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The Role of Islam Nusantara and Nahdlatul Ulama on The National Challenges of Indonesia

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INDEXING	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Keyword 1; Role Keyword 2; Islam Nusantara Keyword 3; Nahdlatul Ulama Keyword 4; National Keyword 5; Indonesia	Islam is a faith that is believed to be revealed, with a guiding principle of 'Rahmatan li al-'alamin'. Islam Nusantara is not considered to be the standard form of Islam, but rather a unique and observable manifestation of Islam in Indonesia. This has been developed through interactions, adapting to the local context, translating and incorporating local elements, and making it accessible to the Indonesian society. The purpose of this study is to explore the significance of Islam Nusantara and Nahdlatul Ulama in addressing the challenges faced by Indonesia as a nation. The process of globalization poses a notable challenge to Nahdlatul Ulama, as it directly impacts the religious foundation of the people, namely Islam Nusantara (Aswaja), and the pillars of Indonesian nationality, particularly in terms of economic independence.

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

Islam is a revealed religion, which has the vision of 'Rahmatan li al-'alamin'. It holds a high level of appreciation for the traditions of society as long as these traditions do not conflict with the principles of Islamic teachings (Lahaji and Faisal, 2023). Islam is considered the final religion that guides humans to the end of time, encompassing all the progress and dynamics of civilization (Sajjad, 2023), including the culture and traditions of local and national communities in every country throughout history.

Islam Nusantara is not normative Islam, but rather an empirical and distinctive form of Islam that has emerged through interactions, contextualization, indigenization, translation, and vernacularization of universal Islam with social, cultural, and literary realities in Indonesia (Pratama *et al*, 2023). Islam Nusantara was initially developed by Walisongo in the Java region and has gained significant popularity, especially on the island of Java (Kato, 2021), where the Muslim population constitutes more than half of the total Muslim population in Indonesia according to the 2010 population census. In fact, the member of Muslim residents on the island of Java reached 130,651,037 out of the total Muslim population in Indonesia, which was 207,176,162. Furthermore, the Nahdliyin of followers of Nahdlatul Ulama alone stands at 143 million in various regions, accounting for approximately 75% of the total Islamic population in the archipelago.

The presence of Islam Islam Nusantara acts as a mediator when there is a conflict over differences in diversity (Setiawan and Stevanus, 2023). With its cultural patterns, it creates a more plural and tolerant character. Indonesia has five religions recognized by the state, and within the Islamic religion itself, there are many Islamic community groups or organizations. Islam Nusantara provides peace because Indonesia is an archipelago that has a culture of tolerance and coexistence amidst differences, such as in the state ideology, namely "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika", which means different but still one.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Local historiography has indeed documented the presence of pre-Walisongo Islamic religious figures, albeit briefly mentioned in legendary tales. However, there are no sources that provide an explanation for the existence of a widespread and organized Islamic da'wah movement. It was only after the stories of Sunan Ampel and Raja Pandhita's arrival in Majapahit that the network of figures spreading Islamic da'wah in Surabaya and Gresik could be identified as a concentrated center of power for Islamic da'wah in a specific location (Mukaffa, 2017)

In the book *Babad Tanah Jawi*, for example, we trace the family tree of the sultanates of Mataram, Pajang to Demak, leading to the Majapahit dynasty with all its traditional legitimacy. The family traditions of the Islamic sultanate are still connected with the Buddhist-Hindu Majapahit kingdom formally and with strong traditions. It seems that there is no known tradition of the "jahiliyah era" in intellectuals, religious practices as well as government systems and dynastic families, for example, in the Islamic tradition of the archipelago after Majapahit (Fawaid, 2015). Social traditions and religious ceremonies, architecture and other works are also strong and a mixture of traditions from the Hindu-Buddhist era to the Islamic era (Supriyadi *et al*, 2022). The Demak Mosque and the Kudus Tower, for example, accommodate the architecture of Hindu-Buddhist places of worship (Idham, 2021). In the social and political system, it shows the position of the ulama, in this case Walisongo, in relation to the sultan and sultanate where religion is not a political tool of the king but is placed as an advisor not only in the spiritual dimension but also in politics and society.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a literature review, which is a fundamental and exhaustive examination of existing writings pertaining to a specific topic or research question (Fink, 2019). The literature review constitutes an essential component of academic and research writing, commonly included in research papers, theses, and other scholarly works (Okoli and Schabram, 2015). The primary objective of a literature review is to provide a summary, synthesis, and evaluation of the existing knowledge and research pertinent to the chosen subject (Cooper *et al*, 2019). The paper aims to investigate the significance of Islam Nusantara and Nahdlatul Ulama in the context of Indonesia's national challenges.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Wali Songo in Spreading Islam in The Archipelago (Nahdlatul Ulama-santara)

