

Integration of Islamic Values and the Local Wisdom of the Orang Rimba in Archipelago Character Education

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Abstract: This research is motivated by the moral and identity crisis in national education, which tends to emphasize cognitive aspects and neglect spiritual and local cultural dimensions. In fact, the traditions of the archipelago contain noble values that are in harmony with Islamic teachings, as seen in the indigenous Orang Rimba community in Jambi, which has a natural education system based on life experiences. This study aims to analyze the Islamic values and local wisdom of the Orang Rimba, identify their compatibility within the framework of Tamadun Islam Nusantara, and develop a conceptual model of character education based on the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom. The approach used is descriptive qualitative with an interpretive paradigm through literature study, document analysis, indirect observation, and source triangulation. The results show that there is synchronization between Islamic values and local culture in five main dimensions—spiritual, social, ecological, moral, and intellectual—which reflect the principles of tauhid, ukhuwah, khilafah fil ardh, ta'dib, and iqra', respectively. The integration of these values forms a contextual character education model that strengthens the Islamic civilization of the Archipelago as an educational paradigm that is down-to-earth, inclusive, and civilized. The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of a character education model based on Islamic values and local wisdom that is relevant to the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom of Learning) policy. The implications of this research emphasize the importance of developing a curriculum based on local culture and further research on Islamic ethnopedagogy to strengthen national character education.

Keywords: Islamic education, local wisdom, Orang Rimba, Islam Nusantara, character education.



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Introduction

Education is the main foundation for the development of human civilization, because it contains the process of passing on values, knowledge, and culture from one generation to the next. In the Indonesian context, education not only serves to educate the nation as stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, but also shapes the character and personality of people who are faithful, pious, and noble.¹ However, the rapid pace of globalization and modernization has shifted the orientation of education to be more cognitive and pragmatic, while moral, spiritual, and cultural aspects are often marginalized.² This condition has given rise to a multidimensional crisis that is evident in the weakening of character, identity, and national consciousness among Indonesia's younger generation.

In fact, the Indonesian people have a wealth of cultural and spiritual values that are deeply rooted in local traditions. One such legacy is the harmonious blend of Islamic teachings and the culture of the archipelago, which gave birth to the concept of *Tamadun Islam Nusantara*. This civilization emphasizes not only material progress, but also moral and humanitarian values.³ Islam in the archipelago developed through a process of cultural dialogue that emphasized the values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, namely peaceful, tolerant Islam that respects differences.⁴ The revitalization of the Islamic civilization of the archipelago is therefore an urgent need to reaffirm the identity of the Indonesian nation amid a global trend that tends to be homogeneous and materialistic.

However, the national education system still emphasizes cognitive outcomes and uniformity, and has not been able to accommodate local cultural diversity and Islamic values in the archipelago. As a result, moral and spiritual values are not contextualized in the learning process. On the other hand, various indigenous communities in Indonesia have education systems that are meaningful and relevant to strengthening national character. One of them is the Orang Rimba community in Jambi, which has a unique value system and educational traditions based on life experiences. Based on Gunawan Iktiono's findings, the Orang Rimba community instills character values such as self-awareness, obedience to customs, preservation of nature, and literacy through a natural social process.⁵ These principles are in line with Islamic teachings on *ma'rifat al-nafs* (self-awareness), *ta'dib* (the formation of manners), and *khilafah fil ardh* (human responsibility as stewards of the earth).

Previous studies show that the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom is an important issue in the development of contemporary Islamic education. Hasan Langgulung emphasizes that Islamic education is a process of developing human potential (*fitrah*) towards becoming moral and cultured individuals.⁶ Muhammin and Abdul Mujib add that Islamic education has a cultural dimension, namely the inheritance of cultural values based on monotheism and morals.⁷ Geertz describes the pluralistic and syncretic nature of Indonesian society, where Islam is internalized through culture without losing its substance,⁸ while Azra refers to Indonesian Islam as *civilizational Islam*—an Islamic civilization that has grown adaptively with local culture.⁹ In the context of education, Tilaar and Freire highlight the importance of a contextual approach that favors the community and departs from the socio-cultural reality of the students.¹⁰

Based on these various studies, there appears to be a gap between the national education paradigm, which still tends to be formalistic, and the cultural potential of local communities, which are rich in spiritual and moral values. There has not been much research specifically examining the integration of Islamic values and the local wisdom of indigenous peoples—particularly the Orang Rimba—within the framework of *the Islamic civilization of the archipelago*. This is where the novelty of this research lies. This research seeks to emphasize that Islamic values do not have to be conveyed through formal mechanisms, but can be internalized organically through local cultural practices and traditions.

