



Content Analysis of the Historiography of the Mughal Empire in the Islamic Cultural History Textbook of Class XI Madrasah Aliyah

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Abstrak

The narrative of Islamic civilization history in the madrasah curriculum is often trapped in a dichotomous simplification between the idealism of past glory and the stereotype of dogmatic decline that ignores the depth of critical analysis among students. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the material on the Mughal Empire in the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade XI Madrasah Aliyah published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2020. Using the Klaus Krippendorff model of qualitative content analysis, the data were critically evaluated through external and internal criticism. The validity of the data was tested using data triangulation techniques based on Norman Denzin's theoretical framework. The results of the study indicate the reproduction of colonial historiographic bias in the textbook, particularly the binary labeling that separates the leadership of Akbar and Aurangzeb in black and white. Furthermore, the textbook also ignores the dimensions of rational scientific progress, madrasah curriculum reform, and the socio-economic agrarian crisis that triggered the decline of the empire. The implications of this paper emphasize the urgency of reconstructing the religious history curriculum through the integration of international revisionist historiography to foster critical, objective, and multicultural thinking among madrasah students.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Cultural History learning in Islamic schools is currently faced with the reality of student boredom due to monotonous presentation of material and mere memorization of facts. Many students view history as merely a supplement to the curriculum with no functional significance for their real lives. As a result, the exemplary values of great civilizations such as the Mughal Empire fail to be transmitted into the development of students' inclusive social character (Pertiwi, 2022). Yet, a comprehensive understanding of how to manage diversity under the auspices of power is crucial in responding to the polarization of modern society. Teachers often struggle to enliven the classroom atmosphere because available teaching materials tend to be linear and lack critical reasoning challenges. As a result of this lack of causal analysis, history has lost its appeal as a means of character education. This social challenge requires a fundamental evaluation of religious Indonesia.

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A literature review of Islamic cultural history textbooks reveals significant weaknesses in the depth and breadth of the material presented (Sulaiman & Faizin, 2020). Several studies criticize the misalignment between learning indicators and the material, which oversimplifies the power dynamics of the great dynasties. Specifically, in the chapter on the Mughal Empire, local literature often reproduces the binary polarization between the pluralist character of Jalaluddin Akbar and the extreme puritanism of Aurangzeb (F. D. Sari, 2024; Truschke, 2017). This narrative of binary opposition is inherited from British colonial-era historiography, which deliberately divided local communities. Unfortunately, textbooks published by official religious institutions still adopt this colonial perspective without adequate critique. This demonstrates a gap between advances in international historical research and the facts taught to students. The limited use of contemporary academic references in the development of local textbooks leads to students' historical understanding being distorted, dogmatic, and lagging far behind developments in world historiography. A critical review of local historical sources is needed so as not to continue to perpetuate colonial myths that divide religious harmony in the world today.

Based on this literature, this paper aims to conduct an in-depth analysis and critical deconstruction of the historical content of the Mughal Empire in the SKI Madrasah Aliyah Grade XI textbook published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. This study seeks to identify various forms of content weaknesses, interpretative bias, and simplification of facts that have the potential to reduce students' critical analysis skills. Through this study, the author intends to compare the domestic narrative in the textbook with international academic references that have high scientific credibility. This step was taken to formulate a direction for improving the religious history curriculum to be more balanced, factual, and contextual for the formation of students' moderate ways of thinking. The ultimate goal is to provide theoretical and practical input for educational policymakers to revitalize the quality of religious textbooks in Indonesia to realize inclusive history teaching. This process is crucial so that the values of past wisdom can be inherited correctly without any distortion from the political interests of the colonial era that undermine the foundations of our nation's tolerance today within the framework of national unity.

