

INSTITUTION OF ISLAM JAVA: COASTAL ISLAM, LOCAL CULTURE, AND THE ROLE OF SUFISM

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine the institutionalization of Islam in Java, which is the work of coastal Islamic communities, particularly the envoys or Sufis who collaborated with local coastal traditions. As a result of document studies, it can be seen that the institutionalization of Islam in Java was a long process carried out by envoys spreading Islam. Among the efforts made were through *da'wah* or the spread of Islam individually by agents of the spread of Islam, and then jointly establishing the kingdom and becoming more structured with the establishment of Islamic educational institutions or pesantren. The Islam produced in this long process is Islam in its acculturative or collaborative style, namely the practice of Islamic teachings in harmony with local traditions. Even though there have been changes for the sake of change, the principal teachings in Islam have not changed except for teachings that are instrumental in nature. One of the greatest attributes in the process of coastal Islamization is the creation of understanding and practice of religion in a moderate style.

Keywords: Islam Java; Coastal Islam; Local Culture; Role of Sufism.

Introduction

Islam first arrived in the coastal areas and only from there entered the interior inland areas. When Islam entered the hinterlands, pure Islam then entered into dialogue with the traditions of the rural communities. The spreaders of Islam of this

generation had a very high “intelligence” to lure Hindu and Buddhist communities to embrace a new teaching, Islam. Islam was not taught as happened in Arabic countries, but through dialogue with the local traditions of the Indonesian people. These propagators of Islam had the principle of improving the welfare of the Javanese people.¹

In the history of Islam in Java, the tombstone of Fatima bint Maimun (died 1085 AD) is of course a very important artifact that Islam was already present in East Java, especially Gresik, in the year in question. It had even arrived in Surabaya, even the coast of Tuban. These three areas have large ports which were places for negotiations among traders from China and Arab or Indian (Malabar or Gujarati) traders in exchanging products and merchandise. The ports of Tuban, Gresik, and Surabaya had already become international ports when Khubilai Khan attacked Singosari.²

In addition, Nur Syam et al., posit in their research that Islam is thought to have arrived in Tuban, just as it had arrived in Gresik. If the Tomb of Sayyidah Siti Fatimah bint Maimun (died 1085 AD) is a standard that Islam has arrived in Gresik, then in fact Islam had also arrived in Tuban, especially in the area around the Port of Tuban. Among these standards is the presence of the Astana Jenu Cemetery, which is thought to hold many artifacts related to the arrival of Islam. Just like Gresik, which has a large number of guardians or propagators (*wali*) of Islam, Tuban also has a very large number of *wali* (guardians). There are as many as 193 saints whose graves can still be traced today. Attempts have been made by a number of researchers to identify these graves. It is just a shame that data related to figures, scientific networks, and preaching networks is rather difficult to identify because of the difficulty of historical sources. However, through the “*barzakh*” approach, or through a spiritual path and empirical studies in tracking the *wali Allah*, 106 saints have been identified. Among the graves that can identify the year is that of Mbah Diro at the graveyard of Tuwiri Wetan village, Merakurak District, whose

¹ Abdul Halim et al., *Madzhab Dakwah Wasathiyah Sunan Ampel* (Jakarta: IMA N, 2021).

² Nur Syam et al., *Tuban Bumi Wali: The Spirit of Harmony* (Tuban: Pemerintah daerah Kabupaten Tuban, 2019), 251.

headstone is inscribed with the year 1706. This means that in the early 18th century, villages in Tuban already had Islamic preachers. They could be itinerant preachers and could also be Koran teachers who lived in the village in question. Because of the *wali Allāh* who were scattered throughout almost all rural areas of Tuban, by the mid-17th and late 18th centuries, the *da'wah* of Islam in these rural areas was already going very well. The *wali Allāh*, who were genealogically related to each other, then spread Islam in rural areas from coastal areas to inland areas. *Da'wah* traffic occurred and it is conceivable that in every village in the rural area there was already a group of people reciting the Koran, studying the Yellow Book/*Kitab Kuning*, and also listening to religious lectures.³

This paper is intended to examine the role of Islamic propagators from coastal areas in the development of Islam in inland areas and its relevance to local cultural factors and *tasamwuf*, which contributed to the spread of Islam in the archipelago, especially in Java. Javanese Islam does have its peculiarities, so even though it has been researched by many experts, it is still relevant for study by people in the current period.

In the realm of social sciences, there are many studies on Islam in the coastal context. Among the notable scholars are Syam,⁴ Thohir,⁵ Aghsari, Wieke, and Abbas,⁶ Ismail,⁷ Munawiroh,⁸

³ Nur Syam et al., *Tuban Bumi Wali*, 23-70; Ahmad Mundzir et al., *Tuban Bumi Wali: The Spirit of Harmony* (Tuban: Pemerintah Daerah Kabupaten Tuban, 2016).

⁴ Nur Syam, *Islam Pesisir* (Jogyakarta: LKiS, 2005); Nur Syam, "Kontribusi Islam Pesisiran dalam Pembentukan Tradisi Islam Nusantara," available at nursyam.uinsby.ac.id.

⁵ Mujahirin Thohir, *Wacana Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan Jawa Pesisir* (Semarang: Bendera, 1999).

⁶ Diah Aghsari, Ismail Suardi Wieke, and Nurlaela Abbas, "Harmony of Coastal Community Regarding its Ethnic, Religion and Cultural Diversity", *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, Vol. 156, No. 1.