The novelty of this research lies in its approach, which combines the perspectives of Islamic education, cultural anthropology, and the paradigm of *Islamic civilization in the archipelago* to construct a conceptual model of character education based on Islamic values and local wisdom. This model is expected to be an alternative to conventional approaches to character education, which lack context and tend to be top-down.

Based on the above description, this study aims to: (1) analyze Islamic values and local wisdom of the Orang Rimba community that have the potential to support character education; (2) identify the

compatibility between Islamic values and the Orang Rimba traditional education system within the framework of *Islam Nusantara*; and (3) develop a conceptual model of character education based on the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom as a manifestation of the praxis of *Islam Nusantara civilization*.

Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings, values, and symbols that exist within the Orang Rimba indigenous community within the framework of *the Islamic civilization of the Indonesian archipelago*. This method involves *library research* supported by secondary field data collected through literature studies, document analysis, indirect observation, and source triangulation. Primary data was obtained from the work of Gunawan Ikhtiono (2014), documentation of interviews with traditional leaders, and records from the KKI Warsi institution (2019–2022), while secondary data came from books, journals, and reports related to Islamic education, cultural anthropology, and Islam Nusantara. The research was conducted in the Orang Rimba community, Bukit Duabelas National Park, Jambi, which maintains a semi-nomadic lifestyle and an experience-based education system. Data analysis was carried out using content analysis and thematic analysis methods with the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing to identify the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom as the basis for developing a character education model based on *the Islamic Nusantara civilization*.

Results and Discussion

Character Education in the Perspective of Islam and Local Culture

In Islam, character education is at the core of the entire educational process. The Prophet Muhammad SAW said: *"Verily, I was sent to perfect noble character"* (HR. Ahmad). This statement emphasizes that Islamic education aims to shape a civilized personality (*insan adabi*), not merely to transfer knowledge (Muhamimin & Mujib, 1993).

Values such as trustworthiness, honesty, responsibility, and social awareness are the foundations of Islamic education, which are also found in the lives of the Orang Rimba community. Their social system teaches children to recognize boundaries, respect their parents, and maintain the balance of the ecosystem (KKI Warsi, 2019). This concept shows a fundamental similarity between *Islamic education* and *local wisdom-based education*: both emphasize the internalization of values through role models (*uswah*) and real experiences (experiential learning). This principle is in line with Paulo Freire's (2003) idea that education must "start from the reality of the learners' lives" in order to be meaningful and liberating. Therefore, the Orang Rimba's educational practices can be considered a form of contextual education that is in harmony with the Nusantara Islamic approach—that is, Islam that lives in the midst of society and respects the local cultural context.

Analysis of the Integration of Islamic Values and Local Wisdom

The results of the thematic analysis show the synchronization of Islamic values and local culture in five main dimensions of education, namely: spiritual, social, ecological, moral, and intellectual. Each dimension has direct relevance to Islamic teachings and contributes to the formation of *the Islam Nusantara civilization*. First, the spiritual dimension. The spiritual values of the Orang Rimba are evident in their awareness of the transcendent forces that govern life. Although their religious practices are not formalistic, there is a deep awareness of the connection between humans, nature, and God (Geertz, 1973). In the context of Islam, this reflects the value of *tauhid rububiyyah*—the recognition of Allah's power in all aspects of life. This spiritual awareness shapes an attitude of humility, gratitude, and moral responsibility towards the universe. Second, the social dimension. The social relationships of the Orang Rimba are built on the basis of mutual cooperation (*besesudungan*) and solidarity. These values intersect directly with the teachings of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* and *ta'awun* in Islam. In the context of education, the value of social solidarity encourages the formation of an inclusive and caring character in students (Azra, 2013). The ideal Islamic character education of Nusantara's " " (the forest is our

mother) should emulate this mechanism by emphasizing collective experience and togetherness in the learning process.

