ISLAMICDIALECTICSAND CULTURE IN ESTABLISHING *ISLAM NUSANTARA* PARADIGM
(Variety Model of *Islam Nusantara* for Indonesia)

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Abstract

This article examines the Islamic dialectics socio-culturallywhich inspires the establishment of Islam Nusantara. The method used in this research is qualitative with historical approach and included in the category of contemporary history. The step taken in this research is to reconstruct the tradition of Islam Nusantara along with its cultural roots that lies behind it. The results show that: first, Islam has become the religion of most of the Indonesian people and has played many important roles in various social, political, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Secondly, Islam Nusantara is a typical Indonesian-Islamicstyle, which is a combination between Islamic theological teachings with the values of local traditions, cultures, and customs in this country. Third, the characters of Islam Nusantara show the existence of local wisdom in Indonesia that does not violate the teachings of Islam, instead they synergize the teachings of Islam with local customs scattered in Indonesia. Fourthly, Islam Nusantara is an Islamic practice in the country as a result of dialectics between shari'a text with local realities and culture. Therefore, Islam Nusantara comes

not to change the doctrines of Islam, but to find ways how to embed Islamic values in the context of diverse cultural society.

Keywords: *Dialectics, Islam Nusantara, Culture, Acculturation.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini meneliti dialektika Islam secara sosio-kultural yang mengilhami pembentukan Islam Nusantara. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan historis dan termasuk dalam kategori sejarah kontemporer. Langkah yang diambil dalam penelitian ini adalah merekonstruksi tradisi Islam Nusantara beserta akar budayanya yang ada di baliknya. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa: pertama, Islam telah menjadi agama sebagian besar masyarakat Indonesia dan telah memainkan banyak peran penting dalam berbagai latar belakang sosial, politik, ekonomi, dan budaya. Kedua, Islam Nusantara adalah gaya khas Indonesia-Islam, yang merupakan kombinasi antara ajaran teologis Islam dengan nilai-nilai tradisi lokal, budaya, dan adat istiadat di negeri ini. Ketiga, karakter Islam Nusantara menunjukkan adanya kearifan lokal di Indonesia yang tidak menyalahi ajaran agama Islam, sebaliknya mereka mensinergikan ajaran Islam dengan adat istiadat lokal yang tersebar di Indonesia. Keempat, Islam Nusantara adalah praktek Islam di negara ini sebagai hasil dialektika antara teks syariah dengan realitas dan budaya lokal. Karena itu, Islam Nusantara datang bukan untuk mengubah doktrin Islam, tetapi untuk mencari cara bagaimana menanamkan nilai-nilai Islam dalam konteks masyarakat budaya yang beragam.

Kata kunci: *Dialektika, Islam Nusantara, Kebudayaan, Akulturasi.*

A. Introduction

The Indonesian archipelago has the uniqueness and thetypicalmatters compared with other countries,starting from its geographical and sociocultural peculiarities to the uniqueness of the civilization. These uniqueness and

specialityhave become the considerations of the scholars to bring *Islam Nusantara*. The term *Islam Nusantara* itself recently invites a lot of debate among number of experts of Islamic sciences. The reason for the debate is that the term is inconsistent with the belief that Islam is one and it only refers to Al-Qur'an and As-Sunnah. *Islam Nusantara* is not a new school or a new sect of Islam. Therefore, *Islam Nusantara* is just a designation or concept of Islam that is naturally developed in the middle of Indonesian culture.

Islam Nusantara is the Islamic values implemented in the country and have long been practiced by theIndonesian people. Therefore, *Islam Nusantara* is a typical Islamicstyle of Indonesia, a combination between Islamic theological values and the values of local traditions, culture and customs. One of the characteristics of *Islam Nusantara* is being polite in implementing religious values and bringing Islam as a religion of peace. *Islam Nusantara* is also known as tolerant andmoderate, can live in diversity, and upholds human rights. The characters of *Islam Nusantara* also show the existence of local wisdom in the country that do not violate the teachings of Islam, but instead synergize the teachings with local customs widely spread in Indonesia.

Islam Nusantara is an interpretation of Islam that considers local culture and customs in Indonesia in formulating its jurisprudence. The model developed in Islam Nusantara is an empirical form of Islamic values developed in Indonesia, as a result of interaction, contextualization, indigenization, interpretation, and vernacularization of universal Islamic teachings and values, in accordance with the socio-cultural realities of Indonesian people. One of the consistent community organizations in the development of *Islamic Nusantara* is *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU). Understanding and acknowledging local culture and wisdoms has always

been applied by NU. Therefore, *Islam Nusantara*, especially if associated with NU varietyof religious models, is very interesting to be studied.

