



## Islamic Education and Early Islamization in Java

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### Abstract

*The introduction of Islam to Jawa was connected to the growth of Islamic education during the pre-Islamic era. Metal dealers who interacted with the local populace helped Islamize the archipelago by spreading the religion across Jawa. Early Islamic teaching occurred wherever and whenever there was interaction between muballiq merchants and the local populace, as opposed to being restricted to a certain time or location. The surau, mosque, manor mansions, and affluent dwellings come first in the schooling system before the environment.*

**Keywords:** Islamic Education, Islamization, Java

### Introduction

Islam is a religion that aims to guide people to holiness and the discovery of substantial meaning. Therefore, Islamic education can be interpreted as an effort to foster and develop the human person from physical and spiritual aspects integratively and gradually. Physical abilities and spiritual and mental intellectual maturity fostered through Islamic education are very significant, especially in anticipating the movements and dynamics of human life and history [1].

One aspect of Islam is education. Education aims to increase the skills, understanding, skills, experience and learning attitudes needed to enable humans to maintain and achieve life goals [2].

Related to the dynamics of human life and history, history holds a collection of forces that can give birth and give rise to new values for the development of human life. Similarly, the history of Islamic

education, in addition to containing the treasury of scientific developments in its time, also fosters new perspectives to find the relevance of Islamic education to all forms of change and the development of science and technology [3].

If detailed, at least two benefits can be obtained in studying the history of Islamic education, namely general ones as exemplary factors and special or academic ones in the context of Islamic education's development [3].

Talking about Islamic education in the early days of Islam in Java is very closely related to the arrival of Islam in the archipelago. Islamic education in the early days of Islam was inseparable from the process of Islamic development. Education experienced developments along with Islamization in several regions of the archipelago, particular areas visited by *muballigs* who also traded [4][5].

It should be understood that history has provided a string of information about the bearers of Islam coming to Java, as well

as information about the time Islam first came to Java and the areas first visited by merchant muballigs who always spread Islam while trading in several areas of the archipelago at that time [6][7][8].

In this context, Mahmud Yunus said that the Social History of Islamic Education in Java is as old as the entry of the religion into Indonesia [9]. This reality is caused because the adherents of Islam at that time certainly wanted to learn and understand more deeply the teachings of Islam. If they want to learn to pray and read the Qur'an, there is a learning process to teach Islam, although it is still straightforward and traditional [10].

This period began the emergence of Islamic education, where they first studied in houses, langgar/surau, and mosques and then developed into Islamic boarding schools [11]. Along with the development of the times and the increasing need for systematic education, an orderly madrasah system emerged, as can be seen, today [12].

Islamic education began with the shift of the early days of Islam, which was marked by the arrival of Islam in the archipelago. However, Islamic education in institutions at that time was still in a straightforward form by the educational culture of each region, such as a student or student visiting his teacher or a teacher making a tour visit to preach and so on. Therefore, the description of the problem that arises here is how the process of entry of Islam in Java and how the Islamic education system in the early days [5][13][14][14].

### **Method**

Systematic research procedures are required to acquire reliable data that can be relied upon. This study's methodology included a review of the literature. The literature review portion of the research strategy is more critical. The study topic-related books and articles are the data sources utilized. A literature review was

utilized as the method of data collecting, and qualitative descriptive analysis was employed as the method of data analysis in this research.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **1. The Process of the Entry of Islam into Java**

The discussion of the process of the entry of Islam in Java will provide information about two interrelated matters. *First*, information about the bearers of Islam entered Java. Literature or historical sources about Islamization in the archipelago inform that Islam came brought by Muslim Arabs who happened to be traders. Such bearers of Islam can be called merchant missionaries. They brought merchandise that supported the process of spreading Islam. It is said to be missionaries because they master religious knowledge comprehensively[1]. *Second*, the thing about the time of the entry of Islam in Java.

