



ISLAMIC REFORMIST MOVEMENT OF HAJI SULONG ABDUL KADIR IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THAILAND'S SOUTHERN BORDER

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Abstract

The development of Islamic education in southern Thailand has been in the spotlight of researchers in the last decade in efforts to establish a national education, although this study is still less attractive. The existence of Pondok schools as Islamic educational institutions is considered to have mobilized separatist movements and the authority of traditional Malay Muslim elites to fight for territory. The existence of the Malay rulers with their authority in the fields of religion and culture made traditional Islamic education deeply rooted in the southern Thailand region. Muslims in the southern province are allegedly a monolithic entity whose existence constructs the institutionalization of Thailand as a state, thus opening up space for separatist seeds that emerge from Islamic educational institutions. The existence of Islamic reformers such as Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir is strong

evidence that his movement is treading the religious and cultural field in the process of reviving the institutionalization of Islamic education in Southern Thailand. The establishment of Madrasah al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani as a forum for Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir to fight for reforms in Islamic education institutions, despite strong opposition from the state and the authority of the traditional Malay Muslim elite but ultimately the principles of reform were realized even though the reformers had died and the madrasa was closed.

Keywords: *Islamic Education, Southern Thailand, Islamic Reformers, State, Separatists.*

Abstrak

Perkembangan pendidikan Islam di Thailand selatan telah menjadi sorotan para peneliti dalam satu dekade terakhir dalam upaya mendirikan pendidikan nasional, meskipun penelitian ini masih kurang

menarik. Keberadaan Pondok Pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam dinilai telah memobilisasi gerakan-gerakan separatis dan kewibawaan elite Muslim tradisional Melayu untuk memperebutkan wilayah. Keberadaan penguasa Melayu dengan otoritasnya di bidang agama dan budaya membuat pendidikan Islam tradisional mengakar kuat di wilayah Thailand selatan. Umat Islam di provinsi selatan disinyalir merupakan entitas monolitik yang keberadaannya mengkonstruksi institusionalisasi Thailand sebagai negara, sehingga membuka ruang bagi benih-benih separatis yang muncul dari lembaga pendidikan Islam. Keberadaan para pembaharu Islam seperti Haji Sulong Abdul

Kadir menjadi bukti kuat bahwa gerakannya menapaki bidang agama dan budaya dalam proses kebangkitan institusionalisasi pendidikan Islam di Thailand Selatan. Pendirian Madrasah al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani sebagai wadah bagi Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir untuk memperjuangkan reformasi lembaga pendidikan Islam, meskipun mendapat tentangan keras dari negara dan otoritas elit tradisional Muslim Melayu namun pada akhirnya prinsip-prinsip reformasi terwujud meski para reformis telah meninggal dan madrasah ditutup..

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Islam, Thailand Selatan, Pembaru Islam, Negara, Separatis.

A. Introduction

The investigation of Islamic education in southern Thailand has become a less desirable object of scientific research. However, this research is focused on the relationship between the Islamic reformist movement, the Thai government and the Malay community of Pattani¹, Yala, and Narathiwat referred to in historical literature as Thailand's southernmost frontier province. From some literature searches, the growing assumption that the development of Islamic education in Pattani is getting stronger.² The *first* assumption; Islamic educational institutions are often seen as the cause of the separatist movement that legalizes the Malay tradition in a sceptical and exclusive manner.³ The *second* assumption; Islamic education institutions prioritize religious material over academic and vocational material which is a priority of the Thai government in facing the era of globalization, especially the effects felt when Thailand experienced the economic crisis in 1997.⁴ The two assumptions above have led to the widening of the gap between Islam and the state that views Islamic educational institutions as teaching radicalism which legitimizes opposition to the state.

In fact, these assumptions contradicted the principles adhered to by the Malay Kingdom itself regarding the nature and function of religious education. For them, Islamic education is seen as a core feature of Malay identity as found by Milner (1981)⁵. This narrative is recorded in history that the majesty of the Patani Sultanate which was annexed by Siam in 1909 is evidence that Islamic education

¹ Dalam tulisan ini menggunakan istilah “Pattani” yang merujuk pada sebuah sejarah kerajaan “Melayu-Muslim” dengan Pattani sebagai salah satu propinsi di Thailand Selatan. Istilah Muslim Pattani untuk pertama kalinya dipopulerkan oleh Forbes melalui penelitiannya yang mengungkap asimilasi Muslim di Pattani sebagai kelompok agama minoritas di Thailand Selatan. Lihat dalam Andrew D. W. Forbes, “Thailand’s Muslim Minorities: Assimilation, Secession, or Coexistence?,” *Asian Survey* 22, no. 11 (October 1, 1953): 1056–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2643979>.

