

# THE CONTINUITY OF WALISONGO'S ISLAMIC PROPAGATION (*DA'WAH*): Religious Faculties at The State Islamic Universities (*UIN*) in Indonesia

**Jejen Musfah**

Lecturer of Educational Management at Syarif Hidayatullah State  
Islamic University (*UIN*) of Jakarta

*jejen@uinjkt.ac.id*

## **Abstract :**

The decline in numbers of Muslims and the lack of interest in religious studies were ironic for the State Islamic Universities (*Universitas Islam Negeri* — *UIN*) which one of its universities uses the name *Walisongo* (i.e. nine medieval saints who spread Islam in Java). The Islamic propagation of *Walisongo* evidently aimed at the Islamization of the Javanese isle, production of '*ulama* cadres, and establishment of an Islamic society. The religious faculties at *UINs* which are the continuity of *Walisongo's* efforts in propagating the Islamic teachings have been lessening recently. The purpose of this research was to analyze the causes of students' low interest towards the religious faculties at *UINs*, and to relate them to the spirit of *Walisongo's* undertakings. This research was a literature research with a qualitative approach which did not hold quantitative data calculation. This research concluded that the existence of religious faculties at *UINs* was in line with the goal of *Walisongo* that was the spread of Islam through educational institutions. The entity of religious faculties that could be said as a continuation of *Walisongo's* struggle in propagating Islam comprised four faculties: Adab, Ushuluddin, Syari'ah, and Da'wah. For a special case at *UIN* of Jakarta, there is the Faculty of *Dirāsāt Islamiyyāh* cooperating with Al-Azhar

University in Cairo. Faculties of religiosity had their golden age during *LAIN* period, yet have been waning throughout *UIN* period. The decline was assessed by the indicator of the decreasing number of students, particularly, compared to the number of students enrolled in the secular faculties at *UINs*.

**Keywords:** *Walisongo, faculty and religious studies, Islamic propagation, UIN*

## Introduction

The number of Muslims ironically continues to decline in Indonesia. In the 80s, Muslims were around 90 percent; in 2000, they were 88.2 percent; and in 2010, they were 85.1 percent.<sup>1</sup> If the quantity of Muslims is decreasing, then, how are their qualities? Let alone how is their understanding of Islam? More firmly, how much are the Islamic scholars in Indonesia?

Related to the above questions, it is interesting to ponder over the data of religious faculty enrollees at *UIN*. The interest in religious studies at *UIN* is much lower than the general/secular studies.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the faculty of religious studies is a place to produce religious experts or scholars.

The decline in numbers of Muslims and the lack of interest in religious studies is an irony for *UIN*, i.e. one of whom uses the name *Walisongo*. *Walisongo's* struggle clearly aimed at Islamizing Javanese people who were previously animists or dynamists; producing the cadres of '*ulama*, and building Islamic characters. Nowadays, religious faculties at *UIN* which are the continuation of *Walisongo's* undertakings are facing a tough challenge.

The academic community of *UIN* should start looking back at the history of *Walisongo* to learn and apply their still relevant values to revive those less desirable religious faculties. Anita explained, "The

---

1. Abdullah Hamid. "Mengapa Jumlah Umat Islam di Indonesia Menurun?", *www.nu.or.id*, 08/12/2016; Erik Purnama Putra. "Persentase Umat Islam di Indonesia Jadi 85 Persen". *Republika.co.id*, 09/01/2016.

2. Erik Purnama Putra. "Persentase Umat Islam di Indonesia Jadi 85 Persen". *Republika.co.id*, 09/01/2016.

history of *Walisongo* has almost disappeared behind a colorful legend. However, in fact, many lessons and wisdom can be picked from their efforts in propagating Islam.”<sup>3</sup>

## Research Method

Looking at the implicit meaning of the title and the issues under study, this research was a literature research with a qualitative approach, i.e. a research that does not hold quantitative data calculations.<sup>4</sup>

There are several main keys in the literature (library) research with a qualitative approach, namely: (a) the researcher is the main instrument that will read the literature accurately; (b) the research is done descriptively, it means to describe in the form of words and pictures, not in the form of numbers; (c) it emphasized more on the process, not on the result, because literature is a work rich of interpretations; (d) the analysis is inductive; (e) the meaning is the main point.

The main or primary literature of this study were books, journal articles, and news discussing the propagation of *Walisongo* and the religious faculties of *UIN*. As a literature research, the method of data collection used was the method of documentation, i.e. data about the variables in the forms of books, journals, notes, and so forth.

While, the data analysis technique is descriptive analysis by using a set of logic that can be used to construct a number of concepts into propositions, hypotheses, postulates, axioms, assumptions, or to construct a theory.

