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Acculturation in Islam: Han Kitab and Islam Nusantara

Hirshi Anadza

Malang Islamic University, Indonesia E-mail: hirshi.anadza@unisma.ac.id

Rommel Utungga Pasopati

Independent Researcher, Indonesia E-mail: rommelpasopati@yahoo.com

Abstract

In China, Han Kitab is an example in how Chinese culture and Islam recognized each other. Ancient Chinese culture is not omitted but enriched by Islam. Confucianism and Islam are different in its each teaching but may crisscross philosophically. Both may come from different backgrounds but both teach people how to behave as individual and part of society. In Indonesia, Islam Nusantara is how Indonesian culture is understood through Islamic perspective. Islam which came later must face many ancient rituals or thoughts. It could not totally eliminate local culture but it can clear up bad aspect of local habits by teaching Islamic way of life. Both Han Kitab and Islam Nusantara shows that Islam did not come to apply such system by force, but it builds such apprehension through acculturation.

Di Cina, Han Kitab adalah contoh bagaimana budaya Cina dan Islam saling mengenal. Budaya Tiongkok kuno tidak dihilangkan tetapi diperkaya dengan Islam. Konfusianisme dan Islam berbeda dalam ajarannya masing-masing tetapi mungkin saling bersilangan secara filosofis. Keduanya mungkin berasal dari latar belakang yang berbeda tetapi keduanya mengajarkan orang bagaimana berperilaku sebagai individu dan bagian dari masyarakat. Di Indonesia, Islam Nusantara adalah bagaimana budaya Indonesia dipahami melalui perspektif Islam. Islam yang datang kemudian harus menghadapi banyak ritual atau pemikiran kuno. Hal ini tidak dapat menghilangkan budaya lokal secara total tetapi dapat membersihkan aspek buruk dari kebiasaan lokal dengan mengajarkan cara hidup Islami. Baik Han Kitab maupun Islam Nusantara menunjukkan bahwa Islam tidak datang untuk menerapkan sistem tersebut dengan paksa, tetapi membangun pemahaman tersebut melalui akulturasi.

Keywords: acculturation; culture; Han Kitab; Islam; Islam Nusantara

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another..." (QS. Al-Hujurat: 13)

Islam is not a monolithic religion. It is true that Islam has its own teachings and rules about many things but this religion is also understood through culture. This faith is believed vastly through human condition. The condition is closed or even rigid since religion is used as identities asserted by people. On the other hand, faith is also open and flexible since it must face various circumstances. These two conditions also come by in how Islam is spread and developed throughout the world. Islam could not be one of today's important religion if it stays out of the world. Islam is built and developed by walking with the world including its human identities and other natural beings.

Today, Islam is spread to the world. This religion is widely known in Asia although it may not be similar from Arabian culture as place were Islam was born. Islam is modified in how to face diverse culture. It does not force people to believe in it.² It realizes dialogues within by asserting what is its similarities in essential human condition and differences from other substance of culture. It may not come in instant synchronicity, but it actually shapes such uniqueness of Islam as its ongoing process.³ Islam is not allergic to culture since this religion is philosophically good for human beings. This faith is also not so closed and rigid because it is flexible to be applied to various cultural backgrounds.

This paper would like to assert similarities, differences and even its tensions of Han Kitab in China and Islam Nusantara in Indonesia. These two aspects show how Islam is widely accepted in many parts of the world especially Asia. Islam is recognized in China and Indonesia and the people admitted it too. There is Confucianism in China and Hinduism in Indonesia when Islam was spread to the areas. Islam face Chinese and Indonesian culture by not destroying, degrading, or even omitting but rather enriching them through the teachings. It indeed includes cultural aspects seen from acculturation ideas. The question is, how Han Kitab and Islam Nusantara are compared through cultural acculturation perspectives? China, Indonesia, and Islam are absolutely three different things. However, Han Kitab and Islam Nusantara prove advanced and peaceful interactions in between.

Radical differences do not always restrict people to interact with other values. By using qualitative method in reading and comparing various written sources, this writing puts in effort to explain how religion, especially Islam, may correlate with traditional culture. Identities may limit people but plural kind of identifications also open opportunities to compare, to assert, and even to understand many other culture as well.

