

## Islamic Education and Archipelago Culture

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**Abstract:** Islamic education in the archipelago is the result of a creative dialectic between universal Islamic values and the local cultural reality that is deeply rooted in the traditions of the island communities. It has grown into a system that not only transfers knowledge, but also transforms personalities and instills good manners. In the context of the Islamic civilization of the archipelago, education functions as the primary instrument for shaping the identity and character of the people. Through institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, prayer rooms, madrasas, and meunasah, Islamic values blend with language, art, and customs, giving rise to a friendly and moderate face of Islam. This article examines the reciprocal relationship between Islamic education and the culture of the archipelago through a historical-philosophical approach with qualitative-descriptive analysis. The focus of the study is directed at the role of Islamic educational institutions as agents of culture, the internalization of Aswaja values in the context of plurality, and the relevance of Islamic education in the archipelago in facing the challenges of modernity and globalization. The results of the study show that the Islamic education system in the archipelago not only produces scholars and intellectuals, but also maintains the continuity of Islamic civilization rooted in local wisdom. Amidst the disruption of values, civilized and cultured Islamic education is key to maintaining the spiritual and cultural integrity of the nation.

**Keywords:** Islamic Education, Archipelago Culture, Islamic Civilization, Aswaja, Moderation



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## Introduction

Islam entered the archipelago not with the sword, but with civilization. The scholars and Sufis became the bridge connecting the heavens of revelation with the earth of culture . Since the 13th century, Islam has flourished in the archipelago through trade, marriage, art, and education. The convergence between da'wah and culture occurred when Islam was accepted not because of coercion, but because of its compatibility with human values and community traditions. Education became the most strategic means in the process of cultural Islamization (Azra, 2013).

Islamic education in the archipelago plays a fundamental role in shaping the character and direction of the nation's civilization ( ). In the view of Syed Muhammad Naquib al Attas (1980), Islamic education is not merely teaching (ta'lim), but rather ta'dīb, the instilling of manners and moral order that glorifies humans as Allah's caliphs on earth. It is these values of manners that then enliven the spirit of the archipelago's culture, making education a vehicle for shaping individuals who are knowledgeable, moral, and cultured.

The process of acculturation between Islam and local culture is not one-sided. Islam purifies local values from elements of polytheism, while local culture provides an aesthetic and expressive form for Islamic teachings. Traditions such as maulid, barzanji poetry, hadrah , nasyid, kasidah, and rituals such as tahlilan and selametan are the creative results of the Islamic community in the archipelago in articulating spiritual values within a local context (Daudy, 1992). This process distinguishes Islam in the archipelago from other regions, as it does not reject culture but embraces it with the values of tawhid ( ).

Islamic education is at the forefront of this dialectic. Institutions such as Islamic boarding schools in Java, surau in Minangkabau, and dayah in Aceh play a key role as centers of knowledge, spirituality, and culture. Great scholars such as Hamzah Fansuri, Nuruddin ar-Raniri, Abdurrauf Singkel, and Syekh Nawawi al Bantani integrated Middle Eastern scholarly traditions with the local context. They taught religious knowledge without abandoning cultural roots, creating harmony between orthodoxy and originality.

In the modern context, the relationship between Islamic education and the culture of the archipelago has become increasingly important to reexamine. Globalization, secularization, and technological disruption pose major challenges to the identity of Muslims in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. Education that is solely cognitive-oriented risks losing its spirit as a process of humanization. Therefore, Islamic education must return to its essence: integrating faith, knowledge, and culture into a single civilization.

The Islamic civilization of the Indonesian archipelago presents a peaceful, open, and wise face of civilization. It grew out of the wisdom of an agrarian-maritime society that loves balance. The principles of tawassuth (moderation), tawazun (balance), i'tidal (fairness), and tasamuh (tolerance) are not just slogans, but the lifeblood that sustains Islamic education in this region (Rahman, 2017). These values make Islam in the archipelago neither extreme nor harsh, but also not liberal; it is a civilized middle path.

## Research Method

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with literature review as the main method. The aim is to explore the values, practices, and patterns of integration between Islamic education and the culture of the archipelago, both in a historical context and in contemporary educational practice. The main sources of research come from classical Islamic literature (turats), historical documents on Islam in the Malay archipelago, the works of Nusantara scholars, and modern academic studies. Data analysis was conducted through content analysis, interpreting the meanings contained in texts, traditions, and educational policies.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Historical Traces of Islamic Education in the Archipelago

Islam emerged as a civilization that blended into the local culture. Islam spread peacefully through trade, marriage, and Sufi preaching. Mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and dayah became centers for the transmission of knowledge and socio-cultural values. The Kitab Kuning (yellow book)

became the main source of learning, but education was not separated from local traditions, such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, and traditional arts. Islamic education shaped the identity of the community without destroying its cultural roots. In Brunei Darussalam, Islamic education was also an integral part of the royal system. Ulama serve as advisors to the sultan, while madrasahs flourish with state support. The difference lies in stronger political support compared to Indonesia, but the principles of character building remain the same. Values such as tawassuth, tawazun, tasamuh, and i'tidal form the foundation of education that fosters social harmony amid ethnic and cultural diversity.

