

South Kalimantan's Inland Ports and the Spread of Islam

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Primarily this investigation examined the origin and development of Islam in South Kalimantan. It aimed to establish social, economic, and geographical factors that contributed to the acceptance of Islamic faith. The main study areas were three villages in Banjarmasin, including the Sasirangan, Gadang, and Bilu villages, within the area of interest. Study respondents narrated through interviews the origin of Islamism in Banjarmasin, the role played by the inland ports in facilitating these movements, and the major form of transportation used by the immigrants. The gathered responses were analysed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. It identified major themes from the interviews. The research found that 97% of study participants understood the connection between the inland ports of Banjarmasin and the exchange of merchandise for transportation over long distances. Yet there was a gap in knowledge concerning the contribution of other factors like political stability and infrastructural development, to the success of these trade missions. Future investigations should, however, focus on analysing archaeological researches that specify timelines for the events that led up to the development of the Islamic religion, as the most predominant in South Kalimantan.

Key words: Inland Ports, Spread of Islam

Introduction

Indonesia is a south-eastern Asian nation made up of several thousand islands. The inhabited areas occupy over 3,000 miles stretching from New Guinea in the east and Sumatera in the west (Cammack & Feener, 2012). Indonesia has for several decades been known as the country with the largest population of Muslims. Initially, the region was governed by administrative authorities before colonial rule and formed the present-day Indonesian Republic (Hadler, 2008). Also, the archipelago was ruled by the Dutch for more than 300 years, but the invasion of current Indonesia took place at the beginning of the twentieth

century (Jianli, 2011). The central location of the country between China and the Middle East trade routes resulted in infiltration of foreign practices and ideas from neighbouring and overseas trading partners (Babb, 2015). The first states on the island adopted South Asian religions and remained the dominant local power up until the fourteenth century in Sumatera and Java.

Currently Indonesia is a secular nation, where most believers are allied to a religion of moderate faith that often combines animist and Hindu practices. Extremist Islamic ideologies have developed over recent years, leading to the progression of Islamic political parties backed by local leaders (Marshall, 2018). Religious state politics have sometimes influenced government policies, since the country's constitution encourages freedom of speech and religion but prohibits blasphemy. Research conducted by Missbach and Palmer (2018) shows that most Indonesian citizens are Muslims who adhere to the doctrines and beliefs of the Islamic faith. However, even staunch observers do not support extremism. Hundreds of thousands visit the hajj in loyalty to the holy month of Ramadhan every year, but dislike the fanaticism and corruption that happens in Saudi Arabia.

Indonesia is presently the largest Islamic country in the world, with more than 87% of citizens being Muslims (Razick, Ismail, Mazahir, Munas & Long, 2016). The nation does not practice Islamic law. Nor is Islam the state religion. The following are the elements of Islam observed in the country:

1. Priyayi Islam: the blended version of Islam that combines with the standard Buddhist-Hindu features which dominate illiterate urban areas;
2. Santri Islam: Commonly practised among landowners and merchants; and
3. Abangan Islam: the type of Islam influenced by animist folk tradition and mainly practised in rural areas (Cammack & Feener, 2012).

Most Indonesian Muslims are Sunni while a few are Shiites. Out of over 230 million Muslims, the Shiite population is estimated at about 3 million (Chalmers, 2007). However, there are other smaller groups, such as the Ahmadiya community that has about 400,000 members (Cammack & Feener, 2012). The denominations differ as to the roles of the clergy. For instance, Sunni imams focus on infallibility and free will. Indonesia has not implemented a uniform Islamic community such as that practised in Saudi Arabia and other countries governed by Islamic law. Muslims in Indonesia also exhibit diverse levels of loyalty and belief (Emmerson, 2015). For instance, the Abangan or nominal group does not focus so much on religion but concentrates on the modern way of life. The Santri embrace frequent prayers and have marks or bruises on their foreheads. Moreover, there are political parties affiliated to the two groups and those that fall in between (Ota, 2019). Cults and Sufi sects apply Hindu and Buddhist beliefs and rituals.

