

Research article

Moralities of Muslim and the Advancement of Western World in the Perspective of *Suluk Linglung*

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Abstract This research aims to discuss about Muslims' moralities upon the Western World's advancement in the teachings of the Islamic holy book whose the first revelation that came down was the command to read, understand and develop. Muslims must have the courage to acknowledge the advancement, including that of Western countries with all their civilizational progress, even though it is also influenced by ideology, state, and religion; which is also in line with the values contained in the work of *Suluk Linglung* by Sunan Kalijaga, one of Muslim saints in medieval Indonesia. By using the Gadamer's hermeneutic method, the author tried to observe, understand, confirm, and look for similarities between the values of *Suluk Linglung* and the progressive civilization already exists in Western society. The author argues that Muslims must avoid and discard negative values from Western society's culture as they do not exist in *Suluk Linglung* Sunan Kalijaga.

Keywords Moralities of Muslim; Javanese Muslim; *Suluk Linglung*; Sunan Kalijaga; Western Societies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nuzzo (2018) noted when Western countries came and colonized the East, such as China, we can see the colonial expansion of Western powers in China in the 19th and 20th centuries, with a particular focus on the founding of the British state, French and American interests in Tianjin and the strategies of Western colonial rule, and the role that law played in the process of creating new social spaces. We can also follow Bijl's (2014) observations about when the Dutch came and colonized Indonesia, the Dutch and Indonesian cultural memories of the collective violence perpetrated during the Dutch colonial period, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. Then, there are also impacts of British colonization, in past and present, felt by the Indian people, as stated in the following statement (Mitter, 2018): *The discipline of art history in India was founded by colonial scholars, especially archaeologists, who adopted the ideas of European history, linear time and periodization, and created a tripartite system of Buddhist/Hindu (ancient), Islamic (medieval) and colonial (modern) periods. Interestingly, the colonial historical framework was used by both the British rulers and the nationalists.*

Above is the history of the journey of Western countries, which colonized and even seized territories with violence, contrary to human values. However, on the other hand, other studies suggested the importance of Western countries in becoming the pioneers of great progress and civilization, known as the Industrial Revolution (Yao & Lin, 2016; Zhou et al., 2015). It is one of the most important turning points in the history of humanity. During this period, human and animal labor techniques were transformed into machines such as the steam engine, spinning, coke smelting, and the puddling and rolling process for iron making. The Industrial Revolution started anew to promote the growth of the world economy and increase production and consumption. It is easy to promote people. The transportation system with canals, roads, and railroads was improved. Banking and other financial systems were also improved to ensure the smooth running of industries and businesses. Infant mortality rates fell and birth rates increased.

Hence the development, advancement, and progress of the Industrial Revolution in Western countries, which brought world civilization to this day, still touches on moral values (Dawley & Faler, 2019; Ellitan, 2020; Hooker & Kim, 2019; Iqbal et al., 2023). However, some Muslim-majority countries and/or their citizens also participated in the Industrial Revolution's development, advancement, and progress. Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East, including Indonesia, as well as Hindu-

majority India, experienced colonialism and imperialism, even throughout the world, carried out by Western countries (Ahmad, 2022; Ben-Tov, 2020; Islahi, 2015).

From the pioneer countries of the industrial revolution to the permanent United Nations security council as stated by Ade (2015), Clancy (2021) that there are no Muslim countries and/or Muslim majority Countries that occupy and influence the council. There are moral values that must be developed by Muslims, such as those found in the Suluk Linglung values, especially for Indonesian citizens (Haris, 2012; Imam & Th, 2015; NUR FADHILAH, 2020).

2. METHODS

A hermeneutical approach integrates elements such as subjectivity, intuition, physicality and creativity into theoretical considerations, coming closer to the reality of the translation process. And this development was also characterized by a dominant tendency leading from an atomistic view of the translation unit to an increasingly holistic view, justifying the fundamental holistic approach in translation hermeneutics (Maxwell, et.al, 2020; Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Mabilon, 2021).

