Abstract
Islam Nusantara is not a new religion, a rival of Islam, sect, or a usual mazhab, but actually is a character of thoughtful mazhab or manhaj Islam. Islam Nusantara is just an approach in practicing Islamic teachings, namely cultural approaches. This Islam has the most prominent character which is called as wasathiyah (moderation) that is reflected in some attitude such as, inclusive, tolerant, friendly, respect other parties, friendly with diverse cultures and religions, tasmuh, tawazun and i’tidal. Islam Nusantara sees local cultures as “oxygen”; filters and then respect good culture and tradition (al-urf al-shalih) so it can have a dialogue with the environment around it positively. This cultural approach has been successfully used by the Walisongo in preaching using tembang, Wayang Kulit, socializing key terms, and so on. In the faith, Islam Nusantara is manifested in some rituals, tahlilan, istighasah, baul akbar, and selametan. Furthermore, in fiqh it’s such as imsak, zakat, Halal Bibalal, marriage registration, marriage book, and the reading of ta’liq talaq. Islam Nusantara successfully consolidate Islam with nationalism so both of them are harmonious, and bring the tradition together with modernization through slogan al-muhafadz ‘ala al-qadim al-ṣalih wa al-akhad bi al-jadid al-ašlab [keep the old good tradition and take a new and better tradition].
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mengamalkan ajaran-ajaran Islam, yaitu pendekatan kultural. Islam ini memiliki ciri yang paling menonjol, yaitu wasathiyah (moderasi) yang terefleksikan dalam beberapa sikap: inklusif, toleran, ramah, menghormati pihak lain, bersahabat dengan kultur dan agama yang beragam, tamadun, dan i’tidal. Islam Nusantara memandang budaya lokal sebagai “oksigen”, mem-filter, kemudian menghormati budaya dan tradisi yang baik (al-‘urf al-shalih) sehingga bisa berdialog dengan lingkungannya secara positif. Pendekatan kultural ini telah berhasil digunakan para Walisongo dalam berdakwah dengan menggunakan tembang, kesenian Wayang Kulit, sosialisasi istilah-istilah kunci, dan sebagainya. Dalam bidang akidah antara lain melalui tahlilan, istighasah, haul akbar, dan selametan. Sedangkan dalam fiqh berbentuk imam, zakat beras, Halal Bihalal, pencatatan nikah, buku nikah, dan pembacaan ta’liq talaq. Dalam nasionalisme, Islam Nusantara berhasil mensenyawakan Islam dengan nasionalisme sehingga keduanya harmonis; dan berhasil mempertemukan tradisi dengan modernisasi melalui slogan al-muhafadzah ‘ala al-qaddim al-salih wa al-akhdz bi al-jadîd al-aşlab (menjaga tradisi lama yang baik dan mengambil tradisi baru yang lebih baik.)

**Keyword:** *Islam Nusantara, Moderate, Culture, Tradition, Cultural Approach*

**Introduction**

When the concept of Islam Nusantara was written by Azyumardi Azra (2002) and Nor Huda (2007), there was no reaction from the Muslim community. Maybe they see the term Islam Nusantara in both books purely academic studies in which Azra only looked from the perspective of his network, while Huda from the perspective of his Islamic intellectual social history. Then, when the main theme of the 33rd NU Congress (*Muktamar*) in Jombang East Java was held on August 1-5 2015, the term Islam Nusantara became popular and caused a very

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1 Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara Jaringan Global dan Lokal* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002).
2 Nor Huda, *Islam Nusantara: Sejarah Sosial Intelektual Islam di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2007).

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sharp controversy in Indonesian Islamic intellectual. It seems that the opponents of the term Islam Nusantara looked at the implications of the term from a theological perspective. Islam Nusantara is regarded as a deviant Islam. Here it needs to be explained adequately about the use of the term Islam Nusantara for the initiators and their supporters, so that there is no misunderstanding in the form of excessive reactions to view as an error. Even though their intention was to use the term Islam Nusantara was very noble. Meanwhile, as a concept that was only introduced to the Indonesian and international public, it is only natural that there are slight differences of opinion among the initiators and/or their own supporters. Therefore, the author needs to start this explanation from the introduction of the identity of Islam Nusantara.

The Identity of Islam Nusantara

There are some of the Indonesian Islamic intellectuals who have introduced the identity of Islam Nusantara, as the first step in helping to facilitate the understanding of the essence and substance of the Islam Nusantara to Muslim communities themselves and have an impact on non-Muslim communities both domestic and overseas. They are trying to understand the public about Islam Nusantara from their own perspective based on their knowledge, observations and experiences. These Islamic intellectuals include Ahmad Baso. The Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) young intellectual is known as a productive author. He stated that Islam Nusantara is not Islam as rival, new religion, peripheral religion, “local Islam” adopted by the Muslim Nusantara, as well as historical Islam that is connoted as anti-Islam, which is contrary to normative Islam.3

Similar to Baso, Said Aqil Siradj explained that Islam Nusantara was not a stream, sect or mazhab, but was a khashaish wa mazayat, the type and character of Islam embraced by Nusantara society, namely Islam that was friendly, polite and moderate. This kind of Islam is built

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3 Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara Ijtihad Genius & Ijma Ulama Islam Nusantara* (Jakarta: Pustaka Afid, 2015), p. 116-117.
on culture.\(^4\) Whereas Baso explained that Islam Nusantara was a mazhab of thought carried out by the ulama (cleric) Nusantara in practicing and translating Islam into Nusantara languages to provide normative religious interpretations into the teachings or theorems of Islam itself.\(^5\)

Both intellectuals have differences in incorporating Islam Nusantara as a category of mazhab. Siradj views that Islam Nusantara is not a mazhab, whereas Baso precisely categorizes it as a mazhab of thought. Actually the two opinions that are at a glance at odds are reviewed from a certain perspective that can be reconciled, and even have mutual implications. Siradj declares Islam Nusantara as a type or character, not a mazhab of thought. But when the type and character of Islam is followed by a number of Muslims in a sustainable manner and the character is clear, namely Walisongo, then his position can rise to become a school of thought. On the contrary, the mazhab of thought which was stated by Baso when accompanied by certain specialties will always result on the type or character of Islam, which distinguishes it from the type and character of other Islam. While in terms of coverage, the meanings of the mazhab which are meant by Siradj are the mazhab of belief, fiqh or tasawuf, while the mazhab that Baso refers to are mazhab of thought that are much more lax.

