



THE DEVELOPMENT OF SYLLABUS AND
CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVES IN THE
COMPARATIVE RELIGION DISCIPLINE AT
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI (UIN) SUNAN
KALIJAGA, YOGYAKARTA:
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

BY

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ABSTRACT

Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN, State Islamic University) Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, constantly provides important contributions to developing and promoting the Comparative Religion discipline and the University accordingly has become a leading centre for comparative religious studies in Indonesia. The present state of such studies in the state institutions of Islamic higher education in the country has been quite indebted to the role played by the University. This thesis attempts to explore the growth and development of Comparative Religion as an academic discipline being taught for years at the University. In analysing how the University cultivates and fosters Comparative Religion, this study investigates the manifestations of the discipline into three academic aspects. Firstly, the University's educational system, which includes the methods used in teaching and learning Comparative Religion, the curricular and syllabic design of the discipline, and other academic policies conducive for maintaining Comparative Religion. Secondly, the role played by the community of the UIN scholars in advancing comparative religious studies. Thirdly, the thoughts and views of the UIN scholars regarding selected topics in Comparative Religion, such as the origins of religion, the religious truth claims, methodology and approaches applied in comparative religious studies, and the objectives and benefits of learning Comparative Religion. This study applies qualitative methods of research, which rely on descriptive and interpretative analyses, historical survey, as well as philosophical examination. It also involves library research and unstructured interviews with some of the UIN scholars concerned with Comparative Religion. The objectives this thesis tries to achieve are: to acquire a portrait of the historical context of the emergence and development of Comparative Religion in Indonesia; to find appropriate ways of improving the methods of teaching and learning the Comparative Religion discipline that meet the needs of Muslim students of religious studies; and to determine the trends of intellectual orientation among the UIN scholars associated with Comparative Religion. The research reveals some findings related to several issues: the connection between the incorporation and teaching of Comparative Religion at the University and the wider context of Indonesian socio-historical dynamics; the epistemological interplay between Muslim and Western traditions of religious studies which inspired the emergence of the notions of Islamic integration of knowledge; and the prospect of teaching and learning Comparative Religion as a medium to promote and build interreligious peace and harmony in the society.

مُلخَصُ البَحْث

قد أسهمت الجامعة الحكومية الإسلامية سونان كاليجاكا بيوكياكارتا إسهامات مهمة وبصفة مستمرة مما ساعد على تطوير وترقية وتمكين هذا العلم، وبالتالي فقد أصبحت تلك الجامعة مركزا رائدا ومعروفا في مجال دراسة مقارنة الأديان في إندونيسيا. ولذلك إن الوضع الراهن لتدريس علم مقارنة الأديان في النظام الأكاديمي للجامعات الحكومية الإسلامية بهذه الدولة يدين إلى حدما إلى الدور الذي قامت به هذه الجامعة. إستهدفت هذه الرسالة البحث لمراحل نمو وتطور علم مقارنة الأديان بوصفها مادة أكاديمية تدرس منذ سنة ١٩٦٠ بالجامعة الحكومية الإسلامية سونان كاليجاكا بيوكياكارتا. وقد عنيت الجامعة بهذا العلم، تناولت الدراسة التعرف على أبعاد هذا العلم من ثلاثة جوانب أكاديمية. أولا، نظام الجامعة التربوي والتعليمي الذي يتضمن تصميم المناهج والخطط الدراسية، الأساليب المستخدمة في تعلم وتدريس هذا العلم ضمن المقررات الدراسية، والسياسات الأكاديمية الأخرى التي ساعدت على ترسيخ هذا العلم. ثانيا، دور علماء الجامعة من أجل المحافظة على علم دراسة مقارنة الأديان وازدهاره بالجامعة. ثالثا، آراء ووجهات نظر أساتذة الجامعة حول الموضوعات المختارة التي تشكل هذا العلم مثل؛ قضية أصول الدين، ومصداقية الدين، وطرق تدريس مقارنة الأديان ومداخل تطبيق دراسات علم مقارنة الأديان. طبقت الدراسة المنهج النوعي مع اعتماده على التحليل التفسيري والوصفي بالإضافة إلى استفادة الدراسات الميدانية والبحث الفلسفي. وتُدعم هذه الدراسة أيضا بالبحوث المكتبية والمقابلات مع بعض علماء الجامعة المهتمين بمقارنة الأديان. حاولت الأطروحة تحقيق الأهداف الآتية: الحصول على صورة السياق التاريخي حول نشأة وتطور علم مقارنة الأديان في إندونيسيا، لإيجاد الطرق المناسبة في تحسين أساليب التعليم والتدريس في علم مقارنة الأديان من أجل تحقيق احتياجات الطلاب المسلمين في الدراسات الدينية، ثم لتحديد ميول ووجهات النظر لعلماء الجامعة المعتنين بهذا العلم. توصلت الدراسة إلى بعض النتائج التي تتعلق بعدة قضايا: العلاقة بين طبيعة إدخال علم مقارنة الأديان وتعليمه بالجامعة الحكومية الإسلامية سونان كاليجاكا والحراك التاريخي الاجتماعي الأوسع بإندونيسيا، التعامل المعرفي بين التقاليد الإسلامية والتقاليد الغربية الحديثة في الدراسات الدينية المقارنة حيث يؤدي إلى انبثاق أفكار التكامل المعرفي في علوم الدين الإسلامية، وإمكانية تعلم وتدريس مقارنة الأديان بالجامعة من أجل كونها وسيلة لتعزيز وبناء السلام والوئام بين الأديان في المجتمع.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Aslam Sa'ad

