Tracing the Scholars of Islam

Series 41

Wali Songo

The Nine Scholar-Preachers Who Spread Islam in Java



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 41

WALI SONGO

The Nine Scholar-Preachers Who Spread Islam in Java

ٱدْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِٱلْحِكْمَةِ وَٱلْمَوْعِظَةِ ٱلْحَسَنَةِ ۖ وَجَٰدِلْهُم بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِۦ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِٱلْمُهْتَدِينَ

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided."

SURAH AN-NAHL 16:125

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who commanded us to invite to His way with wisdom and good instruction. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

This forty-first book of Tracing the Scholars of Islam tells the story of the Wali Songo — nine scholar-preachers linked with the spread of Islam in Java in the 15th and 16th centuries CE. May their story teach us to call to Allah with wisdom and gentleness, and to separate history from legend.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook is an **AI-generated image** — an ***imaginative depiction, not a real likeness*** of the Wali Songo. This label is also printed on the cover. All nine saints are shown ***from behind without faces***, standing in a row in a ***symmetrical composition*** facing a mosque.

The mosque in the centre depicts the ***Great Mosque of Demak*** in its early form — a wooden mosque with a ***three-tiered roof***, without dome or minaret, in the Javanese architecture of the 15th century.

On the left are a **bedug** (large drum) and a **well**; in the background are **coconut palms** and **Mount Muria** in the dawn mist. No one is singled out as the leader, because each saint made his own contribution.

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WALI SONGO

The forty-first book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** tells the story of the ***Wali Songo*** ("Nine Saints") — scholar-preachers linked with the spread of Islam in ***Java*** in the ***15th and 16th centuries CE***.

They opened ***pesantren*** (boarding schools), built ***mosques***, and called people to Islam through ***local culture***. Yet many stories about them come from ***babad*** chronicles and folk tales written much later. This eBook will separate ***history*** from ***legend***.

This eBook explains ***the verses on wise da'wah***, the background of ***Majapahit*** and the rise of ***Demak***, the story of ***each saint***, ***the Great Mosque of Demak***, and ***the boundary*** between culture and Shari'ah.

Note: The translation of Qur'anic verses in this eBook is that of Sahih International. The grading of each Hadith is stated in the Hadith box. Information from books of history and modern research is **biographical narration (not Hadith)** *and is placed in the brown "History Note" boxes. The cover image is an AI-generated image and is marked as such. Most of their dates are estimates.*

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INVITE WITH WISDOM

SURAH AN-NAHL 16:125

ٱدۡعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِٱلۡحِكۡمَةِ وَٱلۡمَوۡعِظَةِ ٱلۡحَسَنَةِۖ وَجَٰدِلۡهُم بِٱلَّتِي هِيَ
أَحۡسَنُۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعۡلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِۦ وَهُوَ أَعۡلَمُ بِٱلۡمُهۡتَدِينَ ١٢٥

Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/16:125

Allah commands: ***"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 16:125.

This was the hallmark of the Wali Songo's da'wah: ***gentle***, ***wise*** and ***understanding of the culture*** of Javanese society, which was then mostly Hindu and Buddhist under the kingdom of ***Majapahit***.

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A GROUP INVITING TO GOOD

SURAH AL 'IMRAN 3:104

وَلۡتَكُن مِّنكُمۡ أُمَّةٞ يَدۡعُونَ إِلَى ٱلۡخَيۡرِ وَيَأۡمُرُونَ بِٱلۡمَعۡرُوفِ وَيَنۡهَوۡنَ عَنِ ٱلۡمُنكَرِۚ وَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡمُفۡلِحُونَ ١٠٤

And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:104

Allah commands that there be ***"a nation inviting to [all that is] good"***, and ***"those will be the successful"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 3:104.

ELEMENTS OF DA'WAH IN 16:125	EXAMPLE IN THE STORY OF THE WALI SONGO
Wisdom (hikmah)	Understanding the customs and language of Javanese society.
Good instruction	Teaching through stories, songs and an example of good character.
Arguing in the best way	Dialogue with leaders and common people without force.

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SPEAK WITH GENTLE WORDS

SURAH TA-HA 20:44

فَقُولَا لَهُۥ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُۥ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ ﴿٤٤﴾

And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah].

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/20:44

When sending Prophet Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ and Prophet Harun عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ to Pharaoh, Allah said: ***"speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 20:44.

If gentleness was commanded even towards ***Pharaoh***, how much more towards people who did not yet know Islam.

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MERCY THAT SOFTENS HEARTS

SURAH AL 'IMRAN 3:159

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ لِنتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ ٱلْقَلْبِ لَٱنفَضُّوا۟ مِنْ
حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَٱعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَٱسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَمْرِ ۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ
عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him].

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:159

Allah says to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: ***"if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 3:159.

Gentleness is not weakness. It is ***a mercy from Allah*** that draws people towards the truth. The Wali Songo are remembered for their ***character and patience***, not for harshness.

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NO COMPULSION IN RELIGION

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:256

لَآ إِكۡرَاهَ فِي ٱلدِّينِۖ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ ٱلرُّشۡدُ مِنَ ٱلۡغَيِّۚ فَمَن يَكۡفُرۡ بِٱلطَّٰغُوتِ وَيُؤۡمِنۢ
بِٱللَّهِ فَقَدِ ٱسۡتَمۡسَكَ بِٱلۡعُرۡوَةِ ٱلۡوُثۡقَىٰ لَا ٱنفِصَامَ لَهَاۗ وَٱللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٥٦

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:256

"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong". Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:256.

Islam spread in Java mainly through ***trade, marriage, education and da'wah***. Guidance belongs to Allah; the caller's duty is ***to convey clearly***.

