



Rethinking Islamization in Southeast Asia: Historical Dynamics, Distinction and Existence of Muslim

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Abstract

This article discusses the process of Islamization in Southeast Asia, theories based on historical evidence, and so on. Then how the characteristics of Islam in Southeast Asia, which of course, in terms of geography, culture, and the process of Islamization is, different from Islamization in other regions. The paper explains that Islamization in Southeast Asia was peaceful and wasatiyya brought by the preachers, Sufi, and Muslim merchants who traded in the strategic Southeast Asian region. Islam in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, is an Islam that is attached to local culture and is slightly arabized so that the natives can well accept it at that time. Although many western scholars argue that Islam in Southeast Asia is peripheral Islam because of its characteristics that are not like pure Islam in the Middle East, their arguments are not based on concrete evidence, so they need to be questioned more deeply. Therefore, the paper will discuss Islam in Southeast Asia, including its history, characteristics, and distinctions, and how western scholars perceive Southeast Asian Islam as peripheral.

Keywords: Islamization, Indonesia, Southeast Asia, Moderation

Introduction

Islam is rapidly spreading its influence worldwide, transcending geographical boundaries and making its mark even on remote islands in Southeast Asia and beyond the traditional Middle Eastern territories. This expansion is not solely attributed to forceful means but also through the peaceful propagation led by Sufis, traders, da'i, and various other emissaries of Islam. The unique introduction of Islam to Southeast Asia sets it apart, showcasing a distinctive approach that differs from the spread of Islam in other regions.

Ira Lapidus, in his insightful book, underscores the uniqueness of Southeast Asian Islamic culture, emphasizing that it "displays differentiating and distinctive elements and

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characters that are different from Islamic civilization in other places." This distinctive feature not only adds diversity to the global Islamic tapestry but also highlights the adaptability of Islam to different cultural contexts (Lapidus, 1995).

Furthermore, Southeast Asian Islamic culture exhibits a rich array of distinguishing traits that distinguish it from Islamic civilizations elsewhere. The cultural and physical characteristics of the Malay nation, heavily influenced by factors such as local geography, climate, and natural surroundings, give rise to a myriad of customs, patterns, lifestyles, and traditions. This amalgamation of factors contributes to the richness and uniqueness of Islamic practices in the region.

As inhabitants of Southeast Asia, it is crucial for Muslims to delve into the historical dynamics and characteristics of Islam specific to the region. Embracing the principles of Wasatiyya Islam becomes paramount, as it encapsulates the moderation and balance required to navigate the diverse cultural landscape of Southeast Asia while upholding the universal values of Islam. In doing so, we not only gain a deeper understanding of our own cultural and religious heritage but also contribute to the broader narrative of Islam's adaptability and universality on a global scale.

Literature Review

The first is a book written by Nathan and Kamali (2005). The main argument of the paper is that Islam in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, exhibits characteristics of peacefulness, moderation, flexibility, and integration with local culture. This form of Islam, known as Islam Nusantara or Wasatiyya Islam, emerges from the interaction, contextualization, and indigenization of universal Islam with the social, cultural, and literary realities of Indonesia. It is viewed as a distinct and empirical form of Islam that existed prior to Indonesian independence and is practiced by various Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Al-Washliyah, and others. The paper contends that while Islam in Southeast Asia may be geographically peripheral, its teachings and practices warrant critical examination and understanding (K.S Nathan, 2005).

The second is an article written by Aljunied (2019). The paper discusses the presence and spread of Islam in Southeast Asia, emphasizing its long history and the significant Muslim population in the region. It explores various factors contributing to the gradual spread of Islam, including the roles of traders, Sufi missionaries, scholars, rulers, and even non-Muslims. The paper also addresses different schools of Islamic jurisprudence and theological leanings present in Southeast Asia. It categorizes the venture of Islam in Southeast Asia into four successive phases: gradualist, populist, colonial-reformist, and assertive. The paper highlights the coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslims in the region and predicts the continued thriving of Islam as Southeast Asia becomes more globalized (Aljunied, 2019).