In other hand, M. Imdadun Rahmat—member of the National Commission of Human Rights (2012-2017) and Deputy of The General Secretary of PBNU (2010-2015)—stated that Islam Nusantara is an understanding and practice of Islam in the Nusantara as a result of dialectics between Shari’ah texts and local cultural realities. \textit{Manhaj} Islam Nusantara was built and implemented by Walisongo and was followed by the ulama Ahlussunnah in this country in the following period.\(^6\) Even

\(^4\) Said Aqil Siradj, “Pengantar”, M. Imdadun Rahmat, \textit{Islam Nusantara Islam Indonesia Ijtihad Kemaslahatan Bangsa} (Yogyakarta & Jakarta: LKiS cooperate with SAS, 2018), p. 1.

\(^5\) Ahmad Baso, \textit{Islam Nusantara}, p. 21.

\(^6\) M. Imdadun Rahmat, \textit{Islam Nusantara Islam Indonesia Ijtihad Kemaslahatan Bangsa} (Yogyakarta & Jakarta: LKiS Cooperate with SAS, 2018), p. 20.
the followers of *manhāj* Islam Nusantara are the largest population compared to other Islamic groups in Indonesia, so that the followers are mainstream Islam in this Nusantara, so that it is worthy of representing the Indonesian Muslim population.

Asep Salahudin—the lecturer of IAILM Suryalaya Tasikmalaya—views that Islam Nusantara is from a religio cultural political side. He explained that Islam as a religious identity, while Nusantara as a political cultural expression. Being Muslim must not be uprooted from the cultural roots and the country, even the stronger the appreciation, because the world of thought and the inner realm is able to dialogue both of them. Humanity and nationality become congruent; Islam and Indonesianness become one breath.\(^7\) Therefore, Islam and Indonesia are not suitable to be confronted, contradicted or differed.

Islam Nusantara is like a meeting of two superior tree seedlings of different types. In the process of acculturation will give birth to a new seed that is superior. Acculturation Islam and Nusantara to get superior types through the character and superior qualities expected. The acculturation is expected to show new ways of religion and civilization through new superior traits due to the combined results of these two advantages. This new genius is called Islam Nusantara. The second meeting was to provide a solution to our national problems as a nation tied to the archipelago’s sea and land unity.\(^8\)

Based on the explanation, in another expression it can be affirmed that Islam Nusantara is an approach to Islam both in preaching Islam, thinking about it, understanding it and practicing it. Different with Islam in the Middle East use a *akidah* and political approach so that it often verdicts other people do *bid’ah* and heresy when facing differences, Islam Nusantara uses a cultural approach so that it is flexible in dealing with differences. To find out the cultural approach used by Islam Nusantara

\(^7\) Asep Salahudin, *Sufisme Sunda Hubungan Islam dan Budaya dalam Masyarakat Sunda* (Bandung: Nuansa, 2017), p. 250.

\(^8\) Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara…*, p. 16.
this characteristic can be considered.

**The Characteristics of Islam Nusantara**

Islam Nusantara has certain characteristics which can be identified and to a certain extent it is different from other regional Islam. According to the Regional Management Team of Bahtsul Masail NU, East Java, there are five characteristics of Islam Nusantara, namely reform (islabiyyah), balanced in all fields (tawazuniyyah), voluntary (tathawuniyyah), polite (akhalqiyyah), and tolerant, respect towards other parties (tasamulb). Lukman Hakim Saifuddin—Minister of Religious Affairs of Indonesia—added that Islam Nusantara emphasizes moderate teaching principles (wasathiyyah), inclusive, tolerant and mutual respect, does not claim only their own religion which is true, and Bhineka Tunggal Ika (unity in diversity). Zainul Milal Bizawie—the activist of Islam Nusantara Center (INC) Jakarta and the author of the books about Islam Nusantara—stated that Islam Nusantara is Islam that is friendly, open, inclusive and able to provide solutions to major problems of the nation and the state. Islam is dynamic and friendly with diverse cultures, subcultures and religions. Whereas Abdullah Ubaid concluded that the spirit of the Islam Nusantara was tasamub, tawasuth, tawazun and i’tidal. But according to Rahmat, the most prominent characteristic was wasathiyah. It seems that this characteristic of wasathiyah has an impact or influence on other attitudes, such as being balanced, voluntary, polite, tolerant, respecting others, united in diversity, friendly, inclusive, tasamub, tawazun, and i’tidal.

In the Indonesian context, there are five moderations, namely moderation.

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9 Ma’ruf Amin, “Khittah Islam Nusantara”, Team PW LBM NU East Java, *Islam Nusantara Manhaj Dakwah Islam Azwaja di Nusantara*, Ahmad Muntaha AM (ed.) (t.t.p.: PW LTN NU East Java & PW LBM NU East Java & State University of Malang, 2018), p. vi.

10 Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, “Pengantar: Islam Nusantara dan Pembentukan Karakter Bangsa”, Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara Sanad dan Fajar Adi Ulama-Santri (1830-1945)* (Tangerang: Pustaka Kompas, 2016), p. iii.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

12 M. Imdadun Rahmat, *Islam Nusantara…*, p. 22.

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in faith (*kalam*), moderation of *fiqh*, moderation of *Sufism*, political moderation, and cultural moderation.

