

# THE DYNAMICS OF PESANTREN LEADERSHIP FROM THE DUTCH ETHICAL POLICY TO THE REFORMATION PERIODS<sup>1</sup>

Auliya Ridwan

University of Western Australia  
auliya.ridwan@research.uwa.edu.au

## Abstract

*In its early periods, pesantren as a type of Islamic educational institution focused merely on religious teachings. Socio-political pressures and the need to carry out Islamic outreach have pushed kiai as pesantren leaders to negotiate their idealism according to the circumstances in different historical periods. Historical accounts from the Dutch colonial period to Indonesian independence show that kiai leadership becomes the decisive factor as well as the legitimation for pesantren to take certain actions during precarious situations. To examine the institutional development of pesantren in the post-reformation era, a recent ethnographic fieldwork has been carried out in three pesantren in Madura, Java, and Lombok. This paper discusses the development and transformation of pesantren as an institution from the Dutch Ethical Policy Period until today. It demonstrates pesantren's involvement in anti-Western campaigns and trials of affiliation with oppositions in the colonial period. This paper shows how Islamic virtues remain the heart of pesantren education and examines how innovation in contemporary pesantren regarding pedagogies and values translated in seemingly non-religious areas is substantially based on religious values.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgement: This research is fully sponsored by Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (LPDP), Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia.

[*Secara historis—pada awal keberadaannya—pondok pesantren merupakan salah satu lembaga pendidikan Islam yang hanya fokus pada pembelajaran agama. Namun karena situasi sosial-politik dan kebutuhan untuk mempribumisasikan Islam secara luas, kiai sebagai pemimpin pesantren pada akhirnya harus menanggalkan idealismenya dan mengikuti perkembangan zaman. Catatan sejarah dari masa kolonial Belanda hingga kemerdekaan Indonesia menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan kiai menjadi faktor penentu sekaligus legitimasi bagi pesantren untuk melakukan tindakan tertentu dalam situasi genting. Dalam rangka mengkaji perkembangan pesantren sejak era kolonial sampai dengan pasca reformasi, artikel berbasis riset etnografi ini—dengan mengambil obyek studi di tiga pesantren: Madura, Jawa, dan Lombok—berkesimpulan bahwa peran pesantren tak hanya sebagai lembaga pendidikan agama an-sich melainkan juga ikut terlibat dalam kampanye anti-Barat dan upaya untuk mengusir penjajahan Belanda. Dengan demikian, pesantren menunjukkan bagaimana keutamaan Islam tetap menjadi jantung pendidikannya sembari mengejawentahkan nilai-nilai agama dalam bidang lain terutama “jihad” melawan kolonialisme.]*

**Keywords:** *Pesantren, Islamic education, Educational leadership*

## Introduction

*Pesantren* or *Pondok Pesantren* is a type of indigenous Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, which has survived for centuries. In the contemporary period, *pesantren*'s natures range in a continuum from the traditional to the more progressive ones. *Kiai*<sup>2</sup> as the leaders of *pesantren* become the most influencing factor in the translation of Islamic virtues into various actions crucial in different socio-political circumstances. They have the authority to transform the characteristic of their *pesantren* education from purely disseminating Islamic virtues into adopting more direct actions as a response to current situations. Adaptive and responsive attitudes toward the social issues in the community have become one of *pesantren*'s characteristics in its history. *Pesantren* always

---

<sup>2</sup> *Kiai, Mursyid, Ustādh, Tuan Guru* are the terms representing *pesantren* leadership. *Pesantren* in different areas have their own term referring to their leaders.

responds to anything against Islamic principles, but this challenge always has its own format in different periods. Although most *kiai* studied in this paper come from Java, I attempt to present a couple of *kiai* and their significance outside Java to get a broader view. Their roles and leaderships appear explicitly as individuals, but are sometimes embed as organizational actions, of which these leaders are in charge. This paper will firstly examine the nature of *pesantren* leadership and continue to discuss how the leadership adjusts to the socio-political circumstances during the Dutch colonial age, the post-independence Indonesia (Old Order), the New Order. It proceeds to take a closer look at how *pesantren* deal with the situations in the contemporary period.

### Getting into the Heart of *Pesantren* Leadership

Historically, when and where the term '*pesantren*' was used for the first time are debated. Historians are varied in their opinions about the origins of *pesantren* due to the diverse theories of the Islamization in the areas where the oldest *pesantren* are thought to have been established. For instance, in the first half of the 16th century, the newly emerging Islamic Sultanate of Demak replicated the administrative structure of the Hindu-Buddhist Kingdom Majapahit but gradually integrated Islamic law and ceremonies into the sultanate.<sup>3</sup> However, it is still unknown how the Hindu-Buddhist religious educational institutions transformed into Islamic. Apart from the debate about the origins of *pesantren*, the mystical tradition in *pesantren* played a dominant role in the development of *pesantren* in the early period. Ricklefs reports the existence of *Pesantren* Tegalsari in 1742, when Pakubuana II (King of Kertasura) sought a spiritual support in the *Pesantren* after his defeat in a holy war against *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (The Dutch East Indies Company,

---

<sup>3</sup> Theodore G. TH. Pigeaud and Hermanus Johannes de Graaf, *Islamic States in Java 1500-1700: Eight Dutch Books and Articles* by H. J. De Graaf, *Verhandelingen Van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 70 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976), pp. 18-19.

