

THE KINGDOM OF DEMAK: TRACES OF SUCCESS AND ISLAMIC HERITAGE THAT SHAPED JAVANESE CIVILIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the historical significance of the Kingdom of Demak, the first Islamic kingdom on the island of Java, which emerged following the decline of the Majapahit Kingdom. The research aims to analyze the multifaceted role of Demak in the spread of Islam and its integration with local cultural values, focusing on the contributions of key figures such as Raden Patah and the Wali Songo. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the study examines historical texts and literature to uncover the dynamics of Islamization and its impact on Javanese civilization. The findings reveal that Demak served as a vital center for trade and Islamic education, successfully expanding its influence while countering external threats. The Great Mosque of Demak and other relics exemplify the enduring Islamic cultural heritage that has shaped the identity of the Javanese people. This research underscores the importance of understanding the interplay between political power and religious transformation, providing valuable insights into Indonesia's cultural and social identity today.

Keywords: Islamization, The Demak Kingdom, Cultural

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INTRODUCTION

The Islamic kingdom in Indonesia emerged as a logical result of the historical development of Islamic education, which provided an opportunity for Islam to realize its ideals and to spread those teachings. One significant example is the Kingdom of Demak, which is the main focus of this article. This kingdom not only played a role in the spread of Islam, but also in the formation of the cultural and social identity of the Javanese people. (Afidah, 2021a) The instability that occurred in the kingdom provided opportunities for people who wanted to establish an Islamic kingdom. In this situation, Demak, which was one of the Majapahit domains, decided to separate itself from the Majapahit Kingdom and establish a new kingdom. This marked the birth of the Kingdom of Demak, which became the first Islamic kingdom on the island of Java. (Fadhilah, 2020)

The da'wah method, which was used to spread Islam in the 12th and 13th centuries, was seen to be highly successful in influencing individuals to adhere to Islamic beliefs because of the deeply rooted influence of our forefathers' teachings. Wali Songo played a significant part in the spread of Islamic doctrine in Indonesia, which started on the island of Java in the fourteenth century (Afandi, 2023). During the time of Wali Songo, the da'wah method began to shift to the introduction of a new culture, namely Islamic culture which was integrated with the local culture of the people in the 15th to 16th centuries. As a result, the non-Islamic kingdoms at that time experienced a decline in power due to their proportion being in the minority. (Tambak, 2014)

Some of the Islamic kingdoms that emerged at that time included the Kingdoms of Aceh, Demak, Cirebon, Malacca, and Ternate. Demak, as the first kingdom on the island of Java, became a pioneer in the development of Islamic culture and marked the decline of the Majapahit Kingdom. Wali Songo's da'wah on the island of Java covers the East Java region, including Surabaya, Gresik, and Tuban; in Central Java, such as Demak, Kudus, and Muria; and in West Java, including Cirebon. This led to the emergence of various Islamic kingdoms along the island of Java at that time (Purhasanah et al., 2023). As a researcher, Exploring the title "The Kingdom of Demak: Traces of Glory and Islamic Heritage that Shaped the Javanese Civilization" is significant because the Kingdom of Demak is one of the important milestones in the history of Islam in Indonesia. The glory of Demak not only reflects its political and military power, but also shows how Islam interacts with the local culture, shaping the rich and diverse identity of Javanese society. (Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2020)

Through this research, the researchers are intended to delve deeper into how the cultural heritage and Islamic values instilled by the founders and leaders of Demak, such as Raden Patah and Wali Songo, still affect the social, cultural, and spiritual life of the Javanese people to this day (Wiryomartono, 2023a). In addition, the researcher is also interested in analyzing the impact of the peaceful and gradual process of Islamization, as well as how this contributes to the formation of the social and political structure in the region. By understanding the traces of glory and heritage of the Demak Kingdom, it is hoped that this research can provide broader insights into the role of Islam in shaping Javanese civilization and its contribution to Indonesian history as a whole (Wiryomartono, 2020).

This research aims to investigate the multifaceted role of the Kingdom of Demak in Indonesian history and culture, especially regarding the spread of Islam and its integration with local traditions (Fahmi, 2024). By analyzing the strategies implemented by key figures such as Raden Patah and the Wali Songo, this study reveals how their efforts not only facilitated the Islamization of Javanese society, but also shaped a unique cultural identity (Antonio, 2022). It also explores the impact of the peaceful Islamization process on social and political structures, as well as the legacy of the Demak Kingdom that continues to influence contemporary Javanese society. As such, it fills a gap in the existing literature and provides important insights into the foundations of Javanese identity and the influence of Islamic values in the context of modern Indonesia (Hakim, 2023).

