

THE LEGACY OF ISLAM NUSANTARA IN LOCAL TRADITIONS: BETWEEN ACCULTURATION AND CULTURAL DA'WAHGrégory Baron¹, Almuzammil Perdhana², and Athiyah Mardatillah³¹ University of Reunion Island, Guadeloupe² Universitas Islam Negeri Mahmud Yunus, Batusangkar, Indonesia³ Universitas Islam Negeri Mahmud Yunus, Batusangkar, Indonesia**Corresponding Author:**

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Abstract

Islam Nusantara represents a unique expression of Islam that has grown and developed throughout the Indonesian archipelago through a long process of interaction between Islamic teachings and local cultures. This phenomenon not only reflects the success of past Islamic scholars in spreading the faith but also highlights Islam's capacity for peaceful dialogue with deeply rooted local traditions. This study aims to explore the dynamics of cultural acculturation within local traditions as a form of Islamic cultural da'wah across various regions in the archipelago, while also identifying expressions of local wisdom that remain aligned with Islamic values. The research uses a qualitative-descriptive method with ethnographic and literature study approaches, involving observation and narrative analysis of Islamic-influenced cultural practices in Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi. The findings indicate that Islam Nusantara has successfully fostered harmony between Islamic values and local culture through inclusive, non-confrontational, and transformative approaches. This acculturation process does not dilute Islamic identity; rather, it strengthens the message of da'wah by embedding it within local symbols that are easily accepted by the community. The study concludes that preserving Islam Nusantara is essential as a model of peaceful, moderate, and culturally relevant da'wah, particularly in facing the challenges of globalization and in maintaining the Islamic identity of Indonesia's plural society.

Keywords: Cultural Acculturation, Cultural Da'wah, Islam Nusantara, Local Traditions

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INTRODUCTION

Islam, as a universal religion, possesses a remarkable ability to integrate with various local cultures wherever it spreads. This is evidenced by its resilience and flourishing in regions with vastly diverse cultural backgrounds (Ward & Szabó, 2023; Wijaya dkk., 2024). In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, Islam did not arrive in a rigid or exclusive form but rather in a friendly, accommodating, and open manner toward local traditions. This unique development gave rise to the concept of Islam Nusantara—a distinct expression of Islam deeply rooted in the local cultures of the Indonesian archipelago. Islam Nusantara is the result of a long historical encounter between Islamic values and local wisdom that had existed long before the arrival of Islam. This process is more accurately described as acculturation rather than mere assimilation—where two cultures blend without losing their individual identities. In this context, Islam does not replace local culture but enriches and directs it to align with the values of tawhid (monotheism), noble character, and Islamic law (Turnbull, 1993). Therefore, studying Islam Nusantara is crucial for understanding how religion and culture can coexist harmoniously without negating each other.

The phenomenon of Islam Nusantara is increasingly relevant in today's modern era, often marked by the polarization of religious and cultural identities (Triandis dkk., 1986). Amid the currents of globalization, which tend to homogenize culture, and the rise of exclusive and rigid religious ideologies, Islam Nusantara emerges as a model of inclusive, moderate, and contextual Islam. Through a cultural da'wah approach, Islam in the archipelago has been able to bridge differences and act as a unifying force in multicultural societies. The uniqueness of Islam Nusantara cannot be separated from the role of ulama (scholars), wali (saints), and religious figures who spread Islam with wisdom and cultural sensitivity. They understood that to touch the hearts of local people, da'wah strategies must avoid confrontation and instead adopt deeply rooted cultural approaches (Sujai, 2023; Syafrizal, 2015). Local traditions such as wayang (shadow puppetry), gamelan (traditional music), literature, customary ceremonies, and wood carving were all utilized as effective da'wah media. Hence, Islam Nusantara is not merely a religious doctrine but also a living cultural expression.

