

# ISLAM NUSANTARA: AMBIGUITY, CULTURAL STRATEGY OR ORIGINALITY (A Historical Studies)

Abdul Aziz<sup>1</sup>, Debi Arlianto<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>abdul.aziz@uin-suka.ac.id,

<sup>2</sup>22101020074@student.uin-suka.ac.id

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## Abstract:

Islam Nusantara is a new term in Indonesia. The opposing group views it as a form of Islamic division, and the pro group considers it a strategy for Islamic da'wah with a slogan of moderation and a cultural approach. Islam Nusantara is defined as Islam that is friendly, inclusive, dynamic, and friendly with a diverse cultural, sub-cultural and religious environment. From this meaning, the question arises from this ambiguity: "does the Islam brought by the Prophet not have the characteristics mentioned above, so it needs a discourse on Islam Nusantara? Or did it just happen because of the problem of syncretism and local cultural infiltration? It is a fundamental question that needs to be cleared. This study uses a social and historical approach to analyze the origin, meaning, and purpose of Islam Nusantara from the perspective of Indonesian society. Islam Nusantara is not a new issue. The identity of Islam has been popular since Islamization. The researcher concludes that the terminology of Nusantara Islam has political and theological content. That is the discourse of certain Islamic rulers and organizations dealing with the current epidemic of radicalism and extremism in religion. Originality is the primordial value of Islam that is not bound by time and place; inclusive, dynamic, and moderate. At the same time, the cultural strategy is a dialogue effort between Islam and time and place. Islam Nusantara needed to develop and change according to the demands of the times.

**Keywords:** Islam Nusantara, Ambiguity, Cultural Strategy, moderate

## Abstrak:

Islam Nusantara merupakan istilah baru di Indonesia. Kelompok penentang memandangnya sebagai bentuk perpecahan Islam, dan kelompok pro menganggapnya sebagai strategi dakwah Islam dengan slogan moderasi dan pendekatan budaya. Islam Nusantara diartikan sebagai Islam yang ramah, inklusif, dinamis, dan bersahabat dengan lingkungan budaya, sub budaya, dan agama yang beragam. Dari pemaknaan tersebut, timbul pertanyaan dari keambiguan tersebut: "apakah Islam yang dibawa Nabi tidak mempunyai ciri-ciri tersebut di atas, sehingga perlu adanya wacana Islam Nusantara? Ataukah terjadi begitu saja karena persoalan sinkretisme dan infiltrasi budaya lokal? Ini merupakan pertanyaan mendasar yang perlu dijawab. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan sosial dan historis untuk menganalisis asal usul, makna, dan tujuan Islam Nusantara dalam perspektif masyarakat Indonesia. Islam Nusantara bukanlah isu baru. Identitas Islam telah populer sejak Islamisasi, Peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa terminologi Islam Nusantara mempunyai muatan politis dan teologis, yaitu wacana para penguasa dan organisasi Islam tertentu dalam menghadapi mewabahnya radikalisme dan ekstremisme dalam agama saat ini. Islam yang tidak terikat waktu dan tempat, bersifat inklusif, dinamis,

dan moderat, sedangkan strategi kebudayaan merupakan upaya dialog antara Islam dengan waktu dan tempat. Islam Nusantara perlu berkembang dan berubah sesuai tuntutan zaman.

**Kata Kunci:** Islam Nusantara: Ambiguitas, Strategi Budaya, moderat

## INTRODUCTION

Islam is a universal religion with a mission and teachings addressed not only to one group or country but to all humankind, even the universe. However, the meaning of Islam's universality among Muslims is not uniform. Some groups define that the teachings of Islam brought by the Prophet Muhammad, who has an Arab culture, are final, so they must be followed as they are. Some groups interpret the universality of Islamic teachings as being not limited to time and place so they can fit into any culture. The first group has the ambition to homogenize all cultures in the world into one, as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad. Different cultures are not considered part of Islam. This group is called the fundamentalist group.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the second group wants Islam to be presented as a value that can affect all existing cultures. Islam lies in the values, not the physical form of the culture. This group is called the substantive group. Another group mediates between the two, which states that some are substantive in terms of Islam, and some are literal.

