

ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY IN NORTH SUMATRA: ANALYSIS OF TRENDS IN THESIS WRITING THEMES AT THE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION STUDY PROGRAM 2020-2022

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Abstract

This research examines the trend of thesis writing themes among History of Islamic Civilization students, Faculty of Social Sciences, in 2020-2022. The problems raised are the trending themes and their contributions to the development of Islamic historiography in North Sumatera. Therefore, this research aims to detail the trending thesis writing themes among students of the History of Islamic Civilization study program, Faculty of Social Sciences 2020-2022, and explain their contribution to the development of Islamic historiography in North Sumatera. The results show that the research themes selected are cultural history, archeology, biography, museums, architecture, education, political, intellectual, organization, art, and demographic histories. Furthermore, the most dominant theme is historical heritage and preservation efforts included in the scope of the archeology discipline, followed by traditions and culture in cultural history. The next themes are architecture, museums, literature, and biography, as well as political, intellectual, educational, organization, social, art, branding, and demographic histories. These themes have indirectly added to the references of Islamic historiography, particularly in local history research.

Keywords: Islamic Historiography; Writing Theme Trends; North Sumatera

INTRODUCTION

Recently, writing the history of Islam has experienced developments, and as stated by Azyumardi Azra, the emergence of Islamic historiography in Indonesia is marked by historical works of academics from within and abroad. The work is included in the category of local history, which contributes to an understanding of Indonesian history (Azra, 2002, p. 3). Meanwhile, Kuntowijoyo argued that historical works could be seen from increasingly complex methodologies involving auxiliary branches of science in the humanities (Kuntowijoyo, 2003).

The use of auxiliary science aims to strengthen and develop a new narrative-descriptive style of historical writing. At the beginning of its emergence, a new history was understood as an alternative when the old history tended to be politics. Rosenthal found that the recorded form of writing history is classical literary works that mention certain terms such as saga and story (Umar, 1988). Hamka also supports this statement in *Sejarah Ummat Islam IV* (the History of the Islamic Ummah IV), where the sources come from the history of local historical writing mixed with myths and legends such as the saga of the Kings of Pasai, and Malay History, which contain interactions between the archipelago and the Arabs (Hamka, 1981).

Rosenthal's statement regarding the form of historiography in Indonesia, which leads to classical literary works, such as the saga and stories, can be used as important material in writing Islamic history (Rosental, 1968). Mukti Ali also stated that there are several approaches in Islamic historiography. Besides, the approach to Indonesian Islamic history is part of national history (Umar, 1988).

Hamka stated that Islam entered Indonesia in the 7th century, marked by the existence of Islamic communities, which later became the center of power (Yatim, 2002). Taufik Abdullah also

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agreed with the theory initiated by Hamka, considering that these Muslim traders visited no indigenous communities. Therefore, the community's existence can be used to reference that Arab theory is the right one to explain Islam (Abdullah & Hisyam, 2003).

The explanation regarding Islamic historiography can provide an overview or information on works written by historians. However, this writing is more directed to a form of historiography highlighting political figures and events. Meanwhile, Uka Tjandrasasmita stated that Indonesia's approach is part of national history. The knowledge of archeology was used to uncover secondary sources, including books, local sagas, and information published by foreigners. In the historiography of Islam, history is seen as a social process due to a shift in societal elements (Tjandrasasmita, 1977).

Sartono Kartodirdjo identified the emergence of an Islamic historical approach as a collection of local histories (Kartodirdjo, 1968), illustrating the writing of new Islamic history. This approach emphasizes history as a process due to shifts in society. However, the dynamics of writing Islamic and national histories have local elements such as belief in mythology in society (Kartodirdjo, 1982). During the colonial period, historical historiography was dominated by Europeans. The focus was more dominant on figures who contributed to the independence, and it was better known as the Indonesia-centric approach.

According to Azra, new developments are marked by the emergence of several monumental works written by Denys Lombard with a global perspective. Azra's work entitled *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya* has represented and strengthened the momentum for the emergence of new writing history. Besides, the work connects with historical developments in a region that do not occur and take place in a vacuum. This is also related to events in other areas, and hence Indonesian history can be placed within the framework of world history.