The lack of comprehensive knowledge regarding the relationship between Islam and local culture in Indonesia, especially within the framework of the Demak Kingdom, is the source of the gap analysis in this study. Even while the Wali Songo's role and the propagation of Islam have been extensively studied, little research has been done on

how Islamic ideals have been incorporated into regional customs. By examining the Demak Kingdom's function as a center of authority that also linked Islamic principles with regional cultural identities, this study seeks to close that gap. With this emphasis, the study contributes significantly to the study of Islamic history in Indonesia and provides uniqueness in understanding the peaceful process of Islamization and its impact on social and political institutions.

METHOD

With an emphasis on the introduction of Islam and the incorporation of regional cultural norms, the study's scope encompasses a thorough examination of the Demak Kingdom and its impact on Javanese civilization. Because it may delve deeply into the meaning of religious phenomena, the qualitative approach is a particularly relevant research tool in the study of religion and religiosity. Researchers can examine the nuances and complexity of religious experiences using the qualitative method, which is frequently incomprehensible using quantitative methods. Given that religious literaturesuch as holy books, ancient texts, and scholarly works is the primary source for comprehending religious teachings and practices, qualitative literature research is crucial in the context of Islamic studies (Saefullah, 2024). The data sources in this research include: (1) Thought Leader Studies, (2) Textbook Analysis, and (3) Historical Studies. These data sources assist the author in studying the history of the Demak Kingdom in depth. The data collection technique used is literature study, which is collecting and analyzing relevant literature to gain a better understanding of the historical and cultural context of the Demak Kingdom (Sofyan, 2021). The limitations of this methodology lie in the reliance on written sources that may have biases or limitations in historical representation, as well as the possible lack of verifiable empirical data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History of the Establishment of the Islamic Kingdom of Demak

Demak was previously an area known as Bintoro or Gelagahwangi which was a duchy area under the rule of Majapahit. The Kingdom of Demak is geographically located in Central Java with its seat of government in the Bintoro area at the mouth of the river, which is surrounded by a vast swampy area in the waters of the Muria Sea (Rokhman & Yuliana, 2018). The establishment of the Demak kingdom itself cannot be separated from the history of the Majapahit kingdom which ruled on the island of Java. on one occasion Raden Patah was ordered by his teacher, Sunan Ampel from Surabaya, to migrate west. During his overseas journey, Raden Patah reached a swampy area on the southern edge of Muryo Island (Muria), where fragrant and swampy were found; then the place was named by Raden Patah as "Demak." (Amarseto, 2017)

The Islamic kingdom of Demak was established at the end of the Majapahit kingdom. Historians in general say that the development of Islam in Java coincided with the period of the weakening of the Majapahit kingdom (Hasyim, 2021a). This gave the Islamic rulers on the coast the opportunity to establish independent centers of power. Under the leadership of Sunan Ampel Denta, Wali Songo agreed to appoint Raden Fatah as the first king in Demak and at the same time the first Islamic kingdom in Java, with the title Senopati Jimbun Ngabdurrahman Panembahan Palembang Sayyidina Panatagama (Fuadi, 2021). Raden Fatah's reign lasted between the end of the 15th

century and the beginning of the 17th century. He was an Islamic king who was the son of the king of Majapahit from a Muslim mother of Campa descent. (Abdullah, 2020)

As the first Islamic Kingdom on the island of Java, the Kingdom of Demak played a major role in the Islamization process at that time. The Kingdom of Demak developed as a trading center and as a center for the spread of Islam (Azman & Supriadi, 2025). Demak's jurisdiction includes Jepara, Tuban, Sedayu Palembang, Jambi and several areas in Kalimantan. In addition, the Demak Kingdom also has important ports such as Jepara, Tuban, Sedayu, Jaratan and Gresik which have developed into transit ports. Demak was the first Islamic Sultanate on the island of Java with the founder Raden Fatah. The Sultanate of Demak can become a complete Islamic Kingdom under the rule of the Sultan and with the guidance of the Wali (Susilo & Wulansari, 2019).