This research uses Gadamer's hermeneutic approach, of that Hans-Georg Gadamer spoke to one of the foremost compelling figures in improving 20th-century hermeneutics (Okonkwo, 2023). In his work, Gadamer created a particular and exhaustive dialogical approach grounded in dispassionate considering. Hermeneutics as an authentic teacher has been created to include the hypothesis of printed elucidation in the gospel, a set of rules that give the basis for great translation practice no matter the Subject. On the other hand, understanding operates on the grounds of such expectant structures that permit what is to be deciphered or caught on to be gotten a handle on. Moreover, Gadamer is seen to preserve that hermeneutics is not a strategy of understanding but an endeavor to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes put (Vladutescu, 2018. Brogan, 2020. Betti, 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Moral and Ethics

Hofmann states that people who witness moral acts are more likely to perform moral acts than non-witnesses and are also more likely to perform immoral acts

themselves. Morality consists of a collection of biological and cultural solutions to problems of cooperation that arise repeatedly in human social life (Curry et al., 2019). While Curry (2016) states that morality is a collection of biological and cultural solutions to cooperation problems and conflict recurrent in human social life.

On the other hand, we can understand Frankena (2020)'s opinion. However, most of the recent philosophers who have discussed this topic have avoided making any proposals of a normative nature, not only about how we should act but also about how we should think and speak. Riaz (2015) posited that moral understanding constitutes a form of knowledge. For instance, comprehending the reasons behind an action's immorality equates to knowing its wrongness. The assertion that moral understanding is unaffected by chance, in contrast to moral knowledge, fails to hold up under examination; similarly, the notion that understanding possesses a profound quality is questionable, as varying levels of understanding exist.

The potential for moral artificial intelligence is noteworthy, as discussed by Savulescu & Maslen (2015), who explored its possible characteristics and achievements. In light of the persistent constraints of human moral psychology and the urgent issues arising in a globalized context, we contend that an artificial intelligence (AI) capable of monitoring, prompting, and advising on moral conduct could assist individuals in surmounting some of their intrinsic limitations. This AI could track physical and environmental influences on moral decision-making, recognize and highlight biases to the agents, and provide guidance on appropriate actions aligned with the agents' moral principles.

Moreover, Djoko and Warsito (2019) also proposed Van Hooft's ethics definition as the moral principles, character traits, and way of life that people and organizations adopt when acting truthfully and transparently. To put it plainly, ethics and its benefits can be understood as a way to guide people who aspire to live "good" lives. Ethics can also be utilized to assist people in addressing the most important question: *"How can I live a humane and humane life?"* Though the solution to the hesitation can be found in various institutions, such as traditional and religious ones, ethical perspectives are still the most reliable because they are grounded in scientific research (Djoko & Warsito, 2019). Hence, morals, etiquette, character, and other similar things, where the classic books of the Islamic boarding school world and particularly *Suluk Linglung* are very related and complementary.

3.2. The Myth of Progress: Historical Divergence and Ideological Futures

The concept of human advancement is often framed by contrasting historical myths. Irwanto (2015) references Plato's account of the legendary Atlantean kingdom in the East—a civilization shrouded in mystery for 2,300 years, estimated to have existed around 9300 BC. This narrative speaks of a kingdom flourishing with peace, masterful art, wisdom, and extraordinary technological and civilizational glory. It is a myth that centers on a golden age in the past—a zenith of human achievement that has since been lost.

In contrast stands the Western myth of progress. Bonnett (2017) notes that this fable, originating in eighteenth-century Europe, became a fundamental philosophical and spiritual pillar of contemporary Western civilization, sometimes even dubbed "the modern religion" or "the modern religion substitute." This pervasive belief holds that humanity is constantly moving forward in time toward a better state. This conviction undoubtedly powered the major societal changes of the last 200 years, as people are motivated to accept change when they believe it will improve their condition. Although the myth was severely tested by the world wars, the threat of nuclear disaster, and ecological crises, it has generally only been chastened, not entirely dethroned. Western societies continue to take progress for granted, even if their beliefs about its inevitability are no longer simple or absolute (Nisbet, 2017; Rist, 2019; Igger, et.al, 2016).