Signature

Date

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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PERSPECTIVES IN THE COMPARATIVE RELIGION
DISCIPLINE AT UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI (UIN) SUNAN
KALIJAGA, YOGYAKARTA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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This work is dedicated to my beloved parents, abah Sa'ad Baidaie and umi (the late) Helmah Mawardi, my beloved wife, Nihayatul Wafiroh, and my beloved children, Ahmad Kavin Adzka and Muhammad Aqil Mirza.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADIA	:	Akademi Dinas Ilmu Agama (State Academy of Religious Studies)
B.C.	:	Before Christian era
BPUPKI	:	Badan Usaha Penyelidik Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (The Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence)
C.E.	:	Christian era
FKUB	:	Forum Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama (Forum for the Harmony of Interreligious Community)
IAHR	:	International Association of the History of Religions
IAIN	:	Institut Agama Islam Negeri (State Institute of Islamic Studies)
ICRS	:	Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies
IKIP	:	Institut Keguruan Ilmu Pendidikan (Institute of Teacher Training and Education Science)
INTERFIDEI	:	Institute for Inter-faith Dialogue in Indonesia
ITB	:	Institut Teknologi Bandung (Institute of Technology Bandung)
NEI	:	Netherlands East Indies
PGA	:	Pendidikan Guru Agama (Religious Teachers Education)
PHIN	:	Pendidikan Hakim Islam Negeri (State Education Institution for Islamic Judiciary Offices)
PPKI	:	Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (The Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence)
PTAIN	:	Perguruan Tinggi Islam Negeri (State Higher Islamic Colleges)
PTIJ	:	Perguruan Tinggi Islam Jakarta (Institute of Islamic Studies Jakarta)
SIT	:	Sekolah Islam Tinggi (Higher Islamic College)
UGM	:	Universitas Gajah Mada (Gajah Mada University)
UII	:	Universitas Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic University)
UIN	:	Universitas Islam Negeri (State Islamic University)
UKDW	:	Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana (Duta Wacana Christian University)
UNJ	:	Universitas Negeri Jakarta (State University of Jakarta)
VOC	:	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (The United East India Company)