VOC).<sup>4</sup> The indivisibility of Islam and Sufism shaped a personal piety and human relationship with God rather than imposing religious ideals on society.<sup>5</sup> This notion is aligned with the root word of the term *pesantren*, *santri*, meaning student or discipline, which probably derived from the Sanskrit word “*cantrik*”, meaning a spiritual disciple<sup>67</sup> during the time of Majapahit (13th-16th centuries). Spirituality remains the heart of every *pesantren* today. *Pesantren*’s characteristic is inseparable from its spiritual identity, the unseen dimension.

With regards to the seen dimension, it is commonly said that there are five essential and ubiquitous components of the *pesantren*: *kiai* (orthodox teacher as well as the leader of the institution), *santri* (disciple or student), *pondokan* (dormitory), *masjid* (mosque), and *Kitāb Kuning* (lit. yellow scriptures, classical Islamic canonical books).<sup>8</sup> The leadership of the *kiai* is considered of crucial importance.<sup>9</sup> As the supreme leader, the *kiai* either established the *pesantren* himself, or is the direct descendant of the founder or the former *kiai* – thus, the successor. The *kiai* establishes the internal structure of his domain, controlling all aspects of the *santri*’s life as well as maintaining strong community links outside the institutional structure. In this sense, the *kiai* forms the intellectual institution with almost absolute authority to direct the life of the *pesantren* body. Often, the decisions made by the *kiai* will influence the characteristics of the *pesantren* in the future.

---

<sup>4</sup> M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since C. 1200*, 3rd ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 122-23.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, “The Tradition of Pluralism, Accommodation, and Anti-Radicalism in the Pesantren Community,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2008, pp. 1-15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> In this article, *santri* refers to both male and female students. However, in some discussion, the term *santrivati* (female students) appears for specific discussion about the female.

<sup>8</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> Ali Maschan Moesa, *Nasionalisme Kiai : Konstruksi Sosial Berbasis Agama* (Surabaya; Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Ampel Press; LKiS, 2007), p. 14.

*Pesantren* culture shows that *kiai* are highly respected for several reasons. First, in *pesantren*, the traditional ideology is maintained and transferred over generations through *kiai* leadership.<sup>10</sup> Most *kiai* roles and titles – thus, authority – are handed down from father to son. Therefore, someone with high religious knowledge does not automatically obtain the title of *kiai* when he does not have the *kiai* lineage. Second, a *kiai* may have multiple roles simultaneously, for instance, as a preacher, a scholar, a teacher and a healer.<sup>11</sup> Last, beyond their *pesantren*, *kiai* have a horizontal power relationship (building networks with other *kiai*) as well as a vertical one (e.g. “down” to the local community and “up” to the mass media or other information resources, to which the general population does not have the access).<sup>12</sup> In addition, *kiai* leadership is the interface between a local community and public decision-makers. Therefore, *kiai* also have political power in negotiating with political leaders and bureaucrats.<sup>13</sup> The previously mentioned characteristics of *kiai* can be clearly found in traditional communities, particularly in rural areas, in which the dependency towards community figures is still high. For this reason, *kiai* become a vehicle of conveying-thoughts in several life aspects. In a more progressive community, the role of *kiai* can be narrowed, but not limited to religious activities. *Kiai* are often involved in resolving religious-related issues such as conflicts between different religious followers, of which officially the police is in charge. This suggests that even though a *kiai* does not formally acquire any governmental position, his religious legitimation is often required by the government to solve public issues.

---

<sup>10</sup> Zulkifli, *Sufism in Java: The Role of the Pesantren in the Maintenance of Sufism in Java* (Leiden, Netherlands: Indonesian-Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Antlöv and Sven Cederroth, *Leadership on Java: Gentle Hints, Authoritarian Rule, Studies in Asian Topics* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1994), p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40-41; Endang Turmudi, “Religion and Politics: A Study on Political Attitudes of Devout Muslims and the Role of the “Kyai” in Contemporary Java,” *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1995.

The figure of *nyai* (female leader of a *pesantren*) should also be noted for her motherhood role.<sup>14</sup> As *pesantren* separate male and female *santri*, the role of the *nyai*, however, is central not only for the female *santri* inside the *pesantren* but also in maintaining social connections with women outside the *pesantren* in general. A *nyai* is usually a *kiai*'s wife and has-in traditional ideology-a subordinate position to the *kiai* leadership.<sup>15</sup> In other words, a *nyai* is a *kiai*'s proxy to reach and maintain relationships with the female community. This role is required as at some point the contact between a *kiai* and a female community, e.g. the female *pesantren*, is not religiously acceptable.

In terms of attitude to preservation and change, *kiai* leadership is central in decision-making about whether to preserve existing practices or to “break the rules” in acceptable areas. For instance, as mentioned previously, the canon in *pesantren* education is the *Kitāb Kuning*—the ‘yellow scriptures’—which consist of foundational knowledge in theology, jurisprudence, morality, etc. The *kitāb* are interpreted rigidly and the possibility of different interpretations has been closed.<sup>16</sup> This strict attitude proposes cautious acts to the *kitāb* and their content as sacred matters.

The main purpose of *pesantren* schooling is to produce and educate Islamic leaders, such as ‘*ulamā*’ and preachers, who are expected to be pious and spread Islamic piety.<sup>17</sup> This mission is variously interpreted,

---

<sup>14</sup> Eka Srimulyani, *Women from Traditional Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia: Negotiating Public Spaces*, *Iias Publications Series Monographs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> Bianca J. Smith and Mark R. Woodward, *Gender and Power in Indonesian Islam: Leaders, Feminists, Sufis and Pesantren Selves*, *Asian Studies Association of Australia Women in Asia Series* (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), p. 93-94.