The formulation of letters and verses of Qur'an was divided into two periods *Makiyyah* and *Madaniyyah* werethe proofs of the dialectics of Islamic teachings with socio-historical background. Imam as-Suyuti explained that there are three criteria determined by the Islamic scholars to define these; time, place, and *khitab*, or the objectsintended.[1] Nöldeke then reconstructed the theory of *Mecca* and *Medina* by analyzing the structure, stylism and content of verses and letters.[2] In addition, prior to the arrival of Islam in *Mecca,* Arabicpeople basically liked poetry, then they wrote poetries as an intermediary to convey the ideas of the solidarity and courage of their respective tribes.[3] Then, one of the psycho-historically-culturallyreasonsfor the existence of short verses with poetic nuance at the beginning of the revelation is to synergize and facilitate them in receiving revelation. This shows that in fact, the Islamic dialecticsreally happenedsocio-culturally, even since the first coming of Allah's revelation.

The Islamic dialectics and culture have generated what is called as Cultural Islam, which is a form ofda'wah approach implemented not through formal legal structure,but the process of through the cultural process of propagation by acculturating local culture. It is expected that through this cultural alignment, it will be able to bringand move the society toward better directions. The spread of Islam to various regions of the world emerges the patterns and variants of Islam intocertain uniqueness and specialties that have

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[1] Jalaluddin Abdurrahman bin Abu Bakar As-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2008), 12.

[2] Theodore Nöldeke, *Tarikh al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar an-Nasyr, 2000), 65.

[3] Toshihiko Izutsu, *Konsep-Konsep Etika Religius dalam al-Qur'an*(Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2003), 28.

developed in the Arabian Peninsula. This is understandable, because every religion, not to mention Islam, cannot escape from the reality in which it exists. Islam is not a religion born in a vacuous space of culture. There is a dynamic dialogue between Islam and reality necessitate.[4]

The development of Islamic culture in Indonesia is a historical necessity. From the very beginning of its development, Islam in Indonesia is an indigenous Islam propagated by *walisongo* (nine Islamic scholars of Java) and their followers by carrying out cultural transformation in society.[5] Islam and culture are not placed in opposite positions, but within the framework of creative dialogue, a transformation in it is expected. The process of cultural transformation in turn results in a mixture of two entities: Islam and local culture. This combination generates the Islamic traditions that are still practiced in various cultural communities of Islam in the country.

In the concept of Cultural Islami, Islam should play a role as a moral and social guide reflected in its concept. Cultural Islam is a method of *da'wah* (propaganda) that is used to invite people to convert to Islam or to obey all the commandments of Allah by using cultural approaches of the local community. Cultural Islam provides diversity in inviting people to love Islam in flexible ways and adapt to the local cultural circumstances. The term "flexible"means that the spread of Islam does not have to use the same methods applied in the Middle Eastern Islamic countries, but in accordance with the local cultural context.

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[4] Masnun Thahir, "Pergumulan Hukum Islam dan Budaya Sasak; Mengarifi Fiqih Islam Wetu Telu," *ISTIQRO', Jurnal Penelitian Islam Indonesia*, Volume 06, Nomor 01, 2007, 174.

[5] Agus Sunyoto, *Atlas Walisongo,* (Jakarta: Cooperation Pustaka IIMaN and LESBUMI PBNU, 2016), vi-vii.

The existence of reciprocal acculturation between Islam and local culture is recognized as a basic rule in *Qawaid Fiqhiyyah*, known as "*al-'adah muhakkamah*," and the custom is made into the law.[6] Or more completely, custom is an enacted*shari'ah, al -'adah syari'ah muhakkamah.* This means that the customs and habits of a society including its culture is the source of law in Islam.[7] Therefore, the elements of local culture that can be used as a source of law is not contrary to the principles of Islam. The elements that are contrary to Islamic principles by themselves must be eliminated and replaced. This is the meaning of the presence of Islamin a place or country.

In *Ushul Fiqh*, the local culture, in the form of culture, is called *'urf* (habit).[8] Because*'urf* of a society - according to the above description - contains the wrong and right elements at once, then Muslims themselves should see it critically and not judge it only as a mere justification. This is in accordance with the Islamic principles that filter out every tradition that exists in the society.[9]

In applying the methods of *Ushul Fiqh* and *al-Qawa'id al-Fiqhiyah*, especially in understanding texts and contexts, it is best to adopt a cultural anthropological approach.[10] This is done primarily in analyzing Islamic values which can be displayed with a friendly way toward the local culture,Islamic issues and local problems. This view is largely formed by *fiqh* tradition of Shafi'i school which is more tolerant for diversity

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[6] Jalaluddin Abdurrahman bin Abu Bakar As-Suyuti, *Al-Asbah wa al-Nadzair fi Qawaid wa Furu' Fiqh asl-Syafi'i* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998),193.