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TRANSLITERATION

'	ء
B	ب
T	ت
Th	ث
J	ج
ḥ	ح
Kh	خ
D	د
Dh	ذ
R	ر

z	ز
s	س
sh	ش
ṣ	ص
ḍ	ض
ṭ	ط
ẓ	ظ
'	ع
gh	غ
f	ف

q	ق
k	ك
l	ل
m	م
n	ن
h	ه
w	و
y	ي

VOWEL

Short Vowels

<i>Fatḥah</i>	َ
<i>Kasrah</i>	ِ
<i>Ḍammah</i>	ُ

Long Vowels

Long <i>Fatḥah</i>	ا	ā
Long <i>Kasrah</i>	ي	ī
Long <i>Ḍammah</i>	و	ū

DIPHTONG

ay	اي
aw	او

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since time immemorial, Indonesia has been known as a great, amiable home to major world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. In addition to these officially state-recognized religions, a plentiful variety of tribal and indigenous beliefs, ethnic groups, cultures, arts, and local languages have also been existent and alive there for centuries. In such a plural society as Indonesia, religious diversity is seen as a serious matter that requires appropriate handling and management; otherwise, if poorly treated, it would be very likely to engender interreligious violence and intolerance.¹

The portrait of the relationship between different religious believers in most parts of the country before independence was, in general, coloured by a significant degree of conviviality and yet traces of interreligious tensions and clashes were sporadically found. These cases occurred more often than not in the predominantly Muslim regions, usually involving two parties: Muslim and Christian communities.² Meanwhile, interreligious relations in Indonesian post-independence became more complicated and, unfortunately, the cases of interreligious conflict and clashes during this period increased in frequency.

¹ See, Herman L. Beck, "A Pillar of Social Harmony: the Study of Comparative Religion in Contemporary Indonesia," in *Modern Societies & the Science of Religions: Studies in Honor of Lammert Leertouwer*, edited by Gerard Wiegers and Jan Platvoet, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2002), 332.

² Some historical accounts on this issue can be found for instance in, M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200*, (California: Stanford University Press, 3rd edition, 2001); Ricklefs, *Polarising Javanese Society, Islamic and Other Visions*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007); and Sutarman S. Partonadi, *Sadrach's Community and Its Contextual Roots, A Nineteenth Javanese Expression of Christianity*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988).

Inapt measures to deal with religious diversity are likely to result in interreligious tensions and violence that in turn can lead to real threats to the national integrity and security interests. In view of this, many Indonesian Muslim practitioners of education were very aware that academic training in Comparative Religion³ can play a pivotal role in edifying their fellow Muslims' mind-sets about the importance of having a better understanding and mutual respect for religious others. In relation to this, in 1960 Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN, State Islamic University) Sunan Kalijaga established the Department of Comparative Religion, a progressive step of great relevance to the national interests of building and promoting interreligious tolerance, peace, and harmony within the pluralistic society of Indonesia.⁴ Ever since then, the University has become a fertile academic ground for the Comparative Religion discipline to grow and thrive quite well. Moreover, the University's efforts to set up the Department of Comparative Religion have been emulated by many other Islamic institutions of higher learning linked to Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (PTAIN, the state institutes of Islamic studies).⁵

³ There are still voices expressing dissent concerning whether Comparative Religion is by definition different from, and only a branch of *Allgemeine Religionswissenschaft*, which literally means General Science of Religion, or is simply another name for the same field of science. For the latter, *Allgemeine Religionswissenschaft* can be dubbed with various names as the Study of Religion, the Comparative Study of Religion, the Scientific Study of Religion, the Phenomenology of Religion, the History of Religion, and Religious Studies. They can be used interchangeably, but still refer to the same definition.

⁴ Fuad Jabali and Jamhari, eds., *The Modernization of Islam in Indonesia, an Impact Study on the Cooperation between the IAIN and McGill University*, (Jakarta and Montreal: Indonesia-Canada Islamic Higher Education Project, 2003).

⁵ UIN Sunan Kalijaga, previously named IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, is a part of Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (PTAIN, the State Institutes of Islamic Studies). PTAIN is a large system of state institutes of Islamic higher learning that represents 8 UINs (Universitas Islam Negeri, State Islamic University), 14 IAINs (Institut Agama Islam Negeri, State Institute of Islamic Studies), and 32 centres of Islamic higher learning with college status called STAIN (Sekolah Tinggi Islam Negeri, State College of Islamic Studies). In addition, there also are a number of institutes and colleges of Islamic studies run by private educational institutions or foundations. Both state and private academic institutions are supervised by Direktorat Pendidikan Tinggi Islam (DITRJEN DIKTIS, the Directorate of Institutes of Islamic Studies) which is attached to the Directorate General of Islamic Education under the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. The eight current UINs are, in fact, a later result of the transformation of IAINs from institutional status into university status. This transformation was initiated in the 2000s.

