

## **ISLAM NUSANTARA: A MIDDLE WAY?**

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### ***Abstract***

Islam Nusantara is not a new thing. The word “Islam” combined with “Nusantara” is not only confirmed the name, but also the characters to show the pattern of a heterogeneous entity. The concept of Islam Nusantara face (*vis a vis*) with Islam in the Middle East (Islam Arab). Diversity as a typology of Islam Nusantara is the result of the struggle that the length between religion and dimensions of life (social, economic, politic, culture and etc.), the text of the context that complement one another so that spawn Islam friendly, peaceful, anti-radical, harmony and rahmatan lil ‘alamin. Departing from the historical and epistemological approach, this article tries to provide a long discourse that was raised again in the “Declaration of Nahdlatul Ulama” at the International Conference of Islamic Leaders Moderate (ISOMIL) which took place from 9 to 11 May in Jakarta. The purpose of writing this article is actually also want to answer the issues pointed out that Islam Nusantara models reflect the teachings of Islam are not singular.

**Keywords:** *Islam Nusantara, Islam Arab*

## **A. Introduction**

Cannot be known that Islam Nusantara term when it first appeared. However, the term resurfaced in around the beginning of May 2016 and been debated by many. There is one group that says it is a form of heresy, while another group chimed with a concept that is equally telling. They negate each other, on one side considers what he believes is the only truth (single truth) and on the other side considers that it is a unique form of plurality. There is a conflict, especially in terms of understanding of Islamic law.

The outcome was the occurrence of socio-religious polemic that became more and more. Fragments of a long history that has helped shape civilization becomes increasingly blurred. In fact, we become blind and difficult to distinguish between where the cultural product and where the product of religion. Even as no longer able to perceive and understand that the Arab is not necessarily Muslim and that Islam is not necessarily Arab. Thus, a lot of people who often fall into the understanding Arabsentris that should Islamsentris. So the more concern is between the Muslims seemed to be forgotten that the basic teachings of Islam that is shade, harmony and love peace on akhlakul kharimah not Islam that is filled with violence, rage, which is always considered to be exclusive, even destructive.

Departing from the problems above, this paper aims to find common ground (meeting point) on the debate which bears the distinction of religious ideas that often occur in Indonesia. On the basis of epistemological and historical framework, this paper seeks to answer questions about what and how Islam Nusantara.

## **B. Terminology Islam Nusantara**

According to Akhmad Sahal that in the understanding of Islam Nusantara, must believe in the existence of religious and cultural dimension hand in hand with one another. This dimension is an Islamic way how to compromise with borders that have specific cultural roots. This resulted in Islam no longer present themselves as rigid and closed, but appreciate otherness. Islam is very accom-

modating values are contained within a given territory. This is confirmed also by Gus Dur, who said that, "The overlap between religion and culture will continue to occur continuously as a process that will enrich life and make it barren. (Sahal, 2015: 33)

From the above statement finally extended to the rest of what Islam Nusantara, meaning whether Islam Nusantara, whether Islam of Nusantara, is Nusantara of Islam. is Islam in Nusantara or Islam that is Nusantara? Still any ambiguity regarding the term Islam Nusantara itself. If Nusantara is defined as a place or region then called Islam Nusantara must profiteer all schools and Islamic organizations in Indonesia. Islam Nusantara means not merely confined to or characteristic of The Nahdliyin (NU). Nor vice versa, when the Nusantara interpreted as typical values, it means profiteer character and characteristics of Islam in Indonesia in which includes elements of worship *mahdah* and *muamalah*.

Furthermore Mustafa Bisri (Gus Mus) never describes the term Islam Nusantara. According to him, Nusantara said it would be wrong if the intent is understood in the structure *na'at-man'ut* (penyifatan) so that means, "Islam dinusantarakan." But it would be right if placed in the structure *idhafah* (designation place) so it means "Islam in Nusantara". Gus Mus above explanation is not wrong in context to dampen fears of a group who misunderstand Islam Nusantara. However, it should be understood that the appointment is also a means to uncover the elements that exist in the area. So, like it or not, like it or not, we should still embrace the nature and characteristics of a region called Nusantara.