In subsequent developments, marital relations with the natives were established, and Islam spread while trading. But until now, there has been no written evidence of this. Many theories about it are vague or only predictable. These theories are generally associated with shipping and trade routes between the Arab World and East Asia [15].

The formation of a Muslim community in a particular place goes through a long process that begins with the formation of the Muslim person as an output of the efforts of the bearers of Islam. The Muslim community further grew the Islamic empire—recorded Islamic kingdoms in Java, such as the kingdom of Demak [16]. The power in the kingdom helped the process of Islamization in these areas.

In line with this, Uka Tcandrasasmita, as quoted by Badri Yatim, stated that there are six channels of Islamization in Java: channels of trade, marriage, Sufism, politics, education and art. Islamization through educational channels, both in pesantren

and huts, organized by religious teachers, kyai and clerics. They were provided with religious knowledge and then returned to their hometowns and conveyed religious teachings to the people in their area [17].

The explanation of the spread of Islam in Java cannot be understood only according to a particular theory. The use of several existing theories can provide a more satisfactory picture. Therefore, it can be understood that Islam was initially introduced by Muslim traders who made trade contacts with the archipelago's indigenous population.

In Javanese history, the problems of trade, the formation of kingdoms and Islamization were processes that went hand in hand and formed the primary nature of the development of Islamic history. International Muslim traders were often accompanied by wandering teachers. With the support of the rulers, merchants and teachers, the Muslim nomads acted as economic actors and preachers who introduced Islam to the local people [18].

Thus the relationship between Muslim traders and locals in Java became increasingly close. In the early days, Muslim merchants, known to be quite burdensome, influenced the process of introducing Islamic values, especially the provisions of Islamic law regarding trade that provided maximum economic benefits. The presence of Muslim merchants in Java made trading cities economic centres, ultimately supporting Islamic development activities there. Advanced trade activities allowed the implementation of Islamic teaching and the construction of Islamic educational institutions to create a vibrant religious life. The dynamics of Muslims in urban areas finally strengthened Islam's penetration into remote parts of Java [19].

Another way of spreading Islam in Java was using power. This method was essential for the expansion of Islam in Java. The religion adopted by the ruler will be

easy for the people and their supporters to follow quickly. The ruler's decision could influence other rulers to convert to Islam so that Islam developed rapidly [15]. After the establishment of the Islamic kingdom in Java, the ruler pioneered various religious activities, ranging from Islamic da'wah and the construction of mosques to the implementation of Islamic education there.

Islam entered Java peacefully, not through coercion, conquest or war. Three main factors helped accelerate the process of spreading Islam in Java, namely: *First*, Islamic teachings implement the principle of monotheism in its divine system, which is a principle that affirms the teaching to believe in God Almighty. *Secondly*, Because of the flexibility of Islamic teachings and the codification of universal values, Islam is considered a very dominant institution to deal with the expansion of Western influence through the power of the Portuguese. Then the Dutch invaded the colonizers and spread other religions [20].

This is a brief description of Islam's entry process in Java and its relation to the implementation of Islamic education. Since the beginning, the activities of spreading Islam have had a reciprocal relationship with the development of Islamic education in Java. The emergence of Islamic educational institutions contributed to the need to spread Islam in Java. Similarly, the spread of Islam naturally supported the formation of Islamic education.

## **2. Islamic Education System in the Early Islamic Period in Java**

The style of education in the early days of Islam in Java was influenced by the religion that existed at that time. In the pre-Islamic period in Java, there were kingdoms whose people predominantly adhered to Hinduism, such as the Kutai Kingdom and the Majapahit Kingdom. The style of education is in the form of *wetonan* or halaqah, and encouragement has

similarities with the system that takes place within the kingdom.

In essence, Islamic education in Java began to develop since the occurrence of trade contacts between Muslim traders and indigenous Javanese populations. The values and trade laws adopted in the international trading system at that time were Islamic values. Hence, those who could build trade relations were those who had accepted and practised Islamic commercial law.

