

REDISCOVERING THE WALISONGO: A POTENTIAL NEW DESTINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL PILGRIMAGE *ⁱ

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Abstract

The current paper explores the tradition of Walisongo, the nine saints or nine “friends of God”, that according to tradition initiated the islamisation of Java in the XV and XVI centuries. Largely unknown outside of Indonesia, the Walisongo pilgrimage remains confidential in the archipelago as well.

Besides allowing a deeper understanding of the roots of Indonesian religious history and of the spread and acceptance of Islam, rediscovering the Walisongo may help to reintroduce a peaceful image of the Muslim world. In such a way, reactivating outside of the country but also inside the tradition of Walisongo may support the idea of a peaceful religion of traders, of scholars and culture lovers open and able to integrate the traditions of other cultural groups. The Walisongo are said to be at the origin of pesantren (Muslim religious schools) and largely using local arts and culture in their teachings.

In an area of Central and East Java where minority groups may tend to impose the views of a reformist, not to say a rigorist Islam, the Walisongo teachings may offer a “new common vehicle” synonym of understanding, peace and cultural respect.

If the development of an international pilgrimage activity would suppose the setting up of proper infrastructures to do so, it may also boost new areas of services that would definitely support territorial developments in the largest archipelago of the world and in a country that, besides being laic and governed by the principles of Pancasila, is before all the country counting worldwide the largest number of muslim citizens.

In a planet currently governed by globalization, the Walisongo origins, even still discussed, would demonstrate that ideas and religions can be shared, also peacefully, across the land and seas.

Keywords:

Walisongo; Indonesia; pilgrimage; heritage; religious tourism; intercultural dialogue, territorial development, social cohesion

1 - The South East Asian Mediterranean : a space for trade and cultural exchanges

If we make the effort by taking some altitude to project ourselves and contemplate what is currently referred as Indonesia, the largest archipelago in the world would appear both as a natural barrier and the unique sea route between modern India and China.

Soon will appear from the Southern Coast of China – but including Taiwan and Hainan islands - to the Indonesian coastlines the geographical and human space perceived by Denys Lombard as the South East Asian Mediterranean. (Lombard, 1998)

Thus, making a parallel with Mediterranean civilizations, it may become easier to imagine many centuries ago the movements of ships whether looking for trade, piracy or political domination; the encountering of civilizations, cultures, arts, techniques and religions.

The destiny of the Indian Archipelago as Indonesia was named by sailors of the XVI century was to be a crucible in which indigenous, Indian, Chinese and western cultures would mix ; to be a receptacle for Hindu, Buddhist ,Muslim and Christian religions.

As stressed by Georges Coedes « The ancient history of South-East Asian countries can be approached from two sides, the Indian and the Chinese, or better still from both at the same time. » (Coedes G. , 1964).

To « Farther India » (Coedes G. , 1965)¹and particularly to Indonesia, India brought civilization, political and religious organization, literacy, law and order, knowledge and arts.

In territories rich of spices,camphor, various essences, precious woods and even gold, large indianized kingdoms started to appear by the 1st century AD in Funan (localized in Cambodia) and by the 4th century to 6th century across Malay states and Indonesia.

And even if, there remain speculations on the reasons that besides the development of techniques and the spread of Buddhism, pushed Indians to sail East, we may consider trade, thirst for rich territories and adventurous minds as acceptable hypothesis.

In Cambodia, Champa, the Malay Peninsula; Indonesia (Sumatra, Java, and Bali), Burma and Thailand, Hindu and Buddhist rulers took power and developed –by a symbiosis with indigenous beliefs different from one place to another- either inland-agricultural or coastal-trading states.

Probably the success of Hinduism and Buddhism was their capacity to integrate animist and local beliefs (Rahman, 2014) but we may rather consider that « most of the population preserved the essentials of their own culture » (Coedes G. , 1965)² and that « Hinduism has always been and still is the culture of the upper classes, but never became completely that of the masses, who were attached to Indonesian animism and to the ancestor cult.»³ (Coedes G. , 1965)

When it comes to Islam penetration in Indonesia the picture is much more blurred. If the presence of the religion of Mahomet in the South East Mediterranean space as defined earlier is admitted in Canton starting from the 7th century, the evidence of the arrival of Muslim faith in the archipelago is still submitted to conjectures.