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A MESSENGER TO ALL MANKIND

SURAH SABA' 34:28

وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَٰكَ إِلَّا كَآفَّةٗ لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرٗا وَنَذِيرٗا وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكۡثَرَ ٱلنَّاسِ لَا يَعۡلَمُونَ ٢٨

And We have not sent you except comprehensively to mankind as a bringer of good tidings and a warner. But most of the people do not know.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:28

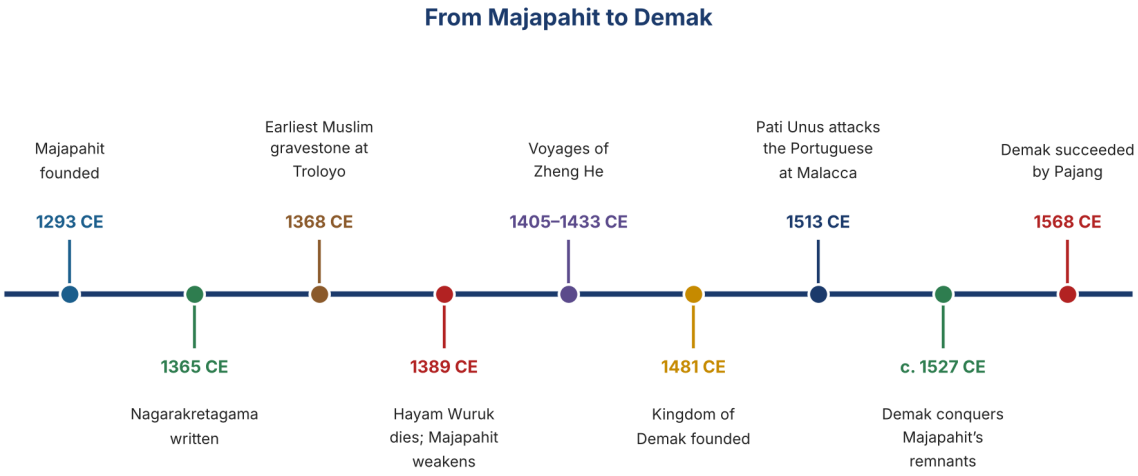
Allah sent the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***"comprehensively to mankind"***. That is why the message of Islam reached ***Java***, far from Arabia. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 34:28.

HOW ISLAM SPREAD IN JAVA	EXPLANATION
Trade	Muslim merchants settled in the ports of Java's north coast.
Marriage	Scholars' families married into local and noble families.
Education	Pesantren produced students who became preachers.
Culture	Local arts were used to convey Islamic values.

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BACKGROUND: MAJAPAHIT

In the 14th century CE, Java was ruled by ***Majapahit***, a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom founded in ***1293 CE*** with its capital at ***Trowulan***, East Java. Its peak was the reign of ***Hayam Wuruk*** (1350–1389 CE) and his prime minister ***Gajah Mada***.



Sources: Wikipedia, "Majapahit" and "Demak Sultanate". Some dates are estimates.

Figure 1: From Majapahit to Demak.

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HISTORY NOTE: THE DECLINE OF MAJAPAHIT

After Hayam Wuruk died in ***1389 CE***, succession disputes — including the ***Regreg War*** (1405–1406 CE) — weakened the kingdom. At the same time, ***Muslim ports*** on Java's north coast grew in influence.

The kingdom of ***Demak*** was established around ***1481 CE***. Its first ruler, ***Raden Patah***, is said to have been a student of Sunan Ampel. Around ***1527 CE***, Demak conquered ***the remnants of Majapahit***.

In ***1513 CE***, ***Pati Unus*** of Demak led a fleet against ***the Portuguese at Malacca***, but failed.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Majapahit". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majapahit
Wikipedia, "Demak Sultanate". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demak_Sultanate

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ISLAM BEFORE THE WALI SONGO

The Wali Songo were ***not*** the first to bring Islam to Java. Gravestone evidence shows that ***Muslims were present earlier***.

HISTORY NOTE: EARLY GRAVESTONES IN JAVA

A gravestone at ***Leran, Gresik***, inscribed ***"bint Maymun ibn Hibat Allah"***, is dated ***475 AH (1082 CE)***. It was re-examined by ***Ludvik Kalus*** and ***Claude Guillot*** in the journal Studia Islamika.

At the ***Troloyo*** cemetery, near the Majapahit capital at Trowulan, there are Muslim gravestones dated ***1368 CE*** and ***1376 CE*** — a sign that Muslims lived ***near the Majapahit court*** in the 14th century CE.

Ma Huan, a Muslim scribe in the fleet of ***Zheng He***, visited Java around ***1413 CE*** and recorded Muslim merchants from Arabia, India and Sumatra.

REFERENCES:

Kalus and Guillot, Studia Islamika. https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika/article/view/570
Wikipedia, "Majapahit". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majapahit

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THE ROLE OF THE WALI SONGO

If Islam was already present, what was the Wali Songo's role? They ***accelerated and strengthened*** its spread — by building ***pesantren***, ***mosques*** and ***Muslim communities***, and by reaching out to ***leaders and common people*** inland.

STAGE	FEATURES
11th to 14th century CE	Merchants and small Muslim communities in the ports.
15th century CE	Scholars such as the Wali Songo build pesantren and mosques.
16th century CE	The sultanates of Demak, Cirebon and Banten arise.

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WHO WERE THE WALI SONGO?

The best-known list is: ***Sunan Gresik*** (Maulana Malik Ibrahim), ***Sunan Ampel*** (Raden Rahmat), ***Sunan Giri*** (Raden Paku), ***Sunan Bonang*** (Makhdum Ibrahim), ***Sunan Drajat*** (Raden Qasim), ***Sunan Kalijaga*** (Raden Said), ***Sunan Kudus*** (Ja'far Sadiq), ***Sunan Muria*** (Raden Umar Said) and ***Sunan Gunung Jati*** (Syarif Hidayatullah).

The word ***"wali"*** comes from Arabic, and ***"songo"*** (sanga) means ***nine*** in Javanese. The title ***"Sunan"*** may derive from ***"susuhunan"***, meaning ***"the honoured one"***.

