

PESANTREN AND THE PRESERVATION OF ISLAM NUSANTARA

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Abstract:

This article describes the background of the rise of an Indonesian moderate Islamic understanding in the midst of a trans-national Islamic movement with the scriptural-puritanical in its character which spread out pervasively in the country; and this new Islamic model is intolerant to local traditions. Meanwhile, historically, *Islam Nusantara* has been deeply rooted among the Moslems in archipelago, and this traditional-moderate Islam has been developed by *Walisongo* (nines guardians). *Islam Nusantara* is accommodative to the local cultures and traditions. It produces a moderate and tolerant model of Islam. This article also describes the role of *pesantren* in protecting the heritages of *Islam Nusantara*. In this context, *Islam Nusantara* is an understanding of Islamicity which is tolerant, peaceful, and accommodative to *Nusantara* culture. Therefore, it denies radicalism and avoids hostility.

Abstrak:

Tulisan ini mendeskripsikan latar belakang timbulnya paham keagamaan Islam yang ramah khas Indonesia, di tengah suasana semakin masifnya penyebaran Islam literalis-puritanis skriptural-transnasionalis yang garang terhadap tradisi lokal. Dideskripsikan betapa paham yang kemudian dikenal dengan "Islam Nusantara" adalah sesuatu yang memang berakar kuat dalam tradisi bangsa Indonesia dan sudah dikembangkan sejak masa paling dini oleh *Walisongo*, sehingga Islam Nusantara tidak perlu dipandang dengan kacamata curiga karena ia akrab dengan budaya dan karakter bangsa Indonesia sendiri, yang cenderung berwatak moderat dan toleran. Dideskripsikan pula peran pesantren dengan berbagai karakteristik, kelebihan, dan kekurangannya sebagai jangkar pewarisan budaya Islam Nusantara. Dalam hal ini, Islam Nusantara adalah sebuah pemahaman keislaman yang toleran dan damai dan akomodatif terhadap budaya Nusantara. Karenanya, ia menolak radikalisme dan kekerasan.

Key Words:

Universal Islam, *Islam Nusantara*, *pesantren*, moderate Islam, tolerant Moslem

Introduction

In his speech at the 33th conference of Nahdhatul Ulama in Jombang, KH. A. Mustofa Bisri said that nowadays the

world suffers from the degradation of humanity values; a world filled with chaos and bloody conflicts. In the Middle East, a radical group speaks and claims itself

in the name of Islam, but their actions and deeds are in contrast with the genuine values and spirits of Islamic teachings. This radical group offers the world with a horrible face of Islam. So, in response to some Moslems who claimed for themselves as representing Islam, the international society asking themselves where is Islam which, supposedly, teaches peace and gives respect to humanity, Islam as *rahmatan li al-âlamîn*, Islam as the great source of mercy for all human race.¹

In the midst of this bewilderment seeking for a kind of peaceful and merciful Islam, a concept of *Islam Nusantara*² is now being promoted and offered to the Moslem world seriously. Why this *Islam*

¹A. Mustofa Bisri, "Islam Nusantara: Revolusi mental dan Amanat Hadratus Syaikh", *Aula: Majalah Nahdlatul Ulama*, No. 09 SNH XXXVII (September, 2015), p. 63. Machasin also emphasized, "In Middle East so many practices of Moslems which expose violence. Today, the image of Islam worsened and dominated by the middle east model of Islam. Whenever a talk about Islam aroused, it will be perceived as such. Amrullah, "Islam Nusantara in the International Struggle", *Aula: Majalah Nahdlatul Ulama*, No. 09 SNH XXXVII (September, 2015), p. 19.

² The term of *Islam Nusantara* is artificial and so it's sounded oddly just like the similar terms such as Malaysian Islam, Saudian Islam, Turkish Islam etc. This oddness is resulted from the general believe of Moslems that Islam is based on the same source namely The Holy Quran and The Prophet Tradition (Sunnah or Hadits). It's true that Islam has fixed ordinances (*tsawâbit*), like the basic teaching of beliefs (*aqîdah*) and rituals (*'ibâdah*). These teachings is unchanged. But the context of *Islam Nusantara* is nothing to do with these basic and unchanged teachings. This *Islam Nusantara* related with the changing regulations (*mutaghayyirât*), namely in the domain of human relations and interactions (*mu'âmalah*) and the cultural aspect. Interview with Akhmad Sahal about *Islam Nusantara*, accessed at <http://koranopini.com/tokoh/wawancara/4792>.

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Nusantara is really deserved to get our attention? There are a lot of reasons for that. One of these reasons is given by Said Aqil Siraj as mentioned below:

The Moslems propagators, since the early times of their services, never banished immediately the practices of local wisdom and tradition -which had spread throughout Archipelago from a long time ago. They never regarded these "national heritages" of the Archipelago deserved to be pulled out, and then to be replaced by Islamic symbols literally. This attitude of *Islam Nusantara* towards local wisdom and traditions is in contrast with the attitude of ISIS, Boko Haram, or As Shahab when they ruled a land. They destroyed historical heritages of this land, even the tombs have been violated abruptly. The journey of these Moslem propagators in Archipelago had proven that there was no contradiction between nationalism and Islamic teachings. They realized that the process of religious propagation needs a conducive situation and a suitable locus for the seeds of the religious values to have chances to grow well.³

