

Nusantara Ulama: Islamic Intellectual Tradition and Local Culture

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Abstract: This article examines how local intellectual and cultural traditions in the Nusantara influenced the socio-cultural development of Nusantara Islam, focusing on the role of Nusantara ulama in adapting and spreading Islamic teachings amidst diverse local cultures. This study uses a qualitative approach with historical and ethnographic methods, which explore the intellectual traditions of Nusantara ulama and reconstruct the underlying local cultural roots. In the analysis of the findings, Robert Redfield's acculturation theory and Melford Spiro's cultural integration theory are used to understand how Islamic teachings were received, adapted, and practiced in Nusantara society, as well as how positive local cultural values were maintained. The results of the study show that Nusantara ulama played an important role in preserving religious knowledge, law, literature, history, customs, medicine, and social, cultural, and political aspects. In addition, the local culture observed in Nusantara Muslim society today is the result of the dialectic between sharia texts and local cultural realities. Nusantara ulama did not come to change Islamic doctrine but rather to find a way to convey Islamic values in the context of diverse cultures in Nusantara. This study argues that Islam Nusantara is a dynamic tradition that integrates universal Islamic values with local traditions, creating a unique Islamic identity that is relevant to the challenges of the times while still upholding the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings.

Keywords: ulama, Mandailing, sufi orders, intellectual tradition

Article history: Received: 14 January 2024 | Revised: 01 April 2024 | Available online: 30 June 2024

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Introduction

The arrival of Islam is a blessing for the whole world. The ongoing process of Islamization has brought light and change to human life. Instead of practicing an ignorant way of life, there is a change to a moral society. The land of Hijaz has been a container of revelation for 23 years and a place where it was practiced until an Islamic and ideal tradition was formed, especially in Medina. However, the process of Islamization in the local community did not change their entire way of life. Fasid and inappropriate traditions continue to be eliminated gradually; on the other hand, good traditions continue to be practiced and strengthened in society.

This approach, if explored further in Islamic society, can be seen clearly. Among them, the first is to filter and remove bad local traditions. Bad traditions are eliminated because they are included in the prohibition of *syara'*, in addition to causing disruption to social harmony. Examples include idolatry, rampant adultery and prostitution, eating carcasses, making women like commodities, a growing tradition of drinking alcohol, gambling, fortune-telling, and killing daughters to protect the honor of the tribe. All these traditions have no room for purification and have been completely eliminated.

Second, accept all good local traditions because there is no clear *syara'* prohibition in addition to the element of goodness. It is also included in the mandatory space. For example, such as the practice of respecting guests, being honest, keeping promises, giving water to drink, *'ashūrā* fasting, and honoring the forbidden month without war. This tradition is accepted and preserved as a good tradition from the side of *syara'*.

Third, accept conditionally and filter bad traditions in order to be in line with *syara'* guidance. In other words, there is room for the purification of forbidden things. For example, like the tradition of adopted children that were originally attributed to the adoptive father, the limits of their lineage have been set, strong kinship bonds based on *aṣabiyyah* and clans have been changed to brotherhood of the same faith and religion, the tradition of unlimited polygamy has been limited to only four wives, inheritance based on male gender only has been extended to women, circumambulation (*hajj*) in the naked state has been changed to circumambulation in ihram clothes, and slaughtering

in the name of idols has been changed to the name of Allah. All these practices have been purified to suit the demands of *syara'*. If not purified, it is included in the forbidden tradition.

Fourth, introducing traditions that are based on the guidance of *syara'*, whether it involves mandatory matters such as zakat as social security, consuming food and drink that is halal and good, or matters of circumcision and *harus*. In addition, this category includes practices that are carried out to celebrate certain celebrations, such as the safe prayer feast, the tradition of *ma'al Hijrah* and *āshūrā*, the birth of the Prophet, the tradition of homecoming and *Lebaran*, sacrifices, and so on.