This network of political power movements, including the Kingdoms of Demak, Cirebon, Banten, Banjarmasin, Pontianak, Gowa, Tallo, Ternate, Tual, and Sumbawa, further facilitated the growth of Islamic-influenced cities along the coast (Sulistiono, 2021). The presence of the Walisongo who intelligently propagated Islam throughout the archipelago, even incorporating Islamic theology into wayang without offending the indigenous Hindu-Buddhist community, is noteworthy. Wayang, being a suitable form, allowed for the existence of mystical and supernatural elements in the character of Walisongo, as conveyed through stories, with a greater emphasis on the concept of da'wah, as developed by the teachings of Sufism.

In Java, the Hindu-Buddhist culture was adopted by Walisongo. Through wayang, Walisongo utilized this folk art as a medium to introduce Islamic teachings. Moreover, Walisongo transformed this traditional form of storytelling by incorporating Islamic theology in place of the Hindu theology it originally contained (Firman and Pratama, 2022). To this day, the original wayang stories remain rooted in the Mahabharata and Ramayana, which are part of Hinduism (Cohen, 2023). Walisongo adapted these stories by infusing them with Islamic values in the plotlines. However, it is important to note that Walisongo's adaptation mainly extended to the utilization of Hindu cultural instruments, such as wayang, through which Islamic values could be conveyed, thereby replacing the underlying Hindu-Buddhist philosophy and theology (Afandi, 2023). As an example, Walisongo modified the meaning of the concept of "Azimat Klaimat Syahadat," originally signifying "the amulet of Kali Maha Usada" within the context of Hindu theology, to instead represent the "azimah sentence shahadah." (Nuraisyah and Hudaidah, 2021). The latter phrase refers to a person's declaration of faith in the belief that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. This belief serves as both a source of motivation and salvation for individuals. In wayang stories, Rahmi *et al* (2022) stated that, Walisongo still utilizes this term to personify the most powerful weapon available to humans. However, it is important to understand that from a Hindu perspective, this term may hold different connotations.

Islam Nusantara and National Synthesis

In the long history since the classical era, a synthesis of Hindu-Buddhist elements in Islamic sacred teachings has taken place through the process of interpreting the holy book Al-Quran, the Prophet's Word or Hadith, as well as other sources such as the consensus of legitimate ulama and tradition. This close relationship between Islam and the heritage of the Hindu-Buddhist tradition is evident not only in spiritual traditions, rituals, and sultanates, but also in works of Islamic literature from the Demak Empire to modern times. For example, the works of Pigeaud demonstrate that intellectual blending occurred from the mid-15th to the 16th centuries under the Demak Empire, until the Mataram era. The art and culture created by Sunan Kalijaga, one of the Walisongo, such as the Shadow Wayang, exemplify how the synthesis of Hindu-Buddhist art heritage with Islamic preaching took place (Noorzeha *et al*, 2022). Furthermore, the Babad Tanah Jawi book contains various dimensions of elements that contribute to the legitimacy of the existence of the dynasty and their historical significance.