Said Aqil Siraj also emphasized:

Islam in Indonesia has no radical root. The rising of radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia is the result of religious culture adopted from abroad. Radical Islam in Indonesia is an imported product, and then distributed inside the country. The global communication technology makes people easily absorb foreign ideas from abroad and this absorption triggered a new model which is struggling to give a new meaning for Islamic teachings and its practices.⁴

³ Said Aqil Siraj, "Promoting Patriotism", in *Nasionalisme dan Islam Nusantara*, eds. Abdullah & Mohammad Bakir (Jakarta: Kompas dan Lakpesdam NU, 2015), p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

In spite of the facts above, there is still a suspicion in seeing this idea of *Islam Nusantara* at least there are three dangers related with *Islam Nusantara*. First, the idea of *Islam Nusantara* basically is a part of secularization process which has been begun at 1980s by Nurcholish Madjid. The Idea of *Islam Nusantara* is no more than secularization in the new cover. In his book, *Islam, Modernity, and The Indonesiacities*", Madjid set forth to build an inclusive Islam, an Islamic model filled with openness and tolerance to other religions and Indonesian culture. This is the same argumentation which set forth by the defender of *Islam Nusantara* who promoting openness and tolerance to other religions and Archipelago cultures. Secondly, the idea of *Islam Nusantara* has great potention to lead Moslems to conflicts triggered by primordial issues. So there will be *Islam Nusantara*, Middle East Islam, Turkish Islam. etc. It is a kind of stick and carrot politic which has been used by the colonial rulers to weaken Moslem societies. They also make Islamic bipolarization by using bipolarity categories such as modernist-traditionalist, cultural-structural, spiritual-politic, esoterist-exsoterist Islam. Thirdly, *Islam Nusantara* will be the greatest hindrance for conducting Islamic law (*sharī'ah*) and caliphate system.

Furthermore, there are also skeptics who urged to say that *Nusantara* (Archipelago) is the periphery of Islamic World, and that Islam didn't come to Archipelago directly through the Arabic Moslem propagators, but it was delivered by Ghujarat and Kurdistan traders, and it was also brought by Campa and Chinese

Moslems,⁵ and so Islam which came to Archipelago was a syncretic Islam, and it even became decadent because it was polluted by different traditions which has been passed through by Islam in it's long journey from it's origin in Arabia to Archipelago.⁶

The perspective mentioned above resulted a negative image on *Islam Nusantara*. It is regarded pejoratively as

⁵ Some historians set forth a theory about the coming of Islam to Archipelago stating that it came from India sub-continent, inspite of came directly from Arabia and Persia. The first historian who set forth this theory was Pijnappel, a Dutch historian from Leiden university. He explained the root of Islam in Archipelago saying that Islam came to this land from Ghujarat and Malabar. His statement was based on the facts that the Arabic Moslems, who followed Shafi'ite School, migrated and dwelled in these cities; and then they brought it to Archipelago. This theory, later on, revised by Snouck Hurgronje. Snouck explained that when Islam came to India sub-continent, it had strong base at the harbour cities in the southern of the country. Several Dakka Moslems who became mediators in the trade relationship between Middle East and Indonesia-Malayan, came to Archipelago as the first propagators of Islam. Later on, according to Hurgronje, they were succeeded by Arabic Moslems, especially who claimed themself as *sayyid* (the lord) and *syarīf* (the noble) and they claimed as the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and they propagated Islam, wether as *ulama* (religious man) or as *sulthān* (ruler) in this land. He said that the most accepted time of this early Islamization in Indonesia-Malayan was around 12th century AD. Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara Jaringan Global dan Lokal* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), p. 24 and Agus Muhammad, "Islam Nusantara di Tengah Gelombang Puritanisme", *Tashwirul Afkar: Jurnal Refleksi Pemikiran Keagamaan dan Kebudayaan*, No. 26 (2008), pp. 25-26.

⁶ Abdul Mun'im Dz. "Mengukuhkan Jangkar Islam Nusantara", *Tashwirul Afkar: Jurnal Refleksi Pemikiran Keagamaan dan Kebudayaan*, No. 26 (2008), p. 3.

an old fashioned, traditional, rube, superficial, and syncretic Islam.⁷ The Indonesianists, moreover, regard Islam Nusantara as a different manifestation of Islam compared to the Islamic practices in Arabia. In Java, according to this perspective, Islam is no more than a thin layer at the surface of Eastern World with it's teachings contradicting fundamentally with Islamic teachings which gives orientation on transcendentalism and law. Meanwhile the Eastern World (Java) gives strong emphasis on the immanent nature of divinity. The religious practices of Indonesian are strongly influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, and even the practices of local religion of the native Indonesian (Javanese), who worships ancestors, gods and goddesses, and spirits, are still present on their religious life.⁸

Islam Nusantara: An Accommodative Islam to Tradition

From the very beginning, Islam had a close relationship with culture;⁹ and Islam underwent altogether a dialectical encounter with culture and made it a locus for it's transformation. Therefore, it was natural for Islam to use Arabic idioms because it was born and grew for the first time among Arabic tradition. And so Islam has a rich vocabularies of trade because it grew among the Arabic

trade society. Islam also reflected the Arabic cosmology, thus it gives eschatological concept of happiness in the form of heaven filled with rivers which waters flowing underneath. A heaven that people who lives in the desert dreams a lot about it.¹⁰