Study Objectives

The traditional settlements in Banjarmasin are closely related to the development of Islamism, considering that the first Islamic empire established between 1526 and 1550 by Sultan Suriansyah was the largest and most prosperous Banjarese kingdom (Abdullah & Suardi Wekke, 2018). Although the first Muslim creations in the city were burnt down and historians cannot locate the exact cradle of Islam in Banjarmasin, Stanley (2015) believed that the present burial site of Sultan Suriansyah is where the royal residence once stood. In the context of religious tourism, numerous cultural and historical fascinations, including the Grand Mosque of Sabilal Muhtadin and the Sultan Suriansyah Mosque, have been used as ancient symbols of Islamism (Abdullah & Suardi Wekke, 2018). The main goals and objectives of this research are to examine how inland ports in Kalimantan supported the arrival, spread, and growth of the Islamic religion in Kalimantan, with a particular focus on Banjarmasin. The research will also investigate how Kalimantan province preserved Islamic culture and entrenched the religion in South Borneo. Specific research questions that the proposed investigation will seek to answer include:

1. What is the history of Islamism in Indonesia's Kalimantan province?
2. How did the geography of Kalimantan and the inland ports of Banjarmasin facilitate Muslims' immigration in the region?
3. What transportation did Muslims mainly use when relocating into Banjarmasin?

Literature Review

The History of Islamism in Indonesia's Kalimantan Province

Islam was founded in the seventh century by Prophet Muhammad in the Middle East, specifically the Arabian Peninsula (Cammack & Feener, 2012). The largest number of Buddhists and Hindus relocated to the Indonesian islands during the late twentieth century, when more than 85% of the residents had embraced the Islamic faith (Formichi, 2012). Some Indonesians consider Islam as the religious system that incorporates Buddhist and Hindu concepts. The process of Islamisation remains unclear due to the absence of proper archaeological evidence and historical information. There was no use of force or invasion to convert the archipelagic people to Islam (Hefner, 2011). However, the states often fought the residents who were allied to other traditional religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

The Islamic religion was spread by Muslims who travelled in the region from the ancient days of civilisation (Al Qurtuby, 2015). Northern Sumatera has several pieces of evidence that prove the local existence of Islam by the end of the thirteenth century (Cammack & Feener, 2012). Further artefacts show that the last great kingdoms of the Pre-Islamic Indic religion ended at the beginning of the sixteenth century, shifting the Javanese headquarters

from the port cities in the north coast to the inland region (Ahmed, 2018). Additionally, the administration was headed by Muslims supported by numerous Islamic legal institutions in the ancient Southeast Asian states (Cammack & Feener, 2012). Records held in the Dutch systems remain inconclusive and scattered, and there is scanty information about pre-colonial Islamic institutions that participated in the administration of the law.

In examining the historiography of the Islamic religion in Banjarmasin, Abdullah, and Suadi Wekke (2018) discuss the influx of Muslims in Indonesia. Husni, Ibrahim, and Saidin (2019) also refute claims that the doctrine was first uncovered in Aceh. Abdullah and Suadi Wekke (2018) base their arguments on two books; namely the *"Chau-Ju-Kua": On the Chinese and Arab trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* and *An Indian Ocean Port: Sources for the Earlier History of Barus*. Nevertheless, the investigators highlight that many of the current stories about the immigration of Muslims in Kalimantan are based on rhymes, genealogy, and chronicles. These scholars also formulated theories explaining the development of Islam in Indonesia, the leaders in its spread, the purpose of its introduction, and its evolution. Abdullah and Suadi Wekke (2018) conclude that the main issues associated with analysing the immigration of Islamic traders and the spread of their creed, are to accurately identify the "who," "from where," "how," and "when" questions. Sunarso's (2018) historiography notes that Muslims from Gujarat India formed the largest group of Islamists to settle in various parts of Indonesia. Their main conclusions are that Muslims came to Indonesia as traders, and also sought social empowerment, mutual respect, and lenience.

Kersten's (2018) work on the arrival of Muslims in Kalimantan analyses the history of Muslims' migration into Indonesia. The author concentrates on the thirteenth century, which was crucial as numerous Islamic kingdoms are documented as established within this time. Although Kersten (2018) acknowledges the variegated and complex nature of the thirteenth century period, he also presents a multi-layered understanding of how or why Arab Muslims successfully established themselves in Kalimantan provinces. When thoroughly researching events leading up to the immigration of Muslims into Kalimantan, Kersten (2018) defines ancient Indonesia as an integrated network of business enterprises. The author also terms the region an extension of the Indian Ocean that was significantly shaped by Arab-directed Islamisation and trade.

Burhanuddin and van Dijk (2014) contributed to the discussion of Muslim settlements in Kalimantan, by examining assimilation into typical Indonesian life, for instance, through setting up legal guidelines such as the Shariah Law, designed to aid a peaceful coexistence. According to their research Muslim traders, missionaries, and adventurers who settled in various inland port regions within Kalimantan adopted rationality, modernity, and authenticity as critical steps to enhancing the successful practice of the religion in Indonesia. Rather than being swayed by the drive for economic success and social integration, Muslim

immigrants or traders sought to live by the social conditions that governed coexistence among Kalimantan residents.

