



THE MEANING OF THE NINE STARS IN THE NAHDLATUL ULAMA SYMBOL

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Abstract :

Nahdlatul Ulama, as the largest mass organization in Indonesia, has specific symbols and meanings. This qualitative content analysis of historical literature examines the meaning of the nine stars in the Nahdlatul Ulama symbol. The data analysis technique used content analysis, sorting through elements that align with the research focus and objectives. This study found that the meaning of the nine stars in the Nahdlatul Ulama symbol symbolizes the famous Walisanga (Islamic Guardians), namely Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Giri, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunungjati. If one of the Walisanga members dies, he or she is replaced by another. The members of the first Walisanga period were: Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Maulana Ishaq, Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubra, Maulana Muhammad Al-Maghribi, Maulana Malik Israil, Maulana Muhammad Ali Akbar, Maulana Hasanuddin, Maulana Aliyuddin, and Sheikh Subakir. The final Walisanga period, during the Islamic Mataram era, included Panembahan Purubaya, Panembahan Juminah, Panembahan Pekik, Panembahan Juru Kithing, Panembahan Kadilangu, Panembahan Kudus, Panembahan Minangkabu Tembayat, Panembahan Wonggo, and Kiai Ageng Ahmad Kategan.

Keywords : Nine Stars, Walisanga, and Nahdlatul Ulama

INTRODUCTION

Nahdlatul Ulama was founded with the ideals of civilization, namely to realize a harmonious and just world order based on noble morals and respect for the equal dignity of all human beings. The strategy towards this ideal begins with the consolidation of the foundation. This involves empowering the community (*jama'ah*) as a cultural force to uphold noble values, and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) as a socio-political starting point for engaging in international struggles. Furthermore, the entire Nahdlatul Ulama movement must be coherent in its strategic reasoning and organization, from the local to the global level (Staquf, n.d.).

In the local context, Nahdlatul Ulama holds significance in continuing the struggle of the Walisanga. Chotib (2023) states that the significance of Nahdlatul Ulama's struggle with that of the Walisanga is evidenced by their similarities in their shared religion, school of thought, and foundation in the teachings of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah*. In addition, the similarities between the two lie in the



following four attitudes: (1) *tawassuth* or moderate, namely a middle attitude, neither extreme left nor right; (2) *tawazun* or balanced, namely maintaining balance in various aspects of life, both relationships with Allah and others; (3) *tasamuh* or tolerant, namely an attitude of respecting existing objects; and (4) *i'tidal* or just, namely acting fairly and uprightly in all things, not taking sides, and adhering to the truth.

At the first Nahdlatul Ulama congress, they did not yet have an organizational symbol, so when the 2nd Nahdlatul Ulama congress was approaching, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari asked KH. Ridwan Abdullah to create a Nahdlatul Ulama symbol. Why KH. Ridwan Abdullah? Because he is an expert in painting and drawing. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari advised KH. Ridwan Abdullah to create a Nahdlatul Ulama symbol with the following provisions: (1) the symbol created must be original or must not imitate any symbol; and (2) the symbol created must not be seen as outdated and boring (Wijayanti, et al., 2023). From this request from KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, KH. Ridwan Abdullah then performed *istikharah* and succeeded in creating the Nahdlatul Ulama symbol as seen today.

Several previous studies have discussed Nahdlatul Ulama. Shofwan (2021) discusses the instilling of multicultural Islamic educational values through the subjects of Aswaja and Ke-NU-an. Shofwan (2023) discusses the significance of character building through Aswaja and Ke-NU-an at Nahdlatul Ulama University in Blitar. Shofwan (2023) discusses the socio-historical history of the founding of the Blitar Branch of Nahdlatul Ulama. Shofwan (2018) discusses the future construction of Nahdlatul Ulama (a Study of the Policy Recommendations of the 17th Conference of the Nahdlatul Ulama Branch of Blitar Regency). Shofwan (2017) discusses the implementation of multicultural education at MI Miftahul Huda Papungan 01, Blitar Regency.

Based on the above research, it appears that no research has focused on the meaning of the nine stars in the Nahdlatul Ulama symbol. Therefore, this study will begin by focusing on the meaning of the nine stars in the Nahdlatul Ulama symbol. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the body of Islamic scholarship, particularly regarding Aswaja and NU. Furthermore, it is hoped that it will be of great benefit to lecturers and researchers who wish to conduct similar research with a different focus.

RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative content analysis of historical literature. Nazir (2011) states that library research is a data collection technique that involves reviewing books, literature, notes, and reports related to the problem being solved. A library study is a study to gather information and data from various sources available in a library, such as books, magazines, and other sources (Mardalis, 2006).

Qualitative research is defined as the research used to examine natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument. Data collection techniques utilize data triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize generalizations (Abdussamad, 2021). Furthermore, data collection is not guided by theory but by facts discovered during fieldwork.