Based on this argumentation, it can be asserted that the Islamic actualization was coherently related to the locality aspects. This was what actually had happened throughout Islamic World from Arabia, Turk, Persia, India, to Archipelago. Thus, *Islam Nusantara* can be understood and appreciated within this way of thinking, namely it was a manifestation of Islamic values which underwent acculturation process with local culture.¹¹ Azyumardi Azra, along side with this context, gave a definition of *Islam Nusantara* i.e. a distinctive Islam resulted from interaction, contextualization, indigenization, and vermin-culation of universal Islam with the realities of social, culture, and religions in Indonesia.¹² In short, *Islam Nusantara* is an Islamic understanding and practices in Archipelago and *Islam Nusantara* is a product of dialectic between the Text of

⁷ Ibid, p.2.

⁸ Martin van Bruinessen, "Islam Lokal dan Islam Global di Indonesia", *Tashwirul Afkar: Jurnal Refleksi Pemikiran Keagamaan dan Kebudayaan*, No. 14 (2003), p. 68.

⁹ Abd A'la, "Islam Pribumi: Lokalitas dan Universalitas Islam dalam Perspektif NU", *Tashwirul Afkar: Jurnal Refleksi Pemikiran Keagamaan dan Kebudayaan*, No. 14 (2003), p. 86.

¹⁰ Moh. Mashur Abadi & Edi Susanto, "Tradisi Ngunya Muslim Pegayaman Bali", *Karsa: Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Keislaman*, Vol. 20 No. 2 (Desember, 2012), pp. 228-229.

¹¹ Abdullah Ubaid & Mohammad Bakir, "Reaktualisasi Islam Nusantara: Pengantar Editor", in *Nasionalisme dan Islam Nusantara*, eds. Abdullah Ubaid dan Mohammad Bakir (Jakarta: Kompas dan Lakpesdam NU, 2015), p. xi

¹² See at official Portal of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, cq. Portal of Arabic Literature and Humaniora Faculty.

Islamic Law (*shari'ah*) with the local realities and culture.¹³

Within *Islam Nusantara*, it will be clearly explained how a normative teachings of God accommodated into culture, which is human made, without losing each other identities. Arabization or a process of self identification with Arabic culture is a process of our withdrawal from our own culture, and therefore it is not suitable with our needs.¹⁴ *Islam Nusantara* works out seriously to make religion and culture for not negating and defeating each other. *Islam Nusantara*, thus, harmonize both of them by developing a religious reason which is not taken from it's authentic religious form literally; a kind of transforming values into a suitable form within certain cultural frame. The result is no more conflict between religion and culture. For example, the Islamic saints (*wali*) in Java introduced Islam through tradition, so they needed to learn and probe *kakawin* (classical literature of Javanese or Kawi); and different performing arts, and due to their mastery of traditional culture they composed *serat* (a kind of classical Javanese treatise consist of religious ethical and moral codes and recited in rhythmic tone) or book (*kitab*). *Wayang* (Javanese traditional puppet show) which was part of poly-theistic ritual of Hinduism was changed and transformed to become a popular instrument for the sake of Islamic propagation to deliver monotheistic tea-

ching. This transformation of *wayang* into Islamic nature was a brilliant creativity, and through which all stratification of Javanese society -from the peasant to noble and royal family- had converted to Islam. They felt no harm with the present of Islam because it was not a threat for their traditions.

Based on the facts mentioned above, *Islam Nusantara* could be offered further as a counter discourse to authentic, literal-scriptural, transnational, and pure Islam, an Islamic model which demands a monolithic practice of Islam throughout the Moslem world. Instead of demanding a single form of Islamicity, *Islam Nusantara* gives a diversity of Islamic interpretations of the religious practices in every different place. And so Islamicity as a manifestation of Islamic value which undergoes dialectical encounter with historical-cultural realities is expressed in different ways within certain local frames. With *Islam Nusantara*, it could be expected there will be no more self-truth claim that Arabic or Middle East Islam has as the pure and sole form of Islamic manifestation.¹⁵

Furthermore, clearly *Islam Nusantara* works out to criticize a view which assists on the using of Arabic expression as the sole and the most legitimate manifestation of Islam. Certainly, this view will diminish and even banish other Islamic traditions.

¹³ Afifuddin Muhajir, "Maksud Istilah Islam Nusantara", *Aula: Majalah Nahdlatul Ulama* No. 08 SNHXXXVII (Agustus, 2015), p. 15.

¹⁴ M. Imdadun Rahmat, "Islam Pribumi: Mencari Wajah Islam Indonesia", *Tashwirul Afkar: Jurnal Refleksi Pemikiran Keagamaan dan Kebudayaan*, No. 14 (2003), p. 9.

¹⁵ In the perspective of puritanist Islam, the very existence of local tradition is denied. This opinion resulted from the reading of tradition by using Quranic text which supposed to be transcendent, complete, and coverall. But actually the case is that al-Qur'an and the Prophet Tradition were constructed on the base of tradition which is historical and particular.

