



Islamic Scholarship In The Malay World: The Multifaceted Contributions Of Ulama

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Abstrak: This study explores the extensive roles and contributions of Ulama (Islamic scholars) in the Malay Archipelago, with a focus on their impact in the fields of Islamic economics, sciences, and mathematics. The research aims to illuminate how Ulama have shaped various aspects of Islamic culture, education, and intellectual thought in the region. A comprehensive literature review was conducted, examining historical texts, manuscripts, and scholarly works related to the Ulama. The study employed qualitative analytical approaches to assess the contributions of Ulama in the Malay Archipelago. Findings indicate that Ulama significantly influenced Islamic economics by aligning economic practices with Sharia principles, emphasizing justice and ethical compliance. In scientific and mathematical fields, Ulama integrated complex mathematical concepts with Islamic teachings, contributing to the advancement of these disciplines. The educational impact of Ulama, particularly through the pondok system, promoted self-reliance and entrepreneurship, while their cultural synthesis effectively combined Islamic knowledge with local traditions. The Ulama's roles extended beyond religious instruction, encompassing broader societal, economic, and intellectual domains. Their contributions not only facilitated the spread of Islam but also respected and preserved local customs. The study underscores the Ulama's enduring influence in shaping the educational and intellectual landscape of the Malay Archipelago.

Keywords: *Islamic Boarding Schools, Malay Islam, Malay Islamic Scholars, Ulama Networks*

Introduction

According to the "Encyclopedia of Indonesia," as cited by Dewan Rahardjo, scholars, known as Ulama, are characterized by their upholding of religious traditions, a holistic understanding of Islamic law, and their role as executors of Fiqh law (Rahardjo, 1996). Importantly, the conferment of 'scholarliness' upon an individual is not a formal process but is acknowledged after a prolonged engagement within the community. This acknowledgment is contingent upon the demonstration of integrity, scholarly quality, and the credibility of moral righteousness and social responsibility. Essentially, the genuine manifestation of a person's scholarliness is intrinsically linked to their possession of these personal qualities (Rahardjo, 1996).

Coinciding with the introduction of Islam to the Malay World, the cultural assimilation of knowledge became a cornerstone of the Nusantara civilization. This assimilation underwent a smooth evolution through several phases. The initial phase saw the pioneering preaching efforts by scholars from Arabian regions. This was subsequently followed by a transition phase involving the training of local scholars, who ultimately established a network of Nusantara scholars. Not confined by geographical or national

boundaries, Malay scholars vigorously pursued the expansion of their knowledge, disseminating their scholarly works across the Islamic world.

In the realm of classical Malay scholarship, a significant role was played in nurturing a knowledge-centric culture within local societies. Despite Islam's advent during a period marked by intellectual decline, its introduction had a transformative impact on the lifestyle of the Malay Nusantara society, influencing both internal (soul) and external (physical body) aspects (Al-Attas, 1969). This transformation laid the foundation for classical Malay scholars to strive towards building an educated society, primarily through the democratization of the educational system. Their relentless efforts led to the creation of structured educational institutions and the production of seminal works in various Islamic disciplines, such as Fiqh, Tawhid, and Nahw. These scholars were instrumental in creating works in Arabic and Jawi, thereby facilitating the socialization of Islamic teachings within the Malay Nusantara society (Ramli & Jamaludin, 2012).

In Islam and the lives of Muslims, scholars occupy a position of immense significance. They are often regarded as possessing religious authority, second only to Prophet Muhammad. A widely cited Hadith proclaims that scholars are the heirs of the prophets (*al-'ulama waratsah al-anbiya*). This reverence affords them high respect among Muslims, and their opinions are considered authoritative in various domains, extending beyond purely religious matters.

The pivotal role of scholars in Islamic society stems from their recognition as legitimate interpreters of Islam's foundational texts, the Qur'an and Hadith. Owing to their profound religious knowledge and moral uprightness, scholars engage with multiple social layers. Their influence and authority in society are substantial. This interplay between religious knowledge and social power underscores the dynamic relationship between knowledge and influence, shaping a formidable presence within the society (Akramunisa, 2017). This study specifically aims to analyze the role of scholars in the Malay-Nusantara region during the early phases of Islam's proliferation, with a focus on understanding their impact across social, educational, economic, legal, political, and power dynamics.