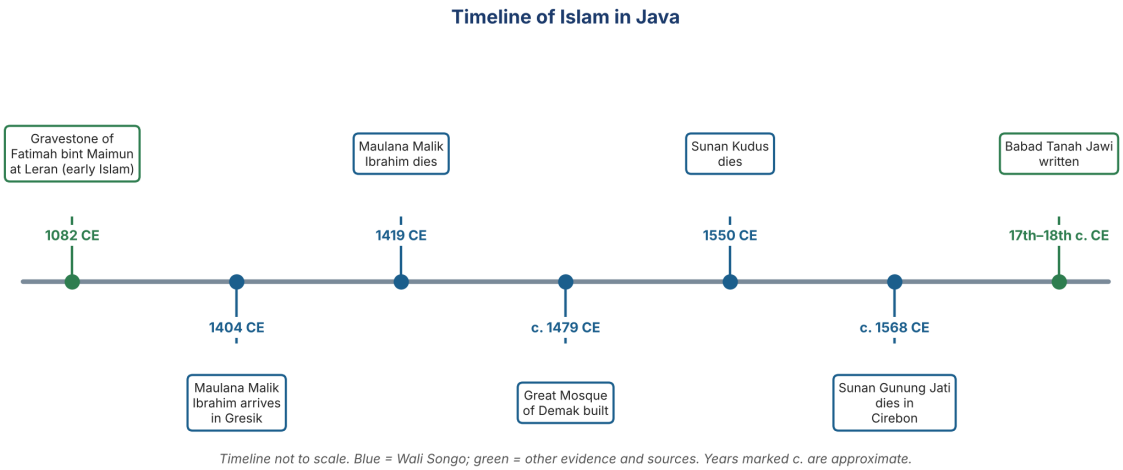
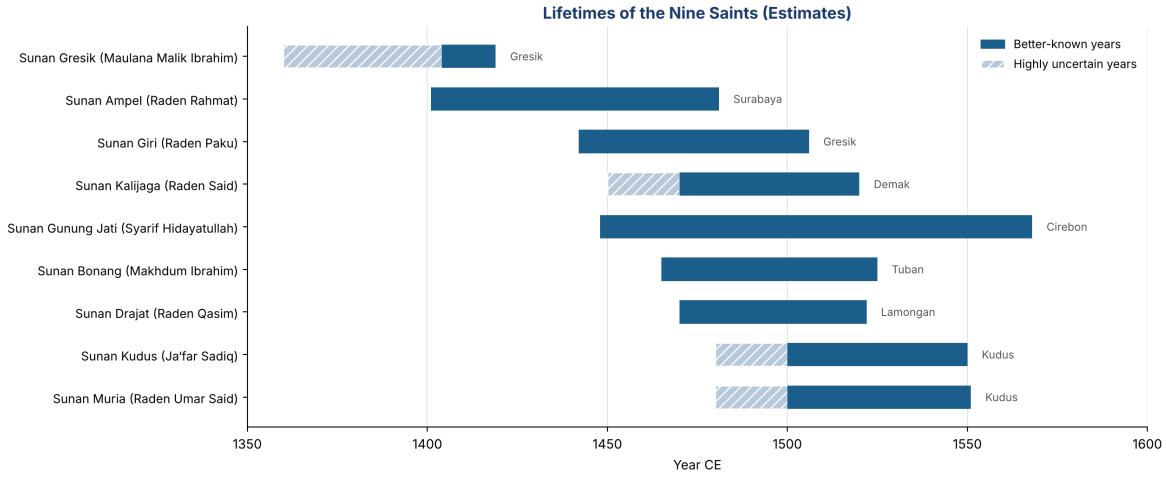


Figure 2: Timeline of Islam in Java.

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THE LIFETIMES OF THE NINE SAINTS

Although called “nine”, these saints ***did not all live at the same time***. Maulana Malik Ibrahim died in ***1419 CE***, before some of the other saints were born.



These dates are estimates and differ between sources. The chart shows that the nine saints were not all alive at the same time.

Figure 3: Estimated lifetimes of the nine saints.

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HISTORY NOTE: A COUNCIL OR A LATER TITLE?

According to some historians, the term ***"Wali Songo"*** as ***a group of nine*** is ***a title given later***. The list of names in the ***Babad Tanah Jawi*** (17th–18th century CE) also ***differs*** somewhat from the list commonly taught today.

Other figures are sometimes included, such as ***Shaykh Jumadil Kubro*** and ***Sunan Ngudung***. The origin of Maulana Malik Ibrahim is also ***disputed*** — whether from Kashan (Persia), Samarqand or of Chinese descent.

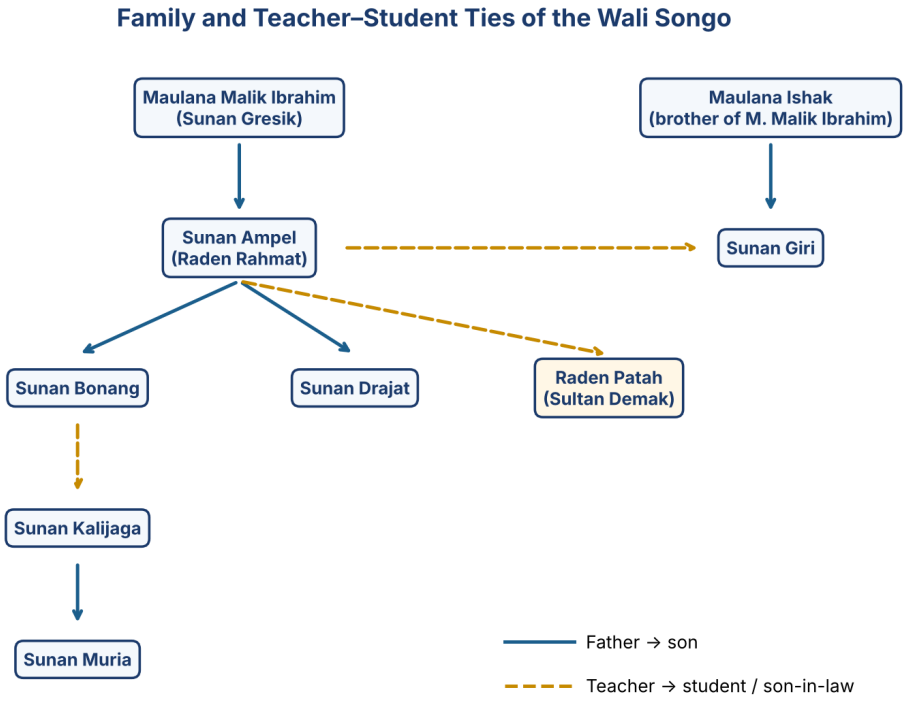
REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Wali Sanga". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wali_Sanga

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FAMILY AND TEACHER–STUDENT TIES

Many of the Wali Songo were ***relatives*** or had ***teacher–student*** ties. This network helped their da'wah ***continue from one generation to the next***.



