

# Contextualization of *Wasathiyah* Values in Haji Sulong's thoughts for Islamic Education Renewal in South Thailand

Sri Sumarni

State Islamic University (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

e-mail: [marni.suka@gmail.com](mailto:marni.suka@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

Since Pattani region entered into a nation state of Thailand there have been various policies of assimilation toward the people of Southern Thailand. Until the present time, this policy has caused a conflict to both sides. The main problem is not about religious issues, but the ethnicity to maintain Malay-Muslim identity from Thai-Buddhist threats. Efforts to understand each other's identity, both Malay-Islamic and Thai-Buddhist can be continuously explored, such as: Islamic values as *ummatan wasathan* and Buddha's *Majjhima-patipada* oriented to the idea of "middle way". Efforts to understand each other can be done through education starting from Early Childhood Education to Higher Education. Efforts to understand both identities can also be done by a figure, such as Haji Sulong. Haji Sulong's struggle was initially prioritized the renewal of the Islamic Education System in Pattani, both the management and the curriculum. But along with the royal policy that continues to pressure the people of Southern Thailand, Haji Sulong also plunged into the political world. Haji Sulong heroic values can be a transformative spirit for the people of South Thailand, such as: (1) Innovative value, (2) Caring values, (3) Values of love/empathy, (4) Prudence, (5) The value of self-control, (6) The value of justice, (7) The value of courage, and etc.

**Keywords:** Contextualization, *Ummatan Wasathan*, Haji Sulong, Renewal, Education

## Abstrak

Sejak wilayah Pattani Raya masuk menjadi negara bangsa Thailand telah berlaku berbagai kebijakan asimilasi terhadap rakyat Thailand Selatan. Kebijakan ini menimbulkan konflik yang merugikan kedua belah pihak hingga sekarang. Persoalan pokoknya bukan masalah keagamaan, tetapi masalah etnisitas yaitu mempertahankan identitas Melayu-Muslim dari ancaman Thai-Buddha. Upaya saling memahami identitas masing-masing fihak, baik Melayu-Islam maupun Thai-Buddha dapat terus digali, seperti: nilai-nilai Islam sebagai *ummatan wasathan* dan Buddha *Majjhima-patipada* yang berorientasi pada gagasan "jalan tengah". Upaya saling memahami tersebut dapat

dilakukan melalui jalur pendidikan mulai Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini sampai Perguruan Tinggi. Upaya saling memahami dua identitas tersebut juga dapat dilakukan oleh seorang tokoh, seperti Haji Sulong. Perjuangan Haji Sulong awalnya lebih mengutamakan pembaharuan Sistem Pendidikan Islam di Pattani, baik manajemen maupun kurikulumnya. Namun seiring dengan kebijakan kerajaan yang terus menekan rakyat Thailand Selatan, Haji Sulong juga terjun ke dunia politik. Nilai-nilai kepahlawanan Haji Sulong dapat menjadi spirit transformatif bagi rakyat Thailand Selatan, antara lain: (1) Nilai inovatif, (2) Nilai kepedulian, (3) Nilai kasih sayang/empati, (4) Nilai kehati-hatian/ tidak gegabah, (5) Nilai pengendalian diri, (6) Nilai keadilan, (7) Nilai keberanian, dan sebagainya.

**Kata Kunci:** Kontekstualisasi, Ummatan Wasathan, Haji Sulong, Pembaharuan Pendidikan

## Introduction

Civilization of mankind will continue to progress and develop when the community is harmonious, peaceful, cooperative, complementary, and strengthen to each other, moreover in this current era of globalization where the streams of value and cultural exchange have transcended regional boundaries. In this era, the network of cooperation between countries is absolutely necessary, and the players are the young generation who have a fair and balanced attitude (*ummatan wasathan*), because in fact globalization not only moves in the economic field, but also in social and cultural interaction of mankind.

For the Thai people in general, facing globalization is probably an easy task, because the devices have been well supported, but for the people of southern Thailand, it may require a long preparation, because they still face problems related to inter-religious life. Violence in South Thailand is not only caused by differences in political interests, but also religion, language, and historical claims on land or territory<sup>1</sup> can endanger citizens. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously strive and explore various efforts to overcome violence through various ways and strategies, among others by reviving the

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Suaedy, *Dinamika Minoritas Muslim Mencari Jalan Damai (Peran Civil Society Muslim Di Thailand Selatan & Filipina Selatan)*, Serial Book of Islamic Study and Southeast Asia (Jakarta: Published by Puslitbang Lektur dan Khazanah Keagamaan Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI dan CISEAS-The Wahid Institute, 2012), hlm. 2.

values of religious teachings, especially Islam with the concept of *ummatan wasathan*.

Religion as a means of solidarity against the domination of certain groups and otherwise able to build a fair and balanced civilization has been running for a very long time. But, religion often remains as part of a territorial identity that is confronted with national identity in the context of a *nation-state*. The differences in political and cultural interests between ethnic and religious minority communities with the central government as a majority form their political identity trigger conflicts and violence in many areas, including in southern Thailand until today.