For many scholars, Islam came from India (Geertz, 1960) and its spread has a link with the development of trade routes controlled between Egypt (ruled starting 1250 by the Mameluke Sultanate) and South East Asia by Muslim Indians from Gujarat. (Pringle, 2010).

But a Chinese origin might not be excluded if we remember that the Chinese fleet touching Indonesia between 1405 and 1407 was commanded by a Muslim admiral, Zheng He and if we consider the possible sea routes, commercial exchanges and diplomatic ties across South China Sea up to South East Asia coastlines.

¹ Based on G.Coedes definition, « Farther India » consists of Indonesia, or island Southeast Asia except for the Philippines;and the Indochinese Peninsula, or India beyond the Ganges, including the Malay Peninsula. Excluded are Assam, which is simply an extension of India and Bengal, and northern Vietnam, whose history developed outside Indian influence : Coedes G.-The Indianized States of South East Asia-1965- Introduction XVI

² Nicolas J.Krom cited by G.Coedes- p33

³ W. F. Stutterheim cited by G.Coedes- p33

Indeed, much earlier in 1281, the court of China had been sending an embassy composed of Muslims to Malayu (Sriwijaya)⁴ (Coedes G. , 1965). Another embassy (or was it the same?), again conducted by Muslims was sent by the king of Samudra (North Sumatra) to China in 1282. (Ricklefs, 2008)

Definitely the presence in Sumatra of Muslim traders, their proselytism is confirmed by Marco Polo: “(...) first I will tell you about the Kingdom of Ferlec. This kingdom, you must know is so much frequented by the Saracen merchants that they have converted the natives to the law of Mahomet (...)”. (Polo, Yule, & Cordier, 1993)

Being the only maritime path between the European market looking for spices and silk and the offer located in South Asia and China, it is not surprising – if we exclude a tombstone dated 1082 found in Leran, East Java that scientists still consider with caution- to find the earliest trace of Islam in Sumatra and across the Malacca straits.

- In Lamreh (Aceh, North Sumatra)
- In Pasai (North Sumatra)

Contradictions between Chinese and Marco Polo sources conducted scholars to argue on the process of islamization (whether through conversion or adhesion, contact of traders with Arab, Persian, Gujaratee traders or Chinese envoys) and the validity of the evidences (in particular gravestones that might have been imported to Indonesia) of Islamic presence. But we may admit, retaining Azyumardi Azra demonstration that penetration of Islam in Indonesia was not uniform and that there might not be any single theory of islamization or unique time frame applicable to the whole archipelago. (Azra, 2006)

During colonial period and the early years of the Indonesian republic, historical and archaeological researches, also probably influenced by political will, would rather concentrated on Hindu and Buddhist heritages. Also up to recent years, the usually admitted first known Muslim kingdoms were Lambek (1211) and Pasai (called Basmah by Marco Polo and still referred during his visit as a land of animism) in which were found the tombstones of Malik Al Shaleh (died 1292) and of his son Malik Al Dahir (died 1326).

Recent researches, despite the impact of the 2006 Tsunami, made possible the discovery of more graves. By now, Acehese tombstones from the 11th century have been identified. The oldest one, dated 1007 AD was found in Kuta Lubhok, Lamreh, at the extreme North East part of Aceh. (Suprayitno, 2011). But as reminded by Pr E. Edwards Mc Kinnon, in Perlak (Aceh) local legends claim that Islam arrived during the 9th century. (Center, 2012).

2 - Penetration of Islam and modern politics

For Indonesian scholars, there are few doubts that Islam reached Indonesia much earlier probably during the 7th century. Recalling the conclusions of the three conferences (Medan in 1963, Jakarta in 1982 and Aceh in 1983) centered on “The Coming of Islam to Indonesia”, Azhar Arsyad stressed that all reached the same conclusions as regards as the time frame (Arsyad, 2012, May 12th) thus countering the conclusions of many European scientists from the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Dawa’h obligation to propagate and spread for any Muslim the religion of Mahomet, the commercial interest of Hindu and Buddhist elites ready to convert to facilitate trade; the miscibility between Islam and local beliefs, the peaceful attitude of traders probably created the fruitful conditions of dissemination of Islam across the archipelago until the XVI century.

⁴ p202

But in Indonesia, a laic country of 248 million in which 87.46% of the population was declaring its faith to Islam, (INDONESIA, 2010) political aspects are never far from cultural ones.

