

BARUS TAPANULI TENGAH AS ISLAM'S ZERO POINT IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: The designation of Central Tapanuli Barus as the zero point for Islam in Indonesia has caused mixed reactions from the public and Indonesian historians. So far, what the Islamic community knows is that the first time they entered Indonesian territory was in Aceh. This article provides an explanation of the traces of the entry of Islamic teachings and evidence of the establishment of Islam in Indonesia as well as the development of da'wah in Barus. Before Islam was preached to Barus around the fifth century AD in Barus, the proof is the site of Mahligai, Papan Tinggi, Makham Tuan Makhdom whose tombstone is inscribed with calligraphy from the Koran. Sheikh Mahmud played a major role in imparting Islamic teachings through trade in Barus City. This research is library research. In this research the author takes theories from the results of previous research.

Keywords: Barus Tapanuli Tengah, History of Indonesian Islam.

Introduction

Islam in Indonesia has a long and complex history. The spread of Islam in Indonesia is believed to have started in the 7th and 8th centuries AD, with Arab traders and other Muslims coming to the archipelago to trade and spread the religion.

In the 13th century, Islam began to spread widely in Indonesia, especially in Java and Sumatra. Islamic kingdoms such as the Demak Sultanate and the Mataram Sultanate were also founded during this time. In the colonial era, Islam in Indonesia experienced significant development. Many Islamic organizations were founded, such as Muhammadiyah (1912) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) which was founded in 1926, which played an important role in the struggle for Indonesian independence.

Currently, Indonesia is the country with the second largest Muslim population in the world, after Pakistan which previously ranked second. The majority of Indonesia's population, namely around 87.02%, identify themselves as Muslims (Sensus Penduduk, 2018). Since prehistoric times, the inhabitants of the Indonesian archipelago have been known as sailors who were able to navigate the open seas. Since the beginning of the century AD there have been shipping and trade routes between the Indonesian archipelago and various regions of Southeast Asia. ¹ This trade was also a way of proselytizing to Indonesia. Da'wah is a very important activity in Islam. By da'wah, Islam can be spread and accepted by humans. On the other hand, without Islamic preaching, it will be further away from society and will then disappear from the surface of the earth (Firmansyah Rahman Hakim, 2019).

In community life, da'wah functions to organize religious life towards the realization of a harmonious and happy society. The cultural identity of a region and country is important for the extension and development of that region (Fatimatuz Zahra, 2018). If you can successfully dig up the historical roots, you will find the elements that have been successful in bringing Islam along. Danandjaja said that the legacy of a collective culture was spread and passed

down from generation to generation in various forms and versions, both written, oral and other (Danandjaja, 1991). In the archipelago, where the majority of the population is Muslim, it would be interesting to know the history of how Islam first entered the archipelago.

According to J. C Van Leur, based on various travel stories, it can be estimated that since 674 AD there were Arab colonies in northwest Sumatra, namely Barus. The historical heritage in Barus City certainly cannot be separated from human life as an object of da'wah, and individuals need a life that is guided by the Koran and Al-Hadith. The sheikhs or ulama in Barus left a very unique and understandable style. They have grounded the teachings of aqeedah and preached inviting people who do not yet believe to believe in Allah SWT (embrace the religion of Islam) (Ali Aziz, 1993)

The author is of the view that the development of Islam through this article will explain the traces of Islamic heritage in Barus and the development of its preaching. The existence of Islam in Indonesia did not just appear. President Joko Widodo inaugurated Barus City, Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province as Zero Point for Islamic Archipelago in Indonesia. Many historical literature states that Islam in Indonesia was first present in Barus. This is proven by the existence of the Mahligai cemetery in Barus in the 7th century. The city of Barus, which has left many cultural identity patterns, if its historical traces are successfully researched, can be used as a basis for developing a region or country (Dwi, 2013).

The decision to designate Barus as the Zero Point of the Islamic Archipelago apparently gave rise to polemics from historians and certain communities. So far, people know that Aceh was the first Islam in the archipelago. Academics also doubt the establishment of Islam Nusantara in Barus City or in Aceh. Because for a long time, historical studies have placed the Samudara Pasai Kingdom in Aceh Darussalam as the center of the first spread of Islam. The debate between the entry of Islam into the archipelago prompted the author to explore the history of Islam and the development of da'wah in Barus City. In this article, the researcher will describe the traces of Islamic civilization and the dynamics of da'wah in Barus City to find out the first Islam in the archipelago. So far, people consider that Aceh was the first location of Islam in Indonesia. The debate regarding the arrival of Islam in Indonesia makes the author need to dig deeper into the traces of Islamic history in the city of Barus.