The goal of incorporating Comparative Religion into the University's curricular is not simply to improve the scholarship and theoretical works in the discipline, but rather to improve the institution's role and contribution in building and strengthening the culture of interreligious dialogue, cooperation, and tolerance.⁶ As a result, the perseverance of the UIN scholars in fostering Comparative Religion has brought the University to be a reputable centre for comparative religious studies in Indonesia.⁷ As such, the teaching of Comparative Religion in tertiary institutions is believed to equip students with tools of critical analysis, to shape their better understanding of other religions, and to "widen the intellectual and spiritual horizons of students by bringing to them...deeper dimensions of life and culture in the dreams and faith by which men live."⁸

Historically speaking, the Comparative Religion discipline is not something new to Indonesian Muslims. In the 1930s, or three decades before UIN Sunan Kalijaga founded the Department of Comparative Religion, some Islamic secondary schools and colleges in West Sumatra started to introduce the discipline to their students. In addition, in fact, Nūr al-dīn al-rānīrī (d. 1658), a prominent Muslim scholar who lived during the Acehese sultanate of the seventieth century, wrote a book entitled *Tibyān fī ma'rifat al-adyān*, which extensively expounds upon the history of world religions, although afterwards not any work on similar topics was written in Indonesia until the early twentieth century. Al-Rānīrī's work very likely received influence from classical Muslim scholarship in Comparative Religion as

⁶ Azyumardi Azra, "The Making of Islamic Studies in Indonesia", in *Islamic Studies in World Institutions of Higher Learning*, edited by Abd. Samat Musa, Hazleena Baharun, and Abd Karim Abdullah, (Kuala Lumpur, Islamic University College of Malaysia, 2004), 31. See also Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru*, (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1999), 169-70.

⁷ Jabali and Jamhari, eds., *The Modernization of Islam in Indonesia*, 140.

⁸ Joseph. M. Kitagawa, "The History of Religions in America," in *The History of Religions Essays in Methodology*, edited by Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), 30.

presented by classical Muslim thinkers such as Abū rayḥān al-bīrūnī (972-1052),⁹ Abū Muḥammad ‘alī ibn ḥazm (994-1064),¹⁰ and ‘Abd al-karīm al-shahrastānī (1086-1153),¹¹ to mention just few, who left a great legacy of works on the discipline.

The flourishing field of Comparative Religion in the Muslim world of the Middle Ages was triggered, in part, by the vibrant interaction among Muslim-Jewish-Christian scholars and their insightful deliberations on interfaith issues.¹² However, the interest of Muslims in studying the multiplicity of religions was obviously rising out of the two main sources of Islamic teachings: the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.¹³ The plethora of works on the history of religions generated by medieval Islam is considered to be, as Franz Rosenthal points out, “one of the great contributions of Muslim civilization to mankind’s intellectual progress.”¹⁴

Many scholars opine that Comparative Religion is a Muslim invention while other scholars hold a view that it is a Western creation by referring to Friedrich Max Mueller (1823-1900) as the founding father of the modern study of religions based on his work, *Introduction into the Science of Religion*, published in 1872.¹⁵ The UIN

⁹ Abū rayḥān al-bīrūnī, *Al-Āthār al-baqiyyah ‘ān al-qurūn al-khālīyyah*, edited by P. Azkaci, (Tehran: Miras al-Maktub, 2001). This book was translated by Edward C. Sachau into *The Chronology of Ancient Nations: An English Version of the Arabic Text of the Athar al-baqiya of al-Biruni or Vestiges of the Past*, (London: W.H. Allen & Co. 1879). Another work of al-Bīrūnī is *Tahqīq mā li al-hind min maqūlah maqbūlah fi al-‘aql al-marḍūlah*, edited by Edward C. Sachau (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1925) was translated also by Edward C. Sachau into *Alberuni’s India: An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws, and Astrology of India about AD 1030*, (Delhi: Low Price Pub.), 2 vols.