Furthermore, writing Azyumardi Azra, which states that Islam Indonesia Sustainable, also explains that the term "Islam Nusantara" in the academic world refers to "Southeast Asian Islam" who are in Muslim areas of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Pattani (Southern Thailand) and Mindanao (Philippines South). Islam Nusantara region in the pre-colonial literature called "the land below the wind" (lands below the wind). More specifically in Arab literature since the 16th century, Islam Nusantara re-

gion called “*Bilad al-Jawi*” (Muslim Affairs Jawi), namely Southeast Asia. The Muslim Ummah Nusantara commonly referred to as “*al-Jawiyyin ashah*” or “*Jama’ah al-Jawiyy*”. Islam Nusantara region is one of the eight religio-cultural realm of Islam. Seven realm of religion and culture of Islam other than Arabic, Persian/Iranian, Turkish, Indian subcontinent, Sino Islamic, Black Africa and the Western World. Despite holding the key principles and teachings of the same in the creed and worship, but each domain has a religious character and its own culture. (Azra, 2015)

Next, Teuku Kemal Fasya (2015) in one of his writings, *Poetic and Cultural Dimensions of Islam Nusantara*, explanations are no less interesting. He defines that Islam Nusantara is the appreciation and practice of the locality’s people who live in the archipelago. Legalization of the word “archipelago” is not simply an affirmation place name or noun, but more importantly, an explanation adjective or quality Islam “here” in contrast to Islam “over there”. The success of Islam so archipelago peaceful religion cannot be separated from the adaptability and resilience of knowledge, local arts and culture. Theological credo paced soar met with the cultural dimension of society and resonate through local knowledge.

Whenever the question arises where Islam is truly original, the answer is clearly no. Because all Muslims in the world agree that Islam as true merely referring to the figure of the Prophet. Alone, so no one else. Islam since the time of the Prophet until now has crossed struggle very long time. The dynamics of reality that kept identical during the 15th century was unstoppable life of his people. It thus reveals axiom symbiotic mutualism relation between Islamic texts and the reality of the people are inseparable. He therefore did not need to be cut down so that scattered disintegrating, even in the name of maintaining the authenticity of Islam though. In a landscape so, Islam Nusantara proper seat placed. A creative idea to turn the primary Islamic texts and legacy thinking of the scholars of the Salaf in the frame of the present dynamics. (Iyubenu, 2015)

### C. Central Role Walisongo

The entry of Islam into the archipelago is often identified by the presence of the Walisongo. Because many believe that of Indonesian Islam they can be germinated and be a part of Indonesian life someday. Friendly Islam is not Islam that is angry; Islam shade and blend with tradition and local culture. So, to start this paper the author considers it necessary to write a piece of the chronology of the emergence of Walisongo start of the first generation.

Before the establishment of the Walisongo we know today as Sunan Bonang, Gunung Jati, Giri, etc. Kalidjaga it turns out there have been nine trustees who are experts in certain fields. In the book *Kanzul Ulum* of Ibn Battuta is still stored in the Imperial Library Sultanate Ottoman Istanbul, the establishment Walisongo turned out the first time carried out by the Turkish Sultan Muhammad I, which receives reports from the merchants Gujarat (India) that in Java, the number of Muslims is still very little, Based on these reports, Sultan Muhammad I formed a team of nine people:

1. Maulana Malik Ibrahim, came from Turkey, irrigation and governance experts,
2. Maulana Ishak, come from Disguise healer,
3. Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubro, originally from Egypt,
4. Maulana Muhammad Al Maghrobi, originally from Morocco,
5. Maulana Malik Isro'il, originally from Turkey, governance experts,
6. Maulana Muhammad Ali Akbar, originally from Iran, healer,
7. Maulana Hasanuddin, from Palestine,
8. Maulana Aliyuddin, from Palestine, and
9. Sheikh Subakir, from Iran, the expert community.

They can be called as the first batch Walisongo who came to the island of Java at the right time. Because, Majapahit itself when it was hit by the civil war (Paregreg War) so that their arrival was not so attention. Note that the first team of experts is not a religion or to say that they do not have enough knowledge of religion are qualified.

Because of Maulana Malik Ibrahim as chairman Walisongo

died in 1419 AD then in the year 1421 AD posted a new Islamic propagator named Ahmad Ali Rahmatullah of Champa is also the nephew of Maulana Ishak. He is a son of Abraham Asmarakandi which became law of Sultan Campha. Selection Ahmad Ali Rahmatullah which will often be called Raden Rahmat is a very appropriate decision. Therefore, Raden Rahmat considered to have advantages (more in theology) and son Crown of Majapahit at the time was married to an aunt of Raden Rahmat.

