



The Dynamics of Civilization and Islamic Educational Thought During the Aceh Darussalam Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the development of Islamic civilization and thought during the era of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate, as well as the contributions of scholars to education and the intellectual dynamics of Islam in the Malay Archipelago. The Aceh Sultanate played a significant role in the Islamization process and the advancement of Islamic thought, particularly in the fields of Sufism, Islamic jurisprudence, and Islamic education. This research highlights the central role of prominent scholars such as Hamzah al-Fansuri, Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, Nuruddin ar-Raniry, and Abdurrauf as-Sinkili, as well as the existence of Islamic educational institutions like meunasah and dayah, which served as religious learning centers and the backbone of Islamic scholarship. Using a historical-descriptive approach, the study reveals that the Aceh Sultanate was not only a center of political power in Islam but also a vibrant hub of intellectual activity that significantly shaped the character of Islam in Southeast Asia

INTRODUCTION

Education is an effort to transform knowledge that was previously unknown to humans into knowledge. Through education, people begin to understand the world and discover new things that were previously unknown. There is an evaluation every time there is an activity. Education is an activity designed in accordance with the curriculum and ends with an evaluation. The quality of education and learning is influenced by various factors, including the quality of educators, school administrators, students, and the curriculum.

Originating from the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, Islam was brought to the world by the Prophet Muhammad (saw) in the seventh century AD. Within approximately 23 years of its emergence, the religion had grown rapidly. Caliph Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and Umar bin al-Khattab took over the leadership of the Muslims after the Prophet Muhammad's death. Islam spread to new territories under Umar's rule, including Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, and Syria. After that, Islam spread throughout China and the entire world under the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, led by Caliphs Uthman bin Affan and Ali bin Abi Talib, respectively.

A number of historians have documented the global trend toward Islamization, including in the archipelago. These same historians have also detailed the origins of Islamic civilization and its development through the spread of Islamic teachings, which led to the emergence of Islamic kingdoms such as Aceh Darussalam, Samudera Pasai, and Peureulak. Historians have also detailed how these ideas adorned each period, whether related to Islamic law (sharia), metaphysics (tasawuf), or religion (aqidah).

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are various ethnic groups scattered throughout the Indonesian archipelago, each with its own unique history. Various elements, including environmental conditions, occupations, beliefs, and worldviews, influence the development of social structures there, which is an interesting topic to study. New elements interact with old elements, and the result is an increasingly strong heritage. Arab and Indian peoples introduced Islam to Indonesia in a peaceful manner, and they lived harmoniously alongside followers of other religions. Their curiosity about Indonesian cuisine and their desire to spread their faith motivated them to come. Both Muslim traders and indigenous Indonesians supported the Islamization movement in Indonesia.

Sulaiman al-Tajir al-Sairafi was an Arab Muslim explorer who began his expedition in the 9th century or mid-3rd century Hijri from the city of Sairaf in Persia. According to Sairafi's account in his book "Ajāibu al-Dunya," written in 237 Hijri or 851 CE, he sailed from al-Khalij in the Arabian Gulf and traveled to India, China, and the Indonesian archipelago, also known as Indonesia. Islamic scholars such as Imam Ghazali spread Islamic religious texts (mysticism, monotheism, hadith, and jurisprudence) to various educational institutions in Indonesia as Islam spread to the Indonesian archipelago. As a result, prominent scholars such as Sheikh Abdurrauf As-Sinkili and Sheikh Nuruddin ar-Raniry emerged, who greatly assisted Islamic countries in spreading the religion and enforcing its laws. The three famous kingdoms of Sumatra, Perlak, Pasai, and Aceh Darussalam, were all greatly influenced by Islam, both religiously and

politically. The majority of the eight main kingdoms that formed Sumatra in the 8th century were pagan, except for the Kingdom of Perlak, which maintained its Muslim beliefs. Like the Abbasid Empire, the Perlak monarchy was led by a sultan who had a number of viziers to assist him. The Kingdom of Samudera Pasai wanted a united Islamic state after its conquest by the Portuguese colonizers. The goal was to create Aceh Besar, a strong and independent state, by uniting Islamic political parties.

During the era of Islamic kingdoms in the Indonesian archipelago, this study focuses primarily on the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam and the development of Islamic thought. Therefore, this study aims to trace the evolution of Islamic thought throughout the Indonesian archipelago and provide an overview of the culture and ideas that emerged during the reign of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam. Another study that delves into this topic is the research by Khairiyah and Abdillah (2023), which examines Islamic culture in Southeast Asia and its influence on the Indonesian archipelago. Based on this study, Islam in Southeast Asia and Islam in the Indonesian archipelago share many similarities, including political beliefs, social diversity, Sufism, artistic expressions, and educational practices.