<sup>16</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “Pesantren and Kitāb Kuning: Continuity and Change in a Tradition of Religious Learning,” Wolfgang Marschall (ed.), *Texts from the Islands. Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World* (Berne: University of Berne, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, “The Pesantren Tradition: A Study of the Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of the Traditional Ideology of Islam in Java” *Phd Thesis*, Australian National University, 1980, p. 248.

which leads to a broad range of nature of *pesantren*, depending upon each *kiai*'s worldview. Furthermore, the *kiai* has the authority to establish various learning materials and curricula in accordance with *santri*'s capabilities and characters. It was common in the past that highly motivated *santri* would stay and learn in one *pesantren* for a period of time and continue learning from other *kiai* in other *pesantren*. They moved from one *pesantren* to another to be exposed to a wider range of authorities, which was considered a prestigious achievement. Despite the traditional characteristics of *pesantren*, some alumni later become famous public leaders, such as Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid. Both figures experienced traditional *pesantren* education as well as modern Western education. They mingled with prominent world leaders and intellectuals and came up with their own thoughts. The interaction of *pesantren* figures and the social environment outside *pesantren* is inevitable when studying how *pesantren* negotiate their identity over time.

To summarize, *pesantren* have core cultural attributes such as the studying of *kitab* kuning and particular pedagogies, which have existed for centuries, but the leadership of *kiai* is the most important element, directing how other elements function. These attributes make up *pesantren* identity, which is reproduced over generations. The choice of texts, foundational knowledge, and the principles used to manage the *pesantren* can be varied amongst *kiai*. However, many of them are based upon their predecessors' practices, with only minor modifications, e.g. the selection of *kitab* and pedagogies. The way that traditional values have been transferred and evolved over generations of *kiai* hasn't been much studied. Many *pesantren* studies focus on the life inside the *pesantren* structures and are less concerned with the development of alumni identity as the representation of the next *pesantren* generation. Figures like Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid have much been studied in terms of their philosophies, careers, and thoughts, but less in how they developed. This paper addresses the development of *pesantren* leadership

in its dynamic historical context, i.e. how the leadership transformed from having a purely Islamic outreach role to a more contextualized outreach in different social circumstances.

### ***Pesantren* Leadership and Resistance around the Dutch Ethical Policy Period**

There are few detailed historical records regarding *pesantren* activities before 1900. It is true that the involvement of *pesantren* as an institution in the society was still at the local level, small in quantity, and not documented enough either by the *pesantren* community or by local authorities. However, *pesantren* appears strongly post-1900, in the period of the pre-Independence nationalist movement (Masa Pergerakan Nasional). This was the time when nationalist social and political organizations mushroomed responding to the more open political atmosphere in the Dutch Indies.

The new episode of the colonial state began in 1901 when Queen Wilhelmina announced the *Etbische Politiek*, the Dutch Ethical Policy, in which the colonial government enacted their responsibility to improve the welfare of the “natives” through education, irrigation, and emigration.<sup>18</sup> However, again, the policy seems half-hearted. The establishment of educational institutions for the indigenous population in this period appears non-assimilating and mal-distributed, catalyzing locals to seek for alternatives. Primary schools, for instance, were divided into those for Europeans and those for natives.<sup>19</sup> In addition, European schools for the indigenous population were not affordable for everyone. In 1930-31, only 0.14% of the total population went to European schooling system of school age.<sup>20</sup> The 1920 and 1930 censuses indicate a very low level of ability in reading and writing. Van der Plas, the governor of East Java, was

---

<sup>18</sup> M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern*, p. 194.

<sup>19</sup> OECD/ADB, *Education in Indonesia: Rising to the Challenge* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2015), p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern*, p. 202-03.



suspicious that the data were influenced by the inability of census-takers to recognize local languages and local scripts which were not taught at school,<sup>21</sup> e.g. Javanese script and *pegon* (Persio-Arabic script). Further, although the number of government schools increased, the number of existing local religious schools remained the same.<sup>22</sup> This implies that the religious schools, such as traditional *pesantren*, were able to present as an alternative schooling, despite the fact that the authorities failed to evaluate their quality. Alternatively, the presence of *pesantren* came to be a seed of resistance towards European education amongst the Muslim community, due to the socio-political context of the period.

The development of new *pesantren* in the colonial period cannot be separated from the collegial relationships among *kiai*. For instance, *Kiai Abbas*, *Kiai Hasyim Asyari*, *Kiai Wahab Hasbullah*, *Kiai Manaf*, and other prominent *kiai* figures helped the foundation of *Pesantren Lirboyo*<sup>23</sup>, now the largest *pesantren* in Kediri Regency. In addition, endogamous marriage is often found among *kiai* descendants, in order to preserve the *pesantren* tradition as well as to ensure the availability of *kiai* in future generations.<sup>24</sup> No wonder that almost all contemporary *kiai* have a strong *kiaiship* lineage. This phenomenon suggests the multiplication of *pesantren* because *pesantren* idealism has been transferred through the next candidate of leadership. In addition, this suggests that *pesantren* education has a different paradigm and function compared to European education.

*Kiai* and other Muslim leaders appeared in Islamic organizations with a focus on society and education, such as *Jamiat Kheir* (1905) and

---

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 217; Loekman Djajadiningrat and Ch O. van der Plas, *From Illiteracy to University* (New York: Institute of Pacific relations. 8th conference Mont Tremblant Que. 1942, 1944).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Abdul Ghoffur Muhaimin, "The Islamic Traditions of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat among Javanese Muslims" (Australian National University, 1995), p. 231.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234-35.