Han Kitab as Chinese Islamic Tradition

As engaged with other culture and religions respectfully, Islam in China is related to Muslim community circumstances. It does not stand unilaterally but indeed interacts with other kind of cultural beings. There are teachers who speak about what is written in Holy Quran while their students interact with other people to apply the teachings. It is not quite separated between teachers and students since Islamic education build quite strong bonds among them. The condition also spread outside the community to wider society. People who believe in Islam realize their deeds to the society while other people react to them as well.

Han Kitab itself was written in 18th century in China. There are many persons who gave abundant contributions to this book. Relatively, there are three main writers who deeply concerned in Islam and China relations. They are Wang Daiyu, Ma Zhu, and Liu Zhi. Wang Daiyu is a renowned Islamic scholar and one of the earliest of the Han Kitab writers, with his first text appearing in 1642.6 His first writing, the Zhengjiao zhenquan, explained Islam's teachings about God, the universe, and the human soul. He also positioned Islamic teachings within the broader context of Confucianism. Confucianism stated two man concepts: the Great Ultimate which is pure undifferentiated being and Non-Ultimate which is situation beyond any concepts. The concepts then relate to single reality of the universe in the energy of qi as stated in yin and yang.⁷ Such cosmology is used to express Islam by Wang Daiyu. He stated that Great Ultimate is Divinity of Allah while Non Ultimate is Allah's Divine Essence. These aspects then made such creation to the universe by Allah himself. There is also Human Ultimate which means truth and righteousness in humanity. In Islam, it means shari'a which direct people to act right known in clean and pure heart and desire.

Wang Daiyu expressed Human Ultimate as seen in Prophet Muhammad himself. He stated Him as Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*), as first espoused by Ibn 'Arabī (1165-1240).8 The *shari'a* or the principle of Islam is meant as the Prophet himself too. Wang Daiyu tried to make Islam understood by Chinese people as at that time anything foreign remained suspicious. His main ideas to shape such cosmological ideas between Islam and Neo-Confucianism. Anything that is foreign is not totally foreign at all since every human being has quite similarities in thinking. Islam which states Allah and His Prophet Muhammad in *tauhid* also can be understood in the frame of Confucianism. Divine being and its creations are known in every belief as there must be Being above anything in this world.

Ma Zhu lived around 1644 and had participated to spread to non-Muslim Chinese. He translated many Islam texts to Chinese language while still thought about whole aspects of divinity of Allah. He shared almost similar thinking with Wang Daiyu but he stated that Allah is above both Great Ultimate and Non Ultimate. Allah is above all and those two concepts are such manifestations of divine energy of Allah. Indeed the two concepts cannot be separated from Allah. and His creations as well. Allah is not like any creations since He is above everything but he is also everything since He is manifested in everything. He proposed Prophet Muhammad as The Main Sage of all Chinese culture. The Prophet is the culmination of all beings. Besides, any Confucian social hierarchy is also important for Islam since there is no crucial differences within in essence. Even though Muslim and Chinese are different as also seen from Islam and Confucianism, its moral order to do good deeds are important to share those two teachings. Ma Zhu still differentiated between Islam and Confucianism, but the cores of those two things remained equal. This understanding also became his perspective to view relations between Muslim and Chinese. He saw no differences between them since both believed in Supreme Being, moral obligations, and God and His creations' relations.

Ma Zhu's stated that it is quite the same in how to be good Muslim and good Confucian. Both Islam and Confucianism have such moral orders which are necessary to guide human deeds. For example, it is guite the same how parents, brothers, and sisters should be appreciated and put more attention between Islam and Confucianism. He also proposed former thought to construct such bridge beside merely expose contradictions between and Confucianism. He rejected crucial differences between those two teachings since there was political separation between Muslim and Non-Muslim. Any harmonic interaction never replace main principle of those beliefs. He did not try to prioritize Islam by undermining Confucianism. Instead, he wrote that his philosophical understanding widened Islam as a neutral teaching which is actually non- threatening to Confucianism itself. He emphasized equality between them so that social harmony may be built above mutual understanding between both teachings.

