

# **The Role of Chinese Ethnic in Spread of Islam in Indonesia**

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**Abstract**-Islam as a religion in the world also has experienced the spread of up to China, recorded at the time of Caliph Uthman ibn Affan (651 M) commissioned Saad ibn Waqos to spread Islam through the Emperor Yong Hui diplomaasi in Guangzhou. Emperor Yong Hui permits the spread of Islam in China, so since the 7th century Islam has growed up in China. This is evidenced by the presence of the relics Huai Sheng Mosque of Guangzhou. Initially the spread of Islam in Indonesia is not a plan of the Ming Dynasty, the Ming Dynasty as the main objective is to conduct diplomacy with the countries of Asia and Africa. In carrying out diplomatic mission trip Ming Dynasty, led by Admiral Zheng He, always stopped in Indonesia up to 7 times, this is due to the geographical location of Indonesia is very strategic. In the 13th century, the condition of Indonesia as the world shipping transit lanes already crowded by merchants of various countries, this was made the Admiral Zheng He became interested in conducting diplomacy with the Majapahit Empire. Results of diplomacy with the Majapahit Empire was causing the acculturation, because at the time most of Indonesian population is Hindu and Buddhist. Acculturation which held by Zheng He in creating Muslim community of Chinese ethnic and providing agricultural education and carpentry by incorporating elements of religion as the way of spreading Islam.

**Key words:** Role, Chinese ethnic, Spread of Islam.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

One of the world's major religions is Islam. Islam came into existence at first in Mecca city of Saudi Arabia. It was taught by Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad was born in Mecca City, on 20th of April, 571 AD, and Muhammad began to spread Islam at the age of 40 years. There are two basic fundamentals of Islam; they are Al Qur'an and Al Hadiths. In Al Qur'an and Hadiths, Islam is mentioned as a universal religion or a religion that brings peace and safety of people around the world. So Islam was spread by Muhammad and his believers, from generation to generation until now to the entire world.<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad as the prophet got the task of preaching Islam to the people of the world. And his job of preaching Islam to the whole mankind started from the family, and all the people that were geographically close to him. Gradually, Islam was followed by the residents of Mecca and finally Islam started to flourish in Arab countries. When Muhammad passed away, Muslim's dissemination activities carried on by the Caliph, Umayyah Dynasty, Abbasiyah Dynasty, and the scholars who shared lead role as disseminators of Islam.

In the further development of Islam, many Chinese Muslims were involved in the spread of Islam across China Sea. Many Chinese people came to Southeast Asian countries: Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand and the Philippines to trade among them (countries) and the majority settling in the country that they went. Most of the merchants and the overseas Chinese Muslims, they started to spread Islam in the areas they were residing or doing business.

The role of the spreading of Islam in Indonesia, particularly very large role, was taken up by these Chinese merchants. So the historical record of the role of Chinese or Chinese ethnic Muslims is huge for Indonesia. The peak of the Chinese people participated instrumental role in spreading Islam

in Indonesia was during the reign of Emperor Yong Le of the Ming Dynasty who visited Indonesia seven times.

Before Islam came to Indonesia, the Indonesian population had converted to Hinduism, Buddhism, animism and dynamism. The process of introduction of Islam to Indonesia took place not through people revolution and war, but by way of evolution and where as varied as the trade route.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. CURRENT STUDIES

Sumanto Al Qurtuby in his study of "The Tao of Islam: Zheng He and the Legacy of Chinese Muslims in Pre - Modern Java" said that the role of ethnicity in China is huge in disseminating the views of Islam. The study was conducted by Sumanto from the presence of Chinese sources like local literature, oral traditions, as well as various ancient relics of Islam/ artifacts and other archaeological objects.<sup>3</sup> During 15th or 16th century, the influence of Chinese ethnicity in Java was strong. Carving the rocks in Jepara Mantingan, Ancient Mosques, Minarets of China Town Banten, door construction of the tomb of Sunan Giri in Gresik, Cirebon palace architecture and *Sunyaragi* Park, the construction of the mosque of Demak – especially in particular pillars of the mosque and its buffer chips emblem turtles *Sekayu* - construction mosque in Semarang or *Kali Angke* mosques and *Kebon Jeruk* mosque in Jakarta also shed light to the subject.

Kong Yuan Zhi in his "Goodwill Journey Mystery of the Archipelago (2011)" about Zheng He states that a Chinese man who came to Indonesia has many motives which was based on trade. After arrived Indonesia, most of them choose Indonesia to live. They lived among with the Indonesian people and are not discharged to Chinese. This because the Chinese ethnicity grewed in Indonesia. They lived with the natives of Indonesia. Use the contacts of trade, they talked about Islam and invited the people of Indonesia to embrace Islam, and continued assimilating them with the population of Indonesia.<sup>4</sup>

Liao Da Ke was gave a very clear testimony about the role of Chinese Ethnic spreading Islam in Indonesia. Role as spreaders Islamic names are very well known as Wali Songo (the nine spreader Islam there are 4 people who come from China ethnicity). After the successful of spread Islam, raised the first Islamic kingdom in Demak. The first king appointed was a Chinese ethnic named Raden Patah (Chinese name: Jin Bun).<sup>5</sup>