Muhammadiyah (1912), along with proliferating *pesantren*.<sup>25</sup> Nahdlatul Ulama, today the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, was founded in 1926. *Kiai* under this organization's umbrella are usually recognized as 'traditionalist orthodox Muslims'.<sup>26</sup> The majority of *pesantren* were and still are affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama.

The color of *pesantren* education vis-à-vis European education showed contrasting positions e.g. people-founded vs government founded, affordable or even free tuition vs costly tuition, religious subjects vs secular subjects, and different education purposes. Further, an oppositional attitude can be traced to the second half of the 19th century. The intensified presence of the Dutch triggered intensified preaching about jihad and the coming of a new era, resulting in a mushrooming number of Quranic schools and *pesantren* with anti-oppression sentiments.<sup>27</sup> This sentiment was, in part, a result of the increasing number of *haji* (those who made pilgrimage to Mecca) within the *cultuurstelsel* period. For some people, increasing wealth enabled them to carry out the hajj. As the pilgrims mingled with all races and classes in Mecca, they learned about the global crisis as the result of Western expansion and returned home with ideas of anti-colonization.<sup>28</sup> Some cases represent the situation. For instance, Hajji Mohamad Rifangi set up Budiah Movement in 1850s covering Pekalongan and Kedu areas and withdrew his followers from government-sponsored religious services, leading the colonial regime to classify him as subversive and exile him to Ambon.<sup>29</sup> Another example is the coming of Hajji Abdul Karim who returned from Hajj to Banten in 1872, establishing Qadiriyyah Tarekat

---

<sup>25</sup> OECD/ADB, *Education in Indonesia*, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> Endang Turmudi, "Struggling for the Umma: Changing Leadership Roles of *Kiai* in Jombang, East Java" (Australian National University, 1996), p. 2

<sup>27</sup> Reynaldo Iletto, "Religion and Anti-Colonial Movements," Nicholas Tarling (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 223.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

*Pesantren* in which some of its branches proliferated message of *jihād*, in which later breaking out rebellion in Cilegon in 1888.<sup>30</sup> In this context, despite the European dominance in power and the spread of Christianity, the adoption of Islam became a symbol of resistance to the West.<sup>31</sup> This resistance could be found in various formats, even in the post-Independence period, e.g. when learning European languages was considered *ḥarām*, forbidden or sinful, by resistance groups.

*Pesantren* leaders responded differently to the socio-political context of the Netherlands Indies. *Kiai* Zarkasji of *Pesantren* Gontor in Ponorogo criticized the focus of government-owned schools on the production of civil servants and their neglect of teaching morality.<sup>32</sup> However, he was aware of the Western schooling system and was inspired by educational reforms in Al-Azhar, Aligarh, and Santiniketan. Gontor then modernized its education by broadening the scope of studies and even using Arabic and English as a medium of instruction.<sup>33</sup> Gontor's critical attitude towards European education indicates a transformative approach rather than a resistance to modern education.

The involvement of figures from *pesantren* in Islamic social organizations such as Persatuan Islam (Persis), Muhammadiyah, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) provided their communities with ideology-based channels for more coordinated collective actions. The ideological channels here do not mean that the Islamic organizations adopted a mainstream ideology of that period, such as nationalism or socialism; but the organizations had specific interpretations of Islamic virtues to

---

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224-25.

<sup>31</sup> Azyumardi Azra, "Distinguishing Indonesian Islam Some Lessons to Learn," Jajat Burhanudin and Kees van Dijk (eds.), *Islam in Indonesia Contrasting Images and Interpretations* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), p. 64.

<sup>32</sup> Lance Castles, "Notes on the Islamic School at Gontor," *Indonesia*, No. 1, 1966, pp. 31.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-33; Florian Pohl, "Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia," *Comparative Education Review* Vol. 50, No. 3, 2006, pp. 400.

manifest in social actions. Persis leaders, for instance, criticized traditional Islamic understanding as no longer pure because it had blended with local traditions, followed unfounded *taqlīd* (conformity with legal precedent), had uncritical attitudes, and had made weak efforts to learn about valid *hadith*.<sup>34</sup> A bit similar to Persis, Muhammadiyah leaders also promoted the purification of Islam from local cultural elements and supported *ijtihād*, making use of Islamic reasoning to respond to contemporary issues.<sup>35</sup> In opposition to Persis and Muhammadiyah, NU leaders appeared to aim to preserve Indonesian Islam and its accommodation to local culture.<sup>36</sup> Although NU rejected particular aspects of modernization, which potentially hindered religious life in Indonesia,<sup>37</sup> this did not position the organization as an anti-modern organization. The fact that NU is now the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia and is the organization with which the majority of *pesantren* affiliate, suggests that *pesantren* in general appreciate local wisdom but are open to selective modernization. This is reflected in a famous *pesantren* principle: *al-muhāfāẓatu ‘ala al-qadīmi al-ṣāliḥ wa al-akbdu bi al-jadīdi al-aṣlah*, preserving good old traditions and adopting better new ones.

The contribution of *pesantren* to the community in the colonial period was not confined to education. Persis, Muhammadiyah, and NU were amongst Islamic organizations contributing to community development, from education to public health and from economy to socio-politics.<sup>38</sup> The attitude of these social organizations toward the colonial government can be characterized as “softly unsupportive” because of their anti-colonial sentiment, but at the same time, they had to

---

<sup>34</sup> Persis, “Sejarah Persatuan Islam,” 2015, accessed 2017, <http://persis.or.id/sejarah-persatuan-islam/>.

