



History of Islam in Australia: Muslim Migration and the Evolution of Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study describes the history of Islam in Australia, highlighting the influx of Muslims and depicting the development of Islam in the country. This research employs the historical method, comprising four stages: heuristics for source collection, source verification or criticism, interpretation or analysis, and historiography for historical writing. The results of this study demonstrate that Islam began to spread to Australia in the early 17th century, primarily due to the regular presence of Makassar fishermen and traders searching for tripang. The next wave of Muslims who came and settled in Australia were Afghan Muslims, Malay Muslims, Indians, Albanians, Lebanese, Indonesians, and so on. The presence of Islam encourages Islamic education in the country, starting with non-formal Islamic education centered in mosques, homes, or offices of Islamic organizations. Various Muslim communities conduct studies and seminars on weekends, commonly known as 'Saturday or Sunday School.' The 1970s saw the establishment of formal Islamic schools in response to the growing Muslim population. The development of Islamic education in Australia gained momentum in the mid-1990s. Privately run Islamic schools adopt the entire local education system, with an additional six hours per week for religious content. As Islamic schools have developed, they have expanded to various states in Australia. The attitude of tolerance and openness that Islamic schools in Australia cultivate supports this.

Keyword: Muslim Migrants; Islamic Education

Abstrak

Kajian ini berupaya menguraikan tentang sejarah Islam di Australia, dengan menyorot kedatangan orang-orang Islam dan memotret perkembangan Islam di Negara tersebut. Metode yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah metode sejarah yang meliputi empat tahap yaitu heuristik atau pengumpulan sumber, verifikasi atau kritik sumber, interpretasi atau analisis dan historiografi atau penulisan sejarah. Hasil kajian ini menjelaskan bahwa Islam datang ke Australia dimulai awal abad ke-17 yaitu kehadiran nelayan dan pedagang Makassar secara berkala untuk mencari tripang. Berikutnya gelombang Muslim datang dan menetap di Australia adalah Muslim Afghanistan, Muslim Melayu, India, Albania, Libanon, Indonesia dan lain sebagainya. Kehadiran Islam mendorong pendidikan Islam di Negara tersebut dimulai dengan pendidikan Islam non formal yang berpusat di masjid, rumah ataupun kantor organisasi Islam. Kajian dan seminar-seminar dilakukan oleh berbagai komunitas Muslim di akhir pekan, 'Sekolah Sabtu atau Minggu'. Sejalan peningkatan kuantitas Muslim didirikan sekolah Islam formal mulai berdiri tahun 1970-an. Perkembangan pendidikan Islam di Australia mendapatkan momentumnya pada pertengahan tahun 1990an. Sekolah Islam dikelola oleh swasta mengadopsi keseluruhan sistem pendidikan setempat dengan tambahan enam jam per minggu untuk konten keagamaan. Pada perkembangannya sekolah Islam mengalami peningkatan dan meyebar ke berbagai Negara bagian di Australia. Hal itu didukung oleh sikap toleransi dan keterbukaan yang dibangun di sekolah-sekolah Islam di Australia

Kata Kunci: Migran Muslim; Pendidikan Islam

Introduction

Often referred to as a continental country, the Australian continent consists of only one nation. It has an area of 7,682,300 km² and is the sixth largest country in the world, smaller than Russia, Canada, China, the United States, and Brazil. Australia is the world's driest continent, with almost 20% of its land mass classified as desert. Average annual rainfall is low, with high rainfall intensity in tropical areas of mainland Australia (namely the North Territory and Queensland), as well as some coastal areas (Tim Penulis, 2022). Aboriginal people were the first to inhabit Australia. Aboriginal people were the first to inhabit Australia following the arrival of humans. Following the arrival of white settlers, the native tribes experienced a sense of displacement, struggled to survive, and ultimately perished. Throughout its development, Australia has become a popular destination for immigrants, contributing to its reputation as a highly diverse country, particularly in terms of religious beliefs. Australia is also known as one of the most multicultural countries in the world. As long as it does not violate state law, the government allows its residents to practice their religion as they wish. Even so, only 2.6% of Australians claim to be Muslim, making Islam a minority religion in the country. However, in terms of population growth, Islam is growing fastest compared to other religions (M, 2019).