The decision of President Joko Widodo (also called Jokowi) on March 24th, 2017 to declare, instead of Aceh, Barus in Central Tanapuli, an historical place known for trading camphor and spices located in the west coast of Sumatra, as ground zero of the civilization of Islam Nusantara led some Aceh scholars to call for betrayal. (Bakri, 2017)

Supported by NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), the largest Muslim association in Indonesia and pro-Barus historians the presidential choice would led some of them to state that “It must be symbolically understood that Jokowi acknowledges that the kind of Islam that Indonesia needs is an Islam that embraces differences. Islam Nusantara is an Islam that celebrates the diversity of local traditions and global traditions as shown by Barus in the past” (Halim & Gunawan, 2017).

Indeed, the image of Islam that the Indonesian President and moderate Muslim associations would like to promote to counter extremism and fundamentalism, is somewhere close to the Walisongo teachings.

3 - Rediscovering the Walisongo

As discussed above, the arrival of Islam in Indonesia remains a land of shifting sand and a place for conjecture or animated debates. Luckily the entry door could only be close to the Strait of Malacca.

Exploring the way the religion spread across the archipelago more specifically in Java may even be more hazardous.

The tradition recalls the special place of nine saints or friends of God that by their actions converted a large number of Javanese: the Walisongo

When visiting the islands of the Indian Archipelago during his trip from the Red Sea to Japan, the Portuguese and Christian sailor Tome Pires (Pires, 1515) stressed the difference between Javanese and the neighbour heathen kingdom of Sunda. Also in Sunda (currently West Java), Moors were not welcome “The king of Sunda does not allow Moors in it, except a few of them because it is feared with their cunning they may do there what has been done in Java”.⁵ (Pires, 1515)

We also learn that “the king of Java is a heathen”⁶ (Pires, 1515) and that the Vice-Roy, Guste Pate is always at sea fighting against the moors in particular from Demak sultanate. He elaborates further “Now I will begin to tell about the Mohammedan Pate who are on the sea coast, who are powerful in Java and have all the trade because they are lords of the junks and of the people.

At a time when there were heathens along the sea coast of Java, many merchants used to come, Parsees, Arabs, Gujaratees, Bengalees, Malays and other nationalities, there being many moors among them. They began to trade in the country and to grow rich. They succeeded in way of making mosque, and mollahs came from outside, so that they come in such growing numbers that the sons of these said moors were already Javanese and rich, for they had been in these parts for about seventy years. In some places the heathen Javanese lords turned Mohammedan and these mollahs and the merchant moors took possession of these places. Others had a way of fortifying the places where they lived, and they took people of their own who sailed in their junks, and they

⁵ P 173

⁶ P174

killed the Javanese lords and made themselves lords; and in this way made themselves masters of the sea coast and took over power and trade in Java”⁷ (Pires, 1515)

His description of the way Muslim religion took place is somewhere less idyllic than the peaceful penetration⁸ scholars use to point out.

Besides, the city of Demak appears to be a stronghold for muslim sea fighters; a sultanate largely and definitely related through history and tradition to Sunan Ampel, Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang ,Sunan Kudus and Sunan Kalijaga,

4 - The nine “friends of God”

“Sunan” to express sainthood is preferred in Java to Wali (from Arabic wala, “that is near” meaning a friend, a relative or protector). For some scholars the words comes from “Suhun” translated as “to do honour to” (Ricklefs, 2008)⁹. Hamka precises that it refers to “Susunan” a Javanese word describing the position of hands pressed together, palms touching and fingers pointed upwards and bowing. (Hamka, 1982). A position that has some similarities with the Hindu “Namaste” also referred as “sembah” in Java and Bali thus illustrating the porosity between cultures in that part of the world during ancient times.

Besides Marco Polo, Tome Pires and Odoric de Pordenone (Cordier, 1921); the indo-malay tradition offers various sources (Ricklefs, 2008):

- The Hikayat Raja Raja Pasai (History of the kings of Pasai) composed in Malay around the 15th century
- The Sejarah Malayu (Malay History) dated 1612

Both present the arrival of Islam in Pasai and Samudra and the tales related to the conversion of the respective kings.

