

Walisongo's Role In Actulating The Islamic Religion And Javanese Culture

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Abstract

The entry of Islam into the archipelago has occurred since the XII century. The spread of Islamic religious teachings did not escape the role of the wali songo, especially on the island of Java. Long before Islam entered the natives, the Javanese people had long embraced the teachings of animism, dynamism, Hinduism and Buddhism. acculturation in the context of Islamic religion and culture is the interaction between Islamic teachings and local culture. However, it should be underlined that local culture is still strong, so that there is a blend of local culture and Islamic culture. This combination is known as cultural acculturation. This study uses a qualitative research method type of literature study. Using various kinds of literature sources such as books, journals, and magazines as data collection. The result of the research is that the process of Islamization in the land of Java runs peacefully without any major conflicts. That illustrates that Islam is the religion of Lil Rahmatil "Alamiin. The method used by the Walisongo is also very intensive, they are able to see from the point of view the customs and traditions of the local population. The Walisongo took a peaceful path, they filled the local culture with Islamic teachings, both in terms of architecture, language, performing arts, songs, and traditional ceremonies. One of Walisongo's principles is Mau'idza Hasanah Wa Mujadallah Billati Hiya Ahsan.

Key Keywords: Wali Songo, Javanese Culture, Islam



INTRODUCTION

Islam is the final religion for all mankind. Through the intermediary of the angel Gabriel, Allah SWT sent the prophet Muhammad SAW to perfect human morals which are wrapped in one belief, namely the religion of Islam. The religion of Islam is *Rahmatal Lil Alamin* (a mercy to the whole world). Referring to the sentence *Rahmatal Lil Alamin* that Islamic religious teachings must be broadcast in a friendly, flexible, gentle manner without any elements of coercion or violence. The entry of Islam into the archipelago has occurred since the XII century. The spread of Islamic religious teachings did not escape the role of the wali songo, especially on the island of Java. Long before Islam entered the natives, the Javanese people had long embraced the teachings of animism, dynamism, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Even though the indigenous people have had their own beliefs from generation to generation, the teachings of Islam can spread and develop without friction or conflict. Local people easily accept and understand Islam as a religion full of peace. We already know how the system or way of the scholars, preachers, and walisongo in understanding what Islam is. Their creativity and intelligence in preaching is by approaching the local culture. The combination of religion and culture is their view to cover Islamic religious teachings by using several arts. Where at that time the indigenous people were used to an artistic performance, one of which was wayang.

The word acculturation in terms of language means adjusting (to a new culture or foreign habits). Meanwhile, according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, the word acculturation means a form of mixing between two cultures that influence one another in a particular society. Meanwhile, according to the term, acculturation has a meaning as a combination of elements of a different culture and becomes a single unit with the intention of forming a new culture without eliminating the old culture. Referring to some of the meanings above, the notion of acculturation in the context of Islamic religion and culture is the interaction between Islamic teachings and local culture. However, it should be underlined that local culture is still strong, so that there is a blend of local culture and Islamic culture. This combination is known as cultural acculturation.

Acculturation itself has existed since ancient times in the course of human history. There are several reasons that can lead to acculturation, including (a) There are different backgrounds. (b) integrates directly with the local culture intensively for a long time, (c) local



culture changes its nature and form to become a mixed culture. The nature of the minority culture changes and enters into the majority culture.

While the meaning of culture in KBBI is thoughts, customs, reason, cultural products that have become behavior or habits and are very difficult to change. The notion of culture is a dynamic value of the elements of learning that contains assumptions, beliefs, agreements and norms or rules that form the basis for interactions with other people. Meanwhile, from the perspective of structuralism, it views that the notion of culture is as a result or product of human reasoning behavior.

Taking the opinions of several experts on culture, they explain that culture is:

a) Edward B. Taylor

Stating that culture is a complex whole and contains several elements, such as: knowledge, morals, art, customs, law, and abilities acquired by a person as a member of society.

b) M. Jacobs and BJ Stern

They say that culture includes the whole form of ideology, social technology, religion, and art where all of it is the result of social inheritance.

c) Koentjaraningrat

Culture is the whole system of ideas, actions and human work in the framework of social life which is made the property of the community itself for learning.