[7] Abi Bakar al-Ahdali al-Yamani as Syafi'i, *al-Faraid al-Bahiyyah* (Kudus: Menara Kudus, t.t), 63.

[8] Wahbah Zuhaili, *Ushul Fiqih al-Islami* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1996), 828.

[9] Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban, Sebuah Telaah Kritis Tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan dan Kemodernan*(Jakarta: Paramadina, 2005), 552.

[10] Ralph Linton, *Antropologi: Suatu Penyelidikan tentang Manusia (The study of Man)*, Terj. Firmansyah (Bandung: Jemmars, 1984), 226.

than other ones, as well as by the teachings of Sufism and social thoughts of Imam Ghazali.[11]

This research used qualitative method with historical approach[12] and included in the category of contemporary history, with the main focus on *Islam Nusantara* in NU religious tradition. The step taken in this research was to reconstruct the tradition of Islamic studies of Indonesia along with cultural roots that laid behind it. This review was conducted systematically and objectively by collecting, evaluating and testing the evidence supporting the data and obtaining strong conclusions.

There were three data sources: literature, documents of NU mass organization, and interviews with central figures of NU and Islamic intellectuals. The data consisted of primary and secondary data. The primary data were taken from official NU documents, in-depth interviews with NU figures, and literature books on NU and *Islam Nusantara*. Meanwhile, the secondary data were sourced from magazines, journals, newspapers and other related research results. The data were taken in two steps, namely: literature review and interviews with some informants related with the existence of NU *and Islam Nusantara.*

The research on *Islam Nusantara*, according to A. Johns, is a field that can unfold the history of thoughts and life of Indonesia.[13] *Islam Nusantara* is very popular among the NU community members. When examined and associated with the development of *Islam Nusantara*, then the rituals

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[11] Mark R. Woodward, Memahami Semangat Baru Dunia Islam Indonesia, conversation with Abdurrahman Wahid, dalam *Jalan Baru Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1998), 131-142.

[12] Dudung Abdurrahman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah* (Jogjakarta: Ar-Ruz Media, 2007), 21.

[13] A. Johns, *Mistik Islam dan Penulisan Sejarah di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Islamic Study Club, 1958), 5.

performed by the NU people contain high cultural values. In turn, the descriptionson Islamic dialectics and culture in *Islam Nusantara* will reflect the religious pattern practiced by NU.

B. Discussions
1. Universalityand Localityin Islam

Al-Islam shalih li kulli zaman wa makan, which means Islam fits to all times and places. This phrase is often spoken by a Muslim proved by observing that Islam is the most widely encompassing religion of various races and nationalities, influencing almost all climatological and geographical features.

The word *Islam* itself has the meaning of submissiveness to God, not only is the teaching of God to His servants, but is taught by Him with hooked to the human nature itself, which is taught as the fulfillment of human nature, so that the growth of its manifestation in thehuman beings is always from the inside, grown and forced from the outside. Because such resignation is a natural human endeavor, then a legitimate religion can not be anything other than surrender to God (*Islam*). So, it is impossible for a person to be religious without performing that attitude, thus a religion without submission to God is not true.[14]

Due to that principle, then all religions are essentially *al-Islam*, which teach the attitude of surrender to the Creator, God Almighty. Because it is the core of all true religions, then *al-Islam*, or surrender to God, is the root of the existence of God's guidance to someone. Hence, *al-Islam* becomes the universal foundation of human life, applicable to everyone, anywhere and anytime.[15]

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[14] Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban,* 426-427.
[15] *Ibid,* 435.

Islam is universal in idealistic terms, at the level of Qur'an and hadith. However, the universality of Islam in Qur'an and hadith needs to be interpreted and explained well. The result is the emergence of clerical explanations which later become *madzhab*. The Muslims of this country follow certain *madzhab* and views which later became the foundation of *Islam Nusantara*, as in the theology of embracing Ash'ariyah, in *fiqh* embracing *Madzhab* Shafi'i and in Sufism embracing Imam Ghazali.[16]

Islamic universalism actually presupposes the world view; Islam as a normative frame of doctrine that is transcendent, standard, unchanging, and eternal. Therefore, the entire textual building must refer to the basic joints embodied in the text of the Holy Qur'an and what was ever taught by Prophet Muhammad in Mecca and Medina as the basis of the birth of Islam. This is based on the reality of Islam as a religion born in the time of the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca and Medina without experiencing the process of historicalization of the teachings. Meanwhile, the aspect of Islamic locality makes the tradition as part of the Islamic awakening.[17]

Indeed, the messages brought by Islam are universal. However, at the same time, Islam is also a response to the special circumstances in Saudi Arabia. There are two things to note in this respect; first, Islam itself is actually born in Saudi Arabia which later transcended and becomes a universal Islam. Secondly, no matter how much we believe that Islam is Allah's revelation, it is finally perceived by Muslims according

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[16] Akhmad Sahal and Munawir Aziz (ed.), *Islam Nusantara; dari Ushul Fiqih hingga Paham Kebangsaan*(Bandung: Mizan, 2015), 172.