⁷ Arifuddin Ismail, *Agama Nelayan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012).

⁸ Munawiroh, "Religious Education and Religious Value in the Coastal Community (Case Study of Karangsong Village's Fishermen Community of Indramayu District Indonesia)," *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, Vol. 34 (2017), 36-44, retrieved from <https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JPCR/article/view/40035/41180> on 26 February 2019.

Holilah,⁹ Abadi,¹⁰ and Ashari,¹¹ Ruslan,¹² Sulistiono,¹³ and Farihah and Ismanto.¹⁴ These writings do not specifically discuss the role of coastal communities, especially the *wali Allah*, in institutionalizing Islam in the archipelago. Syam's writing examines Islam on the coast in a collaborative style, Thohir discusses coastal Islamic discourse and Islamic practices in the coastal realm, Aghsari et al., discuss religious harmony in coastal communities, Ismail discusses local Islam in the struggle between Islam and local traditions, Munawiroh uses a value pattern to examine Islamic Education in coastal communities, and Holilah examines transcendental communication patterns in coastal communities.

Meanwhile, Ruslan examines sea alms as a religious-based ceremony. This ceremony is carried out within the framework of obtaining protection and increasing the productivity of fish catches for fishermen. Mulyadi examines the role of *Walisongo* in the Islamization of coastal areas based on historiographical studies. Sulistiono examines the efforts of *Walisongo* in the process of Islamization in the archipelago, Farihah and Ismanto examine the preaching efforts of preachers in the coast in the process of Islamization on the north coast of Java (Lamongan) through the *bi al-lisan*, *bi al-qalam*, and *bi al-fi'l* (verbal, written, behavior) methods or preaching with lectures, writings, and deeds.

⁹ Ilah Holilah, "Religion, Tradition and Trancendental Communication of Coastal Communities: Formulation of Religion and Culture in the Nyadran Ritual," *Scientific Journal of PPI-UKM*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2017), 26-31.

¹⁰ Yasri Abadi, "Spirit Agama di Masyarakat Nelayan Pancana Baru," in *Dimensi Sosial Kawasan Pantai*, ed. Mukhlis (Ujungpandang: P3MP, 1988).

¹¹ Dedy Ashari, "Peranan Walisongo dalam Penyebaran Agama Islam di Jawa Pada Abad Xv-XVI Menurut Historiografi Tradisional" (Undergraduate Thesis-Universitas Jember, 2013).

¹² Idrus Ruslan, "Religiusitas Masyarakat Pesisir (Studi atas Sedekah Laut Masyaraat Kelurahan Kangkung Kecamatan Bumi Waras Kota Bandar Lampung)," *Jurnal ALAdyan: Jurnal Studi Lintas Agama*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (July-December 2014), 63-88.

¹³ Budi Sulistiono, "Walisongo dalam Pentas Sejarah Nusantara," presented in *Seminar dalam Kajian Walisongo* held by Universiti Teknologi MARA, Sarawak at Quds Royal Hotel, Surabaya, 26-31 May 2014.

¹⁴ Irzum Farihah and Ismanto, "Dakwah Kiai Pesisiran: Dakwah Para Kiai di Kabupaten Lamongan," *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2018), 46-60.

The study of “Coastal Islam in the Institutionalization of Islam in Java”, in relation to local traditions and Sufism, emphasizes how the spread of Islam by Sufis through these coastal areas and could then be institutionalized in Javanese society through adaptation to local culture. The research in this paper is very different from previous studies on coastal Islamic communities and also the role of the *wali Allah* in the Islamization of the archipelago. This study is more comprehensive in looking at the contribution of coastal communities to the institutionalization of Islam in Java. The process of institutionalizing Islam was, of course, facilitated by the agents spreading Islam—Islamic traders and Sufis—in the past and continues to this day.

In the process of institutionalizing Islam, the agents of spreading Islam used various methods, not in a syncretic style by mixing it with old culture (Hinduism, Buddhism, animism, and dynamism), but by introducing local culture with a new culture (Islam) through dialogue, thus forming a distinctive Islam. However, over the course of time, there are things that are steady and fixed, while others involve continuity and change. That is why this study uses a theoretical chart, as conceptualized as acculturative Islam, collaborative Islam, and Islam in continuity and change.

As a literature or library research study, it uses valid documentary materials and secondary data that are also relevant to the theme being discussed. Theoretically, this study will discuss known conceptions of Islam and society, such as Woodward’s conception of “Acculturative Islam”,¹⁵ Syam’s “Collaborative Islam”¹⁶ and others, as well as Voll’s conception of “Continuity and Change,”¹⁷ among others.

The Role of Sufis in Coastal Islamization

Theoretically, it cannot be denied that early Islam first developed in coastal areas. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that

¹⁵ Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Ann Arbor: Univeristy of Michigan, 1989); Mark R. Woodward, “The Slametan: Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam,” *History of Religions*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (August, 1988), 55-89.

¹⁶ Syam, *Islam Pesisir*.