He explained that the interaction between Sharia and local traditions has given birth to various faces of local Islam. In the local community itself, there are traditions that are good (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and bad (*fāsiḍ*). Bad traditions have been successfully changed gradually in society, for example, traditions of feasting or worshiping ethereal beings, arts that contain elements of shirk, practices based on superstitious beliefs, and the like. On the other hand, practices based on good traditions are accepted and continue to be a tradition of the Muslim community in the archipelago. For example, the pilgrimage tradition of visiting and connecting involves friendship, respect for guests, and tolerance. All these practices are energized with *syara'* guidance and become part of the local community's identity.

Since the arrival of Islam in Nusantara in the 12th century BC,¹ Nusantara scholars ('*Ulamā' Nusantara*) have played a central role in spreading and developing the teachings of Islam across the islands. They not only practice religious teachings but also study, interpret, and adapt Islam to the local cultural context. This is what makes the intellectual tradition of Islam in Nusantara so unique and relevant to this day.

Nusantara's scholars are known for their ability to harmonize the teachings of Islam with the diverse local cultures. They not only memorize and understand the sacred texts of Islam but also apply the universal values of Islam in the context of everyday life, colored by

¹ Desta Ramadhoni and Badrun, "View of Perdagangan Arab dan Kedatangan Islam ke Nusantara: Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Orientalis," *Local History & Heritage* 2, no. 1 (March 2022), accessed July 17, 2024, <https://jurnal.medanresourcecenter.org/index.php/LHH/article/view/313/259>.

various local traditions. For example, in various parts of Indonesia, Islamic religious practices are often intertwined with ancestral cultural values, such as marriage rituals, customary ceremonies, and other religious practices.

The intellectual traditions of the Nusantara scholars are also reflected in the religious education systems they have built, ranging from traditional colleges to religious colleges. During the training, young scholars not only study sacred texts but are also taught to understand and appreciate Islamic intellectual heritage as well as enrich themselves with local values that strengthen their Islamic identity. Thus, understanding the role of Nusantara scholars is important not only to preserve the local intellectual and cultural heritage but also to inspire the development of contemporary Islamic thought that is inclusive and relevant to the challenges of the time.

This research aims to examine the influence of the Nusantara's local intellectual and cultural traditions on the development of Islam in the region, focusing on the role of Nusantara scholars in spreading and adapting Islamic teachings in the context of local culture. Through a qualitative approach with historical and ethnographic methods, this research seeks to explore how local traditions and Islamic sharia interact, shaping the unique face of Nusantara Islam. In analyzing the findings, cultural sociology theory, particularly Robert Redfield² and Melford Spiro's theory³ of cultural acculturation and integration, is used to understand how Islamic teachings are accepted, adapted, and practiced in Nusantara society while maintaining positive local cultural values. The research argues that Islam Nusantara is not an isolated form of Islam but rather a dynamic tradition that integrates the universal values of Islam with local traditions, creating an identity that is distinctive and relevant to the challenges of the times while still holding on to the principles of fundamental Islamic teachings.

² Vivian Tseng and Hirokazu Yoshikawa, "Reconceptualizing Acculturation: Ecological Processes, Historical Contexts, and Power Inequities," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 42, no. 3–4 (December 1, 2008): 355–58, <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10464-008-9211-Y>.

³ Roy G. D'Andrade, "Melford E. Spiro, 1920–2014," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 112, no. 7 (February 17, 2015): 1915–16, <https://doi.org/10.1073/PNAS.1500172112/ASSET/AB580F9A-46E5-4D91-BC00-51801BC38D18/ASSETS/GRAPHIC/PNAS.1500172112FIG01.JPEG>.

Methods

The research uses qualitative methods with historical and ethnographic approaches,⁴ aiming to explore the Nusantara Islamic intellectual traditions and the role of Nusantara scholars in disseminating and adapting Islamic teachings within the context of local culture. The study focuses on reconstructing the Nusantara Islamic Intellectual Tradition and the local culture behind it. The steps taken in this study involve collecting, evaluating, and testing evidence that supports the existing data, as well as drawing strong conclusions based on the findings. The historical approach is used to understand the development of Islam in the Nusantara over time, while the ethnographic approach is employed to explore religious practices and local cultural traditions practiced by the Muslim community in the Nusantara. In analyzing the findings, Robert Redfield's acculturation theory and Melford Spiro's cultural integration theory are applied to understand how Islamic teachings are accepted, adapted, and practiced, as well as how positive local cultures are preserved within the community.