In addition, some of them were motivated to convert to Islam because they wanted to read the Qur'an. The merchant *muballig* required that Allah be recognized as Lord and Muhammad as Prophet and Apostle of Allah [21]. Others converted to Islam through marriage, which required the prospective wife to first convert to Islam, followed by maids and other family members[21].

The picture above shows that Islamic education in Java was not limited to one particular place and time. Still, where and whenever there was contact between *muballig* traders and the indigenous population, Islamic education also took place at that time. As for educational materials on shahada, reading the Qur'an, moral values and good morals, then teaching the ways of prayer complete with its conditions and so on [3].

Religious education in the early period took place in the family environment. *Muballigs* take their time to teach religion to the owners of the houses they stay in. Adults are taught religious knowledge related to the implementation of worship, especially the procedure for praying five times a day. Teenagers are taught recitation [1]. This confirms the position of traders who carry out dual activities and are immigrants with the aim of marketing merchandise and missionaries (propagators of Islamic teachings).

But in later general developments, Islamic communities were formed in port cities in Java where Islamic *muballig* traders built mosques. Scholars and teachers began to arrive, and recitations were held in mosques or houses of scholars and teachers. These places of study later developed into the following educational systems [22]:

#### **a. Education system Mosque**

At the beginning of the development of Islam in Java, Islamic education was carried out informally, and the *muballig* carried out Islamic broadcasting anytime and anywhere at every opportunity in a way that was readily accepted by the community. They set up mosques as places of worship and perform Friday prayers in every predominantly Muslim village, and they set up mosques to recite and read the Qur'an and as a place to establish five daily prayers.

Islamic education that takes place in violation is elementary, starting with learning the letters of the Arabic alphabet (*hijaiyyah*) or sometimes directly following the teacher by imitating what has been read from the holy book of the Qur'an. Such education is administered by an officer called *'amil*, who has a double duty, that, in addition to giving prayers at family or village ceremonies, also serves as a teacher. Lessons are usually given every morning and evening for one to two hours which takes several months or even a year.

Learning activities take place in the form of *sorogan* and *halaqah*. The initial subject matter was reading the Qur'an, after which it was taught about the way of prayer and the issue of faith, better known as the nature of the twenty Gods, as well as moral lessons presented through the stories of the Prophets, pious people so that the disciples were expected to be able to emulate it well [3].

The study of the Qur'an in this violation education can be distinguished into two levels, namely; (a) the lower level, which is the beginner level, which starts with the introduction of the hijaiyah letters until they can read them which is held at each level, (2) the upper level; The lessons in addition to the above, are also supplemented by song lessons, *qasidah* and *barazanji*, tajweed and reciting the book of harmony [9].

The primary purpose of transgressive education is so that students can read the Qur'an properly and correctly, and no study has been too in-depth to understand its contents. Implementing this education does not charge a fee. It depends on the willingness of parents who may give something as a form of parental gratitude to their children's teachers who may be their teachers too, whether it is in the form of objects or money according to their respective abilities. And one of the essential characteristics in surau or *langgar* education is the relationship between teacher and student that continues even though the student has continued his studies at a higher educational institution.

Thus, it can be argued that Islamic education, which takes place in violation, is still elementary when compared to the implementation of education today. However, the spirit of conveying religious knowledge from teachers without taking into account the benefits of material aspects and the spirit of studying students without being supported by adequate learning facilities is the backbone of the spread of Islam in later times. It can develop widely along with the development of Islam, which is almost evenly distributed throughout the archipelago.

#### **b. Pesantren education system**

History has proven that the presence of the Baniumayyad empire made the rapid development of science so that the Islamic community not only studied in mosques but

also in other educational institutions such as *Kuttab*. *Kuttab* is then better known in Java as a boarding school with its character, namely the existence of kyai, santri, mosque and Pondok [3].