¹⁷ John Obert Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994).

the contributors to the development of Islam in the archipelago were actually coastal people. They were the spreaders of Islam, both traders and Sufis who in the following period were able to institutionalize Islam throughout the archipelago. The spread of Islam was carried out through preaching from one region to another, then establishing educational institutions and state or royal institutions. The spreaders of Islam were able to enter royal areas, such as in Samudera Pasai and Perlak, and also establish the first Islamic kingdom in Java, namely the Kingdom of Demak Bintoro, with Raden Fatah as its first king. The Majapahit Empire collapsed in 1527 and was replaced by the first Islamic kingdom in Java, with power spanning the north coast of Java and some in the interior. By this time, Demak was the center of the Islamization of Java. The Kingdom of Demak implemented religious political symbiosis which was extremely effective, so that the Kingdom of Demak later emerged as a new power after the fall of Majapahit.¹⁸

In the past, international routes connected one region to another, one continent to another, and specifically between the Middle East and the East were seas, so Islam must have arrived for the first time in coastal areas. During the time of the Singosari Kingdom and continuing with the Majapahit Kingdom, coastal areas such as Gresik, Tuban and Surabaya had become very familiar places for traders from other countries. These cities had become international cities.

The theory of the Islamization of the Archipelago was indeed not entirely caused by trade factors, but also by Sufi preachers and others. In general, it can be stated that Islam first developed in coastal areas and then continued to develop in inland areas.¹⁹ When talking about the movement to spread Islam, it must have been the traders who were proactive in developing Islam compared to the Sufis, although it is also undeniable that both certainly contributed positively to each other.

In the 14th century there were already Muslim communities in the coastal areas of Java, which indeed received opportunities from state officials at that time to carry out trade based on the exchange of goods from abroad throughout the archipelago, as well as goods

¹⁸ Carool Kersten, *Mengislamkan Indonesia: Sejarah Peradaban Islam di Nusantara* (Tangerang: Penerbit Baca, 2018), 60-72.

¹⁹ Syam, *Islam Pesisir*, 1-7.

and products from the archipelago that were sent abroad. Traders from the Middle East, as well as from India and China, have had an enduring presence in the trade arena of the archipelago, especially in Java.²⁰

Azra stated that these trading centers were indeed in coastal areas with large ports, for example Surabaya, Gresik and Tuban, as well as several Muslim community centers on other coasts. All of them illustrate that coastal Islamic communities have carried out *da'wah* and Islamic broadcasting through various processes and results. The emergence of a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Surabaya—*Pesantren Ampel*, as well as a *pesantren* in Giri Gresik, indicates that coastal areas were central points for the spread of Islam and Islamic education at that time.²¹

In time, as trade centers, of course, several harbours for example in Surabaya, Gresik and Tuban, became centers for meetings of various ethnicities. There were ethnic Chinese, Arabs, and Indians. The archipelago served as an intermediate area for international trade. From China to the Middle East via India and from the Middle East via India to China. The archipelago then became the territory connecting India and Indochina and China. That is why Islam also developed in the area sometimes referred to as Bamboo Curtain countries, one example is the Tomb of Saad ibn Abi Waqqas in Guangzhou, which certainly proves that Islam has indeed spread through trade to mainland China. Carol Kersten even referred to the Indian Ocean as the “Arabic-speaking Mediterranean Sea.”²²

Based on Marco Polo's records from 1254-1324 AD, there was already an Islamic community in Sumatra, specifically the Peurela Kingdom. In the records of Ibn Batuthah, 1301 AD, the Kingdom of Samudera Pasai with its king, Sultan Malik Azzhahir, had embraced Islam in the Shāfi'ī school. This indicates that Islam was institutionalized in the archipelago in those years. Islam had

²⁰ Uka Tjandrasmita, “The Introduction of Islam and the Growth of Muslim Coastal Cities in the Indonesian Archipelago,” in Haryati Soebadio and Carine A. du Marchie Sarvaas (eds.), *Dynamics of Indonesian History* (1978), as quoted by Syam, *Islam Pesisir*, 65.

²¹ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad V-XII dan XVIII* (Jakarta: Mizan, 1994).

²² Kersten, *Mengislamkan Indonesia*, 30.

become the state religion, which means that Islam became the religion of the people in these kingdoms.²³

One of the mainstays in the development of Islam throughout the archipelago is the education system. In that era, the *dayah* or *pesantren* was established, which became the center of Islamic education. The *pesantren* or *dayah* educated students from all over the archipelago who would later become agents of spreading Islam. The speed of the spread of Islam in the archipelago was certainly carried out by the establishment of these very great Islamic boarding schools. In Cirebon, for example, a *pesantren* was established, which was the forerunner of the *pesantren* in West Java and Banten, under Datuk Kahfi's tutelage.²⁴

Islamic leaders throughout the archipelago also developed an education system as part of the process of Islamization in the archipelago. Abdus Shamad al Palimbani and Muhammad Arsyad al Banjari were significantly instrumental in developing indigenous Islamic education in Indonesia. In the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries there were also Islamic educational institutions in Makassar, Ternate, and others.²⁵ Since the establishment of Islamic boarding schools, the process of spreading Islam started a new chapter, not through a personal and approach based on power, but through a structured education system that utilized learning experiences in the Middle East, such as at the Haramain Mosque, as well as from educational methods employed in Egypt.

In Java, an education system was developed, namely by establishing educational centers such as in Ampel Dento, through the presence of Sunan Ampel, and also in Bonang Tuban, through Sunan Bonang, as well as in Giri through Sunan Giri. All of them became centers for the spread of Islam and produced agents to spread Islam throughout the archipelago. So it is not surprising that traces of this *da'wah* are found in West Nusa Tenggara, Bali, Ternate, Makassar, and so on.

The first and subsequent generations of propagators of Islam, while born in the archipelago, held religious transmission lines

²³ Ibid., 56-76.