Liu Zi is the most eminent and educated Muslim at that time. He studied Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism or even Christianity to enrich his understanding about Islam. His background of Chinese culture saw Islam is no different than any religion since every religious principle is under the same sky. Every religion has its universal truth which may be different from another. However, since social ideas mirror many people's interactions, a religion has to face another too. He thought that there must be a bridge between Islam and Confucianism and his effort is to reconcile both of them. ¹⁰ He did not synthesize both teachings into one mere concept but his understanding would like to find

any structural similarities between them. Significantly, Liu Zhi stated the *sharī'a*, (the way), the *ṭarīqa* (the teachings) and the *ḥaqīqa* (the Reality of God) are quite parallel with traditional Chinese thought in the *dao* (theoretical underpinning), the *jiao* (the concrete of the *dao*) and the Sage. ¹¹ As conceptual things, the former ideas are different, but its hierarchies and steps towards Supreme Being could be taken in the same understanding. Liu Zhi was attempting to express Islam within a traditional Chinese intellectual framework. He did not explain 'what' and 'how' but he proposed understanding of 'why'. He did not get trapped in dry ritualism of both teachings, but he deepened understanding of inner spiritual meanings. As he spoke of Islam, he illuminated Confucianism itself.

As Liu Zhi avoided dry ritualism, he did not state about strict law of Islam. He asserted wide flexibilities in Islam as seen in his works of *fiqh*, *ibādah*, and *adab*.¹² Those three points are to be understood by practice, not by applying them strictly in wider communities. Every *fiqh* and *ibadah* should always be considered in *adab* so that it did not disturb other people. Ethics is why every deed must be applied within social orders. Islam does not put totality above all but this religion can walk together with any social aspect in any community. His cultural aspect is to expose Islam as spirit not as fixed law but accommodation of many different lanes of thinkings.

Those three main people who wrote in Han Kitab thought of two main ideas. First is about essence of spiritual teaching between Islam and Confucianism. It is incorrect to say that their ideas are to combine the two religions. They are Muslims who stated their faith in front of other religious teaching (Confucianism) and people (Chinese). They tried to shape understanding of Islam and Confucianism, in reverse, and bridge between them. 13 Second is that they explained in Han Kitab such ideas to build moral order and social harmony between Muslim and others. 14 They realized that Chinese people are still Chinese whatever they believed in. They avoided literalism by showing essences in comparisons between Islam and Confucianism. They did not neglect essence of Islam but they proposed flexibilities in Islamic practice. Those three writers emphasized philosophical, practical, and cultural thoughts of Islam and Confucianism. What they wrote and put in the Han Kitab, in effort is such moderation in Islam towards Confucianism.

Islam Nusantara as Cultural Understanding

The concept of Islam Nusantara was firstly emerged in 33rd Muktamar of Nadhlatul Ulama in Jombang, which then became such public debate especially in Indonesia. This debate is due to inadequate academic research of Islam Nusantara especially in public matters. Different from Han Kitab which was written in such book, Islam Nusantara was not followed with any scientific texts. Even Azhar Ibrahim from National University of Singapore said that although Islam Nusantara had big potential to contribute in Islam, but the concept has not built such rational philosophical ideas or produced higher Islamic academic necessity. Moreover, Islam Nusantara could make such pros and contras among Muslims in Indonesia and throughout the world. Therefore, deeper textual researches are needed to complete or to resolve wide understanding of Islam Nusantara.

Professor of Islamic philology of Jakarta State Islamic University, Oman Fathurrahman, asserted that Islam Nusantara is result of interaction, contextualization, indigenization, translation, and vernacularization of universal Islam with literature, cultural, and social realities of Indonesia. ¹⁶ In other words, Islam Nusantara is said by Zainul Milal as a synergy of Islamic teachings and local cultures in Nusantara ¹⁷ that is Indonesia itself. ¹⁸ Therefore the main values of Islam Nusantara are relations between Islam and cultural realities of Nusantara or Indonesia. Islam Nusantara then is necessary to be seen as such implementation of popular Islamic principle that is *al-Islām shālih li kulli zamān wa makān* which means Islam is a religion that is suitable with any era and place, which means that Islam is such faith that and can cope with any situations but not Islam that change them.