Such way of thinking is perceptual thinking, which is used to perceive data that is relevant to the issues under study, and (b)

---

3. Dewi Evi Anita, "Walisongo: Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa: Suatu Kajian Pustaka". *Jurnal Wahana Akademika*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Oktober 2014, h. 264.

4. Lexy J. Moleong, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosda Karya, 1990, h. 2.

descriptive thinking, which is used to describe data systematically in accordance with the systematic discussion used in this study.<sup>5</sup>

## Findings and Discussion

The well-known figures of *Walisongo* revered by Javanese people are namely Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Raden Rahmat (*Sunan Ampel*), Makdum Ibrahim (*Sunan Bonang*), Raden Ainul Yaqin (*Sunan Giri*), Raden Qosim (*Sunan Drajat*), Raden Syahid (*Sunan Kalijogo*), Raden Umar Said (*Sunan Muria*), Ja'far Shodiq (*Sunan Kudus*), and Syekh Nurullah (*Sunan Gunung Jati*).<sup>6</sup>

While, the nomenclature of UIN that partly took the names of some *Walisongo*, namely 1) UIN *Syarif Hidayatullah*, Jakarta (2002); 2) UIN *Sunan Kalijaga*, Yogyakarta (2004); 3) UIN *Maulana Malik Ibrahim*, Malang (2004); 4) UIN *Sunan Gunung Djati*, Bandung (2005); 5) UIN *Alauddin*, Makassar (2005); UIN *Sultan Syarif Kasim*, Pekanbaru (2005); 7) UIN *Ar-Raniri*, Banda Aceh (2013); 8) UIN *Sunan Ampel*, Surabaya (2013); 9) UIN *Raden Fatah*, Palembang (2014); 10) UIN *Sumatera Utara*, Medan (2014); 11) UIN *Walisongo*, Semarang (2014); 12) UIN *Antasari*, Banjarmasin (2017); 13) UIN *Raden Intan*, Bandar Lampung (2017); and 14) UIN *Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin*, Serang (2017).

The spread of Islam in Java conducted by *Walisongo* could not be separated from the materials they preached. For instance, the contents of Sunan Bonang's *primbon* (i.e. a classic book usually containing metaphysical explanation of natural phenomena) teach the science of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), monotheism (*tanbih*), and *tashannuf* (i.e. Islamic ethics/morality and/or sometimes denote

---

5. Noeng Muhadjir. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, Yogyakarta: Rake Sarasin, 1998, h. 55.

6. Ashadi, "Dakwah Wali Songo: Pengaruhnya terhadap Perkembangan Perubahan Bentuk Arsitektur Mesjid di Jawa", *Jurnal Arsitektur NALARs*, Volume 12, No. 2, Juli 2013, h. 55.

Islamic mysticism as well).<sup>7</sup> These are in line with the goals of Islamic doctrines, namely to instill faith, law, and morals.<sup>8</sup>

While, Sultoni elaborated that the teachings of *tashawwuf* taught by *Walisongo* were consisted of *tashawwuf akhlaqī* and *tashawwuf falsafī*. Explicitly, their propagating methods were 1) preaching through education, institution, and wisdom (*al-hikmah*); 2) using wisdom and acculturation of Islamic teachings with local culture; and 3) acculturating the arts with the teachings of *tashawwuf*.<sup>9</sup>

The methods they used were, firstly, production and cultivation of the cadre of *‘ulama* or Islamic scholars as well as the spread of (Islamic) missionaries to various regions; secondly, propagation through marriage (family); thirdly, building a *pesantren* (a traditionally Islamic educational institution) originally initiated by Sheikh Maulana Malik Ibrahim as a model of Islamic education that took the form of monastic and boarding education used by priests and monks in teaching and learning; and fourth, developing Javanese culture. *Walisongo* indeed gave a major contribution to the Javanese culture. Fifth, their method of *da'wab* was providing facilities and infrastructure related to people's economic affairs. Sixth, in enhancing the Islamic propagation in Java, the *Walis* (or *awliya*’ in its Arabic plural form) also used political means to achieve their goals.<sup>10</sup>

While, Ashadi explained another perspective of *Walisongo*’s efforts. "The propagation of *Walisongo* that emphasized on the aspects of *‘aqīdab* (faith) and *syar‘ab* (laws) did not directly affect the construction of worship facilities, namely mosque. Sunan Ampel who adhered to the purity of religion (*Putiban* or ‘whitish school’) must compromise with the prevailing forms of old buildings — those were commonly affected by Hindu or Buddhist architecture. In further,

---

7. Muhammad Syamsu AS. *Ulama Pembawa Islam di Indonesia dan Sekitarnya*, Jakarta: PT. Lentera Basritama, 1999, h. 37-38.

