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TRACES OF *PESANTREN* IN THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN THE LAND OF SUNDA IN THE 15TH-16TH CENTURY

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Abstract

Quro Islamic Boarding School in Karawang, Pasambangan and Ciptarasa Boarding Schools in Cirebon can be said as three important pesantrens in garnering Islamic spread and one of important chain of Islamic school dissemination in Sunda in the 15th and 16th century. The reason is that since 1418 in those two areas (Karawang and Cirebon) there had been established some education and Islamic missionary centers by Syekh Hasanudin bin Yusuf Sidik who built Quro School in Karawangand Syekh Datuk Kahfi who built Pasambangan School in Sembung village, Cirebon. Thereafter, during the time of Syarif Hidayatullah (1470-1528) Ciptarasa Boarding School developed as another chain of the spread of Islam and other Islamic schools in the Sundanese region. From these three schools, Islam flourished in the land of Sunda.

Keywords: Islam, Trace, Chain, Islam, Pesantren, Land of Sunda

A. Introduction

Educational institutions whose functions are to harness learning-teaching and eventually to educate the people always exist in every generation and every community. Each and every generation will have certain view on the importance of educational institutions and will exert the best effort to maintain their existance. That is what is found in the life of Sundanese people. As Edi S. Ekadjati¹ has argued, since old

¹ Edi S. Ekadjati, "Sejarah Sunda" in Edi S. Ekadjati (Ed.), *Masyarakat Sunda dan Kebudayaannya*, Jakarta: Girimukti Pasaka, 1984), p. 75-115.

times, educational activities had existed in the Priangan region. Even before the establishment of Islamic boarding schools, educational institutions had been established in the prehistoric times. Although there is no exact knowledge of how the education was managed at that time as the sources are lacking, it is argued that there were generally informal education in the very early period.

Further Edi S. Ekadjati ² proposes that during the Sunda Kingdom between 7th and 16th century, it is evident that some kind of education system was established in the region which was mainly influenced by Hinduism and Budhism. The evidence is that in the manuscript of *Siksa Kandang Karesian*arranged in 1518 M there are such wordslike *sisya* (student of pupil), *guru* (teacher), *agama* (religion), *pandita* (monk), *pamagahan* (advice), dan *warah sing darma* (monk's teaching).

B. Islam and Pesantren in the Land of Sunda

An Islamic boarding school (or *pesantren*) ³ appeared in a society to answer the demand of Islamic preaching whose ultimate goals are to expand and advance Islam, as well as to train new scholars and preachers for the community. A *pesantren* is also built when there is a demand of an educational institution to deliver and spread religious teachings, and to widen Islamic society's horizon of knowledge.

A *pesantren*is developed on the basis of certain social construction. A *pesantren* could develop itself and the whole surrounding society because of its own potential as an institution that is able to advance the capacity of the community maximally and integrally, other than that most of the *pesantrens* are in rural areas. Therefore, an Islamic boarding school and its bind with the surrounding society is one of the importance, for instance that parents send their children to the *pesantren*.

² Edi S. Ekadjati, *Ibid.*, p. 75-115.

³Pesantren literally means a learning place for santri. There are some terms that are used to denote the Islamic traditional educational institution, or the so called pesantren. In Java island, including in the Sundanese region, and Madura this place is commonly known as pesantren or pondok (literally means "to stay over" or "a lodge" or "a small house"). In Aceh this place is known as dayah or rangkung or meunasah, and surau in Minangkabau. The word pesantren stems from santri whose meaning is a person who seeks for Islamic teaching. In general pesantren refers to a place where santris spend most of the time to stay and to learn (Zamaksyari Dhofier, Tradisi Pesantren, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1990), p. 18 & 44.

Pesantren as an educational institution in Muslim society in the Sundanese fand was established at the same time as the arrival and early development of Islam in this area that is the western part of Java island⁴. Henceforth, the arrival of Islam in Sundanese region cannot be separated from the role of the northern part of the Sundanese land as the key chain of the entrance and spread of Islam. Before Islam spread into the interior of Sundanese land, it was established in the northern shore of western Java. Therefore, the route of the Islam expansion in Sundanese region is certainly started from the northern shore.

The evidence is upheld by the trace of *pesantren* chain. As a spearhead of Islam expansion, the *pesantrens* in the whole Sundanese land cannot be separated from the existence of the *pesantrens* in the northern part of the region. From the northern shore, the *pesantrens* extended to the interior part.