Lastly, there is Anthony Johns's paper from 1975, consisting of abstracts and excerpts from different sources. It covers topics such as the intellectual and spiritual tradition of Islam in Southeast Asia, the establishment of the Sultanate of Banten in 1526, the economic behavior

of Muslims in a specific time and place, and the importance of first-hand knowledge of Islamic doctrines and ideas. The paper also mentions the compilation of a biographical dictionary of religious teachers and the use of a religious text by Jawi students from the Malay lands. It emphasizes the need to understand the complexities and variations in the history of Islam in the region before the birth of Indonesia, cautioning against the misleading personification of Indonesia and the assumption of a homogeneous cultural identity (Johns, 1975).

From the literature reviews mentioned above, it is suggested that Islam was brought to Indonesia through peaceful and moderate means. Additionally, the articles criticize Western scholars who perceive Islam in Southeast Asia as peripheral due to its impure characteristics compared to the Middle East. Such perspectives are argued to lack strong evidence and therefore need to be reexamined.

Research Method

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, employing a combination of literature analysis and case studies to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of Islamization in Southeast Asia. The utilization of literature analysis serves as a foundational tool to comprehensively understand the historical and contemporary trajectories of Islam's dissemination in the region. This involves a meticulous examination of scholarly works, historical documents, and cultural narratives, providing valuable insights into the diverse manifestations and trajectories of Islamization across Southeast Asia.

In parallel, case studies form an integral component of this research, offering a nuanced exploration of the practical implementation and impact of Islamization concepts in the contemporary context of Southeast Asia. These case studies focus on specific instances and localized experiences, shedding light on how Islamic principles and practices are woven into the fabric of everyday life and governance in the region. Through this dual approach, the research aims to offer a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between historical legacies, cultural dynamics, and the contemporary manifestations of Islamization in Southeast Asia.

Result and Discussion

Geographical Setting of Southeast Asia

Geographically, Southeast Asia is separated between the maritime region, which includes Timor Leste, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, and the mainland, which includes Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand (Lapidus, 2000).

Southeast Asian Islam, according to Azyumardi Azra, is identical to the maritime Southeast Asian region, which encompasses Singapore, Malaysia, Southern Thailand (Pattani), Cambodia (Champa), Southern Philippines (Moro), and Malaysia, in addition to Indonesia's territory (Azra, 2017).

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Additionally, the Southeast Asian region is a significant location. Therefore it is understandable why many international traders pass through and even live in this area. This influences how quickly new civilizations spread throughout the region because: a) Southeast Asia is halfway between the East and the West. b) Southeast Asia is a diverse group of islands connected by the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea. c) There were numerous outstanding dynasties or rulers, such as those in Pattani, Brunei, Makasar, Batam, Cirebon, Malacca, Pasai, Perlak, Sriwijaya, and innumerable others. d) The meeting place of the Southwest and Northeast monsoons, bringing together traders on their travels (Zuhri, 1990).

The Arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia

According to Subagus in his book, historical records explain that "the first known people to live in Southeast Asia were the Dongson people in Vietnam." This is because they have settled in the region since approximately 5000 BC. Then followed by the arrival of the Thai people in the Thailand area around 3000 years BC. In comparison, the Malays are described as having settled in Southeast Asia around 2500 years BC. After the Dongson, Thai and Malay peoples arrived, then came migrants from South China, especially from the Yunan and Yangtse regions, followed by the arrival of Arabs, Indians, and then Europeans.

Particularly in the seventh and eighth centuries AD, some Arab and Persian Muslim migrants made transactions and trade trips to China. It is reported that there were four Muslims from the Arab region who visited China during the Tang dynasty under the leadership of Tai Sung (627-650). Some of them allegedly settled in Canton, a district of Guangzhou, and others in Chow, Coang Chow. Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas, one of the four men, was a companion of Muhammad. It is also believed that he built the Wa-Zhin-Zi mosque in Canto. This is a source of pride for Muslims in China because the Prophet's companions brought Islam directly from Arabia since the seventh century (Subagus, 2000).