Viewing local traditions as heresy (*bid'ah*) and astray (*dlalal*) only brings destruction and demolition for local traditions which have been nurtured by *ulama* in various non-Arabia lands. Therefore, *Islam Nusantara* takes a brave endeavor to keep these different cultural expressions of religiosity alive in harmony and enrich each other as well.¹⁶

The religious tradition always undergoes dialectical encounter with reality and this fact makes it becomes changeable according to it's socio-cultural context. Within *Islam Nusantara's* perspective, an ideal Islam, which is imagined by puritanism Moslem, is never exist. The only Islam which is exist is an historical-cultural Islam; it lives and grows amid the cultural diversity of the society. Within Indonesian context, according to *Islam Nusantara*, a good Islamic understanding should be correlated with the needs of Indonesian society, with it's problems and challenges in the future.

Islam Nusantara has no pretention at all to adopt and implant the local Arabic traditions in the Archipelago. It fully realizes that such effort of universalization of local Arabic culture is not a wise choice because it will decrease local traditions. Abdurrahman Wahid, the pioneer and advocate of the indigenization of Islam which eventually becomes *Islam Nusantara*, critically regarded the process of self-identification with the Middle East culture will lead to a with-

drawal of Indonesian people from it's own culture.¹⁷

Certainly, *Islam Nusantara* will not regard all tradition as positive and thus deserve appreciation. It only appreciates tradition which ensures justice and prosperity of the society. Furthermore, *Islam Nusantara* considers that a high tradition (*'urf shahih*) has authority to put a limitation (*takhshish*) on general texts of the Quran or Hadits.¹⁸ Obviously, *Islam Nusantara* urges to put a high tradition on the same plane with religious text itself.

From the historical perspective, actually *Islam Nusantara* takes the spirit (*élan vital*) which has been taught by *Walisongo* in their propagation at 15th and 16th century in Java.¹⁹ *Walisongo* has inserted the local values successfully into Indonesian Islam. The creativity of *Walisongo* produced a new kind of reasoning for *Islam Nusantara* which was not a blind and literal imitation of Arabic Islam.

Walisongo accommodated culture into Islam, and so Islam entered the space and time of Archipelago to be integrated and united into it's realm. For example, *Sunan Kudus* toke advantages from Hin-

¹⁷ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Pergulatan Negara, Agama, dan Kebudayaan* (Jakarta: Desantara, 2001), p. 111 and 119.

¹⁸ Tradition (*'urf*) is counted one of the sources of Islamic law (*al-'âdah al-muhakkamah*). On that plane, it is interesting to consider an Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) theorem, namely "What is strongly settled by tradition is similar to that settled by the Text (*al-tsâbit bi al-'urf ka al-tsâbit bi al-nash*). From this theorem its's clearly seen that '*ulama* had given tradition with a high appreciation .

¹⁹ Afifuddin Muhajir asserted that *Islam Nusantara* is a methode (*manhaj*) of Islam which has been practiced by *Walisongo* and then followed by Sunite Ulama. Muhajir, "Maksud Istilah Islam Nusantara", p. 15.

¹⁶ Abdul Mun'im DZ, "Mempertahankan Keragaman Budaya", *Tashwirul Afkar: Jurnal Refleksi Pemikiran Keagamaan dan Kebudayaan*, No. 14 (2003), p. 7

dhuiism and Budhism symbols to approach and converse the people of Kudus into Islam. This can be seen clearly from the construction shape of Kudus mosque, especially the shape of it's minaret, gate, and ablution place which symbolizes the eight paths of Budhis enlightenment. And as such, *Sunan Bonang* did by changing Javanese *gamelan* (Javanese orchestra), which was strongly influenced by Hidhuism aesthetic, as such so that it has Islamic recitation (*dzikir*) nuance and therefore urging people to enter and love transcendental life. *Sunan Bonang* interpreted the epos of enmity between *Kurawa* and *Pandawa* as a battle between negation (*nafyu*) of evil side of human and affirmation (*istbat*) of divine side of human. Likewise, *Sunan Kalijaga* chosed art and culture as his propagation instruments. He was very tolerant to local culture; and he believed people would stayed away if their culture which consists of their hobbies, customs, and fondness were bitterly offended and denied. They will oppose every kind of purification for their culture, so that is why *Sunan Kalijaga* using a gradual approach to attract them to Islamic teachings. He created a specific shirt for men which symbolizes modesty and piety (*baju takwa*), *sekatenan* (derived from Arabic *syahadatayn*; a popular festival in Yogyakarta preceded another festival namely the celebration of The Prophet's Birthday), *gerebeg maulud* (part of the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday in which a *gunungan*, composition of foods with yellowish rice, meats of chicken, vegetables, and fruits shaped like a mountain carried around The Palace of Yogyakarta), and *layang kalimasada* (derived from Arabic *kalimat syahadat*; a

sacred letter consist of *kalimat syahadat*, and this letter is the most sacred relic of *Pandawa*). Within this same method, several syncretic religious rituals aroused among the Javanese Moslems such as *tahlilan*, *wetonan*, and *slametan*, etc.

From the explanation above, the basic thought of *Islam Nusantara* can be inferred as follow: *First*, Islam gives a great consideration to taditions; and in the case it's values contradict with the local tradition, Islam will approach it gradually and appreciate it proportionally and even transform it by taking it's form as instrument for developing Islamic propagation. *Second*, Islam has no offence to other faith and religion, it builds a strong base for peaceful co-existential life. *Third*, Islam comes to revitalizes obsolete traditions, so it becomes accepted as a religion but at the same time it is also become tradition. *Fourth*, Islam becomes a traditionalized religion, a religion which is deeply rooted in traditions.