The presence of the discourse of Islam Nusantara (IN) cannot be separated from the struggle of the three groups above. IN wants to position itself in the third group. It emerged due to the "failure" of the first group presenting an unfriendly face of Islam and tended to impose it on other cultures, even using violence in preaching Islam. Likewise, the second group is considered to have distorted Islamic teachings. However, the concept of IN is also considered immature (limited to discourse) in the scientific context. According to Azhar Ibrahim, the National University of Singapore (nu.or.id), IN has not yet produced a rational philosophical idea (it has not produced a high degree of Islamic scholarship). This phrase only emerged as a concept when the 33rd NU congress was held in Jombang, East Java. Meanwhile, NU intellectuals believe IN has been practiced since Walisanga in Java. IN is

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<sup>1</sup> Kasdi Abdurrahman, "Fundamentalisme Islam Timur Tengah: Akar Teologi. Kritik Wacana Dan Politisasi Agama," *Jurnal Tashwirul Afkar* 3 (2000).

claimed by NU as the ideal Islamic da'wah concept compared to Middle Eastern Islam.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The term "Islam Nusantara" (IN) raised many questions from the public, especially Muslims. Some accused it of being a new movement in Islam, and some judged and compared Islam with the one brought by the Prophet in Arabia, thus giving rise to various discussions and responses. This paper tries to analyze from a historical and sociological point of view regarding the issue of IN. Its meaning is ambiguous as if Islam brought by the prophet does not contain moderation and inclusion. Then some think that this is only a manifestation of the Ministry of Religion which is currently fighting radicalism, extremism, and terrorism, and some think that the IN Movement is a cultural movement that does not change anything from Islam in the archipelago. This discussion will be reviewed. This study uses a historical and social approach to read the direction of Islamic thought in the archipelago. Historical studies are useful for tracing the origins of the term Islam Nusantara, its influence, and its implications in the current era.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

NU chose Islam Nusantara as the main theme of the national congress in 2015, showing a clear motivation to stem the conservative trend among Indonesian Muslims. The word Nusantara was born in the 14th century during the period of the Majapahit kingdom. In the 20th century, the nationalists used this word for the Netherlands East Indies, and subsequently, Nusantara became a refined expression of Indonesia after independence. Islam Nusantara means Indonesian Islam or the Indonesian way of Islam. Akhmad Sahal, a young intellectual from NU, characterizes Islam Nusantara as Islam that is tolerant and open to and adapted to local culture and tradition.<sup>2</sup>

The head of the graduate program of Islamic Studies Institute built by NU (STAINU, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Nahdlatul Ulama), Dawam

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<sup>2</sup> W Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* (academia.edu, 2020), <https://www.academia.edu/download/86476079/pdf.pdf>.

Multazam, defines Islam Nusantara as follows: acculturating Indonesian local culture and wisdom to the teaching and understanding of Islam as far as the culture and wisdom are not in violation to basic values of Islamic teaching in principle. Since its birth, NU has emphasized Islam, conforming with local culture and tradition. The key concepts of Islamic thought espoused by NU, *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah* (Aswaja), are tolerance, moderateness, and inclusiveness. Quran and Sunna are important, but Aswaja pays due respect to the reality of life. In this sense, the acculturation of Islam and locality, as emphasized in the concept of Islam Nusantara, is not new for NU. It is quite clear from the essay "Indigenizing Islam" (Pribumisasi. Islam), written by one of the most influential NU intellectuals, Abdurrahman Wahid (the chairman of NU from 1984-1999, the third president of the republic of Indonesia from 1999-2001) in 1989. He wrote about the necessity for the whole society to make an effort to indigenize Islam and "to make an effort to create a religious society while providing a firm foundation to our culture". He emphasized the local adaptation of Islam, and this idea is inherited in the concept of Islam Nusantara.<sup>3</sup>

According to Fealy, the term Islam Nusantara was popularized by academics such as Azyumardi Azra in the 1980s. Azyumardi's understanding of Islam Nusantara is quite simple, suggesting that it means Islam in Southeast Asia. The Wahid Institute, a think tank that Wahid established to allow "the pluralist and peaceful Islam" to take root in society. The supplements aimed to disseminate this Indonesian Islam to the Indonesian people. In the introduction to the book, Abdurrahman Wahid wrote, "the majority of our people are the silent majority who are tolerant to and pay respect to any faith, but do not say it openly." The book aimed to show apolitical, cultural, and local Islam alive among the people.