Based on Wikipedia, "Wali Sanga". Sunan Giri was also Sunan Ampel's son-in-law. Some of these ties come from tradition.

Figure 4: Family and teacher–student ties of the Wali Songo.

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LESSONS FROM THIS NETWORK

RELATIONSHIP	LESSON
Father to son (Ampel → Bonang, Drajat)	Raising one's own children as callers to Allah.
Teacher to student (Bonang → Kalijaga)	Knowledge is inherited through teachers with a chain.
Teacher to ruler (Ampel → Raden Patah)	Scholars guiding those in power.
Cousin and son-in-law (Ampel ↔ Giri)	Family ties strengthen the network of da'wah.

This was ***a network of scholars*** that made da'wah in Java ***continuous***. A scholar who passed away left behind ***students and children*** to carry on his work.

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SUNAN GRESIK: TRADE AND HELPING OTHERS

Maulana Malik Ibrahim arrived in Java around ***1404 CE*** and died in ***Gresik*** in ***1419 CE***. He is remembered for ***trade***, ***healing the sick*** and helping ***improve agriculture*** for the people.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2072

حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ مُوسَى، أَخْبَرَنَا عِيسَى، عَنْ ثَوْرٍ، عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ مَعْدَانَ، عَنِ الْمِقْدَامِ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا أَكَلَ أَحَدٌ طَعَامًا قَطُّ خَيْرًا مِنْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ، وَإِنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ ـ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ ـ كَانَ يَأْكُلُ مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ ».

TRANSLATION:

Al-Miqdam رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"No one has ever eaten food better than what he eats from the work of his own hands. And the Prophet of Allah David عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ used to eat from the work of his own hands."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ibrahim ibn Musa, from 'Isa ibn Yunus, from Thawr ibn Yazid, from Khalid ibn Ma'dan, from al-Miqdam ibn Ma'dikarib رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Sales (Kitab al-Buyu'), chapter on a man's earning and the work of his hands, Hadith No. 2072.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2072

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

A caller who is ***self-reliant*** through the work of his own hands is more respected and ***does not depend*** on others. Honest trade is also ***da'wah through character***.

RELIEVING THE HARDSHIP OF OTHERS

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2699

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى التَّمِيمِيُّ، وَأَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْعَلاَءِ الْهَمْدَانِيُّ - وَاللَّفْظُ لِيَحْيَى - قَالَ يَحْيَى أَخْبَرَنَا وَقَالَ الآخَرَانِ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «مَنْ نَفَّسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ

كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ الدُّنْيَا نَفَّسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ وَمَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَمَا اجْتَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُيُوتِ اللَّهِ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَيَتَدَارَسُونَهُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِلاَّ نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ وَغَشِيَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ وَحَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ وَمَنْ بَطَّأَ بِهِ عَمَلُهُ لَمْ يُسْرِعْ بِهِ نَسَبُهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Whoever relieves a believer of one of the hardships of this world, Allah will relieve him of one of the hardships of the Day of Resurrection. Whoever makes things easy for one in difficulty, Allah will make things easy for him in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever covers the faults of a Muslim, Allah will cover his faults in this world and the Hereafter. Allah helps His servant as long as the servant helps his brother. **Whoever follows a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise.** No people gather in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, except that tranquillity descends upon them, mercy covers them, the angels surround them, and Allah mentions them among those who are with Him. And whoever is held back by his deeds will not be hastened forward by his lineage.”

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Yahya at-Tamimi, Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah and Muhammad ibn al-‘Ala’ al-Hamdani, from Abu Mu‘awiyah, from al-A‘mash, from Abu Salih, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness, chapter on the virtue of gathering to recite the Qur’an and remember Allah, Hadith No. 2699a.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2699a

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SUNAN AMPEL AND THE PESANTREN

Sunan Ampel (Raden Rahmat) was born in ***Champa*** around ***1401 CE*** and died around ***1481 CE***. He opened a centre of learning at ***Ampel, Surabaya***, and taught many figures — including ***Raden Patah***, the first sultan of Demak.

SURAH AT-TAWBAH 9:122

۞ وَمَا كَانَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنفِرُواْ كَآفَّةً ۚ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ
لِّيَتَفَقَّهُواْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُواْ قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوٓاْ إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

And it is not for the believers to go forth [to battle] all at once. For there should separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/9:122

Allah commands that a group remain ***"to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:122.

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THE BEST OF YOU

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5027

حَدَّثَنَا حَجَّاجُ بْنُ مِنْهَالٍ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عَلْقَمَةُ بْنُ مَرْثَدٍ، سَمِعْتُ سَعْدَ بْنَ عُبَيْدَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ السُّلَمِيِّ، عَنْ عُثْمَانَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ». قَالَ وَأَقْرَأَ أَبُو عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ فِي إِمْرَةِ عُثْمَانَ حَتَّى كَانَ الْحَجَّاجُ، قَالَ وَذَاكَ الَّذِي أَقْعَدَنِي مَقْعَدِي هَذَا.

TRANSLATION:

'Uthman رضى الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"The best of you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it."** (Sa'd ibn 'Ubaydah) said: Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman (as-Sulami) taught the Qur'an from the caliphate of 'Uthman until the time of al-Hajjaj, and he said: "That is what has kept me sitting in this seat of mine."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Hajjaj ibn Minhal, from Shu'bah, from 'Alqamah ibn Marthad, from Sa'd ibn 'Ubaydah, from Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman as-Sulami, from 'Uthman ibn 'Affan رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, Hadith No. 5027.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5027

The ***pesantren*** — boarding schools where ***santri*** study the Qur'an and religious knowledge — became the backbone of Islamic education in Java to this day. Most pesantren are now indirectly operated by ***Nahdlatul Ulama***. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Indonesia

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SUNAN GIRI, BONANG AND DRAJAT

Sunan Giri was born in ***Blambangan*** around ***1442 CE***. His father was ***Maulana Ishak***, brother of Maulana Malik Ibrahim. He was the ***cousin and son-in-law*** of Sunan Ampel, and is buried at ***Giri, Gresik***.