Literature Reviews

Research on scholars (Ulama) in relation to their interconnectedness and impact within the Nusantara and Malay regions has been extensively pursued. This increase in scholarly attention, especially among young researchers, is driven by an enhanced historical consciousness and a quest to comprehend the contributions of early Islamic scholars in these regions. A seminal and comprehensive study in this domain is Azra's (1994) work, "*Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII Akar Pembaruan Islam Indonesia*." This study delves into the intellectual aspects, emphasizing the ideas and teachings disseminated through the Ulama network. Notably, it is one of the first studies to extensively utilize Arabic sources for examining the renewal of Islamic thought in the Nusantara. Azra adopts 'transmission' and 'network' theories, aligning with the 'New History' approach, and considers the historical trajectory of Islam in the Nusantara from both global and local perspectives. His contributions have been instrumental in enriching the literature and inspiring subsequent research in Southeast Asian and Islamic studies of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Further studies by scholars such as Muhammad (2012), Harahap (2021), and Fawaidah (2023) have built upon or revisited Azra's findings. These works elucidate that

research focusing on the transmission and dissemination of purifying ideas during the 17th and 18th centuries accentuates the Ulama's role, with a particular emphasis on Tasawuf and rationality. These studies highlight that the scholarship of Islamic boarding school scholars in the archipelago is anchored in a network of Middle Eastern scholars, especially in Mecca and Medina, known as Haramain. The primary objectives of these scholars visiting Haramain include performing Hajj and engaging in scholarly pursuits, often leading to their prolonged stay and establishment in these regions. Upon completing their studies, they return to their homelands, contributing significantly to the expansion of the scholarly network. Azra contends that Tasawuf is a vital aspect of Islam, complementing Shariah and Fiqh. He posits that an ideal Islamization process integrates both Fiqh and Tasawuf, arguing that an exclusive focus on Fiqh could engender legalistic tendencies, thus underscoring the necessity for a mystical understanding of religious teachings.

In a distinct vein, Said's (2017) research on the Tafsir of Nusantara scholars aims to trace the lineage of Tafsir interpretation in Indonesia. His study reveals the pivotal role of 'Abd al-Raûf al-Fansûrî and his work, *Tarjuman al-Mustafid*, in shaping the study and evolution of Tafsir. This work has profoundly influenced Tafsir scholarship, permeating through various teaching methods. At least two transmission avenues of Ulama Tafsir have been identified: through teaching activities and scholarly writing, both contributing significantly to the ongoing advancement of Tafsir knowledge.

Another notable study by Faslah (2016) illustrates the considerable contributions of Ulama in the Nusantara to Islamic scholarship. The 17th century, in particular, witnessed the rise of Tasawuf knowledge alongside disciplines like Hadith, Tafsir, and Fiqh. Various Tarekat emerged during this period, with Syatariyah, pioneered by Abdurrauf al-Sinkili, who was mentored by al-Qusyasi and al-Kurani in Haramain, becoming particularly influential. Al-Sinkili's central role in developing Syatariyah in the Nusantara (Indonesia) outshone other 17th-century figures. This study explores the evolution of neosufism, as developed by Nusantara Tarekat scholars, who sought to reconcile Shariah and Tasawuf, thereby facilitating the growth of Sunni orthodoxy that is accommodating of local cultures.

Additional studies have concentrated on individual Nusantara scholars. For instance, Hidayatullah's (2019) research focuses on Syekh Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani, a pivotal figure in Hadith and Sanad studies. Farisi's (2021) study sheds light on the contributions of Syekh Ahmad Khatib al-Syambasi, notable for his significant impact in the Islamic world, particularly in the Nusantara and Malay regions. Muna's (2018) research emphasizes the role of Syaikh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi, a highly respected figure in Hadith studies in Indonesia and the broader Islamic world. His renown is bolstered by two exceptional works, *Al-Khil'ah al-Fikriyah fi Syarh al-Minhah al-Khairiyah* and *Manhaj Dzawi al-Nazhar fi Syarhi Manzhumat 'Ilmi al-Atsar*.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing library research as its primary method. The procedures adopted in this study include the following steps:

1. Literature Review: An extensive review of existing literature, including academic journals, books, and credible online resources, is conducted. This review focuses on identifying and synthesizing previous research findings related to the role of scholars (Ulama) in the Nusantara and Malay regions. Emphasis is placed on understanding the historical, cultural, and religious contexts of their contributions.

2. **Source Selection and Evaluation:** The study meticulously selects sources that are relevant and credible. Primary sources include historical texts and original manuscripts by prominent Ulama, while secondary sources comprise academic analyses and interpretations of these texts. Each source is critically evaluated for its authenticity, relevance, and scholarly contribution.
3. **Data Extraction and Analysis:** Key information, themes, and insights are extracted from the selected sources. This involves analyzing the teachings, ideologies, and the impact of Ulama on the socio-cultural and religious fabric of the Nusantara and Malay societies. The study also examines the evolution of Islamic thought and practices as influenced by these scholars.
4. **Thematic Synthesis:** The extracted data are organized into coherent themes, reflecting the central aspects of the scholars' roles and influences. This synthesis aims to construct a comprehensive understanding of how Ulama contributed to the intellectual, spiritual, and societal development in the regions.
5. **Comparative Analysis:** Where applicable, the study engages in comparative analysis, contrasting the findings from the Nusantara and Malay regions with similar developments in other Islamic regions. This comparative perspective provides a broader understanding of the Ulama's role in the global Islamic context.
6. **Contextual Integration:** The study integrates its findings within the broader historical and cultural context of the 17th and 18th centuries, ensuring that the scholars' contributions are understood in relation to the prevailing conditions of their time.

