

Integration of Islamic Values and Local Wisdom of the Rimba – Jambi in Nusantara Character Education

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Abstract: This research examines the integration of Islamic values with the local wisdom of the Orang Rimba indigenous community as a model of character education in the framework of Islamic Nusantara. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the study employs literature review and textual analysis of Gunawan Ikhtiono's work, supported by secondary field data. The findings reveal that Islamic values—such as honesty, responsibility, simplicity, and compassion—align with Orang Rimba's life principles: self-awareness, adherence to custom, and harmony with nature. The synergy between Islam and local culture provides a strong foundation for strengthening national character education in line with the rahmatan lil 'alamin concept. This research highlights the significance of revitalizing Islamic-based local culture to create morally grounded, contextually aware, and culturally rooted generations.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Local Wisdom, Orang Rimba, Islamic 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 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). However, the rapid flow of globalization and modernization, which demands efficiency and material progress, has shifted the orientation of education to be more cognitive and pragmatic, while moral, spiritual, and cultural aspects are often marginalized (Tilaar, 2002). This condition has given rise to a multidimensional crisis reflected in the weakening of the character and identity of the nation's younger generation.

The Indonesian people truly possess a wealth of cultural and spiritual values that are deeply rooted in local traditions. One manifestation of this wealth 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 encompasses not only material progress, but also moral and humanitarian values (Azra, 2013). Islam in the archipelago grew through a process of cultural dialogue that emphasized the values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*—peaceful, tolerant Islam that respects differences (Majid, 1992). In this context, the revitalization of the Islamic civilization of the archipelago is important to reaffirm the identity of the Indonesian nation amid a global trend that tends to be homogeneous and materialistic.

The values of Islam Nusantara can be found in various local cultural practices that exist in indigenous communities. One interesting example is the Orang Rimba community in Jambi, which has a unique value system and educational traditions that are rich in spiritual meaning. Based on research by Gunawan Ikhtiono (2014), the Orang Rimba community instills character values in children through a natural social process based on life experiences, rather than through formal education. These values include self-awareness, submission to customs, preservation of nature, and literacy. These principles are in line with Islamic teachings on *ma'rifat al-nafs* (self-knowledge), *ta'dib* (formation of manners), and *khilafah fil ardh* (human responsibility as stewards of the earth).

The connection between Islamic values and the local wisdom of the Orang Rimba shows that there's huge potential to develop a contextual character education model that's rooted in the nation's culture but still in line with universal Islamic principles. This integration is a practical manifestation of the Islamic civilization of the Archipelago, namely the effort to ground Islamic teachings so that they are not merely a doctrine, but a living culture that educates, nurtures, and humanizes people (Langgulung, 1988).

However, there are a number of issues that underlie the importance of this study. First, there has been a degradation of character among the younger generation due to the weak internalization of moral and spiritual values in formal education. Second, the national education system still places too much emphasis on uniform cognitive outcomes, thereby failing to accommodate local cultural diversity and the values of Islam Nusantara. Third, the local wisdom of indigenous peoples, such as the educational values of the Orang Rimba, has not been optimally utilized as a source of character learning. Fourth, an integrative and contextual character education model is needed—one that is capable of combining Islamic values with local wisdom within the framework of Islam Nusantara civilization.

Studies on the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom have been the focus of a number of studies in the last two decades. Langgulung (1988) asserts that Islamic education is a process of developing human potential (*fitrah*) to shape individuals with good character, intelligence, and culture. Muhamimin and Abdul Mujib (1993) add that Islamic education is not only normative but also cultural—that is, the inheritance of cultural values based on monotheism and noble character. In a socio-cultural context, Geertz (1973) explains that Indonesian society has a pluralistic and syncretic style of Islam, in which Islamic values are internalized in cultural practices without losing their substance. This view is reinforced by Azra (2013), who states that Islam in Indonesia is *civilizational Islam*, namely an Islamic civilization that adapts and develops through interaction with local cultures. In line with this, Tilaar (2002) and Freire (2003) emphasize the importance of contextual education that favors the community and departs from the socio-cultural reality of the students.

Based on this framework, this study positions Islamic education as a dynamic system that is open to local values. By examining the educational practices of the Orang Rimba community, this study seeks to emphasize that Islamic values do not have to be conveyed in a formalistic manner, but can be internalized through the culture and traditions that exist within the community.

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.

This study has strong relevance to the development of a character education paradigm based on the Islamic civilization of the Indonesian archipelago. The integration of Islamic values and local wisdom is not only a form of cultural preservation, but also part of the process of a living, grounded, and civilized (*madani*) Islamic civilization. Through exploring the educational values of the Orang Rimba community, this study seeks to emphasize that Islam Nusantara is Islam that builds civilization—based on knowledge, manners, and humanity. Thus, the results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of culture-based Islamic education while enriching the scientific knowledge of character education in Indonesia.

Research Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm, which aims to understand social, cultural, and Islamic values holistically and contextually (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach was chosen because the focus of the research was not on quantitative measurement, but rather on interpreting the meaning behind the behavior, symbols, and value systems of the Orang Rimba indigenous community. The type of research used is library research with the support of secondary field data sourced from the work of Gunawan Ikhtiono (2014), KKI Warsi institution reports, and literature related to Islamic education, cultural anthropology, and Islam in the archipelago. The research location focused on the Orang Rimba community in Bukit Duabelas National Park, Jambi, which still maintains a traditional social system and education practices based on life experiences. The researcher acted as the main instrument (human instrument) with the help of secondary interview guides, documentary observation sheets, and value categorization cards. Data collection techniques included literature study, document analysis, indirect observation, and source triangulation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data analysis was conducted through content analysis and thematic analysis (Krippendorff, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006), which included the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Through this method, the study seeks to explore the integration of Islamic values and the local wisdom of the Orang Rimba community as the basis for developing a character education model within the framework of the Islamic civilization of the Indonesian archipelago.

