

## CULTURE AND RELIGION: THE MOVEMENT AND THOUGHT OF ISLAM NUSANTARA NOWADAYS, A SOCIO-CULTURAL REFLECTION

*Ahmad Gaus AF and Herdi Sahrasad*

University of Paramadina

Email: [gausaf@yahoo.com](mailto:gausaf@yahoo.com)

### **Abstract**

*The Islamic ummah is usually used to struggling and wrestling with diversity. There are Nusantara Islam, Progressive Islam, Wasathiyah Islam or Moderate Islam and a range of other terms such as Transformative Islam, Hadhari Islam, or Progressive Islam which community organizations try to develop Islam or Muslim intellectuals. This paper explores the movement and thought of Islam Nusantara. Since Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was established, various dynamics of Islamic views have taken place. NU recognizes the diversity of religious opinions in four schools, but puritan Islamic groups feel that only their views are correct, only Islam has the right to enter heaven, only certain books can be read, and only the opinions of the teacher are considered authoritative. They looked enthusiastic and attracted the attention of the young generation and people who are just passionate about Islam; they are like a meteor that shines brightly, but then fades quickly and finally goes out. The time has proven, movements like that, then grow and disappear and change rapidly. The Nusantara Islam, however, has been down to earth, along with the Progressive Islam have taken steps, both are moving and developing in the future.*

*Umat Islam sudah biasa bergumul dan bergulat dengan keanekaragaman. Ada Islam Nusantara, Islam Berkemajuan Islam Wasathiyah atau Islam Moderat, dan sederetan istilah lainnya seperti Islam Transformatif, Islam Hadhari, atau Islam Progresif yang coba dikembangkan oleh organisasi masyarakat Islam atau intelektual Muslim. Artikel ini mengulas pergerakan dan pemikiran Islam*

*Nusantara. Sejak NU didirikan, beragam dinamika terhadap pandangan keislaman sudah terjadi. NU mengakui keragaman pendapat agama dalam empat mazhab, namun kelompok-kelompok Islam puritan merasa bahwa hanya pandangannya saja yang benar, hanya Islamnya saja yang berhak masuk surga, hanya kitab tertentu yang boleh dibaca, dan hanya pendapat gurunya saja yang dianggap otoritatif. Mereka tampak penuh semangat dan menarik generasi muda atau orang yang baru bersemasia dalam berislam, mereka bagai meteor yang bersinar terang, tapi kemudian cepat pudar dan akhirnya padam. Zaman telah membuktikan, gerakan-gerakan seperti itu tumbuh dan hilang berganti dengan cepat. Islam Nusantara sudah membumi, bersama dengan Islam Berkemajuan, keduanya bergerak dan berkembang ke depan.*

**Keyword:** *diversity; local wisdom; Nahdlatul Ulama; Nusantara Islam; tolerance*

## Introduction

The Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU), the largest Islamic mass organization in Indonesia, uploaded the big theme “Islam Nusantara” in the 33rd NU Congress in Jombang, East Java, in August 2015. Since then, the vocabulary of the Islamic archipelago began to be referred to in various discourses and public discussions. Nusantara Islam is described as a way of religion that is gentle, peaceful, tolerant, anti-violent, and able to dialogue with the local culture. This kind of diversity is considered as an expression of Islam that is most in line with the heterogeneous character of the Indonesian nation in terms of religion, ethnicity, race, language, and culture. According to Laffan, the characteristics of Islam in Indonesia are shaped by the roles of Arab, Chinese, Indian, and European traditions that have interacted since the beginning of the entry of Islam. It is this cross-cultural and intellectual marriage that gave birth to Nusantara Islam (Laffan, 2007; 2015).

Many people believe that if such an Islamic form, namely “Islam Nusantara”, can grow, blossom, and bear fruit, then Indonesia will become a world reference in studying Islam. Indeed, not a few people who reject the presence of the discourse and the Islamic movement of the archipelago which was pioneered by NU, because it is considered still premature. However, his supporters argue that Nusantara Islam is not a dangerous idea because it does not deviate from the basic teachings of Islam in terms of both *aqeedah* and *fiqh*, and still comes from the Qur’an and Sunna.

Historians reveal that the entry of Islam in Perlak, Aceh and on the north coast of the island of Java through the process of preaching *bi al-things* brought

by the preachers who concurrently the task of becoming traders. The process was initially carried out individually. They carry out the obligations of Islamic Shari'a by using clean clothes and maintaining the cleanliness of their bodies, clothing and shelter and houses of worship. In social life, they show a simple attitude, with kind words, and respectful manner following the moral demands of *al-karimah*, honest, helpful, especially participating in giving treatment to sick people, such as helping people who are accidentally overridden by disasters and epidemy. They teach good life, maintain cleanliness, live respectfully, mutual help, live in a society, love nature and plants, understand the meaning of the environment, perform obligations that must be fulfilled to the creator, and do good deeds and avoid evil deeds, so that they get happiness in eternal life in the Hereafter village. Such an attitude became an attraction for the indigenous population who at that time embraced Hinduism or Buddhism. They are interested in the personality of Muslims, so they see a light of faith in Muslims and attract them to embrace Islam. Thus, the authorities considered, the teachings of Islam did not disturb the stability of the government, and even helped strengthen the unity (Karim, 2007).

