

The Development of Islamization in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatera, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: *The East coastal communities of North Sumatera had accepted the influence of Islam through its introduction with merchants from Arabia / Persia and India since the 7th-8th century AD. The process of Islamization finally formed a political community patterned in Islam in the 13th century AD by the emergence of Kingdom of Haru. Islamization in Simalungun Regency only occurred around the 17th century AD with the founding of the Silindrik Gravestone at the State Museum of Pematang Siantar. However, the concrete data about the existence of Muslim communities or Simalungun people who had converted to Islam were only recorded in the Dutch colonial report in the mid-19th century AD. It is very surprising, for the time span reached two hundred years. Likewise when compared with the Islamization that had prevailed in the East coast of Sumatra.*

KEYWORDS: *Islamization; ancient; Arabia/Persia; Simalungun Regency*

INTRODUCTION

The debate about the history of the entry of Islam to the archipelago was back on discussion by academics and general public in Indonesia when President Jokowi inaugurated The Titik Nol (Zero Point) Monument of Islamic Civilization Archipelago in Barus on March 24, 2017. The inauguration of this monument immediately jolted the community, especially the academics. Disclaimer sprang up in various newspapers and social media. The academics of Aceh strongly opposed this inauguration. UIN Banda Aceh in collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs held a seminar in Banda Aceh on May 15, 2017 which conclusively rejected that monument. They firmly declared that Islam first came through Aceh, and Samudera Pasai was the main gate of Islamization in the Archipelago.

It seemed that this seminar only repeated the conclusions of seminars that had been conducted in the 60s and 80s. Strangely, the discussion about the process of Islamization still revolved around two major names; Barus and Aceh. These two regions claimed to be the centers of early Islamic dissemination in Southeast Asia. In three seminars on the history of the entry and development of Islam in Indonesia (Medan in 1963, Banda Aceh in 1978 and Kuala Simpang in 1980), it was concluded that Islam came directly from Arabia in the first century of Islamic year / 7th century AD and the first region that accepted the arrival of Islam was Aceh. Unfortunately, the conclusion of this seminar ultimately got denials from several parties. Aceh as an area that initially accepted Islam or the center of Islamic da'wah was also questioned. There came a thesis (Dada Meuraxa) which stated that Barus in North Sumatra was the first region to accept the influence of Islam and became the center of the spread of Islam in the Archipelago. If so, the area of North Sumatra is important to be studied related to the process of Islamization in the Archipelago

The East coastal communities of North Sumatera had accepted the influence of Islam through its introduction with merchants from Arabia / Persia and India since the 7th-8th century AD. The process of Islamization finally formed a political community patterned in Islam in the 13th century AD by the emergence of Kingdom of Haru. The Kingdom of Haru which practiced Islam had emerged since the palace was in Kota Cina / Kota Rentang, Hamparan Perak, in the delta of Deli River.

This paper will describe the process of the spread of Islam at Simalungun Regency based on the study of the evidence of ancient tombs, archives of colonial documents and the chronicles of the Silou Kingdom in Simalungun in 16th century AD.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Islamization in North Sumatera

The process of Islamization in North Sumatra took no longer than that in Pasai and Lamuri. The East coastal communities of North Sumatera had accepted the influence of Islam through its introduction with merchants from Arabia / Persia and India since the 7th-8th century AD. The process of Islamization finally formed a political community patterned in Islam in the 13th century AD by the emergence of Kingdom of Haru. The Kingdom of Haru which practiced Islam had emerged since the palace was in Kota Cina / Kota Rantang, Hamparan Perak, in the delta of Deli River.