Before Islam arrived in Southeast Asia, Hinduism - Buddhism was the dominant religion in the region. More specifically, the Southeast Asian region on the mainland is identical to Buddhism, while the average in the islands or maritime areas is Hinduism (Bakti, 2000).

Theories concerning Islam's arrival in Southeast Asia

First, the theory that Islam came to Southeast Asia from Arabia. This theory was discovered by John Crawford, a historian, who claimed that Islam arrived in the Asian region through trade activities at the time. This is supported by the findings of the Chinese records mentioned above, which show that Arab and Persian merchants came to the Chinese region, specifically in Canton, in 300 AD, then continued their trade to the Southeast Asian port area, specifically in the Malacca Strait due to its strategic existence for trade transactions. Furthermore, some Arab merchants decided to settle in Southeast Asia and establish an Arab village; some even married

native Southeast Asian women and spread Islam in the region. Crawford also stated that "during the waiting period, Arab traders used the monsoon winds to spread Islam (Supriyadi, 2008)."

This theory is supported by the following evidence: a) The existence of Chinese literature mentions that there was an Arab village in the Sumatra region since 625 AD. b) The relevance of literature between Southeast Asia and Arabia. c) The discovery of stories from various works that describe the process of Islamization of kings in Southeast Asia who have converted to Islam thanks to an Arab sheikh. One example is the saga of the king of Samudera Pasai, who was Islamized by a Sufi figure named Sheikh Ismail.

Second, the theory that Islam came to Southeast Asia from China. Eredia and Fatimi developed this theory. This theory is similar to Crawford's, but Eredia emphasizes that Chinese traders from Canton later spread Islam throughout Southeast Asia.

Meanwhile, Fatimi explained that many Canton Chinese merchants had relocated to the Southeast Asian region (Ibrahim, 1989). The following are some examples of evidence that Canton's people spread Islam in Southeast Asia: a) The discovery of an inscription in the form of a stone that reads "Terengganu," followed by the discovery of a tombstone inscribed with Qur'anic verses in Pekan, Pahang. b) The number of mosque buildings in Southeast Asia are similar to Chinese buildings, such as the shape of the mosque's roof, which is similar to a typical Chinese building. The same thing can be found in a mosque in Kelantan. Not only that, but some mosques in Java and Melaka have pagoda roofs, typical Chinese architecture.

Third, the theory that Islam came to Southeast Asia from Gujarat. Hurgronje developed this theory, claiming that Islam entered the Southeast Asian region through the services of people from Gujarat and the Coromandel coastal region, both of which are Indian territories (Muhammad Ibrahim, 1989). The following evidence supports this theory: a) The presence of several marble stones with the same architecture as Indian tombstones, such as the tombstone at King Malik's tomb in the Pasai region. b) Many aspects of Southeast Asian culture are similar to those of Indian culture.

Southeast Asia's Islamization and Development Routes

A. Trade Routes

Because of the "hectic trade traffic" from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries AD, the trade route became one of the channels of Islamization in Southeast Asia. This happens because the Southeast Asian region is regarded as strategic, causing Muslim merchants from Arabs, Persians, and even Indians to participate in trading in the Southeast Asian area in order to develop their merchandise.

Furthermore, several ports are interconnected, such as ports in Srilat Malacca, Indo-China, the Gulf of Siam, Makassar, and Maluku, which are oriented as meeting centers for ancient people's activities, one of which is buying and selling.

Not only that, but it appears that the contribution of Islamization caused by this trade activity was also profitable for kings and nobles who owned shares and multiple ships. As a result, the proceeds from trade profits are allocated for the spread of Islam in Southeast Asian

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lands, such as the construction of mosques and Islamic learning centers. Many Javanese rulers from among the Majapahit officials converted to Islam not only for political reasons but also for economic reasons influenced by Muslim merchants from Arabia (Yatim, 2000).

B. Marriage

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C. Politics

This is also related to the two factors mentioned above; when the king of a region decides to convert to Islam, most of his people follow suit, thereby aiding the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the fierce political conflict between Hindus and Buddhists in Indonesia forced Islam to enter the fray while spreading peaceful and friendly Islamic propagation.

