



Religious Moderation in Sunan Kalijaga Da'wah

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas moderasi beragama yang diterapkan oleh Sunan Kalijaga dalam menyebarkan ajaran Islam di Jawa. Sebagai tokoh yang menggabungkan ajaran Islam dengan kearifan lokal, Sunan Kalijaga menggunakan seni dan budaya, seperti wayang, tembang Jawa, dan gamelan, sebagai medium dakwah. Pendekatan moderat ini mencerminkan toleransi dan inklusivitas, yang memungkinkan Islam diterima oleh masyarakat tanpa menimbulkan konflik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dengan sumber data utama dari karya-karya yang membahas Walisongo dan moderasi beragama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan moderat yang dilakukan Sunan Kalijaga relevan dengan upaya menjaga harmoni sosial dalam masyarakat multikultural dan tetap relevan untuk mengatasi tantangan ekstremisme agama di era modern.

Kata kunci: Moderasi Beragama, Dakwah Sunan Kalijaga.

Abstract

This research discusses the religious moderation applied by Sunan Kalijaga, one of the Wali Songo, in spreading Islam in Java. As a figure who combined Islamic teachings with local wisdom, Sunan Kalijaga used art and culture, such as wayang, Javanese songs, and gamelan, as a medium for da'wah. This moderate approach reflects tolerance and inclusiveness, which allows Islam to be accepted by the community without causing conflict. This research uses a qualitative method based on literature study with the main data source from works that discuss Walisongo and religious moderation. The results show that Sunan Kalijaga's moderate approach is relevant to efforts to maintain social harmony in a multicultural society and remains relevant to overcoming the challenges of religious extremism in the modern era.

Keywords: *Religious Moderation, Da'wah Sunan Kalijaga.*

Introduction

Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, as well as known as one of the most pluralistic countries in terms of culture, language, and religion. This diversity has its own uniqueness, strength, and plurality where a multicultural society is created where the intensity of interaction between human beings is quite high. However, from this plurality, if not addressed wisely, it will become a challenge and a threat of conflict,

division, and dispute that can disrupt social peace and security, (Susanti, 2022).

As a multicultural country, religious conflicts can arise and have great potential to occur in Indonesia. In the context of da'wah, namely the activity of conveying religious messages to the public, religious moderation is an essential foundation to avoid da'wah practices that are exclusive, provocative, and contrary to the spirit of national unity and unity, (Abd Aziz, 2020). History records that Sunan Kalijaga, one of the Wali Songo who played a central role in

the Islamization of Java, had demonstrated a moderate and inclusive model of da'wah long before this concept was formally articulated. Sunan Kalijaga, with his wisdom and socio-cultural sensitivity, was able to integrate Islamic values with local traditions and culture so that the process of spreading Islam in Java ran peacefully and continuously. He did not use confrontational methods in introducing Islamic teachings to the Javanese people who at that time still held strong Hindu-Buddhist traditions and animism.

Instead, Sunan Kalijaga chose to combine Islamic values with local wisdom and cultural traditions of the local community. This approach full of tolerance and wisdom is a reflection of the religious moderation that he applies in da'wah. He used art, such as puppets, gamelan, and Javanese songs as a medium for da'wah to spread Islamic messages. This not only makes it easier for the community to accept Islamic teachings, but also strengthens local cultural ties that have been ingrained in the daily life of the Javanese people.

Departing from this reality, this study aims to explore and analyze the concept of religious moderation in Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah. The focus of the study will be directed to the da'wah strategies and methods used by Sunan Kalijaga in embracing Javanese society which is still thick with Hindu-Buddhist nuances, as well as revealing the principles of religious moderation contained in it. Through this study, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of the da'wah model that upholds the values of tolerance, harmony, and brotherhood can be obtained, as well as reflect its relevance and application in the context of contemporary Indonesia.

Research Methods

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with the type of library research, data sources obtained from learning theories as primary sources and from scientific literature. This study examines religious moderation during the Sunan Kalijaga da'wah period. The research is carried out by the process of examining various scientific sources to obtain a constructive and broad understanding of scientific concepts, in-depth and comprehensive knowledge.

The data collection technique uses the documentary method by tracing primary and secondary data sources, (Suharsimi, Arikunto, 1998). The primary source of this research is the book *Atlas Walisongo* by Agus Sunyoto. The secondary sources are in the form of a book published by Araska entitled *Sunan Kalijaga Guru Suci Orang Javanese and the Sanctity and Order of Sunan Kalijaga*, journal articles, and research reports that discuss and examine the issue of Walisongo and religious moderation.