In 1435 there were two people who died guardian, ie Maulana Malik Isro`il and Maulana Muhammad Ali Akbar. With the death of two people, the council filed a petition to the Sultan of Turkey (1421 Sultan Muhammad I was replaced by Sultan Murad II, who led until 1451) to send two people who have the ability to substitute a more profound religion.

The petition was granted and in 1436 sent two preachers. One of them Sayyid Ja`far Shodiq, of Palestinian origin, who later settled in the Holy and known as Sunan Kudus. In the book Chronicle Demak (2001) Atmodarminto works, mentioned that Sayyid Ja`far Shodiq is the only member who had the most Walisongo jurisprudence.

Preachers of them was Syarif Hidayatullah, of Palestinian origin who is an expert on war strategy. According to the "Babad Tanah Sunda Babad Cirebon" from PS Sulendraningrat, Syarif Hidayatullah was the grandson of King Siliwangi from Padjadjaran marriages Rara Santang and Sultan Syarif Abdullah of Egypt. Furthermore Syarif Hidayatullah settled in Cirebon and is known by the name of Sunan Gunung Jati.

With the arrival of young carers, it can be said that the composition of the board of trustees can we call the third generation. It appears from the above information that there were three young carers who certainly has the depth of knowledge of religion more than the previous generation. In 1462 two people died Walisongo members, namely Maulana Hasanuddin and Maulana Aliyuddin. Before that there were two trustee members who left the land of Java, namely Sheikh Subakir return to Persia and Maulana Ishak

preaching in Pasai.

In the trial Walisongo in Ampeldenta, it was decided that there were four people who entered the council Walisongo, namely:

1. Raden Makhdum Ibrahim, son of Sunan Ampel who settled in the village of Bonang, Tuban. Hereinafter known as Sunan Bonang;
2. Raden Qosim, son of Sunan Ampel living in Lamongan and known as Sunan Drajat;
3. Raden Paku, son of Maulana Ishaq who live in Gresik and to be known as Sunan Giri;
4. Raden Mas Said, son of Duke Tuban living in Kadilangu, Demak. Hereinafter known as Sunan Kalijaga.

With these changes, the composition of the board of trustees can we call the fourth generation. In the councils of the fourth generation Walisongo are still two people who are from the first batch, so in 1463 they had served in Java for 59 years. Two men were Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Qubro who died in 1465 and Maulana Muhammad Al-Maghrobi (unknown year how his death).

In the Book of Walisana mentioned that at the time of Raden Fatah face Sheikh Siti Jenar, Maulana Muhammad Al Maghrobi still the central figure, the strong suspicion that he makes the decisions about the problem of Sheikh Siti Jenar. It should be noted that from the fourth generation of this many members Walisongo who was the son of the indigenous aristocracy. At the same time, the orientation of the teachings of Islam began to change from Islam Arabsentris be compromised. (Indrayana, 2015)

Additionally, Moh. Adnan in his-(primbon) also mentioned that there are some other basic tasks of the Walisongo (may be called second generation) in addition to spread the religion of Islam (Sunyoto, 2011: 90-91), among them:

1. Sunan Ampel make Islamic regulations for the Java community,
2. King Pandhita in Gresik patterned batik fabric, woven striated and harness,

3. Sunan Majagung teaches treating a variety of foods, side dishes, renew farm tools and make pottery,
4. Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon teach ordinances praying and reciting mantras, method of treatment and procedures for clearing the forest,
5. Sunan Giri make government order in Java, set the calendar calculation cycle of change the day, month, year, tiger, adjust pawukon cycle, also initiated the opening of the road,
6. Sunan Bonang science teaching mysticism, making the orchestra and how to change the rhythm of the gamelan,
7. Sunan Drajat teach the procedure to build a house, make a stretcher and palanquin,
8. Sunan Kudus teach how to make kris, equipment blacksmith, craft gold, also made a rule of law to the judicial system that is destined for the Javanese.

From the explanation of the history of civilization can be seen that the archipelago is never separated from the process and the interaction between religion and cultural assimilation. Even in the past there has been a sublimation Walisongo paradigm from a previously Arabcentric into Islam typical of the archipelago. Thus no one if Karim was quoted as saying by Syarif Hidayatullah Islamic came to the conclusion that the Indonesian people are unique when compared to any Muslim community in the world. Islamic because they do not affect or change the practice of everyday life. In fact, the color of the locality is very much determine the pattern of Islamic society that would be encountered there were very affected region Sufi teachings, while others do not. So Islam for the Indonesian Muslim community is not a homogenous identity. (Hidayatullah, 2010: 17)

