**NAHDLIYYIN'S EFFORTS TO PRESERVE LOCAL TRADITION**

**IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN INDONESIA THROUGH EDUCATION**

**A.Fatikhul Amin Abdullah**

**STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo**

**f4tih85@gmail.com**

**Abstract**

The clash of opinion among fellow Muslims in addressing the pre-Islam tradition often occurs in Indonesia, as seen between the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and supporters of reformist Islam. On the one hand, NU seeks to elaborate the teachings of Islam with local culture (pre-Islam), while on the other hand, reformist Islamists, also seek to purify the Islamic religion (purification) by rejecting religious practices framed with the pre-Islam culture. It is these traits that, since the beginning of the 20th century, have been sued by reformist Islamic scholars. Meanwhile, NU declared itself trying to preserve local traditions. For NU, accommodation between religion and tradition will always occur as a process that will enrich life. This research seeks to explain the relationship of Islam and local traditions and the need to maintain local traditions in religious practice. The method used is historical research methods and methods for collecting data by document studies, literature studies, observations, and interviews of NU figures. The results of this study explain NU offers an Indonesian-faced religion with local traditions that exist to benefit the *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* based on the omniscient divinity. NU consistently develops *pesantren* as a means of transforming religious understanding that respects local traditions as the strengthening of Islam. In *pesantren*, it is taught directly to organize religious practices, which are full of cultural values.

***Key words: Nahdlatul Ulama(NU), Local Tradition, Walisongo, Pesantren, Religious Rituals.***

**Introduction**

One of the factors that helped to accelerate the Islamization process in the Indonesian archipelago was the teaching of Tassawuf which some called mystical Islam. One character of the teachings of Tassawuf is moderate and accommodating to local culture and beliefs, and has a tolerant sense of trust in others (Sutiyono.2010: 73). According to traditional *ulama*, the most effective and efficient *da'wah* is prudence, wisdom, and without violence in society. Walisongo spread wisdom by utilizing local traditions as a tool to spread religion, not shifting the whole *khasanah* of local tradition. (Sutiyono.2010:243-244).

Walisongo who spread Islam in only 50 years managed to combine between Islam and culture. On top of strong cultures, Islamic *syiar*was built, such as the construction of mosques and boarding schools built for the love of the homeland. According to the Chairman of the Institute of Arts and Culture of Muslim Indonesian (Lesbumi) PBNU KH Agus Sunyoto (*Kompas* February 1, 2017) said that the history of Islamic development couldn’t be separated from cultural influences in the form of cultural acculturation and religion.Religious rituals are still practiced without excluding traditional factors such as *Sekaten* and *Tahlilan* ceremonies because local traditions actually become binding and strengthening of Islam. For 800 years since the first entrance, the natives have not accepted Islam. Only after the arrival of Walisongo (15th-16th century), Islam can be spread in Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Maluku. The spread occurred after 50 years of *Walisongo's* arrival as Walisongo agreed that Islam should be developed through cultural means. (Erdianto.*Kompas*.1/2/2017). Islam is not a culture, because Islam is *illahiyah* while culture is *insaniyah*. However, man also practices Islam, so in one dimension it is *insaniyah* and therefore does not threaten the existence of culture (Siraj.2015: 76). Social change is an inevitable development. However, it is only at the level of how the need for change can be met without destroying existing social ties, but utilizing those bonds as the desired mechanism of social change (Achidsti.2015:9).

NU was born as a response of many groups (reformers) who reject the *amaliah* and traditional Islamic creed by purifying the teachings of Islam. NU organization is a form of institutionalization of the traditionalists in order to fortify and respond to reformist attacks so as not to easily blame, heresy, even disbelieve the class that disagrees with modernists / reformers. NU is accommodative, selective, and proportional. Accommodative means that Islam is justified in accepting local traditions, but it is also selective in the sense that not all local traditions are accommodated, but just good local traditions (*al-qadim al-shalih*) are acceptable. While acceptance must be proportional. Thus, NU affirmation of local tradition is conditional, as long as the religious spirit is injected into local traditions, not the other way around. This is what according to Hasyim Muzadi became the uniqueness of NU.According to him, among the uniqueness of NU compared to other Islamization patterns in the country is NU's way of addressing *adat*(local customs). NU does not reject local customs and traditions as long as it fits with Islamic tradition. This is in accordance with *qoidah ushul fiqh*: *Al Muhaafadhatu 'ala al Qoodim al Shoolih wa al akhdzu bi al Soid al Ashlah* "Preserving the culture / something old that is still relevant and taking something new breakthrough / innovative step (the better)". One of the local traditions that continue to be maintained today is *selametan*, *tahlilan*, *sekaten*, etc. (Erdianto.*Kompas*.1 / 2/2017). NU is able to communicate with the culture of the people. Islamic teachings can be absorbed by society without overthrowing the bases of the society's traditions. (Siraj.2015:91).