The main thesis defended in this study asserts that the Mughal Empire material in madrasa textbooks requires theoretical updating through the integration of international revisionist historiography to erode the bias of the binary opposition narrative. The author argues that the dualistic depiction of Akbar's tolerance and Aurangzeb's fanaticism is a false construct that obscures the true sociopolitical dynamics of the empire. Religious policy under Mughal leadership should be situated within the framework of power bargaining and regional stability negotiations, not based on the emperor's personal dogmatic adherence. Ignoring the fact that the Mughal military-civil bureaucracy remained heavily populated by non-Muslim elites is a serious historical distortion. Therefore, curriculum reform based on agrarian socio-economic realities and scientific reform is crucial for training students' critical thinking skills. By debunking these historical myths, SKI textbooks are expected to transform into dynamic, high-quality, and relevant educational tools. Therefore, this article can serve as a reference for teachers in presenting SKI material, especially on the history of the Mughal Dynasty in India.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative content analysis method (*qualitative content analysis*) which focuses on the contextual, critical, and sociological interpretation of texts (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2002). Klaus Krippendorff's content analysis approach is used as the main framework because of its ability to bridge textual data units with the sociopolitical and historical realities that surround them (Krippendorff, 2019). By examining word choice, narrative emphasis, and chapter structure in textbooks, this

analysis does not simply describe the content of the text, but rather unravels the hidden messages and ideological tendencies embedded within it.

The primary data source in this analysis is the Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade XI Madrasah Aliyah students officially published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 2020. To conduct objective textual criticism, the primary data is contrasted with secondary sources in the form of related books and scientific articles, both nationally and internationally. International literature such as Irfan Habib's monumental work on the Mughal agrarian system, John F. Richards' analysis of imperial structure, and Audrey Truschke's critical biography of Aurangzeb are used as scientific parameters to measure the validity of the narrative in the Ministry of Religious Affairs textbook. This integration of external literature serves as a comparison to detect the presence of distortion of facts or the preservation of colonial bias in domestic teaching materials.

The validity of the data and the objectivity of interpretation in this study are fully guaranteed through the application of data triangulation techniques (Denzin, 1978). Referring to Norman Denzin's qualitative paradigm, triangulation is carried out by cross-referencing data from various types of sources, namely official curriculum documents, classical historiographic manuscripts of the Mughal court such as the Akbarnama, and the latest research findings from reputable international journals. Through this cross-reference method, researchers can eliminate personal subjectivity, identify textual contradictions, and compile a credible synthesis of how the Mughal Empire should be taught in Islamic educational institutions. The application of theoretical and source triangulation strengthens the reliability of the results of the content analysis, thus being able to produce recommendations for curriculum reconstruction that are academically sound.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the Islamic Cultural History textbook compiled by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the Mughal Empire is studied in the third discussion for class XI MA (Sulaiman & Faizin, 2020). The author presents a discussion of the Mughal Empire, providing a comprehensive overview of the history and development of this empire, from its founding by Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur to its collapse in the 19th century. The author successfully presents well-structured information, starting from the historical background, challenges faced, to the peak of the empire's glory and decline.

Historiography of the Birth of the Mughal Empire

Etymologically, the word Mughal or Moghul is rooted in the term "Mogul," a dynasty ruled by rulers of Central Asian descent from Timur Lenk. Timur Lenk was a Turkic-Mongol conqueror born in Kesh (now Syahr-i-Sabz) in the Transoxania region in 1336 (Fitrah, 2024). The Mughal dynasty first emerged as a form of military expansion from Central Asia to northern India, where its first ruler also inherited the maternal lineage of Genghis Khan. The legendary conqueror who founded this dynasty was Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur (1526–1530) (Firdaus, 2012). Babur grew up as a warrior with great ambitions to conquer Samarkand, an important city in Central Asia at that time. Thanks to tactical assistance from the Safavid ruler of Persia, Shah Ismail I, Babur succeeded in capturing Samarkand in 1494, and a decade later, in 1504, he succeeded in occupying Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.