In addition, Fauziah (2013) conducted research that explored the Sufi ideas put forward by Hamzah al-Fansuri. The findings of this study show that Fansuri was a Sufi scholar who interpreted the teachings he brought, including Sufism, so that he was nicknamed "Sufi scholar" through his poems. Furthermore, research on the ideas and missionary activities of Sheikh Nuruddin Ar-Raniry was conducted by Musyaffa (2018). Nuruddin Ar-Raniry is referred to as a thinker and pioneer of the missionary movement in the archipelago in this study. Thanks to his struggles and mobility, he had a distinctive Islamic taste and was in accordance with Islamic law. His books and writings contain his ideas. As he rose to the position of Mufti in the Aceh kingdom, his influence became increasingly evident.

This study differs from other studies in that it delves deeper into the culture and intellectual climate of the Aceh Darussalam kingdom, highlighting the contributions of prominent scholars such as Hamzah al-Fansuri, Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, Nuruddin Ar-Raniry, and Abdurrauf as-Sinkili to Islamic thought at that time.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-historical approach. Data was collected through library research by examining various primary and secondary sources, such as historical manuscripts, classical literature, and previous research related to civilization and Islamic educational thought during the Aceh Darussalam Kingdom. Data analysis was conducted inductively by interpreting historical facts, which were then systematically organized to understand the dynamics of Islamic education development during that period.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. History of Islamic Civilization in the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam

Muslim traders from Arabia, Gujarat (India), Persia, and China began slowly but surely bringing Islam to Indonesia in the seventh century CE through maritime trade routes. The roots of Islam have been the subject of several competing ideas; these include the Gujarat, Mecca, Persia, and Chinese schools of thought. Each of these schools of thought emphasizes the role of trade and cultural contact in the spread of Islam. Ancient artifacts such as the tombstone of Sultan Malik as-Saleh in Samudra Pasai (1297 CE) and Fatimah binti Maimun in Gresik (1028 CE) indicate that Islam flourished rapidly from the 11th to the 13th centuries along the coasts of Sumatra and Java, and then spread throughout the archipelago.

Given Aceh's status as the first Muslim-majority province in the archipelago, the arrival of Islam in Indonesia is closely tied to Aceh's history. Islam spread to Aceh through maritime trade routes that brought merchants and missionaries from Arabia, Gujarat, and Persia. Through marriage, trade, and missionary work, Islam spread from Aceh's ports, such as Perlak, Lamuri, Barus, and Samudera, to other locations in Indonesia.

Islamic kingdoms such as Aceh Darussalam, Perlak, and Samudera Pasai emerged when Islam took root in Aceh, and played an important role in spreading Islam throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Aceh is nicknamed "Serambi Mekkah" (the Veranda of Mecca) and became a model for the development of Islam in other parts of Indonesia because these kingdoms were centers of government as well as centers of Islamic education and propagation. Due to Aceh's crucial position as the gateway and center for the spread of Islamic teachings throughout the archipelago, the history of Islam in Indonesia cannot be separated from this city.

Several small kingdoms, including Lamuri, Peureulak, and Samudera Pasai, inhabited the Aceh region before the establishment of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate in the early 16th century. The influence of Hinduism and Buddhism persisted in the culture of these kingdoms even after Islam entered the archipelago in the 9th century through trade routes and the missionary activities of Arab and Gujarati traders. Without a well-established Islamic religious system, the social structure at that time was more conventional, with a clear division between nobles, commoners, and merchants. The Aceh region is now an important stopover on international trade routes due to the rapid growth of maritime trade, but Islamic culture has not yet completely replaced it.

Before the establishment of Samudera Pasai, the first Islamic kingdom in Aceh was Purelak (also spelled Perlak). This kingdom, which was established at least as early as the seventh century AD and was located on the east coast of Aceh, was famous as one of the earliest ports of entry for Islam in the archipelago. Contributing to the emergence of important Islamic kingdoms such as Samudera Pasai, Purelak eventually became the foundation of early Islam. One of the important kingdoms on the coast of Sumatra at that time was mentioned by Marco Polo in his travels as Peurelak (Ferlec). Subsequent Islamic rulers in Aceh and the surrounding islands relied heavily on Peurelak's strategic position as a trading port and center for the spread of Islam.

A political upheaval occurred in the archipelago in the 16th century when the Portuguese destroyed the kingdoms of Malacca and Samudra Pasai. The Portuguese aspiration to increase their influence in the archipelago grew stronger, as evidenced by the concentration of troops on the north coast of Sumatra and the conquest of islands such as Aru or Kampai, Pasai, Pidie, and Daya, where trading stations were established. While the kingdom of Aceh was besieged by Portuguese colonizers, army commander Ali Mughayat Syah appealed to his father to come down and rule the country. The genealogy and governance of the rulers of Aceh, beginning with Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah, are detailed in *Bustan al-Salatin*. The role of religious scholars in governance and diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire are two major events detailed in this essay. In short, he became sultan in 1511 CE and announced the establishment of the Aceh Darussalam kingdom in the same year. The capital of the Banda Aceh Darussalam region was located in the northern region, stretching from the Aru Peninsula to Panca, and the western region, stretching from Daya to Barus.