[17] Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, *al-Turats wa al-Hadatsah; Dirasah wa Munaqashah* (Beirut: Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-'Araby, 1991), 21-23.

to their own experience, problems, intellectual capacity, cultural system, and diversity.[18]

The locality and universality in Islam also becamethe concern byGus Dur (fourth President of Indonesia), thus offering the concept of Islamic indigenization. This offer has inevitable sociological-political implications of putting Islam as an important factor in socio-cultural and political life in Indonesia. This idea departs from his high commitment toward the universal values of Islam and the treasures of traditional *Sunni* thought as something considered ashaving the ability to build social harmony, tolerance, and build the basis of a fair, egalitarian and democratic political life. The idea of more emphasis on the substance of the formal symbols or forms of this country was once abandoned by Islamic leaders, mainly because they were too preoccupied with many polemics about the formal forms of the state in tense and suspicious confrontation from the beginning.[19]

Gus Dur did not seem a priori toward the necessity of a social structure, but was also very careful with the possible idealization of Islamic structures. Gus Dur said that judging from the functions of religion in the social life, Islam was in charge of preserving a number of values and patterns of social behavior that linked the achievement of goals with the glorious ways used for it. The values or patterns of behavior are called *al-akhlak al-karimah* or noble moral values.[20]

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[18] Zianul Milal Bizawie, "Dialektika Tradisi Kultural; Pijakan Historis dan Antropologis Pribumisasi Islam*,"Jurnal Tashwirul Afkar* (Jakarta: Lakpesdam NU, 2003), 33-34.

[19] Masdar F. Mas'udi, *Islam Butuh Penyadaran Kultural Secara Kritis*(Jakarta: Prisma, 1995), 71.

[20] Umaruddin Masdar, *Membaca Pikiran Gus Dur dan Amin Rais Tentang* Demokrasi (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1999), 134.

2. Islamic Dialectics and Local Culture

Indonesia is a plural nation-state. Various races, tribes, languages, cultures, religions and beliefs live in this country. The motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*» is the right expression to explain the reality and hopes of this nation. Despite its diverse cultural, linguistic, racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious and living beliefs, Indonesia remains one, is still feeling mutual, and being respectful of one another.

With this diverse culture, Islam and culture cannot be separated in the life of Indonesian people. However,defined by many experts, although Islam and culture cannot be separated, but they can be distinguished, and it is not justified mixing between them. Religion is absolute, does not change according to time and place. In contrast, the culture, even though based on Islamic teachings, can change from time to time, and from place to place. While most cultures are based on religion, it never happens, otherwise that religion is based on culture. At least, that is according to the belief based on the truth of God's revelation to the Prophets and the Apostles. Therefore, religion is primary, and culture is secondary. Culture can be an expression of religious life, because it is the sub-ordinate of the religion, and never vice versa. Therefore, while the religion is absolute, it applies to every space and time, culture is relative, bounded by space and time.[21]

All cultural patterns, including those based on religion, as dynamic dialogue, are always historical, because they are humane. One of the meanings of that fact is that a cultural pattern, however deeply rooted in religion, must be judged to be always evolving, not static, and not artificial,since the form of its relationship to an underlying religion is an

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[21] Madjid, *Islam Agama Kemanusiaan,* 36.

interpretive relation, in the sense that a cultural pattern is a human interpretation of religious texts. This means the confrontation of a final phase of development is not with the religion of *an sich*, but with a pattern of religious culture which is a humane and historical interpretation of religious texts.[22]

The culture that has gained the legitimacy of sharia texts is transformed into a ritual procession. This process is something common in the environment of Islamic scholars(*kiai*) in the country,so that the Islamic community has the same pattern because of single reference and concept (*ittifaqul ara ʿ*). KH Hasyim Asyari in his book, *Report on Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah's* noted that Indonesian Muslim society experienced conflicts and friction in 1912. This social-religious problemswere caused by the emergence of opposing groups and those carrying new religious views.