Among the examples of the wisdom of the propagator of the archipelagic Islam (Islam Nusantara) was to build Islamic theology with puppets without offending and angering Hindu-Buddhist people at that time. Wayang is a form of Hindu-Buddhist culture adopted by the spreaders of Islam in Java (Walisongo) as a means to introduce Islamic teachings. The folk art was constructed by Walisongo with Islamic theology as a substitute for Hindu theology. Until now, the original story of wayang stories is still stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana books which are part of the Hindu scriptures. Walisongo adopted these stories by incorporating elements of Islamic values in the plot of the story. In principle, Walisongo only adopts Hindu cultural instruments in the form of puppets and incorporates Islamic values to replace Hindu philosophy and theology (and of course also Buddhist theology) contained in it. For example, Walisongo modified the meaning of the concept of "Talisman of Kalimah Shada" initially meant "talisman of the times of superstition" which nuanced Hindu theology to mean "azimah sentence shahadah".

The last phrase is someone's statement about the belief that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is a messenger of Allah. This belief is the life spirit and savior of life for everyone. In the puppet story, Walisongo still uses the term to personify the most powerful weapons for humans. Only, if a Hindu perspective, the amulet is manifested in the form of a symbolic object

which is considered a gift of God, then Walisongo neutralizes the formula so that it is merely a statement of belief in Allah and His messenger. In the Islamic perspective, the sentence is “the key to Heaven” which means as a formula that will lead people to safety in the world and the hereafter. That is, the “creed” in the perspective of Muslims has spiritual power for those who say it. It is a statement of a Muslim to live firmly holding the principles of Islamic teachings to achieve success in life in the world and the hereafter.

The new meaning will not change the standard of the story but has been able to build Islamic values in wayang stories. Walisongo also uses puppet arts to create social constructions, namely, to build a civilized and cultured society. To build a different direction from the original wayang grip, Walisongo added in the wayang theme story with a plot that contained the social vision of the Islamic community, both from the system of government, neighboring relations, to the pattern of family life and personal life. For this purpose, Walisongo even gave rise to new figures that were not actually in the original Mahabharata and Ramayana stories. The most widely known figures are punakawan, which means wise mentors for the Pandavas. Walisongo introduced many Islamic teachings (aqeedah, sharia, and morals) through story plots that were built based on the behavior of the clown man (Suparjo, 2008).

Thus, Islam Nusantara (archipelagic Islam) is a tolerant Islam, a distinctive Islam, that grow, develop, and meet traditions and cultures in the Southeast Asia region. The distinctive Islam of the archipelago if viewed from an epistemological point of view (the theory of knowledge) is valid. The archipelagic Islam experienced an active dialectical process between religion, the culture, and traditions in a particular space and time. The dialectics between religions that have moral and universal values and the culture and traditions of the Indonesian/Nusantara people form a distinctive Indonesian style of Islam which is commonly called the Indonesian archipelago (Alma'arif, 2015; Suryanegara, 1998).

Analyzing critically of Islamic archipelago produced a mapping. Among the mapping produced is some things must be maintained from the archipelagic Islam, and some things must be deconstructed. Among the things that must be maintained are the spirit of the Islam Nusantara (archipelagic Islam) which is tolerant in diversity, appreciation of good traditions, and elasticity or not rigid in reading religious texts. The things that must be deconstructed are the doctrine of al-Ghazali in terms of hostility to philosophy and natural science

and the strong guarding of myths and mysticism by Muslim in the archipelago which hinders progress and civilization (Alma'arif, 2015).

### **Islam Nusantara in Southeast Asia**

Islamic scholar Azyumardi Azra said that the term 'Islam Nusantara' was not new. This term refers to Islam in a group of islands or maritime continents (archipelago) which covers not only the area that is now a country of Indonesia but also the Muslim territories of Malaysia, Southern Thailand (Patani), Singapore, Southern Philippines (Moro), and Champa (Kampuchea), in the Southeast Asia region (Azra, 2003; 2015a). Meanwhile, liberal Islam activist Ulil Abshar Abdalla stressed that library sources, mass media, and social discourse had long used this term. He gave an example that in Bandung there had long been a campus which called itself the Nusantara Islamic University, which although the meaning it meant could be different, at least as a "nomenclature" the term was not new (Abdalla, 2015).