The Success of the Demak Government

a. The Success of the Demak Government during the Time of Raden Patah

Demak was at the peak of its power and influence under the government of Raden Patah. During Wali Songo's reign as king, the kingdom of Demak benefited greatly from his guidance and leadership (Supriyadi et al., 2023). Demak, a small Islamic country, grew into a large kingdom in a short time. During 1511, Raden Patah was able to win the leadership of the Demak kingdom. In addition, he controlled the coastal areas of Central Java and East Java. Although Raden Patah led the Demak kingdom, he was not alone. Once, the man's son, Pati Unus, came to help him. (Anafah, 2018)

The organization Bayangkara Islah (Forerunner of Improvement), which was established by Raden Patah and his dignitaries a year after he was appointed Duke of Bintoro/Demak in 1476, was centered on Islamic education and instruction with a systematic design. The work plan of the organization consists of:

1. The division of the Java-Madura territory into several parts for educational and teaching activities, where each part is supervised by a guardian and an assistant.
2. Islamic education and teachings must be delivered in a way that is easily understood and accepted by the community, using the existing local culture, as long as it does not conflict with sharia law.
3. In addition to having good religious knowledge, Wali Songo and Badal are also expected to maintain good morals and ethics so that they can be an example for the surrounding community.
4. In Bintoro/Demak, it is necessary to immediately establish the Great Mosque as a center for Islamic science and educational activities. Before the Great Mosque was completed, a temporary mosque (langgar) was established and named the Sikayu Mosque. (Hasyim, 2021b)

Some of the achievements that Raden Patah achieved when he served as the ruler of the Demak Kingdom:

1. Raden Patah's victory over Girindra Wardhana (1478), who had seized the Majapahit crown, shows his effectiveness in expanding and defending the country. Raden Patah's reign as king of Majapahit can be considered as an example of his effectiveness in expanding and protecting the kingdom (1478). In addition, Raden Patah fought against the Portuguese in 1511, after Malacca was captured by the Portuguese and the Portuguese tried to create trouble for

Demak. By asking for the help of Pati Unus, the captain of his army (Raden Patah's son).

2. Raden Patah's work in the field of Islamic da'wah and the advancement of Islamic law includes the application of Islamic law in several aspects of daily life. The Great Mosque of Demak was also built by him in 1479, and besides that he also built a palace in 1478. In terms of mosque construction, Walisanga is the savior. (Jayanti, 2022)
- b. The Success of the Demak Kingdom during the Treggono Period (1521-1546)

Sultan Trenggono's rule (1521-1546) was the height of the Sultanate of Demak's prosperity. West Java (Banten, Jayakarta, and Cirebon), Central Java, and portions of East Java are also included in its enormous territory. Sultan Trenggono also took significant steps for the Demak kingdom, including enforcing Islamic principles against the regions he had ruled, including Banten, Cirebon, and Sunda Kelapa (Fatahillah led the expansion of the West Java region), preventing Portuguese territorial expansion, and defeating the kingdoms of Mataram, Singasari, and Blambangan. (Sidiq & Lukitoyo, 2020)

The success of Sultan Trenggono to strengthen and expand the power of Demak, in 1527, the Demak army succeeded in controlling Tuban, and a year later succeeded in occupying Wonosari, and in 1529 succeeded in controlling Gagelang. The Demak territory then continued to conquer Medangungan (Blora, 1530), Surabaya (1531), Lamongan (1542), and also the Penanggungan mountain area (1545), as well as Blambangan which was the last Hindu kingdom at the eastern tip of the island of Java (1546).

The factors that drive Demak's progress are:

- 1) Strategic location in the coastal area
- 2) Bergota Port in Semarang, is an important export-import port for Demak
- 3) It has a river as a link with the interior, thus helping to transport agricultural products in the form of rice as the main export commodity of Demak
- 4) The collapse of the Majapahit kingdom by Demak made Demak develop rapidly freely without any threat from other large kingdoms on the island of Java. (Amarseto, 2017)

The Role of the Demak Kingdom in the Islamization Process

The first and biggest Islamic state in Java was the Demak state, which also played a key role in the spread of Islam throughout Indonesia and Java. The Demak kingdom's formation indicates that Islam is starting to be incorporated into politics. Islamic da'wah activities conducted by scholars and guardians, including Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Giri, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunung Jati, coexisted with Islamic education in the Kingdom of Demak, Pajang, and Mataram. (Saefullah, 2024)

Raden Fatah, the son of Brawijaya Majapahit, is a student of an Islamic college in Ampel Denta. He was given a diploma by his teacher to open an Islamic school anywhere. In 1475 Raden Fatah established a pesantren in the forest of Glagah Arum south of Jepara. This pesantren received rapid progress, so that the small village Glagah also advanced so that it turned into a regency city, namely Bintara and Raden Fatah became the regent in 1475. In this Islamic boarding school educational institution, at

least it has elements such as kiai, santri, mosque and sources of materials or teaching materials. (Mulyati, 2017)