An example of the occurrence of Islamic dialectics and local culture is the ritual of 'almssea' (*sedekah laut*) conducted by coastal Muslim communities in certain seasons. There is a study indicating that *sedekah laut* is a form of conversion of non-Islamic to Islamic beliefs. Though *sedekah laut*is not a form of conversion it is but a manifestation of the result of dialectics between sharia textsand local culture. That is, *sedekah laut*that still survive in the society is not against Islamic teachings. If the process if *sedekah laut*' is limited to the conversion, of course it comes out from two different things which are then converted.

*Kiai*do not only explain the ritual from the side of the theoretical basis but also the dialectic process of sharia textsand local culture. Cultural language is used to express empathy and taste that cannot be expressed by the society

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[22] Budhy Munawar Rachman (ed.), *Ensiklopedi Nurcholish Madjid, Pemikiran Islam di kanvas Peradaban (Cover)* (Bandung:Mizan, 2006), 2094.

itself as well as a theoretical base that becomes the weak point of society.

3. Acculturation in Islam

Various cultures and religions develop in society, where there is sometimes acculturation occurs between them. History recognizes *Walisongo* who spread Islam in Java and the entire country, and they used thegentle method of d*a'wah* throughthe acculturation of local culture.[23] There is a spirit of cultural acculturation that occurred in the Islamic world in the 16th century AD. This acculturation is seen in some mosques in Istanbul (Turkey), Malibar (India) and in Indonesia that have became the icons of Islamic world architecture that time.

First, the acculturation in the style of mosque building in Istanbul (Turkey). After conquering Istanbul, Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih firstly came to the church of Hagia Sophia. According to him, it was an architectural miracle that had never been invincible. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Ottoman Turkish mosques followed the architectural style of the Hagia Sophia church. Sulaymaniye Mosque became the masterpiece of Ottoman Islamic architecture in thisperiod. Sulaymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, built during Sulaiman emperor, was inspired by the architecture of the church Hagia Sophia. The church was not altered at all. It was just added with four towers. This was a form of the spirit of cultural acculturation. It shows the cultural acculturation between Islam and Christians in Europe,affirming that Islam could respect and be friendly with local culture. The Ottoman scholars wanted to affirm that Islam came not to build a foreign spirit.

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[23] Abdurrohman Kasdi, "The Role of Walisongo in Developing Islam Nusantara Civilization," *Jurnal Addin*, Kudus: STAIN Kudus, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2017, 20.

Second, the Malibar Mosque (India) built by Shaykh Zainuddin al-Malibari.[24] The mosque also shows the acculturation of culture. Cultural elements in India are applied, not directly discarded or hostile, but respected and perfected. Third, the spirit of cultural acculturation is also seen in one mosque in *Nusantara*, precisely in Kudus, Central Java. Built by Shaykh al-Islam Imam Ja'far Shodiq or known as Sunan Kudus,the mosque also shows the spirit of cultural acculturation between Islam and local culture. When building a mosque, he did not want to create a strange building for local people.

Besides the mosques, there are many more acculturation processes of Islam and local culture implemented by *Walisongo*. This strategy is known by historians with accommodative strategy, which is the wisdom of Islamic propagators in dealing with acculturation processes. Using this strategy, Islam has penetrated to various remote areas in Java, even spread throughout the archipelago. *Walisongo*'s success cannot be separated from their *da'wah* strategy. Islam is always introduced to the community through dialogues, recitations, art and cultural performances, and far from the constraint and confrontations.

Therefore, Islam is a religion in which the Indonesian people believe most and has played many important roles in various social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of life. That role can be seen from the development of Islam and its influence in the vast *Nusantara* society, so it is rather difficult to separate between local and Islamic civilizations. In this context, Kraemer notes:

"Het raadselachtige in den Islam nu is, dat hij, ofschoon als godsdienst ondiep en arm van inhoud, alle godsdienten ter

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[24] Zainuddin al-Malibari, *Fath al-Mu'in bi Syarh Qurra al-'Ain* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1998)

wereld overtreft door de kracht waarmee hij beslag op zijn belijders. Geen godsdienst maakt zulk een grost percentage van zijn belijders tot loyale, inning aan den godsdienst verknochte, felle aanhangwers als de Islam."[25]

4. *Islam Nusantara* for Indonesia

'Islam' and '*Nusantara*' are two words having their own meaning, and they are combined to form a phrase. So, there is a series of *'Islam Nusantara'* which shows a close relationship between the signifying and signified part without creating new meaning. *Islam Nusantara* with the same meaning can be understood from the perspective of Arabic grammar that the two syllables 'Islam Nusantara' is not the composition of *shifat-maushuf* (signifier-signified), but the arrangement of *idlâfah* (anxiation). Therefore, between the two words contained additional words, *min* (from) or *fî* (in). For example, *khâtamu hadîdin*, meaning 'iron' ring; *qiyâmul lail*, meaning 'night' prayer. So, the series word of *'Islam Nusantara'*does not mean 'Islam' characterized by*'Nusantara'*, but 'Islam lives in *Nusantara'*. The word *'Nusantara'* is not the nature of Islam, but as *idlâfah*.