- The Babab Tanah Jawi (The history of the land of Java) composed of several texts and presenting the dissemination of Islam due to some of the Walisongo works. The different existing copies do not lead to a unique list of saints that from one version to another might be more than nine
- Sejarah Banten (The history of Banten) written in the 18th century and remembering Sunan Giri tradition
- Two early mystic texts brought back to Holland by the 1stDeutch expedition to Indonesia : the Primbon (hand book) and the Seh Bari text
- “The code of Muslim ethics” revealed by Drewes

Some publications (Kasdi, 2017) wish to introduce the Walisongo as sunni “guardians combination of syari’ah and tasawuf experts who have spread the peaceful and cultural Islam”, sent to Java for a first batch composed of “Maulana Malik Ibrahim, who came from Turkey, he was an expert in ruling a country, MaulanaIshaq came from Samarqand (near Bukhara-Russian South), Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubra from Egypt, Maulana Muhammad al-Magrabi came of Magrib (Morocco), Maulana Malik Israel came from Turkey, Maulana Muhammad Ali Akbar came from Persia (Iran), MaulanaHasanuddin from Palestinian, MaulanaAliyuddin of

⁷ P182

⁹ P 11

Palestinian, and SyekhSubakir came from Persia” at the expressed request of the Muhammad 1st Caliph of the Ottoman Empire.”

But most of scholars are less categorical. M.C Ricklefs on its monumental book “A History of Modern Indonesia since 1200” simply notes “An early Muslim gravestone dated AH 822 (AD 1419) has been found at Gresik, one of the most important East Javanese ports. It marks the burial of one Malik Ibrahim, but since this gentleman was apparently not Javanese it merely confirms the presence of foreign Muslims in Java, and sheds no further light on the question of coastal Javanese conversion. Local traditions, however, say that Malik Ibrahim was one of the first nine apostles of Islam in Java (the *walisanga*), a tradition for which there is no documentary evidence.” (Ricklefs, 2008)¹⁰

Dr HM Zainuddin, wakil rektor of the Universitas Islam Negeri in Malang (also called Univesitas Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang) wrote that the “mysterious” Wali also the first “Islamic missionary” or “father” of the Walisongo is either from Gujarat, Turkey or Persia (Dr Zainuddin) whereas the university website recalls that “Sunan Maulana Malik Ibrahim or Makdum Ibrahim As-Samarkandy (also known as SyeikhMaghribi) was an Uzbek who arrived in Java in 1404 and worked at Gresik and Leran until his death in 1419”

Tan Ta Sen traces a Chinese origin to seven of the ninth Walisongo and considers them as Sino Javanese Muslims. (Sen, 2009)¹¹

Definitely it will be difficult to identify the exact origin of Maulana Malik Ibrahim but it appears from all sources that he created within the ten years he stay there a muslim community in Gresik using “Sufi or Taşawwuf” inspired teachings.

Moreover the Walisongo appear not as apostles of Islam preaching separately all over the archipelago but more as a group of preachers, even linked by blood, marriage or spiritual heritage.

Based on tradition and writings from various authors, the document we propose below attempts to precise the relationships between them.