Seen from Arabic grammatical structure, Islam Nusantara according to K. H. Afifuddin Muhajir is *tarkib idhafy* that contains three meanings. First, *fii* means inside; Islam that is understood and practiced by Indonesian people so that became one with Indonesian community life. Second, *bi* means territory; Islam that is understood within Nusantara or Indonesian geographical situations. Third, *lii* means for; Islam Nusantara is understood as subject and object relations as Islam Nusantara is such implementation of Islamic teachings intended for Indonesian people. From the explanation of the meanings, it could be asserted that Islam Nusantara relates only to Muslim in Nusantara, not for other Muslim outside Nusantara, even though it may be suitable as a nice reference for other regions. The explanation is also in line with statement of Nurcholis Madjid who said that Islam is a religion which encompass many races and nationalities in almost every climate and geographical features. The above arguments then made understanding of Islam Nusantara from cultural aspect could be said as important illustration of

Islam Nusantara comprehensively.

From aspect of culture, Islam Nusantara has a peculiar characteristic that this teaching emphasize on sympathetic culture in understanding Islam. That means Islam Nusantara does not destroy, disturb, or even replace native culture but in reverse. Islam Nusantara embraces, appreciates, or preserves local culture. 21 In fact, formulation of religious practice or ibadah in Islam Nusantara still consider local culture. Tahlil is an example of implementation of ibadah dzikr combined with funeral ceremony which in Javanese culture is stated as kesripahan or lelayu. In Javanese culture, there is funeral prayers in following days and years; mitung dina (seven days), matang puluh (forty days), nyatus (one hundred days), mendhak sepisan (commemoration every year), etc. By Islam Nusantara, this ceremonies are accompanied with Islamic dzikr named as tahlilan. Some Islamic law concepts also consider local culture. Another example is, M. Hasbi Ash-Shiddiegy stated that shaking hands between men and women without any relationship (without mahrom) is allowed as far as it does not bring in any problem to Indonesian culture.²² From those two examples, culture as such important position in Islamic habitual doings by Indonesian Muslim both from practical and law definition sides.

However, even there are some adjustments as explained above, Islam Nusantara does not leave behind principle core of Islam that is Islam, Iman, and Ihsan. Those are based on *hadits* narrated by Umar bin Khattab²³ that explains about Iman, Islam, and Ihsan then closed with a sentence, "Actually he is Jibril who comes to you and teaches you about your religion." Main principle of Islam which contains five points, Iman which shows six points, and Ihsan which explains human and Allah relations, are never replaced with anything else in Islam Nusantara. To complete it, K. H. Abdul Moqsith Ghazali said that Islam Nusantara does not even touch any *aqidah* aspects and any *ibadah* that relates directly to Allah.²⁴ With such above explanations, Islam Nusantara then is an implementation of such principle *Ahl Sunnah Wal Jamaah* which is situated in between or *tawassuth* that is between fundamentalism and secularism or liberalism. In other words, Islam Nusantara prioritizes fundamental aspects of Islam but also has secular or liberal consideration listed in local culture as far as its practice does not contradict with those principles in Islam.

Islamic Values Presence in China and Indonesia

Incoming Islam to China and Indonesia have similarities that is through trade route. He incomings can be said as one of determinants of Islamic faces in those regions. Both Han Kitab and Islam Nusantara are two products resulted from crisscrossing of Islam and each local culture. Indeed different local culture

shapes different outcome too. Islam in Chinese culture resulted to Han Kitab, while Islam in Indonesian culture generated Islam Nusantara. Values of Islam in both Han Kitab and Islam Nusantara cannot be separated with the beginning of Islam and its spreading and development process in those two places.

Islam in China was colored with interactions from the outside especially from Persian and Arabic traders. ²⁵ These traders did not just visit China but lived there for quite long time. Islam then became such belief known widely. Chinese dynasty also appreciated the existence of Islam. Ming dynasty built a big mosque for Muslim community, allowed people to build companies and shops, asked some *ulama* to translate more Arabic texts to Chinese, and permitted Muslims to practice their daily rituals. As Muslim population was growing, attention to the community was also increasing.