D. Sufism

One of the factors for the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia was the intermediary of the Sufis as theosophical teachers who mixed with the teachings that had spread among the people. Not only that, but their expertise in healing physical and mental illnesses drew the attention of natives who wanted to learn more about Islam. Some of these Sufis married indigenous women.

Sufism, a mild and easy-to-understand form of Islam, becomes a path of Islamization that is not rigid, not necessarily changing non-Islamic teachings all at once, but with several stages so that Islam spreads without conflict and conflict. Sufis known for their contributions to the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia include Aceh's Hamzah Fansuri, Java's Wali-Sanga, Sheikh Lemah Abang, and others.

E. Education

Several facilities in the form of pesantren, or Islamic religious learning centers, that teach the ins and outs of religion were born as a result of teachers from Sufism, religious experts, and Islamic scholars. Santri, or students who study religion in pesantren, are

quarantined for a while and receive knowledge from religious experts such as preachers (Kyai) to explore Islam. After returning from the pesantren, the santri spread the knowledge of Islam to their respective hometowns, becoming ambassadors for the spread of Islamic propaganda in remote villages. Religious education is mediated not only through pesantren, but also through religious education taught in mosques, religious discussion centers, and so on.

F. Art

Art is a powerful tool for Islamization in Southeast Asia, particularly in the archipelago known as the art of wayang. A Sufi figure known as Sunan Kalijaga popularized Wayang art. He introduced Islamic values and norms to the indigenous people through wayang so that they recognize Islam and are interested in converting to Islam. Sunan Kalijaga did not ask for money from the audience during his wayang performances; he wanted to introduce Islam through the culture that existed in society. Not only wayang but also hikayat, babad, tambourine, Sinden song lyrics, carving, calligraphy, and other works aided the spread of Islam.

The Distinction of Islam in Southeast Asia

A. Characteristics of Islam in Southeast Asia

As previously stated, the historical arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia is supported by several theories and historical evidence. For this session, the speaker will briefly explain the distinction between Islam in Southeast Asia. It was mentioned at the beginning of the presentation that the entry of Islam in Southeast Asia has many unique characteristics that distinguish it from the spread of Islam in other regions. Not only that, but the peaceful spread of Islam in this region is unique, unlike in the Middle East, where the majority of the spread of Islam was carried out through military means due to political situations and so on.

When Islam arrived in Southeast Asia, the many islands and cultures developed their characteristics. As a result, many historians, such as Azyumardi Azra, argue that Islam in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, which has the most Muslims in the world, is a moderate Islam that is introduced peacefully and without violence. Not only that but the characteristics of Islam there are also known to be adaptable, as it can adapt to local culture without erasing the entire culture and adopting Middle Eastern culture (Ahmad, 2016).

It can be concluded that traders, Sufis, and religious experts from Muslim circles spreading Islam in the archipelago tend to be flexible and adaptable, so their da'wah is well received by the natives, especially in coastal areas, because it is a strategic location and readily accepts various foreigners who stop by the majority for trade. This is in accordance with Azyumardi Azra, who mentions that Islam in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, is "Flowery Islam or Islam that is diverse." He explained that the "face" of Islam in Indonesia is a smiling face, which is tolerant, adaptable, and accommodating. Islam in the archipelago is Islam that is inextricably linked to culture. This leads to openness, modernity, democracy, and other benefits (Azra, 2003).

Another distinguishing feature is that Islam in Southeast Asia is one of the world's largest Muslim-bearing regions, with little "Arabization," particularly in the "socio-cultural" pattern. This is also influenced by the peaceful manner in which Muslim merchants, Sufis, and

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preachers spread Islam in Indonesia. This is a characteristic to be proud of, in contrast to how Islamic propagation in the Middle East tends to be through war / military means (Azra, 2002).