Located on the northern coast of Sumatra, specifically in the Lhokseumawe and North Aceh regions, Samudera Pasai was the first Islamic kingdom in Indonesia. Sultan Malik as-Saleh, whose real name was Meurah Silu, founded it in 1267 AD. Due to its strategic position along the Malacca Strait, the kingdom quickly became a center of trade and the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia. As a center of Islamic education, Samudera Pasai also became a center of trade and a destination for intellectuals from China, India, Persia, and Arabia. The kingdom played a significant role in the Islamization of the archipelago, as evidenced by historical records such as the tomb of Sultan Malik as-Saleh and accounts from visitors like Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta. Before its eventual collapse due to the Portuguese invasion in 1521, Samudera Pasai flourished from the 13th to the 16th century.

During the reign of the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam, significant social shifts took place. From households, trade, to the judicial system, Islamic law gradually took root in society. The *dayah* (*pesantren*) system spread religious teachings in an organized manner, producing a generation of competent scholars. The emergence of strong female leaders such as Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah, who exercised astute leadership, further elevated the status of women. The government, which viewed religion as the foundation of national and social life, was reflected in the high respect given to religious scholars; they even acted as advisors to the sultan.

Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah urged the sultans of Daya, Pidie, Pasai, and Aru to unite against Portuguese conquest in order to reclaim the lost territories. However, the kings and queens refused, and the Sultan sent his own troops to attack. Sultan Mughayat Syah successfully swept through part of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam after he defeated the Portuguese colonizers. Thanks to his leadership, the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam became strong enough to establish a national emblem: the Alam Zulfikar flag, which features a white sword with a red spine and a crescent moon and star above the blade.

After Sultan Mughayat Syah died in 1522 AD, Sultan Salahuddin became the eldest son and his successor. He remained unchanged during his nine-year reign. His younger brother, Sultan Alauddin Riyat Syah al-Qahhar, succeeded him in 1531 AD. To strengthen Aceh's defenses against the Portuguese threat, Sultan Alauddin Riyat Syah al-Qahhar established contact with the Ottoman Empire, according to Bustan al-Salatin. This relationship enabled the transfer of skilled cannon makers to Aceh and the construction of a cannon factory there, among other military and technological assistance. Sheikh Muhammad Al-Azhari or Sheikh Nuruddin was a scholar from Mecca who lived during the reign of Sultan Ali Riyat Syah. He was a member of the Shafi'i school of thought and was typically an alumnus of Al-Azhar University in Egypt, according to Bustan as-Salatin. He was a Sufi Muslim who resided in Aceh and spread Islam. He oversaw the establishment of diplomatic relations with Turkey, whose primary objective was to strengthen the military power of the Aceh Darussalam Kingdom. Thanks to their collaboration, Turkey agreed to provide trained cannon makers, and a cannon factory was built in Aceh Darussalam to combat the Portuguese colonizers.

According to Bustan al-Salatin, Sultan Alauddin Riyat Syah al-Qahhar died in 1567 AD after ruling the kingdom of Aceh Darussalam for nearly 30 years. However, according to the account of Mohammad Said, Sultan Alauddin Riayah Syah al Qahhar was buried in Kandang XII after his death on the 8th of Jumadil Awal 979 AH, corresponding to September 28, 1571 CE. Under the rule of his son, Sultan Ali Riyat Syah, the Aceh Darussalam kingdom handed over its torch to a scholar from Mecca, Sheikh Nuruddin, who was a follower of the Shafi'i school of thought and a graduate of Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Qadi Malikul Adil was personally appointed by Sheikh Nuruddin ar-Raniri during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Tsani. In Aceh, he assisted in the reform of Sufism by proposing a new theory called Wahdatul Syuhud to replace Wahdatul Wujud; this new theory was later elaborated in the work Bustan al-Salatin. He spent his time in Aceh spreading religious teachings and much more.

The first Sultan of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam was Ali Mughayat Syah, who ruled from 913 H to 928 H (1514-1522 AD), according to Sheikh Nuruddin Ar-Raniri, a scholar who served as a judge during the Kingdom of Aceh under the leadership of Sultan Iskandar Tsani (Bustan al-Salatin). In the past, the only way to rule was as a meurah, or provincial king; no sultan had ever led the entire country. Among Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah's many remarkable achievements was his conquest of the provinces of Pedir and Samudera Pasai, which were besieged by the Portuguese in 1524 CE.

He only reigned for two months before being killed in 1576 CE because the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam was very unhappy with him. Zainal Abidin, his nephew, became Sultan of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam in the same year. He was the grandson of Sultan Alauddin al-Qahhar and the son of the King of Aru, Sultan Abdalla, who was killed in an attack on Portuguese-occupied Malacca. According to Bustan as-Salatin, he met the same fate as Sultan Sri Alam, who was killed in 1577 CE because he was too harsh and because of his tendency to pit humans and animals against each other.