Abdul Mun'im argues that the Islamization process in Nusantara was not one way but two or multiple ways. Islamization process of Nusantara culture occurred simultaneously with the Nusantara-zation of Islamic values;

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<sup>3</sup> T Sansayto and N Radiani, "الوسطية في إسلام نوسانتارا," *Journal of Religious ...*, 2019, <https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/JRCS/article/view/3728>.

therefore, these two (Islam and Nusantara culture) did not only encounter each other but were merged into a new entity, later called Islam Jawa or Islam Nusantara. Islam Nusantara covered Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and the Philippines, and Islam Nusantara differed from Middle East Islam or Moroccan Islam and others. The existence of Islam Nusantara gradually waned when colonial England, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands divided the area to colonize it.<sup>4</sup>

According to Mun'im, a more destructive impact was the penetration of radical and Middle East Islam in the center of Islam Nusantara in this region and that Islam brought conflicts present in the Middle East to this area. Thus, he argued that Islam Nusantara was reintroduced by reconnecting the network and rooting Islam Nusantara in each locality to enable Islam to emerge again as the source of inspiration and motivation for the development of civilization in this area. Mun'im's essay vividly shows us the crisis with the increasing influence of radical Islam in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, which motivated him to urge the dissemination of the Islam Nusantara concept.<sup>5</sup>

Islam Nusantara is present amid the swift currents of transnational Islamic movements and religious puritanism, such as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and NI (Islamic State), which prioritize radicalism, intolerance, and the brutal face of Islam. The presence of the idea of Islam Nusantara is important to be demonstrated to the wider community. With the spirit of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, Islam Nusantara seems to bring hope for a solution to the increasing movement of radicalism. Islam Nusantara appears to carry an affirmation that Islam is a tolerant, moderate, and friendly religion, not promoting violence.

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<sup>4</sup> A A Mubarak and D G Rustam, "Islam Nusantara: Moderasi Islam Di Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Studies and ...*, 2019, <https://journal.walisongo.ac.id/index.php/JISH/article/view/3160>; Z M Bizawie, "MAP OUT A NEW HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF ISLAM NUSANTARA," ... *Journal of Pegon: Islam Nusantara ...*, 2018, <https://ejournalpegon.jaringansantri.com/index.php/INC/article/view/2>.

<sup>5</sup> H J P Astuti, "Islam Nusantara: Sebuah Argumentasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Kultural," *INJECT (Interdisciplinary Journal of ...)*, 2017, <https://inject.iainsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/INJECT/article/view/1320>.

In the perspective of *maqashid al-shari'ah*, IN appears to tackle the rise of religious radicalism movements and efforts to anticipate existential Islamic values believed by PBNU. Islam Nusantara did not emerge from a vacuum. Certain spiritual practice situations provoke such expressions to appear immediately. This expression can be seen from several lectures by the General Chair of PBNU, Prof. Dr. KH Said Aqiel Siradj. NU launched the Islam Nusantara platform to become an alternative solution during the increasingly radical development of Islam in the Middle East. The pro-violent Islam that spreads in parts of the Islamic world must be balanced with pro-peace Islam.<sup>6</sup>

IN is just a method that tries to find a way to anchor the culture of Islam in the context of a diverse society. It attempts to manifest the face of Islam as shady and inclusive. Based on its long history, IN has experienced a long struggle with its diverse localities. As it is located in a context that is dialectically different from the traditions and culture of the region, it will not destroy or disrupt any of the local traditions or culture. Because of its flexible nature, it can stay on and develop, so it conducts distinctive new Islamic expressions and no one anywhere in the world. It also wanted to take out of the chaos of orthodoxy in viewing religion, the classic debate that there was no tip base and naive people who deny the truth of other things. In the future, Islam in Nusantara has the potential to become a world power due to its science and value.<sup>7</sup>

According to Ahmad Baso, a Nusantara-style meeting featured saplings of two different kinds that, when crossed, will produce a superior seed. For a new genius with desired characteristics or properties, it must cross Islam and the archipelago. These seeds will grow healthy and can survive in any environmental situation and clutches, tolerant and adaptive to the environment so they can grow large and healthy, not wear out quickly, damaged, or fail to grow. A new species called Islam Nusantara is expected to be produced by

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<sup>6</sup> Mubarak and Rustam, "Islam Nusantara: Moderasi Islam Di Indonesia"; H Nugroho and A Hadi, "Islam Nusantara Dalam Perspektif Maqashid Al-Syari'ah," *International Journal Ihya' Ulum Al-Din*, 2020, <https://journal.walisongo.ac.id/index.php/ihya/article/view/4830>.