²⁴ Agus Sunyoto, *Suluk Abdul Jalil: Perjalanan Rubani Syaikh Siti Jenar*, Vol. 1 (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2003).

²⁵ Kersten, *Mengislamkan Indonesia*, 100-103.

from the original source of Islam, namely Saudi Arabia.²⁶ Before they became propagators of Islam in the archipelago, they first studied in Saudi Arabia. For example, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Majagung, and Sunan Giri, and many others were also educated in Saudi Arabia. This transmission line has lasted from the 18th century through the present time. Hence, this Islam is of course Islam as it was in the Holy Land, it is just that they culturally adapted Islam to the local culture, which indeed attracted the interest of the people of the archipelago so they could commence Islamic teachings.

Sufism and Local Islam

Discussions about Islam in the archipelago have sparked various opinions. Based on sociological and anthropological research, it can be understood that there are many conceptions to label Islam in Indonesia. Based on Geertz's study,²⁷ it can be understood that Islam in Indonesia is considered a syncretic Islam or Islam which is a mixture of Islam and local culture, animism, dynamism, and *Kejawen*. The uniqueness of Islam as seen on the surface level is Islam which is like melting pot, mixed together into one without being able to recognize its original pattern.

His ardent opponent is Woodward²⁸ who stated that Islam in Java is not syncretic Islam, but acculturative Islam, namely Islam in its struggle with local culture which produces a distinctive style and may not be the same in performance as Islam in other places. Nonetheless, the essence is that Islam is essentially the same as Islam elsewhere, for example with Islam in the Middle East. These

²⁶ Azra, *Jaringan Ulama*.

²⁷ Clifford Geertz, *Religion of Java* (London: Sage Publication, 1961). Geertz stated there were several trading centres in coastal areas with large ports, such as Surabaya, Gresik and Tuban, and other coastal Muslim community centres. They all illustrate that the coastal Islamic community has carried out *da'wah* through various processes. The emergence of *pesantren* (traditional Islamic boarding school) in Surabaya—*Pesantren Ampel*—and Gresik indicates that the coastal area was the centre of the spread of Islam and Islamic education at that time.

²⁸ Woodward, *Islam in Java*. In Woodward's view, Islam in the archipelago is a distinctive Islam resulting from encountering Islamic teachings with local culture.

two Indonesianists have produced schools of thought which are followed by subsequent researchers on Islam in the archipelago.

In addition to the debates related to socio-cultural classification, there is also discussion about classification based on sources of Islamic authority. In this context, the terms popular Islam and official Islam are known. Popular Islam is Islam that is understood by the general public who are not so familiar with authoritative Islamic sources, and official Islam is Islam that is understood by its scholars, by prioritizing the interpretation of sacred texts, both the Qur'an, the Ḥadīth, and the opinions of revered scholars. Popular Islam, or people's religion, often becomes a problem when understanding and religious behaviour are very far from the understanding of the scholars. In fact, it is occasionally regarded as a "cult sect". Meanwhile, official Islam is getting stronger with the presence of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI/*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*), which in many cases issues religious fatwas. In addition to these are also the scholars outside the MUI, for example *Kyai*, *ajengan*, and so on.²⁹

Although the MUI is not like the fatwa institutions in the Middle East, its role and authority are very strong as evidenced by the many fatwas they have produced that are used for reference in determining religious actions. Among those that stand out are fatwas on Islamic finance, guarantees for halal products, food, beverages, and other consumer goods. Before the state established an institution that guaranteed halal products, the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH), the MUI carried out this role.³⁰

In addition, there is also a discussion about universal Islam which assumes that in the entire world there is only one understanding of Islam; there is no variant understanding of Islam. All must refer to the text in the Qur'an and the Ḥadīth. As authoritative sources, both must be interpreted the same by all Islamic societies. This is the kind of religious understanding that is

²⁹ Karel Steenbrink, "Indonesia Pasca Reformasi: Angin Segar bagi Agama Rakyat," *Majalah Basis*, Vol. 18, No 11-12 (Nopember-Desember, 1999).

³⁰ Ichwan Sam et al., *Himpunan Fatwa Keuangan Syariah: Dewan Syariah Nasional MUI* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2014); Moch. Tholchah, "Fatwa-Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia: Studi Atas Pemikiran M. Atho Mudzhar," *El Banat: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 1, No. 2, retrieved from digilib.uinsby.ac.id on 19 February 2019.

shared by Islamic fundamentalist groups. Then there is local Islam, namely Islam that collaborates with places where Islam is present and developing. It is believed that when Islam comes to an area, it is certain that there is already an established culture, so what happens is that the dialogue between cultures produces a distinctive Islam. Many organizations in Indonesia follow this conception, for example NU and Muhammadiyah.

In general, NU is labelled as an Islamic organization that develops and practices Wasathiyah Islam, although empirically there will also be various classifications. Among these classifications is the one conceptualized by Mujamil Qomar as Liberal NU.³¹ There are several NU figures who are labelled as such, namely KH. Ahmad Siddiq, Gus Dur, KH. Ali Yafie, KH. Said Aqil Siraj, and others. Meanwhile, based on the writings of Sahid HM., it was found that NU figures could be categorized as NU-Fundamental, especially in East Java.³² Nevertheless, the source of his scientific authority cannot be separated from the Islamic scientific tradition in the past, namely Middle Eastern Islam.