Arab traders crossed the continent before the 10th century, establishing indirect contact between Islam and Australia. Furthermore, in the 17th century, Makassar fishermen often navigated northern Australian waters and established direct interactions with indigenous people, namely the Aboriginal tribe. The Bugis Muslims' journey was to collect tripang from the Gulf of Carpentaria. Tripang is a delicious soup mixture in China that has reached the Chinese market via the Northeast, Koepang, and Makasar (Lawson, 2010). The presence of Makassar fishermen and traders also indirectly spread Islam to the areas they explored (Kettani, 2017; Onnudottir et al., 2010). The migration of Muslims from Afghanistan, India, European and Middle Eastern countries, Indonesia, Lebanon, and Turkey marked the subsequent presence of Islam, especially from the 19th to the 20th century (Ambiah & Hamidah, 2019).

Islamic educational institutions grew alongside the growth of Islam and the Muslim community, transitioning from non-formal institutions like Saturday and Sunday schools that taught children on Saturdays and Sundays to Islamic schools and seminars featuring religious and cultural nuances hosted by various Islamic communities. Mosques, offices of Islamic organizations, and other locations serve as venues for such education. Private parties began to establish and manage formal Islamic education institutions in the following period, with the main curriculum meeting state curriculum requirements (Safitri, 2017). The momentum of Islamic education in Australia developed in the mid-90s and continued to increase, along with the rapid growth of the Muslim community itself. The level of openness of Australian Islamic educational institutions is an example of the progress achieved by Islamic institutions, such as madrasas in Indonesia, which are still largely exclusive and develop within Islamic communities only (Rahman & Akbar, 2021). Therefore, studying the history of Islam in

Australia is of great interest. The journey begins with the introduction of Islam and continues with the growth of Islamic religious education within the nation

Research Methods

In this study, the author conducted library research by reading and analyzing books, as well as print and electronic media. This study uses a historical method with four steps: heuristics or collection, source verification or criticism, interpretation or analysis, and historiography or historical writing (Gottschalk, 1985; Kuntowijoyo, 2003). Data collection was carried out by tracing various sources, such as books, journals, and other scientific articles related to the discussion. After the data is collected, source criticism is carried out by comparing data from various sources. The author selectively chooses and sorts which parts from various sources are relevant to the discussion. The data is then categorized based on its classification. Next, we use the data as a reference to address the issues identified in this study. After conducting source criticism and analyzing the data, the next step involves synthesizing various facts gathered from historical sources into a comprehensive interpretation. Lastly, historiography is carried out by assembling historical facts in a logical and systematic whole to obtain a picture of the history of Islam in Australia, especially with regard to the arrival of Muslims in Australia and the development of Islamic education in that country.

Research Result

Discussion

Muslims in Australia: Initial Arrival and Increasing Quantity

As previously mentioned, Muslims have had indirect contact with Australia for a long time, estimated to be before the 10th century. During this time, Arab traders passing through the Western Pacific region on their way to China crossed Australia. However, it is important to note that the Arabs did not establish permanent settlements on the Pacific islands. However, the initial arrival of Muslims to the Australian Continent can be attributed to the presence of Makassar fishermen and traders who periodically visited the north coast in the early 17th century to fish for 'tripang' (Fauzan & Ribawati, 2024; Rane et al., 2020).

Evidence that strengthens the existence of Makassar Muslim traces can be seen in the influence of the Makassar community on Aboriginal languages. Anthropologists have documented oral histories that also provide evidence of trading activities and the impact of Makassar culture on Yolngu songs and dances. Ian McIntosh presents a comprehensive analysis of the incorporation of Islamic elements into Yolngu mythology and ritual, highlighting the influence of the Makassar civilization on Yolngu cultural practices (Onnudottir et al., 2010; Stephenson, 2010). The existence of Makassar Muslims is further strengthened by the existence of local cave paintings depicting their ships, as well as the discovery of a number of artifact remains from Aboriginal communities around the western and northern coastlines of Australia. Inter-marriage occurred between Aboriginal and Makassar residents, and there are visible Makassar burial sites along the coast. Due to European domination of the continent, in the following period, Makassar sailors were

restricted from visiting Australian waters until an official ban was imposed on them from entering Australian waters in 1907 (Saeed, 2004).