However, this term was only popular and caused a lot of reactions in the community after the PBNU appointed it to be the 33rd NU Congress theme in Jombang, East Java, on August 1-5, 2015. The theme reads exactly "Strengthening Nusantara Islam as Indonesian and World Civilizations. "Previously, President Jokowi also used the term 'Islam Nusantara' on the occasion of *istighatsah kubra* held by NU in Jakarta on June 14, 2015, and in the framework of the National Conference of NU Ulema and welcomed Ramadhan 1436 H / 2015 M.

From the momentum, the conference became clear that the PBNU was indeed the one who sparked Nusantara Islam as a cultural movement in the practice of religious diversity in Indonesia. As the most prominent Islamic mass organization in Indonesia, PBNU certainly has a very vital role that can effectively disseminate this idea among the people throughout the archipelago. The archipelago itself is a term used to describe an archipelago that stretches from Sumatra to Papua, which is now primarily an Indonesian territory.

According to der Kroef, the word "Nusantara" was first recorded in Middle Javanese literature (12th to 16th century) to describe the concept of state adopted by Majapahit. After being forgotten, at the beginning of the 20th century, this term was revived by Ki Hajar Dewantara as one of the alternative names for the independent East Indies progressor which had not yet materialized. When the use of the name "Indonesia" (meaning the Indian Islands) was agreed to use for this idea, the word Nusantara remained employed

as a synonym for the Indonesian archipelago. This understanding has, until now, been used in Indonesia. As a result of subsequent political development, this term was then used to describe the unity of island geographies located between the continents of Asia and Australia, including the Malay Peninsula but usually did not cover the Philippines. In this last sense, the Archipelago was the equivalent of the Malay Archipelago, a term popular in the late 19th century until the early 20th century, especially in English-language literature (der Kroef, 1951: 166).

It was recorded that around 1293 to 1500 AD there was once the largest kingdom in the history of Indonesia, the Majapahit Kingdom. The territory of the Majapahit Kingdom extends on Java, Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, Kalimantan, and eastern Indonesia, although its territory is still debated (Prapantja, 1962: 29).

There are three divisions of the Majapahit kingdom's power area; the widest coverage area is called the Nusantara area. This area is an area that does not reflect the Javanese culture but belongs to the colony, and they must pay an annual tribute. They enjoy considerable autonomy and internal freedom, and Majapahit does not feel it is essential to place their bureaucrats or military forces here; however, any challenges that appear to threaten Majapahit's rule over the region will reap strong reactions. Included in this area are small kingdoms and colonies in Maluku, the Nusa Tenggara Islands, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and the Malay Peninsula (Bentley, 2007: 61).

From the description above, it can be concluded that the area called Nusantara is currently included in the Indonesian archipelago and several regions on the Malacca peninsula. Although along with historical and political developments, the term Nusantara at this time is better known as a synonym of the territory of Indonesia only. This discussion in terms of terms and history is vital to do in understanding the meaning of the words "Nusantara Islam" as the knowledge base and limits of thought. It is intended to avoid the ambiguity of the meaning of the word Nusantara when juxtaposed with the word Islam. Is the Nusantara Islam in question is Islam in Muslim areas throughout Southeast Asia or only in Indonesia as intended by the PBNU in every writing and publication (Azra, 2015b). That way, we can distinguish between, firstly, the term Islam Nusantara as the coverage area of Islam in the archipelago-which can cover all Muslim regions in Southeast Asia or even only in Indonesia, and secondly, the term Islam Nusantara as a concept of Muslim religion which is in accordance with the characteristics of the archipelago

(Indonesia). Then in order not to confuse, let us agree that the term Islamic Nusantara which has recently been widely discussed and is the focus of this writing is the Nusantara Islam in the second sense. However, in the discussion section of history, the meaning of the term Islam Nusantara will shift to the first understanding because the understanding of Islamic Nusantara as a “concept” of Islam in Indonesia has only recently been confirmed.

### **The Islam Nusantara (The Archipelagic Islam) in the Past**

With so many different views and ways of Islam in Indonesia, the wisest way to study Islam in Indonesia is to do historical studies. The characteristic of historical study is to place the object of an event studied in a time-space whose temporality is determined. With such a review it will describe the processual journey of a historical event. In this case, Islam in Indonesia (Islam in Indonesia) or Indonesian or Nusantara Islam (Indonesian Islam) becomes the object under study.

There are various theories and opinions about the entry of Islam into the archipelago. The theory of one and the other has the strengths and weaknesses of each. Among these theories, those say that Islam in the archipelago comes from the regions of Gujarat and Malabar in India. This opinion was expressed by Pijnappel from Leiden University. According to him, the Syafi'i Arabs immigrated and settled in Indian territory, then the Indians who brought Islam to the archipelago. He based his opinion on the inheritance of artifacts in the form of tombstones in Pasai, northern Sumatra, especially those dated 17 December 1131 Hijriyah or September 27, 1428 AD. The tombstone he observed has a resemblance to another one found in the tomb of Maulana Malik Ibrahim (died 822/1419) in Gresik, East Java. The two types of tombstones turned out to have the same shape as tombstones in Cambay, Gujarat, India (Drewes, 1968).