<sup>7</sup> L Nurhisam, "Islam Nusantara: A Middle Way?," ... : *Journal of Islamicate Multidisciplinary*, 2016, <http://ejournal.iainsurakarta.ac.id/index.php/shahih/article/view/241>.

crossing two different species. It will have the qualities of a high civilization and be resilient to various conditions and challenges. *Walisanga* was no doubt in effect during the time of the example illustrated earlier.<sup>8</sup>

IN is not a new sect of Islam, let alone a new religion. Nor is it a new ideology or sect in Islam that changes or narrows Islam's sacred and universal teachings. Islam Nusantara is a way of understanding and carrying out Islamic teachings by the archipelago so that it becomes a system of values, traditions, and Islamic culture that is unique to the archipelago. Here Islam Nusantara does not want to change Islamic teachings to suit the culture or traditions of the Nusantara nation. On the contrary, IN tries to maintain the basic principles of Islamic teachings and the actualization of Islamic teachings among the Indonesian people while maintaining the basic principles of Islamic teachings, as it is in the Qur'an and Hadith. IN is "Islamic values implemented in the archipelago and have been practiced by our predecessors for a very long time". Understand that Islam is reasonably spread in the archipelago because Islam carries a mission of peace. So Islam Nusantara is a concept that combines Islamic teachings with a culture based on the Qur'an and As-Sunnah and has an archipelago perspective. So that it is a polite, peaceful, and tolerant Islam, not Islam based on Indian, Arab, and other cultures.

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<sup>8</sup> Teuku Kemal Fasya, "Dimensi Puitis Dan Kultural Islam Nusantara," *Opini Kompas*, August 4, 2015; Ahmad Baso, *Islam Nusantara Ijtihad Jenius Dan Ijma' Ulama Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pustaka Afid, 2015).

other countries, ranging from geographic uniqueness to socio-politics and civilizational traditions.

This uniqueness is a consideration for scholars when carrying out Nusantara Islam. Finally, these uniquenesses shape the color of Islam Nusantara, which is Islam that is friendly, open, inclusive, and able to provide solutions to the problems of the nation and state. Islam is dynamic and friendly in the context of Islam Nusantara. The most dominant acculturation occurred between Islam and Javanese culture (tradition) because both were equally strong. Another uniqueness of Islam Nusantara, from a religious perspective, is that Indonesia is the largest Muslim nation in the world, but religion-politically and ideologically, Indonesia is not an Islamic country. Islam Nusantara reflects Islam that is polite, friendly, tolerant, and integrated with Indonesian cultural civilization. So it can be interpreted that Nusantara Islam is a concept that combines Islamic teachings (Al-Qur'an and Hadith) with culture and has a Nusantara perspective in the form of polite, peaceful, and tolerant Islam.

IN is an Islam that prioritizes mercy (compassion), soothing, protecting, moderate, and accepting local culture that does not conflict with Islamic teachings, which emphasizes dialogue or harmonizing year's texts and reality, not just rituals but still per the knowledge base and cultural treasures so that harmony between religion, culture and the nation is realized which is a manifestation of the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the universal values of Islam Nusantara have several aspects, including: *Compassion*, Islam is a teaching of compassion for all (rahmatan lil alamin), just as the Prophet Muhammad SAW asked his people to love anyone on earth because Allah will love those who love to love. Why should we have an attitude of compassion in conveying and teaching? Because a harsh attitude and an irregular heart will only turn off the sympathy of those, who make them run far away and even cause hatred and conflict.

*Equality*. Equality is a value that adheres to the principle that every individual has equal rights and positions in society. Therefore every individual,



without exception, has equal opportunities to participate in social activities. In later learning, the lecturer will explain to students that all human beings have the same rights and opportunities. There is no difference between socializing and learning. What is there is togetherness and acceptance of differences between others, with various cultural, sub-cultural, and religious environments. Islam is acceptable to the people of the archipelago and worthy of coloring the archipelago's culture to realize its accommodative nature, namely, *rahmatallilalamin*. This role of *rahmatallilalamin* animates the characteristics of Islam Nusantara, a moderate, tolerant medium, loves peace, and respects diversity. Islam embraces not hitting, Islam that fosters, does not insult, Islam that uses the heart, not cursing, Islam that invites repentance, not blasphemy, and Islam that gives understanding, not imposing.