The Sultan's infant son, Sultan Muda, succeeded him after his death. Seven months later, his brother, Sultan Sri Alam, became the new ruler. His leadership in the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam was very unpopular, and as a result, he was assassinated, ending his short reign. After his uncle's death in 1576 AD, the position of king was taken over by Zainal Abidin, the grandson of Sultan Alauddin al-Qahhar and the son of the ruler of Aru. However, Sultan Zainal Abidin suffered the same fate as his predecessor, Sultan Sri Alam, who was also assassinated due to his brutality as king.

Following this, Sultan Mansur Syah continued the rule of the Aceh Darussalam kingdom. Several scholars came during his reign. For example, in 1582 CE, Sheikh Abdul Khair bin Sheikh Ibnu Hajar, a scholar from Mecca who taught Sufism, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Yamani, a scholar from Yemen who taught *usul* and *fiqh*, also arrived in the same year. Another scholar from Raniri, Sheikh Nuruddin Ar-Raniry, who was an authority in Sufism, *usul*, creed, and *fiqh*, arrived after the two scholars mentioned earlier. Ar-Raniry then made significant intellectual and spiritual contributions to the Aceh Darussalam kingdom.

The state of Aceh Darussalam underwent a number of changes due to the succession of leaders who came and went throughout the history of the kingdom. Sultan Perkasa Alam, whose full name was Sultan Iskandar Muda Mahkota Alam Maharaja Darma Wangsa Tun Pukat, succeeded Sultan Muda, who died in 1607. Under his rule, the monarchy of Aceh Darussalam reached its peak. The kingdom of Aceh Darussalam flourished under Sultan Iskandar Muda, who oversaw a period of increased prosperity, political stability, military strength, and religious scholarship. Sultan Iskandar Muda advanced politically by establishing diplomatic relations with several countries, including the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, Sultan Iskandar Muda fortified his land and sea defenses with a force of 9,000 elephant soldiers, 200 cavalry soldiers, and 40,000 infantry troops, all of whom were reinforced and equipped with cannons. In terms of naval defense, Sultan Iskandar Muda was known to the Portuguese colonizers as *Espanto del Mundo* (the global fear), and he commanded a fleet of 400 ships, including the flagship *Cakra Dunia*.

Sultan Iskandar Muda was responsible for upholding justice in Aceh Darussalam in accordance with the rules set forth in the sixteen chapters of the *Qanun Meukuta Alam*. This *Qanun* is a collection of Sharia-based laws covering topics such as the origins of law, customs, and traditions; the fundamental principles of the kingdom; the hierarchy of the royal family; the moral conduct of the king; and the consequences for merchants who violate customs and regulations (*adat Peulapek*). With the implementation of the rules outlined in this *qanun*, no one, not even the kings, will be considered above the law. In the context of Aceh's cultural traditions, one practice firmly upheld by the Acehnese people is *Aday Poteu Meurehom*. Evidence of this is the continued use of the royal seal *Cap Sikureung* (*Cap Sembilan*) throughout the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda.

In addition, according to *Bustan as-Salatin*, Sultan Iskandar Muda built mosques in various regions of Aceh, and each mosque had a number of Islamic educational institutions. To ensure the full implementation and dissemination of Islamic law in Aceh, the advancement and development of religious knowledge cannot be separated from the contributions of many academics who have worked in this field. Sheikh Hamzah al-Fansuri, who founded Dayah Oboh Simpang Kiri Rundeng, a center for Islamic studies, and Sheikh Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, who was a student of Sheikh Hamzah al-Fansuri and assisted him in studying Islam in Aceh, were two prominent scholars of this period who made significant contributions to Islamic knowledge.

The death of Sultan Iskandar Muda in 1636 AD meant that the kingdom of Aceh would be led by Raja Bungsu, also known as Sultan Iskandar Tsani, who had previously served as crown prince. This decision was approved by Qadli Malikul Adil and the members of Balai Gading, and was the will of Sultan Iskandar Muda. Due to his intelligence and character, Sultan Iskandar Tsani married Shafiyatuddin Syah, the son of Sultan Iskandar Muda, thus establishing a relationship with Sultan Iskandar Muda as his son-in-law. With the death of Syekh Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani in 1046 CE, Syekh Nuruddin Ar-Raniry succeeded him as Qadli Malikul Adil. Ar-Raniry played a role in the transition of Sufi thought from Wahdatul Wujud to Wahdatul Syuhud, which was documented in *Bustan as-Salatin*. One of Ar-Raniry's major works, *Bustan as-Salathin*, was written during this period. The author states that the reign of Sultan Iskandar Tsani marked a period of growth for the Kingdom of Aceh. Under Tsani, Islamic religious knowledge flourished, and the Masjid Baitul Masyahid (Beit al-Masjahid) was constructed thanks to Tsani's kindness, justice, and concern for his people. In 1048 H/1638 AD, he also established Taman Sari. Although Sultan Iskandar Tsani's reign was short, he made a significant contribution to maintaining Aceh as a political stronghold and center of knowledge. Because he died at the young age of 30, Sultan Iskandar Tsani only ruled the kingdom for five years. Subsequently, to select a successor to Sultan Iskandar Tsani as ruler of Aceh Darussalam, Qadli Malikul Adil convened a council.