This Gujarat theory was opposed by Fatimi (1963). According to his research, the shape and style of the tombstone are precisely similar to the tombstone found in Bengal. In connection with this artifact data, Fatimi criticized experts who ignored the tombstone of Siti Fatimah dated 475/1082 found in Leran, East Java. But the theory that Islam in the archipelago originates from Bengal can be questioned further, including the differences in the schools of religion adhered to by the Muslims of the Archipelago (Syafi'i) and the schools held by Bengal Muslims (Hanafi).

The theories based on the discovery of tombstone artifacts were later considered to have many deficiencies so that new theories emerged such as the origin of Islam in the archipelago from the Coromandel coast and Malabar (Fatimi (1963: 31-32). Among those revealed by Morrison and received support from Arnold. The opinions of both are based on the similarity of fiqh schools between the two regions and the archipelago. Then Arnold said that in the process of dissemination carried out directly and indirectly through trade activities, many Arab traders also participated in it. This assumption is based on Chinese news, that towards the end of the 7th century an Arab merchant became the leader of an Arab Muslim settlement on the coast of Sumatra. Some of these Arabs reportedly married marriages to local women, thus forming the nucleus of a Muslim community consisting of immigrant Arabs and residents. According to Arnold, members of the Muslim community also carry out activities to spread out Islam in the region (Morrison, 1951).

In addition, a theory states that Islam in the archipelago came from Egypt and Hadhramaut. But again from all these theories have the strengths and weaknesses of each argument. Even so, we can still draw important conclusions that Islam in the archipelago is still sourced from Arabia, but there are many Muslim influences around the Arab region with their respective characteristics. Then, related to this, the next question is who spread Islam in the archipelago.

Among the first spreaders of Islam on Java was Maulana Malik Ibrahim. He reportedly Islamized most northern coastal areas of Java and even tried several times to persuade Majapahit Hindu-Buddhist king, Wikramawardhana (in power 1386-1429) to convert to Islam. However, only after the arrival of Raden Rahmat, the son of an Arab dai in Campa, did Islam gain momentum in the Majapahit palace. He was described as having a decisive role in the Islamization of the island of Java and was seen as the leader of the sanga with the title Sunan Ampel. Here is the beginning of the phenomenal term "Wali Sanga" (guardian nine) in the history of the spread of Islam in the archipelago (Arsyad, 2012).

After the collapse of Majapahit in 1520 AD, in the coastal areas, the process of Islamization went intensively until finally established Islamic kingdoms such as Demak, Banten, and Cirebon. In terms of understanding Islamic faith, it is not necessarily steady and eliminates the mindset of ancient philosophies, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. They did say the sentence of creed, but the memories and practices, as well as the belief in the Bata



Guru, Batara Wisnu, Goddess of God, and others, are still alive. It is where the tendency of syncretism arises (Arsyad, 2012: 213).

Therefore, in addressing cultural acculturation, the analysis used is based on the historical perspective of the entry and development of Islam in Indonesia. Because in the process of Islamization in Indonesia it does not run in one direction, but many directions or through various kinds of doors. The doors, for example, through art, puppetry, marriage, education, trade, mysticism, mysticism, and Sufism. They lead to cultural contact, which is challenging to avoid elements of local culture entering the process of Islamization in Indonesia. As Muslims, they must have a critical attitude in seeing the context of acculturation of Islam and local culture in examining Islamic history in Indonesia. Islam is not a system that only talks about Godhead, but what is equally important is to contain the teachings of civilization (*tamaddun*) completed.

In the subsequent developments, popular culture in Indonesia absorbed many concepts and symbols of Islam, so it often seemed that Islam emerged as an important cultural source in popular Indonesian culture. Likewise in ritual expressions, and socially known “ark” ceremonies (in Sumatra) to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet, as well as in Java with the *Sekaten* ceremony. The art of music is no less important, such as tambourine *qasidah*, and *gambus* in Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi (Kuntowijoyo, 2008: 394).

Indeed the presence of Islam in the archipelago cannot be separated from the nuances in which Islam was born. However, Islam can adapt to local culture. Islamization in Java, for example, runs dialogically and is relatively compromising. The process of Islamic compounding with mediocrity, making Islam in the archipelago easy to be accepted by society. There is no resistance; there is a reception. Even though there are modifications, it is no more than an injection of Islamic values in existing traditions. In its development in this phase, Islam Nusantara with its moderate character and appreciative of local culture, as well as siding with residents in facing challenges, caused Islam to accept as a new religion that gave a color of peace (grace) in the archipelago.

### **Islam Nusantara Today**

The Nusantara Islam in the sense of being a concept of the Muslim religion is only recently confirmed and is widely discussed. However, the true nature of Islamic life that is characterized by Indonesians has been created since the beginning of the spread of Islam itself which is very adaptive and

able to negotiate with the customs, culture, and traditions of the Indonesian people. Since the sultanate era, even until the archipelago found its way as an independent and united nation, Islam still carried out its role as the majority religion. The mission of unity and carrying out tolerance for diversity but still firmly against every form of oppression and colonialism.