Results and Discussion

A. Religious Moderation

Religious moderation means a middle way of religion according to the meaning of moderation. With religious moderation, a person is not extreme and does not exaggerate when living his religious teachings. People who practice it are called moderates, (Ministry of Religion, 2019). Azyumardi Azra and Din Syamsuddin who explained that the term moderate Islam is equivalent to the term *ummatan wasaṭan* or *al-din al-wasaṭ*, as well as the opinion of Iranian scholar Ali Shariati and Muhammadiyah HAMKA figure *al-din al-wasaṭ* meaning that Islam is between Christian esoterism and Jewish exoterism, Burhani finally affirmed that the term *al-din*

al-waṣaṭ as understood in Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 143, must be understood as the center or heart, especially religion which is the center and heart of civilization, (Ahmad Najib, 2008).

In the context of Islam, moderation is known as *wasatiyyah*, which means middle way. This concept emphasizes the balance between the textual understanding of religious teachings and their application in social life. The principle of religious moderation includes three main elements: tolerance, openness to interreligious dialogue, and adaptation to the socio-cultural context of the community without sacrificing basic religious principles. Lukman Hakim himself defines religious moderation as a way of viewing, attitudes, and religious practices in common life by embodying the essence of religious teachings that protect human dignity and build the common good, based on the principles of fairness, balance, and obedience to the constitution as a national agreement, (Lukman Hakim, 2019).

The implementation of the concept of religious moderation has several indicators, namely *tawâzun* (balance), *i'tidâl* (straight and firm/truth and steadfastness), *tawassuth* (middle way), *musâwah* (equality or equality), *syûra* (deliberation), *tasâmuh* (tolerance), *aulawiyah* (prioritizing priority), *tathawwur wa ibtikâr* (dynamic and innovative), and *ishlâh* (reform), (Afrizal, 2015). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia provides indicators of religious moderation including four things, namely national commitment, tolerance attitude, non-violence attitude, and accommodating attitude to local culture, (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

This concept has strong relevance in the Islamic world, especially in the context of multicultural countries such as Indonesia. As the challenges to pluralism increase in the era of globalization, a moderate approach in *da'wah* is increasingly needed to maintain social harmony and prevent conflict. Sunan Kalijaga is considered one of the figures who applies this principle of moderation in his *da'wah*.

B. Sunan Kalijaga and Da'wah Strategy

1. Biography of Sunan Kalijaga

Sunan Kalijaga is a designation given to Raden Sahid, the son of Tumenggung Wilwatikta, the Regent of Tuban. Tumenggung Wilwatikta is a descendant of Ranggalawe, a patih from the Mojopahit Kingdom who is already a Muslim and changed his name to Raden Sahur, while his mother is named Dewi Nawangrum. This is the origin of Sunan Kalijaga is attributed based on Javanese stories, while stories originating from Arabia state that Sunan Kalijaga is a descendant from the family of the prophet Muhammad PBUH which based on the genealogy starts from the descendants of Abdul Muttalib (ancestor of the prophet Muhammad PBUH) who has a son Abbas, a son Abdul Wakhid, a son Mudzakir, a son Abdullah, a son of Madhra'uf, a son of Hasanudin to a son of Abdur Rakhim (Aria Teja, Regent of Tuban), son of Tumenggung Wilwatikta and ended up in Raden Sahid (Sunan Kalijaga) (Berg in Sofwan, 2000).

Sunan Kalijaga has the nickname Raden Sahid, when exactly Sunan Kalijaga was born also holds a mystery. He is estimated to have been born in the 1430s. At the time Sunan Kalijaga married Sunan Ampel's daughter, Sunan Kalijaga was estimated to be in his 20s. Sunan Ampel

who is estimated to have been born in 1401, when he married his daughter Sunan Kalijaga, was 50 years old. The age lineage of Sunan Ampel and Sunan Kalijaga is 30 years apart. so this is used as a peg to see the age of Sunan Kalijaga. Sunan Kalijaga's life span is estimated to reach more than 100 years.

Thus he experienced the end of the Majapahit rule (ending 1478), the Sultanate of Demak, the Sultanate of Cirebon, and Banten and even the Panjang Kingdom which was born in 1546 and the beginning of the presence of the Kingdom of Mataram under the leadership of Panembahan Senopati. In 1586, Sunan Kalijaga breathed his last at the age of 131. His body was buried in Kadilangu Village, which is an area of Demak Regency. The burial place of Sunan Kalijaga's body is located in the northeast of Bintoro City.

2. Sunan Kalijaga's Da'wah Strategy

Sunan Kalijaga is known as a figure who introduced Islamic teachings through da'wah methods that prioritize local wisdom. One of the main methods is the use of art and culture as a medium of da'wah, as explained below:

a. Using Puppets

Cultural acculturation is Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah strategy. Because at that time puppetry was a favorite thing for the residents, the acculturation he carried out was in the form of puppet art. Unlike puppet shows in general where the payment is made using money, Sunan Kalijaga applies rules or requirements for anyone who wants to see the puppet show must read the shahada sentence first before being allowed to enter, (Agus Sunyoto, 2018).