8. M. Mansyur Amin. *Metode Dakwah Islam dan Beberapa Keputusan Pemerintah tentang Aktivitas Keagamaan*. Yogyakarta: Sumbangsih, 1980, h. 22-26.

9. Sultoni, "Nilai-nilai Ajaran Tasawuf Walisongo dan Perkembangannya di Nusantara". *Kabilah, jurnal of social community*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Desember 2016, h. 377.

10. Hatmansyah, "Strategi dan Metode Dakwah Walisongo", *Jurnal Al-Hiwar*, Vol. 03, No. 05, Januari-Juni, 2015, h. 16.

this method of compromise had then been followed by the Islamic community of Java in the future.”<sup>11</sup>

The elaboration of *Walisongo's* teachings and methods in *da'wah Islāmiyyah* above illustrates the effort of spreading and creating the cadres of *'ulama* at that time. *Tawhid* (faith), *fiqh* (laws), *tashawwuf*, and Islamic morals were the religious sciences taught by *Walisongo*, as in the context of *UIN*, they were embodied in the faculties and study programs (*Program Studi — Prodi*). Those faculties and programs are as follows: (1) the Faculty of Ushuluddin which has (a) Comparative Religion Study, (b) Al-Quran and Tafsīr Science, (c) Hadīts Science, (d) Islamic 'Aqīdah and Philosophy, and (e) Tashawwuf Science; (2) the Faculty of Syari'ah and Law which has some programs, such as (a) Family Law, (b) Islamic Jurisprudence (*Madzhab*) Comparative Study, (c) Islamic Criminal Law, (d) Islamic Economic Law, and (e) Legal Science; (3) the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Science which has some *prodis*, namely (a) Communication and Islamic Broadcasting, (b) Islamic Guidance and Counseling, (c) Da'wah Management, and (d) Development of Islamic Society; and (4) the Faculty of Adab who has (a) Arabic Language and Literature, Islamic History and Culture, and Translation (*Tarjamah*).

The fact showed a decline in numbers of students applying to religious faculties after *LAIN* turns into *UIN*, even before the change took place. In 2010, 8,845 enrollees on *UM-PTKIN* raised up to 53,637 in 2012. This demand continued to increase in 2013 reached about 57,448 enrollees. In 2015, *PTKIN* applicants soared to 79,643 of *SPAN* and *UMPTKIN*. While, in 2016, the number of *SPAN* enrollment penetrated 129,327 students, and of *UMPTKIN*, amounted to 79,768. From those numbers, students who passed the entrance test through *SPAN* were 63,601, and through *UMPTKIN*, 41,209 people. Unfortunately, this increasing interest in *PTKIN* was not followed by the interest in the religious studies. The minister of

---

11. Ashadi, "Dakwah Wali Songo: Pengaruhnya terhadap Perkembangan Perubahan Bentuk Arsitektur Mesjid di Jawa", *Jurnal Arsitektur NALARS*, Volume 12, No. 2, Juli 2013, h. 9.

religious affairs admitted sadly to note the information that the programs like Philosophy of Religion, Hadits Science, and Comparative Religious Study occupied the lowest positions.<sup>12</sup>

In 2016, Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar (*UIN Alauddin Makassar*) received 7,908 applicants through the Autonomous Entrance Test (*Ujian Masuk Mandiri — UMM*). Religious studies were not interesting for new student candidates, they were Comparative Religious Study, Religious Philosophy, Islamic Jurisprudence Comparative Study, and ‘Aqīdah Science. Out of 7,908 applicants, there were only 11 people who chose Comparative Religious Study, and so was Philosophy of Religion program chosen by 11 students. The Islamic Jurisprudence Comparative Study also accepted less enrollees with only 23 people. Furthermore, the next less desirable program is ‘Aqīdah Science with only 24 people and Community Development program by 30 applicants. Religious studies are inversely proportional to the general/ health program such as Pharmacy selected by 1,869 people and make the most favorite program in *UMM*.<sup>13</sup>

The decline of public interest in religious faculties is due to several factors. First, there were an increasing number of non-religious/general faculties. The general faculties that had previously existed in public universities only were then available at the State Islamic Higher Education (*Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri — PTKIN*), that is, 14 *UINs* in total, and were relatively spread throughout the provinces. The presence of *UIN* made the distance closer between alumni of *pesantren* and *madrasah* and the secular faculties which previously could be apparently inaccessible.