Azra explained this as a revision of the popular approach in Indonesian historical writing. One of these approaches is Netherlands-centric, where Indonesian history is considered part of colonialism. The Indonesia-centric approach is also better known, aiming to make Indonesia the center of history. It seeks to avoid Netherlands-centric and has to fall into the other extreme camp with its interests.

The views provide an overview of the development of Indonesian historical writing. This approach has influenced the pattern of Indonesian historical writing and tends to be global. Azra acknowledged that the development impacted Indonesian Islamic writing. One of the important works is the research of Azyumardi Azra on the Network of Middle Eastern Ulama in the Archipelago of the XVII and XVIII Centuries. It explained the religious and intellectual discourse of Indonesian scholars in the Haramain and the relationship between the development of Islam in the archipelago and the dynamics in various regions of the world.

Azra tried to trace the social and intellectual history of Indonesian Muslim scholars and the Islamic world centered on Haramain. Therefore, this new research examines Muslim scholars from a biographical perspective.

The style of historical writing leads to Islamic history as part of the Muslim community. This can be seen from the historical writing, which emphasizes the historiography of the fighters in gaining independence from the colonial. In its development, the approach became part of national history due to societal shifts (Yaqub, 2013).

Scientific works in the form of theses and dissertations still dominate Islamic historiography in North Sumatra. However, the research topic is still promoted by the biographies of prominent figures such as Sheikh Abdul Wahab Rokan and scholars and educational institutions. The sources used are dominated by oral sources from their descendants. In conclusion, there is still a lack of written sources related to Islamic historiography.

Student writers from the History of Islamic Civilization have sought to discuss trending topics in their study program, including Islamic Education institutions such as boarding schools, traditions, historical relics from the classical period, some imperial relics, and building architecture as a relic of the Sultanate. Based on the data, Islamic historiography is more dominated by research

that leads to societal traditions. This indicates that the efforts made are to introduce these traditions, which are transformed into information for the public. This research is interested in exploring Islamic Historiography among students of the History of Islamic Civilization study program at the State Islamic University of North Sumatera.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is a qualitative-research using historical methods. The stages passed include heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics is the process of finding and gathering sources (Abdurrahman, 2011). The sources used in this research are secondary sources, including the book *Al-Manhaj al-Mas'udi fi Kitab Al-Tarikhi* and scientific works in the form of books and scientific articles related to al-Mas'udi's historiography. *Kitab Al-Manhaj al-Mas'udi fi Kitab Al-Tarikhi* is used to analyze al-Mas'udi's contributions in the bibliography he uses. These sources were obtained through direct searches in various libraries and digitally. This article does not use primary sources, namely the book *Muruj Al-Zahab Wa Ma'Adin Al Jauhar* (Mas'udi, 2005) due to the writer's limitations in mastering foreign languages. Furthermore, the author verifies the data obtained from various existing sources in order to find valid data in writing this article. Verification is carried out by examining the data obtained from various sources which are then given an interpretation. The next stage is the presentation of research results in the form of scientific articles systematically.

This section describes the method, type of research, location and time, data type and source, data collection techniques, population and samples, variables, hypotheses, and data analysis techniques. The type of writing used is Time News Roman, font 11, space 1, which is made in an MS Word type file. The Research Methods Chapter is written at most 1 page and at least 0.5. Furthermore, it is related to Islamic Historiography in North Sumatra using qualitative research. The intention is to describe the object related to Islamic Historiography, which can be put into a report (Furqhan, 1992).

The determination of the topic is the most important stage in completing the research process. Furthermore, some stages are included, namely source collection, criticism, data interpretation, and historical writing. The first stage is collecting data from various sources, such as books, theses, notes, and interviews. Therefore, a systematic procedure is required to obtain credible sources (Suprayogo & Tobroni, 2003). At this stage, this research organizes and analyzes several scientific works in the form of theses of students from the History of Islamic Civilization study program related to historical writing. At this stage, observation is first made, which further describes the research object.

