

Prophetic *Sira* and the Construction of Indonesian Islam*

Muhammad Abdul Karim
profma.karim@gmail.com

State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, Indonesia

Abstract

Indonesian Islam has gone through a long journey in its history since the first advent up to the present day. In this course, one should note that Islamicization was formed under historical and cultural complexity. Among those, the role of Islamic preaching is the most important. Under this canopy, the transmission and transformation process took first place as the main force. Qur'an and Sunna are significant sources for all Muslims around the world. Both had also become the main streams in Islamicization. Prophetic *Sira*, beside the Qur'an, in this case, has a place of honor. It became one of the primary sources of all Islamic heritages in Indonesia. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH (peace be upon him) was immersed in Indonesian Islamic traditions in various fields and spheres. It is fair to say that the story of the Islamicization of the Indonesian Archipelago and the face of Indonesian Islam today is culturally formed by the determination of Prophetic *Sira*, besides the Qur'anic scripture. In other words, the birth and the beginning of Islam depend on how its adherents interpret and take a cultural reception on the Prophetic *Sira*. This paper tries to capture the prophetic heritage in Indonesian Islam in twofold analysis; transmission and transformation. The former explores how the legacy of Prophetic *Sira* flowed into the scene of Indonesian Muslim life through various modes of transmission up to the present day. It aims at how the Prophetic *Sira* became the force and inspiration for the multiple receptions of institutional matters.

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



Article history

Received 2020-12-28
Revised 2021-03-03
Accepted 2021-03-04

Keywords

Prophetic *Sira*
Indonesian Islam
Transmission
Transformation

Introduction

It is relatively well-known that Indonesian Islam has a place of honor in the course of Muslim studies. Islam has profoundly been identical to Indonesia (M Abdul Karim, 2007). Not only becoming a home for the largest Muslim population (Data Populasi Penduduk Muslim 2020: Indonesia Terbesar di Dunia, n.d.). Indonesia also has a distinct face of Moslem through which the

* The early version of the paper was presented in the Third International Seerat Conference, Sialkot Pakistan, March 03-05, 2020.

multi-cultural Islamic society can be well-established up to current time. It leads one to the question of how Indonesian Islam was historically shaped and culturally established. At the same time, it is well-known that in the first place, it has many things to do with the socio-historical process (Ricci, 2011), which involved the encounter of primary textual sources in Islam itself, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. It means that the face of Indonesian Islam, in general, was based on and shaped by the complex cultural encounter with this text and its derivative heritage (Abu Zayd, 1994).

The determination of prophetic heritage (*Prophetic Sira*) is worthy of mention in this case. As the word of God in the Qur'an has become the first guidance in the significant doctrinal matter, the figure of Prophet Muhammad PBUH was the practical guidance for how to be a Moslem in daily life. Therefore, the Prophet was the first interpreter of the Qur'an (*al-Mufasssir al-Awwal*) who practically explained the word of God. For Moslem, Prophet Muhammad is the representation of the Qur'an itself, for the Qur'an has become the Prophet's morals and characters (*kana khuluquhu al-Qur'an*) (Al-Bukhari, 1989). Besides, several Qur'anic verses have obliged a Moslem to follow whatever the Prophet has instructed and to keep away from what he has prohibited, as he is the best paragon chosen by God to become his messenger.

With such a system of belief, the Islamic preacher who came to Indonesia from various backgrounds, either Arabian, Persian, Indian, Bengali, or Chinese Moslem, all have shared the common issue in their religious proselytizing; introducing Allah as the God of all universe and Muhammad is His messenger which is reflected in the *Syahadatain*, the first requirement to become a Moslem. Moslems accept five pillars of Islam (*arkan al-Islam*): acknowledgment of Allah as the only God and Muhammad as a messenger of God; five ritual prayer; fasting during daylight of the month of Ramadhan; pilgrimage to sites in Mecca and Medina (Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri & Siddiqi, 1998). Therefore, knowing God and His messenger became the first material in Islamic preaching and ultimately became the basis for all Islamic teaching during Islamization through various mediums. This paper explores prophetic heritage as one of the major forces in shaping Indonesian Islam by using the cultural frame and historical account. The prophetic legacy, in this case, is the story of the Prophet, which manifested in various multi-layered forms, including biographical accounts, religious traditions associated with the Prophet, educational curriculum, and others. It is conducted by exploring how the prophetic heritages are transmitted from time to time in various modes and transformed through multiple receptions to form an institutional tradition.

Discussion

Prophet Muhammad and the Course of Early Islamization in Indonesia

On the Advent of Islam

Islam came peacefully in Indonesia through the mutual accumulation of trade, marriage, and

Islamic esoteric preaching. Despite being the most significant event, the coming of Islam in Indonesia remains obscure when and where it came from, and who is the introducer of Islam in Indonesia for the first time. Various opinions are worthy of mention. Donald M. Campbell, in the book *Java, Past, and Present*, as cited by al-Haddad (Sayid, 1957), says that no one knows the voyages to the East except to the Arabs. It is because they are the ones who always came to this place. Still, it is complicated to understand when they came to Java for the first time. It is reported that they arrived at the many East centuries before the Christian year.

Therefore, the course of Islamization of the Archipelago remains unfinished, and it deserves to have more exploration. Concerning the carriers of Islam to the region, historians have a different opinion based on each argumentation. Some claim that Islam was brought by the Arabs directly from Arabian Peninsula (Hamka, 1975). The idea of modern historians taken from the Journal of The Asiatic Society of Pakistan emphasizes that *Jazirah al-Yaqūt*, previously considered to be Cylon, was re-interpreted as an eastern area of India, namely Java (Wheeler, 1950). Based on this opinion, it can be understood that since the beginning of the 8th century AD, there has been a good relationship between the Governor-General of al-Masyriq, Hajjaj bin Yusuf with the ruler of *Jazirah al-Yaqut*. At that time, the king sent several gifts of eight ships to Governor Hajjaj (Ali, 1973).