Secondly, there was the integration of general and religious sciences at *UINs*. The existence of general faculties at *UINs* became a special attraction for the Muslim community because they can get

---

12. Khoiron, "Minat Prodi Agama Turun, Menag: PTKIN Harus Berinovasi", <https://kemenag.go.id>, 01/02/2017, h. 4-5.

13. Hasrul, "Prodi Keagamaan Kurang Diminati Calon Maba di UIN Alauddin", <http://makassar.tribunnews.com>, 02/08/2016.

general knowledge or science on the one hand, and the religious science on the other hand. Religious subjects, approaches and atmosphere are distinctive features of non-religious faculties at *UINs* from those at the Public Universities (*Perguruan Tinggi Umum — PTU*). Some people expect their children could master the general science as well as understand the religious science (i.e. at least the procedures of worship and reading the Koran). In addition, *UIN* students can practice religious teachings through policy, environment, and habituation, even at secular faculties, such as congregational prayers, mandatory veiling, and dress code.

Thirdly, it was caused by the development of pragmatism and materialism among the people. Pursuing the study at the religious faculties guaranteed uncertain professions after graduation, provided little job opportunities, or, despite getting a job, the salary would be so low. Conversely, the general faculties could promise their graduates huge opportunities in getting a job and high salary. The professional certainty for the graduates was what had made today's society prefer general/non-religious rather than religious faculties.

The government was definitely proactive in response to the decline of the students at the religious faculties. Scholarship programs were awarded to those enrolled in religious faculties. The reason is clear, because these faculties were the birthplaces of '*ulama* cadres. Unexpectedly, the provision of scholarship did not significantly increase the interest of the people to study at the religious faculties. In spite of the scholarship had already been provided, the enrolment in secular faculties was still higher.

In addition, other programs that could overcome the tendency to decrease interest in religious faculties should also be measured. *Pesantren* and *madrrasah* which are the institutions of religious faculty student suppliers were to be invited to cooperate. The government should open career opportunities for the alumni of religious faculties, and socialize them to the community. In line with that, the religious faculties ought to develop possible professions for their graduates, and socialize them to the community as well.

## Conclusion

The existence of religious faculties at *UINs* was in line with *Walisongo's* goal of disseminating Islam through educational institutions. The entity of religious faculties can be said to be a continuation of the *Walisongo's* struggle that was spread into four faculties: Adab, Ushuluddin, Syari'ah, and Da'wah. *UIN* of Jakarta has an additional religious faculty, namely the Faculty of Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah which was in cooperation with Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. Religious faculties experienced a golden period during *LAIN*, but declined in *UIN* period. The decline was noted by the indicator of the number of students decreased, especially compared to the number of students applying to the general faculties. Therefore, *UINs'* leaders must think of strategic steps to attract students to religious studies and/or faculties. The government's scholarship program had not been able to effectively attract students. *UINs'* leaders have the responsibility to restore the glory of the religious faculties by increasing their number of students, especially, and more importantly the quality of their upcoming graduates.

## References

- Anita, Dewi Evi, "Walisongo: Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa: Suatu Kajian Pustaka". *Jurnal Wabana Akademika*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Oktober 2014, h. 243-266.
- Amin, M. Mansyur, 1980, *Metode Dakwah Islam dan Beberapa Keputusan Pemerintah tentang Aktivitas Keagamaan*. Yogyakarta: Sumbangsih.
- Ashadi, "Dakwah Wali Songo: Pengaruhnya terhadap Perkembangan Perubahan Bentuk Arsitektur Masjid di Jawa", *Jurnal Arsitektur NALARs*, Volume 12, No. 2, Juli 2013.
- Hamid, Abdullah. "Mengapa Jumlah Umat Islam di Indonesia Menurun?", [www.nu.or.id](http://www.nu.or.id), 08/12/2016.
- Hatmansyah, "Strategi dan Metode Dakwah Walisongo", *Jurnal Al-Hiwar*, Vol. 03, No. 05, Januari-Juni, 2015.

- Hasrul, “Prodi Keagamaan Kurang Diminati Calon Maba di UIN Alauddin”, <http://makassar.tribunnews.com>, 02/08/2016.
- Khoiron, “Minat Prodi Agama Turun, Menag: PTKIN Harus Berinovasi”, <https://kemenag.go.id>, 01/02/2017.
- Moleong, Lexy J., 1990, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosda Karya.
- Muhadjir, Noeng, 1998. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, Yogyakarta: Rake Sarasin.
- Putra, Erik Purnama. “Persentase Umat Islam di Indonesia Jadi 85 Persen”. [Republika.co.id](http://Republika.co.id), 09/01/2016.
- Syamsu AS, Muhammad, 1999, *Ulama Pembawa Islam di Indonesia dan Sekitarnya*, Jakarta: PT. Lentera Basritama.
- Sultoni, “Nilai-nilai Ajaran Tasawuf Walisongo dan Perkembangannya di Nusantara”. *Kabilah, jurnal of social community*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Desember 2016, h. 357-378.