Critical Reflection: Finally, the study critically reflects on the findings, assessing the implications of the Ulama's contributions for contemporary Islamic scholarship and society. It also identifies potential areas for future research, based on the gaps and questions that emerge from the current study.

Result and Discussion

The literature study conducted has yielded several key insights into the role and impact of scholars (Ulama) in the Malay-Nusantara region during the initial spread of Islam.

Ulama and Society

The Ulama's multifaceted role within essential sectors of the Islamic community, bolstered by their legitimacy based on Islamic religious principles, has garnered significant appreciation and importance within the Muslim community. The designation of 'scholarliness' for an individual is not simply a result of a lengthy process within the community; it is contingent upon the demonstration of elements such as integrity, scholarly quality, moral credibility, and social responsibility. The true manifestation of their scholarliness is intrinsically linked to the presence of personal attributes deemed appropriate for them (Qureshi, 1983).

The Ulama's involvement in society provides them not only with theological legitimacy but also establishes their profound social legitimacy and presence. Consequently, it is understood that the Ulama's opinions are adhered to in both religious and other social and communal matters. A typical pattern of interaction emerges between the Ulama and society, where the Ulama act as catalysts, motivators, and dynamic agents of societal

movements, thereby securing a significant bargaining position when faced with authority (Akramunisa, 2017).

Ulama and Kingdom/Government/Politics

The Ulama not only stand apart from the caliphate but occasionally also act as arbiters of power and guardians of the community's moral conscience. In extreme cases, they have formed opposition groups in response to caliphate practices deemed deviant. This development coincided with the shift of power from religious to tribal affiliations (Mahasin, 1994). A notable historical instance occurred during the Abbasid period under al-Ma'mun, who enforced the Mihnah policy against Ulama opposing the doctrine of the creation of the Quran, a belief upheld by the Mu'tazilah school. Since the caliph himself was a proponent of Mu'tazilah, this theology became the official ideology of the caliphate, using the power's legitimacy to disseminate Mu'tazilah teachings, often through forceful and coercive means. For example, Ibn Hanbal, an orthodox scholar adhering to the literal interpretation of Quranic verses and Hadith, was subjected to this policy, tried, and coerced into acknowledging the created nature of the Quran. Nevertheless, he remained steadfast in his belief that the Quran is the eternal Word of Allah.

During the golden era of Islamic kingdoms, Ulama played a prominent role as part of the elite officialdom, reinforcing the leaders' authority. In Southeast Asia, a close relationship between kings and Ulama was commonplace. For example, in the Kingdom of Samudera Pasai, Ayang Utriza Yakin (2016) in 'Sejarah Hukum Islam Nusantara Abad XIV-XIX M' notes that the Islamic government appointed skilled Ulama as official muftis, as recorded by Ibn Batutah during his 15-day stay in Samudera Pasai in 1345. In his account, al-Rihlat, Batutah highlights the mufti's critical role in the sultanate. The mufti typically sat in the council room with the secretary, military leaders, commanders, and high-ranking officials. According to Ayang, this system likely originated from the Sultanate of Perlak (Peureulak) in Aceh, which had a fatwa council headed by a mufti overseeing religious legal matters, a position superior to the ministry of justice.

The conducted literature study provides a comprehensive portrayal of the integration of scholars (Ulama) within the political structures of kingdoms, particularly notable in the 16th century. A distinguished figure in this context is Hamzah Fansuri, a Malay-Nusantara scholar, renowned for his extensive legacy that includes both a biography and significant Islamic works. Other eminent scholars, such as Shamsuddin al-Sumaterani (d. 1693), Nuruddin ar-Raniri (d. 1658), Abdul Rau'f al-Sinkili (d. 1693), and Yusuf al-Makassari (d. 1699), also made monumental contributions. The 18th century witnessed the rise of figures like Abd. Samad al-Falimbani and Syekh Daud al-Fatani. Notably, the Malay-Nusantara Ulama, as part of the royal elite, were indicative of urban phenomena, forming a distinguished social group within city elites due to their expertise in Islamic studies. Burhanuddin (2017), in his book 'Islam dalam Arus Sejarah Indonesia,' notes that Ulama consistently provided spiritual advice and political legitimacy to the king, particularly among their increasingly Muslim populace.

In legal affairs, Ulama played a pivotal role in formulating regulations and shaping the religious life of Muslims. They often served as judges or chiefs in Java. The Kadi institution gained prominence in the 17th century, especially in the Aceh Kingdom, extending beyond providing legitimacy and advice to the king, as observed in the Malacca Kingdom, to the implementation of Islamic law within the kingdom. The inception of the

Kadi in Aceh dates back to Sultan Iskandar Muda's reign (1607-1636). Furthermore, the Aceh Kingdom established the Syaikhul Islam institution directly under the monarch, significantly influencing royal policies in social and political realms, as noted by Jajat.