Many Islamic figures and organizations lived in the mission of the struggle against the occupation of other nations until Indonesia achieved its independence. During this independence period, very wisely, the founders of the nation at that time formulated the core of Islamic teachings relating to the protection of basic human rights so that they became the basis of a state that could be accepted by all elements of a very pluralistic nation. Pancasila becomes the basis of the Indonesian state, which is the embodiment of *Kuliyah Al-Khams* in Islamic teachings.

In the study of *Usul Fikh* (Epistemology of Islamic Law), the theory of *al-Kulliyat al-Khams* as part of the *Maqshid al-Syariah* (The Purpose of Islamic Law) can be interpreted as the Five Principles of Universal / Human Rights, covering five protection. First, religious protection (*hifzh al-dîn*) means that there is no compulsion to embrace or practice a particular religion or belief. Second, the protection of the soul (*hifzh al-nafs*) means that it is not justified to injure or kill lives without rights, such as crimes of terrorism and narcotics. Third, offspring protection (*hifzh al-nasl*). Fourth, protection of reason (*hifzh al-'aql*) means a guarantee of freedom of opinion, so that truth claims are not justified and forced against certain views. And fifth, property protection (*hifzh al-mâl*), means that it is not justified by capitalism or exploitation of natural resources, which does not prosper the people (Ali, 2015).

On this basis, the concept of the Nusantara Islam that is soft, peaceful, tolerant and grounded in tradition and highly prioritizes the interests and fulfillment of social rights has been confirmed by the leaders of the nation since the beginning of independence. In Indonesia, the majority of Muslims loyally accept Pancasila as the philosophy of life of the state and want to practice it in the life of the nation. They accept the fact that Indonesia is a plural country. They respect each other between groups of different ethnicities, ethnicities, religions, and can coexist peacefully and protect each other. It is because Muslims in Indonesia are historically educated and inspired by the provision that they are born and live in a diverse country.

It does not need to be denied that some groups confront Islam with Pancasila. By carrying out Islamic reform and purification of faith, they

oppose religious cultures which are considered harmful to the purity of faith. Facing this reality, many moderate Islamic thinkers react, one of them is K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) who dared to voice his disapproval of those who opposed Islam with the Pancasila in the early 1980s, namely when he rolled out the idea of 'Indigenous Islam'. Islam should not be uprooted from local cultural roots (Mujiburrahman, 2008: 19). Wahid asks, why should we replace the word 'prayer' with 'prayer', 'langgar' or 'surau' with 'mushalla', 'kiai' or 'master teacher' with 'ustadz'? He was concerned that formalism would occur in the form of total Arabization (Wahid, 1989: 67-90).

Therefore, according to him, the indigenization of Islam is needed. Regarding the indigenous idea of Islam - which the author considers this to be the forerunner of the spirit of affirming the current concept of Islamic Nusantara, Abdurrahman gave an interesting parable. Indigenization of Islam is part of Islamic history, both in its home country and in other countries, including Indonesia. The two histories form a large river that continues to flow and is then re-entered by times so that the river grows bigger. The joining of new times means the entry of new water that changes the color of the existing water. Even at the next stage, this river flow may be exposed to very dirty 'industrial waste'. Indeed it's still the same river and old water. The purpose of this parable is that the process of struggle with the reality of history does not change Islam, but only changes the manifestation of Islamic life (Wahid, 1989: 83).

Many examples show the manifestation of Islam in the local culture. For instance, Walisongo in Java made the roof of a three-tiered multi-storey mosque which was a substitute for a nine-tiered roof in pre-Islamic (Hindu-Buddhist) times. If at first, the nine levels mark the Hindu concept of various stages of human life, then the three levels are given three basic teachings of Islam: faith, Islam, and ihsan (Wahid, 1989).

Islam's accommodative attitude towards local culture was also well formulated by traditional Muslim leaders from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), K. H. Achmad Siddiq. In his writing, he explained that the social attitude problem deals with cultural affairs still existing. Ahlussunnah argues that Islamic religion has a natural character, following conscience, ability, and reasonable human needs, which are still not influenced by lust. Islam does not come to erase everything that is already in humans and reject everything that comes from outside. Things that are appropriate or in line with Islam are continued (taken) and developed. Things that have not been entirely in line with Islam are

sought for adjustments to be in line with Islam. Neutral things (empty values) filled with Islamic values, and things that are contradictory or impossible to run with Islam, are prohibited (deleted) (Mujiburrahman, 2008: 53).