In addition, Sunan Kalijaga uses puppet figures and Javanese poetry as a means of da'wah. In the puppet story from the Hindu religious teachings, he tells the

story of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. He also featured people's favorite puppet figures in the story of dialogues about Sufism and moral character. To gain social acceptance, he uses stories and puppet characters as a vehicle for da'wah about the process of Islamization. He did not use the original story but replaced it with Islamic elements. Sunan Kalijaga included elements of moral education, divinity and community life, he also displayed people's favorite puppet figures in the story of dialogues about Sufism and morals. Because he understands very well, the audience faced is Hindus or Buddhists whose entire teachings are centered on spiritual teachings.

Sunan Kalijaga is a puppeteer of Wayang Purwa, who is famous as a puppeteer of very interesting puppets. Sunan Kalijaga invites all people to reduce shirk and be loyal to Islamic teachings. Through that means, Sunan Kalijaga succeeded in leveling Islam throughout Java.

b. Approaching the Community

Sunan Kalijaga achieves a cultural da'wah strategy by integrating and blending with all levels of society and groups of society. So, Sunan Kalijaga in community life does not attach importance to the origin and position of the community. Sunan Kalijaga's attitude and behavior made people at that time think "pretend to mix with bad people, pretend to mix with abangan people".

Therefore, Sunan Kalijaga accepted all Javanese. Sunan Kalijaga's goal is to get to know and get closer to the Javanese people. Thus, thanks to his acquaintance and closeness to the Javanese, Sunan Kalijaga aroused the sympathy and sympathy of the Javanese, which would later facilitate the process of Islamization of the Javanese. In addition, this road has made Sunan Kalijaga

famous among all classes and all groups of people in Java.

c. Acculturation, Turning Offerings into Selametan

One form of Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah activity is to replace offerings with selametan. In the past, before the entry of Islam into Indonesia around the 15th century, Javanese people had beliefs in animism and dynamism, which is an activity in the form of worship of supernatural spirits and ancestral spirits. The custom of the people at that time was to offer offerings in the form of flowers, bitter eggplant, incense, fruits, fried chicken, and boiled eggs. This custom is carried out as a form of worship and getting closer to offerings. Usually the offering tray is placed in the corner of the house, under the bed, at the foot of a large tree, at the intersection near the house, on the edge of the bridge. In practice, offerings should not be eaten and allowed to be eaten or rotted by animals, (Nur Amin, 1984).

In his da'wah, Sunan Kalijaga did not necessarily deny the activities that are usually carried out by the community. He inserts Islamic values into it or through the process of Islamization da'wah. The term "offering" was replaced by "selametan", from the origin of the Islamic word, which actually means "peace" and "happiness and prosperity". The purpose is changed, from being offered to supernatural spirits or gods, to alms in the form of food to the community who, in this case the needy, relatives, the poor, and orphans.

d. Lir-Ilir and Gundul-Baldul Pacul

Sound art is also a support for Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah, especially in the form of macapatan. The songs Lir-Ilir and Gundul-Gundul Pacul have a very big philosophical meaning for life, the essence of which is to

describe the majesty of Islamic teachings and contain life advice. Sunan Kalijaga's famous works such as lir-ilir and Gundul-Gundul Pacul.

e. Grebeg and Sekaten

To spread the teachings of Islam, Sunan Kalijaga also held a kind of celebration which the Javanese called "grebeg". There is a tradition that Sekaten comes from the word "sekati" which means "the name of two gamelan instruments". The idea of combining grebeg culture with sekaten arose when Sunan Kalijaga tried to invite the public to the mosque, which at that time coincided with the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, (Purwadi, 2014). In addition to playing gamelan music and dancing, this time Sunan Kalijaga also invited the community to decorate the mosque complex. At first, people were hesitant to come, but gradually they walked through the door and were ordered to say two shahadas, (Anif, 2014).

f. Gamelan

The gamelan is used by Sunan Kalijaga as a means of da'wah during performances and other events. In his performance, he created his own gamelan so that it could be accepted by the community. Also, gamelan is used to invite people to the mosque. This traditional musical instrument is also used in Grebeg and Sekaten events to attract the attention of the public, (Achmad, 2013).

g. Building a Mosque

Sunan Kalijaga and other guardians built the mosque not in the style of Arabic or Persian architecture. The architectural style applied in the construction of the mosque is the Javanese (Hindu-Buddhist) architectural style. The Javanese architectural style can be seen in the Demak Islam Cathedral whose roof is multi-storey

or stacked like a stepped punden and in the courtyard of the mosque there is a door as an entrance. Sunan Kalijaga was instrumental in establishing the first mosque in Java, namely the Demak Mosque. This mosque is still visited by Muslims from all over the archipelago. The mosque, which was founded in 1477 AD, became the most important religious center in Java and played an important role in efforts to complete Islamization throughout Java, including inland areas. (Budiono Hadi Sutrisno, 2010).

