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ISLAMIZATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN COLONIAL MANNA, BENCOOLEN (1824-1942)

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Abstract: This article examines the process of Islamization and its impact on the socio-economic transformation of the community in *Onderafdeeling* Manna, Bencoolen or Bengkulu Residency, during the Dutch colonial period, spanning from 1824 to 1942. The primary objective of this study is to identify the early figures who disseminated Islam in the region and analyse how Islamic teachings influenced the lifestyle of the local community. Using historical methods through the stages of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography, this study finds that Islam entered the Manna region around the 1880s through the preaching of Shaykh Muhammad Amin from Nias Island. Islamic activities developed through the establishment of large mosques, such as Al-Manar, the formation of Islamic organisations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, and the growth of Sufi orders in the post-independence period. This process also encouraged changes in the community's economic behaviour, primarily through shifts in trade ethics, increased cooperation in agriculture, and the development of *waqf* and *zakāh*-based initiatives. These findings demonstrate that Islam serves not only as a religion but also as a social and cultural force capable of transforming society's structure in a peaceful and sustainable manner.

Keywords: Colonial Economy; Islamization; Muslim Society; Local History; Bengkulu.

Introduction

Islamization is a long and complex historical process that occurred in various parts of the Muslim world, including Southeast

Asia. This region became a centre of interaction between local cultures and Islamic teachings, which spread through traders, scholars, religious orders, and Islamic texts since the 13th century. According to Anthony Reid, the interaction between Islam and local cultures was based on maritime trade routes and harmonious patterns of social adaptation, allowing the process of Islamization to proceed peacefully and gradually.[1] Azra also emphasised that the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia cannot be separated from the role of the network of ulama and traditional educational institutions (*pesantren* and *surau*), which enable the systematic and sustainable transmission of Islamic knowledge to take place.[2] However, in Indonesian Islamic historiography, research generally focuses on royal centres such as Aceh, Demak, and Minangkabau. Areas like *Onderafdeeling* Manna in Bengkulu Selatan (South Bengkulu), despite containing evidence of Islamic history, including ancient mosques, clerics' tombs, and *tarekat* traditions, have rarely been studied in depth.

The study of Islamization in the marginal regions of Southeast Asia has undergone methodological expansion with socio-historical and anthropological approaches that enrich perspectives beyond the narrative of the central dynasty. Johns emphasized that the Sufi order played an important role in spreading Islam to the hinterland through a contextual spiritual approach, in line with the phenomenon of Islamization based on local scholars such as Shaykh Muhammad Amin in Manna.[3] Laffan highlights the role of the ulama network and publication activities as instruments for the formation of local Islamic authority in the shadow of colonialism.[4] Meanwhile, Ricklefs shows that Islamization in Java was gradual and accommodating to local values, strengthening the argument that Islamization

[1] Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680: Volume 2: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 132-35.

[2] Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern'Ulam?'in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 18-21.

[3] Anthony H Johns, "Islamization in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations with Special Reference to The Role of Sufism," *Japanese Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1993): 43-61.

[4] Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

in the periphery was not a hegemonic process.[5] Lape adds an archaeological dimension through artifactual evidence such as gravestones and inscriptions, which demonstrate the continuity of Islamization in coastal communities.[6] Latif examines the role of the tarekat in South Sulawesi as a source of spiritual authority rooted in marginalized communities. Meanwhile, Azman highlights trade and education as the primary means of spreading Islam in Indonesia, which is also reflected in the dynamics of the Islamic economy in Manna.[7] Milner concludes that the process of Islamization in Southeast Asia was the result of social accommodation and cultural adaptation, not simply normative expansion—this framework reflects the inclusive, dynamic, and community-based model of Islamization in Manna.[8]

Although research on Islamization in Southeast Asia has progressed substantially, particularly through macro-historical and dynastic approaches, there remains a notable gap in studies focusing on marginal or peripheral regions such as Manna. While some works address Islamization in inland or non-central areas, they often do not provide an in-depth historical and cultural account specific to Bengkulu Selatan's context. This study offers a novel contribution by presenting a historical analysis of Islamization in Manna, revealing that the process was not solely spiritual in nature but intertwined with broader socio-economic transformations. It argues that religious figures, such as local ulama, played pivotal roles not only in religious propagation but also in shaping community-based economic practices, particularly in agriculture and trade. Through mosque development, institutional religious education, and ethical economic activities centered on commodities like coffee and cloves, Islam became embedded in the structural transformation of society, even amidst colonial pressures. This localised study aims to enrich

[5] Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to Present* (Singapore: NUS Press Pte Ltd, 2012).