Results and Discussion

1. General Findings of the Study

Based on the analysis of literature, field documents, and ethnographic studies, it was found that the value system of the Orang Rimba indigenous community is strongly aligned with Islamic educational values. Education in this community is not realized through formal institutions, but occurs naturally through socialization, role modeling, and social interaction rooted in moral, spiritual, and ecological values (Gunawan, 2014). These values form an experience-based educational pattern that fosters independent, disciplined, and responsible character.

Research findings show that the character education of the Orang Rimba is communal and ecological in nature—meaning that their education is not separate from their social life and natural environment. This is in line with the Islamic view of education as a process of *ta'dib* (formation of manners) and *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul), in which humans are formed to recognize themselves, respect others, and maintain balance with nature (Langgulung, 1988).

Table 1. Integration of Islamic Values and Local Wisdom in the Education System of the Orang Rimba

Aspect of Independence Values	Practices in the Culture of the Orang Rimba	Equivalents of Islamic Values	Contribution to Character Education
Obedience to customs Balance with nature	Children are trained to find food and build their own shelter from an early age	<i>Mas'uliyah</i> (individual responsibility)	Building strong and confident character Instilling moral discipline and social compliance
Simplicity in life		individual	Fostering ecological responsibility
Mutual cooperation	Obey the rules of the forest and the decisions of <i>the Tumenggung</i>	<i>Ta'dib</i> and <i>Ita'ah lil qiyadah</i> ('s obedience to the leader)	Avoiding greed and materialism Building solidarity and social empathy
	Do not cut down trees without customary permission, preserve the forest cycle	<i>Khilafah fil ardh</i> (the trust to manage the earth)	
	Take what you need from nature, do not hoard excessively	<i>Zuhud</i> and <i>Qana'ah</i>	
Working together in hunting and gathering		<i>Cooperation</i> and <i>Islamic Brotherhood</i>	

Source: Researcher data analysis (2025) adapted from Gunawan (2014) and KKI Warsi (2019).

The table shows that the values taught in the lives of the Orang Rimba not only serve a social function, but also have spiritual and pedagogical dimensions that are relevant to Islamic teachings. For example, the concept of *self-awareness* taught to Rimba children is in line with the teaching of *ma'rifat al-nafs* (knowing oneself as a servant of Allah). These values then form the basis for a character education model rooted in the *Islamic civilization of the archipelago*.

2. 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 have been sent to perfect noble character" (HR. Ahmad). This statement emphasizes that Islamic education aims to shape civilized personalities (*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 approach to Islam—that is, Islam that lives in the midst of society and respects the local cultural context.

3. Analysis of the Integration of Islamic Values and Local Wisdom

The results of 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 *Islamic civilization of the Archipelago*.

a. 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 interconnectedness of humans, nature, and God (Geertz, 1973). In the context of Islam, this reflects the value of *tauhid rububiyyah*— 's 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.

b. 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 character in students who care for others (Azra, 2013). Ideally, Islamic character education in the archipelago should emulate this mechanism by emphasizing collective experience and togetherness in the learning process.

c. 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 perspective to instill environmental ethics in the character education curriculum, in line with the concept of *eco-Islam* (Faruqi, 2015).

d. Moral Dimension

Morality in Rimba society is manifested in the form of adherence to customs and prohibitions against behavior that disrupts 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 archipelago needs to integrate elements of custom as a moral instrument that is deeply rooted and accepted by society.

e. Intellectual Dimension

Although the Rimba community does not yet have a strong formal literacy tradition, they emphasize the importance of *natural literacy*—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).

4. 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:

a. 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).

b. Cultural Dimension

These findings prove that local culture is not a barrier to Islam, but rather a medium for expressing Islamic values. Islam in the archipelago adapts through culture, as evidenced by the character education of the Orang Rimba, which is a tangible expression of Islamic values that are grounded in reality (Azra, 2013).

c. 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 (Freedom of Learning) curriculum development, which emphasizes the *Pancasila student profile* and moderate spirituality (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

5. Conceptual Model of Value Integration

Islamic Values = Trustworthiness – Asceticism – Brotherhood – Caliphate – Discipline

Local Values = Independence – Mutual Cooperation – Environmental Balance – Customary Compliance

Value Integration = Contextual character education based on Tamadun Islam Nusantara

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 developed from this model will produce a generation of complete human beings—people who are knowledgeable, civilized, and rooted in universal human values as conceived by Al-Attas (1993).

Conclusion

This study confirms that the integration of Islamic values with the local wisdom of the Orang Rimba indigenous community contributes significantly to the development of character education based on the Islamic civilization of the Indonesian archipelago. Values such as amanah (trustworthiness), ta'dib (good manners), zuhud (asceticism), and khilafah fil ardh (stewardship of the earth) are reflected in their daily lives through mutual cooperation, adherence to customs, and concern for nature. These findings show that Islamic education can grow contextually through local cultural practices without having to rely on formal systems. The integration of Islam and local wisdom enriches humanistic and pluralistic Islamic education theory, while also providing a basis for the development of a character curriculum that is relevant to the Indonesian socio-cultural context. Thus, the Nusantara Islamic education model not only shapes knowledgeable and civilized individuals, but also strengthens Islamic and Indonesian identity amid global dynamics.

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