Library research requires more philosophical and theoretical processing than empirical testing in the field (Muhadjir, 2000). Because of its philosophical and theoretical nature, library research more often uses a philosophical approach than other approaches. The methods used in this discussion are deduction (thinking from the general to the specific), induction (thinking from the specific to the general), and comparison (thinking to find differences and similarities). (Hadi, 2004).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The total number of stars on the Nahdlatul Ulama symbol is nine, representing the Walisanga (Nahdlatul Ulama Guardians), namely Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Giri, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunungjati. According to Labib (2005), the term Walisanga comes from two words: "*wali*" (Arabic: "beloved of Allah"), and "*sanga*" (Javanese: "nine"). Labib and Lailah (2007) state that a wali (guardian) means someone who is favored or loved by Allah SWT, meaning that all their affairs or problems are always protected by Him. This is because in every behavior or activity, such a person is always protected, even protected from all kinds of actions that could harm them. With every beat of their breath or every second, they are under very tight guard and safe from anything dangerous. Thus, the meaning of Walisanga is "*wali*," beloved of Allah SWT, numbering nine.

Another opinion states that the word "*sanga*" comes from the Arabic word "*tsana*," meaning noble (Labib, 2005). Furthermore, some argue that the word "*sanga*" comes from the Javanese word "*sana*," meaning place. Meanwhile, another opinion states that the Walisanga was a da'wah council first established by Sunan Gresik (Maulana Malik Ibrahim) in 1404 AD. They consisted of nine members, as mentioned by Labib (n.d.), including: (1) Maulana Malik Ibrahim (Sunan Gresik); (2) Maulana Ishaq (Sunan Wali Lanang); (3) Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubra (Sunan Kubrawi); (4) Maulana Muhammad Al-Maghrabi (Sunan Magribi); (5) Maulana Malik Israil (from Champa); (6) Maulana Muhammad Ali Akbar; (7) Maulana Hasanuddin; (8) Maulana Aliyuddin; (9) Syaikh Subakir

Based on the names of the Walisanga, those generally known in society as Walisanga are as follows: (1) Sunan Gresik (Maulana Malik Ibrahim); (2) Sunan Ampel; (3) Sunan Bonang; (4) Sunan Giri; (5) Sunan Drajat; (6) Sunan Kalijaga; (7) Sunan Kudus; (8) Sunan Muria; and (9) Sunan Gunungjati. However, Labib (2005) explained several periods of the Wali Sanga as follows, including:

First, the first period of the Walisanga. When Sultan Muhammad I ruled the Turkish Empire, he inquired about the development of Islam from Gujarati traders. From them, Sultan Muhammad I learned that Java had two Hindu kingdoms: Majapahit and Pajajaran. Among his subjects, there were Muslims, but these were limited to Gujarati merchant families who had intermarried with the native population, particularly in port cities. Sultan Muhammad I then sent letters to Islamic leaders in North Africa and the Middle East, requesting that scholars with charisma be sent to Java. Thus, nine scholars of high learning and charisma were gathered. In 1404 AD, these scholars departed for Java: (1)

Maulana Malik Ibrahim, originally from Turkey, was an expert in state administration. He preached in East Java and died in Gresik in 1419 CE; (2) Maulana Ishaq, originally from Samarkand (near Bukhara, Russia), was a medical expert. After being assigned to Java, Maulana Ishaq moved to Pasai and died there; (3) Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubra, originally from Egypt and an itinerant preacher. His grave is in Troloyo, Trowulan, Mojokerto, East Java; (4) Maulana Muhammad Al-Maghribi, originally from the Maghrib (Morocco), was an expert in itinerant preaching. He died in 1465 CE and was buried in Jatinom, Klaten, Central Java; (5) Maulana Malik Israil, originally from Turkey and an expert in state administration. He died in 1435 CE and was buried on Mount Santri, Central Java; (6) Maulana Muhammad Ali Akbar, a Persian (Iranian) physician. He died in 1435 CE and was buried on Mount Santri in Central Java; (7) Maulana Hasanuddin, a traveling preacher from Palestine. He died in 1462 CE and was buried next to the Old Banten Mosque; (8) Maulana Aliyuddin, a traveling preacher from Palestine. He died in 1462 CE and was buried next to the Old Banten Mosque; (9) Syaikh Subakir, a Persian expert in purifying haunted lands inhabited by evil spirits that misled humans. After completing his duties, he returned to Persia and died there.

Second, the second period of the Walisanga. In this second period, there were three Walisanga who replaced several members of the Walisanga who had died. This second session was held in Ampel, Surabaya. The three were: (1) Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah (Sunan Ampel) came to Java (Ampel area, Surabaya, East Java) in 1421 AD, replacing Maulana Malik Ibrahim, who died in 1419 AD; (2) Sayyid Ja'far Shadiq (Sunan Kudus) came to Java (Kudus area, Central Java) in 1436 AD, replacing Maulana Malik Israil, who died in 1435 AD; (3) Syarif Hidayatullah came to Java (then located in Cirebon, West Java) in 1436 AD, replacing Maulana Ali Akbar, who died in 1435 AD.