² S. Aree, “The Religious Geography of Thailand’s Malay Southern Provinces: Revisiting the Impact of South Asian and Middle Eastern Transnational Islamic Movements,” *Sojourn* 35, no. 2 (2020): 343–63, <https://doi.org/10.1355/sj35-2f>.

³ Wan Kadir bin Che Man, “Muslim Separatism: The Moros in Southern Philippines and the Malays in Southern Thailand,” *ANU Press*, 1987, <https://doi.org/10.25911/5d78d7a3a37c7>; Michael John Montesano and Patrick Jory, *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula* (Australia: NUS Press, 2008).

⁴ Johanna Witte, “Education in Thailand After the Crisis: A Balancing Act Between Globalization and National Self-Contemplation,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 20, no. 3 (May 1, 2000): 223–45, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593\(99\)00059-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(99)00059-0).

⁵ A. Milner, “Islam and Malay Kingship,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 113, no. 1 (1981): 46–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00136834>.

is a key expression in state institutionalization.⁶ The emergence of madrassas that teach Islam and their graduates to become figures in the development of the Thai state is a real narcotization launched by the colonizers to separate Islamic education from the state.⁷

Real evidence that the Malay community in Thailand as the forerunner of state institutionalization is Jawi or Yawi as the Thai language used by local Malays in social interactions at the southern Thai border. This language is linguistically similar to the dialect spoken in Kelantan, the northern state of Malaysia. In artefacts found by Kosonen and Person (2011) which reflects that Thailand is a cross between cultures and languages from the intersection of South and East Asia, and the Jawi language is used by the Thai Malay Muslim community among the meeting languages of Khmer, Mon, Chinese, Tamil-Brahmi, Javanese, and others.⁸

Omar Farouk Bajunid also found evidence of traces of language (2005):

Recently Thai was adopted as the language of Islam in Thailand. So that has implications for the manufacture of Islamic literature in Thailand, such as the translation of the al-Qur'an and Ḥadīth which have been translated into Thai. Seeing the development of the Thai language which is increasingly widespread in the public sphere of Thai Muslims, it still does not eliminate Malay which is deeply rooted as a traditional Islamic language, especially among Malay Muslims in Thailand.⁹

Actually the evidence above is anachronistic, even though the history of the development of the Malay community in Pattani shows that Muslims there are monolithic entities whose existence is an institutionalized construction of Thailand as a state despite the issues and sentimental assumptions that lead to a separatist movement that emerged from Islamic educational institutions. In addition, there are a number of developing assumptions that Islamic education in Pattani privileges the separatist movement as an entry point for conflict between

⁶ Rachel V. Harrison and Peter A. Jackson, *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand* (USA: Cornell University Press, 2018), 75.

⁷ J. Liow, "Islamic Education in Southern Thailand: Negotiating Islam, Identity, and Modernity," *Making Modern Muslims*, no. Query date: 2021-01-17 12:56:35 (2009): 141–71.

⁸ Kimmo Kosonen and Kirk R. Person, "Languages, Identities and Education in Thailand," in *Language, Education and Nation-Building: Assimilation and Shift in Southeast Asia*, ed. Peter Sercombe and Ruanni Tupas, Palgrave Studies in Minority Languages and Communities (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 200–231, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137455536_11.

⁹ Omar Farouk Bajunid, *Islam, Nationalism, and the Thai State* (Chiang Mai: Dynamic Diversity in Southern Thailand, 2005), 10.

the government and some remnants of the Malay sultanate. This article aims to widen the range of discussions on separatist conflicts that indicate Islamic education institutions as an effort to fight against the state. This study focuses on the reformist revival spearheaded by a character, namely Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir, whose movement has treaded the field of Thai religion and culture in the process of reviving the institutionalization of Islamic education in Southern Thailand.