Results and Discussion

Nusantara '*Ulamā*' is a Muslim intellectual group that plays an important role in developing and preserving Islam in the territory of Nusantara. They not only become spiritual leaders and educators but also play a role in formulating Islamic identities that fit the cultural and social context of Indonesian society. They not only focus on religious aspects in a narrow sense but also extend their role into the social, cultural, and political spheres. They are the guardians of the Islamic tradition and the mediators between the values of Islam and the diverse local culture in Nusantara. With a profound knowledge of the sacred texts of Islam and a broad understanding of local realities, Nusantara scholars are able to articulate the teachings of Islam in a way that is relevant and acceptable to society.⁵

⁴ Dudung Abdurrahman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah* (Jogjakarta: Ar-Ruz Media, 2007).

⁵ Azyumardi Azra, "The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern '*Ulama*' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 64, no. 2 (2005): 512–13, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-asian-studies/article/abs/origins-of-islamic-reformism-in-southeast-asia-networks-of-malayindonesian-and-middle-eastern-ulama-in-the-seventeenth-and-eighteenth-centuries-by-azyumardi-azraasian-studies-ass>.

The Nusantara territory refers to a number of island states located in Southeast Asia and parts of South Asia that have the geographical characteristics of large and small islands. In general, the territory of Nusantara includes countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Philippines, and Timor-Leste.⁶ The existence of Nusantara scholars reflects a wealth of science that covers various disciplines, such as exegesis, fiqh, sufism, history, literature, and education. They not only maintain religious traditions but are also active in developing religious thinking that is adaptive and inclusive of changing times and social dynamics.⁷

Nusantara *‘ulamā’* is a milestone of science and culture in Nusantara that not only plays a role in upholding the teachings of Islam but also in preserving and developing the intellectual traditions of Islam and the rich local cultural heritage. Their contributions are not only important in the historical context but also relevant in understanding the dynamics of Islam in the growing modern Nusantara region.

Nusantara Ulama and the Islamic Intellectual Tradition

Since the 13th century, Arab-Persian Muslims, both merchants and Sufi travelers, began to intensify the spread of Islam in various territories of Nusantara, thus emerging various contacts with Islam, both occurring individually among institutional mafia communities in the Sultanate. By the second half of the 17th century, the Islamic contact between the territory of Nusantara and the Arab jazirah was established more and more intensely, especially with the increasing number of Muslim groups in the Nusantara community dating to Mecca and Medina, either merely to pursue Hajj worship or for the sake of seeking science, and therefore settled and rushed to the local Ulama

⁶ Anthony Reid, "Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (2001): 295–313, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-southeast-asian-studies/article/abs/understanding-melayu-malay-as-a-source-of-diverse-modern-identities/6E1353012FC5E6FB3403BEABE5411FCA>.

⁷ Norbani B Ismail et al., "Islām Wa Fiqh Nusantara: Al-Tanâfus ‘alâ al-Huwîyah Wa ‘alâqat al-Sulmah Wa al-Ramz al-Dînî Li Jam‘iyah Nahdlatul Ulama," *Studia Islamika* 24, no. 3 (December 31, 2017): 503–54, <https://doi.org/10.15408/SDI.V24I3.4324>.

for a relatively long time. In turn, when some of them returned to their homeland, they became the main locomotive in socialization efforts and the transmission of various religious thoughts to the Muslim community of Nusantara.⁸

The intellectual tradition in Nusantara is known by the existence of the remains of Nusantara scholars who became the media of communication in the past as a wealth of information in the present, whose content is not limited to religion but covers various other fields such as literature, law, history, customs, medicine, and so on. These are the works of the scholars who later became the cultural treasures of the nation.⁹

The earliest attempt was to convey the various teachings of Islam through oral tradition. However, with the growing number of people interested in studying Islam, the need for the religious texts to be a grip in the dissemination, broadcasting, and teaching of Islam emerged. In addition, in the institutional context, there is also an urgent need for the rulers in the various sultanates and kingdoms of Nusantara, for example, against the texts of Shar'iyah (*fiqh siyāsah*), in particular, to formulate and develop the rules for the sultanate.