The challenge posed by Western modernity has elicited three broad responses from non-Western and Muslim-majority societies: rejection, acceptance, and adaptation. The rejectionist stance is exemplified by Ayatollah Khomeini's remark on the US moon landing: *"Even if they travel to Mars... they will never experience true happiness, moral excellence, or spiritual growth."* Here, Western technological advances (Volti, R., & Croissant, 2024. Anelli, & Stanig, 2019) are acknowledged but dismissed as secondary to moral or spiritual advancement, which is categorically denied to the West. Conversely, those seeking to impose occidental standards generally adopt the acceptance approach. These politicians and reformers typically endorse a secularist model, dividing life into "religious" and "non-religious" spheres—the latter being where "progress" is defined. This secular focus, encompassing political and social ethics, allows for arguments like *"we have to do this to keep up with the times"* to be made as universal truths (Muller and Bostrom, 2016). Finally, the adaptation approach seeks a middle ground by reframing the debate.

The fundamental disparity in modernization is addressed by Ahmet Kuru, who offers a powerful structural explanation for why Muslim-majority countries, despite their historical role as pioneers in science and philosophy, currently lag in various socio-economic development and modernization indicators. Kuru's central thesis pins this stagnation on the centuries-long, deeply entrenched alliance between the ulama (religious scholars) and the state (frequently militaristic). This partnership, he argues, systematically suppressed and marginalized the independent intellectual and bourgeois classes (merchants and artisans). Critically, it was precisely these autonomous classes that served as the engine of innovation, economic growth, and scientific inquiry in Europe, ultimately paving the way for the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the subsequent Western definition of 'progress' that the Muslim world now confronts.

Kuru contrasts this modern stagnation with the Islamic Golden Age (roughly the 8th to 11th centuries), a period characterized by relatively autonomous scholars and merchants who drove rapid advancement. However, following the 11th century, the ulama-state collaboration became increasingly rigid, prioritizing religious orthodoxy and political stability above all else, thereby stifling critical thought and entrepreneurial innovation. This institutional hardening prevented the kind of internal separation of powers seen in Europe that allowed for the Renaissance and modernization to emerge. For Kuru, the difficulty in responding to 'progress' and 'modernization' is structurally embedded in this historical divergence, making the acceptance of Western progress feel like an external imposition rather than an organic, internal evolution.

The broader adaptationist argument suggests that the West, having focused on the material, has reached its limit in terms of spiritual and intellectual growth. The ultimate expression of Western Materialism, Communism, is predicted to be adopted by the West (including America) before it ultimately fails due to its inherent material limitations (Evans and Kelley, 2017). The "wave" of materialism is thus nearing its end (Eisenstadt, 2021. Reid, 2018. Overstreet, G. D., & Windmiller, M., 2022).

If humanity is to achieve a future of constant growth and progress, it requires a new guiding philosophy, and the Islamic concept is proposed as the only one capable of offering this. It is suggested that Europe missed an opportunity by closing its doors to the first "wave" of Islam, though it later drew inspiration from it for the Renaissance (Masood, 2017. Darke, 2024). The current projection is that Islam will assume the leadership of humanity, potentially clashing with the humane values of Islam against the materialism of Communism (Turner, 2018). The final prophecy is

that Islam will triumph because it is "the idea that fosters life's continual development in its shadow" (Von, 2017. Karia, 2022. Kusuma, et. Al, 2024).

3.3. Moral Values in Suluk Linglung of Sunan Kalijaga

Sunan Kalijaga, a pivotal figure in the dissemination of Islam in Java, famously championed a profound religious and cultural synthesis. As Waston (2018) notes, he effectively created a local Javanese cultural language that, while not explicitly Islamic, was deeply infused with Islamic moral and spiritual values. This approach, which led to the emergence of Javanese Sufism (Alif et al., 2020), involved integrating Islamic principles with existing local customs. Kalijaga maintained that by respecting the established culture, he could propagate Islam non-imposingly, trusting that once individuals grasped the faith's essence, their traditional practices would naturally evolve into more beneficial ones, thus fostering unity and widespread acceptance in the archipelago.