Indonesian independence, declared on August 17, 1945, signifies the establishment

of a contemporary nation-state across the Indonesian archipelago, devoid of colonial rule. The 1945 Constitution explicitly mentions Pancasila in its preamble, highlighting its foundational and essential role in guiding national and governmental affairs. Furthermore, the principles of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* form an integral part of the conceptual and practical framework of Pancasila. However, the endeavor of Islam Nusantara to reconcile with the nation-state as the ideological basis and embodiment of secularism and modernization did not commence on the day of Indonesian independence or during the preparations leading up to it.

Nahdlatul Ulama in Supporting the Nation

The organization known as the Nahdlatul Ulama was established in the year 1926. Although both Nahdlatul Ulama and the gentry and nobles who supported modernist Islam were involved in the fight for independence, they held differing positions in terms of social and political status (Ma'arif, 2018). The gentry and nobility tended to embrace secular ideologies rooted in colonial perspectives, while the modernist Islamic leaders advocated for ideological Islamic politics, drawing inspiration from movements like Pan Islamism. On the other hand, cultural Islamic leaders followed the *ushul fiqh* approach, which prioritizes the local and valid aspects of Islamic methodology.

In this particular instance, prior to attaining independence, Nahdlatul Ulama had presented a viewpoint on the nation-state by delineating the Dutch East Indies region and the colonial administration governing it. During the Congress held in Banjarmasin in 1936, Nahdlatul Ulama determined that the Dutch East Indies region was considered *Dar al Islam*, meaning Islamic territory, while recognizing the government above it as colonialist. Consequently, Nahdlatul Ulama advocated for the liberation of the Dutch East Indies region from colonialism. The subsequent congress two years later in Menes, West Java reiterated this standpoint, supplemented by a non-cooperative stance where Nahdlatul Ulama declined to participate in the *Volksraad* proposed by Colonialism (Rosidin *et al*, 2022). It is this perspective that serves as the foundation for Nahdlatul Ulama's responses to changes and upheavals in national politics, encompassing aspirations within BPUPKI and PPKI, including the elimination of the seven words in Pancasila, the opposition to the DI/TII and PRRI uprisings, and the endorsement of Pancasila as the sole principle and the existence of the Republic of Indonesia as its ultimate form, in addition to its perspectives on diverse citizenship (Christawan *et al*, 2023).

KH Wachid Hasyim's perspective is the foundation of his thoughts in the debates held in the BPUPKI and PPKI sessions. He fought for the establishment of the state, as reflected in the seven words, and also supported the removal of those words and other Islamic terms that he had advocated for (Muhtar, 2021). However, when we examine the political landscape in forums and institutions, it becomes evident that KH Wachid Hasyim stands alone in his membership in PPKI (Suciyani, 2022). The cultural Islamic movement, represented by the social base of Nahdlatul Ulama and similar groups, faces discrimination in the institutions that were established by Japan in preparation for independence (Kato, 2021). They hold only a very small minority presence in BPUPK(I) and PPKI, with only Wachid Hasyim as their representative. On the other hand, the remaining members, although Muslims themselves, belong to currents that have benefited from the previous Dutch ethical politics. They can be classified as supporters of modernist Islamic schools and nationalists, as well as *priyayi* individuals.

CONCLUSION

Globalization poses a significant challenge to Nahdlatul Ulama. This menace directly targets the religious foundation of the people, Islam Nusantara (Aswaja), and the pillars of Indonesian nationality, particularly in terms of economic autonomy. Recognizing the potential destruction of Islamic traditions in the archipelago caused by globalization, Nahdlatul Ulama has intensified their focus on Islamic issues in the region. Additionally, globalization brings about concerns regarding economic sovereignty, which is currently being undermined by neoliberal capitalism. Islam Nusantara is not a novel movement, religious institution, or ideology. Instead, it is a crucial concept that responds to the rapidly changing civilization. The traditionalism movement of Nahdlatul Ulama serves as a counterbalance to the complexities of life. The essence of Indonesian traditions necessitates an explanation, where Islamic traditionalism, as defined by Nahdlatul Ulama, is often perceived as a blend of the mystical Javanese worldview, encompassing the abangan and priyayi perspectives, along with the fundamental doctrinal and practical teachings of Islam.

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