After intense discussions, it was decided that Sultanah Shafiyatuddin Syah, daughter and wife of Sultan Iskandar Muda, would replace Sultan Iskandar Tsani as ruler of Aceh Darussalam. She was deemed to meet the requirements and possess the necessary qualifications for the position. According to *Bustan as-Salatin* (one of the writings of Sheikh Nuruddin Arraniry), the people of Aceh continued to enjoy a high standard of living under the rule of Sultanah Shafiyatuddin Syah. Sultanah Nurul Alam Naqiyatuddin Syah succeeded Sultanah Shafiyatuddin Syah, who had ruled Aceh Darussalam for 34 years, after her death. The capital city of Banda Aceh was burned and destroyed by followers of the Wujudiyah sect under her rule as a response to Nuruddin Ar-Raniry's fatwa, which revolutionized Sufi ideology in Aceh. After three years in power, Sultanah Zakiyatuddin Syah succeeded Sultanah Naqiyatuddin Syah, who alleviated the issue. The queen of the Aceh Darussalam kingdom in 1678 CE took a firm stance against the Wujudiyah followers responsible for the

destruction. One of her scholars, Sheikh Abdurauf as-Sinkili, assisted her in her efforts to suppress the adherents of Wujudiyah; he later replaced Sheikh Nuruddin Ar-Raniry as Qadli Malikul Adil in the kingdom of Aceh Darussalam.

At that time, the People's Court was discussing the idea of a constitution for the kingdom of Aceh Darussalam, and Qadli Malikul Adil Syekh Abdurrauf as-Sinkili was an important figure in this process. The Aceh region was divided into three parts (Aceh Lhee Sagoe) as a consequence of this constitutional idea. This proposal, controlled by as-Sinkili, established the territorial rules of Aceh. It was up to the Sagoe Leaders and Qadli Malikul Adil to decide who would become sultan and who would be removed. The Sultanate of Aceh maintained control over highly autonomous regions outside Aceh Lhee Sagoe. This led to an improvement in the political climate and the establishment of diplomatic relations with neighboring countries. However, Sultanah Kamalatuddin Syah replaced Sultanah Zakiyatuddin Syah twelve years later. The outbreak of new violence shook the political climate within the kingdom. The kingdom's internal politics were disrupted when the leaders of the state, Syarif Hasyim Jamalulail and Maharaja Lela Abdurrahim, incited their followers to do so. The appointment of Sultanah Kamalatuddin Syah as ruler of Aceh Darussalam was one of the ways Qadli Malkul Adil ended political strife within the kingdom. After that, the kingdom of Aceh began to decline, and the Dutch finally conquered Aceh Darussalam in the 20th century AD.

The emergence of a monumental work of interpretation entitled *Tarjuman al-Mustafid*, written by the great scholar from Singkel, Sheikh Abdurrauf bin Ali al-Jawi al-Fansuri, better known as Sheikh Abdurrauf as-Sinkili, is one of the most obvious signs of the intellectual and spiritual progress of the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam. During the reign of Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah, who led Aceh's golden age (1641-1675 CE), she studied under the guidance of many prominent scholars in the Middle East, spending more than nineteen years in Mecca and Medina before returning to Aceh.

Written in Malay, this commentary is the first comprehensive and systematic interpretation of the Quran in the Malay language. Building on the *Tafsir al-Jalalain*, this work goes beyond a literal translation; it also offers a contextual approach that makes the content of the Qur'an easier to understand, thereby making it more accessible to the Malay community actively engaged in the Islamization process at that time. For those who were not fluent in Arabic at the time, preaching in the original Malay language was a clever and appropriate technique.

B. The Dynamics of Islamic Educational Thought in the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam

The Islamic education system in Aceh is a historical artifact, as mentioned earlier. Islamic education in Aceh gave rise to *meunasah*, which in turn gave rise to *madrasahs*. Similarly, the *dayah* system existed before the Sultanate of Aceh and continued to survive until then. This means that everything from the objectives, teachers, students, curriculum, methodology, to the physical space was based on the Islamic education system. The first step toward change is to clarify the objectives of Islamic education. Islamic schools initially aimed to do

one thing and one thing only: to make Muslims more devout. The objectives of Islamic schools, such as madrasahs and dayahs, clarify this. These two Islamic schools must adapt to meet the demands of modern Muslims if they wish to continue serving the Muslim community. This is because the existing objectives of Islamic education have failed to address the challenges faced by Muslims in various contexts. There are five levels of Islamic education in Aceh, according to Hasymi's Anthology of the Revolution from the Land of Aceh: meunasah, rangkang, dayah, dayah Tengku Cik, and jami'ah. Furthermore, Ibrahim Husein classifies them into meunasah for the lower level and dayah for the upper and middle levels. According to him, dayah education includes rangkang. Therefore, meunasah and dayah are the two types of Islamic schools in Aceh that will be discussed in this article.