From the various explanations above, it can be concluded that culture is a system of knowledge which contains ideas originating from the human mind, so that in everyday life culture is abstract. Culture is also used as a norm in behavior. While the results of culture include objects created by humans that are real, such as: patterns of behavior, social organization, language, tools of life, art and so on. All of that was made with the aim of helping humans in social life.

Culture contains three main things, namely as a cultural system, which includes abstract concepts, ideas, thoughts, norms, views and so on. The cultural system can also be referred to as a "cultural order of behavior". The second thing, culture as the behavior of the cultural actors themselves, as well as patterned behavior, rituals or ceremonies whose form is concrete and observable. The last content is culture in the form of various kinds of objects, such as art, the work of humans in the form of objects or what can be called "works of behavior".



Culture itself has a very important role for a group of local people. The role of culture is (a) as a guide for a relationship between humans, (b) as a place to channel and actualize other abilities, (c) as a guide or guide in the life and livelihood of humans or groups, (d) the basis of development, (e) the difference between humans and other creatures, such as animals, (f) regulators so that humans know how to carry out an action or deed.

Various kinds of culture are one of the characteristics possessed by the Indonesian nation. The culture of the people of the archipelago has been limp since the days of kingdoms still covering the historical space of this country. All over the archipelago has been filled with various cultural diversity, that is what makes the Indonesian nation a pluralistic nation.

Javanese society is very synonymous with elements of kinship or family ties which make it a unified society bound by their norms of life, traditions and religion. Before the introduction of various kinds of teachings, be it Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam, the Javanese people already had their own distinctive Javanese civilization. An example of civilization is that they are familiar with the term *Saiyeg Saika Praya* (gotong royong), village discussion (discussing the village).

The civilization and culture that they built were actually the result of adaptations from nature so that they could form a strong and basic social foundation. An aspect that is no less important is the understanding of animism and dynamism. Animism is a belief in the power of spirits that reside in various objects, such as plants, animals, and even humans. Meanwhile, the meaning of dynamism is the belief that an object has its own magical power.

This belief model is a reality that arises from the interaction of nature with the customs of the Javanese people, so it cannot be denied that they really believe in mystical things. Mystical itself cannot be explained and understood in any way. Even philosophy or reasoning. Such a definition cannot be seen in plain view. Only by using experience or spiritual (spiritual) training can one understand wisdom in depth.

Over time, Javanese culture has been mixed with foreign cultures through the process of acculturation. Even long before Islamic teachings entered and developed, Hindu-Buddhist teachings had already entered aspects of Javanese people's lives. The phases of development and growth of Javanese culture before the advent of Islam are as follows:

a) Pre-Hindu-Buddhist Javanese culture

The identical characteristics of the Javanese people during the pre-Hindu-Buddhist era were based on the rules of local customs and the beliefs of the people. The beliefs of the Javanese people at that time believed in animism and dynamism as the cultural core



that covered all aspects of Javanese society's activities. Customary norms follow people's lives so much that they are static and conservative.

The bonds of social solidarity and familial ties are so strong. The Javanese people strongly believe in various kinds of gods and myths about the spirits of their ancestors, giving rise to the worship of ancestors who are no longer there (ancestral spirits). That way, in the form of daily activities, it becomes a ceremony of salvation. They assume that the spirits of the ancestors become a protective deity for the living family.

Gamelan and wayang arts are used as a means of religious ritual ceremonies to present the ancestral spirits. In the ritual, the spirits of the ancestors have the function of caring for and protecting the family. In the play of wayang art performances, the spirits of the ancestors are usually compared in the form of punakawan. The Javanese people believe in the existence of spirits and supernatural powers who are seen as gods who can provide help or bring disaster.

b) Javanese culture during the Hindu-Buddhist period.