Another characteristic of Islam Nusantara is the attitude of accommodating the elements of local culture and elements of progress originating from other cultures. M. Imdadun Rahmat explained the characteristics of the Islam Nusantara are: *first*, Islam Nusantara is the manifestation of the results of understanding and attitude towards religious texts for the Indonesian context. *Second*, local culture is positioned to enrich religious expression, not as a threat to religious purity. *Third*, the changing times, progress, technological discoveries, new ideas, new thinking and modernity are *sunnatullah* which must be addressed positively. *Fourth*, towards politics, Islam must be a political force because the foundation of Indonesian Islam is a cultural movement.

The characteristics of Islam as explained by M. Imdadun Rahmat show that Islam is not just a ride present in this region, but has become an intrinsic part, so it is not excessive if it is said that this model of Islam is Islam Nusantara. The experience of interacting with religion, culture, social structure and the local political system has resulted a distinctive style of Indonesian Islam that is not only different from Islam in Arab or the Middle East, but also different from Islam in other parts of the world. In the Nusantara there are traditions and cultures in the system of implementing religious teachings, so that it becomes a characteristic of the Islam Nusantara which is not owned and does not exist in other countries. This difference is very visible and can be seen in real terms in several ways. *First*, in the implementation of Islam practice, there are the traditions such as *Halal-bihalal*, *Haul*, *silaturrahim* every Eid Mubarak, *Kupatan*, reading *Shalawat* with *Terbangan*, *Slametan* for 7 days, 40 days,

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13 *Ibid.*, p. 142.
14 *Ibid.*, p. 144-145.
15 Abd A'la, *Ijtihad Islam Nusantara Refleksi Pemikiran dan Kontekstualisasi Ajaran Islam di Era Globalisasi & Liberalisasi Informasi* (Surabaya: PW LTN NU East Java & Muara Progresif, 2018), p. 9.
16 M. Imdadun Rahmat, *Islam Nusantara…*, p. 1.
100 days and 1000 days; Tingkepan, Sepasaran; bridal event series covers Undang Mantu, Ngunduh Mantu followed by Walimat al-‘urs. Second, in the field of education there are Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) with all their peculiarities, such as Arabic pegon, and Javanese meanings “ntawi iki iku”. Third, in dressing someone wears a sarung, kopyah, the traditional clothing of Betawi, Java, Papua, Bali, Madura etc. Fourth, in the matter of tolerance to practice the teachings of Islam, there are those who pray tarawih 20 raka’at, and there are 8 raka’at; there are those who pray in the mosque, prayer room and field. Fifth, in the matter of tolerance to culture, some regions are prohibited from slaughtering cattle such as in Kudus, Central Java, said to be a form of tolerance of Sunan Kudus to the teachings of Hinduism; the use of Janur as a part of traditional wedding ceremony, and Kembar Mayang. Sixth, in matters of tolerance to other religions, there are national holidays because of Islamic holidays, Christian holidays, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and there are other religious memorial holidays.17

Other cultures and traditions that have not been mentioned are the reminder of the Prophet Muhammad is reading of Diba’, Barzanji, Burdah, Tahlilan, Manakib, Istighasah, reminder of Isra’ Mi’raj of the Prophet Muhammad, and nuzul Qur’an, Slametan before and the end of Ramadhan month, nyadran before and the end of Ramadhan, tadarrus Qur’an using speaker, and takbir around the night of Eid Mubarak.

Thus, how big the role of local Indonesian culture and traditions in practicing the teachings of Islam in Indonesia. Many practices of Islamic teachings are displayed through the packaging of local culture and tradition, so that hard-line Islamists see it as a bid’ah and get lost. Whereas according to moderate Muslims, the packaging of local culture and traditions is an extraordinary form of creation.

17 Team of PW LBM NU East Java, Islam Nusantara Manhaj Dakwah Aswaja di Nusantara (t.t.p.: PW LTN NU East Java & PW LBM NU East Java & State University of Malang, 2018), p. 1-2.
The Role of Culture and Local Tradition in Islam Nusantara

The practice Islam Nusantara appreciates the traditions and culture that have lasted a long time in the community. Tradition or culture in usbul al-fiqh is called ‘urf or adat is treated as long as it does not deviate from the values of Islamic teachings.\(^{18}\) There is even a rule: al-‘adah mubkama\(^{19}\) (good customs/al-‘urf al-shalih can be determined as law). This rule is based on the hadith: *Ma ra’ahu al-Muslimuna hasanan fahuwa ‘inda Allah hasanun* (What is considered good by Muslims, then according to Allah is also good. [HR. Ahmad from Ibnu Mas’ud].) This proves that Islam highly respects healthy (good) culture and traditions. Even Islam has established a good tradition among the Jahiliyah community, namely the tradition of respecting guests. The Prophet said: *Man kana yukminu billahi wa al-yaumi al-akhiri falyukrim dhaifahu* (Whoever believes in Allah and the last day should respect his guest).

The appreciation of Islam in the culture of the Nusantara causes Islam to be able to dialogue positively with its surrounding conditions. In every place in Indonesia, there are always majority and minority religions but they remain peaceful, united, tolerant and respectful as brothers and sisters of one nation because Islam that developed in this archipelago is a cultured, civilized, tolerant, peaceful Islam, whose principles are solidarity with fellow Muslims (*ukhuwwah Islamiyyah*), fellow Indonesians (*ukhuwwah wathaniyyah*), and fellow mans (*ukhuwwah insaniyyah*). The principle of life that is mutually respectful and brotherly is one of the Islam Nusantara foundations, anti-coercion, non-violence and anti-terrorism.\(^{20}\)

Islam Nusantara is a reference for *ulama* to know Islamic religious laws related to the actions and sayings of Indonesian.\(^{21}\) Then there are additional legal decisions or different legal decisions produced by the

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\(^{18}\) Ma’ruf Amin, “Khittah Islam...”, p. v.