In the second session of the Walisanga, the tasks were divided as follows: (1) East Java, there were three Walis in charge: Sunan Ampel, Maulana Ishaq, and Maulana Jumadil Kubra; (2) Central Java, there were three guardians on duty: Sunan Kudus, Syaikh Subakir, and Maulana Al-Maghribi; (3) West Java, there were three guardians on duty: Syarif Hidayatullah, Maulana Hasanuddin, and Maulana Aliyuddin.

Third, the third period of the Walisanga. In 1463 CE, four Walis came to power, replacing several other Walisanga members. These four Walis were: (1) Shaykh Maulana Ainul Yaqin (Raden Paku or Sunan Giri), born in Blambangan, Banyuwangi, East Java, the son of Shaykh Maulana Ishaq and Dewi Sekardadu (a princess of Blambangan). He succeeded his father, who had moved to Pasai; (2) Raden Muhammad Said (Sunan Kalijaga), born in Tuban, East Java, the son of Adipati Wilatikta, who resided in Tuban. He succeeded Shaykh Subakir, who had returned to Persia; (3) Raden Makdum Ibrahim (Sunan Bonang), born in Surabaya, the son of Sunan Ampel. He succeeded Maulana Hasanuddin, who died in 1462 CE; (4) Raden Qasim Syarifuddin (Sunan Drajat), born in Surabaya, the son of Sunan Ampel. He succeeded Maulana Aliyuddin, who died in 1462 CE.

Fourth, the fourth period of Walisanga. In 1466 CE, two Walisanga were appointed to replace the two who had died: Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubra and Maulana Muhammad Al-Maghribi. These two Walisanga were: (1) Raden Fatah, a student of Sunan Ampel and the son of King Brawijaya V of the Majapahit Kingdom. He was appointed Duke of Demak in 1462 CE, then built the Demak Mosque in 1465 CE, and was crowned king or Sultan of Demak in 1468 CE; (2) Fathullah Khan, the son of Sunan Gunungjati, was chosen as a member of the Walisanga (guardian) to replace his aging father.

Fifth, the fifth period of Walisanga. This period saw the entry of Raden Umar Said (Sunan Muria), son of Sunan Kalijaga, who replaced one of the Walisanga who had passed away. It is also said that in this fifth period, Sayyid Hasan Nawawi (Sunan Tembayat or Sunan Panadanaran II), son of Sayyid Maulana Hamzah (Prince of Tumapel or Prince of Lamongan) bin Sunan Ampel, entered, replacing Syaikh Siti Jenar, a saint who was initially asked to become a member of the Walisanga but refused because he wanted to focus more on studying Sufism. Sunan Muria was buried on Mount Muria, Central Java, while Sunan Tembayat was buried on Mount Cakrakembang, Klaten, Central Java.

Raden Tanojo (1954) refers to the writings of Kiai Bagus Burhanuddin or Kiai Ageng Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita, a mursyid of the Syattariyah and Akmaliah orders, who stated that Sunan Tembayat Klaten (grandson of Sunan Ampel) was a member of the Walisanga council at the end of the Demak Kingdom. Therefore, he was also called the "Wali Pungkasan" at the end of the Demak Kingdom. He received a blessing from his teacher, Sunan Kalijaga, to teach the following discourse "*Pambukaning Tata Malige Ing Dalem Bait Al-Muharram*":

"Sejatine Ingsun anata malige sajroning Betal Muharam. Iku omah enggoning lelarangan Ingsun. Jumeneng ana ing dhada ning Adam. Kang ana sajroning dhada iku ati. Kang ana antaraning ati iku jantung. Sajroning jantung iku budi. Sajroning budi iku jinem, yaiku angen-angen. Sajroning angen-angen iku sukma. Sajroning sukma iku rahsa. Sajroning rahsa iku Ingsun. Ora ana Pangeran anging Ingsun. Dzat Kang Anglimputi ing kahanan jati"

Meaning: "Indeed, I continuously arrange mahligai in Baitul Muharram. That is the house of My prohibitions. It is in Adam's chest. What is in the chest is the heart. What is between the hearts is the heart. In the heart is the mind. In the mind is Jinem, which is wishful thinking. In the wishful thinking is the soul. In the soul is the secret. In the secret is I. There is no god but I. The One Who Envelops the state of truth."