## 2. Islamization of Science and Education as a Cultural Process

Islamic education is a means of cultivating divine values. The Islamization of knowledge returns all knowledge to tawhid (al-Attas, 1977). The value of adab is taught in pesantren textbooks and applied in manners, respect for teachers, and local traditions such as selametan. Islam enriches culture, rather than erasing it, creating harmony between revelation and tradition.

## 3. The Role of Ulama and Traditional Educational Institutions

The Ulama of the Archipelago are not only teachers, but also spiritual guides and guardians of tradition. Examples: KH Hasyim Asy'ari in Indonesia and Pehin Datu Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama Dr. Haji Awang Abdul Aziz Juned in Brunei. Islamic boarding schools and religious schools serve as moral strongholds, teaching morals, character, and adaptation to modern times through science and technology based on Islamic ethics.

## 4. Islamic Education and National Identity

Islamic boarding schools and madrasas are places where national spirit is nurtured. Students are taught to love their homeland (hubbul wathan minal iman). Great scholars became the architects of social and religious nationalism ( ). In Brunei, the principle of Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB) reinforces identity, while in Indonesia, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika maintains plurality. Islamic education in the archipelago is adaptive to different models of statehood without losing its universal values.

## 5. Culture as a Medium for Islamic Education

Art, literature, and social rituals are means of instilling Islamic values. Examples: Hikayat Amir Hamzah, Syair Perahu, Serat Centhini: spiritual education through literature. Wayang kulit: a symbolic medium for preaching. The traditions of barzanji, marhabanan, and hadrah: aesthetic education that revives love for the Prophet ﷺ. In Brunei, Maulid Nabi and Tilawah Diraja demonstrate the integration of public piety and culture. Islamic education in the archipelago is harmonious with local expressions without erasing cultural identity.

## 6. Moderate Islam and the Challenges of Globalization

Islam Nusantara offers wasathiyah: a balance between tawhid and modern adaptation. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs' program (Moderasi Beragama, MBKM) and MIB in Brunei instill morals, ethics, and social loyalty. Islamic education becomes a moral bulwark against globalization and radicalism.

## 7. Digitalization and Transformation of Islamic Education

Islamic boarding schools and madrasas are now adopting e-learning, social media, and cyber da'wah. Digital literacy based on Islamic values is important to avoid disinformation and extremism. Digital fiqh and cyber ethics teach moral responsibility in the virtual world.

## 8. Integration of Aswaja Values

Aswaja values (tawassuth, tasamuh, tawazun, i'tidal) are applied in educational life. NU Islamic boarding schools serve as laboratories for Aswaja, while Brunei implements them through the Ministry of Islamic Affairs (MIB). Nusantara Islamic education is inclusive and respects cultural contexts without compromising religious beliefs.

## 9. The Relevance of Nusantara Islamic Education in the Modern Era

Islamic education in the archipelago offers a humanistic solution to violence in the name of religion, technological dehumanization, and social disintegration. Teachers become spiritual guides, learning to seek meaning in life, not just a career. This paradigm shapes a generation that is knowledgeable, noble, and socially-minded, presenting a friendly and dialogical face of Islam. Spiritual & Social Dhikr, prayer, qasidah, mutual cooperation, deliberation Tawhid, manners, solidarity, tolerance Moral guidance, social cohesion. Cultural & Nationalism Wayang, gamelan,

literature, civic education Creativity, identity, love for the homeland Cultural preservation, character building of citizens. Digital & Globalization E-learning, cyber da'wah, digital literacy Digital literacy, ethics, technological adaptation Maintaining the relevance of education and Islamic values in the global era

## Conclusion

Islamic education and the culture of the archipelago are two sides of the same coin that reinforce each other. Together, they build a distinctive Islamic civilization: gentle in its approach, firm in its principles, and open to change. Education becomes a sacred path where divine values are embodied in social action. Scholars and traditional educational institutions become guardians of values, while the younger generation becomes the successor to the mission of civilization.

In the era of globalization, Islamic education in the archipelago remains relevant, offering a balance between knowledge and morals, faith and culture, locality and universality. The legacy of Islamic civilization continues to live on through educational institutions, cultural traditions, and human values rooted in monotheism, as a roadmap to the future of a civilized Islamic civilization.

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