

## WALISANGA'S STUDY OF THE STRATEGY FOR THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN INDONESIA

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**Abstract:** Walisanga is a group of scholars who spread Islam in Indonesia. Walisanga is considered successful in spreading Islam through cultural strategies and approaches. The substance of Walisanga's cultural approach is the ability to accommodate local culture with Islamic doctrine, so that cultural acculturation occurs which is the hallmark of Islam in Indonesia. This qualitative writing using literature studies aims to explain the strategy of spreading Islam carried out by Walisanga in Indonesian society. The form of data collection is mainly by collecting Walisanga historical sources and observations on Indonesian culture. While the data analysis technique uses content analysis by sorting out the data according to the research problem. The results of this study are that Walisanga in spreading Islam in Indonesia is carried out with several strategies, as follows. First, the 5 formation strategy; 3; 1, namely five trustees in East Java, three trustees in Central Java, and one trustee in West Java. Second, the strategy of spreading Islam in trading centers and ports is a rational and strategic matter. Third, the spread of Islam using local cultural arts media is a Walisanga strategy that can make Islam accepted in Indonesia.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian people know the nine saints or better known as "*Walisanga*" as the spreaders of Islam. They know Walisanga based on success stories recorded in history books and their legacy. Walisanga has strategies and cultural approaches that are used in the spread of Islam in Indonesia. With these strategies and approaches, the existence of Islam in Indonesia has characteristics that are dynamic, tolerant, creative, and has high adaptation to the diversity of society.

At the time of the spread of Islam, Walisanga first carried out accurate planning and calculations balanced with rational and strategic considerations, namely by looking at geostrategic factors adjusted to the conditions to be faced, so that the results achieved would be maximized. This is also inseparable from the strategies and methods they have set. Therefore, the process of spreading Islam in Indonesia is within the framework of a cultural acculturation process (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). Because of the spread of Islam from Walisanga to Indonesian society, it has made the style of Islam in Indonesia very tolerant.

At least there is some evidence that Walisanga made strategic planning and rational and strategic considerations in spreading Islam as follows, among others:

First, the 5 formation strategy; 3; 1, namely five trustees in East Java, three trustees in Central Java, and one trustee in West Java. He placed five guardians in East Java, because East Java at that time was the center of political power, namely the kingdoms of Kediri and Majapahit. Three trustees in Central Java, because in Central Java the center of Hindu and Buddhist political power does not play much role anymore. Meanwhile, a guardian was placed in West Java, because the spread of Islam in West Indonesia was better (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007).

Second, the strategy of spreading Islam in trading centers and ports is a rational and strategic matter. Because, on average, Walisanga works as a trader. By spreading Islam to trade centers and ports, the spread of Islam is more effective. Where such centers are channels of communication, interaction, socialization of Islamic teachings through economic or trade relations (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). It is through this relationship that the process of Islamization in Indonesia within the framework of "cultural acculturation" is formed peacefully, without having to go through the sword.

Third, using local cultural arts media. Ilaihi and Hefni stated that globally the strategies and methods developed by Walisanga in spreading Islam were mostly through local cultural arts media, in addition to socio-economic channels. Or more precisely, Islamizing culture or cultivating Islam. An example is the art and cultural media that Walisanga modified and adapted to the context of Islamic teachings (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007).

Based on the description above, conducting a study on Walisanga's strategy for spreading Islam in Indonesia is very interesting. This is because the spread of Islam in Indonesia was not carried out by a sword. However, the spread of Islam in Indonesia was carried out by Walisanga's ability to communicate Islamic teachings with local culture. Therefore, there is little hope that this paper will contribute to academics and especially researchers who focus on Islamic studies.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative descriptive research uses literature study in conducting its research. Literature study is research that is limited to library data (Zed, 2008). There are four steps in literature study mentioned by Zed as quoted by Khatibah (2011), including: preparing equipment, compiling a working bibliography, managing time, and reading and making research notes.