\(^{19}\) Al-Imam Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman Ibn Abi Bakr al-Suyuthi, *al-Azyhabu wa al-Nadhair fi al-Furu’* (t.t.p: Syirkah al-Nur Asia, t.t.), p. 63.

\(^{20}\) Said Aqil Siradj, “Pengantar...,” p. iii.

\(^{21}\) Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara...*, p. 121.
ulama of the Nusantara, when compared to the decisions of Islamic law determined by the previous ulama from Arab contained in the classical books. This difference occurs because there are differences in the culture and traditions of Indonesian compared to Arab or Middle Eastern communities.

Choirul Fuad Yusuf and Tawalinuddin Haris argue that the coming of Islam peacefully affected the acculturation of culture between local culture and Islam. The attitude of mutual absorption between the two fosters a new culture both physically and non-physically. Then the culture became the characteristic of the culture of the Indonesian Islamic community.22

The local culture is actually the oxygen of the Islam Nusantara (Indonesianness Islam, indigenous of Islam, or whatever).23 Then the local culture influences the appearance of Islam Nusantara which in partial matters must not and should not be equated with Islam from the Arab region, Islam from the Middle East region, or Islam from other regions, except for the principal and substantive issues. Shortly, good local culture and traditions (al-‘urf al-shalih) are often taken into consideration in establishing Islamic law.

Nevertheless, there is still a filter for that culture. Not all cultures are accepted by Indonesian Muslims. Machasin stated that the attitude of Islam in dealing with local culture and traditions can be divided into three: first, receiving and developing a culture that is in accordance with Islamic principles and useful for the glorification of human life. Second, refusing traditions and cultural elements that are contrary to Islamic principles, and third just leaving it like how to dress.24 Rejection of local culture was experienced by Sunan Bonang. Muhammad Irfan Riyadi reported that

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22 Choirul Fuad Yusuf & Tawalinuddin Haris (eds.), *Insksripsi Islam Nusantara Jawa dan Sumatera* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang & Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2014), p. 1.
23 Asep Salahuddin, *Sufisme Sunda*…, p. 251.
24 Machasin, *Islam Dinamis Islam Harmonis Lokalitas, Pluralisme* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2011), p. 187.
Sunan Bonang criticized and abolished culture and traditions that were contrary to Islamic teachings, especially those related to *akidah* and *tasawuf*. The attitude of Sunan Bonang seeks to rectify and save Javanese Muslims. There are twelve themes which are almost all related to the *tauhid*, and two things related to *Sufism*.25

**Cultural Approach in Practicing Islam**

There are various practices of Islamic teachings carried out by the *ulama* Nusantara using cultural approaches both related to *dakwah*, *akidah*, *fiqh*, the relationship of Islam to nationalism, and the relation of tradition to modernization. The actions of the *ulama* Nusantara related to these fields always express cultural nuances once, so they cause misunderstandings and misperceptions for certain Islamic circles. The use of cultural approaches in these fields is as below:

**Cultural Approach in Dakwah**

The understanding, practice, and methods of the *ulama* of the Nusantara have given a positive impression, namely Islam which appears with a bright but not arrogant, tolerant but not fickle, and peaceful.26 This positive impression grew naturally based on the community’s testimony of the progress of Muslim preachers in this Nusantara, who never forced their will, moreover use violence. Their attitude is very friendly to the people of the Nusantara and is very flexible in facing the culture and traditions, so that the people of the Nusantara respond to the *dai* in a friendly manner by giving them access to give the color of Islam to the local culture and tradition.

In preaching, Walisongo use *Ilir-Ilir* songs. This song actually contains a message of encouragement to *mu’alaf* to always carry out the five pillars of Islam in any condition and face any formidable challenges. So in the song, the term *penganten anyar* is used to symbolize new life in

25 Muhammad Irfan Riyadi, *Fatwa Sunan Bonang Membedah Otentisitas Ajaran tasawuf Walisanga dalam Suluk Syeh Bari* (Ponorogo: STAIN Po Press, 2015), p.187-191.
26 Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara*... , p. xvii.
Islam, *cab angon* symbolizes *mu’alaf,* starfruit tree symbolizes five pillars of Islam, *lunyu-lunyu yo penekno* symbolizes the determination to go through Islam despite facing any challenges.²⁷

In addition, Walisongo socializes key terms in Islam such as *Jamus Kalimosodho* (*syahadat*), *Sekaten Gong* (*syahadatain,* namely two *syahadat: syahadat taubid and syahadat rasul*). Even Walisongo make *Wayang Kulit* by adopting stories in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* book from India, by replacing things which are *syirik* by *taubid.* Then perform the puppet that can be witnessed by Hindus, Buddhists, Animists, Dynamic and followers of other beliefs. They are free from paying tickets, except replacing them by saying *syahadat* which is guided by a special officer. Even the Walisongo added puppet plays by displaying the figures Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong. Actually these name is the language of *dakwah* from *samir nala khairin, fatruk ma bagba* *(do something good that is obtained, and leave things that are in vain). Samir* is Semar, *khairin* is Gareng, *fatruk* is Petruk, while *bagba* is Bagong. This is actually *al-amru bi al-ma’ruf wa al-nahyu ‘an al-munkar.*²⁸

At first the *gamelan* was used by the Javanese to offer *kidung* aimed to the gods of Hindu-Buddhism. Then the *Gamelan* was diverted by Sunan Kalijaga to be used as a prayer to the Prophet, so that tradition named *Sekaten (Mauludan)* emerged which still exists today.²⁹ Sunan Kalijaga believes that if Islam has been understood, old habits will surely disappear, then the teachings of Sunan Kalijaga seem syncretic in introducing Islam. He uses carving, *Wayang, Gamelan,* and *suluk* as a means of *dakwah.* He is the creator of the *akwa* clothes, *Sekatenan, Grebeg Maulud, Layang Kalimasada,* and story of Petruk becomes king. Beside, the downtown landscape in the form of Kraton, *alun-alun* with two banyan trees and a mosque, is believed to be the work of Sunan Kalijaga.³⁰ These

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²⁷ Mujamil Qomar, *Fajar Bern Islam Indonesia? Kajian Komprehensif atas Arab Sejarah dan Dinamika Intelektual Islam Nusantara* (Bandung: Mizan, 2012), p. 35.
²⁸ Ibid.
²⁹ Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara...*, p. 115.
³⁰ Ibid., p. xx.
works are symbols that contain the mission of Islamic \textit{dakwah} culturally in fostering community sympathy for Islam.