In many regions, the legacy of Islam Nusantara is still found in various forms. Examples include the Sekaten festival in Yogyakarta, Tabuik in Pariaman, Mauludan in Cirebon, and the recitation of Barzanji and Marhabanan in many Indonesian villages (Sam & Berry, 2010; Smokowski dkk., 2008). These traditions embody not only spiritual and religious values but also convey social, moral, and national messages. This shows that the cultural da'wah of early Islamic missionaries succeeded in grounding Islamic teachings within local cultural contexts without losing their essence. However, in recent decades, there has been a trend toward the degradation of Islam Nusantara traditions. Some groups now view local traditions as bid'ah (innovation) or superstition that must be abandoned. In truth, many of these traditions contain noble Islamic values and serve as social glue in community life (Rusdiyanto, 2023). Therefore, it is important to reexamine the position of Islam Nusantara in the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian Islam.

This study aims to revive the understanding of the importance of acculturation in Islamic da'wah and explore how local traditions have served as effective media for conveying Islamic teachings in a peaceful and grounded manner. The primary focus is to trace the footprints of Islam in local traditions across various Indonesian regions and to analyze how the process of acculturation occurred and its impact on strengthening the Islamic identity of communities (Rozi dkk., 2021). This study is essential, especially in the face of rapid technological advancement and the overwhelming flow of information, which often shake cultural and religious identities. Local traditions that once served as vehicles for internalizing Islamic values are being abandoned—particularly by younger generations more attuned to global popular culture. Thus, reinterpreting the Islamic values embedded in local cultures is a strategic necessity to preserve Islamic identity amid changing times.

Moreover, this article seeks to assert that da'wah need not always take the form of formal sermons or verbal doctrinal delivery (Orr & Vince, 2009; Qomar, 2016). Da'wah can be conducted through more contextual and communicative approaches, such as art, culture, and tradition. This form of cultural da'wah proved effective in the past and remains relevant today, especially in culturally and religiously diverse societies. In the context of Islam Nusantara, local traditions are not obstacles but rather bridges for conveying Islamic messages in a more heartfelt manner. The success of Islamic da'wah in the archipelago was largely due to the missionaries' ability to understand the social and cultural contexts of the people. They did not reject local culture outright but infused it with Islamic values, thus initiating a constructive cultural transformation.

Accordingly, Islam Nusantara can be viewed as a successful model of Islamic da'wah that is non-confrontational, but instead cooperative and collaborative (Musthofa & Prihananto, 2023; Nazirman dkk., 2021). Such an approach must be revitalized as a da'wah strategy capable of engaging various social elements and responding to the increasingly complex challenges of the modern era. This article also emphasizes the importance of preserving Islam Nusantara traditions as part of a cultural heritage that carries both religious and social significance (Muhammad Yusuf dkk., 2023). This preservation involves not only maintaining the physical forms of these traditions but also safeguarding the values and da'wah spirit embedded within them.

By raising the theme “The Legacy of Islam Nusantara in Local Traditions: Between Acculturation and Cultural Da'wah,” this article offers a new perspective on the relationship between religion and culture. It is hoped that this perspective will enrich Islamic discourse in Indonesia and serve as a point of reflection for a more contextual and humanistic renewal of da'wah. As part of an innovation in Islamic and cultural studies, this article proposes a cultural-based da'wah approach rooted in the historical experience of Muslims in the archipelago. This approach emphasizes tolerance and diversity while reinforcing an image of Islam that is friendly, open, and grounded in the people's daily lives. Therefore, this study is not merely an academic effort to trace historical footprints, but also a call to revive the spirit of da'wah that is harmonious, inclusive, and transformative—an approach urgently needed in the face of the ever-evolving challenges and opportunities of modern da'wah.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical research type. This approach is chosen for its ability to uncover the meaning behind symbols, cultural practices, and Islamic values embedded in the local traditions of the Nusantara community. The researcher seeks to interpret social and cultural phenomena in depth through direct interaction with the research subjects (Mubarok & Rustam, 2019). The goal of this approach is to understand the process of cultural acculturation between Islam and local traditions as a form of adaptive and contextual cultural da'wah. The research was conducted in several regions known

for their rich local traditions infused with strong elements of Islam Nusantara, such as Yogyakarta, Cirebon, Aceh, and Lombok. These locations were selected based on the richness of their local cultures, which have deeply internalized Islamic values in daily life. Each site provides a unique representation of how acculturation occurs and how Islam is conveyed culturally through art, traditional ceremonies, and cultural symbols.