Some might ask, "Were there still other Walisanga, or at least a similar council of ulama, after the end of the Demak Kingdom?" The answer is in "*Serat Kekiyasaning Pangracutan*," as quoted by Noorsena (2011), which explains that there were Walisanga during the Islamic Mataram Kingdom, consisting of several members of the Nine Councils of Knowledge (Dewan Makrifat) of Sultan Agung Hanyakrakusuma, King of Islamic Mataram. These included: (1) Panembahan Purubaya; (2) Panembahan Juminah; (3) Panembahan Pekik; (4) Panembahan Juru Kithing; (5) Panembahan Kadilangu; (6) Panembahan Kudus;

(7) Panembahan Minangkabu (grandson of Sunan Tembayat Klaten), also known as Sunan Tembayat III or Prince Kertaningrat; (8) Panembahan Wonggo; (9) Kiai Ageng Ahmad Kategan

Furthermore, there are actually opinions that state that there were several Walisanga after those already mentioned, such as the opinion of Hadi bin Abdullah Al-Haddar and Bahrudin Ba'alawi in Aizid (2015), who divided the Walisanga period into ten generations.

The 9th generation of Walisanga (1650-1750 AD) included: (1) Sheikh Abdul Muhyi Pamijahan; (2) Sheikh Shihabuddin Al-Jawi; (3) Sayyid Yusuf Anggawi; (4) Sheikh Abdul Rauf Al-Bantani; (5) Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani; (6) Sultan Abdul Kadir; (7) Sultan Abul Mu'ali Ahmad; (8) Sheikh Abdul Ghafur Al-Manduri; and (9) Sayyid Ahmad Baidhawi.

Then the 10th generation of Walisanga (1751-1877 AD) included: (1) Prince Diponegoro; (2) Sentot Prawirodirjo; (3) Kiai Mojo; (4) Kiai Hasan Besari; (5) Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani; (6) Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa; (7) Prince Sadeli; (8) Sayyid Abdul Wahid; and (9) Sayyid Abdurrahman.

However, Shofwan (2025) disagrees with this opinion, citing the lack of valid references from or near their time. This contrasts with the nine Walisanga (saints) of the Council of Knowledge (Dewan Makrifat) of Sultan Agung Hanyakrakusuma, King of Islamic Mataram. In that era, or at least near that era, there were still references explaining the Walisanga council of their time. Moreover, during that era, the Islamic Mataram Kingdom still existed, an extension of the Demak and Pajang Kingdoms.

NU Emulates the Preaching of the Walisanga

In the history of "*Babad Tanah Jawa*," it is stated that the Walisanga served a dual function: as *da'i* (preachers), *muballigh* (transmitters of Islamic teachings), teachers, and community leaders accompanying the king. Therefore, they bore the title "*Sunan*" or "*Susuhunan*," a title for rulers in Java. Among the people of Central Java, the term "*Kanjeng Sunan*" developed for the Walisanga, and the kings of the Surakarta Palace still use the title "*Sunan*" or "*Susuhunan*" (Zuhri, 1979).

Labib (2005) states that the Walisanga were intellectuals who reformed society during their time. Their influence is felt in various manifestations of new Javanese civilization, ranging from health and agriculture to commerce, culture, arts, social affairs, and even government.

The following will describe each of the nine saints and their successful strategies or methods of preaching through a cultural approach, based on a search of several sources, including relevant records and real-life stories that have developed within Javanese society. The nine saints, or walisanga, include:

First, Sunan Gresik. His real name was Maulana Malik Ibrahim. Some call him Maulana Maghribi. In Arabic, "*maghrib*" means the same as "*gharbun*," which means west or far. Maulana Maghribi could be interpreted as "my lord who comes from the west" or "my lord who comes from far away," specifically "Maghrib," a land in North Africa (Zuhri, 1979). Javanese people (at the time) often called Sunan Gresik or Maulana Malik Ibrahim "Kake Bantal."

Maulana Malik Ibrahim started Islamic preaching and educating students through the Islamic boarding school system, so that he is seen as the "Father of Islamic Boarding Schools" in Java (Zuhri, 1979). Da'wah through the Islamic boarding school system is da'wah through a cultural approach, where the word "*pesantren*," which comes from the word "*santri*" with the prefix "*pe*" in front and the suffix "*an*," is interpreted as a place where students live (Dhofier, 1994). The word "*santri*" itself, according to C.C. Berg, comes from the Sanskrit "*shastri*," which means people who know the sacred books of Hinduism or a scholar of Hindu holy books (Dhofier, 1994). In the book *Encyclopedia of Islam*, it is explained that the "*pesantren*" known today is a takeover of the Islamic boarding school system carried out by Hindus in the archipelago (Dewan Redaksi Ensiklopedi Islam, 2002). Thus, the strategy of preaching through Islamic boarding schools is an acculturation or blend of two Hindu-Islamic cultures, but has roots in the history of the archipelago.

The preaching through a cultural approach carried out by Maulana Malik Ibrahim was considered very successful, as he was able to gain sympathy among the people and the ruling class of Java, who were in power even though they were of different religions. This is described by Zuhri (1997) as follows: "Maulana Malik Ibrahim has succeeded in educating his students to be prepared to be his successors as Islamic preachers who have extraordinary weight. His success as a preacher has shown adeptness in winning sympathy among the people and the ruling class who were in power, even though they were of different religions. Therefore, it is worth studying how to give shape and character to preaching as a gateway to the spread of Islam. This gateway can only function if it is carried and upheld by geniuses, who are extraordinary in their abilities, leading the way to speak about Islam through words and deeds."