The difference of identity in Thailand is very clear. The main identification whether a person is Thai or Malay is through cultural symbols such as language and religion. The fundamental identity in Thailand, especially the southern part, is based on the fundamental differences of Islam with Malay and Buddhism in Thai.<sup>2</sup> Thai Muslims have long struggled to escape from the Thai Empire and some of them expressed a desire to join the people of Kedah and Kelantan in Malaysia. To distinguish themselves with the Thai people, they call themselves "Jawi".<sup>3</sup>

According to Thanet Aphornsuwan's search, originally two Siam tribal communities located northward under the Siam Kingdom, now called the Thai Kingdom with a Buddhist majority, and the Malay community in the southern region of what is now South Thailand (formerly Patani Sultanate) muslim majority, they live in peace although they have different religions and ethnicities. Tensions and violence arose when the Siamese kingdom established Thai nationalism in the form of a constitutional monarchy. In the formation of Thai nationalism they emphasized national identity by incorporating the southern regions as part of the kingdom. At the same time, a new system of nation-state was introduced called modernization.<sup>4</sup> The modernization that is implemented is a national system, especially the

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<sup>2</sup> N.d., 2, [http://baiq-wardhani-fisip.web.unair.ac.id/artikel\\_detail-64329-Umum-konflik%20Identitas%20di%20Thailand%20Selatan.html](http://baiq-wardhani-fisip.web.unair.ac.id/artikel_detail-64329-Umum-konflik%20Identitas%20di%20Thailand%20Selatan.html).

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Le Roux, "To Be or Not to Be...: The Cultural Identity of the Jawi (Thailand)," *Asian Folklore Studies* 57 (1998): hlm. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Thanet Aphornsuwan, "Nation-State and the Muslim Identity in the Southern Unrest and Violence," in *Understanding Conflict and Approaching Peace in Southern Thailand*, by Intiyaz Yusuf and Lars Peter Schmidt (Bangkok: KAS, 2006), hlm. 92-127.

uniformity of language and school systems that are required to follow the rules decided by the central government. The aim is to reinforce the nation's identity by strengthening the symbols of the state to build spirit of unity and oneness of Thai people through Thai language and uniformity of schooling system. Ali Sodiqin examined various paths of Thai assimilation to Malay Muslim culture.<sup>5</sup>

On one hand, the people of Southern Thailand feel an imposition with the assimilation of the Thai nation to the Malay Muslims. They are worried about the melting of Malay as a colloquial language and the language of instruction in the Islamic Education system in *Pondok* and *Madrrasah*. Then there was a rejection by the people of Southern Thailand who were subsequently imposed by the Kingdom, where those who opposed the central policy had consequences ranging from arrest, imprisonment to murder.<sup>6</sup>

While culturally the position of the minority in the middle of a majority nation is not only religious but also ethnic and linguistic differences. This adds to the accumulation of their political identity problems. Ethnically and linguistically, Muslims of both regions are part of a Malay ethnic group that is congregate with Muslims in Singapore, Malaysia and Sumatra. This is different from the majority of the population in the country.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the Muslim minority in Southern Thailand has a historical claim to the land they occupied as the former territory of the Islamic Sultanate before it became part of the national state.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ali Sodiqin, "Hukum Islam Dan Budaya Lokal Di Masyarakat Muslim Pattani Thailand (Integrasi, Konflik, Dan Dinamikanya)," *Jurnal Ibdā' (Jurnal Kebudayaan Islam)* 14, no. 1 (June 2016): 32 made a conclusion from his research that Buddha-Thai conducted a lot of assimilation toward muslim culture of Malay Pattani. Such assimilation is through politics, education, culture, and law. Through politics is by developing the ideology "nation, king, religion" which submits all citizens into one nationalism. Education is through the policy of education standardization which obliges the teaching of Thai language and history and Buddhism. Culture is through people migration program from north to south and forming the "peaceful village". The last path is through law in form of law interference namely limitation of Islamic law and the authority of Dato 'Yuthithams, abolishment of islamic court due to the unification of civil court and implementation of Thai civil law I Pattani.

<sup>6</sup> Aphornasuvan, "Nation-State and the Muslim Identity in the Southern Unrest and Violence," hlm. 105-10.

<sup>7</sup> Hussin Mutalib, *Islam Dan Etnisitas Perspektif Melayu* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1995), hlm. 48-53.

<sup>8</sup> WK Chen Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand, Singapore*. (Singapore, 1990), hlm. 43-44.

It adds to the accumulation of political identity that clashes with the central government. The question is, is it impossible to establish a common ground between both sides due to the existence of such political and cultural identity differences? The answer is not impossible. Bert Klanderments, for example, pointed out that one of the main factors of the transformation of movement based on identity differences is the succession of activists and leadership regeneration.<sup>9</sup> With the turn of the movement a political movement can change from hard to soft and vice versa depending on the various factors that surround it. Meanwhile, Ernesto Laclau pointed out that even the distinction between particular identities such as local cultural identity and religion with a universal identity is not unlikely to happen. Optimistically, Laclau pointed out that the attainment of this particular point of particularity and universality is a higher achievement of democracy.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, that religion could be a major factor in building and strengthening political and cultural identity, Scott Appleby showed two dimensions of religion, that religion can be a factor in conflict and violence but can also be a factor of peace and reconciliation.<sup>11</sup> Gutman says that religion-based identity is not always against democracy. Both religion and democracy have a commitment to respect individuals so it is possible for the meeting point to occur.<sup>12</sup> Hence, Gutmann builds optimism that these two basic meetings will reinforce the implementation of justice and a stronger individual guarantee. The criticisms of some people that religion tends to build tyranny, Gutmann answered that not only is the religion potential to build tyranny, but the whole culture, belief, and system of identity have the same potential when there's no rewards for the individuals.<sup>13</sup>

From the description above, it can be concluded that in situations of conflict and violence caused by differences of identity, between minorities and

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<sup>9</sup> Bert Klanderments, "Transient Identities? Memberships Pattern in the Dutch Peace Movement," in *New Social Movements from Ideology to Identity*, by Enrique Laraña (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), hlm. 168-70.