[6] Peter Lape, "Archaeological Approaches to The Study of Islam in Island Southeast Asia," *Antiquity* 79, no. 306 (2005): 829-36.

[7] Zainal Azman and Supriadi Supriadi, "The History of Islamization In Indonesia: Its Dynamics And Development," *El-Ghiroh: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 23, no. 1 (2025): 67-82.

[8] Anthony Milner, "The Timing of Islamization in Southeast Asia: Local Agency, and the Challenge of Analysing Religious Conversion," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 96, no. 1 (2023): 21-49.

the broader discourse by foregrounding how Islamization unfolded within the lived experiences of communities at the colonial margins.

This article is structured in five main sections. The first section provides an introduction that outlines the background, the urgency of the topic, and the scientific contributions, while also explaining the research methods used, which include a historical approach through heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The second section presents the theoretical framework and literature review that form the basis of the analysis. The third section focuses on the historical context and local dynamics of Islamization in Manna. The fourth section reviews the findings and discusses the link between the Islamization process and social and economic changes in society. Finally, the fifth section contains conclusions and reflections on the implications of this study for strengthening Indonesian Islamic historiography, particularly at the local and peripheral levels.

This research uses historical methods that include four main stages: heuristic, criticism of sources, interpretation, and historiography. Primary sources consist of colonial archives such as the Colonial Verslag of 1900, 1901, 1909, 1911, and 1919 which record the dynamics of agriculture, population, and religious activities in Manna; *Verslag over de Burgerlijke Openbare Werken* (1898) on colonial infrastructure; and newspapers such as *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (October 18, 1916) and *De Sumatra Post* (16 Juli 1936) who reported the activities of the mosque and the local Islamic community. In addition, documents from the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI), such as *Algemene Secretarie-Serie Verslagen* (Benkoelen 1894-1921), *Binnenlands Bestuur-Grote Bundel* (1929-1931), and *Departement van Burgerlijke Openbare Werken-Verbaal/Agenda* (1855-1933), provide an administrative and social picture of colonialism. The oral history method complements this approach through in-depth interviews with religious leaders, descendants of local scholars, mosque administrators, and cultural actors, aiming to reconstruct the collective memory and public perception of the process of Islamization and its continuity into the contemporary era. Secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and previous research are used to strengthen the analysis. This approach allows for a contextual reconstruction of local Islamic his-

torical narratives and highlights the role of suburban areas such as Manna in the formation of Indonesian Islamic identity.

The Multidimensional Impact of Islamization in Colonial Manna

Islamization in Manna region, Bengkulu Selatan, is a gradual and peaceful process of integrating Islamic teachings into the local community's social and cultural life. This process is neither hegemonic nor coercive, but instead takes place through a Sufi approach, personal *da'wah*, and the adaptation of local values. Key figures, such as Shaykh Amin, play a crucial role as agents of *da'wah*, not only conveying Islamic teachings but also establishing social institutions, including mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and tarekat networks. This concept aligns with Talal Asad's notion of a discursive tradition, where Islam is not understood as a monolith, but rather through social practices and interpretations within local contexts.[9]

Islam does not replace local culture, but rather interacts and synthesises it with existing value systems. Religious institutions, such as the Al-Manar Mosque and the Naqsyabandiyah order, as well as spiritual study groups, serve as integrative spaces for the formation of Islamic values that align with the lives of the Manna community. In Raymond Williams' view, culture is the product of historical experience and social interaction, and in this context, Islamization in Manna is part of the dynamic production of local culture.[10] This process produced a Muslim society that was not only spiritually religious but also strong in social and customary ties.

Besides being a religious movement, Islamization in Manna also drove changes in the economic order of society. Islamic teachings, emphasising honesty (*amānah*), justice (*'adl*), hard work, and social responsibility, influenced the economic behaviour of the Muslim community, particularly in the agricultural sector and the trade of commodities such as coffee and cloves. These moral principles shaped a work ethic and ethical production relations. This resonates

[9] Talal Asad, "The Idea of An Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1-30.

[10] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (Columbia University Press, 1983).

with Max Weber's thinking, which linked religious ethics with economic rationality in the context of Protestant capitalism.[11]

Islam in Manna society fosters a community-based moral economy. The practices of *zakāh*, *infāq*, and *ṣadaqah* serve as instruments for wealth distribution, strengthening social solidarity. Collective funds are often used to build mosques, assist the poor, or finance the Hajj. In this context, Islamic teachings serve as a value system that encourages economic inclusion and narrows social disparities. Timur Kuran describes the Islamic *waqf* and philanthropy system as traditional public mechanisms that support the structure of Muslim society without state involvement.[12] In Manna, this mechanism resides in the collective consciousness of the community, strengthening their economic position amid Dutch colonial pressure.