Literature Review

This research uses 3 (three) literature reviews, namely research made by Bahrum Saleh, entitled Barus as Zero Point of Islamic Civilization in the Archipelago, which was conducted in 2020. And Uky Firmansyah Rahman Hakim, entitled Barus as Zero Point of Islamic Civilization in the Archipelago: Review of the History and Development of Da'wah, carried out in 2019. As well as research by Suci Karlina, et al. Entitled The Influence of the Ethical Political Policy of the Dutch Colonial Government on the Existence of Islamic Educational Institutions in the Archipelago, which will be carried out in 2024. That the funeral and Islamic teachings by Sheikh Mahmud were first implemented in Barus as the beginning of the entry of Islam into Indonesia.

Method

The research method used in this research is library research, where the author collects data from various sources such as journals, articles, documents, articles and websites related to the research object and then analyzes it using meta analysis. The journals collected were obtained from several sources, including Sinta accredited journals and National journals that have DOIs. The meta-analysis method is that the author reviews several related journals which are used to combine, analyze and synthesize two or more with the aim of finding new

findings and general conclusions. Central Barus Tapanuli is the zero point of Islam in Indonesia (Wahyuni, 2023).

Result and Discussion

Barus is a sub-district located in the center of Tapanuli city in North Sumatra province. It has different populations, namely, from Batak, Minang, Javanese and others. Local people use different livelihoods to build wealth, namely farmers, fishermen, contractors, government officials and others. The main religions practiced by the Barus people are Islam and Christianity. Even so, people still rely on each other, understand each other, respect each other and look out for each other. Islam experienced a period of scientific development reaching its peak around the 2nd/8th century to the 6th/12th century, of course it was marked by a good scientific tradition (Zailani, 2018). In this era, the history of the development of Islam can be seen in the literature on the internet . This is because technology is increasingly developing. In this era, the history of the development of Islam can be seen in the literature on the internet. This is because technology is increasingly developing, through the development of information and communication technology which is able to contribute as a learning medium to develop the learning process, especially in studying Islamic religious education in schools/madrasas (Zailani & Jumari, 2024), so that the Islamic generation can see history of Islamic progress itself.

Regarding the entry of Islam in Indonesia, there is a study, namely a scientific conference held in 1963 in the city of Medan, which is as follows: 1) Islam first entered Indonesia in the 1st Hijriah / 7th century AD directly from Arabia. 2) The first place where Islam entered was the north coast of Sumatra. After that, Muslims founded the first Islamic kingdom, namely Aceh. 3) Most of the first preachers were traders. As it spreads peacefully. Based on this theory, researchers want to know why the Silam kingdom existed in Aceh, but there is no certainty in Islamic teachings themselves.

A. Initial conversion to Islam

Islam first entered the archipelago, starting from the coastal areas of Sumatra Island, which were then continued to inland areas by ulama and spreaders of Islamic teachings. At that time, Islam entered Indonesia brought by travelers from Arabia. These travelers were very enthusiastic about spreading Islam to all parts of the world. The existence of this Arab Theory is supported by Van Leur, Anthony H. Jons, T.W Arnold, and Buya Hamka. In this theory, it is explained that Islam in the archipelago was brought directly by Arab travelers who had the enthusiasm to spread Islam throughout the world in the 7th century AD. This is strengthened by the existence of an Arab village in Barus, North Sumatra, known as Bandar Khalifah. Apart from that, in Samudera Pasai the famous school of thought is the Syafi'i School. This school of thought was also famous in Arabia and Egypt at that time. Then finally, the title Al-Malik was used for the kings of Samudera Pasai, like Islamic culture in Egypt. This theory has received the most support from figures such as Van Leur, Anthony H. Johns, T.W Arnold, and Buya Hamka (Saleh, 2020). The Arab theory about the entry of Islam into Indonesia is supported by several main pieces of evidence. For example, in the 7th century AD, on the East Coast of Sumatra there were typical Islamic villages in the style of the Arab Umayyad Dynasty. Then secondly, the school that was very popular at that time, especially in Samudera Pasai, was the Syafii School which was also very popular in the Arab region and Egypt. Meanwhile, the third is the use of the title Al Malik for the kings of Samudera Pasai, which is very common and often found in Islamic culture in Egypt (Aizid, 2016).