¹⁰ P6

¹¹ P239

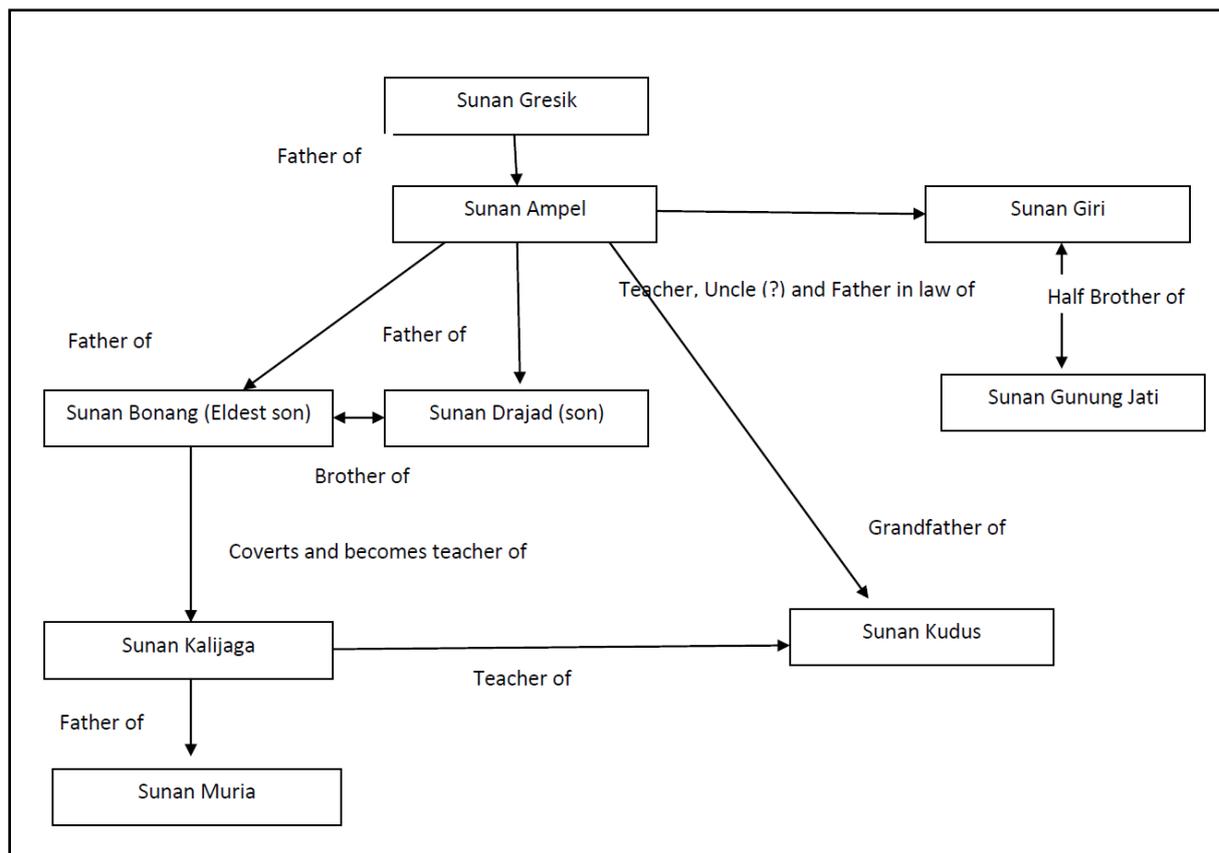


Figure 1. Relationships between the various groups of preachers

We will not consider the saints indicated below as part of the Walisongo namely

- Sunan Prapen
- Maulana Ibrahim Asmorokondi
- Sunan Bejagung
- Syekh Siti Jenar
- Kyai Pandan Arang
- KT Pusponegoro

Neither former President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) that some scholars or politicians would like to include in the list as WaliSepuluh, the 10th Walisongo. (Masduki, 2016).

From the document above it appears that the Dakwah (or Dawah) is before all the task of a group of missionaries mostly coming from the same family (in the large sense).

Conversion will take place

- Either peacefully, by meeting people of Hindu/Buddhist ruled communities through social works and the higher casts through trading, advices or marriage;
- Either through military conquest

Creation of religious centers, mosque and pesantren(religious school) represent a step critical step in the conversion of the masses and the concretization of successful actions towards rulers.

Let us then identify the geographical areas in which Dakwah was conducted by the different Walisongo.

Spiritual name	Name	Alias	Born /In	Area of proselytism	Dead in	Related monument	Remarks
Sunan Gresik	Maulana Malik Ibrahim	Syekh Maghribi Kakek Bantal	Gujarat/ Turkey / Persia / /Ouzbekistan ? According to J.P.Moquette (1912) and based on grave inscriptions origins from Kashan (Persia)	Champa (currently located in Vietnam) Gresik (East Java) In Gresik he converted people of the low class and obtained from the king of Majapahit the possibility to settle in Gresik	Gresik (East Java) April 7 th , 1419	Tombstone in Gresik	Arrives in Gresik in 1404 Probably brother of Maulana Ishaq and son of Syekh Jumadil Qbro or Kubro Maulana Malik Ibrahim is said to be a trader sent for Dakwah to Champa thus coming back to Java after having married a local princess and converted local people His brother Maulana Ishaq went to Pasai (North Sumatra)
Sunan Ampel Son of Sunan Gresik Father of Sunan Bonang Father of Sunan Drajad Grandfather of Sunan Kudus		Raden Rakhmat	? 1401	Surabaya (East Java) Said to be at the origin of the conversion of the Sultanate of Demak (Central Java) Build the mosque of Surabaya in 1421 Said to have contributed to the construction of Demak Mosque in 1479	? 1481	Demak Masjid Agung Surabaya Masjid Ampel	Comes to Java in 1442 to visit a relative, princess of Champa married to the king of Majapahit Iraqi, Yemen or Chinese origins Mother said to be a princess of Champa (see above)
Sunan Giri Nephew of Sunan Ampel and son of his brother Maulana Ishaq Son in law of Sunan Ampel as he married his daughter Half brother of Sunan Gunung Jati	Maulana Abdul Yakin	Raden Paku Sultan Abdul Fakhir Joko Samudra	1442 in Blabangan (Banyuwangi) – East Java	Rise of Mataram (Lombok) Dakwah to Lombok, Sulawesi and Maluku Founder of religious school in Desa Sidomukti, Gresik	?	Grave in Giri-Kebomas (Gresik)	A legend states that the baby was abandoned at sea after his birth by his parents Maulana Ishaq and a princess from Blabangan . The coffin was rescued by sailors and brought back to Gresik where he received Sunan Ampel teachings Sunan Giri may have studied with Raden Patah, first sultan of Demak He traveled to Pasai to receive together with Sunan Bonang