Sultan Fatah's da'wah strategy starts with the presentation of compelling Islamic teachings that are focused on developing Islamic aqidah that is tailored to the current circumstances. The method of al-hikmat, or spectacularly held wisdom, is given priority by the ulama-umara. The expansion of Islam throughout the Indonesian archipelago can be attributed to the representatives' effective policy of publicizing religion and incorporating Islamic education and teaching into all aspects of Indonesian national culture. (Mulyati, 2017)

Additionally, the establishment of Bayangkari Islah (Pioneer Force of Goodness) in Bintara in 1476 had as one of its objectives the orderly support of Islamic teaching and instruction. In Indonesia, this is the first organization dedicated to Islamic education. Demak's approach to promoting Islamic education and teaching is similar to Aceh's, which involves placing mosques in strategic locations across a community. In order to become a teacher, a Badal oversaw the teaching of religious education there, which developed into the hub of learning and instruction as well as the origin of Islam.

Raden Fatah, the founder of the Demak Sultanate, played an important role in the process of Islamization in the archipelago, especially in Java. The strategies he implemented include various approaches, both political, cultural, and educational. Here are some of Raden Fatah's main strategies in the Islamization process (El Jauquene, 2020). Based on this situation, history records the existence of various channels used to spread the teachings of Islam as follows: (Afidah, 2021b)

1. Through the Path of Politics and Power
 - a) Establishing the Sultanate of Demak: As the first Islamic sultanate in Java, Demak became the center of power that spread the teachings of Islam. Demak's political influence helped expand the territory that accepted Islam.
 - b) Coalition with Local Rulers: Raden Fatah established relationships with small kingdoms and local leaders to spread Islam peacefully. This accelerated the acceptance of Islam without major conflicts.
 - c) Countering Majapahit Influence: Demak took on the role of the spiritual successor of Majapahit while introducing Islam as a new foundation, replacing Hindu-Buddhist teachings (Shofura et al., 2024).
2. The Role of Songo Scholars and Wali
 - a) Raden Fatah collaborated with Wali Songo, a prominent group of scholars, in spreading Islam. Wali Songo uses a polite and acculturative approach so that Islam is easily accepted by the community.
 - b) Wali Songo also established Islamic boarding schools and mosques as centers for the education and spread of Islam, such as the Great Mosque of Demak, which became an important symbol of Islamization (Sakhok & Musadad, 2024).
3. Cultural Approach
 - a) Acculturation of Local Traditions: Islam is introduced through art, such as wayang kulit, gamelan, and other local traditions adapted to Islamic teachings.
 - b) Use of Javanese: Da'wah is carried out in the local language to make it easier to be accepted by the community.
 - c) Religious Festivals: Celebrations such as Grebeg Maulid and other traditions are a means of da'wah that subtly introduces Islam.

4. Education and Dissemination of Knowledge
 - a) Raden Fatah encouraged the establishment of Islamic educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools, which became centers for learning Islamic religion and culture.
 - b) This education involves people from various layers, so that Islam is accepted by various social groups (Ilyas, 2020).
5. Trade
 - a) Demak as a trading center used trade routes to spread Islam to other coastal areas.
 - b) Relations with merchants from the Middle East, Gujarat, and China strengthened the spread of Islam through trade networks.
6. Military and Defense

Raden Fatah used military force to protect Islamic interests and the territory of the Demak Sultanate from external threats, such as conflicts with Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms that had not yet accepted Islam.
7. Religious Symbols

The construction of the Great Mosque of Demak as a symbol of Islamic power in Java. This mosque is also the center of religious and political activities of the Demak Sultanate. Through these strategies, Raden Fatah succeeded in making the Sultanate of Demak a strong center for the spread of Islam and building a foundation for the development of Islam in the archipelago (Ardiani et al., 2022).

Relics of the Demak Kingdom

As has been known from the previous presentation, Sultan Fatah played a very important role in the development of Demak, which is the first and largest Islamic kingdom on the north coast of Java (Coast). Some of the relics of the Demak Kingdom include:

- a) Great Mosque of Demak

The Great Mosque of Demak is a heritage mosque of the Demak Kingdom located in Kauman Village, Bintaro Village, Demak District, Demak Regency, Central Java. This mosque was founded in the 15th century by Raden Patah, the king of the Demak Sultanate who was also one of the guardians of the walisanga. The establishment of the Great Mosque of Demak is believed to be a prototype of mosques on the island of Java. The morphology of the Great Mosque of Demak which has a three-layered tajug roof, in contrast to the Middle Eastern mosque which generally has a dome roof, is replicated in most mosques in Java. (Nur, 2017)