During the Hindu-Buddhist phase, the process of developing Javanese culture came from the strong influence of Indian (Hindu-Buddhist) culture. Hindu-Buddhist influence in Javanese society is expansive. Javanese culture accepts and absorbs elements of Hinduism-Buddhism. The growing development of Hinduism-Buddhism through the acculturation process of Javanese society is not only influenced by culture but also influenced by religion.

From the start, Javanese culture has been open to accepting any religious teachings with their understanding that all religions are good. Therefore it is very natural that the culture of the Javanese people is Syncretic (meaningful and full). Precisely in their country of origin, Hindu-Buddhist religions are mutually hostile, but the two religions can be unified using the Shiva-Buddhist religious concept.

At that time Javanese culture was also theocratic. The classification of kings who are considered as incarnations of the gods is one of the proofs.

RESEARCH METHODS

A study must use a method known as the research method. The research method is a scenario of how the research is carried out. In general, research methods are divided into two



kinds, namely quantitative methods and qualitative methods. In this study the authors used research methods with the type of *library research* or library research.

Library research is a type of research in which a researcher does not directly go into the field to find data sources in the form of magazines, books, journals and other documents. Researchers conduct research on the topic of the problem in the library or other places as long as there are relevant sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Acculturation is a process of social interaction that arises when a group of people with a certain culture is filled with elements from a foreign culture, so that gradually the foreign culture can be accepted and processed into the society itself without losing the culture it has.

The background to the acculturation of Islam and culture in the archipelago, especially the island of Java, has existed since the founding of the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit kingdom. The process of acculturation of Islam began in the XIII century. The religion of Islam played a very important role in the development of communication networks between the coastal kingdoms and the interior kingdoms which were Hindu-Buddhist in style. For example, in the north coast of Java, the kingdoms that existed were generally ruled and subordinated to the rule of the Majapahit kingdom. However, when the Islamic religion came, they used Islam as a political and economic force to free the grip of the Majapahit royal government.

Since the collapse of the reign of the Majapahit kingdom in 1520 AD, the coastal and inland areas of the island of Java underwent a process of acculturation of Islam and culture very intensively. Until finally, Islamic kingdoms were established in various parts of the island of Java, such as the kingdoms of Demak, Cirebon and Banten. However, within the scope of understanding aqidah, the community does not necessarily immediately settle for eliminating their old beliefs, namely Hinduism and Buddhism. They did pronounce the two sentences of creed, but the ritual practices of the people's belief in the gods are still alive. This is the emergence of the tendency of *syncretism*.

Islamic acculturation itself has entered the island of Java since the XI century. The process of acculturation of Islam and Javanese culture continues to grow rapidly, especially after the collapse of the Majapahit kingdom. With the collapse of the Majapahit kingdom, the first Islamic kingdom in Java was established, namely the Demak kingdom, followed by the



Cirebon and Banten kingdoms. This can be proven by the discovery of the tomb of Fatimah bint Maimun in Leran, Gresik, East Java by showing the year 475 H on the tombstone.

The spread of Islam using the acculturation method can make indigenous peoples accept Islamic teachings well. The method of acculturation of Islam and culture cannot be separated from the role of the walisongo, where the nine walis use two approaches, namely: a) Using Javanese culture with Islamic names, Islamic figures and Islamic terms. b) Integrate Islamic teachings as a formal aspect in the symbols of Javanese culture.