The importance of considering local culture is not only an argument in traditionalist Muslim thinkers but also reformists. One of the most prominent among the reformists was Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur). He, among others, argued that the coming of Islam always results in a change of society or a transformation of the society towards a better direction. At the same time, the arrival of Islam does not have to be 'disruptive or cutting off society from its past but also can help preserve whatever is good and right from the past and can be preserved in the universal teaching test of Islam. It was experienced and witnessed by Kalijaga about Javanese society, when he saw Majapahit feudalism quickly collapse and was replaced by Islamic egalitarianism which invaded the cities of the northern coast of Java which became the centers of international and Nusantara trade. Then Kalijaga decided to participate in encouraging the enlightenment of the transformation process by actually using local elements to support the effectiveness of the technical and operational aspects (Madjid, 1992: 552).

Besides being polite, which is accommodating and transformative towards local culture, Islam is also open to the culture that comes from outside as long as it is in line with the basic values of Islam itself. According to Cak Nur, this openness is precisely based on the doctrine that Islam is a universal religion. First, Islam, in its generic meaning, is the attitude of surrender and submission to the Almighty God, and submission is a natural tendency of man. Therefore, Islam is a religion of humanity. Second, Islam is the religion of all the Prophets and Apostles, the recipients of revelation throughout history. Third, Islam is the religion of the universe in the sense that all of this nature is subject to God, who has established natural laws. Based on this universality, it makes sense that Islamic culture is cosmopolitan (Madjid, 1992: 426-449).

If Cak Nur (Nurcholish Madjid) sees Islamic universalism which leads to the cosmopolitanism of Islamic culture from Islam itself, then Gus Dur sees it for the objectives of the Islamic law that are in line with universal human values. According to Gus Dur, there are five basic guarantees that Islamic law wants to provide, namely (1) physical safety guarantees from unlawful actions; (2) guarantee of religious freedom; (3) guarantee of family and decent safety; (4) guarantee of the safety of property or property rights; (5) guarantee of professional safety. These five basic guarantees indicate the existence of

universal human values in Islam, and that Islamic culture is cosmopolitan (Mujiburrahman, 2008: 54).

The theological foundation put forward by our thinkers to make a connecting line between universal Islam and local and global culture is as an introduction to the discourse of Islamic thought and movement of the archipelago. In 2008, *Gatra* magazine presented reports on various Islamic styles in various regions with nuances of certain ethnic cultures, showing a concern for the distinctive aspects of Indonesia behind the universality of Islam. The same thing was done by *Tashwirul Afkar* Journal published by Lakpesdam NU in 2008 with the theme 'Islam Nusantara' until the issue was confirmed at the 33rd NU Congress in Jombang in August 2015.

At present, the theme of Islamic Nusantara has become the spotlight of the people of Indonesia and the World. In addition to being a topic of warm conversation in Indonesian media, the theme of Islam Nusantara was once the topic of discussion between religious leaders, observers, diplomats, and community leaders at the United Nations headquarters in New York on August 18, 2015. For NU as the most prominent Islamic mass organization in Indonesia, Nusantara Islam refers to the historical fact of the spread of Islam in the archipelago through a cultural approach, not with rigid and rigid doctrines. That Islam in the archipelago was preached by embracing the culture, harmonizing culture, respecting the culture, and not suppressing culture. President Jokowi has also publicly expressed his support for the Islamic Nusantara model, namely polite Islam, Islam that is full of manners and full of tolerance (Bizawie, 2015).

Islam Nusantara is a typical Indonesian style of Islam, a combination of Islamic theological values with the values of local traditions, culture, and customs in the country. The character of Nusantara Islam shows the existence of local wisdom in the archipelago that does not violate the teachings of Islam but instead synergizes Islamic teachings with local customs widely spread in the territory of Indonesia. The presence of Islam is not to damage or challenge existing traditions. Instead, Islam came to enrich and Islamize the traditions and culture that existed *tadriji* (gradual). It could take decades or generations. Ro'is Aam, the Executive Board of the Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU) who is also Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) KH Ma'ruf Amin, stated that Islam which entered the archipelago was introduced by peaceful means. Proven to be able to bring peace to people's lives in Indonesia.

Ma'ruf Amin stressed that Nusantara Islam is not a new school, but a religious Islam that is tolerant and able to engage in dialogue with local cultures. Since the days of the Wali Songo, this concept has been applied, and it turns out to be in harmony with people's lives so that Islam can develop rapidly in the archipelago. An Islamic concept that has polite character is never compelling and without violence or intimidation. Not hard Islam that is very textual, but also not liberal Islam. So, Nusantara Islam is in the middle according to the principle of *tawasuth* in NU (Situs Islam Nusantara, 2016)

By looking at the face of Islam in the world today, Nusantara Islam is urgently needed, because its distinctive features emphasize the middle road because it is moderate (moderate), not extreme right and left, always balanced, inclusive, tolerant and able to coexist peacefully with adherents other religions, and can accept democracy well. The Islamic model of the archipelago can be traced from the history of the arrival of Islamic teachings to the archipelago which he called through the process of vernacularization and followed by the process of indigenization so that Islam became embedded in Indonesian culture. Therefore, Nusantara Islam is deemed worthy of being an alternative to building a world of Islamic civilization that is peaceful and full of harmony in any country, although of course, its name in other places does not have to be Nusantara Islam.