The Great Mosque of Demak was established with old concepts and values that were rooted in Javanese society before the entry of Islam. The shape of the three-tiered tajug roof is a manifestation of the concept of meru which represents a mountain, then the number three is a reflection of the concept of tribhuana (lower world, middle world, upper world) from Hinduism. The establishment of mosques with other cultural values is indeed in line with the strategy of spreading Islam carried out synchronotically by walisongo. (Undergraduate Student, Architecture Study Program, School of Architecture Planning and Policy Development, Bandung & Pratama Institute of Technology, 2017)

- b) Bedug and Kentongan

These historic bedug and kentongan were used in the past to call the surrounding community to pray 5 (five) times in congregation. This kentongan is shaped like a horseshoe (Wiryomartono, 2023b).

c) Wudhu Pool Site

The site of the ablution pond is also a relic of the Islamic Kingdom of Demak. This ablution pool was made at the same time as the Demak Great Mosque building. But the site of this ablution pond is no longer functional, it can only be seen as a historical relic (Fairuz Sabiq, 2021).

d) Maksurah

Maksurah is a wall carved with calligraphy in Arabic writing that decorates the building of the Great Mosque of Demak. This maksurah was made around 1866 AD, precisely when Aryo Purbaningrat served as the Duke of Demak (Kasdi et al., 2019).

e) Dampar Kencana

Dampar kencana is the throne of the sultans which was subsequently converted into a sermon pulpit at the Great Mosque of Demak. Until now, this pulpit is still used and neatly maintained (Zuliana et al., 2023).

f) Campa and Gentong Kong Plates

The cempaka plate is a plate given by a daughter from Champa who is none other than the mother of Raden sultan Fatah. Some of these plates are installed on the walls of the Great Mosque of Demak as decorations, others are installed in the mosque's hiding place. The Gentong Kong was a gift from Raden Fatah's mother, Princess Champa during the Ming dynasty in the XIV century. It is currently in front of the grave of K.R. Nata Sangen. (Fairuz Sabiq, 2021)

From some of the relics of the Demak Kingdom that are mentioned above, it shows evidence of the glory of the Demak Kingdom and the great role of the Demak Kingdom in Islamic thought and civilization in Indonesia. The main findings of the study of the founding history of the Islamic Kingdom of Demak show that this kingdom, founded by Raden Patah at the end of the Majapahit period, became the first center for the spread of Islam in Java. Under his leadership, Demak thrived as a center of Islamic trade and education, successfully expanding its territory and countering threats from the Portuguese and Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms. Through acculturative political, cultural and educational approaches, Raden Patah and the Wali Songo successfully introduced Islam to the local people. Important relics such as the Great Mosque of Demak and various other artifacts reflect the strong Islamic influence and integration of local values, confirming Demak's central role in the history of Islam in Indonesia and the formation of Javanese cultural identity.

This research shows that the Kingdom of Demak served as a centre of political power and a pioneer of the spread of Islam in Java and Indonesia, which implies the importance of understanding the interaction between political power and the process of Islamization and the integration of Islamic values with local culture. However, this study has limitations, such as the reliance on written sources that may be biased and the lack of local people's perspectives, which may reduce the understanding of the social dynamics of the time. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct further research that explores the perspectives of local people in the Islamization process and conduct field studies to collect richer empirical data, as well as analyse the influence of the Demak Kingdom on the development of Javanese culture and identity today.

CONCLUSION

Being the earliest Islamic state on Java, the Demak state is essential to comprehending the historical and cultural development of Indonesia. It was founded during the fall of the Majapahit Kingdom and rose to prominence under Raden Patah, who, in collaboration with the Wali Songo, successfully incorporated Islamic principles into local societies through political, cultural, and educational means. Demak thrived as a center for trade and the spread of Islam under the rule of Sultan Trenggono and Raden Patah. Its large domains and strategically located ports promoted trade and da'wah, underscoring the connection between religion and commerce. The Great Mosque of Demak is one historical structure that demonstrates the everlasting Islamic cultural legacy that has influenced Javanese culture. Recognizing the legacy of the Demak Kingdom is essential for understanding the foundations of Indonesia's cultural and social identity today. This research emphasizes the importance of historical context in shaping modern societies and illustrates the enduring impact of early Islamic influences in Indonesia. The significance of the Demak Kingdom extends beyond its past, providing valuable insights into the complexities of Indonesian society and its Islamic heritage.

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