B. Method

This research method uses a qualitative library research approach, choosing a library research approach, because as far as researchers observe, there are quite a lot of writings related to ecological boarding schools, however, these writings are still in the form of "flakes" that are still scattered. Therefore, the researcher tries to combine and critically analyze these writings to become one more organized writing. Intellectual work carried out by researchers is in line with the definition of library research itself, as Nazir's view quoted by Milya Sari and Asmendri Asmendri is that a data collection process by reviewing various literatures in the form of books, notes or reports related to the topic to be solved. .

Technically, in this library research, the researcher examines various library sources including research reports, information from the media, and other information related to Islamic boarding schools, ecology and economic development. The literature review was then combined and analyzed and the various libraries were critiqued so that the researchers concluded that they were more "original" writings.

C. Results and Discussion

1. History of Islamic Education in Southern Thailand

In historical records, the process of institutionalizing Islamic education in southern Thailand was inspired by the glory of the Patani Sultanate whose territory consists of the provinces of Pattani itself, Yala, and Narathiwat. These three regions were known from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries as *dār al-Islām*. During the same period, Pattani was a trading centre and traders from Southeast Asia met to transact and partner with other traders in Asia and Europe.¹⁰

¹⁰ Bukti ini ditemukan oleh Ibrahim Syukri, seorang tokoh penting dalam narasi sejarah nasionalisme di Pattani, melalui monografinya yang beliau susun. Lihat dalam Ibrahim Syukri,

In the complete history written by Nathan Porath (2011) which is the greatest discovery in explaining the glory of the Pattani Sultanate over other Malay kingdoms, in a “Hikayat Pattani”. In Hikayat Patani a mimetic text is displayed¹¹ to capture Patani's power relationship with the neighbouring kingdom, namely the Ayutthaya kingdom. Some evidences such as the rebellion of the Sultan Patani against Ayutthaya, the mimetic text of the relationship between the Pattani sultanate and the dominant Malay territory, and there are similarities taken from some buildings in the Johor fracture which prove Patani's superiority.¹²

From this, it can be seen that the Islamic kingdom in southern Thailand contributed the largest to civilization, especially in education. The Pattani Sultanate became the centre of learning for Islamic education in Southeast Asia, which described the “birthplace of Islam”¹³ such as Aceh, Kelantan, and Malaka.¹⁴ Madrasas and pondok in southern Thailand played an important role in establishing the institutionalization of Islamic education that is felt to date.

The “Pondok” school model in the Malay tradition has a very long history, especially for the Malay community in the southern Thai border provinces. The existence of this Islamic educational institution in addition to providing religious teaching, but also as a physical and symbolic entity of Malay Muslim culture.

In the nineteenth century Pattani's existence as a province where Muslim minorities in southern Thailand have earned a reputation as a centre of Islamic

History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani / Ibrahim Syukri (Athens (Ohio): Ohio University Center for International Studies Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), <http://melayu.library.uitm.edu.my/2708/>.

¹¹ Mimetik adalah peniruan dalam identitas manusia menjadi proses terbentuknya budaya. Lihat dalam Matthew Potolsky, “Mimesis,” *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory*, Major Reference Works, December 24, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444337839.wbelctv1m005>.

¹² Nathan Porath, “The ‘Hikayat Patani’: The Kingdom of Patani in the Malay and Thai Political World,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 84, no. 2 (301) (2011): 45–65.

¹³ Dalam hal ini, baik Pattani, Aceh, Kelantan, dan Malaka sama-sama memperebutkan gelar “Serambi Mekkah”. Lihat dalam J. C. Liow, “Religious Education and Reformist Islam in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces: The Roles of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir and Ismail Lutfi Japakiya,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etp026>.

¹⁴ Sebagaimana diketahui bahwa Aceh juga dikenal sebagai “Serambi Mekkah” oleh Syekh Abdul Malik kemudian mengenalkannya kepada orang Melayu. Sejak saat itu Aceh juga dikebal sebagai kota Serambi Mekkah Zurita Mohd Yusoff et al., “Analysis on Methods of Determining Halal or Haram of Animals to Be Eaten According to Syekh Abdul Malik Bin Abdullah in His Kitab Al-Kifayah,” in *Contemporary Issues and Development in the Global Halal Industry*, ed. Siti Khadijah Ab. Manan, Fadilah Abd Rahman, and Mardhiyyah Sahri (Singapore: Springer, 2017), 301–11, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1452-9_28.

education. The reality is that students from Southeast Asia (especially Cambodia) and the archipelago “mondok” in several Pondok schools before continuing their education to Middle Eastern and North African countries. This is stated in the notes of research conducted by William R. Roff in 1965 which traced the Malays in the Malacca Peninsula who made their "nationalism" journey, one of which was by studying in Pattani before they went to religious education in the Gulf countries.¹⁵ Even in the neat notes made by Hassan Madmarn (1999)¹⁶, Peter Riddell (2001)¹⁷, and Azyumardi Azra (2004)¹⁸ explained that Pattani was the best path of Islamic education in his era because there were teachers, religious leaders, and Muslim scholars who contributed to the progress of Islamic education in southern Thailand.