The creative and effective method of \textit{dakwah} has made many people of the Nusantara sympathize and then decided to convert to Islam. Even most of the Adipati in Java embraced Islam by means of Sunan Kalijaga, among Adipati of Pandanaran, Kartasura, Kebumen, Banyumas, Pajang, Kotagede-Yogyakarta, and the last king of Majapahit, Prabu Brawijaya V.\textsuperscript{31} Therefore, Indonesia and especially Java once inhabited 90\% of Muslims. This is an extraordinary success and cannot be matched by the achievements of the next generation of \textit{dakwah} in Indonesia, both individuals, groups and organizations, even though they are in the same position as NU and Muhammadiyah.

The success of Walisongo’s \textit{dakwah} is even more convincing when we make comparisons before and after their \textit{dakwah} period. Before and when Walisongo entered Java, at that time there were two major religions namely Hinduism and Buddhism. With the success of Walisongo’s \textit{dakwah}, Islam was able to shift the position of the two major religions that were originally established to become a minority. Ahmad Syafii Maarif admitted, “Indeed Islamic victory is very phenomenal, two major religions who have traced centuries in the Nusantara were eliminated in such a way, except Hinduism in Bali which still survives.”\textsuperscript{32} Then the Dutch colonized Indonesia with a mission to spread Christianity (\textit{zending}), but they were not able to replace the position of Islam. Compare that with Piliphina, which is originally a Muslim majority, but after being colonized by Spain, its Muslim population became a minority in Mindanao. Likewise, when the Spanish Islamic rulers were defeated, then Muslims by King Ferdinand and Isabella were faced with two choices: remain in Spain by moving to Christianity or remaining Muslim but having to leave Spain. Because of

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid.}, p. xv; M. Hariwijaya, \textit{Islam Kejawen} (Yogyakarta: Gelombang Pasang, 2006), p. 206.

\textsuperscript{32} Ahmad Syafii Maarif, \textit{Islam dalam Bingkai Keindonesiaan dan Kemanusiaan Sebuah Refleksi Sejarah} (Bandung: Mizan & Maarif Institute, 2009), p. 62.
this pressure now Muslims in Spain live in a minority.

Therefore, the substance of the Walisongo *dakwah* method needs to be preserved by adjusting it to the needs of today’s society. The East Java PW LBM NU asserted that in principle the Nusantara Islamic *dakwah* method is same with the Walisongo *dakwah* method, although the strategy needs to be developed according to the challenges of the times by adhering to the rules of *syariah*.

The method in detail can be taken in several ways. *First*, preaching by *ḥikmah*, *muadzah ḥasanah*, and having a dialogue with politeness. *Second*, tolerant to local culture that does not conflict with religion. *Third*, exemplify through *al-akblaq al-karimah*. *Fourth*, prioritize *maṣlabah ʿammbah* (general benefit) than *maṣlabah kbaṣsbbah* (special benefit). *Fifth*, have principle *irtikaf ʿakbbaff al-dararain* (take the smallest risk). *Sixth*, have principle *dar al-mafasid muqaddam ʿala jalbi al-maṣālib* (rejecting damage prior to producing benefits).33

The cultural approach to *dakwah* carried out by Walisongo is now widely followed by NU. They are very familiar with local traditions and culture as media and objects of *dakwah*. But lately, Muhammadiyah began to be interested in using a cultural approach to *dakwah*. Maarif emphasized that Muhammadiyah increasingly considered the cultural dimension in carrying out its *dakwah* so that it became more flexible without losing its main principles and mission.34 The theme of Muhammadiyah and local culture is aimed to finding models of *dakwah* that are appropriate for diverse communities.35 Thus, this cultural approach to *dakwah* erodes the differences between NU and Muhammadiyah. The hope, these two organizations can complement each other in strengthening Islam Nusantara.

33 PW LBM NU Jawa Timur, *Islam Nusantara...*, p. 24-25.
34 Ahmad Syafl Maarif, *Islam dalam Bingkai...*, p. 62.
35 Mohamad Ali, *Islam Muda Liberal, Post-Puritan, Post-Tradisional* (Yogyakarta: Apeiron Philotes, 2006), p. 111.
Cultural Approach in Akidah

Ulama Nusantara pioneered activities related to akidah. The activity involved many insiders, such as Tabililan, Istighasah, Haul Akbar, or Slametan against someone’s death. All of these activities are related to the akidah that is implemented through a cultural approach.

Among those four activities, tabililan is a popular activity in Indonesian society. Tabililan is the activity of reading kalimat thayyibah lailaha illallah (there is no God that must be worshiped except Allah). This activity is very lively in the community, even in certain areas followed by followers of other religions. Moreover, sometimes accompanied by arisan, as an activity that is very favored by the community, while preserving the culture of gathering with fellow neighbors. In general, the Tabililan is held on Friday night routinely every week, but there are also those who carry out the other night.

Then istighasah is a zikir activity which aims to ask for help from Allah SWT. This activity generally also involves many people such as tabililan, but it is generally done incidentally along with the problems faced by the community. Whereas Haul is an annual ceremony for someone’s death filled with Tabililan, Pengajian, khataman Qur’an activities and so on. The Slametan is also related to someone’s death so that the deceased family gets forgiveness from Allah SWT. Baso stated that Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani had written a book of fiqh entitled Nihayat al-Zain which taught traditions 7 days, 40 days, 100 days after death to his students in Makkah.36

In addition, the grave pilgrimage activities were mainly pilgrimages to the graves of their parents and pilgrimage to Walisongo’s grave. This pilgrimage is filled with praying activities that are presented to the arwah of the people who are in the grave. Ulama Nusantara has moved this activity so that among traditional Muslims it has become very entrenched, even by the local government as religious tourism.