In addition, there are many works and elevations of Sunan Kalijaga, including the sokoguru of the Demak mosque made of scrolls, nagawilaga gamelan, honey guntur gamelan, nyai sekati gamelan, kyai sekati gamelan, puppet skin purwa, pious clothes, dhandanggula songs, garuda motif batik cloth and Islamic boarding school praise poems. It can be seen that in his mission to Islamize the archipelago, Sunan Kalijaga not only preached in the form of ideas and activities, but he built and created works in the form of objects or physical. The results of this work cannot be separated from the results of the acculturation carried out by him. He used culture as a link for Islamization.

Sunan Kalijaga uses many local symbols in his da'wah to make it easier for the public to accept the teachings of Islam. The most famous example is how he utilized gamelan and Javanese songs that are familiar to the public. The poems, which usually contain ethical teachings and wisdom, were modified by Sunan Kalijaga to convey Islamic values such as tawakal, patience, and humility.

Local symbols that existed before the arrival of Islam were not rejected, but adapted to new teachings. In this process, Sunan Kalijaga showed an inclusive and

dialogical attitude that prioritized harmonization between Islamic teachings and local culture. This approach shows how important it is to understand the cultural context in Islamic da'wah, which is also a reflection of the principle of religious moderation.

C. Religious Moderation in Sunan Kalijaga Da'wah

The concept of religious moderation (Islam wasathiyah) has been implemented by Walisongo, one of which is Sunan Kalijaga with the aim of facilitating the spread of Islamic teachings and helping Islam be accepted by the wider community. In addition, so that everyone recognizes that Islam is rahmatan lil 'alamin, regardless of religion, race, skin color, ethnicity, and lineage or descent. The Islamic teachings taught by Sunan Kalijaga are carried out little by little or tadrij (gradually) and are not applied directly or suddenly. The adaptive and inclusive approach in its da'wah shows a successful model in spreading Islamic teachings in a multicultural society.

One of the main characteristics of Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah is his attitude that is full of tolerance for cultural and religious differences. In spreading Islam, he did not demand that the Javanese people completely abandon their old traditions. Instead, he offered Islamic teachings as a new spiritual path that still respects cultural elements that are ingrained in people's lives. This approach shows that effective da'wah does not have to be confrontational or radical. On the other hand, by prioritizing tolerance and openness, religious teachings can be better accepted. The tolerance shown by Sunan Kalijaga is also in accordance with the principle of religious moderation, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between the enforcement of

religious principles and acceptance of the cultural diversity and traditions of the community.

1. The Relevance of Sunan Kalijaga's Approach in the Modern Era

Religious moderation shown by Sunan Kalijaga in his da'wah has strong relevance in the modern era. While many countries face challenges in the form of increasing religious extremism and radicalization, a moderate da'wah approach such as Sunan Kalijaga's can be an ideal model. By combining Islamic values with local culture and emphasizing an inclusive and tolerant attitude, Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah offers a solution to create harmony in the midst of differences. In the context of Indonesia, where religious and cultural pluralism is very strong, this tolerant and moderate approach to da'wah can be a way to minimize conflicts and promote harmony between religious communities. Through this study, it can be seen that Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah approach was not only successful in his time, but also had relevant values to be applied in the context of Islamic da'wah today.

Conclusion

Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah is a concrete example of religious moderation that was successfully applied in the social and cultural context of the Javanese people in the early days of the spread of Islam. With an approach that prioritizes local wisdom, cultural arts, and tolerance of local traditions, Sunan Kalijaga is able to spread the teachings of Islam without causing resistance or conflict with long-standing beliefs that are deeply rooted in the community. This moderate approach is evident from his da'wah method which does not impose drastic changes, but adapts local cultural symbols and practices to introduce

Islamic teachings. Through puppetry, gamelan, and Javanese songs, Sunan Kalijaga succeeded in inserting Islamic moral and spiritual values into people's daily lives, which slowly encouraged a peaceful and inclusive process of Islamization.

The religious moderation applied by Sunan Kalijaga shows that effective da'wah does not have to be radical or confrontational. On the other hand, da'wah that respects cultural and religious diversity can result in a broader and deeper acceptance of Islamic teachings. The principle of moderation carried out by Sunan Kalijaga is also relevant to be applied in Islamic da'wah in the modern era, where religious and cultural diversity is often a challenge in itself.

Thus, religious moderation in Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah not only provides valuable lessons about the importance of dialogue and tolerance in spreading Islamic teachings, but can also be a model for contemporary da'wah who want to maintain harmony in the midst of diversity. This approach can help prevent interreligious conflict and strengthen social peace, especially in multicultural countries such as Indonesia.

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