Here are some of the names of walisongo who disseminated the Islamic religion with the acculturation method of Islam and Javanese culture, namely:

a) Sunan Gresik

His real name is Maulana Malik Ibrahim, he is one of the walisongo who spread Islamic teachings on the island of Java by trading, voluntarily providing traditional medicine to the people around him, and teaching a new way of farming. Not only that, Sunan Gresik also built a boarding school building and a Pesucinan mosque in the Leren area, Gresik.

b) Sunan Bonan

With the real name Raden Makhdum Ibrahim, he is the fourth son of Sunan Ampel. The method of approach to society that he uses is by way of culture. Sunan Bonang made himself a mastermind for wayang art performances.

c) Sunan Giri

His real name is Muhammad Ainul Yaqin, he is a descendant of Maulana Ishak, his mother's name is Dewi Sekar Dadu. Sunan Giri's service in spreading Islamic teachings is by creating a boarding school called Giri boarding school. In addition to making teaching buildings, he also preaches with a cultural approach through making songs (songs) for children, such as: muran and cublak-cublak suweng.

d) Sunan Kalijaga

His real name is Raden Sahid, a son of Raden Sahur, the duke of Tuban. Sunan Kalijaga chose to spread Islamic teachings by using the performing arts method. He used literary arts, shadow puppets, and other artistic performances to attract the attention of the Javanese people to Islamic teachings. Even though the wayang art performance is a story from the Mahabharata and Ramayana which has a Hindu-Buddhist style, Sunan Kalijaga incorporates Islamic teachings in the wayang art play.

The walisongo's effort in preaching is to use peaceful methods, without any conflict or coercion on the local community. They use the principle of *Mau'idza Hasanah Wa Mujaadalah Billati Hiya Ahsan*, namely the method of conveying da'wah through kind, gentle and simple words, so that people do not feel disturbed or even threatened by the presence of Islamic teachings. Even though using a method like this will make the spread of Islam take so long, we need to understand that this method can create social and economic peace in society without the emergence of major conflicts, especially if it doesn't involve bloodshed.

In the spread of Islam on the island of Java, Walisongo indirectly rejected the culture that was inherent in the local community. Islam brings teachings about tolerance and equality. This is something that is not found in the Javanese Hindu-Buddhist teachings, where the teachings emphasize differences in degrees. Therefore, Islamic teachings slowly began to attract the attention of society in general.

As for the forms of ceremonies or rituals of the Javanese people who have integrated with the Islamic religion through the acculturation of Islam and culture from the role of the walisongo heritage, they are as follows:

a) Suronan

The Suronan ritual or ceremony is the result of a Javanese ritual which is always carried out routinely when entering the month of Suro. As for one of the activities in the suronan ceremony is the reading of Manaqib Syekh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani.

b) Breakfast

The saparan ceremony means commemorating the month of Shafar, the second month in the Islamic and Javanese calendar. The month of Shafar is believed by the Javanese to be the mating season for dogs. They know that dogs are unclean animals and therefore in this month it is not recommended to carry out wedding processions. In addition, in the month of Shafar, local people believe that there will be many calamities, disasters and catastrophes, especially on the last Wednesday (Rebo Wekasan).

It is not clear where the origins of the understanding of the month of Safar, but when referring to some *Gnostic celebrations* (ahl-alkasf), Al Dairy states that every year Allah SWT includes approximately 350,000 disasters and most of them occur on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar. In order to be free from distress it is recommended to pray four cycles of prayer. Each cycle after reading surah Al-Fatihah is continued by reading Surah Al-Kautsar seventeen times in the first cycle, Al-Ikhlâs five times in the



second cycle, Al-Falaq once in the third cycle and Surah An-nas as many as once in the fourth rak'ah and end by reading a special prayer for the month of 'Ashura.

c) Mauludan

The Mauludan ceremony is a ceremony to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Usually this ceremony is carried out by reading the history of the prophet Muhammada (Manaqib Berzanji) from the beginning of the month to the twelfth day. One form of ceremony to celebrate the birthday of the great prophet Muhammad SAW is *Sekaten*. The *Sekaten* tradition or ceremony has existed since the time of the Demak kingdom. Sultan Agung who served as the king of Demak initiated the *Sekaten ceremony* and is still being preserved and carried out in the Yogyakarta and Surakarta palaces.