Islam Nusantara is Islam that has experienced 'indigenization' or 'nativization' so that it is in line with the personality and identity of the Indonesian people. The charactersoften pinned on *the Islam Nusantara*are friendly, non-violent, tolerant, respectful of tradition, and respectful of nationality. It is a typical of the Indonesian style, the combined values of Islamic theology with the values of local traditions, cultures, and customs. The characters of Islam Nusantara show the existence of local wisdom in that do not

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[25] Hendrik Kraemer, *De Islam: Als Godsdienstig-en als Zendingsprobleem*(Gravenhage: Boekencentrum NV, 1938), 5.

violate the teachings of Islam, instead synergize the teachings with local customs spread in Indonesia.[26]

Meanwhile, in terms of substance, the term *Islam Nusantara* is defined as Islamic practices in Indonesiaas the result of dialectics between the shariah textsand local reality and culture. Spirit of *Islam Nusantara* is the practice of Islam that preceded by dialectics between sharia texts with the reality and culture where the Muslims live. In the perspective of *ushul fiqh*, the dialectic process between sharia texts and the reality and culture where the Muslims live is something that is commonlyeven inevitably happening, considering Islam is a universal doctrine.

Islam Nusantara comes not to change the doctrine of Islam, but to find ways how to place Islam in the context of diverse cultural society. This effort in *usul fiqh* is called *ijtihad tathbiqi*, i.e.*ijtihad* to apply the law, not *ijtihad istinbathi*. Imam Syathibi distinguishes *ijtihad tathbiqi* with *ijtihad istinbathi*. According to him, if *ijtihad istinbathi* devotes on how to create law (*insya'al-hukm*), then *ijtihad tathbiqi* focuses on aspects of law application (*tathbiq wa tanzil al-hukm*).[27]

The existence of *Islam Nusantara* is a form of Islam as a universal religion since it has been embraced by hundreds of millions of people of the country and has generated hundreds of thousands of other Islamic legal products and treasures. Based on the understandingabove, there is no need to fear that Islam is distorted because of *Islam Nusantara* term.

Islam Nusantara has a link with research results by KH Hasyim Asyari who later sparked the term *'Muslim al-Aqthar al-Jawiyyah'* (Javanese Muslims and surroundings) in 1912.

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[26] Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara; Sanad dan Jejaring Ulama-Santri 1830-1945* (Jakarta: Pustaka Compass, 2016), 3.

[27] Imam al-Syathibi, *al-Muwafaqat fi Ushul al-Syari'ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2005), 119.

Choosing the term *Islam Nusantara* for Indonesian Muslim society is more comfortable and easy to understand than calling them Javanese Islam. Although in the past era the word 'Java' was used to point acurrent territory of Southeast Asia, but the fact is only a few people who know it,just as the eminent Egyptian historian Ali Mubarak, in the mid-nineteenth century who called Indonesians, even Southeast Asians, as *Jawi* (Javanese) people. Even al-Azhar university set up a dormitory for students named *Ruwaq Jawi*, populated by Indonesian and Southeast Asian students who were studying at al-Azhar.[28]

Islam Nusantara model can be traced from the history of the arrival of Islamic teachings through the process of vernacularization. Then, this process followed by indigenization, so that Islam becomes embedded in Indonesian culture. So, no longer a stranger. Therefore, in its cultural appearance, there has been a process of acculturation, the process of adoption of local cultures.[29]

The formation of *Islam Nusantara* itself has actually a long history which is full of both criticism and autocriticismto achieve the balance as it is today. This step is actually a conclusion of dialogues and even fierce debates between Islamic and Javanese traditionalpoets (*Kejawen*).[30] It is a form of integration between Islam and the characters of the archipelago. This shows that *Islam Nusantara* is very significant in the formation of the characters of a very diverse Indonesian nationwith the population of over 250 million, inhabited by around 700 ethnicities, 500 languages, thousands

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[28] Ali Mubarak, *al-Khutat at-Taufiqiyyah al-Jadidah li Misr al-Qahirah*(Cairo: al- Matba'ah al-Kubra al-'Amiriyah, vol. 4, 1306 H), 22.

[29] Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara; Jaringan Global dan Lokal* (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 2002), 2-5.