<sup>35</sup> Nasr Abu Zayd, *Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Historical Analysis* (Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 43.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Jajat Burhanudin, “Redefining the Roles of Islamic Organizations in the Reformasi Era,” *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2010, pp. 403-04.

be careful not to invoke colonial discipline or displeasure. The authorities responded to the emerging Islamic schooling by issuing limitation policies such as the Goeroe Ordonnantie (Teacher Ordinance) of 1905 and the Wilde Scholen Ordonnantie (Wild School Ordinance) of 1932.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, Islamic groups which presented as a hard opposition, by increasing Islamic political agitation, required the government to take clear political actions to deal with the Islamic leaderships.<sup>40</sup> This is represented by the incident in 1925, when a group of 20.000 members of government-organized 'Sarekat Hijau' (Green Union) attacked the pan-Islamists of Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union) who were attending a meeting with members of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party).<sup>41</sup> Likewise, the amalgamation of Muslims of 'anti-kafir sentiment' and followers of a Marxist discourse on poverty created an Islamic-Communism faction under the leadership of Hajji Datuk Batuah within the modernist Sumatera Thawalib circle.<sup>42</sup> Datuk Batuah's followers had to face challenges from orthodox teachers in the Thawalib who considered accepting Communism as a deviation from Islam, and who criticized the colonial regime. This movement only ran for a couple of months since Datuk Batuah was arrested by the government on November 11th, 1923.<sup>43</sup> What can be inferred from these phenomena is that in the main, Islamic groups from *pesantren* did not overtly confront the colonial regime, meaning that the government did not take a direct preventative action, and this meant they could keep growing despite several limitations.

---

<sup>39</sup> M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern*, p. 223-38.

<sup>40</sup> Harry J. Benda, "Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-45," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1955, pp. 353.

<sup>41</sup> M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern*, p. 224.

<sup>42</sup> Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933)*, *Cornell University Modern Indonesia Project Monograph Series* (Ithaca, N.Y.,: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1971), p. 53.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

The coming of the Japanese to the Indies after the Pearl Harbor attack of 1942 had a significant impact on Islamic groups. The establishment of the Japanese Islamic Association in Tokyo in the 1930s and the attendance of Indonesian Muslims at their conference in 1938 seems to have been enough to legitimate Japan's endorsement of the Islamic community.<sup>44</sup> The Japanese policy in general aimed to involve Muslim leaders in Java as their loyal allies, resulting in the easy mobilization of labor to support the Japanese war targets in the Pacific.<sup>45</sup> The Japanese applied the principle of 'combine and rule', gathering different Muslim groups into one government-sponsored channel and controlling their direction.<sup>46</sup> In this period, the Japanese established the Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia (Masyumi), Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations, as the channel for the pre-existing Islamic organizations, including NU and Muhammadiyah.<sup>47</sup>

The overt involvement of Islamic leadership in the anti-Western campaign brought a new episode in the evolution of Islamic education: their opposition to oppression became more visible in direct action. The Japanese encouraged Islamic teaching activities in villages<sup>48</sup> and even supported Masyumi figures to establish Sekolah Tinggi Islam (now, Universitas Islam Indonesia) in 1945 as the first Islamic Higher Educational Institution in the Indies.<sup>49</sup> Another important fact is that the Japanese set up Pembela Tanah Air (PETA), the Indonesian Volunteers' Corps, at the end of 1943 and this involved Islamic leaders and students

---

<sup>44</sup> Harry J. Benda, "Indonesian Islam," pp. 353-54.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 354.

<sup>46</sup> David Bourchier, *Illiberal Democracy in Indonesia: The Ideology of the Family State* (Taylor and Francis Inc., 2014), p. 53.

<sup>47</sup> Harry J. Benda, "Indonesian Islam," pp. 356.

<sup>48</sup> R. Murray Thomas, "Educational Remnants of Military Occupation: The Japanese in Indonesia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 6, No. 11, 1966, pp. 634.

<sup>49</sup> Kartomo Wirosuhardjo, *Pts Sayang, Pts Perlu Ditimbang: Perguruan Tinggi Swasta Dalam Sorotan* (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2015), p. 4.

of Islamic schools in Java.<sup>50</sup> In the short period of the Japanese Occupation in the Indies (1942-45), Islamic groups gained freedom of expression and played new and active roles. This period provided more open coordination and communication amongst Islamic leaders and the increase of nationalism. Apart from the Japanese political aim to involve many parties in the Indies for their Pacific War effort, the enhanced freedom of expression and roles given to Islamic groups provided room for the groups to expand their contribution for the nation. The expression of anti-oppression values by Islamic leaders seems to have legitimated paternalistic leadership patterns, where *pesantren* disciples could be delegated to fill specific roles, e.g. as teachers, social workers, organization functionaries, or even para-military soldiers. These roles continued even after Japanese left the Indies, following the atomic bombs in Nagasaki and Hiroshima in August 1945. The Indonesian Proclamation of Independence on 17 August 1945 was followed by the attempted return of the Dutch and their allied troops to regain the control of the Indies. The Deklarasi Jihad, Holy War Declaration, was announced by Indonesian *'ulamā'* to invite *kiai* and *santri* to fight against the Dutch troops in Surabaya on 10 November 1945.<sup>51</sup> Nahdlatul Ulama took an immediate action, declaring a *Resolusi Jihad*, Holy War Resolution, on 22 November 1945, stating that it was an obligation for everyone within a 94 kilometer radius of Surabaya to join the holy war.<sup>52</sup> The blend of religious legitimation and trust in the authoritative Islamic leadership was effective for the mass mobilization of the *pesantren* community.