The influx of semi-permanent Muslim immigrants to Australia began with Afghans who worked as camel drivers. In June 1860, the first group of camel riders reached Melbourne, Victoria. The second wave occurred after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. At its highest point, there were around 3,000 Afghan Muslim workers employed as camel guards. Camel riders settled in Alice Springs and other areas of the Northern Territory. This group founded the first Muslim community (Nurfuad, 2014). The Afghan Muslims imported by the British to Australia came from various regions, including India, Iran, and Afghanistan (Fauzan & Ribawati, 2024). However, due to the prevalence of the Pusthu language among most of them, local residents usually refer to them as 'Afghans' or simply 'Ghan'. They not only guarded camels but also built a telegraph line connecting Australia with London via India and a train line known as the Ghan Train.

As part of an agreement with the Dutch, they sent Malay Muslims to work as pearl divers in Western Australia and the Northern Territory in the 1870s. Zainun (2015) noted that there were 1,800 Malay divers working in Western Australia in 1875. Since 1879, there has been a large influx of Muslim migrants from India, with destinations including the Fiji Islands and Queensland, Australia. The large influx of immigrants sparked concerns about preserving the white population, which led to the implementation of restrictions on immigrants entering Australia through the Immigration Restriction Act, sometimes referred to as the White Australia Policy, in 1901 (Nurdin, 2009; Poetrie, 2013). Restrictions on non-white immigrants resulted in a reduction in immigrants from Eastern countries, especially in Australia. Albanians arrived in the 1920s and took up agricultural work, working as sugar plantation laborers in North Queensland and fruit farmers in Victoria.

The Muslim community in Australia experienced significant growth, increasing from 2,704 in 1947 to 22,311 in 1971. The removal of the Immigration Restriction Act in the late 1960s and the adoption of multiculturalism as official policy contributed to this increase. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a large influx of Muslim migrants from Lebanon to Australia. Most people work as traveling salesmen, buying products in Melbourne and selling them in rural areas. Some of them set up businesses in the retail, warehousing, and manufacturing sectors (Ambiah & Hamidah, 2019). Meanwhile, some Indonesian Muslims migrated to Australia in the 1970s and others in the 1990s for educational purposes (ulfikar & Emawati, 2020). The Muslim community in Australia increased almost tenfold from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, reaching more than 200,000 for the first time. Australia's Muslim community experienced a substantial increase of 35 percent between 1986 and 1991, driven primarily by immigration. During this period, around 100,000 Muslims immigrated to Australia, mainly from the Middle East. Furthermore, the Muslim population doubled in 2011.

According to 2016 census data, there are 604,200 Muslims in Australia, or 2.6% of the total population of around 23.4 million people. Around 40 percent of the population are native Australians, while around 60 percent are immigrants from various countries such as

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey. Additionally, large numbers of Muslims have migrated from Bosnia, Egypt, Fiji, Malaysia, Somalia, and more than 150 other countries (M, 2019). The diversity of Muslim immigrants influences the development of diverse Muslim communities, which are characterized by significant diversity in terms of race, culture, language, and experience. Australia is often referred to as the Continent of Immigrants due to the large number of immigrants, including Muslim immigrants, who come from various countries and reside across its states.

A Portrait of Islamic Education in Australia

Non-Formal Islamic Education

Simultaneously with the growth of Islam and Muslim society, Islamic educational institutions also experienced development. Islam has indeed entered Australia since the 17th century. However, for centuries, Islamic education was still non-formal, carried out collectively in mosques or privately at home (family education). The history of Islamic education centered on mosques can be seen from efforts to build a number of mosques independently. The Ghan group constructed the first mosque in Alice Springs in 1864. After that, the Muslim community founded mosques in Maree in 1884, in Adelaide in 1891, in Perth in 1904, and in Brisbane in 1907. Preston, a suburb of Melbourne, saw the construction of a large mosque in 1976 (Nurdin, 2009), along with numerous other mosques.