This insight is partially derived from the 1602 travel records of an English envoy to Aceh, Sir James Lancaster, who described Hamzah Fansuri, then the Syaikhul Islam, akin to an archbishop. Fansuri was appointed by the king to spearhead peace and friendship negotiations between Aceh and England. Nuruddin ar-Raniri, another head of Syaikhul Islam, mediated strong Dutch objections to royal trade policies favoring Gujarati merchants. He successfully persuaded Queen Safiyyatuddin (1641-1675) to revoke these policies. Aceh distinguished itself as the only Nusantara kingdom with an official Ulama institution, allowing the Ulama to participate in matters extending beyond religious affairs.

A comparable institution existed in Java's Demak Kingdom. The Sultans of Demak were supported by Ulama, serving as *ahlulhalli wal aqdi*, a royal consultative body with decision-making authority on religious, state, and Muslim community affairs. Sunan Giri, a notable member of this body, played a crucial role in authorizing and conferring the title of Sultan upon rulers of Islamic kingdoms in Java. He was instrumental in outlining governmental policies, ensuring the security of Muslims and Islamic kingdoms, and had the authority to depose a Sultan for deviating from the policies set by the Wali.

The Ulama's role extended beyond mere advisory to the king; they were instrumental in integrating Islam into the Indonesian cultural system. Their contributions were pivotal in legitimizing the politically oriented Malay royal culture. The intellectual works of the Ulama, particularly those like Ar-Raniri, who presented a detailed perspective on the Ulama-king relationship, became a source of legitimacy for these kingdoms. In 'Bustanus Salatin,' written around the 1630s for Iskandar Thani, Ar-Raniri highlighted the necessity for a neo-Sufi scholar to navigate royal political issues.

Ar-Raniri underscored that obedience to the king was tantamount to a religious obligation, equating compliance with the monarch to following divine commands. This conferred upon the kings a legitimate political authority acknowledged by the Muslim community. Consequently, Islam played a significant role in shaping the absolute monarchies of the pre-colonial Malay-Indonesian world. As the Ulama's influence within the royal elite solidified, Islam increasingly became the prevailing political ideology. This period was marked by absolute rulers such as Sultan Iskandar Muda and Iskandar Thani in Aceh, Sultan Agung in Mataram, and Sultan Hasanuddin in Makassar.

Ulama and Education

The literature study elucidates the crucial role of scholars (Ulama) in Islam and the lives of Muslims, as outlined by Akramunisa (2017). Ulama are regarded with high esteem, occupying a religious authority second only to Prophet Muhammad. Their opinions are considered binding in various issues, not limited to religious matters, but extending to other aspects of life as well.

The significance of Ulama in Islamic society stems from their role as esteemed and legitimate interpreters of the primary sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. Due to their profound religious knowledge and high moral standards, Ulama interact across various social strata and wield substantial influence within the community. Thus, their religious knowledge is not just informative but also formative; knowledge and power are closely interlinked, creating a formidable influence within society.

As learned Muslim figures, Ulama have maintained their status as the symbolic heirs of Islam. No institution can be considered without acknowledging the Ulama's influence, as their importance is intrinsically linked to the future of Islam. It is evident that no group can parallel the role played by Ulama in the tradition of Islam. The social institution most closely associated with Ulama is the educational institution, which correlates with their status as intellectual elites. The relationship between Ulama and educational institutions is mutually interdependent and necessary.

There are two patterns in the relationship between Ulama and Islamic educational institutions. On one hand, Islamic educational institutions serve as a means of transmitting the Ulama's knowledge, while on the other hand, both formal and informal educational institutions play a role in the formation and training of Ulama. In relation to educational institutions, Ulama are involved as central functionaries. This role is evident in every stage of the development of Islamic educational institutions in various forms such as Majlis, Halaqah, Maktab, Kuttub, Jami', Madrasah, zawiyyah, and ribat, as described by Azra (1990). A common term for Ulama found in these institutions is mudarris or mu'allim.

As Islamic educational institutions evolved, particularly in the 10th and 11th centuries, their hierarchy became more complex. This hierarchy was based not only on historical ties with existing institutions but also on individual expertise, often referred to as *syaikh*. Underneath the *syaikh* are roles such as Naif, Muid, and Mufid, who need not necessarily be Ulama in the truest sense (Azra, 1990). It is noteworthy that in the medieval period, there was no distinct separation between Ulama who worked as teachers and those who did not, as all learned individuals, whether salaried or not, endeavored to impart knowledge to the community (Syalabi, 1973). According to Maqdisi and Pedersen, the madrasah as an educational institution represents a developmental stage in Islamic institutions, evolving from earlier forms like the mosque-khan complex and then transitioning to the madrasah (Makdisi, 1981; Pedersen & Makdisi, 1986).