The others say that Islamic elements developed throughout the Indonesian Archipelago were closer to that of the Indian Sub-Continent. The previous Indian historical legitimacy in the Archipelago and the similarity in Muslim society's structure have become the decisive reason for establishing the Indian theory in Indonesia's Islamisation (Yusuf, 2006). The Bengal theory was also worthy of mention. Based on *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) and *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* (The Story of the Kings of Pasai), Tome 'Pires, author of the *Suma Oriental* noted that Merah Silau/Malik al-Salih (d. 1297 AD) came from Bengal to Indonesia. He is the founder of Samudra Pasai Sultanate, one of the early powerful Islamic Kingdom in Indonesia founded in the 13th century AD (Fatimi, 1963).

Another opinion says that Islam comes from Canton (modern Hongkong) due to trade routes during Islam's spreading via Mecca's land routes to Malacca and Java through Canton (Salam, 1964). The last theory emphasizes that Islam came to Indonesia from Persia, which is evidenced by the Persian cultural influences, including the Indonesian spelling of Arabic letters; *jabar*, *jeer*, and *pesh*, which are the words of Persian language, while the authentic Arabic for these terms is *fathah*, *kasrah*, and *dammah* (Bukhori & Sidi Ibrahim, 1971).

It is better to say that Islam entered Indonesia between the 7th and 14th century AD, which is brought by the Arabs, Persians, preachers from the Indian Sub-Continent, and Chinese Moslems from Canton. Since Islamization is something with cultural complexity, all preachers from several mentioned regions have participated in religious proselytizing with their respective contributions

in politics, trade, culture, and oral preaching, also the preaching by attitude. It is the main reason for the existence of rich traditions in Indonesian Islam. It also proves that the process of Islamization in the Archipelago reflected a phenomenon of robust cultural cosmopolitanism.

Despite all theories conducted in this issue, there is a meeting point among historians that the spread of Islamic teachings in the region cannot be separated from the trading activities both in the land and ocean routes. The roads from Mecca represent the former to Mada'in, which was the former Sasanian capital, to Kabul and Kashmir than to Singkiyang (now Xinjiang) before finally reached Canton (modern Hongkong)(M Abdul Karim, 2019). In contrast, the former lies in the Indian Ocean connection. Without minimizing the former route, historical records have shown the richer sources on the latter route as the primary pathway to the flows of Islamization in the Archipelago.

In the Indian Ocean connection, the pathways of Islamic teachings to Indonesia include several essential ports such as Siraf (Persian Gulf), Guadar and Daibul/Debal (modern Pakistan), Malabar (West coasts of Indian Subcontinents), Ma'bar/Coromandel (East coasts of Indian Sub-Continents to Chittagong, modern Bangladesh), Harbors in Malayan Peninsula, and later connected to the Port of Canton. According to Hall, these global trade routes are divided into five major networks. First, the Bengal network included South Indian regions, Srilanka, Birma (Myanmar), and the North Coast of Sumatera. Second, the network of Malaccan Strait. Third, the network of the South China Sea. Fourth, the Sulu Ocean, which included the west coast of Luzon, Cebu, Mindanao, and the north coast of Kalimantan. Fifth, the Java Sea network is connected to the Archipelago's eastern parts, including South Kalimantan, Java, Sulawesi, Sumatera, and Nusa Tenggara Barat (Hall, 1985).

Thomas W. Arnold's opinion is also important to be emphasized that the Coromandel coasts, which is the central point in the Bengal network, was the transit place for the traders who came from the Arabian Peninsula (including the Persian Gulf) and Malabar before they finally arrived at north coasts of Sumatera which is the gate of Indonesian Archipelago (Arnold, 1986). Besides, according to Dobing and Arnold, the northern tip of the Indrapura Kingdom (modern West Sumatera and surrounding area) was connected to Coromandel beach (modern Bangladesh and the surrounding area), linking to the Middle East region (Abdullah, 2015). It is through this connection we should place the heritage of Islamization of the Archipelago.

Prophetic Heritage in the Fine Grain of Islamization

The formative period of Islamic political identity in Indonesia has witnessed a strong association with Prophet Muhammad's figure. Hikayat Raja-raja Pasai (Story of the Kings of Pasai) and Sejarah Melayu (Malay Annals)(Hill, 1960) tells how the origin of Islam in Samodra. Based on the fulfillment of the Prophet Muhammad's prophecy that one day there would be a great city called Samudra in the East, which would produce many saints, it is narrated that the ruler of Mecca hears

the existence of Samudra and decides to send a ship to that place. Merah Silu, who will become the first king of Samudra, was picked by the ship at India. He has a dream in which Prophet Muhammad appears to teach him Islam and gave him a title as *Malik al-Salih* (Ahmad, 1979).

The name “Muhammad” also became the first symbol in Islamization in the sociological context of society. *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) contains the King of Malacca's conversion, another Islamic Kingdom established in 1400 AD located in Malaccan Strait. The tale is similar to that of *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*. He also has a dream in which the Prophet appears and teaches him the *Shadatain* (confession of faith) and gives him the name “Muhammad Syah” (Ahmad, 1979). It is evident on the importance of the Prophet Muhammad's figure in the socio-political realm of Islamization.

Furthermore, Islam in the sense of institutional law was equivalent to the label “law of Muhammad.” It is valid for those who are strangers to this religion. The early encounters in Islamization have placed Prophet Muhammad as the most crucial figure after God. Several domains on Islamization, be it political, cultural, and educational matters, all have associated with the Prophet.

Marco Polo once notes:

This kingdom [Perlak/Peureulak], you must know, is so much frequented by the Saracen merchants that they had converted the natives to the Law of Muhammad. I mean the townspeople only, for the hill-people live for all the world like beasts and eat human flesh, as well as other kinds of flesh, clean or unclean, and they worship this, that and the other thing for in the fact that the first thing that they see on rising in the morning, that they do worship for the rest of the day (Polo, 1918).”