36 Ahmad Baso, Islam Nusantara…, p. 58 & 104.
Mujamil Qomar: Islam Nusantara..................

Cultural Approach in Fiqh

Actually, the manhaj of the Islam Nusantara was built and implemented by Walisongo, then followed by ulama of Ahlussunnah in the next period.\(^{37}\) Ijtihad ta’liq thalaq (pronounced the bridegroom after ijab qabul), for example is a result of ijtihad Sunan Giri, to strengthen women’s position in marriage, and guarantee achievement of bijzul-nasal (maintain and preserve offspring) as one of the forms of magashid al-syari’at.\(^{38}\) Only recently, ijtihad Islam Nusantara has been the subject of discussion among world ulama since the mid 20\(^{th}\) century.\(^{39}\) They consider the results of ijtihad Sunan Giri as ulama Nusantara to be implemented in their respective countries.

In the teaching process emerges ijtihad which are characteristic from those ulama. For example about Imsak, Halal Bihalal, ta’liq thalaq, and \(\text{\v{z}akat}\). This ijtihad doesn’t be found in classic fiqh literature or other Islam literatures, but saying (qawl) and their perspective are cited from other people.\(^{40}\) Many breakthroughs in Islamic law reform carried out by KHI, including the tightening of polygamy permits, the legitimacy of divorce only in the court hearings, the existence of property, the existence of marriage agreements, and restrictions on the age of marriage.\(^{41}\) Likewise, restrictions on the age of marriage, examination of prospective brides by the KUA, marriage registration, and procurement of marriage books. All of this is the creation of Indonesian fiqh ulama.

Imsak, for example, in classical fiqh it was not found because of the consideration of giving a warning to the Muslim community who are sabur (pre dawn meal) so that it does not run out of time until Subuh. Beside, Halal Bihalal is done by ulama Nusantara with consideration of

\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. xvi.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 125.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., p. ix.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p. 58 & 115.

\(^{41}\) Said Aqil Siradj, “Kata Pengantar Ketua Umum Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama”, Marzuki Wahid, Fiqh Indonesia Kompilasi Hukum dalam Bingkai Politik Hukum Indonesia (Cirebon: Institut Studi Islam Fahmina, 2014), p. xvi.
taking advantage of the opportunity of the Muslim who have been *mudik* (forth to their hometowns when Eid Mubarak). As long as meet brothers, friends and colleagues who are far away, there is an activity of mutual forgiveness called *Halal Bihalal*. Furthermore, at the time of performing *zakat fitrah*, the *ulama* Nusantara decided to use rice even though it was not mentioned in classical *fiqh* from Arab. The policy of *ulama* Nusantara was based on the culture of the Indonesian who ate rice, in addition to the consideration of looking for wheat was very difficult.

The *pesantren* communities have emphasized the aspects of the approach of ushul al-fiqh and qawaid al-fiqh in seeing the more maslahat. Discourse about mashlahah, maqashid, social ethics or al-ushul al-khams (five principles of Islamic law) emerged because of the science of the santri which was more inclined to the contextual approach (*dhurufi-maş lahı*).\(^{42}\) Islam Nusantara is a continuous process in finding the form and manhaj of thinking and acting in Islam which always contextualizes in the dynamization of history.\(^{43}\) Therefore, it leads to the continuity of the nation’s memory and the maintenance of the resources of this nation, the Islam Nusantara becomes a tool, an effective mechanism, and the only means to develop the nation’s strengths and potential resources in the future, which will be expressed in various knowledge disciplines economic, social, cultural and political institutions.\(^{44}\)

The doctrine of Islam in the style of the *ulama* Islam Nusantara create spaces of dialogue and negotiation which culminate in a mutual agreement to assimilate and accept each other in a generous manner.\(^{45}\) Islam Nusantara is the result of the collective *ijma* and *ijtihad* of the *ulama* Nusantara in performing *istinbath* against practical religious laws which are processed from their detailed arguments, as well as the arguments of

\(^{42}\) Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara…*, p. 113.
\(^{43}\) Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam…*, p. 11.
\(^{44}\) Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara…*, p. 67.
\(^{45}\) Abdullah Ubaid, “Pengantar Editor…”, p. Xi.
This *ijma* and *ijtihad* always consider local culture that has been rooted for centuries in Nusantara society.

The movement of strengthening local wisdom that expresses the messages and Islamic values is called the indigenization of Islam. Rahmat stated that the Islam Nusantara which had undergone this indigenous process saw that Islam could not be interpreted and implemented in a single way. Islam that has become a mainstream in this Nusantara accepts the fact that the *mazhab* is more than one in both *kalam* and *fiqh*. So the readiness to tolerate and respect different opinions is a necessity. Syaiful Arif said that the indigenization of Islam is a process of manifesting Islamic values through the path of local culture. Now the indigenous of Islam is a methodology for the formulation of the Islam Nusantara. Then the concept of indigenous of Islam initiated by Gus Dur became a stimulation in formulating the building concept of the Islam Nusantara.