The data analysis technique uses content analysis by sorting data according to the research objectives and problems. Content analysis according to Berelson and Kerlinger as quoted by Kriyantono (2010) is a method for studying and analyzing communication systemically, objectively, qualitatively, regarding visible messages. Thus, content analysis will analyze the collected data systemically, objectively and qualitatively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The word "*wali*" comes from a term in the Qoran which has many meanings, including: helper, rightful, and powerful. Wali also means bodyguard, lover, heir, and caretaker. Walisanga in this study is defined as a group of people (council of spreading Islamic teachings) who are considered to have the right to teach Islam to the Islamic community in Indonesia (Muhyiddin and Safe'i, 2002). The Walisanga in question are: Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunung Jati.

In the "*Babad Tanah Jawa*" it is stated that Walisanga has a dual function, namely: as a spreader and transmitter of Islamic teachings, teacher, and community leader accompanying the king. Therefore, they have the title "*Sunan*" or "*Susuhunan*", a title from the king. Among the people of Central Java, the term "*Kanjeng Sunan*" has developed for Walisanga and kings until now have used the title "*Sunan*" or "*Susuhunan*" (Zuhri, 1979). Walisanga did not use the title "*Sulthan*" (in Arabic), as was the case for propagators of Islam in other areas. The use of the title "*Sunan*" instead of "*Sulthan*" is one of the cultural approaches that Walisanga has considered since the beginning of the spread of Islam.

In addition to the above, Labib said that Walisanga was an intellectual who was a reformer of Indonesian society at his time. Their influence is felt in various forms of manifestation of new civilizations, ranging from health, farming, commerce, culture, art, society, and governance (Labib, n.y). The following describes several Walisanga and the success of the strategy of spreading Islam through a cultural approach, including:

**First**, Sunan Gresik. His real name is Maulana Malik Ibrahim. Some call it Maulana Maghribi. In Arabic, the meaning of "*maghrib*" is the same as "*gharbun*" which means west or far. It can be interpreted that Maulana Maghribi is Tuanku who comes from the West or who comes from afar, namely "*Maghrib*" a country in North Africa (Zuhri, 1979). Javanese people (at that time) often called Sunan Gresik or Maulana Malik Ibrahim as Grandpa Pillow.

Sunan Gresik carried out the spread of Islam and educated the public through the pesantren system so that he was seen as the "Father of Islamic Boarding Schools or Father of Pesantren" in Indonesia (Zuhri, 1979). The strategy of spreading Islam through pesantren is acculturation or a blend of two Hindu-Islamic cultures. Zuhri describes Sunan Gresik as a figure who is good at winning sympathy among the people and those in power who are ruling even though they have different religions (Zuhri, 1979). Meanwhile, Labib illustrates Sunan Gresik as a person who is polite, and gentle towards others, respects the elders, and loves the younger ones (Labib, n.y). Based on this, the style of Islam in Indonesia can be accepted by all people.

**Second**, Sunan Ampel. His first name is Raden Rahmat. He is the son of Sunan Gresik. Zuhri describes Sunan Ampel who has inherited his father's leadership qualities in managing the pesantren. Sunan Ampel succeeded in instilling sympathy among the authorities, not through harsh and violent means, but wisely and by educating people to think responsibly with reasonable arguments (Zuhri, 1979). Labib gave an illustration that Sunan Ampel is known to have a sensitivity to adaptation. The way to instill Islamic teachings is very concerned about the condition of society. The word '*shalat*' is replaced by '*sembahyang*' (originally: *sembah* and *hyang*). Places of worship for Muslims are named according to local culture, namely '*langgar*'. Islamic religious students are called '*santri*', derived from the word '*shastri*' - people who know the holy book of Hinduism (Labib, n.y).