In addition, islamization in Manna also played a role in the formation of a collective identity that distinguished the local community from the Dutch colonial authorities. The Islamic identity formed here did not completely imitate major Islamic centres, such as Aceh or Minangkabau, but instead was the result of a negotiation between Islamic values and local wisdom. This process aligns with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of a third space, a cultural meeting place that allows for the formation of a dynamic and reflective hybrid identity.[13]

Through the establishment of mosques, the spread of Islamic orders (*tarekat*), and the presence of organisations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the Manna community demonstrated cultural resistance to colonialism. Islam served as a symbolic basis for affirming cultural autonomy and building historical awareness. Local Muslim identity was constructed through religious practices, symbols, and historical narratives that distinguished them from the colonial value system. In Stuart Hall's view, identity is built through the articulation of culture, language,

[11] Max Weber and Stephen Kalberg, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).
[12] Timur Kuran, "The Provision of Public Goods Under Islamic Law: Origins, Impact, and Limitations of The Waqf System," *Law & Society Review* 35, no. 4 (2001): 841-97.
[13] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2012).

and narratives that give meaning to collective experiences.[14] Therefore, Islamization in Manna was not only a spiritual phenomenon but also a cultural and political movement that strengthened the position of the local community amidst external pressures.

Early Traces of Islamization and the Role of Shaykh Amin

The process of Islamization in Manna, Bengkulu Selatan, from the 19th century to the early 20th century took place in a dynamic colonial context. After the Treaty of London of 1824, the Bencoolen region, including Manna, passed from England to the Netherlands, marking the beginning of more systematic administrative integration. Colonial archives record that from 1882, Manna and the surrounding area were placed under the supervision of a European controleur with the support of native officials. The Colonial Report of 1882 wrote: "*De Onderafdeeling en Manna, Oeloe-Manna, Seloema, Lais, Mokko-Mokko en Kroë worden bestuurd door inlandsch bestuur onder toezicht van eene Europeesche controleur.*"[15] This information confirms that Dutch control focused on political and economic aspects. Meanwhile, socio-religious life remained driven by local initiatives, which demonstrated the vitality of Islam during colonial control.

Several ethnographic sources indicate that the influence of Islam was already quite pronounced in Manna before the arrival of the great scholars. An 1862 report described the existence of mosques and religious schools in the villages. The traces of Islam in Manna are already evident in the early records. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (BKI) Vol. 8 (1862), in the article "Compendium over de Afdeeling Manna," reported: "*In deze afdeeling bevinden zich verscheidene kampongs met eene missigit en school voor het onderwijzen van de kinderen in de godsdienst.*"[16] This record shows that by the mid-19th century, the local community had a simple mosque and madrasah that served as a center for religious education. In other words, Islam has taken root at the village level, even before the arrival of great scholars such as Shaykh Amin.

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[14] Robert Taylor, "Representation & the Media: Featuring Stuart Hall," In *Sage Video.*: Media Education Foundation, 2015. Video, 00:55:07.

[15] Ministerie van Koloni\u00ebn, *Koloniaal Verslag 1882* ('s-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1882).

[16] "Kompedium over de Afdeeling Manna," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 8 (1862): 301-8.

Colonial archives also provide an overview of the economic orientation of the Manna people at that time. The Colonial Verslag of 1901, for example, emphasized that the people's coffee plantations were the backbone of daily life: "*In de afdeeling Manna wordt hoofdzakelijk koffie verbouwd door de bevolking, naast peper en andere gewassen voor eigen gebruik.*"[17] These developments demonstrate that coffee has become a strategic commodity, sustaining people's lives while connecting them to regional trade networks. Coffee is not only economically valuable, but it also forms a new social pattern, where cooperation in clearing land and managing gardens becomes part of community interaction. In this context, the role of Shaykh Amin became significant. He not only preached in mosques or suraus, but also set an example in economic practices that are clean from usury, taught honest ethics in trade, and emphasized the principle of justice in the management of natural products. Thus, Islamization in Manna cannot be separated from the dynamics of the local economy centered on coffee, which then becomes an effective medium for internalizing Islamic values in people's daily lives.

Oral testimony reinforces this picture. H. Rahman Ali, his descendant, said: "Shaykh Amin not only taught religion, but also guided the community in coffee farming, trading without usury, and reviving the surau as a center of deliberation."[18]

Colonial records also support the social function of mosques in Manna: "*…in de Onderafdeeling Manna bevinden zich eenige steen opgetrokken moskeeën, die tevens dienen als vergaderplaats voor de dorpshoofden en leeraar godsdienst.*"[19] Thus, mosques at that time not only functioned as places of worship but also became centers of social activity for the community. In it, deliberations, meetings of traditional leaders, and religious guidance by scholars took place. This dual role makes the mosque an institution that unites local spiritual, social, and political interests. The presence of the mosque demonstrates how religion is closely intertwined with the public life of the Manna community, as well as providing moral legitimacy for all decisions made together.