Muslims have been building mosques since the 19th century, but it wasn't until the formation of Islamic organizations in the 20th century that the construction of mosques marked significant developments in Islam. Through this organization, Islamic institutions were revived and began to be better organized (Ambiah & Hamidah, 2019). The function of mosques is increasingly expanding, not only as a place of worship but also as a place of Islamic education, including as a place of refuge for minority Muslim communities in Australia. Mosques extend from the city center to inland villages. The large mosques in the city also function as Islamic centers, which carry out various types of Islamic activities such as recitations of the Koran, taklim assemblies, and information centers for non-Muslims who are interested in Islam.

Various Islamic organizations, such as the Center for Islamic Da'wah and Education (CIDE), conduct Islamic-based education for children and teenagers on Saturdays and Sundays. The total number of students is around 100, but approximately 80 students attend school on a regular basis. The educational agenda starts at 10.30 and continues until 12.00 with teaching about reading and writing the Koran. From 12.00 to 12.30, information about Islam was presented and ended with midday prayers together. After the midday prayer, a public lecture was delivered, and the gathering ended with a meal together. The information presented is related to aqidah/tawhid, morals, and sirah/history in the Islamic context (Ambiah & Hamidah, 2019).

Saturdays of Sunday school with children's recitation activities are commonplace in Australia until Islamic schools continue to develop. Weekend schools are the central point where Islamic education takes place, which facilitates the younger generation of Muslims to study various kinds of Islamic issues, especially reading the Koran, Islamic history, Islamic jurisprudence, and also the Islamic worldview (Zulfikar & Emawati, 2020). Another group, the Indonesian Islamic Society of South Australia (MIAS), is also making similar efforts to revitalize mosques and promote Islamic education. The Indonesian community in Adelaide

supported and participated in the founding of MIAS in 1998. The Indonesian Muslim community founded this organization to foster friendship among Indonesian Muslims in Adelaide, South Australia, and to play a role in Islamic education.

The Muslim community that joins various Islamic organisations in Australia seeks to improve the perception of Islam by implementing various initiatives, including educational institutions as well as interesting activities such as exhibitions, conferences, or seminars. Between 1991 and 1992, numerous locations hosted a significant exhibition that welcomed both Muslims and non-Muslims. The exhibition's main goal is to increase awareness and understanding of early Muslim culture and their significant contribution to Australia's economic and professional landscape. Additionally, it is important to correct misunderstandings between Muslims and non-Muslims who view Islam as a religion and culture associated with terrorism, as portrayed by Western media. Museum Victoria originally hosted the exhibition, entitled "An Australian Pilgrimage." The Muslim Community in Australia and the University of Melbourne collaborated to hold this event. The joint team collected and documented historical information about the arrival of Muslims in Australia, as well as their significant contribution to the development of Islam in the country and Australian civilization. After achieving success in Victoria, the exhibition expanded to three additional cities: Geelong, Ballarat, and Albury, concluding in January 1992. Every two weeks in Melbourne, apart from the exhibition, prominent Australian Muslim figures spoke at seminars. Several Muslim communities, including those from Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Bosnia, also held cultural performances (Ambiah & Hamidah, 2019). Several prominent Muslim communities, including Turkish, Pakistani, Indonesian, Malaysian, and Bosnian Muslims, serve this region.

Formal Islamic Education

The Muslim community initiated Islamic religious education in Australia in the 1970s. Along with a surge in immigration from Turkey in the late 1960s and from Lebanon in the 1970s. As the Muslim population grows, so does the demand for formal educational institutions to meet Muslim needs. Schools that are considered accommodating for Muslims are those that can convey religious teachings, give students the freedom to dress Islamically, offer halal food options, facilitate regular worship, organize Islamic holidays, and educate about appropriate social ethics between genders.