Sekaten ceremony aims to spread and deepen the spirit of Islamic religious teachings to the Javanese people. Implementation of the *Sekaten* ceremony was first pioneered by the walisongo. The walisongo know that the Javanese people like the sound of gamelan instruments. Therefore, Sunan Giri, who understood the technique of making gamelan, then made a set of gamelan instruments called Kiai Saketi. He also created music to become a tool for spreading Islamic teachings. Gamelan Kiai Seketi is then played to enliven the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (Maulidun Nabi).

d) Ruwahan

The Ruwahan ceremony is held to commemorate the seventh and eighth month of the Javanese calendar (Ruwah) which coincides with the month of Sha'ban. The Javanese community believes that in the month of Ruwah, it is precisely on the night of the 15th (nisfu sha'ban) that leaves with human names written on them fall from the tree of life. If the leaf falls and there is a name written on the leaf then the person will die in the coming year.

It is not surprising that local people use the mid-Nisfu Sha'ban date for pilgrimages to remember their families or ancestors who have died. On that night the Javanese people usually use it to ask for forgiveness as stated in the hadith narrated by At-Tirmidhi, stating that on the night of nisfu sha'ban, Allah descends to the lowest heaven and visits living things to give them forgiveness. And because of that night, it is customary for the

Javanese people to read Surah Yasin three times after the Maghrib prayer. Most natives *know the month of Ruwah as a month for dedungo* (praying) and *ngunjung* (gathering).

e) Rajaban

Rajaban has a meaning as a commemoration of the Isra Mi'raj of the Prophet Muhammad SAW which occurred on the 27th night of the month of Rajab. The Isra Mi'raj journey from the Al-Haram mosque to the Al-Aqsa mosque and then ascend to the seventh heaven to receive prayer orders from Allah SWT directly.

f) Shawwal

Syawalan is a tradition that is carried out after a full month of fasting during the month of Ramadan. Syawalan itself is carried out to commemorate the month of Shawwal, the tenth month in the Islamic calendar.

g) Among other things

The among-among culture or tradition, according to several community leaders, began when Sunan Kalijaga spread Islam on the island of Java. In the beginning, the among-among tradition was used by the Javanese people as a form of offering to unseen spirits. The offerings are made using various types of offerings. After Islamic teachings entered the land of Java, Sunan Kalijaga changed the form of offerings by using food dishes such as rice, vegetables and side dishes.

In Javanese life, the among-among tradition is also known as salvation, with the aim of always obtaining safety in this world and the hereafter. The meaning of the word among-among itself is "*pamamong*" which means ngemong, guard, protector, and caretaker of body and soul. The among-among tradition is a form of prayer for someone who is still alive. The process of carrying out the among-among tradition is by eating together between several people, both small children and adults. Where various kinds of white rice, side dishes, and vegetables are placed on a tray. Then a tray filled with various kinds of food dishes is placed in the middle circled by the local community. After everything is presented, a person who has a need or desire stands to convey and pray so that all his wishes and wishes can be granted. After everything is finished, this tradition ends with reading prayers and eating dishes together.

The success of preaching the spread of Islam cannot be separated from the role of walisongo. With the assimilation between Islam and local culture, this blessed religion can be accepted and embraced by the Javanese people. In the rules of ushul fiqh, the author sees that

the walisongo take one of the qaidah which reads *Al-Adah Muhakkamah* (custom made as law). However, not all customs can be used as a legal basis. Custom can be used as law in certain circumstances and conditions. Adat can be declared as law if there is no evidence or syara' found.

The origin of adopting the rule of "*Al-Adah Muhakkamah* " is from social reality where values that are believed to be the basis of norms and rules have existed for a long time and have become a pattern of life for the local community. But there are some customs that cannot be used as law just like that, if they conflict with the Shari'a and cause harm (damage) and do not bring benefit (good).

The walisongo were indeed very sensitive to the adaptation to the environmental conditions of the community at that time. The da'wah method carried out in instilling Islamic law and creed pays close attention to local cultural conditions. The habit of gathering or ceremonial rituals on certain days after the death of a family is not an unlawful law, but is changed by filling in prayers, tahlil and alms.