#### **D. Who is Most True (Claim of Truth)?: Debate Lengths Not Visit After**

There is one disease that hitherto has no cure: considers itself the most correct. In this case it is better if we recall at what has been said by Thomas Kuhn in his magnum opus, "The Struc-



ture of Scientific Revolution” (1962) as cited by Edi AH Iyubenu. In the book, Khun strike hard positivism so idolize “single truth”. For Khun, all human beings are only capable of creating a “paradigm” the truth, not Face the Truth itself; could only reach a fact, not a reality. (Iyubenu, 2015: 13)

Then one of the causes of the “old-fashioned” also because so strong positivism in plugging the concept of truth in the minds of every modern society. Coupled with the understanding “sakralitas” excessive text, people suddenly become like God who simply condemned with glasses binary opposition: right and wrong, misguided-pious, and so on. This paradigm be coupled with the reality of Muslims in Indonesia.

“Sakralitas” on text or skriptual-textual understanding is misguided thought that was so dangerous. Ali Harb (a critical philosophical thinker of Lebanon) said that the people who talk a lot about books, the basic principles and the urgency of returning to the text sometimes it has to be the group most distant from the text. And could so they could not even grasp what is contained in it, including the nature and future generations who did not know, on the grounds that they are always in between words and object, between reality and concept as well as between the text and the event. (Harb, 2012: 161)

The author does not intend doubt on the sanctity and authenticity of Qur’an. But that should be understood that the verses of Qur’an largely uncharged teaching *mujmal* (global), not technically, by the nature of the *mutashabihat* paragraph (*zhanniyyah*, not *qath’iyyah*, a.k.a multi-interpretation). Except for verses that pertained *Ubudiah*. Equally important to understand the nature of the decline there are verses in the Qur’an which is to respond to events, setting a new law and denied local laws/customs and nor vice versa, approve local laws/customs prevailing in Arabia at the time.

Evidence locality properties of the text of the Qur’an are verses about *khamr*, horse riding, archery to slavery. The verse on *the hijab* stick out, for example, *asbab al-nuzul* occurs when Sauda

(one of the wives of Muhammad.) Out of the house and meet with Umar bin Khattab, then he was reprimanded by Umar. Sauda later described the event to Muhammad and his being allowed out of the house for one interest. Then there came the verse that commands “stick out the veil” to be “different from the others” (as a distinguishing identity with indigenous slaves) and that “not bothered” by the hypocrites and polytheists at that time.

Thus, historically the Koran is “a response to the realities of the earth sky” Arab society at the time. This is the meaning of Qur’an as “cultural products”; created by God as a response to the dynamics of the past times in the span of more than 22 tahun.<sup>32</sup> Therefore verses of Qur’an there is multi-interpretation, tend locality and belong to the realm *muamalah*, the hijab as subject was, for example, cannot be generalized and relevant applied in every country. (Iyubenu, 2015: 46-47)

Another factor that contributed to the claim of truth is the uniformity of understanding between “Islamic law”, “Syariah” and “Fikih/Jurisprudence”. According to Siroj (2015: 111), in the context of Indonesia three things are often equated. Though substantially, all three there is a difference. Put simply Said Aqil Siroj describe that: Syariah is the main source of jurisprudence, ie legal texts are still contained in the Qur’an and Hadith, which in fact *la yanthiqu* (can not say anything) unless otherwise human reason (understood by humans) as the operational conditions. While “Fikih” is the result of clerical understanding of the texts of law contained in the Qur’an and the Hadith (or so-called Syariah). As the understanding, of course fikih could be true, it could be wrong and often different from one another due to differences in time and place.

It is also been expressed by KH. Sahal Mahfudh about the concept of social fikih. For him, fikih should be able to display the dynamism and flexibility to deal with the social changes that speeding. Kiai Sahal Jurisprudence always aim that is the result of *ijtihad* are not rigid and are sacred, but flexible and contextual. Decision of fikih at a certain time and place could have been considered valid

are no longer relevant in the era or elsewhere. To illustrate this flexibility Kiai Sahal (2015: 29) cites prank KH. Wahab Chasbullah: "*pekih kuwi yen rupek diokoh yo-okoh*" (fiqh that if feels narrowing ya be loose).

Derived from the description above, either Islamic law or fikih can not necessarily be used as a pretext absolute to determine that this was wrong because it is the result of a review of existing human and temporal. In other words, the parameters truly one-in this context-relative because arguably influenced by many factors particular place and time. So unethical if in the middle of the Indonesian nation heterogenitias such case used as a weapon to convict differences in perspective let alone the level of piety someone.