**Cultural Approach in Unifying Islam and Nationalism**

In other hand, the *ulama* Nusantara had succeeded in uniting Islam and nationalism. Salahudin stated that nationalism with Islam was never confronted, but rather compounded. One of the contents of the *jihad* resolution formulated by Hasyim Asy’ari confirms that defending the NKRI is part of *jihad fi sabilillah* and dying on the battlefield its status is the same as *sahid*. Indonesian nationalism within the framework of Kiai Hasyim is irradiated and filled with nationalism, not American secular nationalism which relinquishes religion, especially French Laicism which tends to be hostile to religion. Islam and nationalism are still *vis a vis* in the Middle East to the present. Because the nationalism is secular in the

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46 Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara*..., p. 121.
47 M. Imdadun Rahmat, *Islam Nusantara*..., p. 141.
48 Syaiful Arif, “NU dan Islam Nusantara”, Abdullah Ubaid & Mohammad Bakir (eds.), *Nasionalisme dan Islam Nusantara* (Jakarta: PT. Kompas Media Nusantara, 2015), p. 60.
49 *Ibid*.
50 Asep Salahudin, *Sufisme Sunda*..., p. 238.
51 Said Agil Siradj, “Pengantar”..., p. vi.
style of Arab socialism, while Islam is also strict in the style of Ikhwanul Muslimin. Both of these indeed cannot be met because both have opposing characters and are difficult to integrate, even though they have been explained by al-Tahtawi and Muhammad Abduh, both of whom are Islamic reformers from Egypt. According to Abduh, the state must be loved for three things: first, a place to live where there is food for the citizens and the whole family; second, as a place of rights and obligations; and third, as a place of self-reliance so that it can be noble, colonized or despicable.

Efforts to combine two or more things are actually commonly carried out by certain ulama. The integration has been given examples by the ulama before Abduh’s presence, especially by the founding ulama of the mazhab of kalam, fiqh and tasawuf. Likewise Walisongo on Java has also given examples of integration. Finally this integration was also carried out by Hasyim Asy’ari in underlying the relationship between Islam and nationalism.

Imam Syafi’i combines the Qur’an, hadith, and reason; Imam Asy’ari combines the Qur’an, hadith, and reason; Imam Ghazali combines essence, shari’a, and morality; Walisongo combines tradition, and religion; while Hasyim Asy’ari combines religion, and nationalism in the sense of national politics. This is the foundation of the Islam Nusantara, and becomes a model that is very easy to imitate in the daily activity of Indonesian context.

Cultural Approach in Tradition and Modernization Meeting Point

Islam Nusantara has managed to find common ground with the reality of modernity where Islam can find its compatibility with the ideas of equality, popular sovereignty, pluralism and human rights. Islam Nusantara views Islam, local culture, modernity in a position to give and receive, but based on Islamic values, resulting in a form of Islam

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52 Ibid.
53 M. Imdadun Rahmat, Islam Nusantara..., p. xiii.
with certain characteristics, and in Indonesia with Indonesian character.\textsuperscript{54} The harmonious relationship of tradition or culture with modernization is based on the \textit{manhaji} argument, which is known among pesantren, in dialectical relations between the way our own understanding of Islamic teachings. This relationship is formulated into one \textit{manhaji} principle, namely \textit{al-muhafadhah ‘ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlab} (nurturing the good old, and taking the new one better).\textsuperscript{55}

The rules of \textit{manhaji} serve as a guideline for Indonesian Muslims and other Muslims to relate and synergize between tradition and modernization, as two social phenomena which Western scientists believe are impossible to mate. Then the rules of the results of the \textit{ijtihad} of \textit{ulama} Nusantara have invalidated Western social theory, including those formulated by Huston Smith, that the world is increasingly modern, tradition and religion will automatically be eliminated.

The theory was successful in describing Christian life in the West. But it failed to describe the lives of Muslims both in the West and in the East. The fact is in the Islamic world: the world is becoming more modern, fanatical Muslims in Islam are increasingly fertile and people who convert to Islam are even more numerous; the cities of clothing design centers are increasingly aggressively promoting new clothing models, among Muslims there are more and more people who tend to wear Muslim clothing; when the West promoted new medicines, in Muslim circles there were more and more people who applied the Prophet-style treatment; and when the West aggressively socializes the new sciences, Muslims alike are eager to explore the sciences of the Qur’an.

The harmonious relationship between tradition and modernization has actually been developed by Japan and has succeeded in becoming the king of electro technology in this world. On the contrary Mustafa Kemal and his followers tried to get rid of the Islamic tradition in Turkey and

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 144.
\textsuperscript{55} Ahmad Baso, \textit{Islam Nusantara}…, p. 103.
only concentrated on modernization, as happened in the West, it turned out that Kemal failed to realize the progress of imitating the West. On the contrary now, Turkey under the leadership of Reccep Tayyib Erdogan began to restore tradition and it turned out that Turkey was able to advance rapidly to become a super power in the Middle East and worthy of being compared with America, Rusia and China.

Socialization of Islam Nusantara to the International World

As is the case for several centuries now, Islam Nusantara has reflected the expression of thought, understanding, movement and practice of Islamic teachings in a moderate, tolerant, friendly and harmonious manner that is able to live side by side with people and communities from various backgrounds behind religion, ethnicity, ethnicity, culture, and language. The description of the life of this Islamic religion is soothing and seeks to realize the function of the message of Muhammad, namely as a blessing for the universe (rahmatan lil’ alamin). This fact is contrast to the expression of Islam in the Middle East which always shows a fierce face, and Islam Nusantara is able to reverse the negative stigma that Islam really loves peace, harmony and affection.

Islam Nusantara in the viewpoint of world government is an example and role model for Islam in other places. Arab countries feel the need to learn from Indonesia about how to manage differences between religions as well as differences between Islamic mazhab and internal sects themselves. They also want to follow the example of ulama Nusantara in developing constructive dialogue between Islam and culture on the one hand and with modernity on the other.56 This diversity is the most suitable model for Indonesia, even the methods and manhaj of Islam Nusantara are very likely to be developed in other countries.57 M. Fajar Marta stated that Islam Nusantara as a model was increasingly needed along with the development of radical understanding and acts of terrorism in the

56 M. Imdadun Rahmat, Islam Nusantara..., p. xii.
57 Abd A’la, Ijtihad Islam..., p. ii.
name of Islam as did the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Bako Haram in Nigeria. A similar statement was made by Mujamil Qomar and Masduki that the Islam Nusantara as a model of understanding Islam was increasingly awaited along with various acts of violence carried out by Muslims, both murder, hostage taking, bombing and so on in the name of Islam. This radical action was influenced by the ideology of the struggle originating specifically from the Middle East.