The “law of Muhammad,” which is mentioned by Marco Polo, addresses a civilized society in Perlak formed by the “Saracen Merchants,” which is contrasted to the “world like beasts” of the hill people. Another account reinforces this fact in the case of Java. According to a report written by Cheng Ho, a Chinese admiral, in 1413 Caka (15th century AD), there were already well-dressed Moslems in the north coast of Java, while the non-believers look dirty (Arnold, 1986). Thus, Islamic teaching through the Prophet's paragon was transmitted during the process of Islamicization. The modes of transmission follow the ways of religious preaching; *da'wa bi al-hal* (preaching by the behavior/paragon), *da'wa bi al-lisan* (oral preaching), and *da'wa bi al-qalam* (verbal/writing preaching). Historians explain that the advent of Islam to the Perlak in Sumatera and the northern coasts of Java occurs through the process of mission sacré, that is, the process of preaching by the attitude (*da'wah bi al-hal*) as the first step of religious proselytizing carried out by the *muballigh* or *da'i* who also became a trader (Al-Haddad, 1967).

The process was initially carried out individually. They performed the obligations of Islamic *shari'ah* according to the Qur'an and Prophetic paragon by using clean clothes and maintaining the cleanliness of the body, clothing, home, and houses of worship (Arnold, 1986). In the social life,

they provide a straightforward attitude, with good polite speech following the demands of *al-akhlaq al-karimah*, honest, helpful, especially in participating in giving the ill-treatment. They teach how to have a good living, maintain cleanliness, and be respectful and helpful. They also guide to community life, love, explaining the nature of plants and animals, understanding the meaning of the surroundings, performing obligations to be done for the sake of the Creator of the universe, doing good deeds, avoiding evil, so that they may enjoy the happiness in the eternal realm of life in the hereafter (*akhirat*) (Azra, 2013). It can be said that the notion of the so-called gotong-royong (mutual help) has become ingrained among Indonesian people. This phase can be attributed to the formative period of the idea that Islam has become the primary force. Such attitude becomes an attraction for the indigenous population who, at that time, embraced the Hindu/Buddhist religion. They were attracted to the Muslim personality, so they saw the light of faith in the *Moslems*, which attracted them to Islam (M Abdul Karim, 2007).

It is the secret of peaceful penetration of Islam in Indonesia. Islamic teachings that contain many humanitarian accounts that are transmitted mainly through the preaching by attitudes/paragon (*da'wa bi al-hal*) were the primary key in this case. Thus, historical records have shown that during the transition between Hindu-Buddhist and the Islamic Kingdom, the Hindu rulers saw that the teachings of Islam were not antagonistic to government stability. Still, even it strengthened the government and the unity of it. Several historians said that in c. 1478 AD, in the countdown to the fall of Majapahit Empire, the last powerful Hindu-Buddhist Kingdom, there were many *Moslems* to be found in the northern coast of Java (M Abdul Karim, 2001). There is also an essential artifact in the gravestone of Maulana Maghribi (Malik Ibrahim), namely a number indicating the year of his death, which is 1419 AD. It reinforces the opinion that he has been active in spreading Islam on the northern coast of East Java (Arnold, 1986).

Thus, one can conclude that Islam has spread in northern Sumatra and the north coast of Java by the end of the 13th century, with social groups as the agent spreading. In contrast, the individual *da'wa* is expected to occur since the 7th Century AD (Van Den Berg & Simanjuntak, 1952). By the 15th Century AD, along with the role of Malacca as the epicentral of Islamization, the transmission of Islamic teaching through *da'wa bi al-lisan* took place massively. According to the Acehnese historian, the Qur'anic lessons can be heard at that time in *Surau* (mosque) and *dayah* (traditional Islamic teaching-learning enterprise), along with another Islamic religious lesson, including *akhlak* (moral), which based on the Prophetic tradition, *akidah* (Islamic theology), and *fikih* (Islamic Jurisprudence) (Aboebakar, 1970). The transmission of Islamic teaching has begun to appear in the public sphere informally. It took place in the mosques and private houses of the Islamic preachers.

In Java, especially the north coast areas, the Islamic propagators are locally known as *wali* (saint) (Ricklefs, 2001). The most famous of them is the Wali Sanga (nine saints of Java), called *Sunan*. Some have traveled to Malacca as the center of Islamic learning to obtain religious

instruction (Azra, 2006). This period is considered the beginning of the intensification of Islamic influence in Java and the newly-established epicentral of Islamic political identity, which is marked by the founding of Demak Sultanate in 1475 AD. Under this canopy, the institutionalized Islamic education in a traditional sense came on the scene.

Pesantren, one of the indigenous Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, is thought to have a genealogical root to Wali Sanga's period (Azizy, 2002). In 1416 AD, Syekh Quro, one of the early Islamic preachers on the northern coast of Java, established the pesantren-like institution, which paved the way for Islam to enter the last Hindu-Pajajaran Kingdom in West Java. The teaching-learning institution of Amparan Jati, founded by Shekh Datuk Kahfi, has even become the gate to establishing the Islamic Kingdom in Cirebon, West Java. The oldest historical record of pesantren came from Pesantren Tegalsari in East Java, founded in 1742 AD. Martin van Bruinessen states that pesantren's formal institution was not to be found until the 18th Century (Bruinessen, 1995).