The second stage is source criticism to compare the data findings. The next stage is to select the data by testing internally and externally in terms of discussion, source content, and standard sentences. These tests aim to obtain valid data and investigate its authenticity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The History of Islamic Civilization is one of the study programs under the Faculty of Social Sciences at the State Islamic University North Sumatra Medan, established in 2016. As a relatively new study program, it has just graduated 89 alumni since 2020. Students are required to write scientific papers as a thesis or article to fulfill one of the requirements for obtaining a Bachelor of Humanities (S. Hum) degree. From 2020 to 2022, theses were selected as final projects with various themes according to respective intellectual backgrounds and interests.

The most dominant and trending theme is archaeological research. Out of a total of 89 theses, 25 discuss archeology. Islamic archeology is one of the compulsory subjects in the History of Islamic Civilization study program. Therefore, it is a natural trend for many students to select titles related to archeology. Since the awareness and literacy towards historical relics have been awakened, they are motivated to write about the respective areas of origin and provide recommendations to the government and surrounding communities. The archeological theme

includes an inventory of historical relics such as tombs, analysis of historical sites, and efforts to preserve sites. Many historical relics are neglected and have not received sufficient care in their regions of origin, which piques students' interest.

The next dominant theme concerns people's traditions in certain areas included in the scope of cultural history. Apart from the student's interest, this theme is based on the desire to write about their area of origin. After participating in and taking various courses offered by the study program, students are called upon to explore deeper using various approaches. As one of the provinces with ethnic and cultural diversity, North Sumatera is rich in unique, interesting traditions. Based on this potential, further research is needed to show the existence and dynamics of these traditions in the development of time. Students then use these traditions as research topics in different areas.

The next theme is architecture, which is also one of the compulsory subjects offered by the History of Islamic Civilization study program. It needs more comprehensive research as an area with many historical heritages, mosques, and palaces. The symbols and carvings found in mosques and palaces are usually the focus of student research because each reflects a certain pattern and characteristic of Islamic art.

The next selected theme is political history, while power, empires, and government are interesting topics because North Sumatera is a province with a long empire history. Therefore, data and facts should be reviewed to obtain proportional historical writing regarding the sultanates that once existed in North Sumatera.

Intellectual history and biography are also selected as research themes, although the numbers are not as dominant as cultural history and archeology. This includes discussing the development of the Naqsyabandiah congregation, the Islamization of Chinese ethnicity in Medan city, and others. Meanwhile, the biographies cover the scholar figures and their role in the da'wah of Islam.

The next themes are museums, literature, education, organization, art, social, branding, and demographic histories. The education history includes a discussion on the role of Islamic Boarding Schools or educational institutions and the dynamics of their development. The organization's history includes a discussion on the history and roles of several organizations in North Sumatera.

Historiography discusses how individual writes history about themselves. The development of a community or a nation can be seen and learned through the writing of its history. These themes have added to the historical writing literature, especially local history concerning a particular area, people, places, institutions, and communities. Furthermore, local events have national importance, such as civil war battles, which may seem insignificant but greatly impact a certain area (Dyer et al., 2011).

Historical writing conducted by students is based on a local history approach. The students bring up interesting themes from their respective places of origin. As mentioned above, the themes are additional references to the richness of Islamic historiography in North Sumatera. Apart from being additional literature, they can be recommendations for the community and local government, especially in archaeological research, such as historical sites and conservation efforts. These theses have contributed to the development of writing Islamic history, with varied themes in archeology, culture, architecture, education, and museums.

CONCLUSION

The trending themes for thesis writing among students from the History of Islamic Civilization study program are archeology, literary studies, museums, biography, culture, architecture, politic, intellectual, education, art, organization, social, demographic, and branding histories. The most dominant theme in 2020-2022 is archeology, where 25 of 89 thesis titles have been tried. The next selected theme is cultural history, totaling 19 titles, followed by biography, museums, architecture, politics, intellectual, education, art, organization, and social histories. The least studied themes are literary studies, branding history, and demographic history. They

contribute to the development of Islamic historiography in North Sumatera, especially in local historical writing.

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