The mosque, as an educational institution, emerged initially as an informal and independent entity. Its function as a teaching venue has been recognized since the time of the Prophet. Holding the authority to interpret verses of the Qur'an, the Prophet was frequently consulted about various issues concerning faith and ethics both within and outside the mosque. He provided explanations in front of listeners who gathered around him in a circle (*halaqah*). This tradition continued during the era of the companions, with the addition of Hadith as teaching material. At this time, the term '*ahl 'ilmi*' was often associated with individuals who memorized numerous Hadith. Subsequently, the range of teaching materials expanded to include subjects such as jurisprudence, language, and Arabic poetry (Pedersen & Makdisi, 1986). As a center of teaching and education, mosques were always open to those who felt capable of imparting knowledge to the community. Ulama would come to the mosque on their own initiative to teach their knowledge to interested members of the community, who would gather in a circle as practiced during the Prophet's time (Syalabi, 1973).

In mosques, Ulama played an informal role in providing education to the community. The bond formed between Ulama as teachers and their students was based more on moral attachment within a sacred relationship. Muslims acquired knowledge from these teachers based on personal conviction. This contrasts with the madrasah system. The establishment of a madrasah is often linked to a prominent Ulama figure. Madrasahs were usually founded and endowed by benefactors with specific purposes, such as for the

advancement of a particular school of thought, and their operational management was entrusted to a trusted Ulama who could realize these objectives.

Although the beginnings of Islamic education, which involved studying the Qur'an and developing a system of piety around it, commenced during the Prophet's era, it was not until the first and second Hijri centuries that centers of scholarly study emerged, centered around prominent individuals. Ulama typically granted ijazahs to students to teach what they had learned, which predominantly involved memorizing the Qur'an, transcribing the traditions of the Prophet and his companions, and summarizing the evolving principles of law. Organized schools or madrasahs with established curricula were possibly first instituted by the Shi'a to teach knowledge and indoctrinate students. Later, under the Saljuk and Ayyubid dynasties, which replaced the Shi'a in Iran and Egypt, large Sunni-oriented madrasahs were organized.

From the above discussion, we can discern two patterns in the relationship between Ulama and educational institutions. In mosques and other institutions preceding madrasahs, the relationship between Ulama and educational institutions was different from the pattern that emerged with the establishment of madrasahs. In madrasahs, the relationship between Ulama and students became more structured, with distinct teaching levels, classifications of instruction, and involvement from authorities and waqf benefactors.

Considering the contextual differences between eras, it is evident that many positive elements of the traditional pondok (Islamic boarding school) are not found in modern Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IPTs). Therefore, for the advancement of modern Islamic IPTs, it is essential to integrate the positive elements of the historical pondok with those of modern IPTs. This amalgamation of traditional pondok methodology with modern scholarship has already been successfully implemented in contemporary Indonesia. An example of this is the Pondok Gontor institution in East Java, Indonesia, which excels in various aspects. Among other achievements, Pondok Gontor emphasizes proficiency in Arabic and English, the study of fiqh from multiple schools of thought, strict student discipline, and the establishment of small-scale industries owned by the pondok, enabling its graduates to be self-reliant. Recently, Pondok Gontor has established the ISID (Institut Studi Islam Darul Salam), a modern Islamic IPT offering a variety of study programs akin to other IPTs in Indonesia.

Several contributions of the Pondok (Islamic boarding schools) system in generating quality human capital can be identified, including:

Pondok and the Application of Tauhid World-View in Malay Society

Research conducted by Prof. Hashim Musa on the typology of Malay civilization history has identified that the construction of Malay civilization was founded on six world-view perspectives sourced from divine revelation. These six perspectives have become the mainstay of Malay society (concept of Malay identity). The world-view perspectives are:

- a. The world is a creation and decree of Allah, encompassing the primordial realm (souls), the earthly realm, and the hereafter. The ultimate destination and result of life on earth is the hereafter, with true success being entry into paradise and earthly success being obedience to Allah.
- b. Islam, as guidance from Allah, contains rules for all aspects of life, for individuals and society, aimed at their ultimate success.

- c. The belief that good actions are rewarded while bad actions are punished.
- d. Visions, missions, objectives, intentions, strategies, and operations in all areas of work should be righteous, truthful, and comply with Islamic law without compromise, manipulation, or tolerance.
- e. The highest value is associated with all things that contribute to the formation of a faithful, righteous, and noble individual, whose benefits are shared with others.
- f. A moderate and balanced life between physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects based on knowledge, both obligatory (*fardhu ain*) and communal (*fardhu kifayah*) (Musa, 2001).

Pondok and the Generation of Intellectualism and Culture of True Islamic Knowledge

The practice of a culture of knowledge, initially founded by early missionaries and later continued by local scholars in the Malay world, is evident in pondok educational institutions.

The pondok system can be considered advanced for its time and societal context, particularly regarding the cultural assimilation of knowledge. Currently, some scholars critique and express cynicism towards the pondok education system, labeling it as outdated and unable to cope with modernization (Affandi, 1995). Although this opinion may hold partial truth, it fails to adhere to the etiquette of differing opinions in Islam. The pondok system was meticulously conceived and structured by past scholars for its era and has proven to be effective as intended. Therefore, criticizing it arbitrarily without considering the context of the time is inappropriate (Bakar, 1994; Nasir et al., 2016).