According to the data recorded by Hageman implying that Islam spread in Sunda was begun when there came "a native Muslim merchant" who had perform the haj. He was Haji Purwa or Haji Bahaudin who went to Cirebon Girang and Galuh in 1250 Hijri/1337 AD to spread Islam, it can be predicted that the first chain of Islam expansion is Cirebon and then followed by Galuh⁵. And so are the educational activities by Muslim society. It is predictable that the teaching centers were established during that period and begun in those areas. Henceforth the first stage of the Islamic spread is from the east.⁶

It is also important that based on the local historical sources, if Haji Purwa or H. Bahaudin is the cornerstone of the spread of Islam in Sundanese Land, this should also mean that, first, Islam was brought there from Mecca by merchants. Second, on the first stage, Islam was not only introduced in the northern area, but also in the interior. However, this religion did not instantly spread. This was due to that there were only limited number of preachers, even less than ten, and at

⁴Martin Van Bruinessen, Kitab Kuning: Pesantren dan Tarekat; Tradisitradisi Islam di Indonesia, (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), p. 25.

⁵ Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara, *Menemukan Sejarah: Wacana Pergerakan Islam di Indonesia, (*Bandung: Mizan. 1995), p. 98; Djadja Sukardja, *Situs Kawali (Astana Gede, (Ciamis: Tanpa Penerbit, 2007), p. 29.*

⁶ Hageman, H.J. "Geschiedenis der Soendalanden", TBG. XVII. 1867, p. 16; Ajip Rosidi, *Ensiklopedi Sunda; Alam, Manusia dan Budaya Termasuk Budaya Cirebon dan Betawi*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 2000), p. 259; Edi S. Ekadjati, *loc. cit.*, p. 75-115.

the same time, Hinduism harnessed by Galuh Kingdom was still really strong within the people⁷.

Pesantren Quro and Pasambangan as the First Chain of the Spread of Islam in Sundanese Land in the 15th Century

Undang Sunardjo states that in 1418 in Karawang there was a pesantren after the arrival of Syekh Hasanudinbin Yusuf Sidik-who had visited Cirebon right beforehand—and finally resided in that area and built and led the Pesantrenof Quro until his death 8 (Sunardjo, Two years later, that was in 1420, a scholar named Syekh Datuk Kahfi came in Cirebon. He built and led another pesantrenin Pasambangan village which was later PesantrenPasambangan. He died in that place in interned in Giri Amparan Jati⁹. Based on this information, Pesantren Quro in Karawang and Pesantren Pasambangan in Amparan Jati, Circbon, can be dubbed as the first chain of Islamic spread in Sunda land. From this information, too, there is possibility that the spread of Islam and Islamic educational institutions started not only from Cirebon-which was at that time a part of Galuh kingdom, but also from Karawang.

There are some indications that the expansion did not only started from Circbon, but also from Karawang. First, in 1422 Ki Gedeng Tapa, the Chamberlain of Singapura as well as the Port Master of Muara Jati which was at related time under the administration of Galuh kingdom, sent his daughter, Nhay Subang Larang, to learn Islam to Syekh Quro in Karawang, which was rather far from Singapura (Ekadjati, 1984; Sunardjo, 1983; Sukardja, 2007).

⁷ Tim Peneliti Jurusan Sejarah Fakultas Sastra Unpad, *Sejarah Cirebon Abad Ketujuh Belas*, (Bandung: Pemda Tingkat I Jawa Barat dan Fakultas Sastra Unpad, 1991). p. 13; Nina Herlina, *et al. Sejarah Tatar Sunda*, (Bandung: Satya Historika, 2003), p. 165; Djadja Sukardja, *Situs Kawali (Astana Gede*, (Ciamis: Tanpa Penerbit, 2007), p. 29.

⁸ Unang Sunardjo, *Meninjau Sepintas Panggung Sejarah Pemerintahan Kerajaaan Cirebon 1479-1809*, Bandung: Tarsito, 1983), p. 37-38; Nina Herlina, *loc. cit.* 165.

⁹ Unang Sunardjo, *Ibid.* p. 43; Nina Herlina. *loc. cit.*, p. 173; P.S. Sulendraningrat, *Babad Tanah Sunda Babad Cirebon*, (Cirebon: Tanpa Penerbit, 1984), p. 15-16.