The focus of this research is to answer the formulation of the problem why NU felt it necessary to preserve local tradition in religious activities? How is NU's effort to preserve local culture?

**Theoretical Framework**

This study uses the theoretical structure of Anthony Giddens on agents, agencies, structures, and structural dualities. NU as an agent retains local traditions in religious life amidst the pressures of reformist Islamic organizations in purifying Islam from cultural influences. Efforts that gave birth to various NU policies in the field of education, especially pesantren with various material standards taught.

**Methods**

This study uses historical method. Data obtained through document search, literature study, interviews with Ma'arif LP figures and observations to some Ma'arif educational institutions.

**Religion and Tradition / Culture**

Islam as a religion derived from revelation, is normative and tends to be permanent, while culture is the result of human creation that tends to change and develop according to the times. Yet this distinction does not preclude the existence of religious life in the form of culture (Wahid.2015: 1). Islam in Indonesia is rich in religious rituals that are cultural / traditional as accommodation between religious teachings and local culture, as Geertz (1970) argues, religion is part of the cultural system.

According to Geertz, religion is a pattern for action (pattern for behaviour), and become something that lives in man who manifests in everyday life. Thus, religion is a guideline for framing the interpretation of human actions (Sutiyono, 2010: 1). Accommodation between religion and culture will always occur as a process that will enrich life and make it fertile. The richness of cultural variation will enable the unification of various groups on the basis of equality, both religion and culture as the human rational *fithrah* in realizing peace as a form of accommodation between the two naturally and not necessarily.Like the shape of the Demak Mosque as a concrete example of the reconciliation or accommodation effort in which the layered roof of the mosque comes from the 'meru' concept of the pre-Islamic period (Hindu-Buddhism), numbering nine and cut by Walisongo into three as a religious symbol a Muslim; *Iman*, *Islam*, *Ihsan* (Wahid.2015: 2). So are the holy mosque, the play of *punokawan*, and the play of *jimatkalimosodo*, etc. This is what is termed the indigenization of Islam.

Indigenization is not an attempt to avoid the emergence of opposition from local cultural forces, but precisely so that this culture is not lost which is the essence of the need not to avoid the polarization between religion and culture. The starting point of this reconciliation effort is for revelation to be understood by considering contextual factors, including legal awareness and sense of justice (Wahid.2015: 3). The indigenization of Islam is part of Islamic history, both in the country of origin and in other countries, including Indonesia (Wahid.2015: 4) which, when confronted with local Indonesian culture, is called the Islamization of local culture. (Siraj.2015:32).

Cultural assimilation and accommodation ultimately result in various Islamic variants called local Islam different from Islam in great tradition. Such phenomena for some groups view it as an aberration against Islamic purity and regarded as a syncretic Islam. Islam and the Javanese are often considered contradictory; it shows a harmonious correspondence (Erdianto in *Kompas* (1/2/2017)). The adaptation of Islamic teachings to the reality of life is only permitted as long as it concerns the cultural side. The existence of the harsh principles of Islamic law, then custom can not change the texts but only change or develop the application only, and indeed the application will change by itself (Wahid.2015: 6-8) commonly called the understanding of *nash* with the socio-cultural approach, while the social culture is the development of culture in the context of society (Wahid.2015:13).

The first priority is to create public awareness of what Islam should do. Therefore, society should be stimulated not to think too much about the symbolic manifestation of Islam in life, but rather its essence (Wahid.2015: 19). Islam places *adat* or tradition in its proper place by giving high appreciation according to *qoidah ushul fiqh* among others *Al 'Adah muhakkamah and al ashlu fii al' aahati al ibaahah illa maa nahaa 'anhu al syar'u* “custom is the applicable law” and “that *ashal* in the custom is except what is forbidden by the *syara*”.Also in the hadith of the Prophet SAW *Famaa Roaa al Muslimuuna Hasanan fa Huwa 'Inda allahi Hasanun wa Maa Rouu Sayyian fa Huwa' inda Allahi Sayyiun* “So whatever is seen by the Muslims as something good then it is with Allah is also good, then what is seen by Muslims as something bad then it is with Allah is also bad” (HR Imam Ahmad Bin Hambal).