Theoretically it can be understood that the arrival of Islam in the archipelago occurred at a time when the kingdoms in the archipelago, such as the Singosari or Majapahit kingdoms, had become developed countries. Through its powerful agricultural and naval systems, Majapahit was able to make acquisitions of its neighbouring countries, so that the area of the Majapahit Kingdom was almost the same as that of Indonesia today. As a result of this naval strength, countries overseas could be conquered and become part of the power of the Majapahit Kingdom.

There are several propositions related to the efforts of the *Pesisiran* Islamic community in developing Islam throughout the archipelago and how coastal Islam contributes to the institutionalization of *Nusantara* Islamic culture, which is truly amazing.³³

First, traders and Sufis from Arabia and India—Gujarat—produced extraordinary resources for preachers. Certainly Islam in

³¹ Mujamil Qomar, *NU "Liberal": Dari Tradisionalisme Ablussunah ke Universalisme Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), 26.

³² Sahid HM, "Formulasi Syariat Islam dalam Konstruksi Kiai NU Struktural Jawa Timur" (Ph.D Thesis--IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2009).

³³ Syam, *Kontribusi Islam Pesisiran*, 1.

the archipelago cannot be separated from the traders and Sufis who developed Islam, for it was they who actually had a very positive contribution in the development of Islam. They not only taught where they lived, but they moved from one area to another. One example is Sunan Giri, who has historical traces in Ternate, but then also in West Nusa Tenggara and Bali.³⁴ The Islamization in Palu, for example, was carried out by the *wali* Datuk Karama, from Sumatra. Syekh Jumadil Kubra—Sunan Ampel's parents—was a *wali* who could have lived in Trowulan Mojokerto, but also had traces in South Sulawesi. Sunan Bonang has historical traces in Madura, but also in Bawean, Gresik. Sunan Bonang lived in Tuban, but he was an itinerant preacher.³⁵

The institutionalization of Islam in the archipelago is inseparable from the role of traders and Sufis or *wali Allah*. Most of them are buried on the north coast of Java. This means that coastal communities were indeed the targets of the *da'wah* of the saints in the early days.³⁶ So great was the role of the *wali Allah*, that their tombs are preserved and venerated to this day. The oldest Islamic cemetery in Java is the Tomb of Fatimah Binti Maimun, who is buried in Leran Village, Gresik, and is still visited by Muslims today. Likewise for the tombs of other *awliyā'*, which are also spread across the north coast of Java. It is conceivable that the tombs of the saints have become extraordinary places for pilgrimage tourism. If in the past, only in certain months were the tombs of saints visited by Muslims, but in the present era there are hardly any quiet months for pilgrims.³⁷ Regarding the coastal area as a place for the spread of Islam, for example, one can see from the data—which of course still needs to be verified—that there are

³⁴ Taufiq Abdullah, "Tinjauan Historis Dari Studi Islam Di Asia Tenggara," in Mubarak, *Pertemuan Pakar bagi Pengembangan Studi Keagamaan untuk Kawasan Negara ASEAN dalam Rangka Kerjasama MABIMS* (Jakarta: Balitbang 1995), 18-19.

³⁵ Widji Saksono, *Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa: Telaah atas Metode Dakwah Walisongo* (Bandung: Mizan, 1997).

³⁶ Saroni Asikin Bungadara, "Walisongo Memilih Pesisir Utara Jawa," retrieved from www.inibaru.id/islampedia/walisongo, on 13 February 2019.

³⁷ Arifuddin Ismail, "Ziarah Makam Wali: Fenomena Tradisional di Zaman Modern," retrieved from www.researchgate.net (2016) on 13 February 2019.

192 *awliya'* graves in Tuban Regency.³⁸ That is why Tuban is called “Earth Guardian.”

Second, the transmission of knowledge between Arabs and Indonesians has never been interrupted since the arrival of traders and Sufis in the archipelago. So, the source of scientific transmission has always been Middle Eastern Islam. Almost all saints have traces of knowledge from Mecca and Medina, as it is known that the intellectual source of the saints is Islamic teachings from the Middle East. Almost all saints were intellectually connected with Middle Eastern scholars. For example, Sunan Ampel and Sunan Giri, before becoming persistent propagators of Islam in the archipelago, studied Islam in Saudi Arabia for several years, especially in Mecca. This process continues to the present day, the only difference is that in the past, they studied Islam with authoritative sheikhs at the Masjid al Haram, but now they are studying formally at educational institutions in the Middle East, for example in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Morocco, and so on. There are even those who study Islam in Iran. That is why the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia is not just like the relationships between Indonesia and other countries, but based on theological, scientific similarities, and even Islamic brotherhood. So, actually Islam Nusantara or Indonesian Islam cannot be separated from Middle Eastern Islam, especially Saudi Arabia. There is no doubt that the propagators of Islam from past to present have a genealogical affinity with the Arab world.³⁹

The classic texts that have been continually taught are books that were written by scholars in the past and are still relics of works from the past. The scholars who studied in Mecca returned to Indonesia and taught their students. That is how and why scientific genealogy has been maintained to the present time. According to Ahmad Baso's tracking, there are hundreds of classic books which are the repertoire of teaching in Islamic boarding

³⁸ “Ziarah Makam di Bumi Wali Tuban,” available at <http://www.mistikus-sufi.blogspot.com>; accessed on 28 February 2019.