The details of this unique religious and cultural synthesis, and Kalijaga's own spiritual evolution, are most famously recounted in the *Suluk Linglung* (The Poem of the Linglung Journey). The narrative describes Kalijaga's transformative meeting with his spiritual teacher, Sunan Bonang, following his earlier life as the Duke of Tuban's son who engaged in theft to aid his oppressed people (Nisaa, 2022). The *Suluk* recounts moments such as his meeting with Prophet Khidir, where he explores desires and symbolic colors within an esoteric realm—a spiritual outer space not bound by gravity but influenced by a form of relativity (Faizin, 2018. Fauzan, 2020). This concept of a spiritual dimension operating beyond familiar physical laws holds a faint echo in the history of the General Theory of Relativity, which distinguished itself by the Principle of Geometrisation and emerged from complex, incremental contributions by figures like Einstein, Hilbert, and Grossmann (Fock, 2015-2; Fock, 2015-3).

This spiritual depth aligns with a pragmatic view of faith (Axtel, 2017. Bamyeh, 2018), where adherents recognize that the idea of God fundamentally transcends human comprehension—a principle reflected in the Jewish prohibition on pronouncing God's name and the Muslim ban on visual representations of the divine. Kalijaga was a monotheist who appreciated the Sufism underlying all major world religions, recognizing a common source and essence of God shared by Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Waston, 2018). As with any skill, religion demands discipline and perseverance, and followers can only attain its

benefits and spiritual purpose through the consistent performance of associated rites (Vieten, C., & Lukoff, D, 2022).

Within this framework of discipline and pragmatic faith, the Javanese concept of Suluk refers to the mystical path toward inner perfection, or the spiritual journey (salik) that brings an individual closer to God (Fanani, 2018). Fauzan (2020) outlines the key stages of this journey, including penance, seclusion, contemplation, and controlling the four desires. The culmination is Makrifat (revelation), which in the Suluk context is defined as seeing God's form and actions with the inner eye, transforming the individual into a "perfect person" whose life entirely reflects divine will. The supreme teaching of Suluk Linglung is Manunggaling Kawula Gusti (the oneness between servant and God), a concept rooted in philosophical monism and the unity of existence.

Because of this profound, culminating spiritual value, the Suluk Linglung manuscript itself has been treated as a highly sacred and confidential book. Raden Ayu Supratini Mursidi, the 14th descendant of Sunan Kalijaga and the manuscript's custodian until the late 20th century, strictly preserved the text, viewing it as a sacred heirloom or talisman (Safii, 2022. Sa'adah, 2023). The book, which Kalijaga handwrote on animal leather parchment using Chinese ink, was originally wrapped in white cloth and passed down with the instruction that it only be entrusted to a reliable heir of good moral character. Access was extremely limited, reserved only for those believed to have received divine inspiration. The manuscript was eagerly sought by Indonesian Muslims for the objective evidence it offered regarding Sunan Kalijaga's identity and pivotal role. Ultimately, Muhammad Khafid Kasri, a religious figure in Demak, was the only person who successfully borrowed and copied the text (Afrianti, 2019), leading to its translation and publication in 1993 under the title *Suluk Linglung Sunan Kalijaga (Syekh Melaya)* (Shofwan, 2018. Zarkasi, 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

This analysis highlights a fundamental divergence in the concept of human advancement, contrasting the Western myth of progress—driven by secular, technological, and material metrics—with the profound spiritual journey inherent in the Javanese tradition of Suluk Linglung. The structural challenges faced by Muslim societies in adopting Western modernity are clarified by Ahmet Kuru's thesis, which points to the historical ulama-state alliance as a key factor inhibiting the internal

intellectual and economic forces required for independent modernization. This context reveals that the perceived 'lag' is not merely technological, but rather institutional and ideological, rooted in fundamentally different definitions of societal fulfillment.

Ultimately, the enduring legacy of Sunan Kalijaga provides a compelling path forward. His method of syncretism and the spiritual pursuit detailed in the Suluk Linglung—culminating in the realization of Manunggaling Kawula Gusti—affirm that holistic progress must transcend material gains. True human advancement is achieved through the integration of deep moral values, spiritual excellence, and cultural integrity. For societies seeking a path of constant growth that avoids the limits of pure materialism, the indigenous models of spiritual discipline, as preserved and transmitted by figures like Sunan Kalijaga, offer an essential framework for future development.

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