**Indonesian Islam**

Islam entered Indonesia in a flexible way. The first mosques in Indonesia resemble local architecture and the heritage of Hinduism. This shows that Islam is more tolerant of local culture. Buddhists entered Indonesia with the *Stupa*, as did Hinduism bringing *Ratna* and Christianity to bring Western architecture while Islam did not transfer the symbols of Islamic culture in the Middle East here. Only recently have the dome shape adopted. With this fact it is evident that Islam is not anti-cultural. Islam can adapt all elements of culture. (Kuntowijoyo.1994:12).

Islam is an open system. It means that the development of Islamic culture does not only grow from within. But Islam also recognizes that all humanity has a contribution to culture. Because of that as an open system, Islam becomes fertile. In addition, Islam is also an original, authentic culture, which has its own characteristics and personality (Kuntowijoyo.1994: 44-45). In addition, Islamic culture is a cosmopolitan culture. That is, Islam is a culture that encapsulates or overcomes local, regional, and national cultures. Islam overcomes tribal cultures and national cultures. When Islam entered Indonesia, there were several processes that were in line with Indonesia. Originally Islam was a city-centred culture in a city like Iraq, Iran, but when it entered Indonesia Islam went through the process of becoming a village culture and no longer centred in the city. In the beginning, Islam entered through the city, such as Pasai, Demak, Majapahit, Cirebon, Bandung, and various other places. However, when the city was no longer controlled by the merchants and propagators of Islam, but controlled by local regimes and court powers, Islam also withdrew from the city to spread to the villages. This is a hidden grace so that now Islam in Indonesia is based in the village. Thus, in Indonesia the Islamic culture changed from the culture of the city, the merchant class and the medium that the car turned into an agrarian and static village culture.(Kuntowijoyo.1994:13)

In this case Islam blends with villages and peasants or in other words in "Indonesianization". Examples of art such as the *sekatengamelan* (to commemorate the birth of the prophet, this is the version of Sunan Kalijaga). This passionate Arabic music is not found in a quiet and contemplative serenade of gamelan. Meanwhile, Raden Maulana Makdum Ibrahim (Sonan Bonang) uses Bonang music, he also known as the composer of "*Wijil's suluk* and singing *Tombo Ati*".Sunan Kalijaga with the narrative of *Jimat Kalimasada* as the ultimate weapon of *Yudhisthira* which is actually the translation of the "*shahada*", and the play *pandawa Janoko* (originally *Arjuno*) always guarded by *Semar Semo*, *NoloGareng*, *Petruk*, and *Bagong* (which is not in the original version of *Mahabharata*) which comes from the words "*idza ji'naka* (*Janoko*), *fasammir* (become *semar*), *nala khairon* (become *nolo gareng*), *fatrukil* (become *petruk*), *bagha* (become *Bagong*), meaning "when we come to you then hurry to goodness and leave evil" (Junaidi.2015:98-99). Sunan Giri as the inventor of a *wayang gedog* with*kisah panji*. Sunan Kudus as the inventor of *wayanggolek*, which features a frightening story.

Islam brought by Walisongo is *tasawwuf* Islam, which prefers substance rather than physical form. Therefore, the changes made in the spread of Islam do not impose drastic changes, but slowly and instead tend to retain unimportant forms of physical form but change of thought and belief, not on changes in customs and traditions that are not required in Islam(Achidsti.2015:87-89).

Discussion of Islam in Indonesia cannot be separated from the term Walisongo and pesantren. In terms of Walisongo comes from the words *wali* and *sanga*. *Wali* Allah has the meaning of God's lovers / friends / representatives of God or people who are very love and beloved God who has a deep religious knowledge and able to sacrifice the soul for the benefit of Islam. As for the words *songo* there is an opinion derived from the word there (*akon*) or *Asana* (position) ie the seat statue of the god. So the mention of the guardian is adjusted to the place where he is domiciled like Sunan Ampel (*Ampyal* / yellow bamboo), Sunan Giri, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, Sunan Gresik etc. or *sanga* in ancient Java means nine.Nine in this context is not the amount of nine but number nine is the highest number that also has immortality (the result of multiplication with any number of numbers after the sum fixed on that number). Number nine is the largest odd number that in Hindu concept always uses the odd term like *Trimurti*, *Panca ri Majapahit*, *Sapta Papati* or *sanga* which in pre-Islamic era is the organization of the scholars (Buddhist monks) called *Sangha*. The Walisongo are regarded as the successors who come together in a single religious bond.