On the Pathway of Transmission

As mentioned, the path of Islamization in the Malay Peninsula and Indonesian Archipelago follows the trade route either in the land and the ocean. Likewise, with the transmission of Islamic teaching that also runs through these channels. It can be proven through the traces of religious transmission manifested in many works related to Islamic disciplines taught in Indonesian educational institutions. During the 14th until 16th century AD, when Islam began to spread massively in the Archipelago, especially Sumatera, and Java, Islamic literature's transmission lies in the local literary tradition. The work is written in Islamic reconciliation with local culture through literary genius to disseminate Islamic teaching. Islamic works were responsible for the emergence of the new identity of literary genius in society. Furthermore, in the late 16th until 17th century, the flourishing of the specific religious works on Islamic disciplines came on.

In Malay literature, Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai and Hikayat Bayan Budiman are among the oldest Islamic manuscript which is believed to be created in the late 14th Century (Hill, 1960). This phase is a continuation of the literary tradition of writing romance in the Hindu-Buddhist period. Translation and annotation have become the primary medium of transmission. Pantun, another form of Malay literature has already known in the Malay Annals (Sejarah Melayu), originated in the 15th Century (Ahmad, 1979). Another form, Syair, is used as the medium for religious dissemination as represented by Hamazh Fansuri (d. 1596 AD) from the 16th Century AD who wrote *Syarab al-Asyiqin*, *Asrar al-'Arifin*, *Kitab al-Muntahi*, etc. (Al-Attas, 1966). The case seems to be the same with the Javanese context, in which Islamic elements colored the fate of Javanese literary tradition. The Islamic esoteric nuances strongly influence several Javanese works such as Sira and *mocopat* (Javanese poetry), proverbs, and other pieces with particular reference to the Arabic, Persian, and

Malay works of literature (Schrieke, 1916).

Evidence from the 17th century has shown the more clear picture of the transmission of Islamic literature to the Archipelago, which mainly flowed from the well-spring of Hijaz through the South Asian connection. It is evidenced by the existence of work on *tasawuf* written by the Indian mystic Fadlullah Burhanpuri (d. 1620 AD) entitled *Tuhfat al-Mursalat*, which became one of the primary references in the discourse of Sufism circulated among the Muslim students and elites in the Archipelago, mainly in Sumatera and Java. The book's popularity coincided with the development of Syatthariyyah Sufi-order (*tarekat*), which also originated from the Indian Sub-Continent founded by Abdullah al-Syatthari (d. 1485 AD). Along with the broader segment of the reader, several different interpretations came on the scene. A student from the Archipelago asked his teacher in Hijaz, Ibrahim al-Kurani (d. 1690 AD), about the controversy and requested him to write a book. The teacher granted the request and wrote *Ithaf al-Zakiyy* to clarify the understanding of Burhanpuri's controversial work (Fathurahman, 2012).

The specific religious literature written in this period includes *Tasawwuf*, *Fiqh*, *Hadith*, and *Tafsir*. These are in the Arabic or Malay Language. Several great names represented the prolific writers in this period. One of the best representations is Nuruddin al-Raniri (d. 1658 AD), who represented the "oldest Muslim scholarship of Southeast Asia." He was born to a Hadrami father and a Malay mother in Ranir (modern Randir), India (Azra, 2004). He rises to the office of Syaikh al-Islam of Aceh Sultanate from 1637 until 1644 AD. He is the author of *al-Shirath al-Mustaqim* (fiqh and tasawuf), *Bustan al-Salathin fi Dzikir al-Awwalin wa al-Akhirin* (history), *Asrar al-Insan fi Ma'rifati al-Ruh wa al-Rahman* (tasawuf), and many others. Another name is Abdurrauf Sinkili (d. 1693 AD), an Acehnese cleric who traveled to Hijaz to obtain religious study. He is the author of *Mir'at al-Tullab* (fiqh), *Kitab al-Fara'idl* (fiqh), *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* (tafsir in Malay Language), *Daqa'iq al-Huruf* (tasawuf), and the others.

The specific material on the Prophet Muhammad's story can be found in these works. The Malay Hikayat Mi'raj Nabi Muhammad is one of the early works to deal with the *Sira* in the context of Malay literary heritages (van der Meij & Lambooi, 2014). The manuscript is believed to be written in the early 17th century and became the translation source for all derivative heritages in various languages in the Archipelago. The aesthetic reception of the Prophet's biography has also become the particular characteristic of this stage. Bruinessen reports that several manuscripts in Malay and Javanese language were brought to Europe in 1600 AD. Among these manuscripts is a Javanese translation of *Qasidah al-Burdah*, a 13th-century Arabic poem on the Prophet's glory, written by al-Busiri (d. 1294 AD).

On the Islamic works based on a particular branch of knowledge, the history (*tarikh*) was already known since al-Raniri's time even earlier. The early Malay literature containing the Prophet's biography is some material in *Taj al-Salatin* written by Bukhari al-Jauhari, a Persian cleric

who lived in Aceh. The writing of the book was finished in 1603 AD. The book is a combination of philosophy and literature. It was intended as a guide for the Malay kings. A small part of this book explains the leadership teachings of several Prophets, including Musa, Sulaiman, and Prophet Muhammad (WM, 2010).

The narration of the Prophet's biography is also contained in *Bustan al-Salatin* by Nurudin al-Raniri. The work has become the first-ever literature to present Malay history in a universal context. This voluminous book successfully compiled several Islamic historiography traditions and is similar to that of *Tarikh al-Rasul wa al-Muluk*, a universal history written by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari. Starting with an explanation related to the creation of the universe, including the story of Nur Muhammad, this book explains the history of nations including Persian, Roman, pre-Islamic Arabic, and followed by an annalistic explanation of the Islamic Period from the Prophet to the time of al-Hallaj, before finally explaining the kingdom in India and Malay (Azra, 2004). Through these two works of literature, the Prophet's biography's narrative was written in a pragmatic framework as a guideline for the leaders who ruled in the Malay world at that time. In the 18th century, literature related to the Prophet's history was also written by Malay-Indonesian clerics on more specific and independent themes. Among those are Abdussamad al-Falimbani (d. 1832 AD), the author of the *Risalah al-Mi'raj*, and Daud al-Fattani (d. 1847 AD), the author of *Kifayat al-Muhtaj fi Bayanil Isra wa al-Mi'raj*, and some of the Prophet's historical material in *Wird al-Zawahir*.