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[17] Ministerie van Koloni\u00ebn, *Koloniaal Verslag 1901* ('s-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1901).

[18] Interview with H. Rahman Ali, Bengkulu Selatan, January 3, 2025.

[19] L. C. Westenenk, *Memorie van Overgave van Den Aftredenden Resident van Benkoelen*, Mededeelingen B.B.B. (Semarang: G. C. T. van Dorp, 1922).

The religious traditions inherited by Shaykh Amin are still alive today. Hj. Mariani, a resident of Manna, recalled: "The Rukis Mosque used to be just a small wooden fence, but every Friday night, many people come for *wiridan* and *mawlid*. This has existed since the time of Shaykh Amin, the old man said."[20]

Figure 1. The First Condition of the Rukis Mosque (source: *Statuten en Huishoudelijk Reglement "Roekis" Tanjoeng Moelia Manna*, August 28, 1936)

This photo shows the early phase of the Rukis Mosque as a wooden langgar that lives with the tradition of Friday night *wiridan* and *mawlid*, confirming the continuity of religious practices since the era of Shaykh Amin, while explaining the transition from a village surau to a permanent mosque in the process of Islamization, which relies on collective rites, basic religious education, and cooperation of citizens. The colonial press recorded the existence of the mosque: "*In de nacht van Dinsdag op Woensdag is te Manna een missigit door brand verwoest.*"[21]

This news confirms that mosques are at the center of people's lives, not only as a place of worship, but also as a social space that holds strategic significance for the local community. The fact that the colonial media reported the mosque fire in Manna shows that the existence of the mosque has become a symbol of the collective identity of Muslims as well as an indicator of social dynamics that the colonial side noticed. Thus, mosques serve a dual function: as a

[20] Interview with Hj. Mariani, Bengkulu Selatan, January 5, 2025.
[21] ANETA, "Berita Kebakaran di Onderafdeeling Manna: De Missigit Afgebrand," *De Sumatra Post*, July 1936, 5.

spiritual center that binds the community as well as a public institution that affirms the position of Islam in the colonial socio-political landscape.

Entering the 20th century, the Islamic network in Manna became more diverse. Muhammadiyah has been present since the 1930s, driven by the spirit of educational reform, while NU expanded post-independence by strengthening Islamic boarding schools and local traditions. The *Tarekat* Naqshbandiyyah survived, inheriting the Sufism style introduced by Shaykh Amin. The Head of Kayu Aro Hamlet, M. Harun, said: "He not only taught Islam, but also helped people build irrigation canals, grow coffee, and teach trade without usury."[22]

The mosque's physical transformation from a wooden prayer room to the permanent structure seen today reinforces the institutionalisation of Islam. This change is not merely architectural, but symbolic, demonstrating that the process of Islamization in this region has undergone ongoing institutional strengthening. The following visual documentation supports this narrative.

Figure 2. Rukis Mosque, formerly a simple wooden prayer house, is now the centre of religious activities in Pino Raya (source: author's collection)

[22] Interview with Harun, Bengkulu Selatan, January 6, 2025.

This image also serves as a visual artefact connecting the past and the present, representing the continuity between traditional Islamic preaching and contemporary Islamic institutions that remain rooted in local traditions. This documentation is essential, as it provides empirical evidence of how religious spaces evolve alongside social change while maintaining the substance of local Islamic spiritual and cultural values.

This aligns with Schielke's concept of lived Islam, which emphasises that Muslim religiosity is not merely manifested through normative doctrine, but rather through dynamic and contextual daily practices. In this context, Islam is lived as a social experience internalised in the collective life of society, encompassing spiritual, moral, and cultural aspects that are embodied in daily actions and interactions.[23]

Equally important, Shaykh Amin's role was also evident in the community's economic development. M. Harun, the head of Kayu Aro Hamlet, testified: "He not only taught Islam, but also helped people build irrigation systems, plant coffee, and taught them how to trade without usury."[24] This information suggests that Islamization in Manna contributed to the emergence of a new economic structure grounded in Islamic values, such as anti-usury, agricultural cooperation, and equitable distribution. This aligns with Timur Kuran's perspective on how Islamic institutions can shape economic patterns based on social trust and ethical values.[25] The following table summarises the development of Islamic institutions in Manna from the colonial period to post-independence.