Meanwhile, on the other hand, Labib (2005) provides an illustration of the cultural approach preaching carried out by Maulana Malik Ibrahim as follows, "...so in preaching the teachings of the Islamic religion, he did not directly oppose existing customs, but instead introduced the nobility and high morals taught by his attitude in society, his words were polite, gentle towards others, respectful of the elders and loving the younger. In this way, gradually many people began to be interested in the teachings of the Islamic religion, and in the end they became loyal followers of the Islamic religion."

Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) noted the strategies and patterns of Islamic da'wah successfully developed by Maulana Malik Ibrahim as follows: (1) Socializing with teenagers. By socializing and interacting with teenagers, Maulana Malik Ibrahim found it easier to spread his da'wah. This way, he could understand the character of those being preached to, or *mad'u*, and thus determine the appropriate method for conveying his Islamic teachings; (2) Establishing Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Children wishing to study religious knowledge were accommodated in a *pesantren*. They were then introduced to how to practice Islamic teachings. From this, a cadre of professional da'i emerged, who in turn served as teachers in their communities. Some of them later established Islamic boarding schools as a means of practicing and devoting their knowledge

to the community. From these established pesantrens, da'i emerged with high-caliber skills in furthering Islamic da'wah.

Second, Sunan Ampel. His childhood name was Raden Rahmat. He was the son of Maulana Ibrahim Samarqondi Tuban. In this case, Zuhri (1979) described the personality of Sunan Ampel, who he said was the son of Maulana Malik Ibrahim (Sunan Gresik), as follows: "Since childhood, Sunan Ampel has inherited the leadership qualities of his father, Maulana Malik Ibrahim. So after his father's death, the students of Maulana Malik Ibrahim handed over the leadership of the Islamic boarding school to Sunan Ampel." Based on this description, it can be concluded that the da'wah through a cultural approach carried out by Sunan Ampel was through the Islamic boarding school inherited from his father. However, in this case, Sunan Ampel did not live in Gresik like his father, but he lived in Ampel Denta, Surabaya, while leading the Islamic boarding school inherited from his father from there.

The following is a description presented by Zuhri (1979) about the success of da'wah through a cultural approach to a pesantren carried out by Sunan Ampel, "Just like his late father, Sunan Ampel, who at that time was still called Raden Rahmat, had succeeded in cultivating sympathy among the Majapahit officials and rulers... Raden Rahmat had demonstrated leadership qualities, educating many people to serve the interests of the people of his nation to foster a society that was '*gemah-ripah tata-tentrem*', avoiding the character of cheating, a character that did not reflect honesty. Not through harsh and violent means, but by wise and educated people to think responsibly with reasonable arguments." Meanwhile, Labib (2005) provides an illustration of Sunan Ampel (Raden Rahmat)'s cultural approach to preaching as follows: "Raden Rahmat is known for his sensitivity to adapt. His method of instilling faith and Sharia is very attentive to the conditions of society. The word 'prayer' was replaced by 'sembahyang' (originally: *sembah* and *hyang*). Places of worship are not called *mushalla*, but '*langgar*', similar to the word '*sanggar*'. Those who seek knowledge are called '*santri*', derived from the word '*shastri*' - a person who knows the sacred books of Hinduism."

The philosophical teachings of Sunan Ampel mentioned by Labib (2005) are "*Moh Limo*", which means not doing five despicable things, including: (1) *Moh main*, which means not gambling; (2). *Moh minum*, which means not drinking alcohol; (3). *Moh maling*, which means not stealing; (4). *Moh madat*, which means not smoking marijuana/morphine; (5). *Moh madon*, which means not committing adultery with other women, is one of our teachings similar to Pancasila (five principles) in Buddhism. This is one of the da'wah methods through a cultural approach carried out by Sunan Ampel, where, at that time, there were still many Buddhist cultures.

Regarding the strategies and patterns of Islamic preaching successfully developed by Sunan Ampel, Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) have noted the following: (1) Calling for and continuing the struggle of the previous wali, Maulana Malik Ibrahim, by providing education for the community, especially the nation's cadres and preachers; (2) Preparing and training reliable generations of Muslims.

To this end, intelligent and agile young men were selected to become core preachers, such as Sunan Giri, Raden Fatah, Maulana Ishak, and others; (3) Building relationships of friendship and brotherhood with the natives, namely by marrying local women; (4) Pioneered the establishment of the Great Mosque of Demak. This mosque was later designed as the center of all government and social activities. It was this mosque that later became known as the mosque of the saints; (5) Expanded his missionary reach by sending his confidants to preach to other regions. For example, he sent Maulana Ishaq to preach in the Blambangan region.