1. Meunasah.

Meunasah comes from the Arabic word madrasah, which means place of learning, and in Aceh it is known by various names such as meulasah or meurasah. Before Islam, this building functioned as a village hall for deliberations, a place for young people to spend the night, and a center for social activities. After Islam developed, meunasah became a center for worship, education, meetings, and even buying and selling transactions.

As a basic educational institution, the meunasah was specifically for boys, while girls studied at the teacher's house (Tengku Inong). Education was led by Tengku Meunasah, assisted by intelligent students (sida). The duration of study was 2-10 years without restrictions, generally at night, with basic religious subjects such as reading the Qur'an, tajwid, the pillars of faith, the pillars of Islam, worship, and religious songs (dike/seulaweut). The books used included Perukunan and Risalah Masail al-Muhtadin.

Although the knowledge of the Tengku is often considered limited, they are respected by the community. Teaching at the meunasah is free of charge, and the Tengku only accept gifts from students or the community on certain occasions. Almost all Acehnese children attend the meunasah, making it a compulsory madrasah that fosters religious fanaticism among the Acehnese community.

2. Dayah

Dayah in Aceh is an Islamic educational institution equivalent to pesantren in Java or surau in Minangkabau. The term dayah comes from the Arabic word zawiyah, which means "corner" or "angle," referring to the halaqah tradition in the corner of a mosque used by scholars to teach. This tradition was brought to Aceh by scholars at the beginning of Islam's arrival, then assimilated into the local language to become dayah. Historical evidence shows that dayahs have existed since the time of Sultan Malik al-Saleh and were led by scholars such as Hamzah Fansuri.

Unlike meunasah, which is basic in nature, dayahs are higher education institutions attended by adults, scholars, and rulers. Dayahs were not found in every village, but rather at the mukim level, as a result of Sultan Iskandar Muda's policy of incorporating religious structures into the government. The records of Tome Pires (14th century) and Ibn Battuta reinforce the role of dayahs, especially

in Samudera Pasai, as centers of Islamic study in Southeast Asia, which were visited by scholars from Delhi, Shiraz, and Isfahan.

Dayah became a forum for scientific discussion (halaqah) and a center for da'wah that strengthened Islam in Aceh. One of the oldest was Dayah Cot Kala (225 H/840 AD) in Peureulak, led by Teungku Chik Cot Kala with the support of scholars from Arabia, Persia, and Gujarat. In its development, dayah education is divided into two levels, namely rangkang (intermediate) and bale (advanced), which produce cadres of scholars and leaders of Acehnese society. Rangkang Education

Rangkang is a continuing education institution after meunasah without any special requirements. Here, fiqh, tauhid, akhlak, and Arabic are taught with an emphasis on nahu sharf. Students are guided in reading and translating Arabic-language books on tafsir, hadith, and fiqh, following the Shafi'i school of thought. The duration of study is not fixed but depends on the student's ability. Those who complete their studies may proceed to the higher level of dayah, while those who do not typically return to their villages to engage in da'wah or teach at the meunasah.

a) Bale Education

High-level dayah or bale are intended for students who have graduated from rangkang with specializations such as fiqh, tafsir, and hadith. Teaching is conducted in Arabic using lectures and discussions, with the aim of producing Teungku, although some students only reach the level of Tengku. Students often act as teachers in rangkang, while teachers are called Teungku in Bale. Additionally, there are specialized dayah for women and practical fields such as agriculture, carpentry, and commerce. The highest level is called Dayah Teungku Chik (grand master), as seen at Masjid Baiturrahman. During Aceh's golden age, dayah flourished and produced many scholars who played significant roles in the resistance against the Dutch.

C. Islamic Scholars and Educational Institutions in Aceh

The title of scholar in Aceh is obtained through two requirements, namely mastery of religious knowledge and recognition by the community, which assesses a person's character, knowledge, and obedience. Generally, scholars come from Islamic boarding schools, not universities. In society, social titles vary, such as Teungku (traditional religious scholar), Tuwanku (descendant of a king/sultan), Teuku (noble/ulee balang), and Said/Habib (descendant of the Prophet), but these titles do not confer political privileges. Ulama are highly respected because they are seen as waratsatul anbiya (heirs of the prophets) as well as guides for the people, provided they do not engage in practical politics. Pesantren/dayah are also generally reluctant to accept government assistance because it is considered to be related to political interests. Ulama who are knowledgeable and authoritative become role models and sources of guidance for the community, both in religious and social matters. .

Important figures in Islamic education in Aceh include Hamzah Fansuri, a poet and Sufi scholar of the Wujudiyah school, whose works include *Asrar Al-Aufin*, *Syarab Al-Asyikin*, and Sufi poems. His student, Syamsuddin As-Samathrani (Syamsuddin Pasai), further developed the Wujudiyah school

through works such as *Mir'atul Qulub* and others. Meanwhile, Syekh Nuruddin Ar-Raniri opposed this doctrine and wrote many books, including *Bustanul Salatin*, which is a masterpiece of classical Malay literature as well as a history of the Aceh kingdom.