Babur's expansion into the Indian subcontinent was driven by political instability in the Delhi Sultanate, then under the rule of Ibrahim Lodi. Internal conflict in Delhi prompted Alam Khan (Ibrahim Lodi's uncle) and Daulat Khan (Governor of Lahore) to send envoys to Kabul to request Babur's military assistance in overthrowing Lodi (Riyadi, 2019). Babur seized this golden opportunity; in 1525, he took control of Punjab, with Lahore as his capital, and then led his army directly to Delhi. In April 1526, the devastating Battle of Panipat I broke out. Babur's

innovative military strategy, combining fast cavalry with modern firearms and cannons, successfully destroyed Ibrahim Lodi's much larger elephant force.

Ibrahim Lodi was killed in battle, and Babur immediately established his rule in Delhi, marking the birth of the Mughal Empire. The establishment of this new dynasty sparked great concern among local rulers; Hindu Rajput kings under Rana Sanga immediately assembled a massive army to attack Babur. However, Babur's military prowess was again tested in the face of the onslaught of the Rajput confederacy. Babur died in 1530 at the age of 48, leaving behind a vast empire stretching from the Oxus to the borders of Bengal, which was then inherited by his eldest son, Naseeruddin Muhammad Humayun.

Humayun ruled during a highly unstable state (1530–1540) as he faced formidable challenges from his own brothers, who claimed territorial rights, such as Kamran, who usurped the Punjab region (Khumayroh, 2024). The strongest external challenges came from Bahadur Shah, the secessionist ruler of Gujarat, and Sher Khan (Sher Shah Suri), a formidable Afghan ruler. In 1535, Humayun suffered an initial defeat at Baksar. His complete defeat at the Battle of Kanauj in 1540 against Sher Khan forced Humayun to flee to Kandahar and then seek political asylum in Persia (Afkari, 2020). During Humayun's exile, the Suri dynasty ruled Delhi. After a long struggle and capitalizing on the weakening Suri dynasty, Humayun, with the help of the Safavids, successfully reclaimed the Delhi throne in 1555 (Desky, 2016). However, this second period of power was short-lived as Humayun died in January 1556 after falling from the stairs of his palace, leaving the throne to his 14-year-old son, Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar.

Genealogy of Leadership and Characteristics of the Caliphs

The reign of Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar (1556–1605) marked a period of profound transformation for the empire (Pertiwi, 2022; D. Sari, 2021). Due to his young age when he ascended the throne, state affairs were initially handed over to Bairam Khan, a Shia advisor. Upon reaching adulthood, Akbar assumed full power and ousted Bairam Khan, whose influence was deemed too dominant and who imposed the interests of his particular religious sect. Akbar laid the foundation for a cosmopolitan empire (Akbar, 2021). His inclusive religious-political policies were based on the concept of *Sulh-i-Kul* (universal tolerance), which placed social justice above formal religious doctrine in order to unify multicultural India (Faris, 2015). His extreme measures were exemplified by the formulation of the *Din-i-Ilahi* in 1582 (F. D. Sari, 2024), a spiritual ethical system rooted in Sufism to bind the loyalty of the court elite from various faith backgrounds.

After Akbar's death in 1605, his son, Nuruddin Muhammad Salim, succeeded to the throne with the title Jahangir (1605–1627) (Richards, 1993). Jahangir's reign was marred by various internal rebellions, including one led by his own son, Kurram. Although Jahangir was a follower of *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* a devout Muslim, he maintained the liberal and tolerant policies inherited from his father, limiting the application of Sharia law to the family courts for Muslims. Jahangir's administration was heavily influenced by his empress, Nur Jahan, who held de facto control over important court politics.

After Jahangir's death, Kurram succeeded to the throne and assumed the title Shah Jahan (1628–1658) (Singh, 2020). Shah Jahan was known as a great patron of the arts and the ruler of the empire during its golden age (Mar'ah, 2021). Unlike Akbar, Shah Jahan began to restrict the construction of new Hindu temples and asserted the empire's Islamic identity, although he retained Hindu functionaries in the bureaucracy. The political situation at the end of his reign deteriorated due to a fierce civil war between his four sons (Aurangzeb, Dara Shikoh, Shujah, and Murad Bakhsh) for the throne of Delhi.