Pondok and the Consideration of Local Realities

The curriculum of the pondok has been successful in producing graduates who become intellectual leaders in their communities. They are trained to adopt a selective approach and to value the local realities of the Malay land. Several examples can be cited to substantiate this claim:

- a. The pondok institutions in the Malay region emphasize that the process of Islamization should not be radical, so as to avoid discomfort within the community. Instead, change is implemented gradually, focusing on education rather than punishment. This approach successfully eroded pre-Islamic feudal beliefs in Malay society through engagement and education of the Malay rulers, as stated by S.M. Naquid Al-Attas regarding the second phase of Islamization in the Malay land (around 1700, coinciding with the arrival of British power).
- b. Middle Eastern Islamic theories are adapted to the realities of the Malay land. This can be exemplified by the experience of the state of Terengganu, where a strong collaboration between Ulama and rulers existed in state administration. This is evident in how Ulama played an active role in the governance of Terengganu up to the present day. In historical Terengganu, the role of Ulama extended beyond foundation to maximum involvement in state administration. The Ulama of Terengganu were involved as advisors and laid the foundation for the state's constitution.
- c. The Islamic education system was meticulously organized, taking into account the local Malay realities. This was achieved through a synthesis approach when Malay Ulama adapted the *halaqah* system of Islamic studies from the *Masjidil Haram* in

Mecca to suit local Malay characteristics in terms of dormitory style, clothing style, etc., resulting in a pondok education system more oriented towards local needs (Ishak M. S., 2000). In summary, this action by Malay Ulama was driven by the principle of recognizing and respecting local Malay culture and not fully adopting all elements from the Middle East (Nasir et al., 2016).

Pondok and the Foundation of Human Skills

Traditional pondok institutions have been successful in instilling various human skills (a prominent skill set discussed in modern education systems) in their graduates (Nasir et al., 2016). For example, these institutions have been capable of imparting Communication Skills, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Ethics and Professional Morals. In the pondok education system, knowledge, action (morality), and discipline are emphasized over other aspects. In the long term, this approach has proven effective in producing Ulama and Malay individuals who are religiously enlightened and capable of solving personal and societal problems from an Islamic perspective (Nasir et al., 2016).

We can observe how this noble effort takes time and is not perceived as a problem by pondok students. They recognize the importance of the concept of *Rehlah Ilmiah* (including several cultural characteristics of knowledge: the continuous desire to learn, acting according to calculated knowledge, and pursuing higher education). This concept demands that students exert effort in seeking knowledge in various places, not only for academic learning but also for experiential learning (such as observing different societal sociologies). The result of practicing this concept is the production of well-rounded Islamic scholars, proficient in knowledge, morality, and life experiences, who, following Islamic epistemology, will possess wisdom (Azra, 1998).

Pondok as a Contributor to Economic Factors and Entrepreneurial Foundations

In the context of entrepreneurial training, what is particularly noteworthy is that pondok students have learned entrepreneurship directly from the culture of self-reliance practiced by their teachers (Nasir et al., 2016). Most pondok teachers can be considered successful entrepreneurs, which attracted the interest of the Malay community at the time, similar to the early missionaries who spread Islam in the Malay Archipelago and who were major traders. As a result, they were highly esteemed by the Malay community, facilitating the smooth and non-violent spread of Islam. Pondok teachers were involved in various entrepreneurial activities, such as animal husbandry (cattle, goats, and fish), agriculture (rice, tuber crops, rubber, fruits, and vegetables), rice and timber milling, running grocery stores, acting as intermediaries for land and rubber sales, and serving as hajj agents

Ulama and Economics

Islam possesses its unique framework of Islamic economics, distinct from the economic concepts introduced by Western scholars. Islamic economics is based on pure Islamic values such as justice and is conducted in accordance with Sharia law. Early studies reveal that the contribution and role of Ulama in Islamic economics is not a new phenomenon; it has been discussed by past scholars. In fact, some concepts introduced by these scholars have become the foundation of modern economic systems.

Furthermore, Islam does not prohibit its followers from expanding their wealth and economy, provided that it is done responsibly and considerately, without neglecting obligations towards religion, oneself, and family. Simultaneously, Ulama also play a role in

developing the capacities of religious students and graduates, enabling them to contribute to society beyond being a source of personal income and thus contributing to the national economy.