In this context appears the tradition of copying, writing and translation of texts or manuscripts of Islamic religion in local languages (vernacularisation), which according to some textual data has begun to take place since the early times of the presence of Islam in the territory of Nusantara. If you look at the number of Islamic religious manuscripts found today, both domestically and abroad, it can be assured that this tradition of writing, copying, and translation has taken place massively, and over long periods of time.¹⁰ Along with the growing strength of the tradition, in the territory of Nusantara then emerged various patterns of thought, both in the field of fiqh, exegesis, sufism, hadith, and so on.

Through a network of scholarship and religious activities as well as writing activities conducted by the scholarships in question have

⁸ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994).

⁹ Oman Fathurahman, *Filologi Indonesia Teori Dan Metode* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2015).

¹⁰ Chambert-Loair dan Oman Fathurahman, *Khazanah Naskah: Panduan Koleksi Naskah Indonesia Se-Dunia* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia dan EFEO, 1999).

succeeded in rebuilding the Islamic civilization by presenting their invaluable works in various disciplines of science. As Sheikh Abū al-Khair himself wrote the book *al-Saif al-Qati*, it is a book in the field of sufism. While local figures also produced his works such as Bukhārī al-Jauhārī, who is believed to have pioneered the field of political writing through his work *Tāj al-Salātin* (1603), this work is thought to influence later works like *Sulālat al-Salātin* (1612) by Tun Seri Lanang and *Bustān al-Salātin* (1638) by Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī.

As for Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rauf al-Singkel, in addition to his work in the fields of sufism, hadith, and fiqh, he is considered a pioneer of the writing of Qur’anic exegesis after successfully translating *Tafsīr al-Baidāwī* into Malay. In addition to the works of prose, there are also works in the form of poetry. Among his works are *Sharī‘ah al-‘Ashiqin* and *Asrār al-‘Arifīn fī Bayān ‘Ilm al-Sulūk wa al-Tawḥīd*. His works are in the form of poetry, such as *Sair Burung Pingai*, *Sair Burung Pungguk*, *Sair Sidang Faqir*, *Sair Perahu* and *Sair Dagang*. His fame in the field of poetry was so prominent that Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas described him as a pioneer of Malay poetry.

Another character who stands out with his writings is Sheikh Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī. He has produced many of his works with impressive quality and covers various fields, such as fiqh, theology, sufism, hadith, politics, and so on. In addition to *Bustān al-Salātin*, as mentioned earlier, he also produced the works of *Tibyān fī Ma‘rifat al-Adyān*, *Hujjat al-Ṣiddīq li Daf‘i al-Zindīq*, *Hill el-Zillī*, *Jawāhir al-‘Ulūm fī Kashfī al-Ma‘lum*, and others. As with Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatranī, who also produced his works like *Mi‘rat al-Mu‘minīn*, *Mir‘at al-Muḥaqqiqīn*,¹¹ and others.

Thus, it can be said that Nusantara scholars have played a crucial role in the sustainability of culture and intellectual civilization through the inheritance of science from generation to generation, which in turn contributes to the dynamics of Muslim diversity in Nusantara.

Nusantara Ulama and Local Culture

Al-Islām ṣālih li kulli zamān wa makān, which means Islam is

¹¹ Abd. Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Sejarah Dan Pemikiran Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Sentosa, 1981).

suitable for all times and places. This phrase, often pronounced by a Muslim, is proven by the observation that Islam is the most widespread religion, covering a variety of races and nationalities and affecting almost all climatological and geographical characteristics.¹²

Islam, as a global religion, often interacts with and adapts to local cultures in different regions of the world. When Islam enters a region, this religion often carries not only religious teachings but also the influence of Islamic culture that can adapt to existing customs and traditions. Culture in a society is a certain system of values that is made the guideline of life by the citizens who support the culture. Because it is a framework of action and behavior, culture tends to become a tradition in a society. Tradition is something that is hard to change because it has been united in the lives of its supporters.¹³