							religious teachings from Maulana Ishaq thus meeting his father
Sunan Bonang Son of Sunan Ampel Brother of Sunan Drajad		Raden Makhdum Ibrahim	Surabaya ?	Bonang , Central Java (Close to Demak) Becomes the first Imam of the Great Mosque of Demak	?	Died in 1525 Grave in Tuban as the ship could not reach Surabaya due to rough sea	Travels to Pasai with Sunan Giri
Sunan Drajad Son of Sunan Ampel Brother of Sunan Bonang	Syarifuddin	Raden Qosim	Surabaya ? 1470	Jelag –Paciran later named Drajat (West Java) He gets a large number of followers and build a mosque in 1502 Develops social and charity works	?	Tomb and museum in Drajat	
Sunan Kalijaga Father of Sunan Muria		Raden Mas Said	? 1460	Presented by the tradition as a hero, magician, diplomat, artist, mystic , peace maker and wise leader Said to have built the mosque of Cirebon (Central Java) A legend states that he also built in one day the Great Mosque of Demak (construction also attributed to Sunan Bonang)	? 1513	Grave in Kadilangu (Demak, Central Java)	Sunan Kalijaga is said to be the son of the regent of Tuban converted to Islam by Sunan Bonang His name comes from an orchard Sunan Kalijaga is definitely presented as a sufi
Sunan Kudus		Ja'far Shodiq	?	Founded Kudus (Central Java) – Kudus means holy city a former name of Jerusalem Creates Al Aqsa Mosque in Kudus using as entrance door the former doors of the Majapahit palace Sragi/ Simo / Gunung Kidul (Central Java)	? 1550		Sunan Kudus has been taught by Sunan Kalija. He is said to be the son of Sunan Ngudung di Jipang
Sunan Muria Son of Sunan Kalijaga		Raden Umar Said	?	Preaching in remote areas Pati/ Juwana/ Kudus/ Jepara	?	Tomb in Mount Muria (Central Java)	
Sunan Gunung Jati Nephew of Sunan Ampel and son of his	Syarif Hidayatullah	Muhammad Nurrudin Sayyid Kamil Syekh Nurullah	Pasai (North Suamatra) 1448 ???	Said to have converted West Java Said to have founded Cirebon	Cirebon 1570 ???	Tomb in Gunung Sembung	Said to have died at a very old age Travelled to Mecca were he

brother Maulana Ishaq		Faletahan					lived during three years
Half brother of Sunan Giri							Returns to the services of the Sultan of Demak
							Marries the Sultan's sister
							Becomes military commander in West Java and conquers West Java and Banten
							Blocks the Portuguese at Sunda Kelapa (old harbor of Batavia the current Jakarta)

Table 1: Geographical areas in which Dakwah was conducted by the different Walisongo

5 - The historical Period

To understand further the dynamic of conversion and the role played by Walisongo it is necessary to precise that the historical period at which they conducted their religious mission corresponds to the decline of Indian kingdoms all over South East Asia and to the arrival of Europeans conquerors.

As discussed earlier, history, colonial rules, maritime trade, penetration of religions mingle and collide in Indonesia also observing what happened in the Strait of Malacca which connects the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea and the Pacific is of the highest interest. The strait is controlled

- from the 7th to the 11th century by the Buddhist empire of Sriwijaya (which is located in the present Palembang)
- Weakened by a war led by the Chola ethnic group (the inhabitants at present-day of Tamil Nadu) the Sriwijaya empire lost its regional hold in the 11th century in favor of Jambi
- In the 14th century, Sriwijaya became a vassal city of the Javanese kingdom Majapahit. The attack by the Hindu warriors of King HayamWuruk of the city of Palembang is located in 1377 by historians.

