

# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 6, Number 3, 1999



---

New Trends of Islamic Resurgence  
in Contemporary Malaysia: Sufi-Revivalism,  
Messianism, and Economic Activism  
**Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid**

---

The Transmission of *al-Manar's* Reformism  
to the Malay-Indonesian World:  
The Cases of *al-Imam* and *al-Munir*  
**Azyumardi Azra**

---

The Morphology of *Adat*: The Celebration  
of Islamic Holy Day in North Coast Java  
**A.G. Muhaimin**

# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies

Vol. 6, no. 3, 1999

---

## EDITORIAL BOARD:

*M. Quraish Shihab*  
*Taufik Abdullah*  
*Nur M. Fadhil Lubis*  
*M.C. Ricklefs*  
*Martin van Bruinessen*  
*John R. Bowen*  
*M. Atho Mudzhar*  
*M. Kamal Hasan*

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

*Azyumardi Azra*

## EDITORS

*Johan H. Meuleman*  
*Jajat Burhanuddin*  
*Fuad Jabali*  
*Oman Fathurahman*

## ASSISTANT TO THE EDITORS

*Heni Nuroni*

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ADVISOR

*Richard G. Kraince*

## ARABIC LANGUAGE ADVISOR

*Nursamad*

## COVER DESIGNER

*S. Prinika*

STUDIA ISLAMIKA (ISSN 0215-0492) is a journal published quarterly by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM), IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (STT DEPPEN No. 129/SK/DITJEN/PPG/STT/1976) and sponsored by the Department of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. It specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies, and is intended to communicate original researches and current issues on the subject. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines.

All articles published do not necessarily represent the views of the journal, or other institutions to which it is affiliated. They are solely the views of the authors. The articles contained in this journal have been refereed by the Board of Editors.



## Wali Songo Festival: Tracking Islamic Heritage and Building Islamic Brotherhood

**2**6 June to 25 July 1999 is of special significance for Indonesian Muslim. Located in Surabaya, East Java, the Wali Songo Festival, the greatest Islamic festival of the year, was held by the Muslim during that time. The Festival—which was officially opened by B.J. Habibie, then the Presiden of Indonesia—was aimed as an important media for the expression of Indonesian Islamic culture and civilization.

Thus the festival provided the visitors with the exhibition of many aspects of Islamic civilization achieved by the Indonesian Muslim, from archeological materials—such as the duplicated sword of the Prophet Muhammad, the gravestone of Sunan Ampel and Sunan Bonang (two of the nine Islamic preachers in Indonesia, Wali Songo

---

---

— to the intellectual heritage like the decorated *Qur'ân* in various forms and the Islamic books by the 'ulamâ' (Kitab Kuning). In addition, the festival also exhibited many products by the Muslim, such as calligraphy, rosaries (tasbîh), and turbans (peci).

However, one thing which is significantly important to note is the fact that the festival is directed mainly to remind the Indonesian Muslim with great contribution of Wali Songo (nine saints) in the spread and the development of Islam in Indonesia. The great heritage of Indonesian Islamic civilization, as appeared in the festival, is deeply rooted in the traditions of Wali Songo. It is on the basis of this consideration that the festival is named after the Wali Songo. In addition, the festival at the same time was directed towards presenting the rich and various forms of Islamic civilization in Indonesia.

\*\*\*

Indonesia, with its approximately seventeen thousand islands and four hundred or so ethnic and linguistic groups, is undoubtedly one of the most pluralistic societies in the world. Before the coming of Islam to the archipelago, Hinduism, Buddhism and various local animistic religions (agama suku murba) were the dominant belief systems, having established themselves centuries earlier. Indeed, Indonesia has always been receptive to foreign ideas and hospitable to foreign civilizations. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the case of Islam's arrival in the archipelago it did not supplant the existing religions by military conquest, but by penetration pacifique (peaceful penetration) mostly by traders who also doubled as missionaries. Scholars dealing with the history of the coming of Islam to the archipelago suggest different and various theories on the arrival of Islam to

---



The opening of Wali Songo Festival by B.J. Habibie, then the President of Indonesia.