From this survey of the historical landscape from ~1900 to 1945, the characteristics of *pesantren* leaderships appear to develop quite dynamically, from being merely religious to becoming more social and

<sup>50</sup> Harry J. Benda, "Indonesian Islam," pp. 356; Amelia Fauzia, *Faith and the State a History of Islamic Philantrophy in Indonesia*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 175-76.

<sup>51</sup> Abdul Ghoffur Muhaimin, "The Islamic Traditions," p. 232.

<sup>52</sup> Faisal Ismail, "The Nahdlatul Ulama: Its Early History and Contribution to the Establishment of Indonesian State," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2011, pp. 275.

political as well. Justice and humanitarian issues became the trigger for *ijtihad* by Muslim leaders to strive against oppression, but there was still the commitment to maintain the *pesantren*. *Pesantren* leaders had to respond carefully to the changing conditions. Some Islamic leaders tried to combine Islamism with popular ideologies such as Marxism at that time, creating a direct opposition to the government. However, in many cases, this confrontational attitude resulted in the failure of the movement and imprisonment for its leaders. In general, *pesantren* leaders did not show the direct opposition unless the situation was safe. In these circumstances, despite the fact that the virtue of opposition to oppression is inherent in religious teachings, *kiai* were the source of legitimation about what actions to take; and they had to decide whether to stay in Islamic education and community service or to move into new channels, such as the military and politics. The collectivism amongst *kiai* and strong trust from their disciples made it easy for *kiai* to assemble disciples and sympathizers to act together in the same direction.

### ***Pesantren* Leaderships after Independence: Exercising Islamic Schooling Supremacy**

The trend of Muslim leadership's involvement kept increasing in many aspects of life from the beginning of the twentieth century. Their role shifted from that in Islamic education – such as *pesantren* – to Islamic movement organizations and several positions in the newly established governmental circle. Under President Soekarno, the country went through a middle way, neither religious nor secular, by establishing Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA).<sup>53</sup> Under the ministry, the development of Islamic education in the early Independence period was quite complicated and involved many experiments. The Islamic education organizational forms crystalized in 1965 when the Ministry of Religious Affairs recognized the seven formats of Islamic schooling: classic *pesantren*,

---

<sup>53</sup> Amelia Fauzia, *Faith and the State*, p. 180.



Madrasah Diniyah (Madin, madrasah focusing only to Islamic teachings), Private Madrasah (*pesantren* integrating madrasah schooling), Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN, public elementary madrasah), Vocational Madrasah (two year additional vocational training as MIN extension), State Islamic Institute, and allocation of religious education as a school subject in state schools.<sup>54</sup> These seven types of schools reflected the government's accommodation of the pre-existing institutions (such as classic *pesantren*) and modernized institutions (such as madrasah diniyah and private madrasah). In addition, the government came up with their own standardized madrasah (MIN), vocational madrasah (MIN Extension), and higher education (State Islamic Institute). Non-religious schools under the government also had religious subjects despite the minimal standards. The government's recognition of the abovementioned formats of Islamic schooling gave Muslims the freedom to obtain religious lessons while also providing examples of the standardized Islamic schooling.

Education reforms in *pesantren* education are rare and quite depend upon the *kiai's* view towards innovation in education. There was no single perception as to how to navigate the *pesantren* in the middle of hardly ever stable socio-political circumstances. However, modernization had begun in the 1930s when some *pesantren* applied the madrasah (school) grading system.<sup>55</sup> This effort continued in the 1950s when the madrasah incorporated non-religious subjects, such as the Dutch language, history, geography, and mathematics.<sup>56</sup> However, resistance to this manouvre was explicit. Some *kiai* were accused to have “contaminated the *pesantren* with worldly affairs”.<sup>57</sup> Even *Kiai* Wahid Hasyim, the son of *Kiai* Hasyim

---

<sup>54</sup> B. J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia, Verhandelingen Van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*, 59 (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1971), p. 112-14.

<sup>55</sup> Charlene Tan, *Islamic Education and Indoctrination: The Case in Indonesia*, Routledge Research in Education (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 97.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

Asyari, who led his progressive *pesantren*, Tebuireng, became a target of such comment. Usually, a prominent *kiai*'s decision is accepted unquestioningly as a legitimation by the *pesantren* community. The case of Tebuireng, however, indicates a strong resistance to secular knowledge as it was perceived as religiously unacceptable at that time.

It is true that most *pesantren* were (and are still) affiliated with NU. However, the lands where the *pesantren* stand do not belong to the organization, but to the *kiai* instead. Hence, tracing the *pesantren* leaders' attitudes towards the new era leads to a great range of characteristics. Within the intensified process of "questioning" and strengthening Islamic community social position after the independence, several *kiai* exercise a couple of formats of Islamic schooling. Different from Tebuireng leaders that promoted modernization in the *pesantren*, *Kiai* Idham Chalid, for instance, established the more populist Islamic school Perguruan Darul Maarif in 1954. The *kiai*, far from being profit-oriented, focused on giving the opportunity to the low-income and less-educated community members to get a diploma.<sup>58</sup> The two instances (Tebuireng and Darul Maarif), indicate that *pesantren* had experimented adaptations in Islamic education to suit the current needs far before MoRA crystalized the "official platforms" of Islamic schooling. It is not a matter of what Western knowledge to take into the *pesantren* curriculum, but rather, how *pesantren* and other similar institutions adjust their religious orientations to re-manifest themselves in the more open period.