³⁹ Periksa, Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Global dan Lokal Islam Nusantara* (Jakarta: Mizan, 2002).

schools in Indonesia. In Banten in 1890 there were as many as 149 manuscripts written by revered scholars.⁴⁰

Sunni Islam, which is an Islamic view or interpretation shared by Islam Nusantara (Indonesian Islam) with most Muslims in the Middle East, is also an integral part of the “similarity” of understanding or religious interpretation. If something is different, it is not a matter of principle in Islam, but only in the dimensions of its branches which are caused by religious interpretations. The Qur’an and the Ḥadīth are indeed the main sources in Islam and that will not change. However, it must be admitted that there are many interpretations of the Qur’an or the Ḥadīth, so of course there will be various interpretations. With a slightly “eccentric” language it can be stated “One Holy Book, Thousands of Interpretations.”⁴¹ Fellow Sunnis have certain references to their own religious understanding. Especially with other groups outside of Sunni, there are real differences, but as long as the dimensions of monotheism and the basic rituals are the same, then that is a wealth of interpretations of religious teachings.⁴²

In Islam there are various social-religious classifications based on religion. These religious organizations certainly have adequate followers and supporters. For example, there are even mosques founded by members of Muhammadiyah, NU, and so on. In terms of the basic colour of the mosque or the name of the mosque, it can be easily recognized, for example, if the NU mosque is dominant, it is green with various names, for example Majid al-Fattah, al-Ghany Mosque, Baitur Rahman Mosque, and so on, whereas Muhammadiyah mosques are usually dominated by dark blue with the name at-Taqwa Mosque, Mujahidin Mosque, al-Ikhlās Mosque, and so on.

The mosque, which has a different religious classification, also has a variant of the ritual. In my research, “Conflict and Integration in Village Communities,” it was found that in the implementation of prayers, there were as many as 11 differences between NU and Muhammadiyah, starting from the call to prayer

⁴⁰ Ahmad Baso, *Pesantren Studies 2a, Buku II: Kosmopolitanisme Peradaban Kaum Santri di Masa Kolonial* (Jakarta: Pustaka Afid, 2012), 133-164.

⁴¹ Abdul Munir Mulkan, *Satu Tuban Seribu Tafsir*, (Jogyakarta: Kanisius, 2007).

⁴² Nur Syam, *Islam Nusantara Berkemajuan, Tantangan dan Upaya Moderasi Agama* (Semarang: Fatawa Publishing, 2018).

to greetings. This can be called a difference in the realm of interpretation among Muslims. Each has references that connect to the Prophet Muḥammad.⁴³ Of the 11 differences, they include reading *Iqāmah*, *Takbīrat al-Ihrām*, reciting *basmalah* in *sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, reciting *basmalah* in *sūrat al-Qur'an* after reciting *sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, reciting *iftitāḥ* prayers, reciting *i'tidāl* readings, reading in bowing, prostration, sitting between two prostrations, hand gestures in *tashabbud*, and reading greetings.

Even though there are *furū'iyah* differences, there are actually no substantial differences, for example regarding the theological aspects and ritual foundations. For example, views on the nature of the Oneness of God, the deeds of God, and the nature of God. In the nature of God, what is different is the amount and not the substance. Meanwhile, from the ritual aspect, for example, the number of cycles in the obligatory prayers, the number of obligatory prayers, the procedures for obligatory prayers, and so on; of course, there are similarities.

In the 1970s, the differences between NU and Muhammadiyah were very sharp, especially those related to Muhammadiyah's efforts to eliminate what it conceptualized superstition, *Bid'ah* and *Churafat* (TBC). NU, which has been supporting rituals that collaborate with local traditions (considered akin to tuberculosis by Muhammadiyah), of course optimally defended them, meanwhile Muhammadiyah (as a purification movement) also made optimal efforts to eradicate it.

However, in recent times the two organizations (Muhammadiyah and NU) have had similarities in viewing the relationship between Islam and local culture, in terms of the Muhammadiyah organization as spiritualization of sharia and religion that are friendly to local traditions. Even though internally Muhammadiyah itself is still the subject of discussion, in general this similarity has become a new paradigm. Even today, NU and Muhammadiyah are the main pillars of Moderate Islam in Indonesia.

Third, all *wali Allah* in the archipelago are descendants of scholars from the Middle East and have a lineage to the Prophet

⁴³ Nur Syam, "Konflik dan Integrasi pada Masyarakat Petani di Desa Kuanyar Kecamatan Mayong Jawa Tengah," in Thoha Hamim, *Rekonsiliasi Konflik* (Jogyakarta: LKiS, 2017), 247-260.

Muḥammad, or *tābi'in* and *tābi' al-tābi'in*. In fact, it is undeniable that the early propagators of Islam were the *Ḥabā'ib*s who indeed received the transmission of Islamic teachings from their authentic sources. Hence, respect for the *Ḥabā'ib* is an integral part of religious life in this archipelago. True Islam respects ancestral heritage and the Islamic teachings left behind by the *Ḥabā'ib*, while practicing them according to the context of their time.⁴⁴ The *walī Allāh*, as propagators of Islam, actually have a lineage or genealogy that is continuous with the Prophet. There are two paths that connect *walī Allāh* with the Prophet Muḥammad, namely through Fāṭimah and 'Alī through Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. Ḥasan's line gave birth to *sharīfs*, for example *Sharīf* Hidayatullah, and Ḥusayn's line gave birth to *sayyids*, for example *Sayyid* Ibrahim Asmaraqandi to Sunan Ampel and his *dhurriyah*.