Diversity of cultures and religions flourished in Nusantara society, where sometimes there was a mixture of culture and religion. The influence of Islam on culture in Nusantara has become an attraction for researchers, among others, because of the character or characteristics of Islam in Nusantara, which are different from the Islamic character in other regions of the Middle East. Furthermore, the Islamic development in this region is also experiencing such an impressive phase, as well as showing dynamics and creativity, both in terms of discourse and religious practices.¹⁴ The speciality of Islam in Nusantara is not seldom seen as its own strength and attractiveness, because it means referring to the response, dynamics, and creations of Nusantara's masses in the reception of Islam.¹⁵

There are many ways in which Nusantara Muslims are transmitting and socializing Islam, which they bring from the Islamic world in the

¹² Abdurrohman Kasdi, "Islamic Dialectics and Culture in Establishing Islam Nusantara Paradigm: Variety Model of Islam Nusantara for Indonesia," *Addin* 12, no. 2 (August 1, 2018): 299–324, <https://doi.org/10.21043/addin.v12i2.4537>.

¹³ Nasrullah, "Islam Nusantara: Analisis Relasi Islam Dan Kearifan Lokal Budaya Madura," *Al-Irfan: Journal of Arabic Literature and Islamic Studies* 2 (2): 274-97. <https://doi.org/10.36835/al-irfan.v2i2.3589>.

¹⁴ Oman Fathurahman, "Tradisi Intelektual Islam Melayu-Indonesia: Adaptasi Dan Pembaharuan," *Studia Islamika* 8, no. 3 (January 1, 1970), <https://doi.org/10.15408/SDI.V8I3.685>.

¹⁵ Dale F. Eickelman, *The Study of Islam in Local Contexts* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982).

Middle East. Generally speaking, such efforts always take into account the socio-cultural conditions of local communities, although the large framework remains the source of emerging and developing resources in their places of origin.¹⁶

In a society whose citizens are religious, it is generally believed that religion is one of the cultural traditions that exists in that society. In such a context, the relationship between the tradition of charity and the culture of the community can be seen. Thus, the relationship between the culture and the tradition is intertwined as a mutual relationship. The stronger the religious tradition in a society, the more visible the role of the dominant influence in the culture. Anthropologists divide culture into form and content. According to its form, the culture consists of three, namely:¹⁷

1. The cultural system. The cultural system is embodied in ideas, thoughts, concepts, cultural values, norms, and opinions that are abstract and are in the minds of the respective cultures.
2. The social system that embodies activity, patriotic behavior, ceremonies, and rituals is more concrete.
3. Cultural objects (material culture). Cultural objects are also called physical culture or material culture. Cultural objects are the result of the behavior and work of my own culture.

Islam came and developed in Nusantara through cultural transformations carried out by the Islamic propagators. Thus, Islam that exists and develops at Nusantara is cultural Islam, which is based on the traditions of the community. These traditions have survived to this day. This eliminates the pattern of diversity adopted by the Nusantara community based on traditional values already influenced by the teachings of Islam.

The culture that has acquired the legitimacy of the text of the Shariah is transformed into a ritual procession. This process is something that is common in the environment of Nusantara scholars, so that the Islamic community has the same pattern because of the unique basis and concept (*ittifaqul ara*).¹⁸

¹⁶ Fathurahman, "Tradisi Intelektual Islam Melayu-Indonesia: Adaptasi Dan Pembaharuan."

¹⁷ Jalaluddin, *Psikologi Agama: Memahami Perilaku Dengan Mengaplikasikan Prinsip-Prinsip Psikologi* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2012).