<sup>10</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *Introduction* in *The Making of Political Identities* (New York: Verso, 1994), hlm. 1-5.

<sup>11</sup> R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred, Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2000), hlm. 281-307.

<sup>12</sup> Amy Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), hlm. 207-10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, hlm. 183-86.

the majority is not impossible to fight until the establishment of the meeting point of identity for peace. In this respect religion can also have an important role in building common ground, especially when groups and individuals in the religion do peace efforts. Haji Sulong is a persistent figure in bridging differences and fighting for a common ground between Muslims in Patani region with the Siam Kingdom as the ruler who has been ruling unfairly. He advocated justice to create harmony of life for Muslims in Patani region through Islamic Education. The struggle began with a renewal in the world of Islamic Education.

The reform of Islamic education conducted by Haji Sulong in Pattani is intended to establish a clear and orderly system of education and direction to improve the condition of the Muslim in Patani. Renewal is done to raise the standard of living of Muslims to achieve justice and happiness. In addition, it is also to cultivate a sense of responsibility and devoted to the interests of religion, nation and homeland. The people are expected to develop the teachings of Islam in order to become devout citizens, but also to live in peace and freedom from pressure, including the pressure from the Kingdom of Siam. Renewal of Islamic education that he developed to facilitate the community in solving the problems of life they face. All of that are to maintain harmony of relationships among fellow citizens with the kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

However, Haji Sulong's struggle actually aroused suspicion for the Kingdom of Siam, and he was accused of rebelling. Renewal of Islamic Education which was pioneered got other interpretation by the Kingdom. This paper intends to analyze the thoughts and approaches of Haji Sulong in solving the problems faced by Patani society on that day, and to analyze the perspective of *ummatan wasathan* as a middle-way paradigm.

### **Education as an Instrument to Actualize the Values of *Wasathiyah***

People who take the middle way in Islam are known as *ummatan wasathan*, as found in the contents of Surah al-Baqarah verse 143 which means: "And thus We also made you (Muslims), just (wasathan) and the choice that you may be a witness to the (deeds) of men and that the Messenger

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<sup>14</sup> Farhana Yusoh, "Konsep Pemikiran Pendidikan Haji Sulong (1895-1954) (Studi Tentang Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam Di Patani)" *Skripsi*, UIN Raden Intan, 2018), hlm. 74.

(Muhammad SAW) be a witness against your (deeds). "This Islamic teaching shows that: (1) Muslims should be able to be fair and balanced. The unification of religious beliefs and practices is not part of God's plan for mankind. Conversely, religious differences are a natural thing and make people compete against each other in doing good deeds rather than destroying themselves in antagonism and strife. (2) Diversity is found among various groups, then man must cultivate mutual understanding rather than antagonism and hostility. The Qur'an condemns all kinds of prejudices, both racial, and ethnic.<sup>15</sup> The diversity in society is the *sunatullah* that needs to be bridged with each other.

In his book, "*Ma'rasah al-Mushthalahat bayna al-Gharb wa al-Islam*", the term "al-wasathiyah" in Islamic sense reflects the specific character and identity which is possessed by the manhaj (path/grip) of Islam in thought and life; in view, implementation, and application. The attitude of Islamic wasathiyah is an attitude of rejection of extremists in the form of injustice and bad deeds. It is nothing but a reflection of the original nature of a pure human being and has not been contaminated with negative influences. The just and chosen people are '*ummatan wasatha*' (middle people). The translation of "medieval" or "just and elective people" may be more precise than the term "moderate", because there is too much disguise in the term "moderate" used by the West and secular liberals today. The meaning of "*ummatan wasathan*", the medieval people, the just people, the people who bear witness to the other ummah, is by conveying the message of Islam to all mankind. With the views and attitude of 'wasatha', every Muslim is prohibited from doing '*tatharruf*' or extreme in carrying out the teachings of religion.<sup>16</sup>

The meaning of *wasathiyah* is irrelevant to the understanding of extremists who tend to put forward the uncompromisingly hard attitude also irrelevant to the understanding of liberalist groups who often interpret religious teachings very loosely, freely, and even almost leave the line of religious truth. Islamic attitude *wasathiyah* is closer to the term proportional or put the problem in accordance with the proportion or can be interpreted fair and balanced. This attitude is necessary to avoid misunderstanding and

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<sup>15</sup> Imtiyaz Yusuf, "Dialogue Between Islam and Buddhism through the Concepts Ummatan Wasathan (The Middle Nation) and Majjhima-Patipada (The Middle Way)," *Islamic Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 367-394.

<sup>16</sup> Yoyo Hambali, "Hukum Bom Bunuh Diri Menurut Islam Radikal Dan Islam Moderat," *Maslahah* 1 (2010): hlm. 25.

able to bring about justice and world peace. It will be fair and balanced in different ways, in terms of both Islamic and muamalah, so that Muslims can balance *hablumminallah* and *hablumminannas* concept.<sup>17</sup> *Ummatan* is a concept that can create harmony in life, because it can touch all aspects faced by humans, and offers the principles of unity and oneness.

Education is an excellent instrument for building up the spirit and values of *wasathiyah*. Education needs to be designed somewhat to establish equilibrium values, namely: the balance between religion and the common, the balance between worldly and heavenly goals, the balance of upholding the interests of society and the state / kingdom, the traditional and modern balance, the balance between education in family, school, and community. Education that has fulfilled these values of balance can be called integrated and connected education. Integrated between the various values that exist and develop in the community and connected between various education environments.