In terms of institutional aspects, basic education took place at the Meunasah (Madrasah), which was located in every village. In addition to being a place for learning the Qur'an, writing, reading Arabic letters, ethics, the Malay language, and Islamic history, the Meunasah also served as a center for worship, Ramadan study sessions, Maulid celebrations, zakat distribution, deliberations, and dispute resolution. Its location was separated from residential areas to make it easily recognizable and oriented toward the qibla.

In the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam, education received significant attention with the establishment of state institutions dedicated to science. *Balai Seutia Hukama* became a forum for scholars, intellectuals, and experts to develop science. *Balai Seutia Ulama* functioned as an official institution that managed education and teaching. Meanwhile, *Balai Jama'ah Himpunan Ulama* became a forum for scientific study and discussion. The role of these institutions has made Aceh a widely recognized center of knowledge, attracting many students from abroad to pursue their studies, and the capital of Aceh has developed into an international city and a center of Islamic education.

D. Prominent Figures in Education During the Aceh Kingdom

Several prominent figures in education during the Aceh Darussalam Kingdom:

1. Syekh Hamzah Fansuri

Hamzah Fansuri was a prominent intellectual and spiritual figure who was born in Barus (Fansur/Singkil) in the 16th century AD, an area that later came under the rule of the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam. Together with his brother, he founded a large *dayah* in Singkil which became the center of Islamic teaching. His stature is widely recognized because of his mastery of Sufism, especially the teachings of *wujudiyah* which originated from Ibn Arabi's concept of *wahdat al-wujud*. Through literary works and poems with Sufistic nuances, Hamzah made Malay not only a means of *da'wah*, but also the language of trade, government and science. He was known as a scholar, writer, culturalist, and reformer who was critical of the political and moral behavior of the Acehnese aristocracy. However, the *wujudiyah* teachings he developed drew controversy, especially opposed by Nuruddin Ar-Raniry because they were considered to have the potential to cause pantheistic understanding. Hamzah Fansuri is seen as a Sufi adherent of *wujudiyah*, which is a Sufism that emphasizes God's immanence in His creatures, in contrast to the tendency of orthodox Sufis to emphasize transcendence.

Its teachings depart from the belief that God and nature are essentially one, where the initial manifestation of God's *tajalli* is Nur Muhammad as the source of all creation. Within this framework, humans as microcosms are required to take the path of *tark al-dunya* (abandoning worldly attachments) to achieve closeness to God through the guidance of a teacher with perfect knowledge. The highest level of the process is *ma'rifat*, which is characterized by *fana' fi Allah*, the disappearance of self-consciousness in the presence of the

Divine. This thought caused controversy because it was considered pantheistic, so that its intellectual opponents labeled it as a heterodox teaching that contradicted orthodox sunni Sufism. Nevertheless, the Sufistic teachings of Hamzah Fansuri and his student, Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, had a wide influence not only in the Acehnese court, but also spread to various parts of the archipelago.

2. Syekh Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani

Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani, also known as Syamsuddin Pasai, was one of the great scholars and influential Muslim intellectuals during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636 AD) in the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam. The nickname "as-Sumatrani" was given to him because of his association with the Sumatra region, especially Samudera Pasai, a renowned Islamic kingdom in the past. Syamsuddin was known to master various disciplines, including mysticism, law, philosophy, history, and theology, and was fluent in several languages, including Malay, Javanese, Persian, and Arabic. Because of his depth of knowledge, he received the honorary title of Syaikh al-Islam, which is the highest title for a scholar, kadi, imam, or spiritual advisor. In the royal structure, Syamsuddin played an important role as an advisor to the Sultan, the main imam, a member of the deliberation council, as well as Aceh's diplomatic spokesperson.

Regarding his family origins, historical sources do not provide definite information, although it is estimated that he was born around 1575 AD and died on February 24, 1630 AD (12 Rajab 1039 H), coinciding with the defeat of Acehnese troops in the battle against the Portuguese in Malacca. Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani's work places him as one of the leading ulama figures of the 16th to early 17th centuries who had a major influence on the intellectual development of Islam in the archipelago.

Besides Syaikh Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani, there was another prominent figure during the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam who had a great influence on him, namely Syaikh Hamzah Fansuri. Hamzah Fansuri is widely known as a Sufi, poet, and scholar who has deep thoughts in the field of Sufism. Both Hamzah Fansuri and Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani are known as the two main propagators of wujudiyah teachings in Aceh. Their thinking was strongly influenced by Ibn 'Arabi's concept of wahdat al-wujud, which emphasizes that nothing truly exists except God. This teaching is known as pure tawhid or tawhid hakiki (al-tauhid al-ikhlas), which asserts that the universe does not essentially have an independent existence, but rather its existence depends entirely on God's will.

As a student and successor of Hamzah Fansuri's teachings, Syaikh Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani reinforced the wujudiyah view of Sufism in the Acehnese intellectual context. However, this idea was not free from controversy. Some scholars, particularly Shaykh Nuruddin ar-Raniri, strongly criticized the wujudiyah teachings because they were considered to violate the principles of Islamic monotheism. However, most scholars, including Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, assert that the Sufism thoughts of Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani, and ar-Raniri basically remain within the corridors of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah. Thus, these differences are more accurately

understood as differences in interpretation within the framework of the philosophy of divinity and Islamic mysticism, not as a deviation of faith.