Table 1. The Development of Islamic Institutions in Manna from the Colonial Era to Post-Independence

Islamic institutions	Year of Establishment	Information
Al-Manar Mosque	±1880	The first mosque, founded by Shaykh Amin
Jamik Mosque	Early 1900s	Continuing Islamic preaching and education

[23] Samuli Schielke, "Second Thoughts About The Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life," in *Research in the Islamic Context* (London: Routledge, 2022), 42-68.
[24] Interview with Harun, Bengkulu Selatan, 2025
[25] Kuran, "The Provision of Public Goods Under Islamic Law."

Rukis Mosque	Early 1900s	Centre for *wiridan* and *mawlid* activities
Muhammadiyah	1930s	Promote educational reform and renewal
NU	1950s	Strengthening Islamic boarding schools and local religious traditions
Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah	Post 1945	The legacy of Shaykh Amin's Sufism teachings, developed structurally

All these facts demonstrate that Islamization in Manna (1824-1942) was a multifaceted process, involving religious education, social transformation, and the development of economic ethics. The verified colonial archives, when combined with the collective memory of the community, present strong evidence that Islamization in Manna was not merely normative but also part of a socio-economic transformation that bridged the colonial period with the dynamics of contemporary Islam.

Socio-Economic Transformation of Manna Society during the Colonial Period

The Islamization of Manna not only occurred in the spiritual realm but also significantly reshaped the local socio-economic order throughout the colonial period. After the Treaty of London in 1824, Benkoelen (including Manna) switched its allegiance from England to the Netherlands and entered into the administrative arrangement of the Dutch East Indies. Official documentation shows that in the late 19th century, the Manna region was supervised by European controleurs who worked alongside indigenous officials. As Hefner emphasized, Islam in Southeast Asia acts as an "ethicalizing force" that strengthens civil society.[26]

To assess the pulse of the people's market and the position of coffee in the household economy, colonial reports of the early 20th century provide essential evidence. As noted in a 1901 report assessing the conditions of domestic trade and people's gardens: "*De binnenlandsche handel was over het geheel genomen levendig … De koffie-cultuur ging er niet op vooruit; in verband met de lage prijzen werden vele Liberia-*

[26] Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 75-81.

aanplantingen geheel verwaarloosd."[27] This quote (although on the scale of the southern Sumatra/Benkolen region) shows two simultaneous things: the circulation of the local market remains alive, a space conducive to muamalah ethics, but the price crisis weakens the household coffee plantations. It is in this gap that the internalization of the values of honesty, trust, and anti-usury functions as a moral "buffer" for the economy.

These price pressures had been detected a year earlier and triggered an adaptive strategy at the village level through crop diversification. As reported a year before 1901, about the response of the population to the falling price of Liberian coffee: "*De daling der prijzen van Liberia-koffie maakte dat de bevolking meer werk maakte van de teelt van kapas, kapok en benzoë…*"[28] The shift of some of the workforce to *cotton/kapok/benzene* signifies community-based economic resilience. This diversification reinforces the relevance of Islamic norms in farmer-business decisions (avoiding rent/*gharār* practices, upholding the honesty of scales) when the market is volatile.

Furthermore, there is an archive that explicitly mentions Manna, revealing the link between the progress of Islamization, the expansion of rice fields/irrigation, and the people's commodity portfolio. As noted in the "Benkoelen" section that reports on local religious and agrarian developments:

> *De Islam bleef langzaam vorderingen maken onder de heidenen in de afdeelingen Seloema en Manna … In de afdeeling Manna nam het aantal sawahs in 1908 belangrijk toe. … De uitkomsten van den koffieoogst waren vrij gunstig … De Liberia-koffieoogst bleef weder beneden de verwachting … In de afdeelingen Benkoelen en Ommelanden en Redjang en Lebong is eene proef genomen met de teelt op sawahs van oo-udvisschen …*[29]

This quote ties three processes together at once in Manna: (i) the progress of Islamization, (ii) the widening of the food base through the expansion of rice fields/irrigation, and (iii) the commodity portfolio (coffee remains essential despite the weak Liberian variety). This synergy explains why the mosque/surau logically be-

[27] Ministerie van Koloni\u00ebn, *Koloniaal Verslag 1901*.
[28] Ministerie van Koloni\u00ebn, *Koloniaal Verslag 1900* ('s-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1900).
[29] Ministerie van Koloni\u00ebn, *Koloniaal Verslag 1909* ('s-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1909).

comes a node for deliberation, division of labor, and transmission of economic ethics.