However, Haru did not appear as a spreader agent of Islam in North Sumatra, even though Haru became a powerful kingdom in North Sumatra in the 15th century. This position was held by Pasai Kingdom and Melaka Kingdom until the end of the 15th century. At this time, Islam had spread to the inland areas in the upstream of Deli River. Muslim settlements were predicted to occur along the Lalang River, Sei Semayang and Diski started from Hamparan Perak, Buluh Cina, Kelambir Lima and Sunggal, as there were some ancient graves with distinctive Acehese gravestones in this area, for example the Tomb of Datuk Kota Bangun, the Tomb of Imam Sadiq bin Abdullah, Tomb of Kajang Batu in Sei Semayang, and Tomb of Mbah Raden in Pasar 10 Marelan.

Entering the 16th-17th century, Islam had entered the plateau region of Karo, Simalungun, Dairi and part of Tanah Batak. Islamization coincided with the presence of Aceh as the dominant Islamic force in Southeast Asia replacing Pasai and Melaka since the early 16th century AD. Aceh's attack on Haru caused a political change that led to the formation of new political forces over the ruins of Haru.

Deli, Asahan, Langkat and Serdang then emerged in the 17th century as Melayu Kingdoms which practiced Islam and presented themselves as spreader agents of Islam in North Sumatra. These kingdoms were able to build magnificent mosques as a symbol of the growing of Islam in North Sumatra, including Al-Osmani Mosque in Labuhan. This was where Islam went to Simalungun. (Suprayitno, 2012).

DISCUSSION

Islamization in Simalungun

Based on the local sources, it was said that Islam came from Aceh. In the process of ratification of *rajarapat* (*tuha peut*) as seen in the chronicles of Silou Kingdom ("Partingkian Bandar Hanopan" sometime in the 16th century AD). The chronicle tells of the appointment of King of Silou by the Sultan of Aceh through his deputy, Sultan of Deli. The kings appointed by the Sultan of Aceh were given an Aceh sword, *bawar*, *jorong* and *lela* (cannon) as evidences of their endorsement. These four kings tied the alliance with Aceh, calling their confederation as *raja berempat* (the four kings), a translation of "*Tuha Peuet*" which had already been applied by the Sultan of Aceh in Gayo and Tanah Karo.

The names of the kingdoms in Simalungun were also derived from the events when the kings were appointed by the Sultan of Aceh. *Panei* was so called because at the time of his endorsement, the king sat on a pile of "*parpaneian*" (tree bark or bamboo pustaha with sun and moon shapes), it was called *Silou* because the king at that time sat on the "*Hiou*", and it was called *Siantar* because the king sat on top of the "*pantar*" that was the floor of a house built on a pole.

Each received signs of greatness as possessed by the King of *Panei* in the form of a grant from the Sultan of Aceh on his appointment, namely: "*Terapang*" a kind of *keris*, "*Semiga*", a round gold piece and a picture of fish. (Sejarah Etnik Simalungun/ The Ethnic History of Simalungun).

The presence of Islam in Simalungun was also marked by the tombstone of the *Damanik* clan and the *Aceh Silindrik* Gravestone at the State Museum of Pematang Siantar, the octagonal cylindrical which in the typology of Acehnese gravestone known since the 18th century AD or the early 19th century AD.

The record of the existence of Simalungun people who had converted to Islam only existed in 1850, which was a Simalungun nobleman in Bandar adjacent to the Malay domain. It was estimated that Islam entered from the eastern part of Batu Bara to the inland area of Simalungun and was increasingly widespread in the Siantar Kingdom and Tanah Jawa. There was a *da'i* named *Toean Sjech Machmoed* in Bandar who was originated from Batubara.