It is believed that the role of Ulama or Ulama organizations in the economic affairs of the Muslim community in the Nusantara includes providing religious guidance and developing the capacity and expertise of teachers. This indirectly provides employment opportunities beyond preaching and guiding the Muslim community. These roles and initiatives include offering religious guidance to the Muslim community. In the Nusantara, Ulama actively engage in various aspects of the economy. Their most notable efforts in the mid-9th century were directed towards eliminating the practice of *riba* (usury) in society. They studied and understood the existing economic system and found it to be based on *riba*, leading them to introduce a non-*riba* financial system. Clearly, the policy of *ijtihad* by Islamic Ulama has shaped an economic framework that complies with Sharia, establishing principles based on the Quran and Sunnah, focused on universal social welfare and justice. This ensures fairness in all transactions, in line with the guidelines set by religion (Maulidizen, 2017)

Ulama and Sciences

The discussion of Ulama and their contributions to science might seem unusual or peculiar to some. This perception arises from the common understanding that Ulama are masters of religious sciences and are considered the heirs of the prophets (Ghazali, n.d.). However, this narrow paradigm is clarified in the Quran, which illustrates a holistic system of knowledge based on the concept of *Tawhid*. For instance, Surah Al-Baqarah verse 31 narrates how Allah taught Prophet Adam about the physical world. Prophet Idris, during Ancient Egypt's civilization, was endowed with knowledge about timekeeping, seasons, and calendars. Prophet Noah was given the wisdom to build an ark to survive the great flood, Prophet David mastered the skill of ironwork, and Prophet Joseph was bestowed with futuristic knowledge and economic management skills.

Mathematics, closely linked to everyday life, was a dominant field in Islamic Civilization history. Islamic mathematicians such as al-Khawarizmi and al-Jabir were pioneers in this field, and Islamic mathematical philosophers divided mathematics (*ilm al-hisab*) into four main branches: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. This leads to the question: what is the relationship between Ulama and the science of mathematics in the Malay Archipelago?

The list of writings by Ulama in various formats such as manuscripts, treatises, magazines, and books. Al-Edrus (1993) and Van Bruinessen (1990) show that the Ulama's contributions spanned all branches of knowledge in the Malay Archipelago. Even though the majority of their works focused on *Usuluddin*, *Fiqh*, *Tasawwuf*, and *Akhlaq*, there were works related to sciences and mathematics, such as astronomy. The list of astronomical works, based on the author's research on local manuscripts, includes subjects like arithmetic, logic, inheritance law, medical sciences, alchemy, and navigation. Prominent Ulama who contributed significantly to the dissemination of knowledge in the Malay Archipelago include Syeikh Daud al-Fathani (d. 1879), Syeikh Ahmad bin Muhammad Zain al-Fathani (d. 1908), Syeikh Tahir Jalaluddin (d. 1956), and Syeikh Ahmad bin Abdul Latif al-Khatib (d. 1916), Minangkabau.

Syeikh Daud al-Fathani, proficient in various religious sciences, made substantial contributions to the study of the Shafi'i school of Fiqh and the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah through pondok teachings, featuring books like 'Hidayat al-Muta'allim' and 'Furu' al-Masail,' among his total of approximately 101 titles. His teachings in Tasawwuf shaped the philosophical thoughts of many Malays of that era, influencing their worship and devotional practices. With the application of logic ('mantiq'), the foundational sciences of Usul al-Fiqh, Kalam, and Tasawwuf were conveyed and elucidated in the traditional educational system. This method of teaching influenced societal perspectives on the philosophy of knowledge and the culture of poverty among the Malays.

Wan Mohd Saghir notes that Syeikh Ahmad al-Fatani was an Islamic scholar proficient in over 47 branches of knowledge. He was the first non-Arab (A'jami) to become the chief editor (pentashih) of all Arabic and Jawi books to be published in Mecca, Hijaz (prior to the establishment of Saudi Arabia). He made significant efforts in massively printing Malay-Jawi books after establishing a printing company in Mecca (Saghir, 1992). He also contributed significantly to standardizing the use of the Malay-Jawi language in writings, particularly in grammar and terminologies. His views on studying mathematics are expressed in 'Fatawa Fathaniyah' (1914), where he states, 'mathematics is necessary to avoid discrepancies in religious practices.' For religious requirements, Syeikh Ahmad al-Fatani produced books on arithmetic ('ilm hisab) and astronomy ('ilm falak) for mathematical studies in the traditional system (Shaghir, 1992).

Syeikh Ahmad bin Abdul Latif al-Khatib from Minangkabau, like other scholars, mastered various religious sciences. He became the first Malay to be recognized by the Sharif of Mecca and was permitted to establish study circles and teach in them at the Masjid al-Haram (Hurgronje, 1889). He authored numerous works, no less than 40 in different disciplines. Syeikh Ahmad al-Khatib was distinguished by his scientific and mathematical thinking, which he translated into encouraging these subjects through the writing of astronomical ('ilm falak) and arithmetic ('ilm-hisab) books. He personally taught these subjects based on his books to Malay students from the Malay Archipelago, also known as Tanah Jawi or Nusantara. His other notable works include '*al-Nukhbah al-Bahiyah*', '*Khulasah al-Jawahir al-Hiqiyah fi'al'mal al-Jaibiyah*', '*Raudat al-Hussab fi'Il al-Hisab*' (1890), and '*Alam al-Hussab fi 'Ilm al-Hisab*' (1893).