¹⁰ Research on Ibn Ḥazm’s views on other religions has been done by Ghulam Haider Aasi. See Ghulam Haider Aasi, *Muslim Understanding of Other Religions-A Study of Ibn Ḥazm’s Kitāb al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Aḥwā’ wa al-Nihal*, (Pakistan: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Islamic Research Institute, 1999).

¹¹ ‘Abd al-karīm al-shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-nihal*, edited by Amīr ‘Alī Mahnā and ‘Alī Ḥasan Fā’ūr, (Bairut: Dār al-Ma’rifah, 1993).

¹² Ismail R. al Faruqi, “Foreword”, in *Triologue of the Abrahamic Faiths*, edited by Ismail R. al Faruqi, (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1991), ix.

¹³ Ghulam Haider Aasi, “Muslim Contributions to the History of Religions,” in *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1991, 409-421.

¹⁴ Franz Rosenthal, “Preface,” in Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shahrastānī on the Indian Religions*, (Mouton: Mouton & Co., 1976), 5.

¹⁵ Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961),

scholars concerned with Comparative Religion suggest that Muslim traditions of religious studies need to adopt the constructive aspects of Western traditions of comparative religious studies, especially in terms of the application of modern methodologies such as Phenomenology, History, Anthropology, Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, and Linguistics. The use of modern analyses and approaches will give much benefit in understanding the complex religious data being studied.

The study of religions is always linked to the wider contexts of social, cultural, and political dynamics in the society, as such because it is “part of a greater project of the critical study of society.”¹⁶ The Comparative Religion discipline develops through empirical reciprocity and is epistemologically constructed and affected by the historical, social, cultural, economic, and political surroundings.¹⁷ In line with that, the discipline, as a part of human understanding of scientific activities, may not be separated from “its complex relations with society, the state, and the economy.”¹⁸ It is within such an epistemological context that the development of Comparative Religion in Indonesian institutions of Islamic higher learning can be well understood and presented.

1; See also, Dominic Corrywright and Peggy Morgan, *Get Set for Religious Studies*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 43.

¹⁶ Abdulkader Tayob, “The Study of Religion and Social Crises, Arab-Islamic Discourse in Late Twentieth Century”, in *New Approach to the Study of Religion*, edited by Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, and Randi R. Warne, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), vol. 1, 104. See also, Hans G. Kippenberg, “Rivalry Among Scholars of Religions: The Crisis of Historicism and the Formation of Paradigm,” in *Historical Reflections*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1996, 387.

¹⁷ Jacques Wardenburg, “Observations on the Scholarly Study of Religions as Pursued in Some Muslim Countries,” in *Numen*, vol. 45, no. 3, 1998, 235-257. See also, Jacques Wardenburg, “Islamic Studies and the History of Religions,” in *Scholarly Approaches to Religion, Interreligious Perceptions and Islam*, edited by Jacques Wardenburg, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995), 413-451; W.A. Bijlefeld, “Islamic Studies Within the Perspective of the History of Religions,” *The Muslim World*, LXII, 1972, 1-11; Charles J. Adam, “The History of Religions and the Study of Islam,” in *The History of Religions: Essays on the Problem of Understanding*, edited by J.H. Kitagawa, M. Eliade and C.H.Long, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 177-193.

¹⁸ Kapil Raji. *Relocating Modern Science, Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 10.

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In 1960, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN, State Islamic University) Sunan Kalijaga, previously named Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN, State Institute of Islamic Studies) Sunan Kalijaga was the first Islamic institution of higher learning in Indonesia to establish a Department of Comparative Religion. Ever since then the University has continued to dedicate a significant contribution to the improvement of scholarship in Comparative Religion and constantly promotes the discipline as a full-fledged field of knowledge at the academia. UIN Sunan Kalijaga, therefore, is seen as exemplary for other institutions of Islamic higher learning in developing the Comparative Religion discipline and is recognized as one of the preferred centres for comparative religious studies in Indonesia. Furthermore, in following UIN's academic steps, many of the state institutes of Islamic studies across the country also established departments of Comparative Religion. Suffice it to say that the present state of comparative religious studies in many of the state institutions of Islamic higher learning in Indonesia is quite indebted to the role played by the University.