The basic thought which sees traditions friendly above makes Islam easily accepted by various peoples in Archipelago with their different cultures and traditions, and now it becomes the religion of majority in the modern Indonesia; and it is spread out nationwide ranging from urban to peasant society , it even reaches people in the far remote lands of Archipelago. For those who have opportunities to get adequate religious knowledge of Islam, they become *santri* (Moslems who practice Islamic teachings and rituals obediently), and those who have not such opportunities and so they are lack of Islamic knowledge's, they are identified and called as *abangan* namely Muslems who perform the Islamic rituals

loosely, but they hold traditions firmly; traditions which are blended with Islamic nuances.

The existence of *Islam Nusantara* has a great and deep implication on the life of Indonesian people. *First*, there is a strong relation between religion and local radiations, so from the very beginning Islam opposes every kind of imperialism, both on political or cultural aspects. *Second*, from early time of its coming, Islam participated actively in defending freedom, establishing state, and also took an important role in constructing a constitution which is strongly based on religion and tradition; and hence *Pancasila* was born as a national agreement. *Third*, due to its care and love for tradition and homeland, *Islam Nusantara* never took any kind of rebellion against a legitimate government, because such rebellion is regarded as a betrayal to the state.²⁰

Within such context, an appropriate socialization in offering and promoting the concept of *Islam Nusantara* could be actualized and it will produce a gentle Islamic order, because, as Azra asserted, "The orthodoxy of *Islam Nusantara* developing a moderate (*washathiyah*) and tolerant characteristic. *Islam Nusantara* is rich with the Islamic legacy, and so it becomes the future hope for a global renaissance of Islamic civilization."²¹

Pesantren: The Anchor of Islam Nusantara

The history proved that *pesantren*²² has played as the most important first orthodoxy agent of *Islam Nusantara* and it still regarded as the educational center of the society in all aspects, even though its early existence is still debatable,²³ and there are several theories about it.²⁴

²² *Pesantren* is a Archipelago civilization's treasure which has been present in the *Kapitayan* periode namely before the coming of the world great religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. *Pesantren*, due to its encountering with these world great religion, has undergone changes of its form and content along side, the nature of each religion, but its mission and messages never changed, namely to give spiritual and moral values in each daily conducts of the society, from social, economic activities to state affairs. Said Aqil Siraj, *Islam Sumber Inspirasi Budaya Nusantara Menuju Masyarakat Mutamaddun* (Jakarta: LTN NU, 2015), p. 3. The interaction of *pesantren* with Islam is supposed taking place since the widespread of Walisongo propagation, Alwi Shihab, *Islam Sufistik: Islam Pertama dan Pengaruhnya Hingga Kini di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), p. 221.

²³ The core of debate goes around the question was *pesantren* an indigenous institution of *Nusantara* or was it imported from abroad. Karel A Steenbrink, for example, explained that *pesantren* was imported from India, both its form and system. Karel A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam Kurun Modern* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1994), pp. 20-23. But this view was denied by Martin van Bruinessen, and he asserted that the assumption which urged to claim that *pesantren* was a continuation of pre Islamic educational institution was not supported by accurate evidences. On the contrary, there is a strong reason to say that 19th century of *pesantren* characteristic was not found before the middle of 18th century. Martin van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradisi, Relasi-relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1997), p. 19. Furthermore, Denys Lombard also refused an assumption that *pesantren* was an

²⁰ Mun'im DZ., "Mengukuhkan Jangkar Islam Nusantara," pp. 7-8; Abdullah Ubaid, "Pengantar Editor: Reaktualisasi Islam Nusantara," p. 4.

²¹ Official Portal of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, especially portal of the Faculty of Arabic literature and Humaniora.

On the contrary, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana has explained that the educational system of *pesantren* should be abandoned or transformed so by which enabling it to lead Muslims to the gate of rationality and progress. If *pesantren*, with

imported institution, He said that it was a continuation and modification of a local institution which has been exist before. Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya (2)* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2005), p. 129 and Ahmad Fawaid Sjadzili, "Islam Nusantara: Pertautan Doktrin dan Tradisi", *Tashwirul Afkar: Jurnal Refleksi Pemikiran Keagamaan & Kebudayaan*, No. 26 (2008), pp. 10-11.

²⁴ The seven theories related to the history of pesantren run as follow. First theory, *pesantren* is an adopted or adapted model of Hindhuism and Budhism education before the coming of Islam into Archipelago. Manfred Ziemek, *Pesantren dalam Perubahan Sosial*, trans. Burche B. Soendjojo (Jakarta: P3M, 1986), p. 100 and Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam Interpretasi untuk Aksi* (Bandung: Mizan, 1991), p. 57. Second theory, *pesantren* came from India. Sutari Imam Barnadib, *Sejarah Pendidikan* (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 1983), p. 24. Third theory, the model of *pesantren* was found in Baghdad. This theory put forwarded by George Makdisi in Maksum, *Madrasah Sejarah dan Perkembangannya* (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1999), p. 80. Fourth theory, *pesantren* was a product of acculturation between Hindhuism-Budhism (pre-Islam in Indonesia) and India, HJ de Graaf, "Islam in South East Asia until 18th century", in *Perspektif Islam di Asia Tenggara*, ed. Azyumardi Azra (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1989), p. 33. Fifth theory, *pesantren* resulted from acculturation between Hindhuism and Budhism and Arabic culture, M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Pesantren dan Pembaharuan* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1995), p. 32. Sixth theory, *pesantren* comes from India and Moslems people in Indonesia, Selo Sumardjan, *Perubahan Sosial di Yogyakarta*, trans. HJ. Koesoemanta and Mochtar Prabotinggi (Jakarta: YIIS, 1986), p. 275, and seventh theory, *pesantren* was derivated from India, Middle East and from earlier local tradition, Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, dan Tarekat: Tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), p. 22.