As stated here, the pesantren education system was limited to the education system before the renewal of Islamic education in Java. Historically, it can be said that the birth of the pesantren education system existed before the renewal period. It's just that the system used is still classified as traditional and very simple.

According to Martin, the main reason for establishing pesantren was to transmit traditional Islam as contained in the classics written centuries ago, which became known as the yellow book [15].

However, this view then raises the question of when pesantren first appeared. This isn't easy to answer because this institution initially did not have enough evidence of Java as a development centre. It is only known that around the 15th century A.D., pesantren had been established by Islamic propagators known as Wali Songo, such as in Ampel by Sunan Ampel and in Giri by Sunan Giri [23].

Regarding the purpose of forming Islamic boarding schools, H.M. Arifin distinguishes them into two parts, namely; *The general goal*, which is to guide students to become human beings with Muslim personalities who, with their religious knowledge, can become muballigh amid their society by their religious knowledge capacity. *The specific purpose* is to prepare the students to become religious people in the knowledge taught by the kyai concerned and practice it in society [24].

The content of the pesantren curriculum focuses on religious sciences, such as Arabic, fiqh, hadith, tafsir, kalam science, *Tarikh* (history) and so on. The literature of these sciences, as mentioned

earlier, is the classic book called the yellow book with its characteristics, among others:

1. The books are in Arabic.
2. They generally do not use *syakal*, some even without dots or commas.
3. It contains science that is quite weighty.
4. His method of writing is considered archaic, and its relevance to contemporary sciences often seems relatively non-existent.
5. It is usually studied and studied in Islamic boarding schools.
6. The paper is yellow [25].

The position of *pesantren*, in this case, is a continuation of elementary education that takes place in violations by studying various branches of religious science sourced from the yellow books. Learning activities take place at certain times, namely after dawn prayers. Usually, in the morning, the students do household chores, clean the yard, and process the fields together with the *Kiyai*. After that, they are given another lesson. During the day, students rest, and in the afternoon, they return to study. In carrying out all these activities, congregational prayer times are always considered [26].

Based on this *pesantren* teaching system, Amin Rais. Stated that the system applied in the boarding school has several uniqueness, by the characteristics and character of the boarding school itself, including:

1. Through a traditional system that has complete freedom compared to modern schools, there is a two-way relationship between students and *kyai*.
2. Life in *pesantren* shows the spirit of democracy because they have become accustomed to working together to overcome the problems faced, including non-curricular ones.
3. The students do not suffer from the "symbolic" disease of obtaining degrees and diplomas because most *pesantren* do not issue diplomas, while students

with sincerity enter the *pesantren* without expecting a diploma.

4. The Islamic boarding school system prioritizes simplicity, brotherhood, equality, self-confidence and courage in life.
5. Alums of Islamic boarding schools do not want to occupy government positions, so the government can hardly control them.[27]

The form and system of *pesantren* education as mentioned above was able to survive until the Dutch colonial government issued a policy to provide teaching to the lower class by establishing *volk schools*, folk schools or public elementary schools using a system different from the education system applied in *pesantren*.

In responding to the Dutch colonial education system at that time, education activists, especially Muslims, differed in views. Some of them shut themselves off from the influence of Western modernization in a highly selective way [3]. In addition, some modernists had previously acquired reformist values from the Middle East, thus readily accepting the colonial education system.

This is proven by the existence of a school founded by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan by combining religious subjects with general subjects [28]. Dahlan integrated the *pesantren* education system with the *gubernamen* (Western) education system contributing to the lives of Muslims in Java [1].

The education system implemented by the Dutch Colonial ruler at that time greatly influenced the traditional system in *pesantren*. With the support of power, the system was adopted and followed by reform figures in Islamic education. If the Dutch colonial power had not had time to colonize, the education system until now would have been dominated by the traditional *pesantren* education style.