### **To Oppose or to Play a Bargain: Some Cases of *Pesantren* Leaderships in the New Order Period**

Following the 30 September 1965 coup (G30S), which eventually led to Soekarno's resignation from power, Soeharto's presidency (1966-1998) has been characterized as creating "political stability and communal

---

<sup>58</sup> Ahmad Syafii Maarif and George A. Fowler, *Islam, Humanity and the Indonesian Identity, Debates on Islam and Society* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2018), p. 173.

harmony” to encourage the inflow of foreign investment funds.<sup>59</sup> The price for the stability and harmony was the sacrifice of civil liberties.<sup>60</sup> Political power in the country centered on the President and aided by the army, and only three political parties were recognized: the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) as the representative of the religious (read: Muslim) groups; Golongan Karya (Golkar) as the pro-government; and Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI) as the channel for the nationalists.

Despite their peculiar characteristics, the three political parties were required to endorse Pancasila (the five principles) as the sole principle (*Asas Tunggal*).<sup>61</sup> This ‘sole principle’ became the political-ideological umbrella that was mutually shared by any political ideologies. As the “intersectional ideology”, this principle was expected to prevent potential conflicts among politicians. In addition, two bodies made strong contributions to the political stability of the New Order. Firstly, ABRI (the armed forces) played major roles in national defense and security as well as in a sociopolitical environment by shadowing the civilian government structure from the top to the very lowest level, and with allocated seats in parliament.<sup>62</sup> Secondly, the government devised the political party Golkar as an electoral machine. Golkar consistently delivered electoral victories of about two-thirds of the vote, e.g. with 62.8 percent of the vote in the 1971 election.<sup>63</sup> This political measure shows the government’s effort to align all political and social elements in accordance with the government’s will. Consequently, any initiative

---

<sup>59</sup> Adam Schwarz, “Indonesia after Suharto,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 4, 1997), pp. 120.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Dewi Fortuna Anwar, “The Habibie Presidency: Catapulting Towards Reform,” Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy (eds.), *Soeharto’s New Order and Its Legacy: Essays in Honour of Harold Crouch* (Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: The Australian National University, 2010), p. 106.

<sup>62</sup> Edward Aspinall, “Opposing Suharto : Compromise, Resistance, and Regime Change in Indonesia,” *East-West Center Series on Contemporary Issues in Asia and the Pacific* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 22.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

from the grassroots level had to obtain both permission and blessing from the top authority in order to get support.

The political circumstances forced *pesantren* leaders to determine whether to support, to oppose, or to try to bargain with the government. After experiencing challenges and constant persecutions in the political party PPP, NU—the organization with the most *pesantren* affiliates—returned to its origins, focusing upon socio-religious activities, though it still accepted Pancasila as its sole principle.<sup>64</sup> NU's withdrawal from the PPP in 1983 reflects how the organization tried to negotiate with the regime of the New Order. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) emerged as the NU leader and suggested that the decision was for the benefit of the organization. No longer affiliated with any political party, along with an improved relationship with government at a local level, *pesantren* development programs and other NU activities often earned financial support.<sup>65</sup> This accommodating attitude did not mean that NU ideologically supported the autocratic regime, but simply meant that it pragmatically gained adequate space to develop. As reflected in NU leader's view, "being oppositional was perhaps more heroic but it did not leave one the freedom to do the things that really matter".<sup>66</sup>

One *pesantren* to support the government was the *pesantren* run by the *tarekat* (Sufi order) Shiddiqiyah. *Pesantren* Shiddiqiyah is located in Jombang, a home to most NU founders. However, this *pesantren* does not affiliate with NU. The Federasi Tarekat Muktabarah NU (NU's Recognized Sufi Order Federation) categorized Tarekat Shiddiqiyah as an unlawful *tarekat* due to its unclear chain of transmission (*silsila*).<sup>67</sup> *Kiai* Muhammad

---

<sup>64</sup> M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern*, p. 378; Steven Drakeley, *The History of Indonesia, The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005), p. 123.

<sup>65</sup> Edward Aspinall, *Opposing Subarto*, p. 75.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> The federation considered tarekat Shiddiqiyah as a new tarekat, does not affiliate with mainstream tarekat in which their chain of transmissions are *ṣaḥīḥ*/authentic. The authenticity provides trusted transmitters and transmitted contents

Mukhtar Mu'thi, the founder as well as the Mursyid of Shiddiqiyah saw this as a threat for the future of the *tarekat* and therefore took a further action to convince their disciples that the *tarekat* did not contradict Islam nor the government. His effort to approach the government was unique by adapting and assimilating the *tarekat*'s principles with that of the state, Pancasila.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, the *tarekat* appeared with a nationalistic slogan, showing its pro-nationalist ideology, and therefore gained socio-political support from Golkar.<sup>69</sup> This case shows how a *pesantren* navigates through its allegiance with the government in order to ensure its continuity.

Unlike the two abovementioned *pesantren*, *Pesantren al-Mukmin* (also known as *Pesantren Ngruki*) under Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, which is controversial today in relation to the *pesantren*'s involvement in terrorist acts, had a history of posing a strong opposition toward the New Order regime. In the 1982 trial, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir were accused of being anti-nationalist due to their refusal to raise the Indonesian national flag at their schools, conducting events without the presence of the village head, impairing Pancasila, criticizing Indonesian officials at *pengajian* (Islamic study session), and provoking villagers to disobey man-made law because it contradicted Islamic law.<sup>70</sup> Sungkar, as a person who was ideologically Masyumi, criticized the absence of the freedom of expression and political involvement for ex-Masyumi members in Partai Muslimin Indonesia (Parmusi), a Masyumi-based political party in the New Order period, and this created a dramatic backfire.<sup>71</sup> Some Islamic movements -and *pesantren* affiliated with them-

---

which connect current generation to Prophet Muhammad. Abd. Syukur, "Gerakan Tarekat Shiddiqiyah Pusat Losari, Ploso, Jombang (Studi Tentang Strategi Bertahan, Struktur Mobilisasi, Dan Proses Pembangkaian)" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2008), p. 5, 334.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Sydney Jones, "New Order Repression and the Birth of Jemaah Islamiyah," Edward Aspinall, Greg Fealy, and Harold A. Crouch (eds.), *Soeharto's New Order and Its Legacy Essays in Honour of Harold Crouch* (Acton, A.C.T.: ANU E Press, 2010), p. 43.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

opposing the government became the “right extreme”, juxtaposed with Communism as the “left extreme”. The case of *Pesantren* Ngruki’s opposition suggests that the New Order regime limited Muslims’ political rights and implemented strict regulations using government bodies.