The escape of a prince of Sriwijaya, Parameswara (Iskandar Shah) is said to be at the origin of the foundation of the city-originally simple sea-counter of Malacca (Malaysia) around 1400.

- In the 15th century, the Sultanate of Malacca extends its influence over the Strait, the Malay Peninsula, the Riau Islands (now Indonesian Kabupaten) and the East Coast of Sumatra. But above all, Malacca becomes a center of influence both for language (which becomes lingua franca) and Malay culture for Islam.
- The fall of the city in the hands of the Portuguese in 1511 will lead to the development of the Johor and Perak dynasties but also the emergence of Brunei. The successors of Diego Lopez de Sequeira and Alfonso de Albuquerque extend their control over the city until 1641, date at which they were defeated by a Dutch-Malay coalition. During these 130 years their port activities had to suffer from competition from other sultanates; the spread of Catholicism was held back by the solid implantation of Islam, their commercial activities threatened by the Chinese empire and the Dutch competitors

In Java, HayamWuruk (also called Rajasanagara) access to the throne of Majapahit in 1350 for a reign of 39 years. The king and its Prime Minister Gajah Mada expand the kingdom to its largest frontiers. As indicated by

Coedes, "Roughly, the kingdom comprised all of what was to become the Dutch East Indies (with perhaps the exception of the north of Celebes) and a great part of the Malay Peninsula, but it did not extend to the Philippines." (Coedes G. , 1965)¹². Evidences exist of the control also of Bali and of Sumbawa as well of the exchanges with other Hindu States of Asia and with China.

With the death of Hayam Wuruk and its successor Vikramavardhana, decline started due to

- The growing influence of Malacca and the pressure it exerted on Majapahit
- The propagation of Islam at first on the coastlines at the initiative of traders thus all over the country
- Succession conflicts that tend to destabilize the kingdom
- The Chinese pressure on Java
- The competition that Muslim controlled harbors besides Malacca exert on trade

Hindu culture and religion, taking the opportunity of the path opened under Rajasanagara, slightly withdrew to Bali opening even more largely the place to Islam penetration.

6 - Arts, Culture and Religion

The Persian, Turkish or Ouzkekh possible origins of Sunan Gresik plead for him being an adept of Sufism, a school of practices that let a large part to mysticism and the inner research of God. Also the missionary practices of the Walisongo may have similarities with the ones of Sufi in Kashmir using "persuasion, discussion and discourse" (Malik, 2003)

Walisongo are also said to be mystic sometimes magicians ; at least being gifted with supra natural powers. For sure they were having a extreme sensitivity and sense of psychology, accepting to introduce into their teachings local beliefs but most of all indigenous traditions and arts.

It is particularly true for :

- Sunan Bonang, said to use Gamelan, a traditional group of instruments largely based on percussions from Java and Bali, in order to adapt traditional songs to Islam.
The poetic and religious song Tombo Ati, from Tuban regency is associated with his name
- Sunan Drajad said to have created melodies for Gamelan in particular the Gending Pangkur theme
- Sunan Kudus, famous for using Wayang Golek, the Indonesian puppets usually used for Sanskrit epics Mahabharata and Ramayana, incorporating Hindu and Buddhist symbols in architecture; to teach Tawhid, the central concepts of Islam, by using stories
- Sunan Kalijaga that besides also using Wayang and Music is refered as imposing Baju Takwa, a particular way of dressing for muslims
- Sunan Muria for using traditional instruments from the gamelan suit and being particularly knowledgeable in Javanese culture

Finally Walisongo initiated the opening of "Pesantren" or muslim religious schools. Currently existing Indonesian religious schools still trace their origins to that period

¹² P259

7 - Walisongo and Patrimony

If the proselytism of Walisongo had effects all over Java, the cultural heritage mostly tombs, mausoleum or mosques can be found mainly in two provinces: East Java and Central Java.