With this kind of attitude, finally, the development of pesantren from time to time continues to change and adjust along with the changing times, so that until now it is still seen that pesantren educational institutions still exist amid society, and the education system is very much different from the previous pesantren education system. This is greatly influenced by the development of education in Java and the community's demands in the Islamic boarding school itself.

In reality, the education and teaching system in Islamic boarding schools today can be classified into three forms, namely:

1. Islamic boarding schools whose teaching system is applied in a non-classical way (*sorogan* or *bandungan*) with students living in cottages or dormitories that have been provided.
2. Islamic boarding schools whose teaching system is the same as above, but the students are not provided with huts in the pesantren complex.
3. Islamic boarding schools provide non-formal and formal education through madrasahs and even public schools at various levels and vocational to the community's needs [29].

The occurrence of changes in the Islamic education system like this is inseparable from the motivation that always arises to carry out reforms in the Islamic education system which is still full of shortcomings. These shortcomings were then sought to be completed by adopting several colonial education systems. The effort was mainly carried out in response to the traditionalist imposed ban on the Western education system.

It is undeniable that many modern Islamic education systems contain many elements derived from the West, such as school benches, subject matter preparation, methodology and many others. All of these things still stem from the

influence of the Dutch colonial education system.

The traditionalists, inevitably, had to give up the colonial education system to be applied because they saw the success that had been achieved. An example that can be put forward in this connection is the public school education system in Minangkabau, which, although initially used the *surau* education system, after some time adopting the Western education system, the results were able to place Minang children in a strategic position in intellectual and political discourse during the national awakening and the independence period [30].

### **c. Madrasah Education System**

The form of madrasah known from the Islamic education system in the Middle East as an educational institution *after Kuttab* and *halaqah* in mosque seem to be different from the madrasah known in the Indonesian context, considering that the madrasah was not yet known in the early days of the spread of Islam. Still, the term later emerged after a renewal carried out by modernists in Java, including the modern education system in Java. The madrasa itself. This is discussed as additional material for information about the early education system.

As stated by Muhaimin and Abd.Mujib that the presence of madrasah as an Islamic educational institution is motivated by several factors, including; as a manifestation and realization of the renewal of the Islamic education system, as an effort to improve the pesantren system towards an education system that allows graduates to get the same opportunities as public schools, there is a mental attitude of a group of Muslims, especially students who are fascinated by The West as their education system. As an effort to bridge between the traditional education system carried out by pesantren and the modern education system from the results of acculturation [25].

The difference between madrasahs and pesantren, namely pesantren characteristic of the lesson, is specific religious lessons, while in madrasahs, in addition to being taught religious knowledge (dominant). Madrasahs integrate religious knowledge and general knowledge.

Combining the Islamic boarding school system with the system applicable to modern schools becomes the education and teaching system used in madrasahs. The fusion process takes place gradually.

Thus, if the madrasah system is connected with the Islamic boarding school system, it remains closely related because, at first, the pesantren as a camp of traditionalists who continued to adopt the values of renewal although very selectively by taking the madrasah system, so that in the pesantren system there was also a madrasah system. And the most exciting thing to know from this issue is that two integrated systems are not new, as madrasahs consist of mosques, dormitories and study rooms. All Islamic boarding schools in Java almost own this Islamic boarding school system.

### Conclusion

The presence of Javanese Islam has a significant impact on changes in the social order of society in many aspects, not only in the ritual aspect but also in the aspect of government, social relations, to the educational aspect. Early Islamic education in Java changed and ran several education systems that were mainly adopted until now on the island of Java. The Islamic education system in Java first used the Langgar system, then switched to Pondok Pesantren until it is still used today. It is the largest pesantren education centre in Indonesia today. Then Madrasah Education, with a neater curriculum, adopted a middle eastern education system that focused on Kuttab and Halaqah. So that some

education systems between Pesantren and Madrasah are united by the leadership or head of the foundation in one institution. The tradition of *kuttab* and halaqah then became the hallmark of education in Java today.

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