B. Wasatiyya of Islam

One of Allah's greatest gifts to Muslims is to be "ummatan washatan / moderate people," "khiyaran" (the best people), and "adulan" (the wisest or fairest people). This is mentioned in His Word in Surah al-Baqarah verse 143, where it says: " *And so We have made you believers an upright community*"

Imam Fakhruddin al-Razi, a well-known exegete, interpreted this verse by explaining that the word "washatan" here means "just and chosen," implying that Muslims are a chosen and just people. In his tafsir, he explains that the word "*washathan*" here has several meanings that are nearly identical. The first is "washath," which means "just," as evidenced by the use of this word as "just" in several other verses, as well as hadith and classical Arabic *sha'ir - sha'ir*. The second meaning is "*washath*" (choice). However, al-Razi prefers the meaning of "choice" as the interpretation of the word "*washath*" because he believes it is the most appropriate.

Minister of Religious Affairs Tarmidzi Taher's work "Aspiring for the Middle Path Islam: Religious Harmony in Indonesia" explains another term for "*washath*" in Indonesia. This term is also mentioned in the works of world scholars such as "Muhammad Rasyid Ridla, Muhammad al-madani, Muhammad Syaltut, Yusuf al-Qardhawi, and Wahbah al-Zuhaili."

Indeed, da'wah taught in Islam is da'wah done well and with wisdom. This has also been mentioned in Surah al-Anbiya' verse 108, which reads, "And we did not send you (Muhammad) but as a mercy for all the worlds" in Surah al-Nahl verse 125, it is also stated that "Call (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and full of good lessons and argue with them in a good way too."

Nahdlatul Ulama, one of the major mass organizations in Indonesia, addresses "*washathan*" as a character of religious behavior that has two definitions: First, "*tawasuth*," which means a moderate attitude based on the principle of "middle way," and tries to avoid all forms of extreme behavior "*tatharruf*." Second, "*tawashuth*" means "*tasamuh*," or an attitude of tolerance, respect for differences, and social and cultural diversity in society. Third, "*tawazun*" refers to a balanced approach to worshipping Allah ("*al-hablu ila Allah*") and socializing with humans ("*al-hablu min al-nas*") in order to achieve harmony between one's relationship with the Almighty Creator and oneself with other Humans. The fourth word is "*i'tidal*," which means "fair (Syam, 2018)." This concept is supported not only by several verses and hadiths but also by the fact that Indonesia is a country with a diverse range of tribes, races, religions, and cultures, so the concept of Islam here coexists with local culture and respects differences.

Oman Fathurrahman and Azyumardi Azra also explained that Islam in Indonesia or Islam Nusantara is Islam that is "empirical and distinctive as a result of interaction, contextualization, indigenization, translation, vernacularization of universal Islam with social, cultural and literary realities in Indonesia." In other words, wasatiyya is caught between an

over-textualist attitude that leads to jihadist and radical attitudes and an over-rationalist, contextualist attitude that leads to hostile liberals.

In the social realm, Washathiyah Islam is regarded as a "large Islamic organization" that existed prior to the declaration of Indonesian independence in 1945. "Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Al-Washliyah, Perti, Mathla'ul Anwar, PUI, Persis, Nahdlatul Wathan, Al-Khairat, DIII, and many more" are among the organizations in question. These organizations are thought to use the "washathiyah" system not only in terms of ideology and religious understanding but also in their interactions with society, culture, and politics (Ahmad, 2016).

C. Peripheral Islam

Some western scholars regard Islam in the Archipelago as a peripheral Islam because it differs from the original form of Islam that originated in Arabia or the Middle East. They argue that this is because Islam is the least Arabized in the Archipelago. And, unlike the Middle East, where most people first encountered Islam, the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia is relatively new. As previously stated, Islam in the Archipelago is an Islam that can blend into the community without having to remove elements of local culture and apply all Arabic culture; however, some orientalists believe that Islam in the Archipelago is not pure Islam because it is mixed with local beliefs. Van Leur, Winsted, and Landon were among these orientalists.