Two schools founded in the 1970s were the "Queensland Islamic Society" and the "Goulbourn College of Advanced Education." The "Queensland Islamic Society" school was founded in Brisbane with the aim of encouraging and raising awareness among Muslim children about prayer and fostering good relations. Students come from India, Africa, Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, and indigenous Australians. Furthermore, the "Goulbourn College of Advanced Education" was founded within Islamic institutions or schools, adopting a system similar to madrasas or Islamic schools in Indonesia.

Abdullah Saeed, a professor at the University of Melbourne's Centre for the Study of Contemporary Islam, has explained the establishment of Islamic schools. According to him,

there are a total of 23 Islamic schools, 16 of which are referred to as 'Islamic Colleges', and their main focus is providing pre-university education. The Australian government explained that the Islamic school had received accreditation and recognition. As a result, these schools receive subsidies from the government in various forms. Among the numerous Islamic schools in Australia, two are particularly well-known. The two schools are located in Melbourne as King Khalid Islamic College, which is currently known as the Australian International Academy (AIA). This educational institution is recognized as the oldest Islamic school in Australia, founded by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) in 1983. In addition, Minaret College was founded in 1993 (Saeed, 2003).

Noor al-Houda Islamic College is another Islamic school in Sydney. Founded in 1983, Silma Ihram and Siddiq Buckley, a married couple who converted to Islam, initiated the establishment of this educational institution. The local public school rejected their daughter for wearing a hijab and Muslim clothing, prompting them to proactively establish an Islamic institution. At its inception, the Noor al-Houda Islamic College faced obstacles in the form of rejection from communities of different beliefs. Acquiring land was a challenge in itself, so the school had to move nine times in a period of four years. Like other Islamic institutions, they frequently relocate due to land licensing restrictions (Safitri, 2017).

Another challenge facing Islamic schools in Australia is ethnic diversity, as the majority of Muslims in these countries are immigrants from countries such as Turkey, Morocco, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and others. The positive side is that you can get to know the diversity of various aspects of Muslim culture. On the other hand, a negative aspect is that many parents choose state schools over Islamic institutions founded by Muslims with different affiliations or schools of thought. Even though Islamic school education is relatively cheaper (Ghamra-Oui, 2020), concerns that their children's religious education deviates from their own understanding influence the parents' perspective. This lack of support from fellow Muslims has led Islamic schools to seek financial assistance.

The development of Islamic education in Australia gained momentum in the mid-1990s. Under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard, Islamic education in Australia experienced a significant increase in prevalence, mainly due to increased financial access. Improved administration and increased educational standards have led to an increasing preference for Islamic institutions among students. In this regard, the surge in the Muslim population also has a significant influence. In 1997, Sydney became the city with the largest Muslim population, with the establishment of fifteen Islamic schools. After a decade, the number had doubled. Melbourne ranks second in terms of the number of Islamic schools it possesses. In contrast, other cities typically have only two or three Islamic schools (Safitri, 2017).

Following the events of September 11, 2001, there was a marked increase in discussion in the mainstream media regarding the perceived incompatibility of Islam with a secular, multiethnic state. The connection between Islam and radical ideologies became evident. Senator Aden Derek defended Islamic schools from accusations of promoting anti-Australian

sentiment, stating that Australian Muslim colleges, like all schools in the country, aim to educate their students to become proud Australian citizens and contribute positively to the development of a prosperous, harmonious, and safe nation. Muslims have undertaken initiatives to eliminate prejudice and encourage dialogue with communities of other religions, with the aim of encouraging harmonious coexistence. Increasing their knowledge and becoming more familiar with Islam has the potential to reduce their prejudiced attitudes towards Muslims (Mansouri & Vergani, 2018). Participants in the discussions included Muslim organizations, mosques, and Islamic schools, which are also the entities most involved in carrying out interfaith and intercultural initiatives (Yücel, 2011).