The Role of Banjarmasin's Inland Ports in Supporting Muslim Immigration

Indonesia was an economically significant trade route between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. According to Missbach and Palmer (2018), political discussions examining the foundations of Indonesian provinces such as Kalimantan have highlighted the significant influence of Muslims in the region. Long before its coronation as a country, Indonesia was used as a transnational marketplace because the land was mostly rich in natural resources (Snyder, 2018). In the sixteenth century the existing inland ports provided important points of cultural and religious contact between foreign traders, explorers, missionaries, and the indigenous populations (Prasojo, 2017; Rahmini, Pudjihardjo, Hoetoro & Manzilati, 2015). That form of Indonesia attracted Muslim adventurers, soldiers, and traders who sought for improved living standards (Missbach & Palmer, 2018). As identified by Friederich, Moore, and Flores (2016), significant numbers of Muslim traders settled close to the Banjarmasin headwater, due to the presence of commodities such as timber, coal, and petroleum.

Similarly, Islamic preachers who resided in the highly populated inland ports of Banjarmasin inter-married with the indigenous communities, resulting in a positive reception and acceptance from the host population (Pringle, 2010; Mohamed et al., 2018). Assimilation took place through marriages, worship, and business partnerships. Currently, Indonesia has the most significant number of Muslims, forming 13% of the world's Sunni Islam population (Abdullah, 2016). The existence of over 200 million Muslims across Indonesian provinces, including Kalimantan, confirms that the country's majority are Islamic believers (Abdullah, 2016). Indonesia has also been described as a temporal region that is guided by a robust Islamic inspiration.

Banjarmasin is the most ancient municipality in Kalimantan, founded in the sixteenth century (Takahashi et al., 2017). Even though the city of Banjarmasin had several rivers passing within its towns, thus giving it the name 'The City of a Thousand Rivers', its only water supply is the Kuin Watercourse (Meidwinna & Junichiro, 2017). Archaeological analyses of remains found in the region confirmed its history of social and economic relationships with outsiders. According to Kisworo (2017), the most outstanding historical evidence of the spread of Muslim traders includes the Muslim state of Brunei, established as early as the thirteenth century. Other Muslim states, including the Landak, Sukadana, Sambas, and Banjarmasin, were used as settlements for Muslim priests within the sixteenth century (Meidwinna & Junichiro, 2017). The main neglected factors that facilitated the spread of Muslim civilisation include the Banjarmasin inland ports, through which Muslims accessed the regions using sailing vessels. The dhows (sailing ships), first built around the Nile River,



appeared in diverse variations and were preferred by Muslim traders and sailors due to their ability to navigate through strong winds because of their small streamlined bodies (Salim, 2013). The ocean routes in the Indian Ocean connected Indonesia to other countries and also promoted cultural and business ties, especially towards the West.

Primarily, flexibility and immigration have impacted the movement and settlement of the 26.7 million Muslims living on the Island of Borneo (Brunner, 2011). The island is a relatively massive stretch of land that was initially sparsely populated. Borneo had favourable ecological characteristics that encompassed the growth of magnificent forests, which attracted traders specialising in the sale of timber (Feener & Sevea, 2009; McAlpine et al., 2018). Before the 1990s, Borneo was primarily composed of non-Muslim residents from different ethnic backgrounds, who attacked immigrants affiliated to the Islamic faith (Hasyim, 2013). The outcome of the religious friction between the entrepreneurial refugees and aggressive natives was a significant change to the social relations, and the introduction of economic activities such as coal mining and large-scale logging.

Brookfield, Potter, and Byron (2016) state that the development of Borneo as an area significant to the settlement of Arab and Chinese Muslims in East Kalimantan, was largely attributed to its tributaries and creeks. Historically, the massive resources of gas, oil, and soft coal available in Borneo's sedimentary basins, alongside the ports and streams, were considered by Muslim traders and explorers as potential for commercial success especially for those who ventured into the Banjarmasin Sultanate (Wells et al., 2016). Following the operationalisation and invention of steamships between South-East Asian regions, Borneo also underwent industrialisation as evidenced by the construction of a railway station in 1864. Later, the existence of petroleum in northern and eastern Borneo's sedimentary basins further encouraged the influx of multi-ethnic and cultural immigrants, who took advantage of their interpersonal relationships with the indigenous populations to learn the inhabitants' way of life and preach Islam. Since the first Muslim adventurers and explorers travelled into the Island of Borneo in the sixteenth century, several Islamic kingdoms have been created to reinforce the influence of Islamic civilisation (Marliani, Asyahri & Anwar, 2017; Sirait, 2016). The increased Islamic networking among Indonesians further facilitated advances in sailing and trading.