Shaykh Hamzah Fansuri and Shaykh Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani are known as developers of wujudiyah, a teaching that emphasizes that the ultimate form belongs only to Allah, while creatures are only His manifestations. This thought is popularly known as the Seven Dignities, which was influenced by Ibn Arabi's ideas. The dignities include Ahadiyah, Wahdah, Wahidiyah, Alam Arwah, Alam Mitsal, Alam Ajsam, and Insan; the first three include the dignity of divinity, while the next four are the dignity of being.

This concept is related to the theory of tanazul (tajalli), namely the descent of the Divine form from the unseen to the real world in stages until it reaches humans as perfect beings (al-insân al-kâmil). This teaching is widely discussed in Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani's *Nur al-Daqâiq*, which emphasizes the secret of ma'rifatullah.

Despite criticism, wujudiyah thought still had a major influence on intellectual and spiritual development in Aceh, and became an important part of the dynamics of Islamic civilization and education in the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam.

The main teachings of Syaikh Syamsuddin as-Sumatrani's Sufism include three main points. First, about God, he asserted that God is One, Qadim, Baqa, not bound by space, time, or place, and impossible to be compared to anything. Secondly, about creation, he taught that the universe was created through stages, starting from Ahadiyyah, Wahdah, Wahidiyyah, the Realm of Spirit, the Realm of Mitsal, the Realm of Ajsam, to the Realm of Insan. Thirdly, regarding man, he viewed man as a manifestation of God's attributes; the attributes that exist in man are only a description of the Divine attributes, not identical to them, because the essence of God's attributes is absolute ma'ani.

3. Syekh Nuruddin ar-Raniri

Sheikh Nuruddin ar-Raniri (Nuruddin Muhammad bin Ali bin Hasanji al-Hamid ar-Raniri) was a great scholar from Gujarat of Hadrami descent who arrived in Aceh in 1637 during the time of Sultan Iskandar Thani and was appointed as Sheikh al-Islam and mufti of the kingdom. In the field of education, he contributed through curriculum reform by emphasizing fiqh, hadith, and tawhid according to the Syafi'i and Asy'ariah schools; the establishment of large dayahs such as Dayah Manyang as centers of ulama education; the development of teaching methods with discussions (mudzakarah) and scientific debates (munazarah); and evaluation reform with a structured examination system. He also introduced the tradition of systematic scientific writing with clear references and arguments. These reforms made Acehnese education more focused and influential centuries later.

4. Syekh Abdurrauf as-Singkili

Sheikh Abdurrauf as-Singkili or Teungku Syiah Kuala was born in Singkil and spent about 19 years studying in Mecca, Medina, Jeddah and Yemen. Upon his return to Aceh during the time of Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah (1641-1675), he was appointed as the royal mufti and Qadhi Malik al-Adil. In the field of education, he established Dayah Kuala which became an important center of Islamic education in the 17th century, developed an integrative system that

combined sharia, Sufism, Arabic language, and natural sciences, and built a network of dayahs connected to Middle Eastern educational centers. He also introduced the method of *tadarruj* (gradual learning) and interactive discussions, while regenerating ulama who then spread knowledge throughout the archipelago. His contributions made Aceh a leading center of ulama development in Southeast Asia.

E. The Synergy of Ulama Umara Grounding Aceh Islam

In the course of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam, the role of ulama was very dominant in supporting the leadership of the sultan who was titled Sultan Imam Adil. Ulama occupied important positions such as Qadli Malikul Adil (the great mufti of the kingdom) who was assisted by Mufti Empat, and was involved in the preparation of qanuns and fatwas. The appointment of a cleric to the post of Qadli Malikul Adil was regulated in the Qanun Meukuta Alam, which required Islamic qualities, scholarship, justice and personal integrity. For example, Syaikh Hamzah al-Fansuri was appointed Qadli Malikul Adil during the time of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah (1588-1604 CE) due to his breadth of knowledge, and after his death was succeeded by his student, Syaikh Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani. The close relationship between ulama (religious leaders) and umara (rulers) made Aceh a strong Islamic kingdom, with sharia law as the basis of political, social and military life, based on the Qur'an, hadith, *ijma'* and *qiyas*.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam was one of the largest centers of Islamic civilization in the archipelago that played an important role in the spread of Islam, especially through trade, politics, law, and education. The golden age occurred during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda with a strong military force, the application of Islamic law through Qanun Meukuta Alam, and international diplomatic relations. Islamic education developed through dayah institutions and mosques that became centers of scientific study with great contributions from scholars such as Hamzah al-Fansuri, Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, and Nuruddin ar-Raniry. The development of Sufism thought and the birth of monumental works made Aceh a widely influential Islamic intellectual center in the archipelago.

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