The term *pesantren* comes from the word *santri*, while *santri* from *sastri* said that students who study the book of the *castra* / religious book in particular.While *pesantren* from *castri* get affixed "*pe-castri-an*" or "*pecastrian*" which by Javanese tongue become *pesantren* or place of *santri* / *castri* which specially study book of religion(Kasdi.2008:58). The traditionalists have always maintained the customs, cultures, and traditions that Walisongo has done. However, fundamentalist reformers have always attacked these efforts.

Fundamentalists show the direction of uncompromising political movements even among Muslims who are still in touch with local traditions. Fundamentalists project the awakening of Islam as it has gained by the golden age of Islam by suppressing all sorts of traditions, which they regard as unrelated to early Islamic history. This group has always clashed with traditionalist groups who tend to maintain the culture in carrying out its religious teachings. Traditionalist feuds with reformers are increasingly visible in Islamic forums or Muslim congresses in addressing religious practice and religious education in the archipelago.

Finally after going through various events including the Hijaz Committee and the extension of the reformist group in Java and even into East Java, to the extent of Surabaya, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), born from 16 Rajab 1344 or 31 January 1926 in Surabaya on KH Wahab Hasbullah idea and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, which accommodated the traditional scholars (Marijan.1992: 14-17) and just got official recognition (*rechpersoon*) from the Dutch government on February 6, 1930 No. IX.

As a social organization of religion, the role of NU for the journey of Indonesian civilization can not be underestimated. Accommodative attitudes toward culture are more placed in order to show that religion (Islam) is always an opportunity for the growth of culture that is the 'instinct' of each community. That is why NU always cares for local culture as a tool to develop a religious tradition that has *Ahlussunah wal Jama'ah*.The face of religion (Islam) offered by NU is an Indonesian-faced religion. Like the tradition of Pesantren education, the tradition of appreciating the kiyai, the pilgrimage tradition, the *Mitoni* tradition (*tingkeban*), *Ngapati* Tradition, *Surohan*, *nyekar*, *muludan*, surviving the dead like *nelungdino*, *mitungdino*, *matangetydino*, *nyatus*, *mendak*, *nyewu* etc were all inspired by local culture, the NU received a good tradition but its spirit remained Islamic.

**Traditional Friction with the Reformists**

One of the methods used by traditionalists and preachers in the archipelago through pesantren and yellow book (the book used in pesantren). The use of this yellow book by reformists is considered a *taqlid* act (in a negative sense), but it is actually a teaching method that takes into account the scientific genealogy itself. Reformers as imitative actions without thinking and developing understanding often understand *taqlid*. The most rejected of the reformists is the non-use of the Qur'an and Hadith as the sole source of knowledge of Islam. Thus the reformist rejection of the traditionalists stems from two things, namely the traditionalist defense against the traditional form and the use of the classic book (yellow book) in the understanding of Islam (Achidsti.2015:96).

For the Nahdliyyin narrations and / or the transformation of the knowledge that went on (*mutawatir*) until the Prophet became a belief in the truth of the doctrine he received. This is because the limitations of a person in doing *ijtihad* to dig (*istinbat*) the proposition of the Quran and hadith directly because of the limitations of the tools and the conditions to do so. Therefore, the generation after Rasulullah SAW until now regarded as intellectual and moral reference among *Nahdliyin*. Through *pesantren*, the nahdliyin sharpen their minds and hearts to continue to fight for the tradition of *salafus salihus* until it is always contextual until now.This pesantren institution is the centre of study of Islamic tradition with all its dynamics. NU has the determination to keep the Islamic tradition of Nusantara over the influence of anti-*bid'ah* movement in Indonesia influenced by Wahabi. This starting point has awakened scholars to keep the Islamic tradition of Nusantara so as not to lose the orientation of Indonesian Islam which become the pattern of Islamic society tradition

**NU's Efforts to Preserve Local Traditions**

NU was born as a social movement that strives to maintain an established and good tradition in society while strengthening the values of Islam that has long been growing without having to clash with the times. For NU, Islam does not conflict with any tradition, but Islam can color and benefit the form of social-state building, including Pancasila and Bhineka Tunggal Ika. So far, NU's efforts in maintaining the nation and state status have been more pronounced given that if the atmosphere is not conducive, the damage and destruction of social solidarity will be easier. This is what is always held by NU through its famous *fiqhadagium*, "*dar'u al-mafaasid muqaddamun 'ala jalbi al-mashalih*" (preventing damage must take precedence over building the benefit).