Even one of the walisongo, Sunan Ampel, who is known for his caution in Islamic law, calls prayer as "*Prayer* ". The word *prayer* comes from two syllables, namely sembah and Hyang, which means worshiping God. As well as naming the place of worship as "*violation* " originating from the word studio.

In making mosques and *langgar* (places of worship) were also made with a pattern of Javanese culture. The building uses multi-level tiles, even the Kudus mosque building is equipped with towers and gates patterned with Hindu-Buddhist culture. Apart from the word *prayer* and the form of buildings for Muslim places of worship, Walisongo also established Islamic boarding schools which, according to historians, were similar to Hindu-Buddhist hermitages, a place to educate future religious leaders (*Cantrik*).

From the description above, it can be concluded that the method of spreading Islam by Walisongo is through a cultural approach and local traditions. The da'wah models delivered by walisongi include:

First , the method of spreading the Islamic religion carried out by Walisongo can be seen through several relics in the form of mosques, architectural forms of miniature tower buildings (gates), forms of carved designs for the tombs of saints, teachings of ancient books including several songs, such as *Lir-ilir* which hosted by Sunan Giri, and *Sluku-Sluku Bathok* .

Second , the method of spreading Islam through language acculturation. For example, from the word *Sekaten* atay in Arabic *syahadataini* (two sentences of creed). *Sekaten* is a gamelan instrument whose music is made by Sunan Kalijaga. The gamelan is then colored with Islamic nuances, such as *Rabbulngalamin* (Rabbul'Alamiin), *Salatun* , *Salawatan* , and so on. Gamelan *Sekaten* is a way of preaching through the arts, where at that time the Javanese people really liked to gather and listen to the strains of artistic music.

Various words from Arabic are used to give religious symbols in sekaten by using the names *Apem*, *Ketan*, *Kolak* . Etymologically the word " *Apem* " comes from the word *Afwan* (Arabic) which means to apologize, " *Kolak* " comes from the word " *Qala* " which means to say (Qaala-Yaquulu) and " *Ketan* " is rooted from the word *Khata'an* or mistake. The three types of food that can still be enjoyed today mean that if you make a mistake in your daily life, then apologize immediately.

Third, the method of Islamic da'wah by using shadow puppet art made from buffalo skin. Shadow puppet art performances were performed by Sunan Kalijaga during the time of Raden Patah who ruled in Demak. At first, Sunan Kalijaga saw the wayang paintings resembling human forms attached to the reliefs of the Penataran Temple, Blitar. Because the painting was similar to humans and was considered contrary to Islamic law, Sunan Kalijaga worked around this by changing the shape of the painting, which was originally facing forward, to be changed to face sideways.

Thus the arrival of Islam is not used as an enemy or a threat to the Javanese people. The da'wah method by approaching the local culture carried out by Walisongo made Islam gradually integrate with the life of the people in it. The Islamization of Javanese society was acceptable to all classes of Javanese society at that time.

There are those who argue that tolerant and accommodative attitudes are considered a negative thing because they mix up culture or people's beliefs with Islamic values, making it difficult to distinguish which are Islamic teachings and which are the original traditions of the community. But there are also those who argue that tolerance and the acculturation of Islam with culture bring positive things. The reason is that these syncretistic teachings have become a bridge for the Javanese people to (Syaban, 2019) accept Islam as their new religion.

CONCLUSION

The process of Islamization in Java proceeded peacefully without any major conflicts. That illustrates that Islam is the religion of *Lil Rahmatil "Alamiin* . The method used by the Walisongo is also very intensive, they are able to see from the point of view the customs and traditions of the local population. The Walisongo took a peaceful path, they filled the local culture with Islamic teachings, both in terms of architecture, language, performing arts, songs, and traditional ceremonies. One of the principles that Walisongo forms the basis of is *Mau'idza Hasanah Wa Mujadallah Billati Hiya Ahsan* , namely the method of delivering da'wah through kind, gentle and simple speech, so that people do not feel disturbed or even threatened by the presence of Islamic teachings.

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