Methodology

Area of Study

Three urban and rural settlements were studied in Banjarmasin, in the Island of Borneo, within the larger South Kalimantan. The selected villages namely Sasirangan, Gadang, and Bilu villages were chosen due to their proximity to the historical Muslim settlements in the Martapura River. Additionally, these areas were easily accessible public spaces. Moreover,

significant archaeological evidence had been found in these villages, indicating trade between Chinese and Arab Muslims here.

Study Population

The investigators selected fifty respondents through purposive sampling. Thirty-five respondents were included by fifteen individuals previously chosen by the lead investigators. The snowballing technique was applicable because researchers had limited awareness about villagers who had actively taken part in cross-cultural trade, or social interactions with early Muslims (Malterud et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). Respondents were required to be at least 75 years old, since they were more likely to have experienced the religious and cultural interactions between immigrant Muslims and indigenous populations first-hand. Individuals who demonstrated interest in the topic were also incorporated into the investigation. Unstructured questionnaires were the primary data collection tools, since the study was qualitative (Flick, 2018; Gentles et al., 2015). The questionnaires were distributed door-to-door, as most participants lacked email accounts.

Research Design

The exploration adopted a qualitative interviewing technique, largely engaging in unstructured conversations with the selected respondents. Investigators compiled questions that would guide the interactions, and allowed the respondents to answer in their own words, and in other instances, their native language (Griffith et al., 2016). Two volunteer interpreters translated the local dialect. Responses were audio or video-recorded to prevent any misinterpretation bias. Investigators also used notebooks to record critical points during interviews.

Data Analysis

Content examination was the main technique for interpreting, classifying, and tabulating behavioural and verbal data. The investigator applied codes that represented particular ideas or themes. The NVivo software reduced the workload. It also associated the respondents' narratives and research questions in a timely and credible manner.

Results

Participants were provided with handwritten questionnaires, to respond to the following questions:

1. What are the events that marked the influx and history of Islamism in Banjarmasin, and the larger Kalimantan?

2. In your understanding, how did the inland ports of Banjarmasin support or prevent the Muslims' settlement in the region?
3. Could you elaborate the main modes of transportation used by Islamic settlers who came into Indonesia's Banjarmasin?

Although all respondents established that Islam had been in Indonesia earlier than the nineteenth century, 97% could not agree on the actual chronology of events that led to the establishment of Islam as the dominant religion in Indonesia. For instance, while a significant number of participants stated that the Sultan Sulaiman of Lamreh was one of the first rulers to establish an Islamic kingdom in the region, others could recall Sultan Suriansyah as the first influential figure of Islamic origin. Eighty-seven percent stated that the Indian Ocean served as the entry point for Islamic traders who sought to take advantage of resources including petroleum, coal, and timber. However, 14% of interviewees termed the immigration of Muslim explorers, preachers, and merchants a forced invasion, as evidenced by the constant historical wars between groups that adopted Islamic customs and those that adhered to Hindu-Buddhist religious concepts (Böhmer, 2019). Many of the narratives provided by study respondents were based on stories, and could not be directly proven using reliable archaeological evidence.

When asked about the role of the inland ports of Banjarmasin in sustaining the movement of Islamic traders, missionaries, and explorers, 97% of respondents mentioned that these ports provided platforms for the movement of goods including processed timber and coal mined from the rich sedimentary basin. Most participants indicated that the ports were points of cultural, economic, and social interconnection to the Indian Ocean and the Arab Peninsula (Purboyo & Ibad, 2017). They also mentioned that ports marked identity in the larger South Borneo and East Kalimantan. Increasing economic and infrastructural growth, alongside the inland ports, further attracted settlers who later established traditional Muslim kingdoms.

Research subjects also provided crucial insights into the main modes of transportation used by early Muslim visitors, to access the Island of Borneo. According to 98% of the interviewed subjects, the Banjarmasin ports were the main connection between the rainforests, coal mines, and petroleum deposits within Borneo. All the respondents agreed that merchants originally used dhows due to their more streamlined bodies, as compared to steam ships. Islamic merchants and preachers preferred this form of transportation because they could easily access remote locations within Borneo.