all it's traditional nature, was conserved and taken for granted as such, according to Alisjahbana, it's means to defend backwardness and stagnation among Moslem²⁵.

In other side, recently there are a lot of *pesantrens* were no more representing an indigenous Indonesian educational institution which were labeled as *pesantren salafiyah* (classical or traditional) which preserving it's traditional characteristics, namely studying classical Islamic books (*kutub al-turats*) and sometimes these classical Islamic books are called *kitab kuning* (yellowish book). These *pesantrens*, on the contrary, worked out to bring every aspects of life to the Qur'an and the Sunnah (*al-rujû' ilâ al-Qur'ân wa al-sunnah*). They strongly refused cultures and traditions which previously had become an integrated part of national life. They wants to change these national legacies with Middle East traditions especially with Wahhabis tradition. These new characteristics filled with an uncompromised attitude towards different opinions and easily labeled the different group as heretics. They are textualist-literalist in understanding Islam so that by which they tend to be radical group. Then these unindegenious Indonesian *Pesantren* claimed themselves as *pesantren "Salafi"* (*pesantren* which follows the teachings of classical piety Moslems) and boosted themselves as the defender of the Qur'an and the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad SAW from

²⁵ See Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2012), p. 121.

any deviation of religious practices.²⁶ The addressing with confusing name *Pesantren Salafi* of these new pesantrens has made a misunderstanding when confronted with the traditional *pesantren*. Because these *salafiyyah* traditional *pesantren* always conserves and defends Indonesian cultures and accommodates local traditions and gives more emphasis for general benevolence (*al-mashlahah al-'âmmah*), tolerant, and avoids to regards other opinion as heretic.

The rising of *pesantren salafi*²⁷, as described above, gives a important sign that intolerant attitude has entered the heart of Moslem defense center, and made *pesantren* as the headquarter of radical cadre training. This practice obviously deviated from traditional values of *pesantren* which teaches tolerance and dignity²⁸, therefore violated the paradigm of *pesantren*.²⁹

Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana's critique and the rising of new *salafi pesantren* –or

²⁶ M. Misbah, "Tradisi Keilmuan Pesantren Salafi", *Ibda': Jurnal Kebudayaan Islam*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Juli-Desember, 2014), p. 242.

²⁷ Said Aqil Siraj addressing *pesantren* with Wahabi characteristic, which teaches violence and intolerance to local tradition, with labelling it as "artificial *pesantren*" (*pesantren dadakan*). Said Aqil Siraj, "Kembali ke Pesantren", in *Nasionalisme dan Islam Nusantara*, ed. Abdullah Ubaid, pp. 28-30.

²⁸ Zuhairi Misrawi, "Deradikalisasi Pesantren", in *Nasionalisme dan Islam Nusantara*, ed. Abdullah Ubaid, p. 42.

²⁹ The paradigm of *pesantren* emphasises the Moderate Islam. Within this perspective, *pesantren* sees Islam as a belief which must be manifested into practice. A faith which necessarily ended in social activities through dialog, honesty, humble, and gives a great benevolence to Moslem, nation, and humanity, Abd A'la, "Kembalikan NU ke Nilai Pesantren", in *Nasionalisme dan Islam Nusantara*, ed. Abdullah Ubaid, p. 37.

artificial *pesantren* in Said Aqil Siraj's term- has pushed *pesantren* and proved itself as an institution which bequeaths of it's indigenous³⁰ heritages of Islamic values which have been moulded within Archipelago traditions. There are many studies about *pesantren* with different perspectives have been done by researchers, even though these studies, according to Zamakhsyari Dhofier, were not adequate.³¹

Cliffort Geertz, for example, in his writings frequently was not consistent in describing *pesantren*. In one place, Geertz asserted that *pesantren* life was indicated by an aggressive (active) economical ethic and conduct, filled with an entrepreneurship and it followed an idea of freedom in running a bussiness as it was clearly seen from the behaviour of *kiai* as such. So, following their *kiai*, many of the *pesantren* alumna became entrepreneurs. But in another place, Geertz also described the riligious life of *pesantren* only rotated arround hereafter life. The *pesantren* life only about "tombs and religious rewards"³². Deliar Noer also identified *pesantren* as a conservation nest

³⁰ The indigesousity of *pesantren* is different from the practice of other educational istitution, so that it has a spesific chararacteristics and unique ones. It has own exellencies in it's scietific tradition and also in it's moral transmission and internalization. Mardiyah, *Kepemimpinan Kiai dalam Memelihara Budaya Organisasi* (Malang: Aditya Media Publishing, 2013), pp. 1-2.

³¹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), p. 9.