In the 19th century, where some Indonesian students became the Imam at Masjid al-Haram, there was substantial evidence on the productivity of the works written by them. In the context of the literature of the Prophet's Sira, the type that developed was the historical narrative regarding the Prophet's Birthday (Maulid al-Nabi) and Qasida (the Arabic poems on the Prophet's story). Muhammad Nawawi al-Bantani (d. 1897 AD), for example, one of the most celebrated Javanese student in Hijaz, wrote at least six works on the Maulid; *Madarij al-Syuhud Syarh Maulid al-Barzanji*, *Targhib al-Musytaqin: Syarh Mandzhumat al-Barzanji*, *Fath al-Shamad al-'Alam: Syarh Maulid Syarif al-Anam*, *al-Ibriz al-Dani fi Maulid Sayyidina Muhammad al-'Adnani*, *Bughyat al-'Awam fi Syarh Maulid Sayyidil Anam*, and *al-Durr al-Bahiyyah fi Syarh al-Khasais al-Nabawiyyah*. Bearing the title *Sayyid 'Ulama al-Hijaz*, Nawawi al-Bantani is one of the most crucial figures in the Islamic intellectual tradition of the Archipelago, for many of his works are circulated and studied by Islamic student in pesantren.

Prophetic Heritage and the Shaping of Indonesian Islam

By the late 19th Century, Islam has begun to increase as most of the population in the Archipelago. The broader community in the Archipelago accepted it due to the humanist way of Islamic preacher in religious proselytizing. In this sense, Islam does not appear "rigid" when responding to local customs that develop in the native society. When Islam arrived at that time, this

religion adapted to the local community's culture in various ways through cultural acculturation (M Abdul Karim, 2007). This part will address the three-fold acculturation, which includes the natural process, the educational phase, and the organizational stage, to be applied in prophetic heritage as one of the leading forces in shaping Indonesia Islam.

The culture here refers to all cultures in Indonesia, consisting of native culture, the culture that fills in, and culture which is a mixture of both. Historical facts cannot be denied about the acculturation of Islamic teaching with local cultures; Indonesian Archipelago is an area with its characteristics with its Islamic identity. Considering the Archipelago is a crossing of world trade traffic and transit, cosmopolitanism is necessary. In its development, the form of acculturation of Islamic teaching and local culture in the Archipelago displays several faces. Sometimes the elements of Islam are dominant above the native culture and vice versa. Besides, the process of acculturation sometimes also forms a newly-established culture that has its nature that can no longer be distinguished between what comes from outside and which is native's local genius (M Abdul Karim, 2018). There are at least three phases of encountering between Islamic teaching and local culture, including the natural, educational, and organizational stages (M Abdul Karim, 2007).

First, in the natural phase, Islam, with its cultural devices, was brought by traders who come to the Archipelago. Although their primary purpose is to trade, the task of preaching cannot be neglected. It is like the advice of the Prophet: "Convey whatever comes from me, even though it is only one verse" (*ballighu 'anny wa law ayatan*) (Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri & Siddiqi, 1998). At this initial stage, Islam's teachings were conveyed naturally through social interaction, as mentioned earlier. Showing the Qur'anic teaching and Prophetic values practically through *Da'wa bi al-hal* becomes the primary key in this process. The effort of the merchants, as well as preachers, was successful with a resounding glance. It was evidenced by the large number of indigenous people who were interested and decided to embrace Islam. In this phase, natural processes emerge from two directions. The behavior of Islamic merchants and preachers who practice their religion in social interactions meet with the native interests that arise voluntarily to convert to Islam on the other hand. It happens because the preachers or merchants have bargaining power for them, namely the humanistic values based on the Prophet's paragons.

Gradually, groups of certain Islamic preachers were formed, which also spread naturally. It leads to the second phase of acculturation at the educational level. When the Islamic *da'wah* has shown its progress, which has successfully promoted Islam across the regions, it becomes a necessity to train the new preachers. These cadres were specially educated; besides being taught religious knowledge, they were also taught the Prophet Muhammad's history as an example in carrying out Islamic *da'wah*. Institutions were formed, led by *ulama*, and attended by several students (M Abdul Karim, 2007).

Prophetic Education Through Cultural Rites

In both stages, one should note the emergence of various cultural strategies in preaching Islam. Islam entered Indonesia with peaceful penetration and spread by cultural forces resulted from several strategies carried out by Islamic preachers. In this case, they first performed structuring and immersing themselves with the local community by studying the culture that developed there. In this case, it is no exaggeration to say that they first carried out the so-called socio-anthropological research, in our modern sense, before finally performing Islamic da'wah. They did not directly perform frontal preaching by necessarily blaming the religion held before by them and replacing it with a new religion. However, everything happens gradually with several processes. In this context, the Prophet's history's teachings became essential elements in the cultural strategy. In formal teaching and learning, the educational strategy brought by the Islamic preachers in Indonesia also insert several Islamic teachings through cultural rites. Among the most important of this local genius is the tradition of Mawlid al-Nabiyy (celebrating the birth of the Prophet) (Tarsitani, 2007) with various local designations (Muludan, Maulid, Male, etc.) and the tradition of al-Isra wa al-Mi'raj (the Prophet's ascension) with its local designations (Rajaban, Isro-Mi'raj, etc.).