### **Islamic Education in South Thailand at the Beginning of the Haji Sulong's Struggle**

Thailand (Muangthai) is a country located in Southeast Asia and belongs to the member of *Association of South East Asian Nations* (ASEAN). The government is in form of a kingdom of 76 provinces with a population of 57 million. The southern part of Thailand is mostly occupied by Muslims. Their number is 2.3 million or about 4% of the entire population of Thailand. The most populated areas of the Muslims include Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun. These four provinces were previously one of the most prominent Pattani kingdoms in the Malay Culture (Indonesia and Malaysia). Residents in this region have their own culture when compared to Thai residents in other areas of the Buddhist majority. In the 16th century, Pattani was known as one of the Islamic kingdom that was rich in scholars and became one of the trading centers.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Afrizal Nur and Mukhlis Lubis, "Konsep Wasathiyah Dalam Al-Quran; (Studi Komparatif Antara Tafsir Al-Tahrîr Wa At-Tanwîr Dan Aisar At-Tafâsîr)," *An-Nur* 4, no. 2 (2015): 21.

<sup>18</sup> Mr Ilham Nuereng, "Dinamika Bernegara Masyarakat Muslim Thailand Selatan Dalam Perspektif Sosiologi Politik Islam," *In Right: Jurnal Agama Dan Hak Azazi Manusia* 5, no. 2 (2016): 54.



The development of Islam in Southern Thailand also affected the development of education. Islamic education in Pattani (including Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun) began from the time when Islam arrived and settled in Pattani in the fifteenth century, basic education began in the Muslim community by studying the Qur'an. The recitation of the Qur'an becomes the main recitation that every member of society must pass. Qur'anic education is mostly carried out in the form of a pondok, then it began to be established in Pattani in a crowded manner.<sup>19</sup>

The system of *pesantren* education, as found in Java is also known by the people of Thailand. The person who firstly introduced this educational system was a pupil of Sunan Ampel in Java named Wan Husein. He was an influential cleric in the development of Islam in Pattani. With the introduction of *pesantren* boarding system, Islamic teaching is no longer exclusively belonging to the royal elite, but also belongs to the common people and the poor people.<sup>20</sup>

*Pondok* becomes the most important educational institution in Pattani. In this case Pattani becomes the center of renowned Islamic religious education in Southern Thailand and the Malay peninsula land. *Pondok* becomes a very influential educational institution and as a place of community guidance and considered as a bulwark to defend the local culture. The santri/students use sarongs, dressed in Malay, white *kopiah*, and use the writings of Jawi and Jawi books.<sup>21</sup>

The entry process of Islam in Pattani can not be separated from the role of education. In the early stages, informal education is very important, namely informal contact between preachers and local people then followed up with the emergence of non formal education and formal education at last. Formal education undertaken by the government began in the period of King Chalongkorn or Rama V in 1899. This school received less public recognition of the region of Southern Thailand. Looking at that fact, in 1921 the government

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<sup>19</sup> Nuereng, "Dinamika Bernegara Masyarakat Muslim Thailand Selatan Dalam Perspektif Sosiologi Politik Islam."

<sup>20</sup> Rosana Jehma, Sumardi, and Sugiyanto, "The Nationalism Movement of Islam for Independence of Patani Southern Thailand (1902-1945)," *Jurnal Historica* 1, no. 1 (2017): 14.

<sup>21</sup> Jehma, Sumardi, and Sugiyanto, "The Nationalism Movement of Islam for Independence of Patani Southern Thailand (1902-1945)."

passed a law that required schools to be increased namely primary school grade one to fourth. Although the law was passed, however, the Islamic community in South Thailand (specifically in four areas: Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun) did not welcome the enactment of the law. Proven statistics of 1960 primary school graduated from first to fourth grade in the region only 13.67%, because people still chose education with the system of *pondok*.

In 1943, the condition of the Islamic community in Southern Thailand was depressed when the government of Phibul (Prime Minister of Thailand) overturned Islamic law related to kinship and inheritance and ignored the position of mufti (Islamic Religion Council in certain areas). Muslims were forced to accept civil laws that contradicted to the Islamic Shari'a. Finally, Islam Pattani made its own choice. Haji Sulong was appointed by the community as *kadi* (judge) for matters related to Islamic kinship laws but the position was not recognized by the Bangkok-based Siam government.<sup>22</sup>

The Siamese (now Thai) government's discriminatory attitude toward the people in the four regions of the South, aroused resentment of the citizens to the government, especially government officials who were perceived as spies, disrupting freedom of speech, thinking, movement and politics, for anyone who tried to remind government of Siam would be arrested and killed. Although Haji Sulong's intention to return to his homeland was not related to political affairs, but seeing the state of depressed society, then the thought of justice (*wasathiyah*) emerged. Unable to withstand the actions of the government, Muslims sent Haji Sulong to send a letter to the government/kingdom. Subsequently the Tawang Thamrong Nawasawad Government established a special committee (March 20, 1947) to investigate what happened in the South so that it could be improved. The committee arrived in Pattani on April 3, 1947, Haji Sulong as the Chairman of the Islamic Council and the leader of the Pattani Muslim community held a meeting with about 100 Pattani community leaders and succeeded in making 7 demands to the Siamese Government. The seven demands were formulated as follows<sup>23</sup>:

<sup>22</sup> Rosidi Semail, "Haji Sulong Sang Permata Pattani (1895 – 1954)," accessed January 13, 2016, Hidayatullah.com.

<sup>23</sup> Mohd Roslan, Mohd Nor, and Hamidah Jalani, "Konflik Selatan Thailand: Peranan Malaysia Sebagai Negara Jiran (Conflict Of Southern Thailand: Role Of Malaysia As A Neighbour State)," *Jurnal Hadhari An International Journal* 9, no. 1 (May 18, 2017): 157–169.