In a document from China written by Chu Fan Chi which states that Islam entered Indonesia around 625 AD (7th century), this time occurred after 9 years of the Prophet

Muhammad. spread the teachings of Islam openly. Then in 672 AD there was the tomb of Sheikh Rukunuddin who died. In the 9th–12th century AD, archaeologists believe that Barus was one of the villages of various tribes that brought and influenced the entry of Islamic teachings into Indonesia. Until now, the Arab theory or Mecca theory is considered the strongest theory regarding the entry of Islam into Indonesia. The weakness of this theory only lies in the lack of evidence and also explanatory facts regarding the role of Arabs in the process of Islamization or the spread of Islam in Indonesia (Aizid, 2016).



President Joko Widodo Signs the Zero Point Monument for Pradaban Islam Nusantara Friday, March 24 2017 in Barus, on the coast of Barus City, Central Tapanuli. Photo: North Sumatra Diskominfo.

The entry of Islam into the archipelago apparently has an inseparable trace from the trade route to Barus, which is better known as the "Spice Route" (Azhari, 2017). As a trade route that focused on the search for spices, traders who went through this route brought along Islamic teachings which then penetrated the archipelago. One authentic proof that Islam first touched the archipelago through Barus is the existence of the tomb of Sheikh Rukunuddin, a figure who died in 672 AD or 48 Hijriah. Sheikh Rukunuddin's grave is a historical marker located in the Mahligai Tomb complex in Barus (Jamalie & Wibowo, 2022).

The entry of Islam in Indonesia cannot be separated from the realm of trade, the concept of trade presented by Islamic preachers is in accordance with Islamic law in the sense of honesty, because Islam provides teachings on when a Muslim can carry out transactions that do not contain elements of gambling, usury, gharar (fraud). and vanity (Zailani, 2022).

This discovery is an important starting point in reconstructing the early traces of Islam in this archipelago, although it is not yet completely free from debate and doubt (Burhanuddin, 2022; Jannah & Nasir, 2018; F. Nasution, 2020; Syafrizal, 2015). The existence of this tomb, which is rooted in history, is a silent witness to Barus' role as the first gateway for the spread of Islam in the archipelago. However, it should be noted that this discovery is still the subject of debate among historians. Some still doubt the authenticity and accuracy of this discovery. Nevertheless, Sheikh Rukunuddin's grave in the Mahligai Tomb remains a silent witness to the early era of Islam in Barus, indicating the city's role as the starting point that brought the light of Islam to the archipelago.

The debate regarding Barus' status as Zero Point of Indonesian Islamic Civilization has become a sharp focus in the realm of history, giving rise to various points of view involving a number of experts and academics. Prof.'s critical view. Dr. Azyumardi Azra, MA, emphasized

the political nature of President Jokowi's determination of Barus as ground zero. According to him, this determination is more political than based on in-depth academic or historical studies. In his view, the lack of authentic evidence in Barus is a crucial point which, according to him, cannot validate its status as the initial center for the spread of Islam in the archipelago. On the other hand, Prof. Dr. Farid Wajdi Ibrahim, MA, Chancellor of UIN Ar-Raniry, devoted his attention to the findings in his research in Peurlak, East Aceh Regency (Nasution, 2017).

The results of the research show that the Peurlak Kingdom became an Islamic kingdom in the III Hijriah century or around the IX century AD, an existence that is acknowledged to be older than Barus. His argument is supported by the discovery of gravestones engraved from 225 to 248 AH, proving that Islam had penetrated the social and cultural structure of Peurlak in that period (Perret, 2007). Disagreement between Prof. Dr. Azyumardi Azra and Prof. Dr. Farid Wajdi Ibrahim highlighted the complexity of historical research in the archipelago. While one party doubts the sustainability and accuracy of Barus' data, the other party offers an alternative based on archaeological findings indicating the presence of Islam in other areas, such as Peurlak. In this context, the debate surrounding the Zero Point of Indonesian Islamic Civilization is not just an academic debate, but reflects an openness in historical interpretation that illustrates the complexity and diversity of the development of Islam in Indonesia (Saleh, 2020).