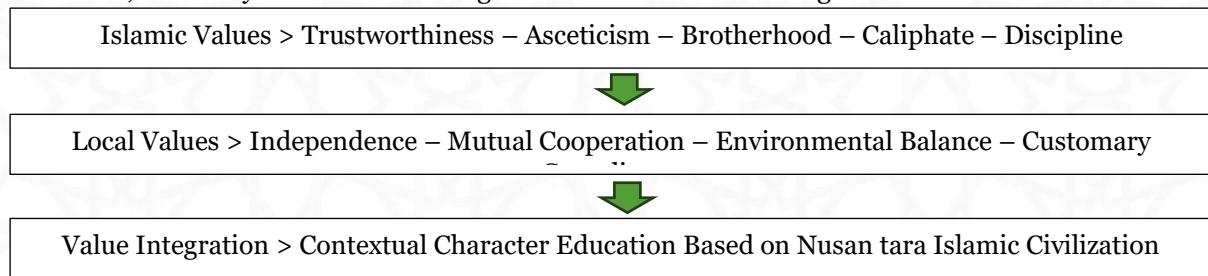
Third, the ecological dimension. The Orang Rimba understand the forest not merely as an economic resource, but as *the mother of life* (Gunawan, 2014). This value is in line with the principle of *khilafah fil ardh*, in which humans act as responsible stewards of the earth (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30). Modern Islamic education can draw inspiration from this ecological view to instill environmental ethics in the character education curriculum, in line with the concept of *eco-Islam* (Faruqi, 2015). Fourth, the moral dimension. Morality in Rimba society is manifested in the form of adherence to customs and prohibitions against behavior that destroys the social order. This value is in line with the concept of *ta'dib* in Islam, which emphasizes the formation of manners as the basis of a Muslim personality (Al-Attas, 1993). Thus, Islamic character education in the Indonesian archipelago needs to integrate customary elements as moral instruments that are deeply rooted and accepted by society. Fifth, the intellectual dimension. Although the Rimba community does not have a strong tradition of formal literacy, they emphasize the importance of the ability *to read nature*—that is, understanding the signs of nature, directions, and animal behavior as a form of contextual knowledge. This value reflects the spirit of *Iqra'* (reading) in Islam, which refers not only to written texts but also to the interpretation of the reality of the universe (Langgulung, 1988).

Contribution to the Strengthening of the Islamic Civilization of the Archipelago

The integration of Islamic values and local wisdom as seen in the Orang Rimba community contributes significantly to strengthening *the Islamic civilization of the Archipelago* in three main dimensions: First, the epistemological dimension. This study confirms that Islamic knowledge and values can be contextualized through local culture without losing their authenticity. This supports the idea of Islam Nusantara as an epistemological paradigm that values plurality (Madjid, 1992). Second, the cultural dimension. These findings prove that local culture is not a barrier to Islam, but a medium for expressing Islamic values. Islam in the archipelago adapts through culture, as the character education of the Orang Rimba is a tangible expression of Islamic values that are grounded in reality (Azra, 2013). Third, the pedagogical dimension. This study offers a context-based character education model—using local values as *an entry point* for learning Islamic values. This model supports the direction of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum development, which emphasizes *the Pancasila learner profile* and moderate spirituality (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

Conceptual Model of Value Integration

To clarify the relationship between Islamic values and local wisdom in the formation of character education, this study formulates an integration model as shown in Figure 1 below:



This model illustrates that value integration is not a one-way process of domination, but rather a dynamic dialectic between religion and culture. The educational process built from this model will produce a generation of perfect human beings—people who are knowledgeable, civilized, and rooted in universal human values as conceived by Al-Attas (1993).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the integration of Islamic values with the local wisdom of the Orang Rimba indigenous community contributes significantly to the development of a character education model based on *the Islamic civilization of the Indonesian archipelago*. The Orang Rimba's value system and social practices reflect Islamic educational principles such as amanah (trustworthiness), *ta'dib* (good manners), *zuhud* (asceticism), and *khilafah fil ardh* (stewardship of the earth), which are internalized through daily life practices such as mutual cooperation, adherence to customs, and preservation of nature. These findings confirm the relevance of Hasan Langgulung's view that Islamic education is a process of forming a complete human being (*insan kamil*) that encompasses spiritual, social, and intellectual dimensions. Theoretically, this research enriches the realm of Islamic education by showing that local values can be a medium for internalizing Islamic teachings in the context of pluralistic and humanistic character education. Practically, the results of this study can be used as a basis for developing a curriculum based on local wisdom and training educators in applying contextual Islamic pedagogy in schools and communities. The socio-cultural implications emphasize that education based on local values can strengthen Islamic and Indonesian identity and become a means of cultural preservation. However, this study has limitations because it emphasizes textual analysis and has not conducted in-depth empirical verification in the field. Therefore, further research is recommended to test the effectiveness of the Islamic and local wisdom-based character education model in various other indigenous communities in Indonesia through an Islamic ethnopedagogical approach, in order to strengthen an educational paradigm that is down-to-earth, inclusive, and civilized.

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