PROVINCE	CITY	WALI	REMARKS
East Java	Gresik	Sunan Gresik	The tombstone is located in the center of the city
	Surabaya	Sunan Ampel	Located in the west of Ampel Mosque, Surabaya
	Gresik	Sunan Giri	Located on the hills
	Tuban	Sunan Bonang	The tombstone is located close to the Great Mosque of Tuban
	Lamongan	Sunan Drajad	Located on the village, A museum can be visited
Central Java	Kudus	Sunan Kudus	Located in the Great Mosque of Kudus dated 1549
	Kudus	Sunan Muria	The tomb is located in Mount Muria, 45 km from Kudus
	Demak	Sunan Kalijaga	Mausoleum near Kadilangu The Great Mosque of Demak said to be built by Raden Patah is also of interest
	Cirebon	Sunan Gunungjati	Located 5 km from the city on a rock formerly home of the Hindu port of Caruban

Table 2. Tombs, mausoleum or mosques can be found mainly in two provinces : East Java and Central Java

Both are well connected either by air or sea through international airports and large sea harbors offering to the development of international pilgrimage the needed logistics platforms:

- Surabaya for East Java
- Semarang for Central Java

With the development of the middle class since the early 90's, the abrogation of strict controls on the movement of local population and affordable airfares or transport means, Indonesian people started to visit and travel all over the country, thus discovering the archipelago.

For places of Muslim pilgrimage the effects are of several types:

- A huge increase on the needs for mass transportations at local and national levels
- The development sometimes chaotic and non standardized of tourism infrastructures including hotels
- The appearing of food and catering around the places of interest
- The setting up of permanent or non-permanent shops selling pilgrim souvenirs
- The degradation of the visited sites particularly tombstones (Prihantoro & Yuristiadhi, 2016)

Now, tour- operators offer Walisongo related organized trips.

In some cases local governments may create special days or festivities under the form of religious festivals or celebration days. (Fealy & White, 2008)

Indonesian market in itself is huge considering a local population of 248 million people in 2015 that shall reach 320 million by 2050. Besides the Presidential Decree 21-2016, dated March 2nd 2016 creating Short Stay Visa Free facilities for 169 countries – many of Muslim faith- may without doubt have a positive impact on religious tourism.

8 - Conclusion

The Walisongo tradition, between legends, myths and history reveals the deep roots of the Hindu and Pre-islamic Indonesian civilization. It questions the way Islam arrived in Indonesia, the period at which initial contacts were made and the communication Muslim preachers used, to convert at the same time animist people from low condition and high Hindu Buddhist rulers.

It express the essence of Islam Nusantara as Indonesian elites call the so particular Islam practiced in the archipelago tinted of indigenous beliefs, traditions and arts.

Promoting such a pilgrimage internationally has a sense, as it can demonstrate the openness and somehow peaceful way, the “nine friends of God” used to promote Islam and realize the Dakwah.

To anyone willing to understand Indonesia the Walisongo tradition is a revelation of the complexity of the world and culture he is diving in.

Many are the Indonesian politicians or foreign diplomats – such as the Australian Ambassador, Paul Grigson- willing to show, by doing the “tombstones tour” how strong are the links uniting them with the archipelago.

Of course, to go further, data (mostly absent) on tourists and pilgrims will need to be collected; the graves, tombstones and traditional monuments need to be protected from time and tourists attempts.

More, at a time, Indonesia is at the crossroads (Fournié & Dou, 2017) a confrontation around the thematic of Walisongo shall absolutely be avoided between Traditionalists and supporters of Reformist Islam.

Origin of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, its sufi inspired Islam could become indeed areas of debate. Even the nature of Walisongo could be a source of trouble. As expressed by Irfan Arwas, head of the executive board of the Indonesian Mujahideen Council , an organization inspired by Wahhabism and Salafism:”Muslims are not allowed to idolize anyone, (Pilgrims) pray to dead people. They idolize the Walisongo” (Topsfield, 2016).

Besides the development of the Walisongo pilgrimage, and as in the Wayang Golek theatre used to explore the Kurukshetra War or Mahabharata War, a struggle between ideas, between visions of Islam may take place.

Could those WayangGolek so beneficial to Sunan Kudus to spread its teachings and successfully with the other Wali convert Java between the 14th to 16th centuries become an area of discord during the 21stone ?

We prefer to see the Walisongo pilgrimage as a way, if properly monitored by Indonesian authorities to promote Indonesian culture worldwide, protect Indonesian and Islamic related patrimoine, support regional and local development.

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