Sunan Bonang (1465–1525 CE) and ***Sunan Drajat*** (born 1470 CE) were ***sons of Sunan Ampel***. Both are linked with ***composing songs for the gamelan***. Sunan Bonang is buried in ***Tuban*** and was ***the teacher of Sunan Kalijaga***.

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GOOD CONDUCT TOWARDS NEIGHBOURS AND GUESTS

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6018 (MUTTAFAQ ‘ALAYH)

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الأَحْوَصِ، عَنْ أَبِي حَصِينٍ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ فَلاَ يُؤْذِ جَارَهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him not harm his neighbour; whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his guest; and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Qutaybah ibn Sa‘id, from Abu al-Ahwas, from Abu Hasin, from Abu Salih, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Good Manners, Chapter: Whoever Believes in Allah and the Last Day Should Not Harm His Neighbour, Hadith No. 6018. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 47).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6018

The most effective da‘wah is ***good character***: not harming neighbours, honouring guests, and speaking good. Sunan Drajat is remembered in tradition for ***teaching generosity*** towards the poor.

SAINT	CONTRIBUTION ATTRIBUTED TO HIM
Sunan Giri	A centre of learning at Giri; sent students to other islands.
Sunan Bonang	Gamelan songs; teacher of Sunan Kalijaga.
Sunan Drajat	Gamelan songs; da‘wah through generosity.

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SUNAN KALIJAGA: WAYANG AND GAMELAN

Sunan Kalijaga (Raden Mas Said) is the best-known saint in Javanese culture. He is said to have used ***wayang kulit*** (shadow puppetry) and ***gamelan*** to convey the teachings of Islam. His tomb is at ***Kadilangu, Demak***.

HISTORY NOTE: GAMELAN ON THE UNESCO LIST

Gamelan is Indonesia's traditional percussion orchestra — gongs, drums, xylophone-like instruments, string instruments and bamboo flutes. Evidence of its history appears in the reliefs of ***Borobudur*** from the 8th century CE.

In ***2021***, UNESCO inscribed gamelan on the ***Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity***.

REFERENCES:

UNESCO, "Gamelan". https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/gamelan-01607

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ART AS A BRIDGE, NOT A GOAL

According to tradition, wayang stories were ***adapted*** to carry values of ***tawhid and good character***. This approach drew many people to the mosque.

Yet the scholars remind us: art is only ***a bridge***, not the goal. Whatever ***contradicts the creed*** must be ***abandoned***, even if it is part of the culture.

CULTURAL ELEMENT	POSITION OF THE SHARI'AH
Language, modest dress, architecture	Permissible — as long as it does not contradict the Shari'ah.
Stories that carry advice	May be used for education.
Beliefs of shirk and superstition	Must be abandoned.

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THE GREAT MOSQUE OF DEMAK

The ***Great Mosque of Demak*** in Central Java is believed to have been built by the Wali Songo in the ***15th century CE*** (the date 1479 CE is still an estimate), during the reign of ***Raden Patah***. It is among the ***oldest mosques*** in Indonesia.

HISTORY NOTE: THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE DEMAK MOSQUE

Its roof is ***tiered*** in Javanese style, and supported by ***four main teak pillars (saka guru)***. Sunan Kalijaga is named as the most prominent figure in its construction.

Its main entrance has carvings known as the ***"doors of thunder"***. The mosque has been renovated several times, and a ***verandah*** was added in the ***19th century CE***, but its original form ***largely remains***.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Demak Great Mosque". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demak_Great_Mosque

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THE MOSQUE AS A COMMUNITY CENTRE

Like ***the Prophet's Mosque*** in Medina, the early mosques of Java were not only places of prayer — they were also ***centres of learning***, ***places of consultation*** and ***centres of welfare***.

FUNCTION OF THE MOSQUE	EXAMPLE
Worship	Congregational prayers and Friday prayer.
Education	Qur'an classes and study of books.
Consultation	Scholars and leaders discussing community affairs.
Welfare	Helping the poor and travellers.

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SUNAN KUDUS AND SUNAN MURIA

Sunan Kudus (Ja'far Sadiq) died around ***1550 CE*** and is buried in the town of ***Kudus***, Central Java. He may have played a role in the origin of ***wayang golek*** (rod puppetry).

The name ***"Kudus"*** is said to come from the Arabic word ***"al-Quds"*** — another name for Jerusalem.

SUNAN MURIA ON THE MOUNTAIN SLOPES

Sunan Muria was ***the son of Sunan Kalijaga***. His tomb is on ***Mount Muria***, Kudus. According to tradition, he chose to preach to ***village and mountain communities***, far from the towns.

The lesson: da'wah must reach ***every level of society*** — not only towns and palaces, but also ***farmers, fishermen and villagers***.

TARGET OF DA'WAH	EXAMPLE OF A SAINT
Palaces and leaders	Sunan Ampel, Sunan Gunung Jati.
Merchants and ports	Sunan Gresik.
Popular arts and culture	Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Bonang.
Villages and mountains	Sunan Muria.

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SUNAN GUNUNG JATI: SCHOLAR AND RULER

Sunan Gunung Jati (Syarif Hidayatullah) was ***the founder and first ruler of the Cirebon Sultanate***, West Java. His son, ***Maulana Hasanuddin***, founded ***the Banten Sultanate***. His tomb is in ***Cirebon***.

He was the only one of the Wali Songo who also ***ruled a kingdom***. This shows that ***knowledge and leadership*** can be combined in one Muslim.

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EACH OF YOU IS A SHEPHERD

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 7138

حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، حَدَّثَنِي مَالِكٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ دِينَارٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « أَلاَ كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، فَالإِمَامُ الَّذِي عَلَى النَّاسِ رَاعٍ وَهْوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَهْوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْهُمْ، وَعَبْدُ الرَّجُلِ رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَهْوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُ، أَلاَ فَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ ».