¹⁸ James W. Watts, "Ritual Legitimacy and Scriptural Authority," *Journal of*

A manifestation of the interplay between Islamic dialectics and indigenous customs is the seasonal “almssea” ceremony (*sedekah laut*) practiced by Muslim communities along the seashore. According to a study, *sedekah laut* refers to a process of converting from non-Islamic to Islamic views. Even though *sedekah laut* is not a conversion process, it is an expression of how local culture and sharia texts interact. In other words, *sedekah laut*, which is still practiced in society, does not contradict Islamic principles. If *sedekah laut*’s scope is restricted to conversion, it naturally originates from two distinct entities that undergo conversion.¹⁹

Another example is the *peusijuk* custom practiced by the Acehnese, which is a tradition that was carried out before Islam came to Nusantara and then after Islam entered Aceh. This tradition is filled with deep Islamic values. One of the main values that is reflected is faith in the power of God, which is expressed through the prayers of the *tuha peut* or *peusijuk* practitioners. In addition, in the process of *peusijuk*, there is emphasis on the importance of *tawakal* and patience, in line with the teachings of Islam about *Qadha* and *Qadar*: (decree and destiny of God). This practice also emphasizes the importance of sincere intentions and goodwill as part of asking for blessings from the Creator.²⁰

Nusantara ‘*ulamā*’ not only explains the ritual of the theoretical foundation but also the dialectical process of Shariah texts and local culture. Cultural language is used to express empathy and appetite that cannot be expressed by society itself, as well as the theoretical foundation that is the weakness of society.²¹

A significant contribution of the Nusantara ‘*ulamā*’ is their ability to combine Islamic principles with local cultures. This synthesis is

Biblical Literature 124, no. 3 (January 1, 2005): 401–17, <https://doi.org/10.2307/30041032>.

¹⁹ Kasdi, “Islamic Dialectics and Culture in Establishing Islam Nusantara Paradigm: Variety Model of Islam Nusantara for Indonesia.”

²⁰ Adi Kasman, M. Ikhwan, and Roni Hidayat, “Peusijuek Local Wisdom Resilience of the Acehnese Within the Cultural Globalization Discourse,” *Jurnal Antropologi: Isu-Isu Sosial Budaya* 24, no. 2 (December 9, 2022): 187–94, <https://doi.org/10.25077/JANTRO.V24.N2.P187-194.2022>.

²¹ Kasdi, “Islamic Dialectics and Culture in Establishing Islam Nusantara Paradigm: Variety Model of Islam Nusantara for Indonesia.”

evident in the various religious practices, customary ceremonies, and social norms observed in various territories of Nusantara. By integrating Islam with indigenous customs, Nusantara scholars have formed a unique Islamic identity that is relevant to the local community.

Ironically, there is no denying that there are still bad practices that are still practiced by a few Muslim communities, such as the use of black magic to destroy opponents, ruin businesses, and destroy the institution of marriage. Although our country is moving towards the Industrial Revolution 4.0, which sees the achievement of various advances, this practice involving elements of magic and shirk is still done for the purpose of personal satisfaction and interest. While this practice is included in the strict prohibition because it involves elements of polytheism and tyranny, In addition, other bad practices that are widespread nowadays are also symptoms of corruption. It involves various parties, whether civil servants, traders, or ordinary people. Usually, it is done with various rewards and causes damage to the lives of the community and the country. This practice of bribery is strictly forbidden by *syara'* to the giver or receiver of bribes. All these bad practices are prohibited and must be abandoned.

From the perspective of acculturation and cultural integration theory, research findings on the role of Nusantara '*ulamā'*' in developing and maintaining Islam in the Nusantara region can be understood as an example of the manifestation of interaction between local culture and Islam. Robert Redfield, who put forward the acculturation theory, defines this process as a form of cultural change that occurs when two different cultures interact but without eliminating their respective cultural identities. In this case, Nusantara '*ulamā'*' play a key role in bridging Islamic teachings and existing local traditions, as seen in rituals such as sea alms and *peusijuk*, which combine Islamic principles with local culture. This process creates an Islamic identity that is unique and relevant to Nusantara society, where Islamic teachings are accepted and implemented in the existing social and cultural context. Thus, Redfield's acculturation theory provides an understanding that Islam in Nusantara is not only accepted religiously but also translated into a cultural form that can be accepted and practiced by local communities.