Some of the Pattani ‘ulamā’ are like Ahmad Patani, Zayn al-‘Ābidīn Patani, Da’ud ibn ‘Abdullah Patani is a nineteenth-century teaching figure who teaches in Malay and is known as a *tok guru* or teacher of sekolah pondok in southern Thailand with a circle of ‘ulamā’ called *halaqa* Melayu. In Pattani, the *tok guru* translated classical books and interpretations of the Qur’ān from Arabic to Malay so that religious messages could be conveyed to the public, as well as being active in sermons and religious lectures in mosques, kingdoms, and gatherings organized by the community.

2. Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir’s Educational Path

The same is true when tracing how the Malay reformist movement in southern Thailand reconstructed folk traditions that were considered syncretic and demonstrated the practice of *jāhiliyya* (a period of ignorance before the arrival of Islam) with a mission of “religious purification”, as was the case in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia with Ahmad Dahlan’s reformist movement through Muhammadiyah Islamic organization.¹⁹ The agenda of religious purification is

¹⁵ William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism, 1900-1941* (Australia: ANU Press, 1965); William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ Hasan Madmarn, *The Pondok & Madrasah in Patani* (Malaysia: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1999).

¹⁷ Peter G. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern “Ulama” in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).

¹⁹ James L. Peacock, *Purifying the Faith: The Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/57280>;

carried out with *ijtihād* rather than the interpretation of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, thus rejecting authority based on textual sources that prevail in classical books written by 'ulamā' and recommending a return to authentic sources from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth itself. One of the actions taken by the reformers was to translate the al-Qur'ān into *vernacular* languages such as Bangkok Thai and southern Thai Malay, so that Islamic teachings could be accessed by ordinary people. The application is when *khuṭba* jum'at uses two languages, namely Arabic with *vernacular* language so that Friday congregations can understand the da'wah messages conveyed by the *khaṭīb* (the sermoner).

Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir is one of the reformist Islamic figures in southern Thailand whose religious purification movement is the most prominent. Born in Kampung Anak Ru a commercial trading district in Pattani in 1895 who is a descendant of the famous 'ulamā' Shaykh Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad al-Fatani. Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir is known by Thai Malays as an '*alīm*' figure, his mastery of Islam was good thanks to his family's education which introduced him to Arabic and classical books, and memorized the entire Qur'ān by the tender age of eight. Educational background Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir attended the Haji Abdul Rasyid *mondok* in Sungei Pandang Pattani Village before continuing to Ma'had Dār al-'Ulūm in Mecca. In this ma'had Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir was trained in *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and *nahw wa ṣarf*.²⁰ However, it was while taking that ma'had, that Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir began to study Islamic reformist texts, especially the thoughts of Muḥammad 'Abduh.

Upon his return from Mecca in 1915, Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir returned to Pattani to see the socio-religious conditions there. However, a year later Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir returned to Mecca and later joined the *ḥalaqa* Melayu community at the Harām Mosque and met two '*ulamā' jāwī*' namely Shaykh Zain al-Fatani and Tok Kenali from Kelantan Malaysia. Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir's work became increasingly known after becoming a teacher at the Shafi'i school and forging scientific connections with Egyptian scholars and learning to know the ideology of thought of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghāni. The combination of

Syamsul Anwar, "Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization: A Study of Tarjih in Muhammadiyah," *Islamic Law and Society* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 27–44, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568519053123894>.

²⁰ Abdul Rahim Mohamed Zakaria, "Legacy of Haji Sulong in Contemporary Separatist Struggle in Thailand's Restive South" (Thesis, 2005), <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/handle/10356/14380>.

knowledge possessed by Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir on the thoughts of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghāni (or what is called *Chularajmontri*)²¹ making him even more determined to catapult his figure as an Islamic reformer upon his return to southern Thailand.