A cultural approach is the main priority for this visit, showing the importance of preserving and appreciating the cultural and historical heritage of the archipelago. President Jokowi in his statement said that Barus was not just a name that appeared when Islam was present, but had long been known in history. As a source of camphor, Barus had trade relations with the Middle East before Islam. Islam itself then set foot in Barus in the 7th century AD, in the period after the Prophet Muhammad spread Islam for 22 years after receiving a revelation from Allah. It is important to note that camphor, which is a typical Barus natural resource (Alnoza, 2020), has a significant contribution to religious practices. The Prophet's hadith mentions the use of camphor in bathing corpses with the term "bi-kaafuran," which is interpreted as camphor by Indonesian scholars. By inaugurating the Zero Point Monument for Indonesian Islamic Civilization in Barus, President Jokowi and the Minister of Education and Culture marked the continuity of Islamic civilization in the archipelago. The event reflects a commitment to recognizing and celebrating the cultural heritage and Islamic values that have shaped the identity of the Indonesian nation.

B. Traces of Islamic Civilization in Barus

1. Mahligai's Tomb

The Mahligai Tomb Complex is located in Aek Dakka Village, about 5 km from Barus District to the north. The complex is the largest cemetery compared to the others. The area is about three hectares and around it there are rubber plantations. Complex the same meaning as a small palace in ancient times. Then it was called this complex (Uky Firmansyah Rahman Hakim, 2019).

The shapes of tombstones in the Mahligai Tomb are quite diverse and varied, almost the same as those found in other tombs in the Barus area. The variations in tombstone shapes observed can be grouped into several types, namely: 1) The pillar/pillar shape is eight-sided or octagonal with the main decorative motif of lotus flowers, floral motifs and Arabic calligraphy. This type of stone has a crown that looks like a lotus flower. 2) Cylindrical pillar tombstones where the top or crown is in the shape of a lotus. The type is plain, but some of them are decorated with tendril-themed openwork motifs combined with geometric motifs. 3) The shape of the top of the flat tombstone is cut with small curves, with a jagged impression. 4) The shape of the tombstone is a flat piece of stone

board with a curved top, like the shape of a ship's keel or a Persian style curve. The decorative motifs are themed with plants and flowers carved with a specific design.

In 1963, this site witnessed the discovery of the grave of a prominent scholar from Arab country, Sheikh Rukunuddin. The original headstone, discovered later that year moved to Medan in 1964 to be stored at the North Sumatra State Museum for security purposes and as material for the first seminar on the introduction of Islam in Sumatra North. Apart from Sheikh Rukunuddin, this burial complex also contains graves other scholars such as Sheikh Muazzamzyah, Sheikh Zainal Abidin Ilyas, and Sheikh Imam Khatib, student of Sheikh Muazzamzyah. The entire Mahligai burial complex includes The area reaches 1 hectare and is surrounded by beautiful rice fields, creating a calm and blessed atmosphere. Mahligai Tomb, which is the final resting place of scholars and figures religion in Barus, inaugurated by Mr. Sheikh Siddiq, who himself was also buried in the complex. The existence of this tomb has a deep meaning as a center spiritual and intellectual for the people of Barus. The gravemaster, who has knowledge in-depth history, conveying information about one of the tombstones records the history of a prominent Muslim, namely Mr. Sheikh Rukunuddin (Siregar et al., n.d.).

2. Sheikh Mahmud's grave

Mr Makhdam's burial area is in Patupangan Village, Barus District, at the foot of sloping hills. The shape of the headstone is the same as the tombstone in the Mahligai Tomb. Compared with Acehnese tombstones, the tombstones are included in typology B2 or type G according to Othman. In this type the basic shape is a rectangular block, the shoulders tend to be flat or slightly raised, the head has one or more steps, the decoration on the legs and waist is usually geometric with flowers at each corner. Calligraphy or inscriptions are filled on the right, left, top, bottom and middle sides of the tombstone (Uky Firmansyah Rahman Hakim, 2019). The inscriptions on each tombstone are as follows: First, on the tombstone, what can only be read temporarily is the sentence *la ilaha illallah, Muhammadurrasulullah* (There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah) on all sides. The same sentence is also found on the tombstone. Second, on the tombstone the inscription reads (maalik al-mulki zuu al-jalaali wa al-ikram; who has power, has greatness and glory) while on the other tombstone, the inscription reads (*innaa fatahnaa laka mubinaa*; indeed, We have given you a great victory real).