Discussion

The interviewees selected for this study demonstrated increased awareness of the process of Banjarmasin's Islamisation. Yet investigators noted the gaps in knowledge among elderly

residents regarding the actual reasons for Chinese, Arab, and Indian Muslim immigration into the archipelago. On the basis of literary investigations and subjects' accounts, it is safe to conclude that the first interchange between Muslims and indigenous populations was through commercial activities, which were mainly based on the sale of timber, coal, and petroleum (Abood et al., 2015). Traders also dealt in incandescent chillies, coconuts, yams, bananas, and shrimps sold in Banjarmasin's floating markets, including the Mara Kuin on the Barito River (Prayitno, 2018; Noor, 2017). Arisanty et al. (2018) found that trade between Muslims from the Persian Gulf, Yemen, and West Asia followed the monsoon winds into the Island of Borneo, Sumatera, and Java. Commercial exchanges between these regions' inhabitants significantly encouraged conversion to Islam, for a majority of Banjarmasin populations. The intelligence, integrity, and honesty of the Muslim explorers, missionaries, and traders were the main causes of the high level of tolerance and acceptance that Muslims received in Banjarmasin (Khan, 2009). Additionally, intermarriage between routine travellers and local residents, as it happened in Borneo, meant that the visitors did not have to force their customs, beliefs, and perceptions on the Bunjars, rather the host population underwent a steady cultural assimilation (Hwang & Schulze, 2018; Oesterheld, 2016). Eventually, Muslim immigrants began teaching Shariah dictates which were meant to regulate social interactions, primarily to reinforce the spirit of brotherliness and social cohesion.

The research proved that the physical geography of Banjarmasin, within the Island of Borneo, was crucial to introducing and spreading the Islamic religion among local populations. The inland ports provided an excellent location for the exchange of goods obtained from Borneo's forests and sedimentary basins, forming active business hubs in which individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds felt free to interact (Houlihan et al., 2019). Moreover, as indicated by Hays (2019), the creeks and tributaries were tourist attractions and important platforms where residents socialised daily. Therefore the largest groups from both mixed nationalities and defined religious identities settled along these port areas. Over time, inland ports became a destination for Islamic missionaries, whose key objective was to spread the teachings of Allah. Nevertheless, most people living in Banjarmasin acknowledged that the first contact with the preachers was through the commercial exchange of goods, which the safety and transportation convenience of the ports facilitated for foreign traders.

For a significant number of Banjars, the river was the single most important source of their livelihoods, considering that every movement of merchandise or people, in or out of the Island, had to go through the Borneo headwaters (Nugroho et al., 2016). Thus, explorers, traders, and preachers would likely settle for easy-to-maintain and speedy vessels that could easily move with the winds. Although there were several design advances of trade ships, the early tourists preferred tugboats and dhows to manoeuvre through the sometimes narrow rivers (Budiman et al., 2019). Also, dhows were considered cost efficient for traders who supplied relatively small amounts of merchandise across shorter distances, for instance,



within Banjarmasin, Samarinda, and Pontianak. Nevertheless, in rare circumstances traders used advanced vessels to transport perishables such as shrimps, fruits, and tomatoes, sold in Borneo's floating markets.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the spread of Islam in South Kalimantan's Banjarmasin initially commenced with commercial activities such as the sale of petroleum, logs, fruits, spices, coals, and fruits. Later in the sixteenth century, Banjarmasin began receiving Muslim preachers and missionaries who sought to spread the teachings of Muhammad to the predominantly Buddhist and Hindu region. Shortly after the first preachers settled in Borneo and began socialising with the indigenous populations, several Muslim kingdoms were established to further the spread and adoption of Islamic customs and principles, among indigenous groups. For most historians, the inland ports of Banjarmasin were important, in trying to understand the origin of Islam in a region with the world's largest population of Muslims.

Although much has been written about the history of Islam in South Kalimantan, further archaeological investigations are needed, to articulate its chronology of trade and religious conversions. None of the literary works examined for this research specified timelines of the entry and assimilation of Muslim traders in Borneo. Additionally, most investigations only briefly discussed the climate and geography of Banjarmasin. As noted, most scholars had only mentioned that the inland ports were exchanges for the merchandise transported from Borneo to China, India, Persian Gulf, and Western countries. Future studies should concentrate on how the political stability and development of infrastructure in these inland ports contributed to the settlement of Muslim immigrants in Banjarmasin.



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