Third, Sunan Bonang. His real name was Maulana Makdum Ibrahim, one of the sons of Sunan Ampel and Nyai Ageng Manila (Djaya, 1965). Sunan Bonang received his father's education, Sunan Ampel, as a missionary full of ambition and devotion. From his father, who was also his teacher, Sunan Bonang inherited leadership qualities and wisdom in social interactions (Zuhri, 1979).

Sunan Bonang's cultural approach to preaching was through the fields of culture and the arts. Zuhri (1979) describes Sunan Bonang's cultural preaching at that time as follows: "From his people, who were still steeped in the old Hindu-Buddhist culture, Sunan Bonang received inspiration on the importance of culture, especially the arts, in everyone's life. Culture and the arts can imperceptibly shape human character in everyday interactions. Therefore, Sunan Bonang focused his preaching primarily on culture and the arts, in keeping with his gentle and patient nature." Still, according to Zuhri (1979), who explained, "Thus, Sunan Bonang directed his preaching more in the field of art and culture, therefore always preached using the language of art and culture. His area of operation was East Java, especially the coastal area between Rembang and Surabaya. He composed Javanese gending or gamelan songs with themes of faith, worship, morals, stories of the Prophets, and folk tales containing good character, while also gradually eroding misleading spiritual beliefs and mysticism that deviated from the faith of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah*."

During his lifetime, Sunan Bonang was also a supporter of the establishment of the Great Mosque in Bintoro, Demak. The strategies and methods of da'wah developed by Sunan Bonang, as outlined by Ilaihi and Hefni (2007), include: (1) Empowering and increasing the number and quality of da'i cadres. This was done by establishing Islamic education and da'wah; (2) Infusing Islamic influence into the Majapahit royal circle. Sunan Bonang provided Islamic education to Raden Fatah, the first Sultan of Demak, and other nobles; (3) Engaging directly with the community. In interacting with the community, he created Javanese songs imbued with Islamic education and da'wah, such as Sinom, Dandanggulo, Pangkur, and others. He also replaced the names of Hindu unlucky days and the names of Hindu gods with the Islamic name. 4. Codifying or recording his da'wah messages. His students codified his da'wah messages or teachings. These books were in both poetry and prose. This book later became known as the *Suluk Sunan Bonang*.

Fourth, Sunan Drajat. Sunan Drajat's real name was Syarifuddin Hasyim, the son of Sunan Ampel. In his daily life, he was known as a socially conscious

Waliyullah, who, in carrying out his da'wah activities, did not hesitate to help the lower classes and improve their social life (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). Sunan Drajat's names include: Raden Qosim, Sunan Mahmud, Sunan Mayang Madu, Sunan Muryapada, Raden Imam, Maulana Hasyim, Syekh Masakeh, Pangeran Syarifuddin, Pangeran Kadrajat, and Masaikh Munat (Labib, 2005).es of angels and prophets.

Furthermore, Labib (2005) stated that Sunan Drajat introduced Islam through the concept of *da'wah bil hikmah* (Islamic preaching with wisdom), using wise and non-coercive methods. Sunan Drajat employed five methods of preaching through a cultural approach, including: (1) Through direct religious studies in mosques or prayer rooms; (2) Through educational programs in Islamic boarding schools; (3) Providing fatwas or advice on resolving problems (for local residents); (4) Through traditional arts. Sunan Drajat often preached through the Pangkur song, accompanied by Javanese music; (5) He also conveyed religious teachings through traditional rituals, as long as they did not conflict with Islamic teachings.

Displayed on the tomb of Sunan Drajat in Paciran, Lamongan, East Java, the four main teachings of da'wah written on his tomb read, "*Paring teken marang kang kaluyon lan wuto; paring pangan marang kang kaliren; paring sandang marang kang kawudan; paring payung kang kudanan*", which means: give a stick to the blind; give food to the hungry; give clothes to the naked; and give an umbrella to those caught in the rain (Labib, 2005). Sunan Drajat's teachings are teachings through a cultural approach, where Javanese society at that time really liked this kind of literature.

The strategies and patterns of da'wah developed by Sunan Drajat have been explained by Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) as follows: (1) Establishing aid centers or posts, arranged in such a way as to facilitate the management and distribution of aid to those in need; (2) Creating model villages. These model villages were chosen from the center with the aim of becoming reference centers for the community in their daily lives in all matters; (3) Instilling the teachings of collectivism, namely the teaching of mutual cooperation, where the strong help the weak, and the rich help the poor; (4) In the arts, he created Javanese songs, such as Pangkur.

Fifth, Sunan Giri. Other names for Sunan Giri include Joko Samudro, Raden Paku, and Prabu Satmata. He was also known as Sultan Abdul Faqih due to his profound knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). He was the son of Maulana Ishak (Hasyim, 1979). Another name for Sunan Giri is Raden Ainul Yaqin (Zuhri, 1979). His first act of da'wah was the establishment of a mosque. He later established several Islamic boarding schools and taught religious sciences, such as fiqh, hadith, and grammar (*nahwu*) and theology (nerve) to his students (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007).