There are changes in this life, for example if people went to Hajj by camel in the past, they now, of course, go by airplane and car. So, you cannot force yourself to practice religion as it was practiced 14 centuries ago, especially those related to those religious instruments. There are things that have not been allowed to change since Islam first appeared in this world and there are things that can change due to changing times because it is indeed possible for these changes. The divine dimension, rituals that cannot be changed and fundamental teachings in Islam, are certainly not allowed to change, but the instrumental dimension is certainly allowed to change. There is something that is continuous and something that changes.⁴⁵

Based on cultural studies, that there is no area that is empty of culture, even though these cultures can be labelled with traditional and ancient conceptions. When Islam arrived somewhere, it is certain that it was not an empty land with absolutely no tradition and culture. Every area visited by Islamic preachers was always a culturally advanced area. Islam came to the archipelago when the systems of government and economics, as well as the social and cultural system, were advanced. No one doubts the greatness of the Majapahit kingdom, which covered an area as large as the

⁴⁴ Muhammad Syamsu, *Ulama Pembawa Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Lentera, 1996).

⁴⁵ Zamakhsayri Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren, Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), 5.

present-day archipelago. Of course, the economic, social, cultural and political systems were advanced. Islam came at the right time when these systems failed to prosper society and the system faltered because of wars between kingdoms within it. At a time like this, Islam came and offered a new system that was egalitarian, just, and prosperous.

In the archipelago/Nusantara, there are various kinds of traditions and culture, related to both lifestyle and beliefs.⁴⁶ These lifestyles and beliefs were in constant dialogue with each other, engaging in give and take tolerance. Hence, some call it a syncretic, acculturative, and collaborative concept. All of them describe how Islam met the local culture that had been established in their cultural area.

In the encounters with local culture, there was something unique. Almost all local traditions could be integrated with Islamic conceptions. In coastal areas, and I think also in inland areas, there was already a local culture that was originally very far from Islamic conceptions, for example, the *manganes* tradition at the cemetery, the *nyadran* tradition at the well, and other traditions that were in line with animist and other dynamism actions. But in their own way, the preachers and religious leaders could then integrate these local traditions with an Islamic breath. In the coastal area of Tuban, East Java, for example, there are categories of *wong NU*, *wong Muhammadiyah*, and *wong Abangan*. *Wong NU* and *wong Abangan* have the same cultural field. The cultural sphere involves a grave or tomb and well. There are many wells based on local beliefs made by the *wali*. These places are considered sacred, however it is used as a place for *nyadran*, which has animist or dynamist cultural connotations. When *wong NU* and *Abangan* meet in a cultural space such as this, slowly but surely the *nyadran* or *manganan* tradition could be changed by incorporating Islamic teachings. What was originally Tayuban or Satire was then replaced with *Yasinan* and *Tablilan*. The cultural sphere remains, but the

⁴⁶ Andrew Beatty, "Adam and Eve and Vishnu: Syncretism in The Javanese Slametan," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (June 1996), 271-288; John Ryan Bartolomew, *Alif Lam Mim: Kearifan Masyarakat Sasak* (Jogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2001).

content or substance changes to become more Islamic, from Tayuban to Thayiban.⁴⁷

Fourth, from an individual-style *da'wah* system to a state-style one, namely with the emergence of the Demak Kingdom, with a monarchical system of government supported by the *wali Allah* in the land of Java. Everything went according to the scenario that had been set, namely the state as an instrument for developing the Islamic religion. Of course, there were small ripples or clashes between the old and new kingdoms, but as far as what has been recorded in history, there were no major wars in the process of making the state a system of strengthening Islam within it.⁴⁸

In subsequent developments, the relationship between Islam and the state experienced ups and downs. There were times when they were very close and were times when they were far away. Of course, conflictual nuances occurred, for example around 1965. However, the relationship between Islam and the state became more conducive. Even though it was coloured by religious prejudice in the past, today we see that the relationship between Islam and the state is getting better and almost inseparable. Even though it is not an integrated relationship, it is in the context of a very basic symbiosis. Today the relationship between the state and Islam is crucial to how society can prosper.⁴⁹

Fifth, establishing an Islamic educational institution as an instrument for producing religious experts. Among the most effective mediums for the spread of Islam is Islamic education in addition to Islamic *da'wah*. Original places for Islamic education, such as *pesantren*, have made a major contribution to the Islamization of the archipelago. The *pesantren* founded by Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang, and many other *wali Allah* are the forerunners of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. The Ampel Dento Boarding School, founded by Sunan Ampel, was located in Surabaya, an international port city in the past. Likewise, the Giri *pesantren* was also founded by Sunan Giri and was in Gresik, also

⁴⁷ Nur Syam, "Islam Kolaboratif: Memahami Konstruksi Sosial Upacara pada Masyarakat Pesisir Palang, Tuban, Jawa Timur," *Qualita Absana*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (April 2004), 1-13.

⁴⁸ Azra, *Jaringan Ulama*.

⁴⁹ Faisal Ismail, *Islam and Pancasila, Indonesia Politics 1945-1995* (Jakarta: Balitbang Depag., 2001).

an international port city. The Bonang *pesantren* was founded by Sunan Bonang in Tuban, and the Islamic boarding schools in Cirebon were founded by Sunan Gunung Jati. These cities were thriving international port cities in their time.

Based on a study conducted by Qomar, Islamic boarding schools have historical roots with pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist education systems in Baghdad, India and other parts of the Middle East.⁵⁰ The Islamic boarding school education system, which has a dormitory style, had actually become a tradition among Hindus and Buddhists long before Islam developed in the archipelago. Because of this, many education experts claim that *pesantren* are actually a continuation of the education system in the archipelago during the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, which then received a touch of new curriculum content and teaching systems in accordance with Islamic principles.