As mentioned earlier, historical records show that the literature related to the Prophet's *sirah* transmitted to the Archipelago from the beginning of the 17th to the 19th century was related to *qasidah* and *manaqib* literature (biographical works of a laudatory nature) concerning isra 'mi'raj and another story of the Prophet's glory. It shows that the first interface of moslems in the Archipelago with the *Sira* was in the context of aesthetically spiritual receptions. They know the Prophet through singing *pupujian* (local poetry that contains the Prophet's glory, which is sung in local rhythm scale) as the influence of the reception of *qasidah* literature since early Islamization. This *pupujian* is sung every time after the call to prayer before iqamah. The Arabic qasida and *manaqib* were recited in various local rites such as a baby's birth, circumcision, marriage, etc.

Besides, they also knew the Prophet from the Mawlid tradition where the *qasidah* was also recited along with the *manaqib* works of literature such as Maulid al-Barzanji, written by Ja'far al-Barzanji (d. 1764 AD), Maulid al-Diba'i, which is attributed to by Abdurrahman ibn al-Diba' al-Syaibani (d. 1537 AD), Qasidah al-Burdah, etc. Some local preachers even compose the book of *manaqib* and qasida either in Arabic or regional languages. These rites have survived the challenges thrown by the modernists up to current times, those who see the celebration of the Prophet's birthday as a heresy (*bid'ah*). In modern times, the Prophet's birthday celebration is also filled with public religious preaching that contains some reflections on the life and teachings of the Prophet himself. Shortly speaking, the form of education on the Prophet's story in this artistic medium is more aimed at appreciating the life and teachings of the Prophet that is implanted in the heartstrings of every Muslim in the Archipelago.

Sira in Traditional Pesantren

Another feature of the second stage is the pesantren's role as the agent of disseminating Islamic teaching in the Archipelago. Along with the rapid development of Islam and the increasing number of local Islamic preachers who traveled to study in the Middle-East, especially Mecca and Madinah, form the "Hijaz-Malay intellectual network," an educational institution began to be established in such a formal sense. Indeed, education through the artistic medium was assumed to have existed before, since the agents produced from the non-formal education, such as teaching-learning activities at the teacher's home or in several mosques.

The emergence of the formalized institution is aimed to conserve that culturally-based religious rite as the necessary of the second stage of acculturation. In a formal sense, the first Islamic educational institution, even the education of Indonesian people in general, appeared in the Archipelago was the traditional pesantren (*dayah, surau,* and other local names). With the oldest historical records in the early 18th century, pesantren became a formal educational institution that applied the so-called "curriculum" for its students called *santri*. It must be admitted that the first and foremost Islamic discipline taught in pesantren is fiqh and *aqidah* due to the institution's primary purpose to produce the new cadres who would become Islamic preachers in the community.

Martin van Bruinessen who specifically researched the traditional pesantren curriculum, says that *Sirah* is a new lesson and is rarely taught in pesantren (Bruinessen, 1995). The number of books taught is still minimal, in which the majority of students access knowledge about the Prophet through *manaqib* literature such as *maulid al-Barzani* and *qasidah* such as *Burdah* and *Syimt al-Durar*. Based on the research in dozens of pesantren in late 1980 and early 1990, Bruinessen's conclusion shows that only three works related to the *Sirah* are formally taught in traditional pesantren (see table 1). The formal *Sira* work taught at the traditional *pesantren* based on the table above is *Khulasah Nurul Yaqin* written by Umar Abdul Jabbar (d. 1971 AD), a writer from Mecca, which is a resume of *Nurul Yaqin*, a work composed by Muhammad al-Khudlari Beik (d. 1927) an Egyptian Islamic historian.

Table I. *Sira Literature in Pesantren*

No.	Title	Number of Pesantren
1	<i>Khulasah Nurul Yaqin</i>	3
2	<i>Al-Barzanji</i>	1
3	<i>Dardir</i>	1

Source: Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning*, 191

The rest are works related to *manaqib*, namely *al-Barzanji* and *al-Dardir 'ala Qissat al-Mi'raj*, attributed to Ahmad al-Dardiri (d. 1786 AD), an Egyptian cleric, which contains the stories about *Isra Mi'raj*. However, in the early 2000s, there was increasing attention on *sira* literature in the

pesantren milieu. This observation cannot be separated from the government's role through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which organizes a competition to read Arabic books called MQK (*Musabaqah Qira'at al-Kutub*), a unique national competition for the *santri* (students in pesantren). This competition is divided based on age and educational qualifications; *ula* (beginner), *wustha* (intermediate), and *ulya* (advance); see [table 2](#).

Table 2. *Sira Literature in the National Competition of Musabaqa Qiraat al-Kutub MQK 2017*

No	Level	Title of the Book
1	<i>Ula</i>	Khulasah Nurul Yaqin
2	<i>Wustha</i>	Nurul Yaqin
3	<i>Ulya</i>	Al-Rahiq al-Makhtum

Source: <https://kemenag.go.id>

This national competition then encouraged some traditional *pesantren* to make the *Sira* literature a part of the curriculum's official textbooks. At least, this enables the stakeholders of traditional *pesantren* to be more interested in formal *Sira* literature. As a result, limited to the literature in the contest, several pesantren, especially modern pesantren, has also begun to compose *Sira* literature. It was also strengthened by the mushrooming of several pesantren in a contemporary style, a real influence of Islamic modernism echoed in Egypt by Muhammad Abduh Rasyid Ridha and others. It is in line with the renewal of Islamic education with the emergence of the madrasa system, on the one hand, and modern pesantren, although the traditional pesantren still have a healthy existence day.

Teaching Sira and Islamic History in the Indonesian Modern Islamic School

The final and most recent stages in the acculturation between Islamic teachings and Indonesian culture occur in the organizational aspect. Being influenced by the colonial policies, the traditional Islamic educational institution began to renew the learning management ([M Abdul Karim, 2007](#)). Until the end of the 20th century, the traditional *pesantren* education system continued to develop. Pesantren was no longer exclusive by only teaching the Islamic disciplines, and it also started to adopt the so-called "secular sciences," especially the foreign languages (English, Dutch, Japanese), as the influence of the colonial government in one hand and the spirit of national awakening to the freedom of nation ([Nasution, 1983](#)). Traditional *pesantren* mainly consisted of mosques and dormitories (*asrama*), while several *pesantren* in the early 20th century began to have classes, and even some facilities and sophisticated infrastructures.