TRANSLATION:

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **“Indeed, each of you is a shepherd, and each of you will be asked about his flock. The ruler over the people is a shepherd and will be asked about his flock. A man is a shepherd over the people of his house and will be asked about them. A woman is a shepherd over her husband’s house and his children and will be asked about them. A servant is a shepherd over his master’s wealth and will be asked about it. Indeed, each of you is a shepherd and each of you will be asked about his flock.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Isma‘il ibn Abi Uways, from Malik ibn Anas, from ‘Abdullah ibn Dinar, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Judgements (Kitab al-Ahkam), Hadith No. 7138. Also narrated as No. 893, and by Muslim (No. 1829).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:7138

A ruler will be ***asked about his people***. A scholar who becomes a leader carries ***a double trust***: guarding the religion and the welfare of the people.

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MAKE THINGS EASY, NOT DIFFICULT

The Wali Songo's approach agrees with the advice of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to those who call to Islam:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 69

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو التَّيَّاحِ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «يَسِّرُوا وَلاَ تُعَسِّرُوا، وَبَشِّرُوا وَلاَ تُنَفِّرُوا».

TRANSLATION:

Anas رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Make things easy and do not make them difficult; give glad tidings and do not drive people away."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn Bashshar, from Yahya ibn Sa'id, from Shu'bah, from Abu at-Tayyah, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, Chapter on the Prophet ﷺ Choosing Suitable Times for Advice, Hadith No. 69.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:69

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Da'wah that ***makes things easy*** and ***brings good news*** wins hearts, while da'wah that is ***harsh*** and ***frightening*** can drive people ***away***. But making things easy ***does not mean*** changing the rulings of Allah.

MAKING THINGS EASY	DOES NOT MEAN
Teaching step by step	Hiding obligatory rulings.
Choosing gentle words	Agreeing with shirk.
Understanding new Muslims	Making the forbidden permissible.

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CONVEY EVEN A SINGLE VERSE

Every Muslim has a responsibility to convey, according to their ability. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3461

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَاصِمٍ الضَّحَّاكُ بْنُ مَخْلَدٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا الأَوْزَاعِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا حَسَّانُ بْنُ عَطِيَّةَ، عَنْ أَبِي كَبْشَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً، وَحَدِّثُوا عَنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلاَ حَرَجَ، وَمَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ».

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضى الله عنهما reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Convey from me, even if it is a single verse. And narrate from the Children of Israel, there is no harm (in it). And whoever lies about me deliberately, let him take his seat in the Fire."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu 'Asim ad-Dahhak ibn Makhlad, from al-Awza'i, from Hassan ibn 'Atiyyah, from Abu Kabshah as-Saluli, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, Hadith No. 3461.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3461

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

There is no need to wait to become a "saint" to call to Allah — ***convey even a single verse***, provided it is ***true and based on knowledge***.

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SURAH FUSSILAT 41:33

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّن دَعَآ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِى مِنَ ٱلْمُسْلِمِينَ

﴿٣٣﴾

And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, "Indeed, I am of the Muslims."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/41:33

"And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah" and himself does ***righteous deeds***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 41:33.

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THE REWARD OF CALLING TO GUIDANCE

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2674

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ، قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - يَعْنُونَ ابْنَ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لاَ يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا وَمَنْ دَعَا إِلَى ضَلاَلَةٍ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الإِثْمِ مِثْلُ آثَامِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لاَ يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آثَامِهِمْ شَيْئًا».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"Whoever calls to guidance will have a reward like the rewards of those who follow him, without that diminishing their rewards in the least.** And whoever calls to misguidance will bear a sin like the sins of those who follow him, without that diminishing their sins in the least."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Ayyub, Qutaybah ibn Sa'id and 'Ali ibn Hujr, from Isma'il ibn Ja'far, from al-'Ala' ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from his father 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Ya'qub, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Knowledge, Hadith No. 2674.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2674

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Every Javanese who embraced Islam through the da'wah of the saints — and every descendant of theirs who prays — becomes ***a continuing reward*** for that caller, by Allah's permission.

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THE MESSENGER'S TASK: RECITING, PURIFYING AND TEACHING

SURAH AL-JUMU'AH 62:2

هُوَ ٱلَّذِى بَعَثَ فِى ٱلۡأُمِّيِّـۧنَ رَسُولًا مِّنۡهُمۡ يَتۡلُواْ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ءَايَـٰتِهِۦ وَيُزَكِّيهِمۡ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ ٱلۡكِتَـٰبَ وَٱلۡحِكۡمَةَ وَإِن كَانُواْ مِن قَبۡلُ لَفِى ضَلَـٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ۝٢

It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom - although they were before in clear error.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/62:2

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sent ***"reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 62:2.

These three tasks are ***an example*** for every caller: ***reciting the Qur'an***, ***purifying belief*** and ***teaching knowledge***.

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CULTURE AND SHARI'AH: THE BOUNDARY

The Wali Songo's cultural approach is sometimes ***misunderstood***. Some use it as an excuse to keep ***superstitious practices***. We must return to ***intention*** and ***the scale of the Shari'ah***.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 1 — THE FIRST HADITH OF AL-ARBA'IN AN-NAWAWIYYAH

حَدَّثَنَا الْحُمَيْدِيُّ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ الزُّبَيْرِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ الْأَنْصَارِيُّ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التَّيْمِيُّ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ عَلْقَمَةَ بْنَ وَقَّاصٍ اللَّيْثِيَّ، يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، يَقُولُ «إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا، فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ».

TRANSLATION:

'Alqamah ibn Waqqas al-Laythi said: I heard 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه say on the pulpit: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: **"Actions are only by intentions, and every person will have only what he intended. So whoever emigrated for worldly gain he would attain, or for a woman he would marry, his emigration is for that to which he emigrated."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from al-Humaydi 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Ansari, from Muhammad ibn Ibrahim at-Taymi, from 'Alqamah ibn Waqqas al-Laythi, from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Beginning of Revelation, Hadith No. 1 (the first Hadith of Sahih al-Bukhari); also narrated by Muslim (No. 1907).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:1

The saints' intention was ***to bring people closer to Allah***. If a cultural practice today ***takes people away*** from tawhid, it ***contradicts*** the original purpose of their da'wah.