1. The Thai government should inaugurate the local government (Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun) who are Muslims.
2. The results of prosperity in these four areas should be spent on this region alone.
3. Malay language lesson is allowed, taught in elementary school until level four.
4. Civil servants in these four regions are 80 percent taken from among local Muslims.
5. Allow Malay to be used in government offices besides Thai.
6. Allow the Council of Islam to use sharia law.
7. The government should keep the Shariah Court out of court in the four areas.

The seven demands were submitted to the central government. The Thai Prime Minister, and Tawang Thamrong Nawasawad brought the seven demands to a cabinet meeting in July 1947. The result was that the seven demands were rejected by the cabinet. This of course disappointed the citizens and Haji Sulong himself who was seeking the values of justice.

It can be illustrated that the relationship between the Pattani people and the Siamese Empire is less harmonious, the government, on one side, wanted Patani citizens who were successfully merged with the Kingdom area could immediately adjust to the various policies that made Pattani people "shocked". The relationship was untrustful and even suspicious, and potentially caused a conflict.

### **Initial Efforts of Haji Sulong in Islamic Education Renewal**

Haji Sulong's full name was Haji Sulong Al Fathoni or Muhammad bin Haji Abdul Kadir bin Muhammad bin Tuan Minal. He was born in the village of anak Ru Pattani in 1895 who was the only child of Haji Abdul Kadir with his wife Syarifah. The first teacher of Haji Sulong was his own father. The first religious education he got was reading the Koran.<sup>24</sup> Haji Sulong had a very strong character. When he was a child he had a lot of humor but he was smart and clever. At 8 years old, his father sent Haji Sulong to study religion to Haji

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (Singapore: Horizon Books, 2001), hlm. 2.

Abdul Rashid in Pandan river area, Pattani. At 12, Haji Sulong went to Mecca to study religion for 20 years.<sup>25</sup> Haji Sulong was famously fluent in Arabic and master of Arabic literature. This permissibility was even recognized by those skilled in the Arab themselves. For almost 20 years after returning from Mecca,

Haji Sulong got married to Cik Sofiah. A year after his marriage, his wife died before he could get a child. Then two years later he married Hajjah Khodijah binti Haji Ibrahim, the daughter of a Kelantan Mufti.

When he was 12 years old Haji Sulong seek knowledge in Mecca. Finally, in 1924, Haji Sulong returned to Pattani to entertain his very sad wife for the loss of her first child named Mahmud who died at age of 2.<sup>26</sup>

At first Haji Sulong was not interested in getting involved in Pattani people's struggle. However, the critical awareness that he had, made him aware little by little the miserable condition of the people and Pattani. Finally, in 1945, at the request of the people and the support of the scholars, Haji Sulong became Chairman of the Pattani Islamic Council. Haji Sulong carried out the activities in mosques and boarding schools. The activities undertaken aimed to teach Islam, mobilize and inculcate the spirit of Patriotism among the Malay Muslims Patani. The beginning of Haji Sulong's activity in Pattani focused on purifying Islamic teachings. According to him, Islam is not only a spiritual command building based on the five pillars of Islam, but it is a total ideology that forms both personal and public spaces including regulating aspects of social life. Haji Sulong intended to help the surrounding Muslim community who were poor and deficient.<sup>27</sup>

Haji Sulong considered that the stagnation of the traditional education system was one of the reasons for the decline of civil society. He viewed the curriculum system in *pondok* generally informal and far from being comprehensive. The existing system did not have clear standards. Therefore, a modern academic curriculum with a clearer structure and direction was needed. The *pondok* system relied heavily on *tok guru* and the area limited from

<sup>25</sup> Husam Lamato, Sumarno, and Nurul Umamah, "The Role of Haji Sulong In Fighting Special Autonomy For Patani Southern Thailand (1947-1954)," *Jurnal Historica* 1, no. 1 (2017).

<sup>26</sup> MK Zaman, *Fatani 13 Ogos* (Kelantan, 1996), hlm. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Religious Education and Reformist Islam in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces: The Roles of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir and Ismail Lutfi Japakiya," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): hlm. 36.

the *tok guru*. The students quickly came and left *pondok* at their will. This caused a problem in the assessment system when *Pondok* was faced with the national education system. Not to mention *pondok* system was unlikely to continue when a *tok guru* did not have a cadre of leadership until the end of his life.

In the established Islamic education paradigm, he viewed subjects such as mathematics, geography and science as a necessity in Islamic education. These subjects should be synchronized with the religious curriculum or now known as the integration-interconnection term. He wanted more structured structures and regulations such as the age of entry into the *pondok*, the standard length of study time, and the evaluation system used. To realize his thinking, he built a madrasah in Pattani. This Madrasah was the first *madrasah* in Pattani. The *Madrasah* was named *Madrasah Al Ma'arif Al Wathoniah*. The religious education system in Patani at that time, although more familiar with the institution of *Pondok*, but also accepted the existence of this school.

*Madrasah* has a clear curriculum system. Unlike the curriculum formed in traditional *pesantren*, there are some characteristics such as the following:

1. Traditional *pondok* are usually located in inland area established by a teacher.
2. The *pondok* as a residence during the study is usually established by the student. After graduation then given or sold to anyone interested.
3. In addition there is also a hall as a classroom, place of learning process. Besides, it also becomes the place where teacher teaches the lessons to the community.
4. Teachers are seen as leaders who are responsible for all activities in education, both in terms of administration and the relationship between *Pondok* with the community.
5. Teachers do not charge high fees to their students. The cost of living is obtained from the source of personal wealth, *zakat fitrah* and *zakat* from students and society.