Middle East ulama have failed to educate the Muslim community so that their thinking, understanding and actions have the tendency to blame and mislead others both Muslim and non-Muslim. Their thinking is superficial that the truth is limited to what they understand and practice. They only accept a single interpretation of their own version. While the thoughts, understanding, faith, and practices of other Muslims outside of his group are considered to be contrary to Islam so they are hostile. This attitude inherits ways of Muslim religion, the Khawarij style which is always concentrated in search of who has become an infidel and then fought. This model of Islamic religion is diametrically opposed to the Islam Nusantara model. If they easily forgive those who have become Muslims, then on the contrary, the Islam Nusantara, especially the one pioneered by Walisongo, is trying to Islamize the unbelievers.

The Islam Nusantara which is tolerant and moderate can be a model that can change the negative views of Western countries towards Islam so far. So, the Islam Nusantara which is flexible with local culture is better introduced to the international world. Afifuddin Muhajir suggested that we should try to promote the manhaj of the Islam Nusantara to the whole world, especially to nations that are endured by a long war, namely

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58 M. Fajar Marta, “Islam Nusantara Untuk Dunia”, Abdullah Ubaid & Mohammad Bakir (eds.), Nasionalisme dan Islam Nusantara (Jakarta: PT. Kompas Media Nusantara, 2015), p. 64.

59 Mujamil Qomar & Masduki, Islam Nusantara sebuah Model Pemikiran, Pemahaman dan Pengamalan Islam di Indonesia (Tulungagung: Akademia Pustaka, 2018), p. 1.

60 Ibid., p. 63.
those who can only damage (*fasad*) but do not make repairs (*shalah*).\(^{61}\)

Indonesia must be more proactive in spreading Islam Nusantara to the international world so that its influence can be accelerated, so that it needs to strengthen the *wasathiyah* Islamic network, both at the national, regional and international levels.\(^{62}\)

Therefore, the Islam Nusantara was designed to be a model of Islam that was able to realize the mission of *rabmatan lil ‘alamin* in real and concrete ways in society, so that the Islam Nusantara was expected to be able to transform the bad image of Islam due to violence in the name of Islam from various chosen models circles from the Middle East, become a good image, full of peace and coolness as it has been applied for centuries in this Nusantara. If the Nusantara Islam is practiced it will save the image of both Islam and its practitioners from the trap of violence or radicalism and even terrorism.

The methods and strategies of Islam Nusantara should be a reference for the global Muslim community, because the existence of Indonesia as a country with a majority Muslim population throughout the history span that is traversed relatively reflects peace and prosperity compared to other Muslim countries.\(^{63}\) The methodological rule (*almuhafadhah ‘ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhzu bi al-jadid al-aslab*) is the result of *ulama* Nusantara’s *ijtihad*, which was communicated creatively among Indonesian Muslims and their networks in the Indian ocean, even to the Arab country.\(^{64}\) The rule reflects moderate attitudes both in the face of tradition and modernization. Meanwhile, tradition and modernization are often opposed by certain Islamic groups, especially fundamentalist Islamic groups. They reject the tradition because it is considered contrary to Islam, while they reject modernization because

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\(^{61}\) Afifuddin Muhajir, “Meneguhkan Islam Nusantara Untuk Peradaban Indonesia dan Dunia”, Akhmad Sahal dan Munawir Aziz (eds.), *Islam Nusantara dari Ushul Fiqh hingga Paham Kebangsaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 2015), p. 68.

\(^{62}\) M. Fajar Marta, “Islam Nusantara…”, p. 65.

\(^{63}\) Abd A’la, *Ijtihad Islam…*, p. 10.

\(^{64}\) Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara…*, p. 104.
it is believed to endanger the faith of Muslims.

The Islam Nusantara has been offered as an ideal model of Islamic practice that is peaceful and civilized to the Muslim world in a conference of global moderate Muslim leaders and intellectual, the International Summit of Moderate Islamic Leaders (ISOMIL) in May 2016. This offer received a positive response at amid the decline in the standard of living even the humanitarian crisis of Muslim nations in Arabia and the Middle East in general, due to NATO’s military invasion, Western political intervention, political instability, and especially due to conflict and civil war due to sectarianism and religious radicalization.\(^{65}\)

The positive response was a reflection of their beliefs on the facts of the field in Indonesia. Even though moderate Islam has become the main pillar of the realization of an Indonesian society that is peaceful, tolerant, friendly, harmonious and respectful of others despite their different backgrounds. Moreover, Indonesia is known as the most plural Muslim country both in terms of islands, ethnicity, ethnic origins, religion, culture, and language so that the ability to moderate Islam is a satisfying success.

**Conclusion**

Indeed, Islam Nusantara is an approach in practicing Islam by considering local culture and traditions, so that it uses a cultural approach. In the perspective of social science studies, the variation of the Islam Nusantara which is characterized by a cultural approach as a matter of reason, there is no element or motive to rival Islam at all, so it is not worthy of being suspected as a new religion. This cultural approach has been used in *dakwah* Islam, strengthen of *akidah*, implementing *fiqh*, approaching local culture, assuring nationalism, and linking tradition with modernization. It is precisely through this cultural approach that Indonesian Islam is able to integrate Islam with local culture, Islam

\(^{65}\) M. Imdadun Rahmat, *Islam Nusantara*..., p. 28.
Mujamil Qomar: *Islam Nusantara*.................

with local traditions, Islam with nationalism, Islam with modernity, and integration with other components while still adhering to Islamic teachings.
Mujamil Qomar: Islam Nusantara..................

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