Muhi-ud-Din Muhammad Aurangzeb ultimately emerged victorious after ousting his brothers and imprisoning the aging Shah Jahan (Truschke, 2017). Aurangzeb ruled from 1658 to 1707 under the title Alamgir Padshah Ghazi. In a radical departure from his predecessors, Aurangzeb implemented a strict Islamic puritanism in state administration. He banned alcohol, gambling, prostitution, drug use, court music, and the practice of sati (the burning of Hindu widows). Aurangzeb imposed a jizya (poll tax) on non-Muslims in 1679, sanctioned the destruction of several Hindu temples allied with the rebels, and funded the drafting of a comprehensive codification of Islamic law known as the Fatawa Alamgiri.

Although the Ministry of Religious Affairs textbook portrays Aurangzeb pejoratively as a fanatic who triggered the dynasty's downfall, revisionist historiography suggests that his harsh policies were driven by the urgent need to stabilize state finances following massive military expansion into the Deccan region (Sulaiman & Faizin, 2020). After Aurangzeb's death, Mughal rule declined sharply under a series of weak rulers, until its complete collapse after the last Sultan, Bahadur Shah II, was exiled by the British colonialists in 1857.

Integrative Policy and the Progress of Dynasty Civilization

The Mughal Empire's peak glory was supported by the successful development of robust sociopolitical, military, economic, and cultural institutions. In the military and administrative fields, Akbar created the Mansabdari system, a highly organized military-civil bureaucratic hierarchy (Desky, 2016). Through this system, officials were assigned ranks (mansab) that determined the number of cavalry they maintained and the amount of salary they received from the state. Uniquely, positions within this system were based purely on individual skill and loyalty, not on factors of descent, ethnicity, or religion. This policy successfully integrated the Hindu Rajput aristocracy and the Muslim military into a single entity devoted to the emperor.

In the economic and agricultural sectors, the Mughal Dynasty relied on a highly efficient and centralized land tax management system. Irfan Habib explains that agriculture was carefully managed through administrative divisions ranging from the smallest units called deh (villages) to pargana (districts), under the supervision of local functionaries called mukaddam (Harahap, 2024). This agrarian policy promoted high-value commodity crops such as rice, sugarcane, cotton, tobacco, and spices, which became the raw materials for the world's leading woven textile industry. Mughal textile exports dominated the global market and generated a massive influx of silver metal from European nations, creating extraordinary monetary stability for the empire. A comparison of the depth of this civilization's achievements is presented in the following table:

Field of Civilization	Representation of 2020 Ministry of Religion Textbook Material	Findings and Analysis of Modern Revisionist Historiography
Military Administration	Dividing the region into districts led by <i>I will be back</i> .and subdistricts by <i>faujdar</i> .	The administrative system is dominated by the system <i>Official</i> which bound the loyalty of the Hindu Rajput and Muslim aristocracy institutionally without religious sentiment.
Agrarian System	Agriculture is managed centrally to advance rice, sugar cane, cotton and the weaving industry.	Land tax is collected in cash using a system <i>Capture</i> restrict, creating a dynamic relationship between farmers, <i>zamindar</i> (landlord), and holder <i>jagir</i> .
Science & Education	Primary schools were run by teachers in mosques and Shah Jahan	Akbar radically reformed the madrasa curriculum by integrating rational sciences (<i>ma'qulat</i>) such as mathematics,

	established a college in Delhi.	logic, and astronomy side by side with religious knowledge (<i>manqulat</i>).
Art & Architecture	Highlighting marble-clad monumental buildings such as the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort, and the Grand Mosque of Delhi.	Mughal architecture represents a cosmological and aesthetic fusion of Persian-Turkish Islamic traditions with Hindu Rajput architectural symbols.