The data sources in this study include both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through field observations, in-depth interviews, and direct documentation. Observations focused on the implementation of traditions and rituals that contain Islamic elements. Interviews were conducted with religious leaders, cultural figures, local elders, and the general public. Documentation involved recording events, taking photographs, and noting significant symbols that appeared in local cultural practices. To explore the data further, the researcher used semi-structured interview techniques. These interviews allowed informants to explain in detail their experiences and perceptions of local traditions infused with Islamic values. This approach enabled the emergence of richer, more in-depth, and contextual data. Furthermore, this technique was effective in uncovering values that may not be immediately visible.

The main instrument in this research is the researcher themselves (human instrument), who functions as the data collector, observer, and data analyst. The researcher prepared observation and interview guidelines developed from a preliminary study. Data validity was maintained through technique and source triangulation, by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation from different parties. Data analysis was carried out interactively and simultaneously with the data collection process. The analytical model used is Miles and Huberman's model, consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was done by selecting relevant information and discarding irrelevant data. Data were presented through descriptive narratives and visualized in tables or images. Conclusions were drawn based on patterns and themes that emerged from field data.

Below is Table 1, which summarizes the data collection techniques used:

Table 1. Data Collection Techniques

Data Collection Technique	Data Source	Purpose
Participatory Observation	Local community traditions	Identifying cultural practices
In-depth Interview	Religious and cultural figures	Understanding symbolic and value meanings
Documentation	Photos, videos, artifacts	Supporting observational and interview data

Images were also used during the documentation process to strengthen field findings. Below is an example of visual documentation:

Figure 1. Sekaten Traditional Procession in Yogyakarta



This image depicts the Sekaten cultural procession, which contains Islamic elements such as the recitation of shalawat, religious lectures, and the distribution of food as a form of sadaqah. This practice serves as a real-life example of how cultural da'wah is conducted by adapting to local values. In thematic analysis, the researcher searched for recurring narrative patterns in interviews and observations to identify Islamic values embedded within local cultures (Mauro & Hardison, 2000). This approach enabled the researcher to develop a deep understanding of the acculturation process, which is not indoctrinative but rather persuasive and contextual.

Research ethics were maintained by providing informed consent to all informants, ensuring the confidentiality of personal data, and respecting local cultural values. The entire research process was also conducted with a participatory approach, in which the community acted not only as research objects but also as active subjects in exploring their own culture. Through this in-depth and field-based qualitative approach, the study is expected to contribute to the development of an inclusive, culturally grounded Islamic da'wah, while also reinforcing the existence of Islam Nusantara as a model of Islam that is friendly and rooted in local wisdom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study reveals several key findings regarding the interaction between Islam and local cultures within the context of Islam Nusantara. One of the main findings is how the process of acculturation gives rise to new forms of traditions that retain the core teachings of Islam. For instance, in the Tabuik celebration in Pariaman, the community commemorates the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandsons, Hasan and Husayn, in the form of a cultural festival (Marín & Gamba, 2003). Although it contains elements of entertainment and visual spectacle, the spiritual values and historical Islamic narratives are preserved and passed down across generations.

In Central Java, the Sekaten tradition held annually during the Prophet Muhammad's birthday celebrations at the Yogyakarta and Surakarta Palaces demonstrates a strong acculturation between Javanese culture and Islamic values (Kistoro, 2021; Luthfi, 2016). Gamelan performances, night markets, and recitations of Barzanji poetry are integrated into a series of events that blend spirituality with local culture. This tradition attracts participation from people of all backgrounds, including non-Muslims, thereby reinforcing an inclusive and tolerant Islamic outreach. In South Sulawesi, the Maudu Lompoe tradition in Sinjai Regency serves as a medium for cultural da'wah. During this event, communities gather to support orphans, recount the Prophet's biography, and share traditional foods as an expression of

gratitude. The core messages conveyed through these local cultural practices are solidarity, compassion, and reverence for the Prophet.