*Indonesia as to how and when this came about. Written sources are of little help in arriving at a definite answer.*

*Whatever the origin or the time period of the coming of Islam to the archipelago, it cannot be separated from the maritime history of the Indian ocean, where quite a number of Muslim were involved in trade and commerce. It is possible that Muslims had been present in the archipelago since the earliest centuries of Islam which in turn become stable through intermarriage with indigenous women. This process of consolidation, however, must have been a slow one until finally Muslims became politically dominant in some parts of the archipelago in the thirteenth century.*

*The influence of trade, however, cannot have been the sole factor in popular conversion to Islam in the archipelago. Some scholars, for example, believe that sufi wanderers played a very significant role in this process of Islamization. Whatever, the disputes over its origins, there is one point scholars can agree upon: Islam was introduced either by traders or the sufis, or on many occasions*

---

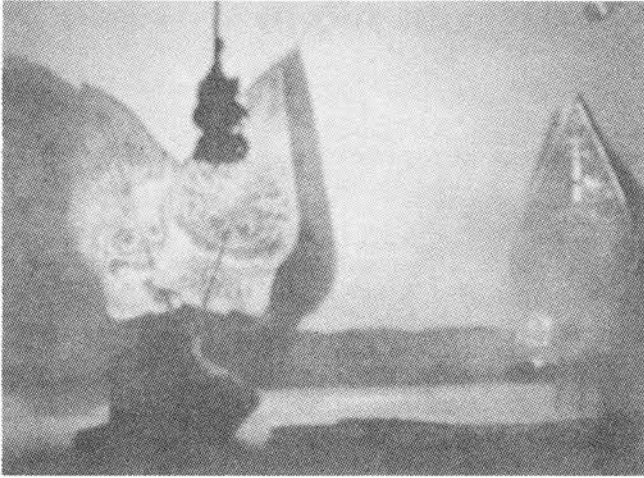
---

by Muslim traders who were also member of sufi orders.

In case of Java, sufism was the most visible form of Islam from the thirteenth century onward, and it was through sufi practices that Javanese noble families and a great number of people embraced this new coming religion. In this account, the wali songo usually associated with early Javanese sufism played pivotal roles in Islamizing Java because they were willing to accept and use elements of local culture in introducing new religion for Javanese community. The use of potential local culture is manifest as the wali songo absorbed and validated the wayang (shadow puppet-play) and gamelan as their effective tools in attracting Javanese into Islam.

The word wali songo itself is derived from two words: wali means 'saint' or pious person and songo in Javanese language means 'nine'. It is possible that there must have been more than nine saints in Java. However, in the term of old cultural and cosmological Hindu-Javanese belief, nine is the most important number. In this Hindu Javanese context, then, the nine saints may occupy the places of the nine guardian-deities who presided over the points of the compass in the cosmological system. Wali songo then in Javanese culture is accordingly nine prominent saints to name nine pious Muslim leaders: Maulana Malik Ibrahim known as Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Giri, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, Sunan Kalijaga and Sunan Gunungjati. It is worth noting that they were popularly called sunan rather than wali. Some suspect that this word probably stemmed from Javanese word "sesuhunan" meaning respected figure for their piety or from Arabic word "sunnah" referring their substantial roles in propagating the sunnah (tradition) of the Prophet Muhammad.

\*\*\*



Wayang Kulit (the shadow puppet), one of traditional Javanese theatre performed in the Wali Songo Festival.

*Therefore, the inauguration of Wali Songo Festival from 26 June to 25 July 1999 in Surabaya is of significance to trace back historical steps of how wali songo has introduced Islamic tenets into Javanese community kindly and peacefully. More importantly, it will be also beneficial in term of encompassing today's Indonesian community into moral wisdom that tempered with a common idealism as cordially practiced by those noble Javanese Muslim saints. This is urgently imperative as Fadel Muhammad, the chairman of this cultural festival notes, that heated socio-political condition manifested in the current fast growth of numerous political parties has unfortunately led the backdrop of seemingly unceasing disunity among Indonesian people. Through this festival, according to Fadel, it is hoped, therefore, that Indonesian Muslims in particular would adapt themselves in bringing universal values of religion and culture through which they would be able to find the strength, to conceive and to maintain truly spirituality, religious patterns of*

---

---

thought and feeling, which alone could withstand the onslaught of materialism.

This one-month festival included a number of events such as broadcasting films and launching newly published book on wali songo's steps in Islamizing Java as well as contests on reciting dzikr (God's remembrance) and shalawat (prophet's hagiography) among students of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools). An impressive exhibition featuring the artifacts of wali songo's life and duplicates of the Prophet's and Umar Ibn Khattab's swords (the second khalifah), was open to the public. Finally the Wali Songo Festival featured performance by several groups every evening that showcased the rich and various combination of traditional arts with Islamic ideology and practice. Thus many of performing groups were from pesantren (traditional Islamic educational institution) and some were from the professional troupes, and some were from projects. They were put together for the festival. With this tremendous activities, according to Achmad Zaini, one of local officers, regardless the political and religious attitudes, it is also hoped that this festival will disseminate the feeling of unity and togetherness into today's Indonesian society in large.

Ismatu Ropi