"*Tichelman*, according to the information he obtained from *Tuan Samanad Damanik* who was a Muslim stated that in accordance with the statements of the vice-king of Siantar, *Toean (Radja) van Bandar*, *Toean Siattar*, *Toean Sawadim Damanik*, that Islamization began in Simalungun in the District Bandar adjacent to the Malay region 37 years ago or approximately in 1850 and a year later, Islam began to enter the inland area of Siantar. The first Simalungun who embraced Islam according to *Tichelman's* report was the *Parbapaan Bandar Tongah* named *Tuan Sariani Damanik*. After he converted to Islam, his people started to follow his belief. King of Siantar, *Tuan Sangnualuh Damanik*, who was exiled to *Bengkalis* also later converted to Islam between 1901 and early 1902 and actively ran the *syi'ar* of Islam to his indigenous people. Following in the footsteps of *Sangnualuh*, there were some tribal chiefs (*adathoofden*) of Siantar also converted to Islam. *Tuan Bandar Sawadim Damanik* was apparently born a Muslim for his father *Toean Olorani Damanik* had already been a Muslim. *Tuan Bandar's* position was temporarily held by *Mr. Adjib Damanik* who was also a Muslim since he was a child. *Tuan Adjib* was the paternal father of *Tuan Sawadim Damanik* who took him under his protection after *Sawadim's* father passed away. (Sejarah Etnik Simalungun, 2013/ The History of Simalungun Ethnic, 2013)

Islam was spread by the merchants of Batubara from Bandar to the western and eastern regions in Dolog Batu Nanggar and Bosar Maligas areas. A *da'i* in Siantar, Toean Goeroe Joesoef was originated from Siak Seri Idrapoera. The spreaders of Islam went through Batubara to Simalungun where Simalungun was administratively still under the patronage of Batubara which was a resort (area) under Kontroleur Batu Bahra in Laboehan Roekoe.

A Simalungun (*een Simaloengoener*), Toean Nabolon Damanik from Pematang Siantar set out to Tebing Tinggi on his childhood. This was where he received Islamic education and became a Muslim. He performed his pilgrimage to Mecca (Haji) and returned to Siantar as Hadji Moehammad Thaib Damanik of Siantar. He was a leader of Simalungun people who headed a region (*soehi*), but he lost his position (*partuanon*) when he moved to Tebingtinggi as an Islamic advocate who persistently spread his new religion in his own environment. He was not allowed to stay in Simalungun after he left without consent. He was sentenced to forced labor in public works. Apparently, there was a complaint from the Simalungun community. There was no prophet accepted in their region. There was also a public complaint about him from the Simalungun Islamic community.

The following will explain the role of King of Siantar, Sang Nauuluh Damanik on the process of Islamization in Siantar. After converting to Islam, Sang Nauuluh actively performed da'wah in Pematang Siantar, especially among his people. Islam was growing fast not only in Siantar, but also in Tanah Jawa. He built Rumah Adat in Kampung Naga Huta as the center of Islamic da'wah. He was a king respectfully obeyed by his people.

If a tribal chief converted to Islam, it would usually be followed by his subordinates or his people. This was how Islam expanded in Simalungun. *According to Tichelman, a subordinate became interested to Islam because it was considered to be able to provide benefits or special rights even though this was contrary to their customary rules. The other chiefs follow their leaders by their own will in order to get the conveniences and to still get the chance to head their own posts.*

As a Muslim king, Sang Nauuluh had really played his role as an Islamic preacher who always encouraged his people to practice Islam in a kaffah (as a whole) and true way with these following programs:

1. Building direct communications with the community by visiting people's homes to provide direction and socialization of the country's development program.
2. Encouraging people to cut their hair and keep the house and village clean.
3. Building traditional houses in Kampung Rambung Merah, as agricultural training centers, where people worked (*marharoan*) on agricultural land (*marsialop ari*) together.
4. Building (expanding) roads for horse-drawn carriages to connect the trade to Tiga Siattar (weekly markets), in order to increase trading activity from the east coast of Sumatra.
5. Encouraging people to raise horses with *mamahan huda* system, because horse is a tool of social transportation and military kingdom.

Sang Naulauh became an important figure in the context of Islamic development in Simalungun with his position as a king. Islam then spread throughout Simalungun with his anti-colonial stance, even in the period after he was exiled to Bengkalis. Islam was used by Sang Naulauh as a "weapon" against Dutch colonialism.