### **Islam Nusantara and Its Future Prospect**

In terms of vision and function, the concept of Islamic Nusantara should have been widely accepted by the Indonesian people. The success, of course, is not only limited to the acceptance of Nusantara Islam as a concept of the Muslim religion in Indonesia. Furthermore, Nusantara Islam must be practiced in the daily lives of Muslims in Indonesia in their social life. Martin van Bruinessen, a Dutch anthropologist studying Islam in Indonesia and Asia said history has proven that the soft character of Nusantara Islam has been embedded in Indonesian Muslims who are very familiar with tolerance. It can reduce horizontal conflicts that often occurred so as not to widen large-scale as happened in the Middle East (Republika Online, 2015). When it was confirmed and received support from the government, Islam Nusantara has the potential to become a stronger position in the lives of Indonesian Muslims.

As a consequence of the diversity of understanding of Islam in Indonesia, which is also diverse, the potential for the development of Nusantara Islam in the future will not be separated from opposition. Groups or organizations

that carry the purity of creed and also campaign for the system of Khilafah government or mass organizations considered to be opposed to the concept of tolerant Islam will be a challenge. For example, Hizbut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), one of the organizations that voiced the Caliphate considered the Nusantara Islam to be a dangerous idea. Even the head of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) blatantly refused and called for the fight against the concept of the Nusantara Islam which he considered was only a tool for a group of people to perpetuate liberalization of Islam in Indonesia (HTI, 2015). However, Azyumardi Azra (in Rizieq, 2016) said, "Indonesian Islam (Islam Nusantara) will not fail as long as we continue to strengthen." The meaning of strengthening here is to continue to promote the socialization and strengthening of the concept of the Islamic Archipelago itself. Especially by NU as bearers and mass organizations having enormous influence both in the community and in government (Azra, 2015b).

Furthermore, the spirit of the Islamic Archipelago certainly has the potential to be applied in other countries in the world. Especially lately, world leaders have begun to be interested and learn this concept. As stated by Martin van Bruinessen, "The idea of Islam Nusantara or Islamic peace in the style of Indonesia, must continue to be introduced to the world." The internet channel, according to him, can be used by Indonesian Muslims to convey their ideas through international languages. The same thing was said by PBNU Rois Aam, K. H. Ma'ruf Amin that Islam Nusantara brings peace in Indonesia within interfaith, inter-ethnic, and inter-ethnic support. Islam Nusantara is Islam jointed with local wisdom (Muslim Media News, 2015).

In this context, strengthening the Islam of the archipelago is intended to enhance and continuously strive to find, reconcile, communicate, weave and produce new constructs in strengthening the role of Islam in the life of the nation and state. The construction does not have to be a total renewal or a complete return to traditions, but it can only be limited updates. An invention is not meant to find tradition or authenticity literally, copy what has been done, but how the local tradition can be modified so that in the present context, it becomes relevant and contextual. Thus, Nusantara Islam is a process that is continuous and does not stop in finding forms and ways of thinking and acting in Islam, which always contextualizes in the motion of history. And all elements, especially Muslims in Indonesia, should be wise to realize that all this is done solely in the context of our efforts as Muslims in realizing our shared ideals, namely to make Islam *Rahmatan lil 'Alamiin*.

## Conclusion

From the above explanation, it is understandable that the Nusantara Islam has been grounded, along with progressing Islam, both of which are moving and developing in the future. Islam Nusantara (NU) with “Advancing Islam” (Islam Berkemajuan) Muhammadiyah has a crucial historical role in building Nationalism and civilization in Indonesia. This role is what causes Indonesian Islam and Nationalism to become inseparable. Although the majority of Indonesia’s population embraces Islam, it does not necessarily make Indonesia an Islamic State. The idea that this nation was built and founded by various groups from Sabang-Merauke made Indonesia remain steadfast towards the Pancasila and the motto of Unity in Diversity.

In its development, both NU and Muhammadiyah, it is increasingly evident that Indonesian Islam has significant capital to contribute to efforts to build world peace and prosperity. Both NU and Muhammadiyah did not want to force the enforcement of Islamic law in the archipelago. Both believe that Indonesia must continue to stand tall in the ideology of the Pancasila. Islam Nusantara seeks to build Indonesian and World Civilizations, Nusantara Islam is a form of polite, friendly, civilized and cultured Islam. The PB-NU leaders stressed that the distinctive characteristics of the Nusantara Islam were Islam, which merged with culture.