³² Clifford Geertz, "The Javanese Kyai: The Changing Role of A Cultural Broker", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 2 (1959-1960), pp. 236-238.

of Islamic old fashioned traditions,³³ and so Fuad Amsyari concluded that traditional *pesantren* (*salafiyah pesantren*) put The young Moslem and The nation in danger.³⁴

But there are many experts who have a positive views toward *pesantren*. Manfred Ziemek, for example, asserted that *pesantren* was a centre of changes in the fields of education, politic, culture, social, and religion.³⁵ Kuntowijoyo saw “nowdays *pesantren* underwent a serious development which even denied it’s own basic characteristics”³⁶ The most impressive statement coming from Soebardi and A. John who exclaimed that *pesantren* in the periods of 1200-1600 AD was *avant-garde of Malay-Archipelago Cultural development*:

These were *pesantren* institutions which had a decisive role in shaping and molding an Islamic characteristic of Islam kingdoms (in Archipelago), and *pesantrens* played an important role in spreading out Islam into far remote hinterlands. From *pesantrens* came out manuscripts consisting of Islamic teachings in South East Asia which have been collected by first wanderers of Dutch and English trade companies in the end of 16th century. To understand deeply about the history of Islamization in these territories, we have to study *pesantrens*, because these institutions

had become *avant-garde* of Islamic dissemination in these lands.³⁷

H.J. de Graaf and Pigeaud noted that *pesantren* in 15th century had developed and become the religiosity center which it’s role should’nt be underestimated in introducing Islam to the people, especially who lived in hinterlands.³⁸

As an institution, *pesantren* had a great historical contribution for Indonesian as can be seen on sociological facts until today. Historically, *pesantren* was not only become the centre of educational institution, but it also become the center of Islamic propagation, the training headquarter for freedom fighters againts colonial rule; and at the same time it had become forerunner of defending culture and Muslem societies from deviated values brought by the colonial rule. Sociologically, *pesantren* becomes centers of the societies in educational aspects, it becomes the keeper of great traditions, the advocat of communities interests, and the centres of spiritual exercises.³⁹ That is why from the very beggining, *pesantren* has become the educational centre of the society, ranging from religious aspect, martial arts, art performances, economical, and state affairs fields. The future religious leaders, men of letters, and even

³³ Deliar Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 300.

³⁴ Fuad Amsyari, *Masa Depan Umat Islam Indonesia* (Surabaya: al-Bayan, 1993), p. 112.

³⁵ Ziemek, *Pesantren dalam Perubahan Sosial*, p. 2.

³⁶ Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam*, p. 57

³⁷ S. Soebardi, “The Place of Islam”, in *Studies in Indonesian History*, ed. McKay (Australia: Pitman, 1976), p. 42.

³⁸ HJ. de Graaf & TH. G. Pigeaud, *Kerajaan-kerajaan Islam di Jawa: Peralihan dari Majapahit ke Mataram* (Jakarta: Grafiti Pers, 1985), p. 34.

³⁹ Arifin Suryo Nugroho, “Peranan Pesantren dalam Pelestarian Nilai Kesenjaraan Melalui Tradisi Ziarah Walisongo”, *Pendidikan Agama Islam*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (Juni, 2012), p. 55.

princes all have been educated and trained in *pesantren*.

Within *pesantren* traditions, the *kitab kuning* (lit. the yellowish book)⁴⁰ has become an integrated characteristic and identity of *pesantren*. The *kitab kuning* is regarded as standard book and references (*marâji'*) within Islamic disciplines, both in the field of faith (*aqîdah*), law (*syarî'ah*), Islamic ethic (*akhlaq*), and Islamic mysticism (*tashawwuf*), and history. The *Kitab Kuning* is the information source of Islamic sciences, and also as a cultural treasures which belongs to *Pesantren*. Interestingly, the very existence of *Kitab Kuning* in *Pesantren* has a commonality as the instructional materials in all other *pesantrens* in Archipelago, and even reached South East Asia range. This commonality indicated that *Kitab Kuning* became shared and traditional curriculum of the traditional education institution in Archipelago. The *Kitab Kuning* which have been delivered in *pesantrens* consist of Shafi'ite Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) books, Ash'arite theology books, and ethical-mystical books written by al-

⁴⁰ The word *Kitab Kuning* actually attached to the books inherited from the Islamic middle periods which are used in *pesantren* till the present day. *Kitab kuning* always uses Arabic alphabets without Arabic grammatical symbols so this kind of book is also called *kitab gundul* (The Barren Book). The mastery of these classical Islamic books is the distinction of the pupil graduated from *pesantren*, and by which they get a high respect from the society where they serve as Islamic propagators. Furthermore, the process of mastering these classical books has its own dynamic and has shaped a scientific tradition which is supported by the mastery of instrumental sciences, including *humaniora* (*adab* or literature). Without the *kitab kuning* in its more complex meaning, intellectual tradition is hardly able to escape from extremity crisis. Siraj, "Kembali ke Pesantren", p. 30.

Ghazâlî which were the dominant ideology of Moslem societies in Archipelago.