The philosophy of Islamic teachings from Sunan Ampel "*Moh Limo*" which is similar to Buddhist teachings, means not doing five despicable things, including not playing gambling, not drinking, stealing, smoking marijuana, and not committing adultery (Labib, n.y). Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) mention the strategy of spreading Sunan Ampel's Islam, among other things by calling for and continuing the struggle that had been carried out by the previous guardian and marrying the daughter of the local area.

**Third**, Sunan Bonang. His real name is Maulana Makdum Ibrahim, one of the sons of Sunan Ampel and Nyai Ageng Manila (Djaya, 1965). Zuhri describes Sunan Bonang as a figure who is an expert in the arts and culture and the arts. Sunan Bonang emphasized the spread of Islam through the arts and. Sunan Bonang composes songs based on local culture and incorporates Islamic values into the songs (Zuhri, 1979).

Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) mention the strategy of spreading Islam from Sunan Bonang by incorporating Islamic influence into the Majapahit Kingdom and codifying or bookkeeping Islamic teachings and producing a book known as "*Suluk Sunan Bonang*".

**Fourth,** Sunan Drajat. His real name is Syarifuddin Hasyim. He is the son of Sunan Ampel. In his daily life, he is known as a guardian who is social and does not hesitate to help the grassroots (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). Other names for Sunan Drajat include Raden Qosim, Sunan Mahmud, Sunan Mayang Madu, Sunan Muryapada, Raden Imam, Maulana Hasyim, Sheikh Masakeh, Prince Syarifuddin, Prince Kadrajat, and Masaikh Munat (Labib, n.y).

Labib stated that Sunan Drajat spread Islamic teachings through a wise and non-coercive concept. There are five strategies of Sunan Drajat in spreading Islam, including direct recitation at mosques, organizing Islamic boarding schools, giving advice in solving problems for the community, through arts and culture, and through traditional customary rituals (Labib, n.y). Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) mention the strategies for spreading Islam from Sunan Drajat, including establishing community assistance centers, creating pilot villages, instilling the teachings of mutual cooperation, and creating traditional songs.

**Fifth,** Sunan Giri. Other names are Joko Samudro, Raden Paku, Prabu Satmata. He is the son of Maulana Ishak (Hasyim, 1979). The name of another Sunan Giri is Raden Ainul Yaqin (Zuhri, 1979). In the spread of Islam, the first thing to do was to establish mosques and Islamic boarding schools, then teach religious sciences, such as fiqh, hadith, nahwu, and neuroscience (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007).

The strategies for spreading Islam developed by Sunan Giri include: fostering Muslim cadres, developing Islam, providing education for the wider community, pioneering children's games containing Islamic teachings, and composing traditional songs that are inserted with Islamic teachings (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). Games made by Sunan Giri that remain popular and exist today include mushroom games, *jalungan*, sugar substitutes, and so on.

**Sixth,** Sunan Kudus. Other names are Raden Ja'far Shodiq, Raden Undung, or Raden Untung, and Raden Amir Haji. Sunan Kudus is known as a great scholar who mastered the science of hadith, the science of interpreting the Koran, science of literature, logic, and especially the science of jurisprudence. With the height of his knowledge, he was later nicknamed "*Waliyul Ilmi*" which means a guardian who becomes a storehouse of knowledge (Syamsu, 1999).

Labib (n.y) describes the spread of Islam from Sunan Kudus with a strategy of dynamically integrating Hindu traditions into Islamic teachings. For example, Sunan Kudus actually slaughtered a buffalo, not a cow (an animal considered sacred by Hindus) during Sacrifice Day. It is part of Sunan Kudus's respect for Hindu followers. The construction of the



Kudus Mosque itself does not leave elements of Hindu architecture. The shape of the tower still retains the Hindu style of architecture.