*Tolerance.* Tolerance in Arabic is called "tasamuh," which means generosity, mutual permission, and mutual convenience. According to Umar Hasyim, *tolerance* is defined as the granting of freedom to fellow human beings or all members of the community to carry out their beliefs or the rules of life in determining their respective fates, as long as in carrying out and determining their attitudes they do not violate and do not conflict with the basic requirements for the creation of order. And community peace. Tolerance is an attitude of how to respect other people who have differences. Islam Nusantara appreciates the differences that exist in society because Islam is a religion that has a high spirit of tolerance. Islam is moderate because it is neither extreme right nor extreme left.

*Value of Harmony.* Religion is related to the Almighty Creator, and each religion has a different name, how to respect and taqwa to Him. In addition, it is also taught how to live in harmony and practice religious teachings in social life to interact with other humans. In this social life, a more mature attitude is needed. Religious maturity can be judged on the ability to understand and practice religious teachings, especially the ability to respect and be tolerant of people of different religions. With religious maturity, religious harmony is hoped to be created with many different sects. Maturity attitudes can be formed

by understanding religious teachings, understanding existing differences, and being able to accept differences and get along well with others so this is the nature of religious maturity and creates harmony.

*Equality and Brotherhood.* In Islam, the term equality and brotherhood is known as Ukhuwah. There are three types of ukhuwah in human life, namely: ukhuwah islamiah (brotherhood of the same religion), ukhuwah wathaniyah (brotherhood of fellow citizens), ukhuwah basyariyah (the fraternity of fellow human beings). From the concept of ukhuwah, it can be concluded that every human being is a brother regardless of ethnicity, religion, nation, and belief. Because humans are brothers, every human being has the same rights. Thus, according to the author's assumption, the birth of Islam Nusantara began when Islam entered Indonesia without war but with courtesy and peace. In subsequent developments, Islam met with various local cultures, from where religion and culture (acculturation) met so that it gave birth to a religion unique to the archipelago, characterized by being polite, friendly, tolerant, and tolerant, and integrated with Indonesian cultural civilization. Then the existence of Nusantara Islam is a characteristic of Islam in the archipelago, which later distinguishes Arab Islam and Islam in the Middle East.<sup>9</sup>

The term Islam Nusantara (IN) refers to Islam throughout and from Nusantara. Despite Indonesia's undeveloped name, the word Nusantara implies early Islam preaching to Indonesia by Walisanga. While nusantara may have reached Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula during the Majapahit Kingdom, there is evidence to suggest that it reached the Pacific and Madagascar;<sup>10</sup> Islamic thinking and Nusantara's culture are in and out of harmony, so the campaign of Islam Nusantara reflects that. Islamic values were

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<sup>9</sup> S Arifin, "Islamic Religious Education and Radicalism in Indonesia: Strategy of de-Radicalization through Strengthening the Living Values Education," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 2016, <http://www.ijims.iainsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/ijims/article/view/401>; T Islam and A Khatun, "'Islamic Moderation' in Perspectives: A Comparison between Oriental and Occidental Scholarships," *International Journal of Nusantara Islam*, 2015, <http://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/ijni/article/view/1414>.

<sup>10</sup> I L Sarhindi, "Cultivating Islam Nusantara in Indonesia's Pesantrens: A Promising Deradicalisation Strategy?," *Journal of Nahdlatul Ulama Studies*, 2020, <http://jnus.lakpesdamsalatiga.or.id/index.php/jnus/article/view/5>.

therefore crafted not as static values of the Arab world but as something that could seamlessly integrate with the culture in which Islam was spread and taught.<sup>11</sup> There are three principles comprising Islam Nusantara. Contextualizing Islamic thinking is the first step. It is also important to acculturate Islam into local culture. The third is the support for Indonesia as a state and its ideology. The last, philosophically, the campaign of Islam Nusantara can be adopted in other places in the interest of the cultivation of cultural Islam.<sup>12</sup>