3. The Islamic Reformist “Purification” Movement: The Role of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir

The thoughts of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir were more filled with religious matters and state politics, although in the beginning he tried to guide the Pattani people to the teachings of “pure” Islam. The thought of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghāni seems to have turned the religious movement towards religious purification by totally applying the *arkān al-Islām* foundation (the five pillars as Islamic buildings). At the same time, the condition of the Pattani people’s religious views is adorned with local cultural practices and traditions which according to Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir are not of pure Islam.

The second step taken by Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir was to change the stagnant of *pondok* school education system. As a reformer, he found syncretic things to be the root cause of the low quality of education which was also caused by the socio-religious backwardness of the Malays in Patani. Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir observed that there are around 500 *pondok* schools that are enslaved by non-Islamic cultural practices. Some of the aspects he found included an informal education curriculum, very traditional, non-standardized education management, “jadul”²² school teaching skills, an unstructured hierarchy of managers, and poorly regulated management of funds and inputs for educational institutions. The academic atmosphere that is centralized to the *tok guru* and religious materials has not experienced an adjustment to the conditions of the times. Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir also found that student management views were not well managed, students who registered were not given an understanding of the learning requirements so that students stayed long and left the *pondok* school at will. Because there is no standardization, the accreditation system like modern education according to Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir is considered a form of decline in the quality of education

²¹ Imtiyaz Yusuf, “The Role of the Chularajamontri (Shaykh Al-Islam) in Resolving Ethno-Religious Conflict in Southern Thailand,” *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 27, no. 1 (November 2, 2010).

²² Jadul is an acronym for the Indonesian term “jaman dulu” which means that something is very traditional from an earlier era which is also traditional.

management. Schools only impose personal assessments from the *tok guru*, the subjectivity of the teacher's token is so influencing that the scientific tradition is almost non-existent. In terms of regeneration, if the *tok guru* does not appoint a successor, the boarding school will lose its interest in society, which may not be the same as the progress of educational institutions after the *tok guru* dies. According to Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir, this requires a major reform in the management of Islamic education.

Seeing the conditions that occurred in Pattani, Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir considered that if Islamic education institutions want to advance, their management must be improved in a modern way. Some of the ways that Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir does is to include general materials such as science, mathematics, geography, and economics into the curriculum content, the combination of Islamic religious knowledge and general science will make Islamic educational institutions open up broader insights. Besides that, Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir also made a rule that there must be a system that regulates new student admissions, study time, and examinations to determine students' academic abilities. In order for all these steps to be carried out in various Islamic education institutions, Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir conducted *rihlah* to various areas of Pattani from village to village with a *door to door* system through *tabligh* which was conveyed to the community directly.

Seeing the activities of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir, many Malay people at that time did not accept his steps to modernize Islamic education. Borrowing Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu's (2019)²³ theory about modernization in Islamic education that if there has been acculturation of three elements (religion, culture, West) there will be a fundamental physical collision in Islamic education, namely fundamental changes in the governance system and material content of Islamic education. . Although in fact, this hypothesis is not justified in the case of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir, who had an educational background from Mecca. As found by Professor Rahimin Affandi Abd Rahim (2006) at the end of the twentieth century, the Islamic world of Southeast Asia was faced with a clash of traditionalism and reformism which resulted in chaos in socio-religious. Most of the clashes between

²³ Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu, "The Modernisation of Islamic Education in Ilorin: A Study of the Adabiyya and Markaziyya Educational Systems," *Islamic Africa* 10, no. 1–2 (June 12, 2019): 75–97, <https://doi.org/10.1163/21540993-01001003>.

traditionalism and reformism were found in Middle Eastern countries, but Professor Rahimin highlighted in Malay after the events of 1900-1940 concerning reform in the field of *fiqh* law.²⁴

4. Madrasah al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani

At the same time, Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir's group succeeded in influencing the community to hasten Islamic education reform in Pattani²⁵ and managed to establish a private Islamic school in Pattani named "Madrasah al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani" in 1933, the curriculum was composed of three components: religion, academic, and vocational, consisting of Islamic religious sciences, science and humanities. In Islamic religious knowledge the content consists of *qirā'āt*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *nahw* dan *sarf*, *tawḥīd*, *tarīkh*, dan *akhlāq*. While the sciences and humanities consist of mathematics, geography, science (biology, physics, chemistry).