Sang Naulauh refused the advice of Kontrolir Kok to leave Islam and he appointed Islamic Ulama H. Mat Thaib from Bedagai as his political advisors which led him to become a COLONIAL ENEMY. He refused Nomensen's request for his permission to let Zending RMG work at Siantar on March 1903. Sang Naulauh also established a relationship with Ulama from Arab H. Yusuf bin Al-galidi, who was dropping by at Siantar to buy its produce. At the suggestion of H. Yusuf, Sang Naulauh wanted to make Siantar an Islamic Kingdom with direct political relations with the Middle Eastern Islamic world and hoped to be awarded the title of Sultan from the Islamic Khalifah of Turkey. As a first step, Sang Naulauh forged metal coins from copper with "Baginda Sultan Alias Malim Sultan" engraved on them that ought to be used by his people. This plan was considered endangering the existence of the Dutch colonial. Kontrolir Kok then reported to Westenberg. Westenberg later reported to Residen J. Schaap in Medan. Residen then asked Sang Naulauh to revoke the order and forbid the people of Siantar to use the coin in Simalungun. (Juandaha Raya Purba Dasuha dan Erond L. Damanik, 2011: 71-74).

The Islamic practice which had been available in the ritual and culture of the Simalungun community became the "bridge" of transition for Simalungun people to convert to Islam. Islam was considered a weapon against the Dutch colonialists among the kings of Simalungun who had embraced Islam. A Muslim figure of Simalungun (founder of Al-Kautsar Pesantren in Marjandi-Simalungun), Haji Amir Purba Dasuha explained:

"... that in the view of the traditional Simalungun society (especially the kings of Simalungun), there is a very positive outlook of Islam. Islam is not in contradiction with the traditional culture of Simalungun. Simalungun people have been used to avoid food containing porks (especially among kings who studied mysticism) even since the era of their ancestors which is indeed 'prohibited' in Islam, they are commonly circumcised (Simalungun: *'marsopit'*), practice polygamy (married with more than one woman) especially among kings and many other habits that actually do not contradict Islam" (Sejarah Etnik Simalungun, 2013 / The History of Simalungun Ethnic, 2013) Islam spread to Tanah Jawa from Siantar. The first Simalungun leader in Tanah Jawa who embraced Islam was Toean Sahma Sinaga, Toean Anggi, brother of Toean Tandjoeng Tongah, who helped expanding Islam there. Islam then progressed from Simalungun Bawah to Simalungun Atas. The development of Islam in the Raya region went hand in hand with the entry of the Javanese contract laborers, the Mandailing and Malay migrants who entered Simalungun after 1907. In 1933, out of the population of 15,000, 300 indigenous people and 413 laborers / contract laborers from Java Island were Muslim. (Sejarah Etnik Simalungun, 2013 / The History of Simalungun Ethnic, 2013)). Islamization was conducted through a kinship approach. The king of Raya's relative from Padang Tebingtinggi named Orangkaja Alinaviah was granted permission of the king of Raya to open a plot of land for the plantation and mosque while he was in the capital of the kingdom in 1937.

Islam entered the districts of Silou Kahean and Raya Kahean, the downstream (*benedengebieden*) of Dolog Silou and Raya from Padang and Bedagai. The first Muslim in Kahean (who was still known) at the beginning of this century was Lobei Mohammad Said,

who later changed his name to Raden Mohammad Said from Bengkulen. Raden Mohammad Said became the "commander" of the King of Raya, Toean Kapoltakan Saragih and became an Islamic advocate there.

R. Mohd. Said married Mr. Hapoltakan's sister from another mother before he was appointed as Pangulu Parik Lombu, granted him 210 hectares of land (on the map) and finally appointed him as Thaib Kadli for Raya Kahean. The number of Muslims in Raya Kahean and Silou Kahean were 1385 and 240 people respectively until the 1930s.