In *madrasah Al Ma'arif Al Wathoniyah* there are three levels namely

- a. Ibtidaiyah (initial level) for 6 years;
- b. Mutawasitah (middle level) for 3 years;
- c. Tsanawiyah (final level) for 3 years.

In *madrrasah* and *pondok*, Haji Sulong also taught *Ushuluddin* and *tafsir* by giving a new perspective. Interpretation of verses related to social affairs was conveyed more contextualized, such as hard work and struggle.<sup>28</sup>

After *Madrasah Al Ma'arif Al Wathoniah* was built, there was an increase in subjects taught, from previously studying only the yellow book then general subjects like mathematics, geography, science, Thai language, etc were added. In addition, there was also improvement in the learning system in the classroom. Before entering the class, students firstly marched in the field to pray and sing Islamic poems about the pillars of Islam, the pillars of faith and others. This *pondok* became special because of the improvement in such renewal of Islamic education.

Privileges in this renewal of education can be interpreted that Haji Sulong had run the mandate of Islamic teachings of *ummattan wasathan* with care about the social environment which was still underdeveloped and tried to maintain harmony with the scholars and the kingdom. The reaction of his struggle to uphold justice for the policies of the kingdom that made the people of Southern Thailand shocked at that time, merely just for actualizing critical instinct along with the breadth of knowledge he gained after studying and interacting with the scholars from various countries.

### **Renewal of Islamic Education in Dealing with Royal Policies**

After the Islamic Education system began to be organized, where the *Madrasah* education system had organized the organizational structure and the learning curriculum, the students were introduced to the class system, subjects given were more various and students got the line practice. This made the Thai royal party suspicious. They assumed that there was a hidden intention wanted by Haji Sulong with the system he implemented. The word *al-wathoniah* meaning nationality interpreted as a hidden intent that Haji Sulong wanted to separate from the Kingdom. Finally, the school was closed by the Kingdom after running for 2 to 3 years.<sup>29</sup> After the closing of *Madrasah Al Ma'arif Al Wathoniyah*, Haji Sulong still taught books and gave religious lectures in the previous *pondok*. The interpretation of the book commonly

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<sup>28</sup> Zaman, *Fatani 13 Ogos*, hlm. 9–10.

<sup>29</sup> A. Fathy, *Pengantar Sejarah Patani* (Kelantan: Aman Peris, 2001), hlm. 83.

studied by Pattani Muslim society felt different when it was taught by Haji Sulong, because of his insight and extent knowledge.

During the reign of Phiyababol (1933-1938) there were several strategies prepared to undertake the program of assimilating minority populations throughout the country of Southern Thailand including the Pattani Muslim community. One of the assimilation programs was education program since elementary school. All children of school age were required to study in Siamese royal schools and not allowed to attend education outside of government schools. This was certainly detrimental to the Islamic boarding school system and Islamic educational institutions. In Siamese learning there was the teaching of Buddhism. Islamic Malay culture was slowly depressed. The use of Jawi writing as Malay script was prohibited as well as the use of Malay as a social language. Even the use of Malay Islam as a name was considered as a form of opposition on the basis of the state.<sup>30</sup>

The term *rathaniyom* (the Thai state only for the people of Thailand) was proposed by Phibun Songgram as the country's political ideology. *Rathaniyom* was a state culture formed by the cabinet ministers used as the basis for the existing policy making. *Rathaniyom* aimed to serve as a new culture created by the state to be followed by all Thai people. There were several points in *Rathaniyom* considered to oppress Muslims like the use of the name, the language used, and the dressing arrangements of the Thai citizens.<sup>31</sup>

The oppressing system was what Haji Sulong wanted to fight for. Haji Sulong and his friends tried to fight for the aspirations of Muslims to be given special autonomy. The movement of Haji Sulong aroused the suspicion of the Thai Kingdom, moreover he was familiar with an outside political figure (Kelantan) namely Tengku Mahmood Mahyuddin. In December 1947, Thai Senet Council Expert Bajong Sricharon met Tengku Mahmood Muhyuddin in Rantau Panjang, Kelantan, Malaysia. The result of the meeting was that Tengku Mahyuddin agreed to attend a meeting and dialogue with the central government in Bangkok. Haji Sulong did not attend the meeting in Bangkok

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<sup>30</sup> Jehma, Sumardi, and Sugiyanto, "The Nationalism Movement of Islam for Independence of Patani Southern Thailand (1902-1945)."

<sup>31</sup> AO Chapakia, *Politik Dan Perjuangan Masyarakat Patani Selatan Thailand 1902-1922* (Malaysia: University Kebangsaan Malaysia Bangi, 2002), hlm. 93.

and left a letter to Tengku Mahmood Mahyuddin who was present at the meeting.<sup>32</sup> The contents of the letter were:

“The Malays (Islam) in the Siamese government feel the misery punishment over the unjust acts of our royal employees. We have appealed to the Kingdom of Siam but we failed, therefore we represent Tengku Mahmood Mahyuddin bin Tengku Abdul Kadir to look for ways so the Malay people are not prevented from practicing Islam and Malay customs.”<sup>33</sup>