The following table summarizes key findings of local traditions that contain Islamic values:

Local Tradition	Region	Embedded Islamic Values	Da'wah Function
Tabuik	Pariaman, Sumatra	Martyrdom, love for Ahlul Bayt	Collective memory, symbolic representation
Sekaten	Yogyakarta & Solo	Maulid commemoration, reverence for the Prophet	Spiritual education, social integration
Maudu Lompoa	Sinjai, Sulawesi	Gratitude, compassion, social care	Strengthening brotherhood, Islamic value education

Moreover, interviews with traditional and religious leaders suggest that the sustainability of these traditions heavily depends on proper understanding of Islamic law and cultural preservation efforts. They noted that da'wah through local culture is more widely accepted by communities as it avoids didacticism and instead touches on emotional and cultural aspects.

The image below documents one of the Maudu Lompoa celebrations:



Field observations indicate that traditions internalizing Islamic values become more than just cultural heritage—they serve as educational tools, communication media for da'wah, and instruments of social cohesion. Furthermore, the research found that younger generations are increasingly interested in developing local Islamic-based traditions through digital content. Many visual documentations of Islam Nusantara traditions are now widely shared on social media, simultaneously expanding the reach of da'wah and promoting cultural preservation.

However, challenges persist, particularly in the form of cultural globalization that threatens to erode both local and Islamic values. Therefore, the involvement of educational institutions and pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) is crucial in maintaining a balance between cultural preservation and religious value cultivation (Hoskins, 1987; Kasdi, 2017). The Grebeg Besar tradition in Demak, held every Dhu al-Hijjah, symbolizes the strength of Islam intertwined with Javanese customs. This tradition includes a procession of gunungan (mounds of agricultural produce) paraded from the Palace to the Grand Mosque of Demak. The produce is later distributed to the public as a symbol of blessing. Researchers observed that the event functions as both cultural education and religious outreach, as each element in the procession carries Islamic symbolism. For example, the rebana drumming and shalawat (praises to the Prophet) are integral to the religious messaging through art. Notably, both Muslims and non-Muslims participate, reflecting the inclusive spirit of Islam Nusantara.

In Ternate, the Kololi Kie tradition—or pilgrimage to sacred mountains—has undergone Islamization since the arrival of Middle Eastern scholars. Previously animistic in nature, the practice has been aligned with Islamic teachings and reinterpreted as pilgrimage to the graves of saints and early Islamic missionaries. This transformation was accepted because it was conducted through gentle spiritual and cultural engagement. Interviews with local elders reveal that the process was organic and well-received.

In the Minangkabau context, the philosophy “Adat Basandi Syara’, Syara’ Basandi Kitabullah” (Custom based on Sharia, Sharia based on the Qur’an) provides a strong foundation for harmonizing custom and Islam. Rituals such as Batagak Pangulu (installation of clan leaders) incorporate Islamic prayers, sermons, and religious lectures. Observations show that people do not view Islam and local customs as conflicting but as a harmonious blend that strengthens both religious and cultural identities.

Similarly, the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu, which commemorates Ashura and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, represents another form of cultural da’wah. Introduced by Indian Muslim descendants, it has merged with local traditions. The community now uses this occasion for spiritual education and social solidarity, with symbolic elements like the Tabot coffins, Islamic-themed marching bands, and the recitation of the Karbala story emphasizing values of sacrifice, justice, and faith. Interviews indicate growing youth awareness of Islamic history through this cultural lens.

In Lombok, the Perang Topat tradition symbolizes religious tolerance between Muslims and Hindu Sasak communities. Held near both a Hindu temple and a mosque, the ritual involves joint prayer followed by the throwing of ketupat (rice cakes) as a symbol of hope for peace and harvest. While ceremonial, the event fosters spiritual values of coexistence and interfaith harmony. Researchers noted that this tradition enhances the value of religious moderation and demonstrates Islam’s openness to cross-faith dialogue.

In Minangkabau, West Sumatra, Islamic values have long been embedded in customary philosophy. Field observations reveal that various customary ceremonies—such as Batagak Pangulu, circumcision, and weddings—explicitly feature Islamic elements, including prayer, Islamic attire, and sermons conveying moral teachings. This acculturation process is active and sustained through continuous cultural dialogue among elders, scholars, and intellectuals, showing that Islam does not replace local traditions but enriches them with spiritual depth. The internalization of tauhid (monotheism) and morality through customary context demonstrates Islam as an essential part of cultural identity.