[30] GWJ Drewes, *The Struggle between Islam and Javanism* (Bijdragen, Dell 122, KITLV), 1966.

of cultural traditions, 6 official religions, and hundreds of local faiths. *Islam Nusantara* is able to place itself as a religious force to integrate and defend the unity of this nation in the frame of NKRI (United Nation of Indonesian Republic).[31]

The main features of *Islam Nusantara* are moderate (*tawasut*), tolerant (*tasamuh*), maintaining balance (*tawazun* and *i'tidal*), *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (inviting to the good deeds and preventing the bad one), anti-radical, inclusive and tolerant.[32] In relation to local culture, *Islam Nusantara* uses a sympathetic cultural approach in running the spread of Islam; it does not destroy, damage, or eradicate indigenous cultures, but instead, embrace, respect, preserve, and preserve it. One of the main characteristics of *Islam Nusantara* is to consider the elements of Indonesian culture in formulating *fiqh* (law).[33]

Islam Nusantara is developed locally through traditional Islamic educational institutions (*pesantren*).[34] This educational institution was built on courtesy and eastern manners; emphasizing respect for scholars(*kyai*) andexperts(*ulama*) as religious teachers. The students (*santri*) need guidance from their religious teachers so as not to get lost and to prevent the development of wrong or radical understanding. One peculiar aspect is the emphasis on *Rahmatan lil Alamin* (grace for the universe)principle as the universal value of Islam, which promotes peace, tolerance, mutual respect, and diverse views in relation to the fellow Muslims, or interreligious relationships with other faiths.

Islam Nusantara and various historical dynamics and contemporary contexts increasingly get attention and become the focus of study from the international world. The foreign

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[31] Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara,* xxl.

[32] Sahal and Aziz (ed.), *Islam Nusantara,* 235.

[33] Azis Anwar Fachrudin, "The face of Islam Nusantara." *The Jakarta Post*, 24 July 2015.

[34] Snouck Hurgrounje, *Nederland en de Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1915), 21.

media have begun to talk about *Islam Nusantara.* The al-Arab daily, an Arabic-language newspaper published in London, published a long article entitled *Islam NusantaraMadkhal Indonesia li Mujtama 'Mutasamih* (Islam Nusantara is Indonesia's gateway into a tolerant society). Besides al-Arab, Egypt's largest daily *al-Ahram and al-Masry al-Yaum* also portrayed a friendly and tolerant Indonesian Islam.

When *Islam Nusantara*has become a warm conversation topic in Arabic media, then it will be a great momentum becauseArab world is currently facing a serious challenge about the rise of extremism and terrorism. Even the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz has promised that his country will apply the concept of moderate and open Islam, which is friendly to all religions as well as the world. The Crown Prince has also called for global support to help transform the hard-line face of the kingdom into an open state, which can empower all potential, and be open to foreign investment.

5. Variety Model of NU in the Perspective of Islam Nusantara

Among the powers of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is to undertake a series of thoughts that has never been broken through its existence since 1926.[35] *Kiai* and the intellectual groups of NU always generate new ideas and concepts that could inspire the Indonesian Muslims to dissolve in the flow of ideas. For example, the great idea of NU during Surabaya Conference in 1927 called for 'cultural warfare' against the penetration of Western culture symbolized by the Dutch colonial. At that time, the use of tie was fought with caps, coat with koko clothes, trousers against *sarung*, and shoes against sandals.

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[35] M. Muhsin Jamil et.al.., *Nalar Islam Nusantara; Studi Islam ala Muhammadiyah, al-Irsyad, Persis, dan NU* (Jakarta: Direktorat Pendidikan Tinggi Islam, 2007), 277-278.

The main purpose of NU is to unite the steps of *ulama* and its followers in conducting activities to create the benefit of society, the progress of the nation and human dignity. As a religious organization, NU is an indispensable part of Indonesian Muslims who always try to uphold the principles of brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), togetherness and coexistence, both with fellow Muslims and with fellow citizens of Indonesia.[36]

NU is able to survive until because its position as an agent of change, not an institution that survives the flow of changes. As an institution in the traditionalist line-up, NU continues to create traditions based on Islamic faith and sustainability maintained by sages, religious leaders, teachers and *kiai*.

The traditions of thinking and building great ideashave become important culture in NU's life. Supposedly, if this nation desires to be great,those traditions should not only thrives among NU people, but throughout all of the Indonesian people. However, quite a few intellectuals are interested in this field. Part of the creative ideas of *kiai* as a part of the expression of faithfulness to Islamic science traditionally characterized is the emergence of the idea of *Islam Nusantara*.