NU with the auspices of *Ahlussunnah wal jama'ah* are concerned and fought hard to rebuild Indonesia and aspire to make Indonesia as a prosperous and sovereign country in accordance with the character of this nation itself based on the spirit of “*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*”or *tauhid* (Siraj.2015: 56-57) which is important steps to re-establish the sovereignty of the state. NU also develops its role more actively in building world civilization, considering NU currently appears as the world's largest *aswaja* power. NU with *aswaja* remains the front guard in maintaining the traditions and local wisdom of the archipelago so that NU seeks for dialogue between the essence of Islamic teachings *aswaja* with the culture and civilization of the archipelago that does not contradict and even mutually improve each other. (Siraj.2015:67). NU is able to survive until now, one of its factors is to position itself as an agent of change, not an institution that survives the flow of change by continuing to create traditions that are based on Islam. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad SAW who teach to preach religious teachings in accordance with their reason and cosmology (*khatibinnas 'ala qadri' uqulihim*), the reasoning by the NU is held and utilized in such a way in preaching because, it is impossible to instill religious teachings with something extraneous with ordinances of local communities.

As long as the culture does not conflict with religious norms, NU seeks to preserve it. This is the implementation of the firmness of holding the religious principles (*qoidah Al-Fiqhiyah*) formulated by the classical scholars, among these religious principles is *al'adah al Muhakkamah Maa Lam Yukholif al Syar'a* "meaning a tradition can be transformed into a social-religious order, as long as it does not conflict with religious norms "and qoidah al tsabit bi al 'urfi ka al tsabit bi al nash meaning" defined by urf / adat as defined by nash ". NU continues to create traditions that are based on Islam by not destroying the whole culture of society that accommodates the culture / traditions that are running in the community.Therefore, NU seeks and consistently develops pesantren as a means of transforming tolerant religious understanding and respecting local traditions with distinctive learning methods, lessons that teach the works of scholars with clear scholars and to the Messenger of Allah. In addition to special methods and materials, NU *pesantren* are also taught to continue to conduct and preserve religious teachings based on local traditions as an Islamic reinforcement. Even in developing the existing culture, NU also formed Lesbumi (Institute of Indonesian Muslims Artist) on March 28, 1962 in Bandung by KH Saifuddin Zuhri, which aims to affiliate cultural arts into the religion of Islam as well as prove that Islam is disseminated through socio-cultural as Walisongo does it.

**Conclusion**

The law of cultural origin is permissible whereas the law of worship is prohibited, so if the culture remains as a culture then there is no prohibition during its implementation is not contrary to religious teachings. But if the culture used as a worship that is prohibited because every worship has no guidance. Islam brought Walisongo with all its flexibility to raise the rituals derived from the original belief of Indonesia or pre-Islamic religion changed its substance according to Islamic teachings but its form still remains unchanged. This is what is understood by NU in addressing Islam *rohmatan lil'aalamiin*. Peaceful Islam that always takes a socio-cultural approach because the prophet Muhammad also does not like the shocks that occur in society.The Prophet Muhammad always prefers piety and peace in religion because the right does not have to be done but avoids that danger which must take precedence. Until now the *Nahdliyyin* still insist on preserving the doctrine and methods of Walisongo da'wah in the banner of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization. The way in which NU is able to maintain the local tradition is to remain firmly in pesantren as a means of transforming knowledge and understanding of religion in order to remain flexible in dealing with the existing culture through the way life and material are taught and the practice of religious practice laden with cultural values in it such as reading *maulid* together, *tahlil*, pilgrimage grave (*nyekar*) and so on. In addition, forming Lesbumi as a controller of Indonesian culture with religious teachings.

Acknowledgments to some parties who helped the publication process of this article, especially the library staff of PBNU, NU Member, National Library, University of Indonesia (UI) Library, ANRI, and various parties that cannot be mentioned one by one. The writing of this article has no particular interest but rather an impulse as an academician to disseminate of knowledge. Thank you also to the UI through the 2017 Indexed International Publication for Final Project (PITTA) program that funded this research to be able to published.

The writer is a doctoral student of History Faculty of the Faculty of Cultural Sciences Universitas Indonesia (FIB UI) force of 2014 who is also a lecturer at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo. Several published scientific papers include Women's Movement in Indonesia 1928-1974 Demands for Equal Right within Household and in Marriages (2016), *Pesantren Sebagai Pembentuk Nasionalisme dalam Mewujudkan Indonesia Bermartabat* (2016), and *Muslimat NU dalam Penguatan Peran Perempuan Indonesia Tahun 1946-1974* (2017).

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