The growth and development of the Comparative Religion discipline in the particular context of UIN Sunan Kalijaga is inextricably intertwined with the wider context of Indonesia's social, cultural, and political dynamics. It can be argued accordingly that the founding of the Department of Comparative Religion at the University has been, to some extent, an academic response to the conditions of plurality in Indonesia as a great home to major world religions (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism) and to hundreds of traditional, indigenous beliefs and practises, as well.

The success that UIN Sunan Kalijaga has achieved in fostering Comparative Religion can be seen through the discipline's manifestations in three academic

aspects. Firstly, the UIN educational system focusing specifically on the methods used in studying and teaching the discipline in academic coursework, the curricular and syllabic design of the subject, as well as other academic policies conducive to fostering scholarship in the discipline. Secondly, the community of the UIN scholars concerned with Comparative Religion that has played a pivotal role in cultivating and maintaining the discipline as an outstanding field of knowledge. Thirdly, the UIN scholars' ideas and thoughts regarding certain topics in comparative religious studies such as the notion of the origins of religion, the issue of religious truth claims, the methodology and approaches used in religious studies, and the purpose of studying Comparative Religion.

C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions provide an unequivocal direction to this research:

1. What were the socio-historical contexts and factors that inspired and drove the emergence and development of the Comparative Religion discipline in Indonesia?
2. How did the Comparative Religion discipline grow and thrive within the academic setting of UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta?
3. What are the opinions and views of the Muslim scholars at UIN concerning certain selected topics in Comparative Religion?

D. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims:

1. To acquire a relatively intact portrait of the historical setting of the emergence and development of Comparative Religion studies in Indonesia.
2. To find appropriate ways of improving the methods of teaching and learning

the Comparative Religion discipline that meet the needs of Indonesian Muslim scholars and students of religious studies.

3. To determine the trends of intellectual orientation among the UIN Muslim scholars associated with Comparative Religion.

E. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

As the title of the dissertation suggests, this study will be confined to the analysis of how the Comparative Religion discipline grows and thrives within a particular context of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta. In such a way, this study tries to approach and unequivocally discuss some relevant topics such as how the University's educational system is applied in maintaining and cultivating Comparative Religion; the role of the University scholars in dealing with the discipline; and the views and thoughts of those scholars regarding certain topics frequently discussed in Comparative Religion.

F. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is important and timely to be done for several reasons:

1. This work will enhance the research and studies concerning how the Comparative Religion discipline has been cultivated and developed within the academic milieu of Islamic higher learning institutions in Indonesia. Indeed, despite the long familiarity of Indonesian Muslim scholars with religious studies, the development of Comparative Religion in Indonesian centres of Islamic higher learning has not yet been systematically addressed and methodologically studied, therefore this study is considered significant and timely, but still it merits further research.

2. This study can be a source of reference from which scholars of religious studies, in particular, and social workers, in general, can benefit when they have to deal with challenging facts concerning interreligious issues and socio-cultural diversity. Sensitive interfaith issues cannot be taken for granted, so a better understanding of them and appropriate approaches to them are highly required in order to anticipate and counter the negative effects that may arise from managing a culturally and religiously plural society. This study is expected to be a valuable document of the history of Comparative Religion in Indonesia.

G. METHOD AND SOURCES OF RESEARCH

This study is consciously designed to be qualitative and hence relies chiefly on interpretative¹⁹ and descriptive analyses.²⁰ Two methods of survey are employed: historical and philosophical. Meanwhile, the procedures for gathering the sources of data are built on library study and empirical investigation through interviews. Interviews with several of the UIN Muslim scholars, as well as with the policymakers at the university are necessary as secondary and supporting sources of research data.

Historical survey²¹ is employed to explore the socio-historical contexts such as the realities of socio-cultural-religious diversity and socio-ideological-political dynamics that surround the context of the founding of UIN Sunan Kalijaga and the inception of the Department of Comparative Religion in the university. The analysis of Indonesian Muslim scholarship in Comparative Religion and the instruction of Comparative Religion in Islamic secondary schools and colleges prior to the

¹⁹ Max Travers, *Qualitative Research through Case Studies*, (London: Sage Publication, 2001), 0-10.