In the cultural and intellectual fields, the Mughal civilization made lasting contributions to the development of world civilization (Firdaus, 2012). The development of Urdu, a harmonious blend of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and the local Sanskrit/Hindi language, became a unifying means of communication for the people of North India that persists to this day. The establishment of higher education institutions in Delhi and Lucknow, as well as the patronage of the movement to translate ancient philosophical and scientific works from Sanskrit into Persian, demonstrates that the Mughal court functioned as a center for the transmission of inclusive and progressive scientific knowledge in its time.

Structural Stagnation and the Decline of Power

The decline of the Mughal Empire after Aurangzeb's reign in 1707 was a systemic process of decline that cannot be reduced to mere factors of the ruler's morality or religious conflict (Basr, 2023). In-depth analysis reveals a multifaceted structural crisis that infiltrated the empire's foundations. One of the most fatal internal weaknesses was the unclear leadership succession. Without an established system of primogeniture, every emperor's death was followed by a bloody civil war among princes vying for the throne (Moin, 2022). This prolonged war of succession destroyed the political cohesion of the court elite, fueled acute factionalism among the nobility, and drained the state treasury massively.

Socio-economically, Aurangzeb's expansionist military policy of conquering the Deccan region for nearly 25 years imposed an unsustainable financial burden on the empire. To finance these campaigns, land revenue demands were raised to extreme levels. This excessive agrarian exploitation undermined the welfare of the peasants and angered local zamindars who felt disadvantaged by the land assignment (*jagir*) system. Consequently, various communal-based armed rebellions erupted, such as the Jat peasant rebellion in the north, the Sikh militia in Punjab sparked by the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur, and the Maratha guerrilla resistance in the west, which greatly drained the Mughal military's energy.

Kondisi fragmentasi internal ini diperparah oleh stagnasi teknologi militer. This state of internal fragmentation was exacerbated by the stagnation of the empire's military technology. The Mughal Empire failed to develop a naval force adequate to secure its coastal areas, while its land forces began to lag behind the innovations of modern European military tactics. This weakness in naval defense was optimally exploited by Western nations, particularly the British through the East India Company (EIC) trading partnership, to control strategic trade routes and implement a divide and rule policy (*divide and rule*) exploiting the conflict between Muslim rulers and the Hindu majority (Suryadi, 2015).. British military and political intervention slowly but surely stripped the Mughal emperor of his political authority, ultimately triggering the total collapse of the empire in the 19th century.

CONCLUSION

A critical analysis of the 2020 Islamic Cultural History textbook for Grade XI Madrasah Aliyah shows that while the book successfully systematically chronologically presents the history of the Mughal Empire, the material presented still suffers from narrative simplification and colonial historiographic bias. The core findings of this study confirm the existence of a binary labeling that separates the

leadership of Akbar and Aurangzeb in black and white without placing them in the context of political pragmatism and imperial stability. The textbook also tends to ignore aspects of rational scientific reform, agrarian structure, and macro-socioeconomic crises that were the main factors determining the dynamics of the rise and fall of Mughal civilization in India.

The main advantage of this analytical article lies in its successful critical deconstruction of the domestic curriculum by directly integrating it with the latest research findings from globally renowned international historians. This writing utilizes Klaus Krippendorff's content analysis model and Norman Denzin's rigorous theoretical triangulation, thus providing a more objective, richer historical reading that avoids subjective bias. By debunking the myths of binary history inherited from British colonialism, this article offers a fresh, academically nuanced perspective to revitalize the teaching of Islamic history in Indonesia.

As a recommendation for future research, researchers are advised to conduct experimental classroom studies to test how reconstructed Mughal history materials can influence the development of critical reasoning and tolerance in madrasah students. Future research should also explore Islamic history curriculum documents from other Muslim countries in Southeast Asia to map models for integrating pluralistic values into regional education systems. Furthermore, an in-depth study of the political roles and economic contributions of Mughal empresses and princesses in cultural development is warranted to provide a more equitable gender perspective in Islamic historiography.

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