After World War I, price dynamics reversed, and interest in coffee increased again. As reported after the late 1918 price surge: "*De belangstelling voor de teelt van koffie nam bij de stijging der prijzen tegen het einde van 1918 weer toe.*"[30] The price recovery signal explains the sustainability of the people's coffee economy in South Sumatra and justifies why the ethics of muamalah (anti-usury, honesty, and trust) remain relevant in the major commodity cycle, particularly when capital/trade flows strengthen.

Field testimony makes clear how these values settle as an everyday norm. *Ustadh* Ibrahim Zaini (Pino Raya) said: "After routine recitation runs in suraus, the way people trade begins to change. In the past, I was often dishonest; now I am embarrassed to cheat, especially if I claim to be a student."[31] This testimony presents "social shame" as a moral sanction mechanism, an indicator that Islamic trade ethics have transformed into a collective standard. H. Darman Lubis (Kayu Aro) describes the shift in work patterns: "In the past, people went to their respective fields. After the arrival of Shaykh Amin and his disciples, a peasant group was formed; they opened irrigation ditches together, and the deliberation was at the mosque."[32]

This information illustrates the institutionalization of cooperation and target deliberations that align with the data on the expansion of rice fields/irrigation, as well as highlighting the mosque as a center for organizing work. Maria Ningsih (a descendant of the Peranakan community) emphasized inclusivity: "Even though we are of different religions, we participated in community service work at the mosque because it is the center of the village. The important thing is to be honest and help each other."[33]

Interfaith participation reinforces the findings of local Islam that vernacular public ethics (honesty, helping each other) become social glue beyond the boundaries of identity. H. Rahman Ali (a descendant of Shaykh Amin) summarized the economic-social ethics

[30] Ministerie van Koloni\u00ebn, *Koloniaal Verslag 1919* ('s-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1919).
[31] Interview with *Ustadh* Ibrahim Zaini, Bengkulu Selatan, January 7, 2025.
[32] Interview with H. Darman Lubis, Bengkulu Selatan, January 8, 2025.
[33] Interview with Maria Ningsih, Bengkulu Selatan, January 9, 2025.

of *da'wah*: "He guided coffee farming, traded without usury, and made the surau a place of deliberation."[34]

This narrative directly links the teachings of anti-usury, muamalah justice, and deliberation to the coffee production and commerce ecosystem to create a stable moral economy at the village level. The colonial press archives also capture the centrality of the mosque as a public space and collective memory. As the colonial daily reported on the disaster at Manna: "…*de missigit afgebrand*…"[35] The fact that mosque fires are in the news confirms their dual function: in addition to ritual centers, mosques are public institutions (deliberation, coordination of aid, identity markers). This reinforces the argument that religious institutions underpin social cohesion across the ages.

Since the 1930s, institutional differentiation has become increasingly clear: the movement for educational reform (Muhammadiyah) and, later, the strengthening of Islamic boarding schools (NU) after independence; the tradition of the tarekat and the recitation of the book has continued. At the material level, mosques that started as wooden slabs transformed into permanent buildings, such as the Rukis Mosque in Pino Raya without losing their core function as a center of worship, deliberation, and social binding. Thus, the colonial gap is now bridged through the sustainability of practices: Friday night wirid and maulid, irrigation collective work, small congregation-based cooperatives, and anti-usury ethics in local commerce.

Tabel 2. Socio-Economic Aspects Before and After Islamization in Manna

Socio-Economic Aspects	Before Islamization	After Islamization
Trading System	Transactional, prone to fraud	Ethical, based on the value of honesty and rejection of usury
Agriculture and Irrigation	Individual, not systematic	Collectively, through cooperation and deliberation

[34] Interview with H. Rahman Ali, Bengkulu Selatan, January 3, 2025.
[35] ANETA, "Berita Kebakaran di Onderafdeeling Manna: De Missigit Afgebrand."

Community Leadership	Feudal, clan-based and colonial	Meritocratic, led by clerics and religious leaders
Interfaith relations	Segmentative, minimal social interaction	Inclusive, based on public ethics and collective work
Social Structure	Hierarchical and exclusive	Egalitarian, based on science and social contribution

The Islamization in Manna between 1824 and 1942 was a multilayered process that united the recontextualization of religious teachings with changes in socio-economic structure, from trade ethics and agricultural collective work to the institutionalization of mosque-based village deliberations. By juxtaposing colonial archives (trade, prices, rice fields, commodities) and collective memory through interviews, this article shows the continuity of values rather than discontinuity, so that the gap between the colonial period and the development of modern Islam is bridged empirically and conceptually.