Tuan Goeroe Baringin (from Minangkabau) was appointed head of the Islamic Teacher at Raya Kahean around 1925 upon the proposal of the vice-king of Siantar (Tuan Bandar, Tuan Sawadim Damanik). The close friendship between the kings of Malay with the kings of Simalungun (through marriage) and the visit among the fraternities (the king of Raya with the king of Padang Tebingtinggi) further strengthened the influence and penetration of Islam among the Simalungun people (especially among the noblemen). They recruited many Muslims (who were often members of their own families who had embraced Islam) in order to help the kings of Simalungun in their day-to-day duties. There were many of the royal families or relatives eventually converted to Islam with the help of those Muslim employees. The feelings of dissatisfaction toward their old religion led them to finally convert to Islam. The transition of religion was increasingly open, especially among the Simalungun noblemen through marriage, both with fellow kings of Simalungun or with the Malay noblemen. For example, the King of Panei surnamed Purba Dasuha took the daughter of King of Siantar surnamed Damanik as his wife. The King of Siantar had converted to Islam since 1901 and for that the transition to Islam surely became more open in Panei. Although in practice, it did not automatically occur through marriage. The last King of Panei, Tuan Bosar Sumalam Purba Dasuha retained with his old religion despite taking a daughter of King of Siantar who was a Muslim as his wife but he still gave freedom to her to choose which religion she wanted to believe (an interview with the son of King of Panei, T. Kamen Purba Dasuha). In this case, that Simalungun nobleman who had embraced Islam was persevering in performing da'wah to attract many Simalungun people to convert to Islam. King of Siantar who had long sympathized with Islam and had officially converted to Islam in 1901 was very keen to invite his people to convert to Islam. (Sejarah Etnik Simalungun, 2013 / The History of Simalungun Ethnic, 2013)

Islam continued to grow since the 1920s in Simalungun Bawah. The coming of Muslim immigrants (especially the Mandailing people from South Tapanuli) further increased the syiar of Islam in Simalungun which was seen from the presence of Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah (1927) whose base was in Yogyakarta, al-Djam'iyatul Al-Washliyah (1930) and Union of Islamic Teachers (PEGGI) in Pematang Siantar (1936). Its growth continued and attracted the interest of Simalungun Muslims to join the organization despite the release of the King of Siantar's warrant in Kerasaan which forbade the people of the Siantar Kingdom to join Muhammadiyah. (Sejarah Etnik Simalungun, 2013 / The History of Simalungun Ethnic, 2013). There were Simalungun Muslim communities in Parapat, Sipolha, Tigaras and Poerba Sariboe (Haranggaol) in the coastal areas of Lake Toba, in Sidamanik, Mardjanji Panei, and Negeri Dolog after the 1940s and increasingly gained their adherents. One of the most famous Islamic advocates in Parapat was Haji Pardede of Tapanuli.

CONCLUSION

Archaeologically, the Islamization in Simalungun Regency only occurred around the 17th century AD with the founding of the *Silindrik* Gravestone at the State Museum of Pematang

Siantar. However, the concrete data about the existence of Muslim communities or Simalungun people who had converted to Islam were only recorded in the Dutch colonial report in the mid-19th century AD. It is very surprising, for the time span reached two hundred years. Likewise when compared with the Islamization that had prevailed in the East coast of Sumatra, there had already been Kingdom of Haru which was a Islamic kingdom around the 13th century AD. It surely becomes an interesting issue to study in the future. How could it happen? What are the factors causing it? Is it because there has been no evidence found or are there any other matters that might be related to Dutch colonial politics?

The records about the existence of a Simalungun who had converted to Islam only appeared in 1850 who was a Simalungun nobleman in District Bandar adjacent to the Malay region. It was estimated that Islam entered from the eastern part of Batu Bara to the inland area of Simalungun and was increasingly widespread to the Siantar Kingdom and Tanah Jawa. There was a *da'i* named Toean Sjech Machmoed in Bandar who was originated from Batu Bara. Islam also entered from Deli and Serdang, especially from Bedagai Kingdom and Padang Kingdom which were directly facing the region of Simalungun. It is also undeniable that Islam might also enter Simalungun through the influence of the Aceh Kingdom as it was recounted in the chronicles of Silou Kingdom.

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