IN is not understood as a new movement, a new religious institution, not even a new ideology. It becomes an important term to address the fact that civilization is increasingly undergoing drastic changes. The NU traditionalism movement is a counterweight to such a complex life behavior. The meaning of the traditions of the people of the archipelago requires a measurable explanation. Suppose the archipelago people's attitudes, behavior, and patterns in expressing their religion are considered wrong, regardless of the philosophical substance. In that case, Islam will not be easy to develop in this country.<sup>13</sup> The missionaries have been able to read critically about the condition of the local community. They are also so loose in articulating religion with local culture. Moreover, the spread and proselytizing of Islam in the archipelago is based on the teachings of Sufism and Sufi behavior that makes the Islam of the Nusantara a distinctive Islam, a substantial-universal Islam, not a mere formalistic Islam which is unable to separate and distinguish between Arabization and Islamization. Therefore, here it can also be understood that formalistic Islam is Islam that is more concerned with skin than content.

Due to globalization's consequences, the practice of carrying out religious and cultural expressions has been subject to friction that drains energy. Many aspects of Islam Nusantara are considered contrary to the

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<sup>11</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita: Agama Masyarakat Negara Demokrasi* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Sarhindi, "Cultivating Islam Nusantara in Indonesia's Pesantrens: A Promising Deradicalisation Strategy?"

<sup>13</sup> M Woodward, "Islam Nusantara: A Semantic and Symbolic Analysis," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal* ..., 2017, <https://heritage.kemenag.go.id/index.php/heritage/article/view/398>.

original Islamic doctrine. Transnational groups disapprove of traditional practices, such as making pilgrimages and praying for dead saints. In their argument, these practices are heterodox. According to them, such an approach to Islam represents a mixture of pre-Islamic beliefs, Hinduism, Buddhism, animism, and Islamic ideas.<sup>14</sup>

NU realizes that the process of forming the religious identity of the people of the archipelago can be an example of the struggle between Islam and tradition that has been carried out since the beginning. Acceptance of the influence of Islam certainly does not happen immediately but through a process of ongoing negotiations. When the archipelago people have accepted Islam's teachings, they integrate it with their traditions. This form of fusion is a complete and inseparable integration and forms their religious identity, which is a further stage than syncretism. When syncretism is understood as a combination and mixing of symbols and elements from Islam and local traditions, the religion of the people of the archipelago has far formed a symbiosis, as a complete and harmonious blend of Islamic beliefs and their traditions. So, respecting this context makes NU continue to fortify it. With the principles of *tasamuh*, *tawassuth*, and *tawazun*, NU protects Indonesia. This is why Islam Nusantara is used as NU's strategy in facing global challenges.<sup>15</sup>

IN is claimed a model of Islamic understanding that is produced through a dialectical process with local Indonesian traditions, so Islam Nusantara emerges as a model of Islamic understanding that is uniquely Indonesian . Because of this dialectic between Islam and local culture, Islam Nusantara has two different characters. On the one hand, Islam Nusantara tends to be close to traditionalist Islamic thought, which offers religious concepts that are polite, friendly, and tolerant of the diversity of Indonesia's local traditions. However, on the other hand, Islam Nusantara tends to be close to liberal Islamic thought, which emphasizes spiritual substance rather than its standard form. Therefore, Islam Nusantara does not pursue a legal form of the Islamic state but how the

<sup>14</sup> T Bilfagih, "Islam Nusantara; Strategi Kebudayaan NU Di Tengah Tantangan Global," *Aqlam: Journal of Islam and Plurality*, 2018, <http://journal.iain-manado.ac.id/index.php/AJIP/article/view/505>.

<sup>15</sup> Bilfagih.

implementation of a country's government reflects Islamic values and benefits all humanity.<sup>16</sup>

The transformation of Islam Nusantara from traditionalism to post-traditionalism is supported by the intellectual tradition of Islam Nusantara, which relies on elements of the inheritance of classical Islamic thought (the yellow book) by giving reinforcement to the methodological aspects of *mashlahah mursalah* (goodness not found in the text of the Al-Quran and hadith), *istihsân* (goodness obtained through rational thinking) and *`urf* (good tradition). This thinking framework has implications for the birth of liberal thought in Islamic Nusantara thinking.<sup>17</sup>

As per Zainul Bizawie (nu.or.id), IN is a scientific issue that can be utilized as an "analysis tool" of other Muslim cultures, not a systematic item. As an illustrative example, the implementation of ushul fiqh rules, which aim to advance *maqashid al-shari'ah* (sharia's motivation), which is the conviction of human gain in this world and the next, goodness, and benefit, is protected by the four main principles of *hifz addin, al-'aql, al-nafs, and al-mal*. Bizawie intends to introduce this as a promising area of Islamic study.<sup>18</sup>