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THE RELIGION IS SINCERE ADVICE

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 55 — THE 7TH HADITH OF AL-ARBA'IN AN-NAWAWIYYAH

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبَّادٍ الْمَكِّيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ قُلْتُ لِسُهَيْلٍ إِنَّ عَمْرًا حَدَّثَنَا عَنِ الْقَعْقَاعِ، عَنْ أَبِيكَ، قَالَ وَرَجَوْتُ أَنْ يُسْقِطَ، عَنِّي رَجُلاً قَالَ فَقَالَ سَمِعْتُهُ مِنَ الَّذِي سَمِعَهُ مِنْهُ أَبِي كَانَ صَدِيقًا لَهُ بِالشَّامِ ثُمَّ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ عَنْ سُهَيْلٍ عَنْ عَطَاءِ بْنِ يَزِيدَ عَنْ تَمِيمٍ الدَّارِيِّ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «الدِّينُ النَّصِيحَةُ» قُلْنَا لِمَنْ قَالَ «لِلَّهِ وَلِكِتَابِهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلأَئِمَّةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَعَامَّتِهِمْ».

TRANSLATION:

Tamim ad-Dari رضى الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"The religion is sincere counsel (nasihah)."**

We said: "To whom?" He said: **"To Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, to the leaders of the Muslims and to their common people."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Muhammad ibn 'Abbad al-Makki, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Suhayl ibn Abi Salih, from 'Ata' ibn Yazid al-Laythi, from Tamim ad-Dari رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, Hadith No. 55; the 7th Hadith of al-Arba'in an-Nawawiyyah.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

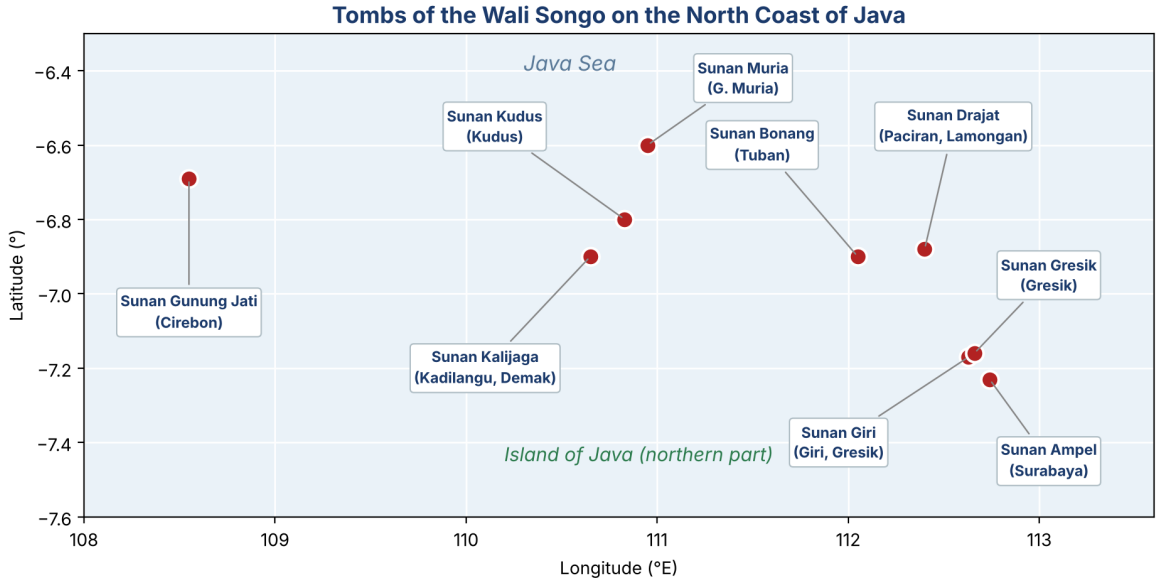
Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:55a

Correcting practices that contradict the Shari'ah — with ***knowledge and wisdom*** — is part of ***sincere advice for Allah, His Book and His Messenger***, and not a sign of disrespect for the saints.

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THE LEGACY OF THE WALI SONGO TODAY

The tombs of the Wali Songo lie ***along the north coast of Java***, from Cirebon in the west to Surabaya in the east.



Approximate positions by latitude and longitude. Sunan Gresik, Sunan Giri and Sunan Ampel lie very close together.

Figure 5: Tombs of the Wali Songo on the north coast of Java.

Visiting graves is prescribed ***to remember death and to pray for the deceased***. But ***asking the dead to fulfil one's needs*** contradicts tawhid — supplication is to Allah alone.

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THE LARGEST MUSLIM COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

As the fruit of centuries of da'wah, Indonesia today has ***the largest Muslim population in the world***.

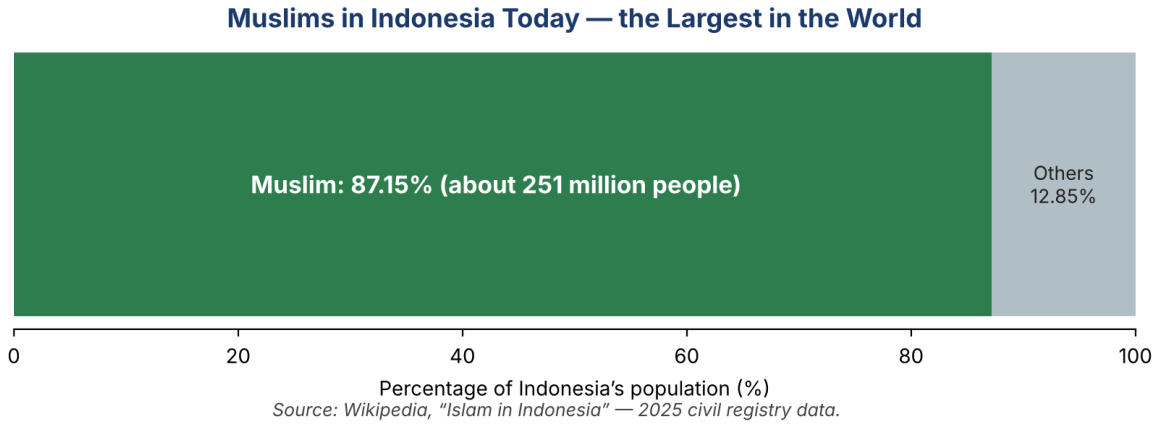


Figure 6: Muslims in Indonesia today.