According to Wiwid Prasetyo in reviewing the history of Zheng He, it was said that his achievements were brilliant and admired by anyone who have studied about him. He came to Indonesia with a fraternal peace mission without any intention of war, violence and struggles for power. Zheng He provided moral inspiration for modern civilization. It always contained the human values which always taught in Islam as his religion foundation in life. He is an ideal example of a Muslim. He visited various regions of Asia and Africa with thousands of sailors and left no traces of colonialism.<sup>6</sup>

Mardiana Nur Hasanah, in his book "Theory of entry of Islam to Indonesia" stated that Islam came to the archipelago from China instead of the Middle East/ Arab and Gujarat/ India. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD many Muslims of Cantonese Chinese from southern China fled to Java, Kedah and Sumantra. After this occurred the crackdown population of Huan Chou Cantonese and other southern Chinese regions were predominantly Muslim.<sup>7</sup> They were trying to hold a political revolution against imperial China in the 9th century AD.

## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Theory of Religions

Humans in their life cannot be separated from the religious beliefs that exist in this world. There were some people who have an agnostic attitude and some are not embracing any religion. Religion is very important in human life because every day worships preserving religions in all aspects. There is no final word for religious activities. The worship places have no ending for worshipping rituals; religious social activities such as the birth ceremonials, death, and marriage.

There are numerous religions existing in this World. One religion is different with another religion. The most important difference of religion is rooted in theology and rituals. But the religious teachings were similar to the universal social teaching. Both help to teach about love, patience, help, charity, peace etc. So these similarities in each religion can build the existence of pluralism and tolerance.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2 Theory of Spread

The spread of religion is a part of the system and is done by all scholars of religion in this world. According to his profession and deployment framework of religion, the human race and the good that has not been religious. Target spread of those who have religious faiths to supplement the quantity of a religion, whereas for that has embraced a religion serves to increase the quality of faith.<sup>9</sup>

Religion deployment process includes several patterns, including (1) Orally, (2) Using writing, and (3) Use to change other people's behavior to conform to religious teachings.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.3 Theory of Roles

Role theory attempts to explain the interactions between individuals in organizations by focusing on the roles they play. Role behavior is influenced by role expectations for appropriate behavior in that position, and changes in role behavior occur through an iterative process of role sending and role receiving.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of role theory is social interaction organized by the community, which govern what and how the role of each person in the interaction. In that scenario had already written a role that has to be done, so there is a clear division of tasks. Complex jobs were given out, so that the work can be done systematically.

In 1936 Ralph Linton an anthropologist was developed a theory about the role of social interaction in terms describe the actors who play according to what is established by culture.<sup>12</sup> In accordance with this theory, the expectations of the role of a shared understanding will have lead to behave in everyday life. According to this theory a person engaged in an activity together each have different tasks and roles, but have the same goal. The sociologist named Glen Elder (1975) was helped to expand the use of role theory. The approach is called life-course. It explains that every community has hope for each member to have certain behaviors according to the categories that apply in the community.

### 3.4 Theory of Culture

According to Kathy S. Stolley, culture is a broad concept. Culture woke up from the whole idea or ideas. Culture includes all creations and humans when they interact. Culture shapes the way how people see the world. It's influenced on how to think, act, speak, ritual, law, how rituals, typical meal, clothing, and about bad or good.<sup>13</sup>

## 4. ANALYSIS

### 4.1 History of Islam in China

According to Chinese Muslims' traditional legendary accounts, Islam was first brought to China by Sa'd ibn abi Waqqas, who came to China for the third time at the head of an embassy sent by Uthman, the third Caliph, in 651, less than twenty years after the death of prophet Muhammad. The embassy was led by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqās, the maternal uncle of the prophet himself. Emperor Gaozong, the Tang emperor who received the envoy then ordered the construction of the Memorial mosque in Canton, the first mosque in the country, in memory of the prophet. Hui legends seem to confuse the 651 visit with the initiation of Islam as early as 616/17 by earlier visits of *Sahabat*.

Muslims in China have managed to practice their faith in China, sometimes against great odds, since the seventh century. Islam is one of the religions that is still officially recognized in China. China and Arab have a trade relations, Trade existed between pre-Islamic Arabia and China's South

Coast, and flourished when Arab maritime traders converted to Islam. It reached its peak under the Mongol Yuan Dynasty. China's long and interactive relationship with the various Steppe tribes and empires, through trade, war, subordination or domination paved the way for a large sustained Islamic community within China. Islamic influence came from the various steppe peoples who assimilated in Chinese culture. Muslims served as administrators, generals, and other leaders who were transferred to China from Persia and Central Asia to administer the empire under the Mongols.