In his book "Historiografi Islam Kontemporer," Azyumardi Azra quotes a western scholar named "Nikki Keddie," who refutes Van Leur's and others' arguments. Keddie conducted a direct research study in the Minangkabau region to compare Southeast Asian Islam and Middle Eastern Islam. Keddie mentions a tendency among non-Muslims and some Muslims to refer to Islam in Southeast Asia as peripheral because Islamization occurred later. Many even regard Islam as "bad, syncretic, and nominal" in Southeast Asia. In other words, Islam is only a thin layer beneath the layer of local culture in Southeast Asia. According to Keddie, most Minangkabau people still believe in the mystical and the "supernatural or superstitious," which is incompatible with Islamic teachings. This does not, however, imply that there is no Islam present, as evidenced by the fact that many mosques or surau are built as places of worship for Muslims as well as places to study religious knowledge.

Furthermore, the Indonesian people are the most significant contributor to the Saudi Arabian economy because of their annual contributions as pilgrims, and Indonesia is arguably the largest pilgrimage in the world. Although the distance between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia is great, it does not dampen their religious spirit. In contrast, they are powerful in mystical and supernatural things not only in Indonesia but also in the Middle East, particularly in North and East Africa. As a result, we cannot claim that Islam is good or bad in a given area based solely on the fallacious arguments presented by Van Leur and others. Some of the statements above suggest that Islam in Southeast Asia is considered peripheral in geographical terms; however, this peripheral claim must be tested critically and thoroughly in the context of religion or Islamic teachings. While the statement that Islam is geographically peripheral in Southeast Asia may be true, the statement that Islam is peripheral in terms of teachings needs to be

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critically tested (Azra, *Historiografi Islam Kontemporer – Wacana, Aktualis dan Aktor Sejarah*, 2002).

Maintaining the Existence of Muslims in Southeast Asia

A. Muslims In Myanmar

In general, there is a classification for the mention of Muslim groups in Myanmar based on ethnicity, including Burmese Muslims, Rohingya Muslims, Muslims of Indian descent, Zerbaday Muslims, and Huihuu (pathay) Muslims. The classification of these groups impacts their survival in Myanmar. Burmese Muslims are an indigenous Muslim group in Myanmar who have lived and occupied the old royal area around Mandalay and blended in with the Burmese community, most of whom are Buddhists. Further reading reveals that the existence of Burmese Muslims in Myanmar is similar to that of other ethnicities in Myanmar, in that they have rights and obligations as members of the Myanmar region (Freedom, 2019).

Myanmar recognizes not only the existence of Burmese Muslims but also Muslims who have a history of marriage with indigenous people, such as Zerbadi Muslims, who are long-term residents of Myanmar with mixed Indian blood and have gradually integrated into the dominant Burmese community. Furthermore, Huihui Muslims are recognized; they are known to have married into Burmese society and become part of the Burmese ethnic group.

On the other hand, the presence of Muslims of Indian descent is uncommon in Myanmar; if found, these Muslims have blended in with ethnic Burmese in Myanmar because this group is dynamic, making it easy to blend in with the indigenous people; another reason is that the majority of Indian Muslims are traders, making interaction with residents a daily activity. The coup carried out by General Ne Win in 1962 against the previous government, which recognized the Indian and Rohingya groups as Burmese tribes, was one of the reasons for the departure of Indian Muslims from Myanmar. However, after the coup, the policy towards the population began to change, requiring them to migrate to other places.

Myanmar society's bigotry toward ethnicity was fostered by the Myanmar government's "Emergency Immigration Law" in 1974 and the "Burmese Citizenship Law" in 1982. The "National Registration Certificate (NRC)" ethnic-based identity card system was introduced in 1974. This system had the unintended consequence of excluding the Rohingya from Myanmar's ethnic race. The Emergency Immigration Act of 1974 discriminated against them by making them eligible only for Foreign Registration cards; additionally, many schools and institutions do not recognize the NRC, leaving Rohingya out of education and employment opportunities.

The Rohingya issue has been ongoing for a long time, with all of their efforts to be recognized and granted the right to live in Northern Arakan, Myanmar. Even though these efforts had already suffered a setback in 1961, the seeds of hostility between different ethnicities remained until the policies discriminated against the Rohingya in recent years. When examined more closely, the problem of the Rohingya as a non-indigenous ethnicity is not one of quantity (minority and majority) but of a long history involving the economy and the role of the government, resulting in a protracted conflict that is difficult to end. The Rohingya conflict is unresolvable due to at least three major factors: first, a lack of majority-minority tolerance

in maintaining religious and ethnic relations; second, the state's tenuous relationship with minority communities; and third, a lack of state response to community conflicts (Gunasingham, 2019).