²⁰ Robert A. Stebbins, *Exploratory research in the social sciences*, (California: Sage Publications, 2001), 29.

²¹ Alexander R. Thomas and Polly J. Smith, *Spotlight on social research*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 8. See also, Verma, R. K. and Gopal Verma, *Research Methodology*, (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1989), 16-24.

establishment of UIN are also scrutinized. These facts can serve as a backdrop to the present study as well as to what Alparslan Acikgeng called the “*environmental context for science*,”²² which can be seen as one factor, among others, that has inspired and driven the emergence of the discipline of Comparative Religion in PTAIN, in general, and at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, in particular.

According to Acikgeng,²³ a body of scientific nomenclature is shaped and developed by a community of scientists and scholars. With this in mind, one can see through a historical point of view and then develop a clear understanding that the discipline of Comparative Religion should also be treated as a body of scientific nomenclature that is cultivated and developed at UIN. UIN, as an educational institution and its community of scholars of Comparative Religion, is held to have a direct influence on the epistemological construct of the discipline. Accordingly, the development of the Comparative Religion discipline at UIN very much relies on the contribution made by UIN as an educational institution, on the one hand, and by its community of Muslim scholars, on the other.

Together with the historical survey, philosophical analysis²⁴ is also applied to examine the opinions and views of the UIN scholars concerning certain selected topics in Comparative Religion. It seems difficult for any study to discover how the Comparative Religion discipline develops in the academic setting of UIN Sunan Kalijaga without surveying how the UIN scholars concerned with Comparative Religion deal with issues pertinent to the discipline. This point is important to be addressed as it confirms Cemil Ekdogan’s opinion that “the history of ideas correlates

²² Alparslan Acikgeng, *Islamic Science Towards a Definition*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996), 73.

²³ *Ibid*, 94.

²⁴ Rob Fisher, “Philosophical Approach,” in *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, edited by Peter Connolly (London: Cassel, 1999), 105-134.

with the intellectual history in traditional history.”²⁵

Furthermore, the sources of data for this present work are based in part on library study. The library study is carried out by searching a number of libraries and research institutions from which books, papers, articles, research reports, and academic theses relevant to this topic of study can be acquired. Among the very significant parts of the primary sources for this research are books, papers, articles, and dissertations produced by the UIN scholars, especially those who have been trained in the Comparative Religion discipline at UIN Sunan Kalijaga. As an ancillary source of data, interviews with seventeen scholars of the University will obviously enrich this research. Also included in the sources of data are treatises, archives, documentation, historical accounts, and other forms of publication regarding the curricular system, as well as the methods of studying and teaching Comparative Religion applied at UIN Sunan Kalijaga.

The growth and development of Comparative Religion can be examined through the discipline’s manifestations into four academic aspects: material production, education institution, an organized body of scientists (practitioners), and scientific worldviews.²⁶ To this point and of these four aspects, the last three seem to be more appropriate to be used as a theoretical basis to frame how Comparative Religion has continued to flourish for several decades at UIN Sunan Kalijaga. The analysis of the development of the Comparative Religion discipline at the University

²⁵ Cemil Ekdogan, *Science in Islam & the West*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC and IIUM, 2008), 6.

²⁶ Pervez A. Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science, Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality*, (London: Zed Book Ltd., 1991), 29. Hoodbhoy said, “How one measures science, or scientific progress, naturally depends on what one means by science. Nevertheless, it is useful to identify four key ways in which science manifests itself in the contemporary world: (1) As a major factor in the maintenance and development of the productive process needed to sustain society; (2) As a collective and organized body of practitioners (scientists) who are professionally engaged in its full-time pursuit; (3) As a major element of the educational system within a society; (4) As one of the most powerful influences moulding people’s beliefs and attitudes towards the universe – the scientific worldview, which employs a methodological procedure wherein observation, experiment, classification and measurement are used to drive knowledge.”