After the colonial government further expanded its dominance, in the mid-19th century, the Dutch government began to establish a western educational model intended for the Dutch and a small group of natives in the Archipelago. It is supported by the ethical policy that applies equal education to the villagers. However, this education's primary goal is still the same; the advancement of Dutch companies. The Dutch government also issued regulations to accelerate the ability to read

and write Roman script, those who study in the traditional Islamic institutions and are not able to read the Roman writing are considered “illiterate” (*buta huruf*) and will not be able to work in government companies (Nasution, 1983).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the renewal of Islamic educational institutions began to arise. The emergence of Islamic educational institutions in the western model in West Sumatera has marked the beginning of renewal. The most important agents, in this case, were the student of the Archipelago who studied in Mecca under Ahmad Khatib Minangkabau (d. 1916 AD), a native Sumatra who became a teacher in Mecca. Abdullah Ahmad (d. 1933), one of the first “Indonesians” who received the honorary degree from Al-Azhar University, Cairo, and the founder of Islamic magazine *Al-Munir*, the first Islamic mass media in the Archipelago, was also a figure who founded *Adabiyah School* in 1909 AD. In 1915 AD, the government recognized the government as the first HIS/Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (the name of Dutch school for the natives) founded by an Islamic organization that received government subsidies. The school is regarded as the first *madrasah* in Indonesia to teach mainly the Islamic sciences and secular discipline in a western classical model.

In Java, traditional *pesantren* also began to adopt secular sciences, especially the foreign language. Several *madrasahs* also began to be established, such as the *Madrasah Muhammadiyah* in 1918 AD, amid the Dutch government schools' development. However, there are also several *madrasah* in Java that refuse to teach secular disciplines. Furthermore, after Indonesia's independence in 1945, traditional *pesantren* has also built several *madrasah* or governmental schools for their Islamic student (*santri*). Kiai Wahid Hasyim was the critical figure in the reconciliation between Islamic education and governmental schools. In addition to encouraging traditional *pesantren* to establish *madrasah* or government schools, he was also a pioneer in the integration of religious lessons for the 30% allocation of the curriculum of government schools through the official regulation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Number 3, 1950 (Nasution, 1983).

Concerning the Sira of the Prophet Muhammad's learning, the Islamic education system in Indonesia has integrated the Sira material into Islamic History. In the context of the *madrasa*, all levels of education have been given the lesson called *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam* (History of Islamic Culture). In this lesson, the Prophet's *Sira* is taught as a significant part in the beginning. The following is the official guide for composing *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam's* syllabus in all levels in *madrasah* based on the official Regulation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia (Peraturan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia No. 0000912, Tahun 2013 Tentang Kurikulum *Madrasah* Tahun 2013).

All of the levels have the same purpose; the ability to take a lesson of Islamic history, emulating the outstanding Islamic figures, and relating them to the current phenomena for the progress of Islam in the future (see table 3). With the smaller portion through the legacy of Kiai Wahid Hasyim with his policy in 1950 AD, the history of Prophet Muhammad is also taught at the government school under the subject Islamic Education which contains several themes of Islamic disciplines such as Fikih (Islamic jurisprudence), Akidah (Islamic theology), Akhlak (morality), and Tarikh (Islamic history).

Table 3. The scheme of the national standard for the subject of Islamic history in Madrasah

Level	Subject	Elaboration
Ibtida'iyah	Operational Definition	Narratives related to the development of a Muslim's life in Islamic history from time to time in the context of worshipping God and morality
	Scope	History of pre-Islamic Arab society and History of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad Da'wah of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions The events of the Prophet's Hijrah and <i>Fathul Mecca</i> The important events during the period of <i>al-Khulafa al-Rashidun</i> The history of <i>Wali Songo</i> (Nine Saints of Java)
Tsanawiyah	Operational Definition	A subject that examines the origin, development, and role of Islamic culture as well as outstanding figures in Islamic history
	Scope	The History of Prophet Muhammad in Meccan Period The History of Prophet Muhammad in Medinan Period Islamic Civilization in the <i>al-Khulafa al-Rasyidun</i> Era The development of Muslim society under the Umayyad The development of Muslim society under the Abbasid The development of Muslim society under the Ayyubid The development of Muslim society in Indonesia
Aliyah	Operational Definition	A subject that examines the origin, development, and role of Islamic civilization, since the time of the Prophet, the classical times/golden age (650 sd. 1250 AD [According to the writer, the exact periodization is started from the Prophet's time to the fall of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 AD]), the middle age/age of the decline (1250 to 1800), the modern times/age of revival (1800 until now), and the development of Islam in Indonesia and the world.
	Scope	The <i>da'wa</i> Prophet Muhammad in Meccan and Medina Period The Succession after the Prophet The development of Islam in the classical ages (650-1250 AD) The development of Islam in the middle ages (1250-1800 AD) The development of Islam in modern times (1800-now) The development of Islam in Indonesia and the world

Source: Permenag no. 912, Tahun 2013

Materially, it must be recognized that the material on *Sira* and Islamic history in educational institutions in Indonesia is based on the political frame of history. It can be seen from the distribution and classification of the material that follows the political phases of Muslim history in general.