Pesantren in Indonesia that still exist, such as the Gontor's *pesantren* in Ponorogo, the Tebuireng *pesantren* in Jombang, the Rejoso *pesantren* in Jombang, the Sunan Drajat *pesantren* in Lamongan, and so on, are tens to hundreds of years old. The Tegalsari *pesantren* in Ponorogo,⁵¹ which was once cared for by *Kyai* Hasan Besari, a Syatariyah congregation figure in the Archipelago, is a *pesantren* that became a place for the sons and daughters of the Solo and Jogjakarta Palaces to attend. Raden Ngabei Ronggowarsito studied at this *pesantren*.

In tune with the times, *pesantren*, which in the past relied on conventional learning systems (*sorogan*, *wetonan* and *bandongan* systems), have incorporated madrasah educational methods which place more emphasis on the classical system. Nonetheless, the old system is maintained. So, the *pesantren* education system is actually an integrated education system between conventional and modern education systems.

One of the biggest contributions by Islamic figures in both the past and present is through education. The world of Islamic education is no longer a peripheral education, but has entered the middle region. Islamic boarding schools, madrasa education, and other non-formal educational methods with Islamic characteristics

⁵⁰ Mujamil Qomar, *Pesantren: Dari Transformasi Metodologi Menuju Demokratisasi Institusi*, (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2005), 7-16.

⁵¹ Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*.

have become a strong attraction for the community. The slogans “Islamic education is better” are no longer meaningless, but have become a reality.⁵²

Understanding the Contribution of Coastal Islam

To understand the contribution of coastal Islamic communities in the institutionalization of Islam in the archipelago, John Obert Voll,⁵³ Bassam Tibi,⁵⁴ Mark R. Woodward,⁵⁵ and Nur Syam’s⁵⁶ conception of socio-cultural religious changes will be used. In Voll’s view, socio-cultural change can be categorized as change and continuity, one of which is continuity within change. Meanwhile, from Tibi’s conception, change is something common in social life. Therefore, Islam does not always have to be synonymous with Islam in the past, but can change according to the demands of the times.

Every change must go through a process. The arrival of merchant preachers and Sufi preachers in coastal communities was certainly an initial process in social and cultural change in coastal communities. The people of the archipelago who were originally Hindu-Buddhist and adherents of animism and dynamism later became Muslim. This change, of course, took place over a long process, which Woodward refers to as a cultural dialogue that produced acculturative Islam, or Islam which has a distinctive style.

However, there are basic elements that cannot change in totality or continuity within change. For example a *slametan*, the container is an old container, but the substance has changed from the original Hindu-Buddhist style or animism and dynamism to an Islamic style. Hence, traditions that were originally in the form of old traditions have changed into new ones in old packaging, which in Syam’s conception is called collaborative Islam where the NU, *wong* Muhammadiyah and *wong* Abangan people meet in the medium cultural sphere: wells, tombs and mosques.

⁵² A. Umar, *Madrasah Transformatif, Best Practices Pengelolaan Madrasah di Kota Santri* (Semarang: Fatawa Publishing, 2015).

⁵³ Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change*.

⁵⁴ Bassam Tibi, *Islam, Kebudayaan dan Perubahan Budaya* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1999).

⁵⁵ Woodward, *Islam in Java*.

⁵⁶ Syam, *Islam Pesisir*.

Changes in socio-cultural religiosity in Indonesian society were actually determined by preachers, both traders and Sufis, who intelligently acted not to eliminate all socio-cultural religiosity in Indonesian society, but placed the substance of Islamic teachings within the general framework of Indonesian people's lives. Through clever methods such as this, Islam could become a pattern for the behaviour of the people of the archipelago without resorting to violent conquest.

The institutionalization of Islam in the archipelago has been a unique process of Islamization that ultimately produces a unique style of Islam, as well. Through Islamic boarding schools, metamorphosed into madrasas and then schools, the understanding of Islam has become stronger and more massive. What is interesting about the presence of Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and schools is that they could produce a moderate understanding and practice of Islam. Indonesian Islam is an example of how Islam is practiced in a peaceful style, or moderate Islam, which always exalts the harmony of life with God, humans, and even with the universe, which is a product of this Islamic education.

The religious moderation that is seen today can essentially be drawn straight with Islamic practices, as instituted by the early generations of propagators of Islam and continues to develop and continue to the present day. This continuity in understanding and practicing moderate religion, or *wasatyyah*, is what binds Islam Nusantara so that it can determine the journey of a peaceful and tolerant Islam.

Conclusion

Islam is one and there is no Islam in the teachings of different principles. Islam is the source of the Qur'an, the Ḥadīth and the opinions of the scholars. If the first and second are final, it means that there are no changes from either. However, in the opinion of scholars, it will depend greatly on the era, in accordance with the problems and challenges of society in that era. Therefore, as people's understanding develops, of course, it also requires new interpretations that are relevant for the contemporary world. However, one thing is certain: Islam can develop in society due to the existence of figures and various efforts made, both *da'wah* and

education. All of this, I think, started with the contributions of coastal Muslims who made a real contribution from the very beginning to the Islamization of the archipelago. The biggest contribution from the coastal world towards the Islamization of the archipelago was due to their intelligence and wisdom in responding to the social, cultural, educational, political, and economic world of the past and the impact it continues to have.

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