B. Muslims in Thailand

Thailand is a Southeast Asian country that is located between Australia and China. Buddhists constitute the vast majority of religious adherents in Thailand. Islam is a rapidly expanding minority religion. In general, Muslims in Thailand are of various ethnicities. They are dispersed throughout the country, with the exception of Malay Muslims who chose to settle in the Pattani region, Thailand's southernmost region, which later became the center of the Malay-Muslim community.

According to historical records, the Muslim community in Thailand comprises Muslims from various ethnic groups, including Thai Muslims who are Thai residents of Huihui and South Asian descent, and Muslim groups from Cam, Indonesia, and Persia (Raymond, 1980). These groups live in Bangkok, where they can blend in with the locals and adapt to their daily routines.

As in Myanmar, ethnic issues have been a contention for Thai Muslims throughout their history. Thailand seeks to expel ethnic Malay Muslims who refuse to conform to the principles of the Thai government, which seeks to make Thailand a secular state. On the other hand, it is well known that Malay Muslims continue to adhere to the Malaysian state's anti-secular ideology (Raymond, 1987).

The state's bigotry toward ethnicity, kings, and religion has gone far against Thailand's Pattani Muslim culture, particularly in applying Islamic law, which has become a hereditary rule of Thai society. The Pattani people face challenges in enforcing Islamic law in the face of Thai government intervention, particularly the application of civil law. Many of their efforts result in their opposition to government policies that are perceived to be less concerned with the value of tolerance for Pattani Muslims' rights (Horstmann, 2011).

In terms of Islamic law's level of development, the reality is inversely proportional to the Indonesian government, as the Indonesian government not only provides the 1945 Constitution to resolve religious conflicts but also creates KHI (Compilation of Islamic law) in Indonesia. Thailand can learn a lot from Indonesia about the concepts and efforts in synchronization between state and religion.

C. Muslims in Indonesia

Unlike in other Southeast Asian countries, most Indonesians are Muslims, making it the largest in the region. This phenomenon undoubtedly impacts the realization of Muslims' religious rights in Indonesia.

In addition to the quantity factor, Muslims in Indonesia are considered prosperous because of the Indonesian nation's character, which has always been known as a country rich in culture and culture. Under the auspices of Pancasila and the slogan "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," Indonesia is inhabited by various tribes, each with its distinct characteristics. The Indonesian

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people live in harmony, peace, and tolerance thanks to the values embodied in Pancasila (Berlin, 2019).

Inter-religious harmony exists in Indonesia. Although religious adherents occasionally disagree, the issue is quickly resolved so that it does not cause societal divisions. In this case, the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) plays a critical role as the front line in maintaining the stability of interpersonal relations. FKUB is a community-led forum facilitated by the Provincial / Regency / City Government and the Ministry of Religion to build, sustain, and empower religious communities for harmony and prosperity. The management of regional FKUBs is directly confirmed by a Governor/Regent/Mayor decree. FKUBs have been established in 34 provinces, 405 regencies, and 98 cities (Ragil, 2019).

In addition to FKUB, major Islamic organizations in Indonesia, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, promote interfaith tolerance. Tolerance, also known as *tasamuh*, is always practiced by all followers of these significant Islamic organizations (Prabowo, 2015). It is not surprising that one of Islam's *wasathiyah* teachings is deeply ingrained in Indonesian Muslims. This phenomenon inspires the rest of the world to learn about Indonesian Islam.

According to Romo Magnis, the NU and Muhammadiyah-promoted concept of Islamic moderation has kept Indonesia safe. The religious traditions of the two Islamic organizations can inspire any community worldwide, particularly Southeast Asia. As a result, the international community should recognize NU and Muhammadiyah.