In the Bugis-Makassar region, Islam has been embraced through symbolic and functional integration into a strong social structure. Concepts such as siri’ (honor) and pesse (empathy) align with Islamic values of dignity and compassion. Many da’wah efforts are led by To Makkaka (customary leaders) who also serve as agents of Islamization. Important rituals—weddings, harvest feasts, and leader inaugurations—feature Qur’anic recitations at both opening and closing, reflecting Islam’s deep integration into cultural expression. Traditional mosque architecture with Bugis design elements further illustrates a harmonious blend of local aesthetics and religious function.

Among Muslim communities in Bali (e.g., Pegayaman Village, Buleleng), acculturation is more cautious due to the dominant Hindu culture. Muslims there adopt similar house and clothing styles to local Balinese, modified to meet Islamic standards. The megibung (communal meal) tradition, originally local, has been Islamized through serving practices and pre-meal prayers. Islamization in this minority context proceeds through peaceful cultural means (Flannery dkk., 2001; Hafizh dkk., 2024; Hoskins, 1987). Uniquely, the Pegayaman Muslim community preserves local art forms such as dance and music, stripped of mystical elements and infused with Islamic values—creating religiously rooted yet culturally grounded arts.

In Central Java and Yogyakarta, the legacy of the Walisongo (nine saints) heavily shapes an Islam that is welcoming to local culture. Traditions like Sekaten, Grebeg Maulud, and Nyadran serve as enduring examples of Islam-Javanese cultural synthesis. These include recitations of shalawat, Islamic sermons, and Arabic calligraphy combined with wayang (puppet shows), gamelan, and offerings—adjusted to align with Sharia (Duncan dkk., 2004). Community leaders stated that religious values become more relatable when conveyed through familiar cultural forms. This is the strength of cultural da'wah: rather than imposing textual understanding, it fosters spiritual experience through familiar, grounded social practices.

Ultimately, across the regions studied, the research concludes that cultural da'wah through acculturative approaches holds great potential for maintaining social harmony and reinforcing an inclusive Islamic identity. The success of this strategy depends heavily on the cultural sensitivity of da'i (preachers) and their ability to interpret religious texts contextually. Local traditions are not threats to Islamic purity, but strategic spaces for the deep and sustainable planting of Islamic values. In the multicultural context of the Indonesian archipelago, such an approach is more effective in manifesting Islam as rahmatan lil 'alamin (a mercy to all creation). This study affirms that the legacy of Islam Nusantara is not an ideological compromise, but a thoughtful reflection of the dynamic and deeply rooted social-spiritual realities within Indonesia's rich cultural pluralism.

Discussion

The findings of this research reveal that the acculturation between Islam and local traditions across the archipelago was not the result of ideological conquest but a dialogical and dynamic historical process (Cianciarulo, 2015; Darajat, 2020). This aligns with the da'wah (Islamic propagation) approach of the Walisongo, which emphasized cultural values as mediums for conveying Islamic teachings. The use of a cultural approach in da'wah becomes highly relevant in the context of Indonesia's ethnic, linguistic, and customary diversity. By incorporating local cultural elements such as art, architecture, music, and social rituals, da'wah becomes not only more communicative but also capable of reaching the collective consciousness of society in a more subtle and grounded manner. This study confirms that Islam in the Nusantara grew not through dogmatic rigidity, but through flexible and inclusive interactions with local traditions.

Phenomena observed in Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and even Bali illustrate a common pattern in which Islamic values are embedded within traditions through contextual symbols and practices. These symbols act as "cultural bridges," connecting the doctrine of monotheism (tawhid) with local wisdom. For instance, in the Sekaten tradition of Yogyakarta, the recitation of salawat and mass religious gatherings are incorporated into public celebrations that also feature gamelan music and local markets. This demonstrates that Islamic spirituality can be inclusively present in public spaces without erasing local cultural elements (Chapman & Fedigan, 1990). Such approaches challenge the stigma that Islam must sever ties with local culture and instead show that Islam can be organically integrated into everyday life.