The situation above then shaped Islam in China as a non exclusive religion with its high moderation towards others. ²⁶ Islam in China cannot easily neglect Chinese cultural roots as stated in faith of natural beings and its surroundings. Islam needs to build meaningful situation among other people too. China which is already multicultural then is enriched by Islam and its teachings. Han Kitab then become such main proof that this religion does not try to omit Chinese cultural aspects but rather deeply understand and closely interact with other people. ²⁷

It is quite uncertain how and when Islam arrived in China. Some texts stated that first China Muslim community was established in 651 while its population increased massively in Mongolian Yuan dynasty in 1300s. ²⁸ Former Islamic community did not really engage in politics since its situation is quite nomadic while needed to face emergence of Chinese and Mongolian dynasties. However, in social aspects, Islam is widely spread though trade and interpersonal deep interactions such as inter marriage Islam is known better is in grassroots with its teachers and students close relations. ²⁹ The close relations then brought deeper tradition in related Han Kitab

Similar with China, Islam is spread in Indonesia through trading doings. The difference is China is international route of silk lane but Indonesia is a transit for ships of sailing voyages. There are some theories about how Islam got inside Indonesia related to who and when the spreading religion appeared. Many other theories also think that Islam was embraced by Indonesian people through socio- cultural interaction process between native and foreign people in peaceful trading process. Those who teach Islam at that time were really permissive and accommodative of local culture, or in another word, this peaceful way is what made Islam widely known in Indonesia.³⁰ That process of Islamic values infiltration which emerged term of Islamic native of Indonesia or *Islam Pribumi* which then shaped Islam Nusantara.

Term of *Islam Pribumi* is such actualization process of spreading of Islam by Wali Songo in Java with their tolerant and accommodative actions towards local culture. Spreading of Islam was going through ceremonies, art, and even dress up manners. Those are evidences in how to make Indonesia as the biggest population of Muslim in the world. At least 87 percent of 258 million of population or about 224 million persons are Muslim.³¹ The practice of spreading of Islam by Wali Songo then were listed in three pillars of ideas of Abdurrahman Wahid spoken by Umma Farida.³² First, Islam must be proactive in facing the demands of life modernization. Second, in context of Indonesia, Islam cannot be state religion. Third, Islam should be inclusive, democratic, and plural power not as exclusive one in a sovereign state.

Wali Songo as actors who spread Islam in Indonesia especially in Java island emphasized more in communication pattern that is dialogical, inclusive, cultural, and sufistic which give wider religious possibilities but still hold tight to *tauhid* values.³³ The outspread process does not limit on dialog and oral, but also cultural acculturation which results in some combination of cultural artifacts of Islam and local culture. Shadow puppet art is an important example brought by Sunan Kalijogo which is Islamic in its plot but so native in its forms. Song of Ilir-Ilir, *tahlilan* as mentioned before, *mitoni*, *slametan*, *grebeg syuro*, are proofs that rooted Islam deeply in Indonesia as it is easily accepted in every tier and strata of community of people.

Theory of acculturation stated learning process of culture through imitation and also practice.³⁴ It is used to adapt such foreign culture as a subject to be part of a society. Everyone is considered as social and cultural so that concept of personhood cannot be separated from neighborhood itself. Knowledge then became such key term in understanding acculturation. A person has its own identity as his knowledge but then he also interacts with others with other knowledge. Such different knowledge may be seen as enrichment or even elimination. However, acculturation is above both, it may understand many knowledge at the same time while own knowledge may remain the same and others' too. Acculturation is never such given concept but it is a process which brings in people, community, society, and all of their ideas together in life. It is since people and their ideas are always contingent. Those are not fixed since any identities may be also built by others. The differences are certain and sure but its interactions among others are flexible as seen in acculturation.

Han Kitab and Islam Nusantara are proofs of acculturation of Islam and other culture. Han Kitab shows how Islam interacts better with Confucianism in philosophical ideas while Islam Nusantara exposes cultural ideas and artifacts with native culture of Indonesia. Han Kitab explained philosophically

abut cosmology, practice, and moral orders between Islam Confucianism. Han Kitab did not contradict the two teachings ontologically, however, it focused on ethics as seen in cultural aspects of Chinese people. Islam and Confucianism despite its crucial differences, can reconcile each other socially or even philosophically. This explanation shows how acculturation still preserves own identities while pay attention to others'. Han Kitab shows how Muslim and Confucian people are not quite different in their purposes of religious practices. The principles are totally different but what they head are the same that is social harmony and God or Allah Himself. Islam Nusantara is similar since it emerged because of wider appreciation of Islam to local culture. Local culture which is so native got combined with Islamic practice as foreign concept. Islam Nusantara shows deeper concept of Islam through active roots. Its peaceful ways got in through art and any other artifacts.