Conclusion

Shortly speaking, Indonesian Islamic societies are taught about the Prophet figure from the beginning in the cultural context and aesthetic-spiritual implementation through the local genius that has been mentioned earlier. At the most recent stage, they also continue to study their beloved Prophet in a more standard form in the cognitive context. That is how the *Prophet's Sira* shaped the

character and nature of Islam in the Indonesian Archipelago. Hopefully, the narration above can briefly describe how the *Sira* of Prophet Muhammad PBUH was immersed within the Indonesian Islamic traditions in various fields and spheres. The face of Indonesian Islam today is culturally formed by the determination of the figure of the Prophet. Being transmitted from its well-spring in the Middle East through several routes, mainly the South Asian connections, *Sira* of the Prophet was accepted by Moslem in Indonesia with various receptions, from the aesthetic-spiritual form to the cognitive frame.

References

- Abdullah, R. (2015). *Walisongo: Gelora Dakwah dan Jihad di Tanah Jawa*. Surakarta: Penerbit Al-Wafi, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Aboebakar, H. (1970). *Pengantar Sejarah Sufi dan Tasawuf*. Jakarta: Ramadhani, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Abu Zayd, N. H. (1994). *Mafhum al-Nass: Dirasah fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Al-Markaz Al-Tsaqafiy Al-'Araby, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Ahmad, A. S. (1979). *Sulalatus Salatin:(Sejarah Melayu)/diselenggarakan oleh A. Samad Ahmad*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1966). *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri*. SOAS University of London, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Al-Bukhari, M. (1989). *Al-Adab al-Mufrad Beirut: Dar al-Bashair al-Islamiyyah*, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Al-Haddad, S. (1967). *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam di Timur Jauh*. Jakarta: Almaktabah Addami, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Ali, K. (1973). *History of India, Pakistan & Bangladesh*. Ali Publications, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Arnold, S. T. W. (1986). *Preaching of Islam, A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*. NY and London: Constable & Co.
- Azizy, A. Q. A. (2002). *Memberdayakan Pesantren dan Madrasah, pengantar dalam Ismail SM.,(dkk.). Dinamika Pesantren Dan Madrasah*, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Azra, A. (2004). *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern'Ulam?' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. University of Hawaii Press, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Azra, A. (2006). *Islam in the Indonesian World: an Account of Institutional Formation*. Mizan Pustaka, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Azra, A. (2013). *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah*. Prenada Media, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Bruinessen, M. van. (1995). *Kitab kuning, pesantren dan tarekat: Tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia*. Bandung: Mizan, 17, available at: [Google Scholar](#).

- Bukhori, & Sidi Ibrahim. (1971). *Sejarah Masuknya Islam dan Proses Masuknya Islam di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Publicita
- Data Populasi Penduduk Muslim 2020: Indonesia Terbesar di Dunia. (n.d.). Retrieved February 5, 2021, from IBTimes.ID website: <https://ibtimes.id/data-populasi-penduduk-muslim-2020-indonesia-terbesar-di-dunia/>
- Fathurahman, O. (2012). *Ithaf al-Dhaki: Tafsir Wahdatul Wujud bagi Muslim Nusantara*. Bandung: PT Mizan Publika, available at: [Google Scholar](#) .
- Fatimi, S. Q. (1963). *Islām comes to Malaysia*. Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Hall, K. . (1985). *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Hamka. (1975). Sejarah Umat Islam. In *Bulan Bintang*. Jakarta, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Hill, A. H. (1960). Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai. *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 33(2 (190), 1–215, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Karim, M Abdul. (2019). *Sejarah Pemikiran dan Peradaban Islam* (8th ed.). Yogyakarta: Bagaskara, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Karim, M Abdul. (2001). Kontribusi Muhammad bin Qasim dalam Penaklukan Sind. *Jurnal: Thaqaifiyat*, 2(2), available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Karim, M Abdul. (2007). *Islam Nusantara*. Yogyakarta: Gramasurya, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Karim, M Abdul. (2018). Islam in Indonesia: A Historical Perspective. *Indonesian Journal of Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies*, 1–17, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri, & Siddiqi, 'Abdul Hamid. (1998). *Sahih Muslim Vol. 1*. New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, available: [Google Scholar](#).
- Nasution, S. (1983). *Sejarah Pendidikan Indonesia*. Jemmars, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Polo, M. (1918). *The Travels of Marco Polo*. JM Dent & Sons, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Ricci, R. (2011). *Islam translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia*. University of Chicago Press, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2001). *A History of Modern Indonesia since C. 1200* (3rd ed.). Hampshire: Palgrave, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Salam, S. (1964). *Sedjarah Islam di Djawa*. Djajamurni, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Sayid, A. (1957). Sejarah Perkembangan Islam di Timur Jauh. *Jakarta: Dzija Shahab Al-Maktab Addami*, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Schrieke, B. J. O. (1916). *Het boek van Bonang*. P. den Boer, available at: [Google Scholar](#).
- Tarsitani, S. (2007). Mawlūd: Celebrating the birth of the Prophet in Islamic Religious Rituals and Wedding Ceremonies in Harar. *Annales d'Éthiopie*, 23(1), 153–176. Editions de la Table Ronde,

available at: [Google Scholar](#).

Toynbee, A. J. (1989). *Study of History Vol. II*, available at: [Google Scholar](#).

Van Den Berg, H. D., & Simanjuntak, P. (1952). *Dari Panggung Peristiwa Sedjarah Dunia. Groningen: JB Wolters*, available at: [Google Scholar](#).

van der Meij, T. C., & Lambooi, N. (2014). Hikayat Mi'rāj Nabi Muḥammad. In *The Malay Hikayat Mi'rāj Nabi Muḥammad* (pp. 23–109). Brill, available at: [Google Scholar](#).

Wheeler, R. E. M. (1950). *Five thousand years of Pakistan: an archaeological outline*, available at: [Google Scholar](#).

WM, A. H. (2010). Etika Islam Dalam Tajussalatin Karya Bukhari Al-Jauhari. *Jurnal Filsafat*, 20(2), 147–164, available at: [Google Scholar](#).

Yusuf, M. (2006). *Sejarah Peradaban Islam di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka, available at: [Google Scholar](#).