The overall strategy and missionary approach developed by Sunan Giri, as outlined by Ilaihi and Hefni (2007), includes: (1) Developing a cadre of preachers who were educated at Giri schools; (2) Expanding Islam outside Java. A missionary approach he developed, not adopted by previous saints, was his

efforts to send his students to remote parts of Indonesia to spread Islam, such as the islands of Madura, Bawean, Kangean, and even as far as Ternate and Huraku in the Maluku Islands; (2) Providing education for the wider community, including the creation of the gamelan sekaten, a shadow puppet show rich in Islamic teachings, pioneering children's games containing Islamic teachings, and composing Javanese songs interspersed with Islamic teachings.

Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) illustrate the "*gamelan sekaten*" created by Sunan Giri as follows: "The gamelan was installed in the mosque's veranda and played only during the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday. Those who wished to watch had to come to the mosque. As a fee, they had to follow the rules, such as performing ablution first. Afterward, they had to enter the mosque gate, which signified their acceptance of forgiveness (*ghafur*). Then, they recited the shahada, which automatically signified their conversion to Islam" (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). Some of Sunan Giri's games that remain popular and exist today include Jamuran, Jalungan, Gula Ganti, and so on.

Sixth, Sunan Kudus. Other names for Sunan Kudus include Raden Ja'far Shodiq, Raden Undung, Raden Ngudung or Raden Untung, and Raden Amir Haji. Sunan Kudus was renowned as a great scholar who had mastered hadith, Qur'anic interpretation, literature, logic, and especially jurisprudence. Due to his profound knowledge, he was nicknamed "*Waliyul Ilmi*," meaning the saint who is the repository of knowledge (Syamsu AS, 1999).

Sunan Kudus's Islamic preaching through a cultural approach is described by Labib (2005) as follows: "At that time, the Kudus community was still predominantly Hindu. Therefore, Sunan Kudus attempted to subtly integrate their customs into Islamic law. For example, Sunan Kudus slaughtered a buffalo, not a cow (an animal considered sacred by Hindus; ed.), during the Eid al-Adha. This was part of Sunan Kudus's respect for his Hindu followers... The construction of the Kudus Mosque itself did not abandon Hindu architectural elements. The shape of the minaret retains a Hindu architectural style."

Sunan Kudus, also known as Ja'far Shodiq, was a great poet who, with his creativity, took the initiative to compose Islamic folk tales with an Islamic artistic spirit. The style of preaching he developed was heavily influenced by the arts. Among his famous works are Gending Maskumambang and Mijil. To attract the sympathy of the masses, he integrated himself with local culture, making it more appealing and accessible to the masses. As is the case with the Prophet Muhammad's birthday celebrations, many people flock to witness the event. This is used to spread Islamic propagation. At the mosque gate, everyone must recite the shahada before entering (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007).

Seventh, Sunan Kalijaga. His real name was Raden Syahid, and some say Muhammad Said. He was the son of the Duke of Tuban, Tumenggung Wilatikta (Raden Sahur), a descendant of Ranggalawe. He was also known as "Syaikh Malaya" because of his habit of preaching by traveling from one region to another. Sunan Kalijaga was a saint who had the ability to infuse Islamic influence into Javanese customs and traditions. As a result, he remains one of the saints most deeply held in the hearts of the Javanese people to this day.

Sunan Kalijaga excelled among other saints in his cultural approach to preaching. While other saints established Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) for their preaching, Sunan Kalijaga did not. He enjoyed preaching Islam while traveling from one region to another. Labib (2005) illustrates Sunan Kalijaga's cultural approach to preaching as follows: "His method of preaching was very flexible; the Javanese people who at that time still adhered to old beliefs were not opposed to their customs. He approached the people who were still ignorant in a subtle way; even in his clothing, he did not wear a robe (like other saints; ed.), so that the people did not feel intimidated and were willing to welcome his arrival with pleasure. The clothes he wore every day were traditional Javanese clothes that he designed and perfected himself in an Islamic way."

Still according to Labib (2005) who stated that Sunan Kalijaga was the first person to create the art of Muslim clothing (now called *taqwa* clothes), vocal art (*Dandanggulo* song), carving art (with leaf motifs, *gayor* shapes or *gamelan* hanging tools and other ornamental forms which are now considered national motifs, before the era of Sunan Kalijaga most carving arts had human and animal motifs), created *bedug* and *jidor* in mosques (by ordering his student named Sunan Tembayat Klaten), *gerebeg maulud* (commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday at the Demak Mosque), *gong sekaten* (which was originally the "*syahadatain gong*" which is reading the two sentences of the *shahada*), created shadow puppets and was a puppeteer, as well as an expert in city layout (which consists of; palace or district, town square, one or two *beringain* trees, and mosque). Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) and Hamka (1981) have recorded the *da'wah* pattern developed by Sunan Kalijaga as follows: (1) establishing an education center in Kadilangu; (2) preaching through art, including the tradition of celebrating Hindu and Buddhist heritage approached through *tahlil*; (3) incorporating Islamic stories into *wayang kulit* performances, and he is the creator of shadow puppets and the author of *wayang* books which contain dramatic stories and have an Islamic spirit.