The establishment of Madrasah al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani coincided with the change in the form of Thai government from being an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy and this greatly impacted the socio-religious conditions in Pattani. Subrahmanyam (2015)²⁶ This change in the form of government was used by ruling parties and groups to carry out attacks on paternalization of democracy to limit the autocratic role of the old Muslim elite who had connectivity with the Malay rulers. The ruling Partai Rakyat at the time sought to modernize education and promote it through official speeches and radio broadcasts across the country. In particular, Prime Minister Phraya Phahol made a personal donation for the construction project of the Al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani Madrasah and later even attended the inauguration ceremony as a sign of government support.²⁷

Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir knows very well that the groups who oppose the modernization of Islamic education are not from the government, but from the *tok guru* and traditionalist Pondok schools. In response to this wave of opposition,

²⁴ Professor Rahimin Affandi Abd Rahim, "Traditionalism and Reformism Polemic in Malay-Muslim Religious Literature," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 93–104, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410500400090>.

²⁵ Montesano and Jory, *Thai South and Malay North*.

²⁶ Arjun Subrahmanyam, "Education, Propaganda, and the People: Democratic Paternalism in 1930s Siam," *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (July 2015): 1122–42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X14000523>.

²⁷ Hayimasae, "Hj Sulong Abdul Kadir (1895–1954)," 142.

Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir conducted a persuasive dialogue and public campaign on the benefits of modernizing Islamic education. This step then received the support of Haji Mohammad Idris, a respected Pattani educator who was given the nickname Tok Guru Bermin, Jambu.²⁸ However, these obstacles continue when efforts to modernize Islamic education are paradoxically overshadowed by the Malay community itself, who are the entities that Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir is fighting for. The objections and suspicions of some Malay educators to the initiation of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir were a threat to the *status quo* that tried to destroy the trust of the Malay community in Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir.

Overall, Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir's breakthrough to transform Islamic education seems to have come under fire from various parties, especially from the traditional religious elite represented by the *kaum tua*. Due to this pressure and wave of rulings, finally in 1935 Madrasah al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani was closed because Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir was suspected of taking part in practical politics. In this way, Madrasah al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani is considered a symbol of resistance against the Malay community who maintains their authority and traditional religious traditions.²⁹

It is important to note here that although Madrasah al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani has been deactivated, the reform efforts of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir are still being carried out carefully, silently, waiting for the right momentum until a certain time and then reactivating. Gradually, more and more Pondok schools began to introduce the reform curriculum conceptualized by Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir into the syllabus, changing the orientation of the cottage to become a systematic and more orderly educational institution. The contribution of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir became evident when a law was made in the state to regulate and manage Islamic education in southern Thailand with the establishment of a modernist Islamic private school.

After Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir died in 1952 under mysterious circumstances after being arrested by the Thai police, there was a setback in the management of education in the country. The loss of a charismatic leader of this caliber and the popularity of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir in modernizing Islamic

²⁸ Hayimasae, 146.

²⁹ Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism," *Bangkok: Thai Khadi Institute, Thammasat University*, 1985, 152.

education in southern Thailand has proven that this effort to reform the field of Islamic education creates a spectrum that religion, tradition, culture and politics are integral elements in the institutionalization of Islamic education.

D. Conclusion

The process of transforming Islamic education in southern Thailand has not been considered smooth. Islamic education institutions are considered as the reason for the opening of space for separatism and preferring religious material over academic and vocational materials, which is why the existence of Islamic education in the southern region of Thailand faces many obstacles. Two separatist movement entities and the authority of the traditional Malay Muslim elite are well aware that Islamic education institutions are considered as strong vessels in maintaining their respective authority. Including Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir as strong evidence that his movement is treading the religious and cultural field in the process of reviving the institutionalization of Islamic education in southern Thailand. Under his movement, Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir was able to reform the Islamic education that is currently felt by Thai society, even though this struggle was met with resistance from various parties such as the state and the traditional Malay Muslim elite. The existence of this Islamic educational institution in addition to providing religious teaching, but also as a physical and symbolic entity of Malay Muslim culture. So that whatever happens, the establishment of Madrasah al-Ma'arif al-Wataniah Fatani as a forum for Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir to fight for reform in Islamic educational institutions that are more organized and well-managed.

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