Institutionalization of Islamic Organizations and the Expansion of Post-Colonial *Da'wah*

The Islamization process in Manna relies on the local nodes of mosques/*suraus*, networks of scholars-teachers of the Nihi Temple, and the practice of the tarekat that has been visible in the colonial administration since the 19th century. The colonial legacy (worship infrastructure, religious literacy, associative habits) then became the foundation of institutional transformation after 1945. The primary evidence below, which explicitly mentions Manna, shows continuity from 1824 to 1942 towards a postcolonial Islamic configuration.

Early historical records of local religious structures can be found in colonial documents. One of them is the Binnenlandsch Bestuur ANRI archive of 1896, which contains a list of indigenous chiefs and spiritual leaders in Manna: "*Register der inlandsche hoofden en geestelijken in de Onderafdeeling Manna: Imam, Lembaga Mengaji, Syech Soeleiman, Syech Moekmin...*"[36] These archival excerpts demonstrate that even before independence, semi-formal religious structures

[36] Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, "Register Der Inlandsche Hoofden En Geestelijken in de Onderafdeeling Manna," 1896.

were already in place, administratively recognized by the colonial government, and included local religious leaders who carried out the functions of da'wah and Islamic education. This understanding is essential as a bridge between the informal structure of 19th-century *da'wah* and postcolonial institutionalization.

Following independence, the institutionalization process proceeded rapidly. H. Lukman Wahid, Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Manna branch, explained: "Initially, it was only a small recitation group. After Indonesia's independence, we established an official branch of Muhammadiyah in Manna, around 1951. Our focus at that time was to build madrasas and nurture *ngaji* teachers."[37]

This statement highlights how Muhammadiyah has become a significant agent in the modernization of Islamic education, in line with Marsudi and Zayadi's analysis, which posits that this organization plays a crucial role in strengthening the education system in suburban areas through an institutional approach and a progressive curriculum.[38] At the same time, the tradition of *pesantren* and classical science continues to live on through the activities of NU. *Kiai* Muhammad Idris, the caretaker of one NU's *pesantrens*, said: "Our *kiais* already have a tradition of offering the book and manaqiban. After NU was officially established here, the recitation and strengthening of the Aswaja principles became more directed and organized."[39]This information illustrates the continuity of traditional Islamic scientific practices from the colonial era to the present day. This was reinforced in a Dutch document of 1909, which noted: "*De Islam bleef langzaam vorderingen maken in de afdeelingen Seloema en Manna...*"[40]

The report shows that Islam continues to develop steadily in inland areas such as Manna, albeit without the kingdom's political intervention, and is instead supported by local cultural structures and clerics. In rural areas such as Kedurang and Tanjung Mulia, the Naqsyabandiyyah order emerged as a strengthening of the spiritual aspects of the community, according to *Ustadh* Salim Mahmud, local

[37] Interview with H. Lukman Wahid, Bengkulu Selatan, January 10, 2025.
[38] Muhammad Sholeh Marsudi and Zayadi Zayadi, "Gerakan Progresif Muhammadiyah Dalam Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam dan Sosial Keagamaan di Indonesia," *Mawa Izh Jurnal Dakwah dan Pengembangan Sosial Kemanusiaan* 12, no. 2 (2021): 160-79.
[39] Interview with *Kiai* Muhammad Idris, Bengkulu Selatan, January 11, 2025.
[40] Ministerie van Koloni\u00ebn, *Koloniaal Verslag 1909*.

mursyid: "*Dhikr*, *jahr*, *wirid*, and *suluk* began to be revived since the 1960s. The old books of Shaykh Amin are still used as guidelines for *dhikr* and *suluk*."[41]

This trace of spiritual sustainability can be linked to the taractal supervision document in the ANRI archives in 1937: "*Nota betreffende controle op mystieke bewegingen, met name Naqsyabandiyah, in de residentie Benkoelen...*"[42] This archival excerpt illustrates the colonial government's concern for the institute's development as a social force. However, after colonialism ended, this network became a medium of spiritual strengthening as well as social solidarity in rural Muslim communities.

Formal institutions, such as the Religious Schools (Madrasah Diniyah) and the Al-Manar Grand Mosque, also play a central role in the education and regeneration of the ulama. Based on the internal archives of the mosque in 1973, it is stated: "The Ta'lim wal Irsyad Council has been established as a forum for the development of local teachers and *dā'ī*."[43] The quote suggests that the mosque was not only a place of worship, but also a center for religious education and the worship of local postcolonial Muslim leadership.

Thus, the process of Islamization in Manna shows a clear historical continuity. From the role of traditional scholars in the colonial period, to the strengthening of local structures in Dutch reports, and the postcolonial institutionalization by organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU, all reflect the flow of Islamic da'wah, which is flexible yet firmly rooted. The changes in the social, economic, and religious structures in Bengkulu Selatan from 1824 to the present have not occurred in a vacuum, but are a continuation of the transformation that has taken place since the colonial period and was revived in a modern institutional format after independence.