¹⁰ Edi S. Ekadjati, *loc.cit.*, p. 83-84; Unang Sunardjo, *loc. cit.*, p. 14-20; *loc. cit.*, p. 30-31.

According to the same source, there is also a possibility that Nhay Subang Larang, fulfilling his parents' will, had some companions or guards entrusted by Ki Gedeng Tapa himself, as she was at that time only a teenage and needed protection. Other than that, as a daughter of a chamberlain, Nhay Subang Larang is predicted to always have some protectors or companions who are themselves Muslims, either converted in Singapura or when they arrived in Karawang¹¹

In the 15th century Cirebon and Karawang deserved to have a role as the first chain of Islam spread in Sunda land as both of them were inseparable. Although Syekh Quro resided and built a *pesantren* in Karawang, he arrived in Cirebon beforehand. Therefore, from these two places, Islam and *pesantren* started to expand to the whole Sunda areas.

There is another indication that the spread of Islam and and Islamic education in Sundanese region began from, that is the fact that Ki Gedeng Tapa or Ki Gedeng Lumajang Jati were converted to Islam since 1418 after his acquaintance with Syekh Hasanudin bin Yusuf Sidik alias Syekh Quro. It is difficult to understand if Ki Gedeng Tapa had his daughter learn Islam if he was not a Muslim himself. It also important that through time, it was not only Nhay Subang Larang as a non-resident who learnt at *Pesantren* Quro, but other people from other regions, too, including from southern regions of Karawang that is included as interior Sunda (Sunardjo, 1983: 38-41). So, based on Undang Sunardjo's information, the spread of Islam—followed by *pesantrens*—in Sunda land predictably started from the eastern part, initially, and on the second stage started from the north, that is Karawang. 12

2. Pesantren Ciptarasa as the Second Chain of Islam Spread in Sunda Land during Syarif Hidayatullah Reign

In the 16th century, religions and faiths in Sunda land were still fundamentally transforming. One of the factors is the entrance of Islam and the collapse of Hindu civilization. Cirebon is the first area in Sunda land accepted Islam and from here the new religion expanded to other areas. On later stages, Cirebon which at time played as the religious

¹² Unang Sunardjo, loc. cit., p. 38-41.

¹¹ Edi S. Ekadjati, *loc.cit.* p. 85; Edi. S. Ekadjati, *Sunan Gunung Djati; Penyebar dan Penegak Islam Islam di Tatar Sunda, (*Jakarta: Dunia Pustaka Jaya, 2005), p. 94; Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara, *loc. cit.*, p. 148.

center, in the early 16thcentury succeeded to Islamize Banten, as well as Jayakarta, Cimanuk and Kuningan. By the middle of that century Islam had spreaded to some parts of Sunda land. The expansion was intensified by the fall of Sunda kingdom in 1579 after the attack of Banten kingdom under the leadership of Maulana Yusup¹³.

The growth of Islam followed by the establishment of pesantrens in Sundanese region was fastened after the arrival of Syarif Hidayatullah or Sunan Gunung Djati and acted as the religious leader and the kingdom ruler in Cirebon. Since 1470 the role of Cirebon as the Islamic preaching and education centerswas strengthened under the reign of Syarif Hidayatullah. He established a pesantren in Dusun Sembung, Pasambangan and taught Islam in Kampung Babadan, which was around 3 kilometers to the west of Pasambangan. During the first years in Cirebon, he was very active in teaching replacing the role of Syekh Datuk Kahfi. He also adapted himself to the local tradition and values which he was himself newly acquinted 14.

After a while he was entrusted by the community to be the leader. This role was authorized by his legal appointment in 1479 as the leader of Cirebon with the noble rank of Tumenggung (some kind of duke) and was dubbed as Susuhunan Jati or Sunan Gunung Jati. Not long after, he was authorized by the walis (Islamic early preacher in Java) to be the leader of Islam to the whole Sundanese land, from Cirebon as the centre.

During his time, as the kingdom ruler and religious leader, he gave priority to the spread of Islam by building numerous grand mosques in Cirebon vassals, making the grand mosque of Ciptarasa as the centre as well as a *pesantren*. This innitial stage was followed by the strengthening stage that was filled with mental and spiritual development among the people of Cirebon ¹⁵ (Herlina, 2003).