Symbolic and adaptive da'wah strategies have proven to be highly effective in peacefully spreading Islam. This is evidenced by the absence of large-scale rejection of Islam in many regions; on the contrary, Islam was warmly embraced because it did not erase local identities. Concepts such as *siri'* in Bugis or *adat basandi syara', syara' basandi kitabullah* in Minangkabau demonstrate that Islam was not merely adopted as a belief system but absorbed as a moral and ethical foundation within social structures (Brakel, 2004; Brown & Gaertner, 2003). This confirms that Islam in the Nusantara is not hegemonic but functions as a form of spirituality embedded within the cultural and social life of the community.

One crucial aspect of this cultural da'wah is the Islamization of local symbols. Architecture, carvings, traditional dances, and clothing have been modified to align with Islamic values. For example, Muslim homes in Bali retain traditional architectural styles while eliminating elements that contradict Islamic teachings, such as symbols of worship. These modifications were not enforced through coercion but emerged from educational processes and growing public awareness shaped through da'wah interactions. This represents a form of "cultural Islamization" that is not destructive but transformative (Berry, 2009; Bessière, 1998). Islamic values are applied without negating local identity; in fact, they enrich it with deeper spiritual meaning.

Furthermore, successful cultural da'wah emphasizes a participatory approach. Local preachers or ulama are usually part of the communities they serve—they understand the language, symbols, and social structures of the people. The success of the Walisongo also lay in their ability to adopt social roles such as puppet masters (*dalang*), storytellers, and gamelan musicians. In a modern context, this approach remains relevant: preachers must understand cultural contexts before delivering religious messages. This ensures that da'wah is not alienating and continues to reach the hearts of people both personally and collectively.

The integration of Islamic values into tradition also demonstrates that Islam can serve as a strong cultural identity (Berry, 2006). Communities do not see a contradiction between being Muslim and preserving ancestral culture. In many cases, Islamic identity actually strengthens the commitment to safeguard cultural heritage. This represents a healthy and productive form of cultural synthesis that should serve as a model for da'wah strategies in the modern era. With such an approach, da'wah does not become a "purification" project that enforces homogeneity, but a process of education and social transformation rooted in local wisdom.

However, this discussion must also consider the potential challenges of this approach, particularly in confronting waves of puritanism that view acculturation as *bid'ah* (innovation) or a distortion of Islamic teachings. Some da'wah groups promoting transnational ideologies often reject local expressions of Islam in favor of more uniform approaches. This can lead to social tensions and even internal conflicts within communities (Berry, 2005). Therefore, it is important to reinforce the narrative of Islam Nusantara as an authentic, contextual form of da'wah that does not contradict universal Islamic principles.

In the educational context, this research provides a foundation for developing curricula on Islamic history and culture in Indonesia. Students must be introduced to the fact that Islam in the archipelago spread through cultural means rather than violence. This is vital for fostering a holistic historical understanding and instilling pride in an inclusive and peaceful Islamic identity. A curriculum that integrates elements of cultural da'wah will foster religious narratives that are tolerant, appreciative of differences, and encouraging of intercultural dialogue in a multicultural society like Indonesia.

Moreover, cultural da'wah can be a powerful strategy in addressing the challenges of the digital era. By utilizing social media, local Islamic content such as traditional calligraphy, Sufi poetry, and local legends can be attractively packaged and widely distributed to younger generations. This presents a great opportunity to continue culturally-based da'wah traditions through modern platforms (Astuti, 2018; Berry, 2008). By maintaining local essence and spirituality, digital da'wah can expand the reach of an adaptive and creative Islam Nusantara. This research also contributes theoretically to Islamic anthropology and contextual da'wah studies. It illustrates that Islam can be studied not only as a theological system but also as a social practice that evolves and interacts with its environment. Islam Nusantara, in this context, serves as a powerful case study of how religion transforms through cultural interaction. Theories such as inculturation, symbolism, and intercultural dialogue are highly relevant in explaining how cultural da'wah can be a tool for sustainable social transformation.