Among Syeikh Ahmad al-Khatib's notable students in the field of astronomy was Syeikh Tahir Jalaluddin from Minangkabau, Sumatra. He authored '*Huraian yang Utama*' or '*Pati Kiraan*' (1938), '*Nukhbat al-Taqrirat*' (1939), and '*Natijah al-Umn*' (1951), focusing on timekeeping and Qibla direction using logarithms. The use of logarithms in timekeeping ('ilm miqat) was taught in Arab-Malay schools in Malaya. Syeikh Tahir simplified multiplication and division calculations in his first two books by producing '*Jadwal al-Lugharimat*' (1936). Syeikh Jalaluddin (1938) explained: "*To simplify the calculations of multiplication and division in both aforementioned books on the subject of 'ilm miqat, a nearly extinct field in Islamic sciences due to the complexity of calculations with base-sixty ratios, the methods outlined in 'Nukhbat al-Taqrirat' and 'Huraian Yang Utama' enable students with some knowledge of calculations to grasp it, and God willing, within a week they should be able to comprehend it.*"

In the context of Ulama's writings related to the spread of mathematical sciences in the Malay Archipelago, two methodological approaches are identified: qualitative and quantitative. Scholars of wisdom and philosophy discuss the qualitative nature of numbers through metaphysical reasoning, while mathematical applications are addressed through

quantitative theories. Sheikh Ahmad al-Khatib's mathematical texts fall into the latter category. However, according to Mat Rofa, the qualitative aspect is inseparable from the discussion and development of quantitative theories, as their production and proof are based on philosophical foundations.

Examining the topics in 'Alam al-Hussab, a 204-page book, it covers subjects including arithmetic, series, sequences, geometry, permutations, modular congruences, approximations, plane geometry, and others. As stated by the author (Al-Khatib, 1310 H), 'I have compiled in it most methods associated with calculations, land measurement, and other related areas, organized into an introduction and seven chapters.' 'Alam al-Hussab portrays the content of traditional mathematical education, comprising the science of calculations (*'ilm al-adad and al-jabr*) and land surveying (*al-handasah*). It begins with an understanding of the number system and basic operations with numbers, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, halving, and doubling. Covering knowledge of algebra (*al-jabr wa al-muqabala*) and geometry, 'Alam al-Hussab provides comprehensive knowledge for solving mathematical problems related to transactions, inheritance (*faraid*), and various daily issues. This structured approach to mathematics was a tradition in Islamic scholarly discussions of the 17th century CE. Indeed, *'ilm al-adad*, *al-jabr*, and *al-handasah* are three major topics in mathematics, critically important in Islamic mathematical studies.

The brilliance and significance of Islamic mathematical sciences have been effectively transmitted and embraced in the Malay Archipelago through the contributions and roles of these Ulama in teaching and authoring mathematical works. Their works reference the mathematical texts of scholars from the Islamic Civilization era. Thus, it is evident that Islamic mathematics had reached and been studied in the traditional education system of the Malay Archipelago approximately 200 years prior to the introduction of Western mathematics (Marzuki & Ali, 1997).

Conclusion

The study reveals the multifaceted roles and significant contributions of Ulama in various fields, including Islamic economics, sciences, and mathematics in the Malay Archipelago. Their profound influence extends beyond religious teachings, encompassing broader societal and intellectual realms. *First*, Economic Contributions. Ulama have played a pivotal role in shaping Islamic economic principles, aligning economic practices with Islamic values of justice and ethical compliance. Their efforts have laid the groundwork for an economic framework that is both Sharia-compliant and socially equitable. *Second*, Scientific and Mathematical Advancements. Ulama were not only religious scholars but also pioneers in scientific and mathematical fields. Their works, particularly in the field of mathematics, demonstrate a harmonious blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches. This indicates an advanced understanding of complex mathematical concepts and a commitment to integrating these sciences within the framework of Islamic teachings.

Third, Educational Impact. The Ulama's educational contributions, notably in the pondok system, have been instrumental in promoting a culture of self-reliance and entrepreneurship. Their teachings have fostered a deep understanding of mathematical sciences, preparing students to address practical, daily-life problems through mathematical reasoning. *Fourth*, Cultural and Intellectual Synthesis. The study highlights the Ulama's role in synthesizing Islamic knowledge with local cultural practices. This synthesis has not only facilitated the spread of Islam but also preserved and respected the local customs and

traditions of the Malay Archipelago. *Fifth, Legacy and Influence: The legacy of the Ulama in the Malay Archipelago* is a testament to their enduring influence across multiple disciplines. Their scholarly works and teachings have laid a solid foundation for future generations, bridging traditional Islamic sciences with contemporary needs and challenges. This study underscores the Ulama's significant contributions to the development and propagation of Islamic knowledge, economics, and sciences in the Malay Archipelago. Their efforts have not only enriched the Islamic intellectual tradition but also have had a lasting impact on the societal and educational fabric of the region..

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