Both Han Kitab and Islam Nusantara point that Islam is not coercively applied in China and Indonesia. Islam is spread through peaceful ways. The belief came in peace and understood harmony among people. The writers of Han Kitab did not explicitly stated what is Islam but they indicate Islam through Confucian frame of thought. Islam is no different than Confucianism so that Chinese people could embrace it too. They also tried to reconcile Islam and Confucianism by asserting neutral and equal religions in between. Islam Nusantara is quite the same since Wali Songo outspread Islamic ways through acculturation of cultural manners of Indonesian people. They did not shouted at people to follow their religions nor they became angry at people to nod to Islamic moral obligations, but they got closed to society and understood their culture. It is what acculturation means. Acculturation does not ask others to follow rigid definitions but it spread meanings towards others. It provides understanding to people so that others become conscious about what they are doing. It allows flexibilities of culture above any power. It comes together with people's ideas of being good.

Conclusion

Both Han Kitab and Islam Nusantara shows that Islam did not come to apply such system by force, but it builds such apprehension through acculturation. This religion introduced its ethics then develops further dialogues about wide issues. Islamic approach is acculturation itself, which in its dynamic does not lead the society, but walks together with people. Since Islam meets culture outside of it, that is in China and Indonesia, Islam becomes multi culture in its faces. Han kitab widened understanding of Islam in Confucian frame that more philosophical while Islam Nusantara offers possibilities of Islamic accommodation of native culture that is more practical based on artifacts of

culture. Both are Islamic face of moderation seen in acculturation. Islam is not fixed as totally applied but it builds such mutual understanding among different culture.

Endnotes

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<sup>5</sup> Wain, 2016, p. 28.
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⁶ Wain, 2016, p. 30.

⁷ Wain, 2016, p. 31.

⁸ Wain, 2016, p. 33.

⁹ Wain, 2016, p. 35.

¹⁰ Wain, 2016, p. 37.

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¹⁷ Nusantara in Indonesian Great Dictionary is a name for Indonesian archipelagos.

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- 22 Ash-Shiddieqy, M. Hasbi in Azis Anwar Fachrudin. 2015. The Face of Islam Nusantara. (online) in www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/07/24/the-face-islam-nusantara.html, accessed June $25^{\mbox{th}}$ 2019.
- ²³ Narrated from Umar r.a: Once upon a time when Rasulullah SAW and His close friends sit together, there comes a man with very white clothes and very black hair. The Prophet's close friends did not know the stranger's identity and where he came from. And then he sits in front of The Prophet, closes his knees near The Prophet's knees, and puts both of his hands above The Prophet's thighs. He said, "O Muhammad, explain to me about Islam", asked him to The Prophet. "Islam is when you testify that there is no God except Allah and Prophet Muhammad is His messenger, you do shalat, issue zakat, fasting in month of Ramadhan, and go hajj (if enable)", The Prophet answered to the questions. Once the stranger replied, "You are true, O Muhammad". The man then continued to another question. He said, "Tell me about iman."Iman is you believe in Allah, His angels, His holy texts, His Rasuls, judgment day, and takdir (destiny) of the good and the bad." The man replied, "You are true". The man continued again, "Tell me about ihsan." The Prophet answered, "You pray to Allah, as if you saw Him. If you cannot, then hold to ibadah that you did as Allah saw it too". The man went on other question, "Tell me about judgment day." The Prophet replied, "Who was asked know more than who asked." The man continued, "Tell me about the signs of the judgment day." The Prophet answered, "When you see a woman slave was born to her employer, when you see those who wear no footwear, the poor, and the goat shepherd glorify tall buildings." Once finished asking the questions, the man went away. "Hey Umar! Do you know who the man that asked?", asked Prophet Muhammad. Umar replied, "Allah and His Rasul know more than any other else." Rasulullah SAW explained, "Actually He is Jibril, who comes to you and teaches you about your religion." HR. Muslim no. 8 (Bugho, Musthofa. 2012. Al Wafi fi Syarh Arbain Nawawiyat. Dar Ilm Wa An nur: Beirut, p. 15).

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<sup>25</sup> Igbal, 2018, p 415.
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²⁶ Wain, 2016, p. 27.

²⁷ Wain, 2016, p. 30.

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³² Farida, 2015, p. 144.

³³ Tajuddin, Yuliyatin. 2014. "Walisongo dalam Strategi Komunikasi Dakwah". ADDIN,

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