### **Islam Nusantara: As the Middle Way?**

Baso (2015: 55) in his book, the analogies that Islam Nusantara is like meeting featured two saplings of different types, but when put together in the process of crossing will generate a new seed is superior. Crosses Islam and the archipelago is required to obtain a new genius with characters or properties desired seed. These seeds will grow up healthy and can survive in any environment situation and clutches, tolerant and adaptive to the environment so they can grow large and healthy, do not wear out quickly, damaged or failed to grow. By crossing two different species it is expected that new species appear populist, the quality of a high civilization and resilient to various conditions and challenges. And a new species that is called Islam Nusantara. So if we are absolutely sure of Islam Nusantara it is the result of crossing two of seeds, the more support the superiority of ijtihad turmeric natural wealth of our archipelago than, for example, import *habbatussawda* (black cumin).

Therefore, it is not surprising that Imam Shafi'i, in his book the luminary, "al-Umm" as quoted by Ahmad Baso also stated that: "*Ma min biladil-muslimina baladun wa illa-fihi 'ilmun qad shara ahluhu ila' ttibai qauli rajulin min ahlihi fi aktsari aqawilihi.*" That is, in every country there is a science that Muslims lived and followed

by its inhabitants and science that became the clerical grip in most opinion. It thus shows that geographical considerations into something important.

Fealy (1997: 176) also had to reflect the core of Gus Dur in viewing Islam. According to Gus Dur, Islam is not static. The teachings of Islam is not something that is relegated once so and after that never require reformulation and reapplication. In other words, he argues that the essential characteristic of Islamic law is the necessity to be interpreted contextually. Because if the social and historical context changes, then change the application also eternal principles of the law;

“Call to the development and refreshment is not a solicitation to remodel Islamic law. Such an invitation is not just another Islamic law will put on the need for a moment, to the will of men who are always changing. That is an attempt to make it more sensitive to human needs today and in the future. With such sensitivity Islamic law will continue to make adjustments than necessary, without having to sacrifice the values transendentalnya predetermined by Allah. With that sensitivity, it can be Islamic law also gives its contribution to nation-building, which is to create values a dynamic life but based on the awareness of the necessity for humans to strive within the limits of his ability as a mere creature.”

In addition, Azra (2015) assume that Islam Nusantara as represented by NU and Muhammadiyah have almost all the potential to advance to realize civilization *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Capital is the amount of richness and diversity of institutions ranging from mosques, schools, madrasas, schools, universities, hospitals and clinics, homes for social sponsorship, cooperatives, to other economic activities. Consequently, many foreigners since the late 1980s, such as Fazlur Rahman Islam Nusantara looked great potential to stand the forefront in advancing the global Islamic civilization. With the Islamic civilization *wasathiyah* (middle way)

Islam Nusantara can contribute more peaceful world civilization and harmony. Expectations like this, according Azyumardi Azra, increasing amid continuing conflict in the Muslim countries of the Arab world, South Asia, West Asia and Africa. To that end, NU and Muhammadiyah Islamic organizations along with other *wasathiyah*, not only need to improve thinking and charitable efforts in the country, but also to be more expansive spread Islam *wasathiyah* to foreign countries. Thus, Islam Nusantara able to stand at the forefront in realizing Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

### **E. Conclusion**

Islam Nusantara is not a form of movement to change the doctrine of Islam. It also is not going to move the *Qiblat* of Indonesian Muslims from Mecca to Indonesia. It just wanted to find a way how to anchor the culture of Islam in the context of a diverse society. Islam Nusantara just want to sow and display the face of Islam shady and welcoming not angry. By looking at the shards sepihan long history, Islam in Nusantara has experienced a long struggle with their diverse localities. He comes not to break or cut down the traditions and the local culture, but rather try to dialectic with the context in which it is located. Therefore flexibility nature, it is able to survive and thrive, so bring distinctive new Islamic expression and no one anywhere in the world.

Thus, Islam Nusantara is not some new thing, he just wants to put something in place. With the presence of Islam Nusantara was a reminder that the Arab is not necessarily Muslim and that Islam is not necessarily Arab. With such a paradigm, that Islam Nusantara actually wanted to take out of the chaos cross orthodoxy in viewing religion, the classic debate that there was no tip base and naive who deny the truth of other things. With hope, the civilization of Islam Nusantara will become the world because Islamic civilization step treasures of science and Islamic values archipelago *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

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