After his success in making Cirebon as a Sultanate, Syarif Hidayatullah paid more attentions to religious development both in Cirebon and other areas in Sunda.

¹³ H.J. De Graaf, Geschiedenis van Indonesie, (Bandung: N.V. Uitgeverij W. Van Hoeve- s''Gravenhage, 1949), p. 114-115; Nina Herlina, loc. cit., p. 325-326.

¹⁴ H.J. De Graaf, *Ibid.*, p. 116-117; ¹⁴ Unang Sunardjo, *loc. cit.*, p. 54-55; Edi S. Ekadjati, *loc.cit.* p. 91;

¹⁵ Nina Herlina, loc. cit., p.188.

Since 1528 Syarif Hidayatullah made a lot of trips to preach Islam numerous areas. Although he was the leader and head-teacher of the *Pesantren* of Ciptarasa, he seems to be equally very active to directly enhance religious teachings to the interior areas of Sunda.

He succeeded convert two prominent figures to Islam: Patih Keling and Dipati Cangkuang. Patih Keling was Islamized on a sea-trip and so were his men. They, then, resided in Cirebon. Dipati Cangkuang was from Kuningan. Dipati Cangkuang's conversion to Islam made the expansion of Islam in the area a lot easier. Dipati Cangkuang himself played important role in spreading Islam and strengthening Islam power in tha land of Suna. From this area Islam spreaded to other areas such as Galuh, Talaga, Kuningan, Ciamis, Sumedang, Bandung, Cianjur, Bogor, Jakarta, and Ujung Banten. To manage the Muslim society in Sunda land, Syarif Hidayatullah appointed four families and their followers as leaders in different areas. They are Pangeran Sebakingkin (Hasanudin) in Banten, Raja Lahut in Jaketra, Haji Dzuliman (Cakrabuana, Ki Samadullah, or Abdullah Iman) in Pajajaran, and Raja Sengara (Kian Santang) in Tegal Luar¹⁶

Syarif Hidayatullah had a big attention to Islamic preaching. He made a lot of travels to remote areas and sent emmisaries to other regions such as to Luragung (Kuningan), Sindangkasih, Rajagaluh and Talaga (now in the Regency of Majalengka), Ukur (Bandung), Cangkuang (Garut) Cibalagung, Kluntung Bantar, Pagadingan, Pasir Luhur, Indralaya, Batulayang (all of which are in the western and southern part of Sumedang), Timbanganten and Cianjur¹⁷.

That was the spread of Islam to the interior of the Sultanate of Circbon centered at the Mosque and the *pesantren* of Ciptarasa. Seeing those influenced areas, the Syarif Hidayatullah succeeded to reach far and wide in the interior of the land of Sunda.

During the time of Syarif Hidayatullah, the spread routes are, one Cirebon-Kuningan-Talaga-Ciamis; two, Cirebon-Kadipaten-Majalengka-Darmaraja-Garut; three, Cirebon-Sumedang-Bandung; four, Cirebon-Talaga-Sagalaherang-Cianjur; five, Banten-Jakarta-Bogor-Sukabumi; and six, Banten-Banten Selatan-Bogor-Sukabumi 18

¹⁶ Edi S. Ekadjati, loc. cit., p. 103.

¹⁷ Unang Sunardjo, *loc. cit.*, p. 85-94 & 94-95; Sulendraningrat, *loc. cit.*, p. 36-37 & 57 & 86-89; Edi S. Ekadjati, *loc. cit.*, p. 91-93; Nina Herlina, *loc. cit.* p. 188.

¹⁸ Nina Herlina, *loc. cit.*, p. 188

C. Conclusions

Pesantren Quro' in Karawang, Pesantren Pasambangan, and Pesantren Ciptarasa in Cirebon are three Islamic schools that can be said as the first chain of Islam spread in Sunda land in the 15th and 16th century. They are labeled as the first chain as in those two areas, there had developed the Islamic preaching and education centers since 1418. The cornerstones were the establishment of Pesantren Quro by Syekh Hasanudin bin Yusuf Sidik and Pesantren Pasambangan in Sembung, Cirebon, by Syekh Datuk Kahfi. Proceedingly, during the reign of Syarif Hidayatullah (1470-1528), with his capacity as the kingdom rulerand religious leader the mosque of Ciptarasa was expanded as a pesantren. He prioritized the spread of Islam and got directly involvedin the activities in the interior of Sunda land.

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