Eighth, Sunan Muria. Other names for Sunan Muria are Raden Umar Syahid or Umar Said, and Raden Prawoto. He was the son of Sunan Kalijaga and Dewi Saroh (Rozaq, n.d.). In his daily life, he reflected a personality that placed love for Allah SWT. It is therefore not surprising that he was known as a Sufi or expert in Sufism (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). Like the previous saints, the preaching patterns he developed were often imbued with Islamic teachings in the form of art (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007).

Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) have noted the following strategies and patterns of preaching developed by Sunan Muria: (1) making remote mountainous areas centers of preaching activities; (2) preaching through the arts, by creating the *gending Sinom*, *Kinanti*, and so on. This kind of music is a form of *macapatan* song art, which is still preserved by some Javanese people.

Sunan Muria's cultural approach to preaching was similar to that of his father, Sunan Kalijaga. Labib described Sunan Muria's preaching strategy as follows: "Like his father, he used subtle methods in his preaching, like fishing without muddying the waters." (Labib, 2005). According to Salam, as quoted by

Labib (2005), Sunan Muria's targets (mad'u) were traders, fishermen, sailors, and the common people. He was one of the saints who maintained the art of gamelan and wayang as tools for preaching Islam. He also created the songs Sinom and Kinanti.

Ninth, Sunan Gunung Jati. His real name was Syarif Hidayatullah. He was the son of Syarif Abdullah and Nyai Larasantang. Sunan Gunung Jati, besides being a preacher, was also known as a national hero who steadfastly resisted colonialism. He defended his territory by integrating it against colonial threats. He successfully broke the Portuguese rule on June 22, 1527, which then replaced "Sunda Kelapa" with "Jayakarta" (complete victory) (Ilaihi and Hefni, 2007). Until now, the name has become "Jakarta", the capital of Indonesia.

Ilaihi and Hefni (2007) stated that Sunan Gunung Jati's da'wah development strategy focused more on job descriptions or task division, including: (1) providing internal guidance to the sultanate and the people within the Demak region under the guidance of senior walis, with the primary program being to immediately convert the people of East Java and Central Java to Islam, as they constitute the primary force; (2) providing guidance to those outside the region by delegating responsibility to the youth.

The total number of stars on the Nahdlatul Ulama symbol is nine, symbolizing that NU follows the Walisanga in preaching, namely Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Giri, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunungjati. Not only that, Nahdlatul Ulama also follows Walisanga in the *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* understanding, namely: (1) the field of fiqh follows four schools of thought, namely: Imam Hanafi, Imam Maliki, Imam Syafii, and Imam Hambali; (2) the field of theology follows two schools of thought, namely: Imam Asy'ari and Imam Maturidi; and (3) the field of morals follows two schools of thought, namely: Imam Ghazali and Imam Junaidi.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, this study concludes that the nine stars on the Nahdlatul Ulama symbol represent the Walisanga (Islamic board of directors), namely Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Giri, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunungjati. Walisanga was a da'wah council first established by Sunan Gresik (Maulana Malik Ibrahim) in 1404 AD and consisted of nine members. The implication of NU using the Walisanga symbol is that this largest organization in Indonesia follows in the footsteps of the Walisanga in preaching, both structurally and culturally.

If one of the members of the Walisanga died, he would be replaced by another figure. Therefore, the Walisanga had several periods as follows. The members of the first period of Walisanga were: (1) Maulana Malik Ibrahim; (2) Maulana Ishaq; (3) Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubra; (4) Maulana Muhammad Al-Maghribi; (5) Maulana Malik Israil; (6) Maulana Muhammad Ali Akbar; (7) Maulana Hasanuddin; (8) Maulana Aliyuddin; and (9) Syaikh Subakir.

The second period of Walisanga was: (1) Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah (Sunan Ampel) replaced Maulana Malik Ibrahim, who had passed away; (2) Sayyid Ja'far Shadiq (Sunan Kudus) replaced Maulana Malik Israil, who had passed away; and (3) Syarif Hidayatullah replaced Maulana Ali Akbar, who had passed away. Until the Walisanga era of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom, the era of Sultan Agung Hanyakrakusuma, the King of Islamic Mataram, including: (1) Panembahan Purubaya; (2) Panembahan Juminah; (3) Panembahan Pekik; (4) Panembahan Kithing Interpreter; (5) Panembahan Kadilangu; (6) Panembahan Kudus; (7) Panembahan Minangkabu (grandson of Sunan Tembayat Klaten) or called Sunan Tembayat III or Pangeran Kertaningrat; (8) Panembahan Wonggo; and (9) Kiai Ageng Ahmad Kategan.

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