Within that context, Azyumardi Azra exactly gave a definition of Archipelago Islam as a distinctive Islamicity resulted from Islamic interaction, contextualization, nativication, and vernacularization with the realities of social, culture, and religions in Indonesia. The Archipelago Islamic orthodoxy (Ash'arite's theology, Shafi'ite's Islamic Jurisprudence, Ghazalian mysticism) has developed moderate and tolerant characteristics. Archipelago Islamicity which is rich with Islamic legacies will be the source of hope for the renaissance of global Islamic civilization.⁴¹

The Prospect of *Islam Nusantara*

With the development of the puritanist Islam which is now growing stronger, so it's worthwhile to ask question, how is the destiny of *Islam Nusantara* in the future? In the midst of that serious threat, as mentioned above, there is still a chance of *Islam Nusantara* to become dominant model in the life of Indonesian Moslems based on the following conditions:⁴²

First, puritanism in its meaning as an extreme, rigid, radical, and cruel ideology is not suitable with the life of Indonesian Moslems which generally have moderate, tolerant, and accomo-

⁴¹See the official Portal of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, especially the Portal *Adab* (Arabic Literature) and *Humaniora* Faculty.

⁴² Agus Muhammad, "Islam Nusantara di Tengah Gelombang Puritanisme", *Tashwirul Afkar: Jurnal Refleksi Pemikiran Keagamaan dan Kebudayaan*, No. 26 (2008), p. 45.

dative characteristics of their religiosity life.⁴³

Second, the Indonesia Constitution gives no chance for the establishment of Islamic state as imagined by the puritanist group. The farthest state accommodation towards aspirations of this group is only in the form of regional regulation (Perda) which is titled with Islamic Regional Regulation (Perda Syariah). But the range of this Shari'ah Regulation is very limited, and tends to be ineffective and sometime becomes instrumental commodities in a political struggle.⁴⁴

Third, traditional Islamic group has several institutions which supporting the countinuity of religious teachings and practices, namely *pesantren*. This traditional institution of Islamic education has produced a tolerant (*tasâmuh*), moderate (*tawâzun*), and straight national Islamic leaders. *Pesantren* which faithfully hold the basic paradigms of *pesantren*, as A'la said, has moulded a

⁴³ Persatuan Islam (PERSIS) is a good example of the above reasoning. This group, although it's still exist until now, doesn't make any significant progress. On the contrary, Muhammadiyah-eventhough has the common ground of wahabism with PERSIS is more moderate and relatively able to get along with the age.

⁴⁴ For example, the implementation of Syariah Regulation in Bulukumba South Celebes and in severals other regions. The Syariah Implementation in this region has become an instrument to gain political interests, and fequently this implementation of syariah regulation is intolerant to the local traditions which have been practiced traditionally and descendantly. Syamsurijal Adhan & Zubair Umam, "Perdaisasi Syariat Islam di Bulukumba", *Tashwirul Afkar: Jurnal Refleksi Pemikiran Keagamaan dan Kebudayaan*, No. 20 (2006), p. 77 and Rumadi, "Perda Syari'at Islam: Jalan Lain Menuju Negara Islam", *Ibid.*, pp. 2-7.

moderate culture in performing the religiosity of Islam⁴⁵.

Within this context, as the anchor of *Islam Nusantara*, *pesantren* should strengthens the fields below: *First*, *tamad-dun* (progressivity), namely by engineering *pesantren* as a model of open educational institution, both scietifically and sociologically. *Second*, *tsaqafah* (civilization), namely by enlightening people to become creative and industrious society, so that *pesantren* will be able to present itself as the agent of beneficial change in the spectrum of Indonesian nature. *Third*, *hadlarah* (culture), namely by building culture. *Pesantren* should be able to preserve and develop great tradition (*'urf al-shahîh*) in the midst of raging globalization which poses technologies and by which enabling it to push the world towards a uniformized-monolithic culture.

Conclusion

Several important points should be emphasized in this conclusion statement: *First*, The Islamic message is universal, but at the same time it's also a response to the specific condition of Arabic land. Within this context, actually Islam was molded on the local tradition of Arab; in another words it's form was shaped by specific local impertions, and then it was universalized and transcendentized and

⁴⁵ Since 1970's, *pesantren* began to open formal educational institutions, and nowadays almost all big *pesantrens* have their own higher educations, ranging from universities, institutions, and colleges. Some of them establishes higher traditional Islamic Education (*Ma'had Aly*) which tries to educate students with wide and deep knowlegde of classical Islamic disciplines and contemporary Islamic studies as well.

so it becomes an universal message.⁴⁶ *Second*, eventhough we believe that Islam is a universal revelation of God, but the understanding of Islam is obviously a product of Moslem's perception which is influenced by their specific problem, their experiences, their intellectual capacities, and the diversities of cultures in each Moslem communities. The claim of Islamic universality precisely could be actualized in the different cultural systems as it's seedling locus.

Islam Nusantara is not a new Islamic sect, and it's not intended to change Islamic doctrines. *Islam Nusantara* is an understanding of Islamicity which is tolreant, peacefull, and accomodative to *Nusantara* culture. It denies radicalism and avoids hostility. It embraces local traditions and make them as an instruments for Islamic propagation.

Islam Nusantara realises the classical theorem, namely *idzâ wujudat nash fatsamma mashlahah*, *idzâ wujudat mashlahah fatsamma syar'Allâh* (If there was a religious text, so there is a benevolence; and if there was benevolence, so the law of Allah is exist therein).[]

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⁴⁶ As alocal product, Islam was born in Arab, namely in Hijaz area to responds the living issues in the area.

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