Melford Spiro, on the other hand, developed a theory of cultural integration that places more emphasis on how different cultural elements

interact and are united to create harmony in society. In this context, the contribution of Nusantara '*ulamā*' in introducing Islamic teachings by paying attention to local social and cultural conditions shows their efforts to integrate religious teachings with local customs harmoniously. Nusantara '*ulamā*' not only function as guardians of Islamic traditions but also as mediators who help society understand and implement Islamic teachings in the context of their daily lives. As seen in the tradition of writing and translating religious texts, this integration process enriches the understanding of Islam that can be accepted by society while strengthening the ties of local culture with universal Islamic values.

Conclusion

The fact is the fusion between the sharia (divine elements) and the traditions (humanitarian elements) of society has formed an Islamic tradition. It's like in the traditional saying: *Syariah mengato, adat memakai*. Based on the saying, the Islamic sharia, or revelation, was revealed by Allah SWT. to regulate human life as a guide for living in things that are commanded and forbidden, while custom is a rule for humans to accept and apply in life. In fact, in Islamic law, there are custom and uruf methods as sources of Islamic law. In addition to fiqh methods, it is mentioned that custom is certified as a legal value. This method is accepted under strict conditions including not contradicting the text of either the Quran or the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW. Islam celebrates good traditions and rejects all bad traditions.

Historically, the Nusantara region has been a place where Islam grew and flourished in a dynamic interaction with the rich local culture. Nusantara's teachings not only play an important role in spreading Islamic teachings but also in interpreting and adapting them to the cultural values that exist in the Nusantara region. They integrated elements of local wisdom such as customs, art, language, and philosophy that existed in the Nusantara community into their understanding of Islam, creating an Islam that had local nuances but remained within the framework of the universality of the doctrine.

The scholars also developed Islamic intellectual traditions among the Nusantara community by translating various literature into local languages, writing books, building banquets, and reviving assemblies in the community. They not only teach religion but also contribute

original ideas in the fields of Islamic sciences such as exegesis, fiqh, sufism, and others. In this process, they blend Islamic knowledge derived from classical sources with a unique local context, creating a scientific tradition different from the Islamic scientific tradition in the Middle East or India, although still interconnected and interacting.

The religious worshippers of Nusantara are known for their tolerance of differences and their ability to preserve interreligious clashes in Nusantara. They not only act as spiritual leaders in the Muslim community but also as mediators in the social and religious conflicts that occur in society. Their moderate approach and deep understanding of the local socio-cultural context have made them a figure respected and followed by many, not only in the past but also in the present.

Islam Nusantara is not a static or isolated entity, but a dynamic tradition that continues to evolve and adapt to the challenges of the times. Nusantara '*ulamā*' became the main representative of intellectual creativity and spirituality that have shaped the face of Islam in the unique and profound Nusantara. Thus, studying and appreciating their contributions not only provides insight into the history of Islam in Nusantara but also about the potential of Islam to embrace diversity and build peace and progress throughout the world.

Accordingly, after more than 1400 years of revelation, this tradition-friendly approach can still be used in evaluating the interaction between sharia and local traditions. Strictly speaking, prohibited things remain prohibited and cannot be practiced. Likewise, with the things that are required and permitted by *syarā'*, they remain as required and permitted in addition to being practicable.

In the perspective of Robert Redfield's acculturation theory and Melford Spiro's cultural integration theory, the role of Nusantara '*ulamā*' in developing Islam in the Nusantara region reflects the process of interaction between local culture and Islamic teachings. Redfield sees this as acculturation, where Islam is accepted and translated into a cultural form that is relevant to the local community, as seen in the rituals of sea alms and peusujuk, which combine Islam with local traditions. Meanwhile, Spiro emphasizes that Nusantara '*ulamā*' play a role in integrating Islamic teachings with local customs and cultural values, thus creating social harmony. By writing and translating religious texts, Nusantara '*ulamā*' succeeded in effectively combining Islamic teachings

with local culture, creating a distinctive Islamic identity in the Nusantara that still maintains the universal values of Islam in the existing social context.

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