#### **4.2 Period of Chinese Ethnic Arrivals to Indonesia in Spreading Islam**

Some experts classify the arrival of the Chinese into Indonesian territory in several categories. According to Purcell (1997) in his book *The Chinese in South East Asia*, Chinese migration to the region of Indonesia and Southeast Asia is divided into three phases:

- a. The first stage in Indonesia is not the arrival of Hindu and Buddhist and yet the establishment of the kingdom. The first period started from the beginning of the first century BC until the establishment of the Hindu kingdom and Buddha until the middle of the seventh century AD.
- b. The second phase, a period of Islam in Indonesia began late seventh century to the fifteenth century AD.
- c. The third stage, the inclusion of the nation so carried after Europeans arrived in Indonesia.

#### **4.3 Activities and Methods of Propagation of Chinese Ethnic in Indonesia Acculturation Patterns**

Islamic broadcasting activities undertaken by China is very diverse ethnically pure weight was very strong role. Broadly speaking, the activities undertaken by the spread of Islam Chinese ethnicity possessed the following pattern:

- a. Through trade, trade is something of activities that bring substantial financial benefits to be used to finance one's own life and to use the cost of the spread of Islam.
- b. Through marriage, marriage is the case because the propagator of Islam in Indonesia comes from a place far away and after a long stay in Indonesia.
- c. Through education, ethnicity China is very pleased to educate those who had converted to Islam and who have converted to Islam in a special place called boarding school and in education is done not only on the teachings of Islam, but also teach science skills as stock work.
- d. Using art, artistic merit is favored by the public because it has the role of entertaining and fun.

#### **4.4 Evidence of Islamic Festival Celebrations in Indonesia**

- a. Islamic New Year Celebration  
Islamic New Year celebration is a ritual activity has been known for the Java community since the reign of King Sultan Agung 1613-1645 AD. When the Indonesian people still follow the calendar year *Saka* system inherited from the Hindu tradition. Muharram as the beginning of the year is also regarded as a holy month, the moon is right for introspection to get closer to God.
- b. Sekaten Festival  
In the activities of this festival Sekaten, they had the gamelan performances at the Palace Complex Islam Mosque compound. Sekaten closely related to the process of Islamization in Java. Java community likes watching the gamelan. Gamelan is staged in sekaten event is named *Kyai Sekati*. Sekaten festival attracts people to watch the performances of gamelan music, closely and listen to the direction of the king as well as listen to the advice given by the scholars.
- c. Nyadran Festival  
Nyadran ceremony has a philosophical meaning to honor dead ancestors. Comity parents and ancestors who had died is by visiting ancestors' graves to pray for ancestors got a glorious place in heaven. Nyadran ceremony was praying, cleaning, and decorating graves and lay a wreath on the tomb. The perpetrators of the symbols choose nyadran is time for the ceremony before the coming of Ramadan, exactly one day before fasting.
- d. Ramadan and Eid Festival

After completion of fasting for a month, it's time for the celebration of the victory of Muslims, or better known as Eid Celebration. In celebration of Eid, Muslims visit to her parents' house to celebrate together, the young went to the old so there was activity to return home. The habit of visiting each of parents in this celebration aims to pray for each other and each other's virtual Greetings. All the new Islamic dress, everything fun and it's influenced by China is very strong in the presence of burning firecrackers. In Eid celebration there are special food called rice cake eating curry, *Kupat*, special side dish consisting of beef and chicken, as well as other specialty foods. The joy of children can be seen when eid celebration is coming because they contain *angpao* prize money or new clothes. Likewise, the poor get *zakat* money to meet their food needs and shop for Eid festival needs. On the feast that there should be no people are sad and hungry, everyone should be happy.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Indonesia already have a religion since BC is in the form of trust namely *Kapitayan*, and in the first century AD Hindu and Buddhist religions go to Indonesia, this can be proved by the discovery of various relics of the kingdom kingdoms in Indonesia is thick with the characteristic of Hinduism and Buddhism. As the development of Islam in Arabia, then in the 7th century Islam arrived in Indonesia through trade and is based on historical records, the arrival of Islam to Indonesia performed by actor's missionaries came from Arabia, Persia, India and China.

The role of Chinese ethnic in the spread of Islam in Indonesia, not of diplomatic relation between China and Indonesia, moreover the Chinese ethnic during the reign of the Ming Dynasty carrying trade mission and the spread of Islam. Indonesia has become the most strategic places in the spread of Islam because it is one of geographical location as a connecting line of trade. In the spread of Islam in Indonesia, the Ming Dynasty had a diplomatic relation between Asia and Africa and sent Zheng He to connect in the diplomacy.

Zheng He during his diplomatic journey to the Africa stopped in Indonesia and he has observed many similarities between Indonesia and China, and slowly recognized the possibility of spreading of Islam in Indonesia by ethnic Chinese. Acculturation walked over time, ranging from weddings to parties or work with the local population, the introduction of both written and visual arts by combining the stories of Hindu and Buddhist communities, but has the message of Islam in it. Besides, there was a combination of Chinese and local style architectural style in the Mosque. Acculturation methods that make the local community more interested to embrace Islam. Many similarities have been found from evidence & records: such as mosque architecture, Islamic forms of dresses and festivals and in many other cultural forms.

## NOTES

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