The grave of Sheikh Mahmud in Abdurrahman Bin Muadz Bin Jabal
Photo: Wikipedia

This tomb is located on a hill with a height of approximately 720 M above sea level. On top of these hills there is flat land about 20 x 15 M. On this land there are eight tombs, and only one has an Arabic inscription. This tomb is probably the longest in Barus, perhaps even in Indonesia, with a diameter of around 8.15 m, and the tombstone is 135 cm high. It is estimated that the figure buried is a Sufi named Sheikh Mahmud as stated in the inscription (Masmadia Pinem, 2018). Sheikh Machmud was born during Umar Bin Khatab's time as caliph. Several different people were also curious to measure the length of the tomb. Not all graves are marked with tombstones and are not carved with natural stone. The shape of the tombstone uses a type of white granite with black spots which indicates the tombstone came from Barus. The tombstone marking the head of the grave is flat with the head in the form of a circle. Meanwhile, the tombstone marking the foot of the grave is flat and the head is carved wavy. The typology of the gravestones in this tomb is different from the gravestones in Aceh. This tombstone is more patterned towards the Surya Majapahit type in Java. If you look at the type of calligraphy, the inscriptions in this tomb complex have a sulus pattern (Amelia, 2017).

There are three inscriptions that can be read clearly, namely, one verse of the Koran and two hadiths of the Prophet. The inscription quoted from the Koran is, (*kullu sya'in haalikun illa wajhahu*, everything will perish, except Allah) which means everything will perish except His face. Meanwhile, the hadith quote on this tombstone reads: *qala al-nabi sallallahu 'alaihi wasallama almu'minu hayyun fi ad-darain*, which means the Prophet Muhammad said: believers live in the world of time. Meanwhile, the third inscription is the hadith of the Prophet which is found at the head which reads: *la ilaha illallah, Muhammadurrasulullah, qala al-nabi 'alaihi wasallama: al-mu'minuuna la yamuutuuna bal yungaluna min daarin ilaa daarin*, meaning, there is no god but Allah, Muhammad Messenger of Allah, said the Prophet 'alaihi salam (peace be upon him): the believers do not die, but they move from one place to another (Masmadia Pinem, 2018).

C. Development of Islamic Da'wah in Barus

Psychologically, the conscience of the act of preaching is a call for every person who has faith and knowledge according to their respective abilities - to follow these calls. This must be embedded in the mind of the believer. The strength and belief in Islamic da'wah as an implementation of faith and pious activities will be actualized through daily activities (Aripudin, 2012). Islam has a state that upholds the values of welfare for all citizens without discrimination. In general, the concept of Islam is based on ethics and morals (Rahmat & Agusti, 2018).

Sheikh Mahmud taught Islam to Barus City through trade and spread Islam to Barus and taught the Koran to the local community. Researchers observed that Barus was starting to be eroded by the city's Islamic nuances. This can be proven by the number of churches. According to Rizki, a community leader in Barus, this was because in the past the colonialists entered Barus and the natives were pushed to Aceh and they created a kingdom there (Uky Firmansyah Rahman Hakim, 2019). The longer the people living in Barus are no longer Muslim because visitors come and go from the port, the religion of the people will no longer be Muslim. However, Islamic history is still remembered there, the Central Tapanuli Regency government is trying to promote Barus City as a religious city.

Conclusion

Based on the explanation that has been developed in this research, taken from several sources, the conclusion is that Central Barus Tapanuli was the zero point for the entry of

Islam in Indonesia (formerly the archipelago), this is proven by supporting theories such as the Arabic or Makkah theory which explains that Islam in the archipelago was brought directly by Arab travelers who had the enthusiasm to spread Islam throughout the world in the 7th century AD. This was strengthened by the existence of an Arab village in Barus, North Sumatra known as Bandar Caliph.

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