Romo Magnis and Azyumardi Azra acknowledged the two organizations' contributions to the formation of Indonesian-style Islam. According to Azra, Indonesian Islam is unquestionably *Wasathiyah* Islam, an inclusive and accommodating Islam that is the least Arabized. There are four reasons why NU and Muhammadiyah are important in Indonesia, which are as follows: a) Following the democratic transition in 1998, NU and Muhammadiyah worked to strengthen social cohesion. When the wave of democracy swept through Indonesia, these two organizations played a critical role in preserving national unity. b) Pancasila, as a state ideology, is compatible with the concept of middle-ground Islam advocated by NU and Muhammadiyah. This is because most Indonesian Muslims believe that Pancasila is already Islamic and follows the fundamental teachings of Islam. c) Indonesian Muslims have historically favored the middle ground. Despite the fact that Islam is practiced by 87 percent of Indonesia's population, Islamic parties have never won major elections (Patria, 2019). d) Extremist groups will never win as long as NU and Muhammadiyah uphold the middle path and Pancasila.

Islamic moderatism has been played by many other moderate Islamic organizations throughout its history, including *al-Wasliyah*, *Mathla'ul Anwar*, PUI, *Persis*, *Nahdlatul Wathan*, *al-Khairat*, and others (Azra, 2010). However, the consistency of NU and Muhammadiyah, as well as the support of a large number of members, make them well-known in peace campaigns, both through education and social religion and even in international forums.

It is stated in some literature that the consistency of these two religious organizations in voicing Islamic moderation lasted for a long time, specifically since their involvement in formulating the fundamentals of the state at the beginning of independence, possibly even earlier. The most visible struggle is carried out through the educational institutions they oversee and the sociopolitical work they perform. As a result, these two Islamic organizations should be referred to as civil society institutions critical to the country's moderation (Miftahuddin, 2010).

NU's role as a mediator in Afghanistan peace efforts is one concrete example of the role of Indonesian Islamic organizations in world peace. On June 4 and 5, 2013, NU met with local clerics and leaders. As a result, they agreed to work together to strengthen the existing factions' unity and agreement. This certainly necessitates a tolerant attitude on their part. NU played an essential role on that occasion by introducing the principles of *tawasuth*, *tawazun*, and *tasamuh* (Niam, 2013).

Conclusion

This brief discussion shows numerous theories about how and when Islam first arrived in Southeast Asia. Among them are the theories of Islam's arrival in Southeast Asia from Arabia, China, and India / Gujarat. And in various ways, including trade, marriage, Sufism, Islamic preaching, education, politics, and art. Furthermore, the arrival of Islam in this region went through several stages, beginning with the presence of Muslim traders and ending with the formation of Islamic kingdoms. Each theory has evidence to back it up.

Because Islamization in Southeast Asia has its style and variety and is also far from the word violence, historians such as Azyumardi Azra agree that Islam in Southeast Asia has characteristics that are peaceful, moderate, flexible, and blend with local culture without reducing the sense of obedience to religion, particularly in the territory of Indonesia as the most significant Muslim bearer in Southeast Asia and even the world.

Islam in Indonesia or Islam Nusantara is Islam that is "empirical and distinctive as a result of interaction, contextualization, indigenization, translation, vernacularization of universal Islam with social, cultural and literary realities in Indonesia." In other words, *wasatiyya* is caught between an over-textualist attitude that leads to jihadist and radical attitudes and an over-rationalist, contextualist attitude that leads to hostile liberals.

In the social realm, *Wasatiyya* Islam is regarded as a "large Islamic organization" that existed prior to the declaration of Indonesian independence in 1945. "Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Al-Washliyah, Perti, Mathla'ul Anwar, PUI, Persis, Nahdlatul Wathan, Al-Khairat, DIII, and many more" are among the organizations in question. These organizations are thought to use the "washathiyah" system not only in terms of ideology and religious understanding but also in their interactions with society, culture, and politics.

Islam in Southeast Asia is considered peripheral in geographical terms may be correct. However, in the context of religion or Islamic teachings, this peripheral claim must be critically and thoroughly tested. While the statement that Islam is geographically peripheral in Southeast

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Asia may be true, the statement that Islam is peripheral in terms of teachings needs to be critically tested.

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