The affirmation of the Islam Nusantara as a moderate and inclusive Islam is not something new in substance. IN movement attempt to reinterpret Islamic values in a disruptive and deconstructive era. Many Islam appears in the form of violence, conventional, extremism, and even in the form of terrorism. IN is a movement that has many pros and cons.<sup>19</sup> This movement was considered a new form of Islam, and its model violates the Islam brought by the Prophet, namely Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. We think this is where the ambiguity. Islam Nusantara is referred to as Islam which reflects the values of *wasathiyah* or moderation and is inclusive. From this, the question arises, did the

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<sup>16</sup> I Supena, "EPISTEMOLOGY OF ISLAM NUSANTARA AND ITS IMPLICATION TO LIBERAL THOUGHT OF INDONESIAN ISLAM," *European Journal of Science and Theology* (ejst.tuiasi.ro, 2021), [http://www.ejst.tuiasi.ro/Files/87/3\\_Supena.pdf](http://www.ejst.tuiasi.ro/Files/87/3_Supena.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> M Esfandiar, "Islam Nusantara and the Challenges of Political Islam in the Contemporary World," *ISLAM NUSANTARA: Journal for the Study of ...*, 2022, <http://journal.unusia.ac.id/index.php/ISLAMNUSANTARA/article/view/147>.

<sup>18</sup> K M Luthfi, "Islam Nusantara: Relasi Islam Dan Budaya Lokal," ...: *Journal of Islamicate Multidisciplinary*, 2016, <http://ejournal.iainsurakarta.ac.id/index.php/shahih/article/view/53>.

<sup>19</sup> Sansayto and Radiani, "الوسطية في إسلام نوسانتارا."

Islam that the Prophet brought before not have *wasathiyah*, moderation, and inclusive values? Undoubtedly not. Islam, since classical times has become a religion that is not free from the influence of other civilizations in terms of government, economy, and even culture. During Umar's time, customs regulations for merchandise were adopted from the Romans; The legal system that existed at the time of the Abbasids was adopted from Persia. Hijab is also actually the influence of the Mediterranean civilization.<sup>20</sup>

This discourse is still in the elite and intellectual circles, so if it is hoped that this Movement will one day become a model for Islam throughout the world, then it is not the time. This term is ontologically unclear and has not been accepted by many groups, even from its group of bearers, namely the Nahdlatul Ulama. Outside Java, there are also MUI institutions that reject this concept. So, discussing the issue of IN in a global context is still premature. Islam Nusantara, as a material object, for researchers, cannot be brought to the world stage and promoted as the ideal Islam. The way of Islam of various groups, customs, and cultures worldwide has a different style. It might be possible for "eastern" countries because the approach in Indonesia if applied in eastern countries, could be suitable, but there will be many challenges for secular countries. So, discussing IN in the global region still needs a scientific and scientific study so that it can be promoted.<sup>21</sup>

## CONCLUSION

With the mainstream thinking of Abu Hasan al-Asy'ari and Maturidi, the IN discourse will be difficult to be accepted by the international community. Such things will clash when we have a dialogue with the case of Iran or Saudi Arabia. So, hoping that the IN discourse can become an example of Islam worldwide is difficult to realize. IN remains the originality of the Islamic style of the archipelago that accommodates its traditions and culture and will always

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<sup>20</sup> P. S. Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, CA. 1300 to 1700," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): 138-67, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657295>.

<sup>21</sup> M Mushlihin, S Narulita, and R N Aulia, "Education and the Formation of Islam Nusantara: Epistemology, Direction and Sustainability," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of ...*, 2021, <http://journal.unj.ac.id/unj/index.php/hayula/article/view/20469>.

experience progressive interpretations in a direction that develops. the terminology of Nusantara Islam has political and theological content. That is the discourse of certain Islamic rulers and organizations dealing with the current epidemic of radicalism and extremism in religion. Originality is the primordial value of Islam that is not bound by time and place; always inclusive, dynamic, and moderate. At the same time, the cultural strategy is a dialogue effort between Islam and time and place. In the end, Islam Nusantara needed to develop and change according to the demands of the times.

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