The term Islam Nusantara was officially introduced and promoted by NU, as a form of interpretation of an alternative global Islamic society that has always been dominated by Arab and Middle East perspectives. *Islam Nusantara* became the main talk of the Indonesian people after NU Board of Directors/PBNU set it as the theme of NU's 33rd Congress in Jombang on August 1-5, 2015, "Strengthening *Islam Nusantara* for Indonesian Civilization and World." Various

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[36] MA. Sahal Mahfudh, *Nuansa Fiqih Sosial* (Jogjakarta: LkiS, 1994), 228-229.

discussions were held, articles appear in the national media, from student writings to the professors

There are several facts about the relation between *Islam Nusantara* with PBNU; first, the concentration of PBNU in the last five years that avoids the practical politics hasbrought up a lot of NU *kiai* and young experts who are active in mobilizing the institutions of NU's working units. The great works of the NU people, for instance, are *Ahkamul Fuqaha, Thariqat al-Husul 'ala Ghayat al-Wushul* (KH MA Mahaluddin), *Fathul Mujib al-Qarib* (KH Afifuddin Muhajir), Encyclopedia of Nahdlatul Ulama (Research Team of PBNU) and others. Second, throughout the period 2010-2015, PBNU has witnessed the social-political chaos of the world's Islamic society that led to violence and bloodshed. Third, the idea of 'Back to *Pesantren'* which was voiced since the 32nd NU Congress in Makassar in 2010 was followed by technical and strategic steps in empowering *pesantren* and NU people.[37]

Therefore, the presence of Islam Nusantara is a response of some phenomena and facts. Concerning *Islam Nusantara*'s concept and the roles of NU in guarding *Islam Nusantara*, the Chairman of PBNU, Said Aqil Siradj said:

> "NU will continue to fight for and guard *Islam Nusantara* model. The most obliged to guard *Islam Nusantara* is NU. The term *Islam Nusantara* refers to the historical facts of the spread of Islam by *Walisongo* in this archipelago, which was done by cultural approaches, not with rigid and hard doctrines. *Islam Nusantara* is preached to embrace, preserve, and respect local culture, not even muzzle it. From that foothold, NU will continue to maintain *Islam Nusantara*as a friendly, anti-radical, inclusive and tolerant Islam."[38]

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[37] Sahal and Aziz (ed.), *Islam Nusantara,* 229-233.

[38] Speech of the Chairmanof PBNU Said Aqil Siradjin the opening of *Istighatsah Menyambut Ramadhan dan Pembukaan Munas Alim Ulama NU*inthe Mosque Istiqlal, Jakarta, Sunday 14 June 2015.

In the beginning of socialization, there was support of various circles on the model of *Islam Nusantara*. On June 14, 2015, President Joko Widodo openly supported PBNU to develop *Islam Nusantara* model, which is a moderate form of Islam and is considered to fit the cultural values of Indonesia. He said,

> "Our Islam is *Islam Nusantara*, a polite Islam, a faithful Islam, and that is *Islam Nusantara*, a tolerant Islam.[39]

An Islamic intellectual, Azyumardi Azra also appreciates and supports *Islam Nusantara*. According to him, *Islam Nusantara* model is needed by the people of the world today, because of its characteristic in putting forward the middle ways, moderate, tolerant and can coexist peacefully with other adherents, and can accept democracy well. The term *Islam Nusantara* refers to an archipelago or maritime continent (*Nusantara*) cluster that encompasses a territory that becomes the territory of Indonesia and its surroundings.[40]

The practice of Islamic Nusantara is somewhat influenced by the teachings of Sufism and the spiritual flow in this nation that has existed before. Some traditions, such as honoring *kyai*'s authority, respecting Islamic figures such as *Waliongo*, also take part in some Islamic traditions such as the grave pilgrimage, *tahlilan* (sending prays to the ancestors), and commemorating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, including *sekaten* celebration, which are adhered by traditional Indonesian Muslims.

C. Conclusion

Seeing the phenomena of the face of Islam in the world today, the presence of *Islam Nusantara* is urgently

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[39] Heyder Affan, "Polemik di balik istiIah 'Islam Nusantara'". *BBC Indonesia*, 15 June 2015.
[40] Azra, *Islam Nusantara,* 15.

needed, because of its characteristics that put forward moderate middle ways, are always balanced, not as right and leftextremists, inclusive, tolerant and able to coexist peacefully with adherents of other religions. The *Islam Nusantara* model can be traced from the history of the arrival of Islamic teachings to the territory of Indonesia. Therefore, *Islam Nusantara* should be an alternative to build a peaceful and harmonious civilization of the Islamic world in any country.

Islam Nusantara has a distinction not only in rich and nuanced Islamic traditions and practices but also in social and cultural life. In relation to local culture, Islam Nusantara uses sympathetic cultural approaches in running *syiar* of Islam; it does not destroy, damage, or eradicate indigenous cultures, but instead, embrace, respect, preserve, and protect local culture. One of the main characteristics of Islam Nusantara is to consider the elements of Indonesian culture in formulating *fiqh* (jurisprudence).

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