## References

- Abdalla, Ulil Abshar. 2015. Reportase Majelis Kamisan, Kontroversi Islam Nusantara. *Islam Lib*. <http://islamlib.com/gagasan/islamnusantara/kontroversi-islam-nusantara>
- Ali, Ahmad. 2015. Membumikan al-Kulliyat al-Khams sebagai Paradigma Islam Nusantara. *NU Online*, 8 Juni, [www.nu.or.id](http://www.nu.or.id).
- Alma’arif. 2015. Islam Nusantara: Studi Epistemologis Dan Kritis, *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 15 (2), 265-291.
- Arsyad, M. 2012. Kajian Kritis tentang Akulturasi Islam dengan Budaya Lokal. *Lentera Pendidikan*, 15 (2), 211-217.
- Azra, Azyumardi. 2003. *Asia Tenggara Konsentrasi Baru Kebangkitan Islam*. Bandung: Fokusmedia.



- Azra, Azyumardi. 2015a. *Islam Nusantara (1)*, Republika Online 18 Juni, <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/kolom/resonansi/15/06/17/nq3f9n-islam-nusantara-1>
- Azra, Azyumardi. 2015b. *Islam Nusantara adalah Islam Toleran*, 08/07/2015, Berita Satu, <http://www.beritasatu.com/nasional/nusantara>
- Bentley, Jerry H.; Bridenthal, Renate & Wigen, Kären E. 2007. *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Bizawie, Zainul Milal. 2015. *Islam Nusantara Sebagai Subjek dalam Islamic Studies: Lintas Diskurus dan Metodologis*. In Akhmad Sahal, Munawir Aziz. *Islam Nusantara; dari Ushul Fiqh hingga Konsep Historis*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Drewes, GWJ. 1968. New Light on the Coming of Islam to Indonesia. *BKI*, 124 (4), 433-459.
- Fatimi, S.Q., *Islam Comes to Malaysia*. Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Institute, 1963, h.31-32.
- HTI, *Bahaya Ide Islam Nusantara*, 01/07/2015, (<http://hizbut-tahrir.or.id/2015/07/01/bahaya-ide-islam-nusantara/>)
- der Kroef, Justus M. 1951. The Term Indonesia: Its Origin and Usage, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 71 (3), 166-171.
- Karim, M. Abdul. 2007. *Islam Nusantara*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Book Publisher.
- Kuntowijoyo. 2008. *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi untuk Aksi*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Laffan, Michael F. 2007. *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below The Winds*. 1st Edition. London: Routledge.
- Laffan, Michael F. 2015. *Sejarah Islam di Nusantara*. Yogyakarta: Bentang.
- Madjid, Nurcholish. 1992. *Islam: Doktrin dan Peradaban*. Jakarta: Paramadina.
- Morrison, G.E. 1951. The Coming of Islam to the East India. *JMBRAS*, 24 (1), 31-37.
- Mujiburrahman. 2008. *Mengindonesiakan Islam: Representasi dan Ideologi*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

- Muslim Media News. 2015. KH. Ma'ruf Amin Siap Dorong PBNU Jadikan Islam Nusantara sebagai Pola Pikir, 10 August 2015, <http://www.muslimmedianews.com/2015/08/kh-maruf-amin-siap-dorong-pbnu-jadikan.html#ixzz3xO5iqA8U>
- Prapantja, Rakawi. 1962. trans. Theodore Gauthier Pigeaud, *Java in the 14th Century, A Study in Cultural History*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff.
- Reportase Majelis Kamisan. 2015. *Kontroversi Islam Nusantara*, Islam Lib. 11 July. <http://islamlib.com/gagasan/islamnusantara/kontroversi-islam-nusantara/>
- Republika Online. 2015. *Pandangan Profesor Belanda Mengenai Islam Nusantara*. 2 August 2015 (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/islam-nusantara/15/08/02/nsf416368-pandangan-profesor-belanda-mengenai-islam-nusantara>)
- Rizieq, Habib. 2016. Inilah Kesesatan Jemaat Islam Nusantara (JIN), 16 January 2016 (<http://www.eramuslim.com/berita/analisa/habib-rizieq-inilah-kesesatan-islam-nusantara.htm#.VpnhXraLTDC>)
- Situs Islam Nusantara. 2016. *Islam Nusantara Sejak Zaman Wali Songo Ajarkan Kesantunan*, 09 January 2016, (<http://www.islamnusantara.com/islam-nusantara-sejak-zaman-wali-songo-ajarkan-kesantunan/>)
- Suparjo. 2008. Islam dan Budaya: Strategi Kultural Walisongo dalam Membangun Masyarakat Muslim Indonesia. *Komunika*, 2 (2), 181-182.
- Suryanegara, Ahmad Mansur. 1998. *Menemukan Sejarah: Wacana Pergerakan Islam di Indonesia*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Wahid, Abdurrahman. 1989. Pribumisasi Islam. In Muntaha Azhari & Abdul Mun'im Saleh (Eds), *Islam Indonesia Menatap Masa Depan*. Jakarta: P3M.