According to 2025 civil registry data, there are about ***251 million*** Muslims in Indonesia, or ***87.15%*** of the population. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Indonesia

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BETWEEN ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

SURAH AL-ISRA' 17:36

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْبَصَرَ وَٱلْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْـُٔولًا ﴿٣٦﴾

And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/17:36

"And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge". Tafsir Ibn Kathir 17:36.

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, INTRODUCTION NO. 5 — FROM IMAM MUSLIM'S OWN INTRODUCTION

وَحَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُعَاذٍ الْعَنْبَرِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي ح، وَحَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ مَهْدِيٍّ، قَالاَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ خُبَيْبِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنْ حَفْصِ بْنِ عَاصِمٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «كَفَى بِالْمَرْءِ كَذِبًا أَنْ يُحَدِّثَ بِكُلِّ مَا سَمِعَ».

TRANSLATION:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"It is enough of a lie for a person to narrate everything he hears."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from 'Ubaydullah ibn Mu'adh al-'Anbari, from his father Mu'adh ibn Mu'adh; and from Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mahdi, both from Shu'bah, from Khubayb ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from Hafs ibn 'Asim. In the following narration, Imam Muslim narrates it with a connected chain: from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, from 'Ali ibn Hafs, from Shu'bah, with the same chain, from Hafs ibn 'Asim, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in the Introduction to Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 5; the connected narration through Abu Hurairah is in the Introduction, narration 7 (sunnah.com/muslim/introduction/7).

GRADE: SAHIH — Imam Muslim placed it in the Introduction to Sahih Muslim and narrated it with a connected chain through Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:5

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STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR CLAIM	STATUS
Maulana Malik Ibrahim died in Gresik in 1419 CE.	Generally accepted; his tomb in Gresik is dated 822 AH (1419 CE).
The Wali Songo were a fixed council of nine.	Disputed. The list differs between sources; they did not live at the same time.
The Wali Songo were the first to bring Islam to Java.	Not accurate. The Leran (1082 CE) and Troloyo (1368 CE) gravestones show Islam was earlier.
The Demak mosque was built by the saints in one night.	Legend. The mosque was built in the 15th century CE; the "one night" story cannot be confirmed.
The "soko tatal" pillar of the Demak mosque was made by Sunan Kalijaga from wood chips.	A famous tradition; cannot be confirmed from contemporary sources.
Stories of the saints' miracles (karamah).	Many come from babad chronicles and folk tales; cannot be confirmed.
The saints were of Chinese descent.	A theory from a 1968 book; still disputed.

REFLECTION — HONOURING WITHOUT EXAGGERATING

The Wali Songo's contribution to ***bringing Islam to Java*** was immense. We honour them by ***following their wise way of da'wah***, not by ***venerating them excessively*** or believing every legend.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Invite to the way of Allah with wisdom and good instruction (16:125; 3:104).

Second: Speak with gentle words (20:44; 3:159).

Third: There is no compulsion in religion; our duty is to convey (2:256; 34:28).

Fourth: Islam in Java predates the Wali Songo; they accelerated and strengthened it.

Fifth: Trade honestly and help others (Sahih al-Bukhari 2072; Sahih Muslim 2699).

Sixth: Build centres of learning and teach the Qur'an (9:122; Sahih al-Bukhari 5027).

Seventh: Good conduct towards neighbours is da'wah (Sahih al-Bukhari 6018).

Eighth: Culture can be a bridge for da'wah, as long as it does not contradict the Shari'ah.

Ninth: A leader will be asked about his people (Sahih al-Bukhari 7138).

Tenth: Make things easy and convey even a single verse (Sahih al-Bukhari 69, 3461; 41:33; Sahih Muslim 2674).

Eleventh: Guard your intention and advise with wisdom (Sahih al-Bukhari 1; Sahih Muslim 55).

Twelfth: Separate established history from legend (17:36).

CONCLUSION

The tombs of the Wali Songo along the north coast of Java are still visited today. The next book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam**, in sha Allah, will tell the story of ***Nuruddin ar-Raniri***, the great scholar of Aceh. Wallahu a'lam.

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GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Wali Songo	"Nine Saints" — scholar-preachers of Java.
Sunan	A title of honour, possibly from "susuhunan".
Pesantren	A boarding school where santri study religion.
Babad	A Javanese historical chronicle mixed with legend.
Majapahit	A Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in Java (1293–c. 1527 CE).
Gamelan	The traditional Javanese percussion orchestra.
Wayang kulit	Shadow theatre using leather puppets.
Saka guru	The four main pillars of a traditional Javanese mosque.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the three ways of da'wah in verse 16:125?

2. What evidence shows that Islam was in Java before the Wali Songo?

3. Why can the saints not be regarded as a council living at the same time?

4. What is the boundary between culture and Shari'ah in da'wah?

5. How can we continue the da'wah of the Wali Songo today?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Find all nine tombs of the Wali Songo on a map of Java.

Activity 2: Draw a family chart of Sunan Ampel and his sons.

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

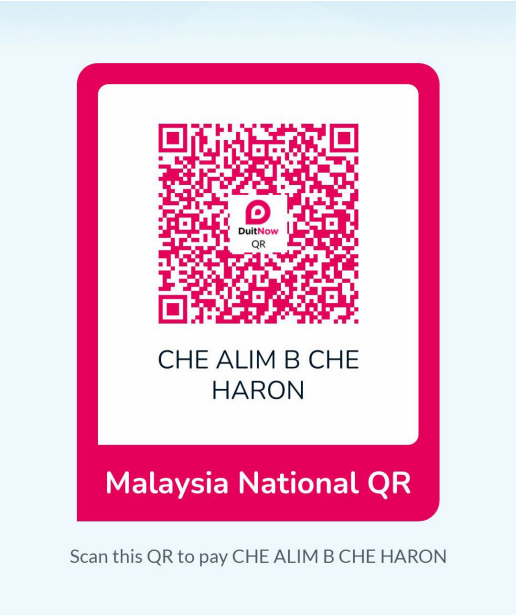
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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