Islamization and Local Historiography: Finding New Space

This research emphasises the importance of reading local history, such as Manna region, as an integral part of the larger narrative

[41] Interview, *Ustadh* H. Salim Mahmud, Bengkulu Selatan, January 12, 2025.
[42] Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, "Nota Betreffende Controle Op Mystieke Bewegingen, Met Name Naqsyabandiyah, in de Residentie Benkoelen," 1937.
[43] Dewan Ta'lim Wal Irsyad Al-Manar, "Pencatatan Kegiatan dan Pembentukan Dewan Ta'lim Wal Irsyad," 1973.

of Islamization in Indonesia. So far, the construction of Islamic historiography has been centred on the centres of political power, such as the Islamic kingdoms in Java or northern Sumatra, thereby overlooking the peripheral areas that undergo a more cultural and grassroots process of Islamization. As shown in the findings of this study, the traces of Islamization in Manna are very significant in shaping changes in the social, economic, and religious structure of local communities.

The Islamic approach introduced by Shaykh Amin and continued by a network of scholars and postcolonial institutions demonstrates a process of Islamization that is rooted and impacts various aspects of people's lives, ranging from spiritual practices and educational traditions to the management of economic resources. This model of Islamization reflects what Woodward calls local Islamization, which is an integrative process that arises through the accommodation of Islamic values into the local cultural framework, rather than through symbolic coercion from above.[44]

In the context of historiography, local approaches, such as those undertaken in Manna, make an essential contribution to a more contextual reevaluation of Indonesian Islamic history. As Pohl explains, the history of Islam in Indonesia is not only determined by formal power relations but also shaped by a network of regional scholars, Sufistic practices, and a pesantren teaching system that strengthens the reproduction of Islamic values through non-hegemonic channels.[45]

Islam in Manna also serves as an instrument of social and economic engineering. As shown in interviews and local documentation, Islam shapes patterns of relations between citizens, strengthening social solidarity through recitation, collective work, and an ethically based economy. This aligns with Hasan's findings, which emphasise that Islamization in Indonesian villages has a long-term effect in creating a new social structure that is ethical, participatory, and peaceful. Values such as honesty, cooperation, and social

[44] Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*, vol. 3 (Springer Science & Business Media, 2010).

[45] Florian Pohl, "Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on The Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia," *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 389-409.

concern became the new moral foundation for a society that previously lived in an exploitative and hierarchical colonial structure.[46]

In terms of methodology, this study not only reconstructs essential events in the local history of Islamization but also offers an interpretive approach based on primary data, including local documentation, oral testimony, participatory observation, and religious artefacts that emerge from the community. This approach expands the scope of Indonesian Islamic historiography in a more democratic and plural direction. Thus, Islamization is not only read as the spread of doctrine, but also as a process of social negotiation that produces diverse and contextual forms of Islam.

This study emphasises that strengthening local historiography by making areas such as Manna historical subjects is an essential step in building a fairer, more representative, and open Islamic historical narrative that reflects the diversity of Muslim experiences in various regions of Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study examines the Islamization process in *Onderafdeeling* Manna, Bengkulu Selatan, spanning from the late 19th century to post-independence Indonesia, employing a historical-qualitative approach that combines oral histories, archival materials, and local ethnography. Findings highlight that Islamization in this region was not a linear trajectory of religious diffusion but rather a multi-layered transformation involving Sufi *da'wah*, ethical economic practices, and institutional development. The pivotal role of Shaykh Amin through the establishment of Al-Manar Mosque, honest trade systems, and community irrigation initiated a moral restructuring of society. Later, Islamic organizations like Muhammadiyah and NU institutionalized these changes, serving as agents of both religious instruction and civic empowerment, particularly through rural Naqshbandiyyah networks.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on vernacular Islam by presenting Islamization as a bottom-up, adaptive civilizational project rooted in grassroots ethics and local

[46] Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on The Landscape of The Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (2009): 229-50.

culture, thereby challenging mainstream historiographies that center on royal power. It reveals how peripheral regions such as Manna function as active sites of religious and socio-economic innovation. However, the study is limited by the availability of written colonial records and relies heavily on oral narratives, which, while rich, require cautious interpretation. Future research could expand by including comparative studies with other peripheries in Sumatra or Sulawesi. Strengthening access to regional ANRI archives and community-based documentation is also recommended to deepen historical reconstruction and illuminate overlooked Islamic trajectories in Indonesia.

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