After sending the letter, precisely on January 16, 1948, Haji Sulong was arrested along with some of his best friend namely Wan Uthman Wan Muhammad, Haji Wan Hussain and Wan Mohamad Amim. With the capture of Haji Sulong, the peace talks that Tengku Mahmood Mahyuddin attempted with the kingdom in Bangkok stopped. The peaceful movement of Haji Sulong was considered to be an opponent and a rebel. Yet the movement was not to liberate the four areas of Muslims in the South, but only demands justice for all (between the people of South Thailand and the Kingdom) were not pressing each other. The news of Haji Sulong's arrest was widespread and provoked a reaction from local and foreign Islamic societies. On January 19, 1948 his followers demonstrated in front of the Teluban police station, where Haji Sulong was detained. They demanded that the kingdom gave a reason why Haji Sulong arrested. The charges was not responded, even Haji Sulong was transferred to Pattani prison, then to Nakom Sri Thammarat. The reason for the move was that Haji Sulong had many followers in Pattani, if he continued to be detained in that area, it was worried that his followers would do something that could endanger the security.<sup>34</sup>

In mid-June 1952, Haji Sulong was released from prison after four years in detention. His return to Pattani was greeted by thousands of Muslims. They were waiting at the Kokpor train station. Muslims still expected the leadership of Haji Sulong. The proof was Hajj Sulong's Islamic lectures were attended by more and more people. The mosque where he delivered preaches was full of audience. It was proof that the influence of Haji Sulong was getting stronger.

<sup>32</sup> Roslan, Nor, and Jalani, “Konflik Selatan Thailand: Peranan Malaysia Sebagai Negara Jiran (Conflict of Southern Thailand: Role Of Malaysia As A Neighbour State).”

<sup>33</sup> Semail, “Haji Sulong Sang Permata Pattani (1895 – 1954),” hlm. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



This condition caused the Thai Government to hesitate, the Governor of Phraya Rattana-paldi region issued instructions (24 December 1953) to close the assembly of Haji Sulong's Islamic lectures.<sup>35</sup>

Since then, Haji Sulong was not allowed to teach. The instruction made Haji Sulong write a letter directly to Luang Sanavin Viwat, Thailand's Minister for Domestic Affairs to explain that he had no intention of opposing the government and demanding independence. The contents of the letter included:

“I only teach religion to people who come to learn voluntarily. Now, I am not going anywhere, only going to the wedding or death ceremony, so do not accuse me of doing activities that are not favored by the government.”<sup>36</sup>

Haji Sulong's letter was rejected by the Minister of Domestic Affairs of Thailand. This showed the action of regional governor was approved by the central government in Bangkok. In fact they had designed more severe action against Haji Sulong. Incidentally at that time, political development in Malay land was in the process of demanding independence from Britain. Haji Sulong was called by Colonel Bunlert Lert Paricha, the Police Chief of Songkhla, on 13 August 1954 with Wan Seman Muhamad, Che Ishak Yusof and Ahmad Haji Sulong. They left by car from Pattani to Songkhla. A few days after that, there was heard the missing news of Haji Sulong and his friends. Haji Sulong disappeared mysteriously, increasing the political tension in the four Southern Territories. Muslims believed Haji Sulong and his friends were killed by the Songkhla apparatus.<sup>37</sup>

The story of Haji Sulong made the people of Pattani sad and gave him the title ulama and the great mujahid of Bumi Pattani. His death added sympathy from Muslims and anger and resentment to the Thai government until today. Haji Sulong whose early return did not want to be involved in politics and limited his actions only to the renewal of the Islamic education system, but because of the conditions of society which was full of injustice, Haji

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Roslan, Nor, and Jalani, “Konflik Selatan Thailand: Peranan Malaysia Sebagai Negara Jiran (Conflict Of Southern Thailand: Role Of Malaysia As A Neighbour State).”

Sulong appeared as a "bridge" between the people of Southern Thailand and the Kingdom of Thailand, although eventually he himself became a victim.

### **Contextualization of Wasathiyah Values in the Present Time**

The political, cultural and economic integration carried out by the Thai government against the southern provinces forcibly and suddenly got fights from local communities. This resistance was an attempt to protect the ethnoreligious they had from Thai hegemony. The inherent identity of the Pattani Malay muslim was able to mobilize this community against every government policy that threatened its existence. This resistance led to a prolonged conflict from the 19th century to the present. The Thai government should be aware of the striking differences between the Pattani people who have Malay Islamic culture and the Buddhist community in most other areas. A coercive and abrupt assimilation policy will only cause shock to the oppressed party (the people of Southern Thailand) and new conflicts harming both sides and it still continues to the present time. The main issue is not about religion, but the ethnicity of maintaining Malay-Muslim identity from Thai-Buddhist threats. To appreciate two different identities then mutual respect for both parties is the key to resolving the problem.

The attitude of mutual respect will grow when there is mutual understanding of each other's identity, so the role of dialogue is very important. In the process of dialogue both parties need to play equally, not push each other. When the condition is not equivalent then the dialogue needs to present the third party. In the context of the relations of the Pattani people (South Thailand, now) represented by Haji Sulong with the Thai kingdom at that time, had been bridged by Tengku Mahmood Muhyuddin from Rantau Panjang, Kelantan, Malaysia, but received little response from the kingdom. Communication in the dialogue process is often straightforward. In facing unbalanced situation between the ruler and the ruled like this, it requires an attitude of courage, determination, fighting power, but also self-control and strong patience from the weak side. These attitudes exist on Haji Sulong.

The values of Haji Sulong's struggle which was from the beginning did not want to be involved in politics and limited only to the renewal of the Islamic educational system, in fact it could be an indicator that he did not intend to fight against the Kingdom. But because of its success in establishing

Islamic education system in *Madrasah Al Ma'arif Al Wathoniyah* which was well organized, then closed by the kingdom, then Haji Sulong began to plunge into the political area. Feelings of disappointment certainly existed, but he remained patient, and continued to teach in the *pesantren*. At the same time, the government's pressure on the people of Southern Thailand continued, prompting him to come to solve the problem through peaceful means. He was still trying to think clearly, not directly fighting physically, putting forward the dialogue either directly or through a letter to the government. But the dialogue offered failed even he was eventually killed.