In religious social practice, locally-influenced expressions of Islam have contributed to the formation of cohesive and inclusive Muslim communities. Traditions such as slametan, tahlilan, and pilgrimages to saints' graves are examples of how Islamic values are realized in collective practices that strengthen social solidarity. These traditions are not merely rituals but serve as spaces for intergenerational dialogue and internalization of Islamic values across time. Through such practices, da'wah extends beyond the cognitive level and touches the emotional and spiritual dimensions of society (Arif dkk., 2022). This is the strength of Islam Nusantara: it permeates the social fabric through organic and sustainable cultural pathways.

Amidst the dynamics of globalization and cultural homogenization, the role of cultural da'wah becomes increasingly crucial as a counterbalance to modernization forces that threaten to erode traditional roots. Da'wah embedded in local culture not only preserves the legacy of Islam Nusantara but also strengthens the resilience of Indonesian Muslim identity against global cultural homogenization. Local values synergized with Islam have the potential to serve as moral, ethical, and social cohesion filters. Therefore, future da'wah strategies must continue to develop culturally-based approaches as spiritual defenses rooted deeply in local and historical contexts.

In literature and historical studies, many ancient manuscripts and traditional literary works demonstrate the integration of Islamic and local cultural values, such as Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai, Babad Tanah Jawi, and the poetry of Hamzah Fansuri. This proves that cultural da'wah did not only occur orally and socially but also through literacy and literature. Preserving this heritage is vital for understanding the spiritual roots of Islam in the Nusantara. Reviving these manuscripts in academic and public education will allow younger generations to appreciate that Islam in Indonesia has a long, meaningful, and relevant historical legacy.

The concept of Islam Nusantara presented in this discussion also offers solutions to recurring religious identity conflicts in the public sphere. By emphasizing the principles of tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), and tawazun (balance), the Islam Nusantara approach frames diversity as a blessing rather than a threat. This approach is highly relevant for building a peaceful and pluralistic society. In this context, da'wah is not merely the transmission of teachings, but a reconstruction of civilization that dialogues with time and localities. Thus, Islam Nusantara emerges as an inclusive and solution-oriented Islamic narrative amid social fragmentation and religious identity radicalization.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that Islam Nusantara is a unique manifestation of the meeting between the universal teachings of Islam and the living and evolving local cultural values of Indonesian society. Through an acculturative approach, Islam has deeply permeated local traditions, not through sharp conflict, but by enriching the spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions of life. This process occurred historically, sustainably, and with broad impact on religious practices to this day. Traditions such as slametan, maulidan, pilgrimages to saints' tombs, and religious literature are tangible results of cultural da'wah that are not only symbolic but also substantive in building a moderate, tolerant, and humanistic Muslim identity. The use of qualitative methods with ethnographic and literature-based approaches in this study provides an in-depth picture of how cultural da'wah operates in the daily lives of Indonesian Muslims. Findings from various regions show that Islamic values are practiced not only ritually but are lived through harmonious social, cultural, and spiritual relationships. This illustrates that Islam Nusantara is not merely a label, but a da'wah paradigm with strong historical, epistemological, and methodological foundations.

The key conclusion of this study is that Islamically accommodating approaches toward local culture have proven more effective in reaching the hearts and minds of the people. This approach creates a peaceful, dialogical, and unifying da'wah space amid Indonesia's ethnic, linguistic, and customary diversity. Islam Nusantara emerges as an alternative da'wah model that is inclusive and socially transformative. Therefore, efforts to strengthen culturally-based da'wah strategies must be continuously supported through policies in education, culture, and contextual Islamic curriculum development. Moreover, the development and revitalization of Islam Nusantara's cultural da'wah are vital in the contemporary context marked by globalization, digital disruption, and transnational ideological threats. Islam Nusantara can serve as an effective filter for preserving Indonesian Muslim identity rooted in moderation and local wisdom. Hence, collaboration among stakeholders—including educational institutions, religious leaders, cultural communities, and the government—is needed to preserve and innovate culturally-based da'wah formats for contemporary relevance.

Thus, Islam Nusantara is not only a legacy but also a future direction for Islamic da'wah that responds to modern challenges while maintaining national harmony. Cultural da'wah rooted in local values and based on universal Islamic principles becomes a strategic key to shaping an Indonesian Muslim society that is religious, inclusive, and adaptive to global changes without losing its spiritual and cultural identity.

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