Sunan Kudus composes stories that are Islamic in nature and spirit. The pattern of the spread of Islam that was developed was heavily patterned in the arts. Sunan Kudus merged with the local culture, making it more attractive and popular. As was done on the commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, many residents flocked to witness it. And this was used by Sunan Kudus for the spread of Islam. At the gate of the mosque, everyone must read the shahada first before entering it (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007).

**Seventh**, Sunan Kalijaga. His real name is Raden Syahid. He is the son of the duke of Tuban, Tumenggung Wilatikta. There are many names attached to him, including he is also known as "*Shaykh Malaya*" because of his habit of spreading Islam by wandering from one area to another. Sunan Kalijaga is a saint who can incorporate Islamic influence into the customs and traditions of the Javanese people. Shofwan (2022) mentions Sunan Kalijaga, the author of "Song of Rumeksa Ing Wengi".

Labib (n.y) illustrated the spread of Islam from Sunan Kalijaga in a very flexible way, not against existing customs. The clothes worn daily are Indonesian traditional clothes which are designed and perfected by themselves in an Islamic manner, not Arab traditional clothes. Sunan Kalijaga also creates shadow puppets and acts as a puppeteer, as well as an expert on city planning (which consists of; a palace or district, a square, one or two banyan trees, and a mosque). Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) noted Sunan Kalijaga's strategy for spreading Islam, including establishing an education center in Kadilangu, through art, and incorporating Islamic stories into *wayang kulit* performances.

**Eighth**, Sunan Muria. Other names are Raden Umar Syahid and Raden Prawoto. He is the son of Sunan Kalijaga and Dewi Saroh (Rozaq, n.y). In his daily life, he reflects a person who places love on Allah. So it is not surprising that he is known as a Sufi (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). Like the previous trustees, the strategies for spreading Islam that he developed were many that were laden with Islamic teachings in the form of art (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007).

Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) have noted Sunan Muria's strategy for spreading Islam, including making remote mountainous areas the center of Islamic activities, through art, and others. Labib (n.y) described the strategy of spreading Islam from Sunan Muria which used subtle methods, such as finding fish so as not to muddy the water.

The targets of the spread of Islam from Sunan Muria were traders, fishermen, sailors, and commoners. He is one of the guardians who still maintains art to convey Islam (Labib, n.y).

Thus, a cultural approach through *gamelan* art and *wayang kulit* has become a medium for Sunan Muria in spreading Islam.

**Ninth**, Sunan Gunung Jati. His real name is Syarif Hidayatullah. He is the son of Syarif Abdullah and Nyai Larasantang. Sunan Gunung Jati is known as a national hero who is persistent against colonialism. He succeeded in breaking Portuguese rule on June 22, 1527, which then replaced "*Sunda Kelapa*" with "*Jayakarta*", meaning a complete victory (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). Until now the name has become "*Jakarta*" the capital of Indonesia.

Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) state that the strategies for spreading Islam from Sunan Gunung Jati include: conducting internal guidance of the sultanate and the people within the territory of the Kingdom of Demak, conducting training outside the region by delegating responsibility to the youth.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the explanation of the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that Walisanga's strategy in spreading Islam in Indonesia was carried out using several strategies, as follows. First, the 5 formation strategy; 3; 1, namely five trustees in East Java, three trustees in Central Java, and one trustee in West Java. Second, the strategy of spreading Islam in trading centers and ports is a rational and strategic matter. Third, the spread of Islam using local cultural arts media is a Walisanga strategy that can make Islam accepted in Indonesia.

The Walisanga who spread Islam in Indonesia includes Sunan Gresik (Maulana Malik Ibrahim), Sunan Ampel (Raden Rahmat). Sunan Bonang (Makdum Ibrahim), Sunan Drajat (Syarifuddin Hasyim), Sunan Giri (Raden Ainul Yaqin), Sunan Kudus (Raden Ja'far Shodiq), Sunan Kalijaga (Raden Syahid), Sunan Muria (Raden Umar Syahid), and Sunan Gunung Teak (Sharif Hidayatullah).

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