. Various efforts have resulted in progress in Islam, one of which is the establishment of Islamic institutions. In 2004, Australia recorded 30 Islamic educational institutions, primarily located in New South Wales and Victoria. Some of these schools provide primary and secondary education. The Islamic schools in question are Malek Fahd Islamic School, King Abd Aziz Islamic School, Al-Noori Islamic School, Arrisalat College, Al-Zahrah College, Australian International Islamic College in Queensland, Raja Khalid Islamic College, and others (M, 2019). In New South Wales, the number of Islamic educational institutions has tripled over the past 15 years, reaching a total of 22. Likewise, the number of students studying in Islamic schools has increased by almost 200%, exceeding 10 thousand students (*Mengenal Sekolah Islam di Australia*, 2014). Hence, examining the presence of formal Islamic education in Australia, we can assert that the growth of Islamic schools mirrors the rise in the number and caliber of Muslims, as well as the resilience of these establishments amidst the diverse challenges Muslims encounter in a multifaceted nation.

Atmosphere of Formal Islamic Education

Private parties provide Islamic religious education in these schools, which operate independently of the Australian government. The government only offers broad educational goals as a guide; the institutions have autonomy in making their own specific plans. Within the Australian Muslim community, there is no body responsible for regulating educational content on Islamic topics. This condition causes each school to develop its own educational plan for various religious subjects. This management approach allows schools to use their time more efficiently when dealing with religious issues among their students. Thus, administrators have several opportunities to improve their understanding and application of theory and practice in this area.

Islamic schools in Australia, although privately funded, follow the local education system and also dedicate an additional six hours each week to Islamic religious instruction. In Australia, the dominance of the secular education system has made Islamic education just a "style." (Fery et al., n.d.; Safitri, 2017). However, Islamic schools are an alternative education that includes Islamic practices, provides a platform for religious expression, and offers extracurricular programs to connect students with society. By providing these elements,

Islamic schools create communities and foster a sense of belonging among students. Their involvement actively encourages community unity and solidarity (Ghamra-Oui, 2022).

Rahma Eka Saputri, a participant in the Indonesia-Australia Youth Exchange Program (AIYEP) from West Sumatra, described the atmosphere of Islamic schools in Australia. When he was an intern teacher at an Islamic school in the Kiama area, about 120 kilometers south of Sydney, New South Wales, he explained that the atmosphere of Islamic education at Emity College was different from Islamic boarding schools throughout Indonesia. All of the students are Muslims, but some of them do not wear hijab. Meanwhile, around 70% of the teachers are Muslim, and 20% are non-Muslim. Sometimes, non-Muslim principals are responsible for Islamic schools in Australia. Instilling religious values such as harmony and Islamic moral qualities is the responsibility of Muslim teachers. Meanwhile, non-Muslim teachers try to instill Australian values in their students, such as independence and discipline. The Australian Islamic schools' implementation of an open system aims to ensure that any educational institution in the country can become a forum for fostering understanding and respect for various cultures and religions in society (*Mengenal Sekolah Islam di Australia*, 2014).

Most Australian Muslims have a moderate, progressive, and ethics-focused understanding of Islam. They firmly reject violent extremism within the Australian Muslim community and the widespread tendency to view interactions with non-Muslims as familial, friendly, and collegial (Rane, 2021). A pluralistic school environment has also proven to be very effective in fostering tolerance among students in Islamic schools in Australia. Such understanding and attitudes will continue to encourage the development of Islam, including Islamic educational institutions in Australia, in the future.

Conclusion

Australia is one of the countries considered to be the most multicultural in the world. 2.6% of Australians claim to be Muslims, making Islam a minority religion in the country. However, in terms of population growth, Islam is growing the fastest compared to other religions. The seasonal arrival of Islam can be seen in the presence of Makassar Muslims in the 17th century. In subsequent developments, the permanent presence of Islam occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries, namely waves of immigrants from Afghanistan, Malay Muslims, India, the Middle East, Albania, Lebanon, Indonesia, and so on. The presence of Muslims encouraged the birth of Islamic education. Islamic education began with non-formal education, conducted in mosques and individual homes. Islamic educational institutions have developed rapidly, providing alternatives for the Muslim community to meet their religious education needs through studies and simanar. The growing needs of Muslims require the establishment of formal Islamic schools. Overall, the development of Islamic education in Australia demonstrates an effort to maintain religious identity in a multicultural society while integrating into an inclusive national education system. Although there are still challenges and events, Islamic education continues to develop as an integral part of Australia's educational diversity.

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