From Haji Sulong's struggle, there are values which can be sought by elaborating the values of wasathonyah worthy to be preserved, such as:

1. Innovative value in making renewal in Islamic Education, both management and curriculum that integrate between the study of religion with general knowledge;
2. Great caring value in helping others;
3. The value of affection to the family, trying to comfort his sad wife because her child died, until returning to his homeland;
4. The value of prudence and not rash in the struggle;
5. Strong value of control, non-violence;
6. The value of justice in fighting for the sake of defending the right and those who are persecuted;
7. The value of courage despite being faced in an unequal situation, still dare to step forward without moving back;

Goodness values owned by Haji Sulong had given the title to him that he was a hero and not a rebel. The results of interviews with two lecturers and a student from Fatoni University, Thailand strengthened this analysis.<sup>38</sup>

In the current condition, it is necessary to continue the negotiations between the people of Southern Thailand and the government to create peace in this area. Both sides must recognize each other's identity, so that they are open and can understand each other. Although the Thai government and some Thai Buddhist communities, it is necessary to learn how the true teachings of Islam. It can be through *ulama* in the South. The Thai government also needs

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<sup>38</sup> Abdulaziz Kalupae, Abdunorma Sama Alee, and Firdaws, Interview on the Hajj Sulong Struggle in Pattani, November 3, 2017.

to keep looking for Buddhist values that choose the middle way to find a way of peace in negotiating a conflict. Islam and Buddhism have been involved in religious exchanges in their encounters in Central, South and Southeast Asia. Their initial meeting was followed in some cases, with Buddhist conversion to Islam as it did in Central Asia and Southeast Asia. But there are also other areas where Buddhism and Islam have continued to exist side by side so far as it has happened in India as well as in mainland of Southeast Asia.<sup>39</sup>

The expression of Buddha *Majjhima-patipada* refers to the idea that Buddhism represents the Middle Way. The Buddha obtains nirvana from within himself on the basis of his own efforts in seeking answers to the question of dukkha (human suffering) and the pursuit of salvation. As for Islam, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) who attained his single spiritual form through revelation from outside himself while trying to understand the meaning of human in terms of the purpose of creation and purpose of life which is *rahmatan lil'alamiin*.<sup>40</sup>

The various values of seeking the middle way of the two religions need to be continuously explored and lived through peace education in schools and colleges. The ideology of the middle way can color the curriculum of all subjects or stand alone under the name of Peace Education.

## Conclusion

Haji Sulong's struggle was initially not interested in the political field and prioritized the renewal of the Islamic Education System in Pattani. There was an increase in subjects which previously only studied the yellow book then general subjects such as mathematics, geography, science, Thai and other languages were added. In addition, there was also a system of learning in the

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<sup>39</sup> Yusuf, "Dialogue Between Islam and Buddhism through the Concepts Ummatan Wasathan (The Middle Nation) and Majjhima-Patipada (The Middle Way)."

<sup>40</sup> Imtiyaz Yusuf. Imtiyaz Yusuf has mentioned the history of the relationship between Islam and Buddhism in his 2003 writing, providing additional analysis that the meeting between Islam and Buddhism is as old as the birth of Islam. The first meeting between Islam and ahab al-Bidada or Buddhist community took place in the middle-7 AD in the Persian East, Transoxiana, Afghanistan and Sindh. Much historical evidence suggests that some early Muslims extended the Qur'anic and al-Kitab categories from books or revealed religions to include Hindus and Buddhists *ibid*. During the second century of Islam or the 8th century AD Muslim translated many Buddhist works into Arabic. We can find titles like Arabic, *Bilawar wa Budhasaf* and *Kitab al-Budd*.

classroom and graduation system. This renewal can be the foundation of the development of Islamic Education Institution in Southern Thailand until now.

The policy of assimilation by the Government of Thailand toward the people of Southern Thailand forcibly and suddenly had caused "shock" for the people of Southern Thailand. This policy caused a conflict causing loss to both sides until now. The main issue is not about religious, but the ethnicity of maintaining Malay-Muslim identity from Thai-Buddhist threats. To appreciate two different identities then mutual respect for both parties is the key to resolving them. Efforts to understand each other's identity, both Malay-Islamic and Thai-Buddhist can be continuously explored, such as: Islamic values as *ummatah wasathiyah* and Buddha's *Majjhima-patipada* oriented to the idea of "middle way". Efforts to understand each other can be done through education starting from Early Childhood Education to Higher Education.

The heroic values of the characters are also important in providing a transformative spirit to the people of Southern Thailand, such as: the stubborn struggle values of Haji Sulong but still able to control himself and seek to find a way of peace through dialogue. The values of Haji Sulong can be found by elaborating the values of *wasathiyah* worthy to be preserved, such as: (1) innovative value, (2), caring value (3) value of love/empathy, (4) prudence/not rash, (5) the value of self-control, (6) the value of justice, (7) the value of courage, and etc. This article can be compiled due to good assistance and cooperation with the Office of Research and Community Service (LPPM) UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta in the scheme of Postdoctoral Program UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2017. Thanks to Prof. Drs. KH Yudian Wahyudi, MA, Ph.D. as the Rector of UIN Sunan Kalijaga and Mr. Prof. Al Makin, MA, Ph.D. as Chairman of LPPM UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.

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