These cases of NU and two other examples of *pesantren* in the New Order period illustrate how *pesantren* leaders’ decisions in dealing with untoward situations for the development of their *pesantren*. In addition, different theological schools appears in the *pesantren* community attitudes. NU upheld the principle of weighing the advantages and disadvantages from any action taken and focused upon the continuation of the organization. As a result, NU built a relationship with the government that was not political. This move allowed the organization to gain more freedom to develop and a stronger bargaining position with the government. In the context of the *al-shafi’i* jurisprudence school of thought, this attitude stresses the “caution, moderation, and flexibility” even in the face of authoritarian rulers.<sup>72</sup> A similar action was taken by *Pesantren* Shiddiqiyah, which recognized a commonality between the *tarekat* teachings and Pancasila, and refrained from identifying either as predominant or superior. The *tarekat pesantren* was seen as a “safe” institution “supporting” the government. The case of *Pesantren* Ngruki, however, presents a contrast. Its opposing attitude toward Pancasila, the national flag, and other national attributes did not emerge until the New Order. In the Japanese Occupation period, Masyumi had been a channel for religious sentiments. Inside Masyumi, there were also NU and Muhammadiyah elements. Masyumi also emerged as a political party in the post-Independence period. Therefore, the reason why former Masyumi figures, such as Sungkar, who co-founded *Pesantren* Ngruki, openly opposed the government, generated a big question. The history of ex-Masyumi members would have been different if the Old Order

---

<sup>72</sup> Greg Fealy, “Nahdlatul Ulama and the Decline of Parliamentary Democracy,” David Bourchier and J. D. Legge (eds.), *Democracy in Indonesia, 1950s and 1990s* (Clayton, Vic.: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994).

and the New Order regimes had treated the Islamists without such harsh rejection.

In short, since the colonial times, Islamic organizations in Indonesia have always had to adapt to the state politics. In some cases, *pesantren* have been an outpost in the education field, e.g. *Pesantren Ngruki* was an indirect channel for Masyumi sentiments. On the other hand, along with *pesantren's* roles in Islamic outreach, several *pesantren* gathered together to form organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Sumatera Thawalib. *Pesantren* leadership is characterized by a Godly orientation and is manifested in various ways, e.g. whether to be “softly unsupportive” or to strongly oppose what is considered as oppression. Some leaders prioritized the continuation of *pesantren* education and bargained with authorities. Others positioned education as a means of struggle along the path of justice and therefore took a direct action to oppose tyranny and oppression.

### **Manifesting Religious-Orientation in Reformation Era: Three Cases of *Pesantren* Leadership in Madura, Java, and Lombok**

The reformation in economy, law, and politics in 1998 created an atmosphere of openness through democratization. Although Indonesia's democracy was still young, Reformation era paved the way for the freedom of expression, crucial for *pesantren*. From the colonial period, *pesantren* have expressed their opposition towards oppression and other social injustice issues while, many of them, put concerns of the continuation of Islamic education. This attitude indicates the two sides of the same coin, the cultivation of Islamic virtues and the social actions as their manifestation. This section discusses how contemporary *pesantren* leaders express their *pesantren's* religious orientations in the period of Reformation and transparency. Three *pesantren* are selected as case studies: A traditional *pesantren* in Madura and two progressive *pesantren* respectively in Java and Lombok.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Under Human Research Ethics approval from the University of Western Australia with reference number RA/4/20/4265 obtained on 17 May 2018, I have to



### *A Conservative Pesantren in Madura*

Whereas many *pesantren* have adjusted their *pesantren* structures and pedagogies in accordance with different circumstances, this particular *pesantren* in Madura has remained relatively unchanged from its date of establishment back in the middle of the ninetieth century. Leaders' regeneration and social roles, as well as *pesantren's* pedagogies have undergone a very slow modification. The leadership of this *pesantren* is usually handed down from the *kiai* to his oldest son. The *kiai* candidate pursues Islamic training *pesantren* in Indonesia and often continues his studies in the Middle East. Hence, the *kiai* scholarship in this *pesantren* appears identical over different periods of leadership.

The education in this *pesantren* has a strong emphasis on spirituality as it is considered the highest attainment in education. In the beginning, the *santri* are encouraged to learn about Islamic jurisprudence and morality. But soon, a few selected *santri* go through the Sufism training directly under the *kiai's* supervision. This can be inferred that the *kiai* hands down the highest *ijazah* (license) only to the *santri* who is regarded spiritually mature. Furthermore, it is common for community members outside the *pesantren* to visit the *kiai* to ask for a spiritual advice regarding family issues, jobs, and others. These roles define the *kiai* as a teacher as well as a spiritual leader in community.

Before the 1998 Reformation, the *kiai* refused any aid from government, as he perceived it would bring some sort of political relationship to the *pesantren*. The economy of the *pesantren* depended largely upon the *kiai's* family and eventually, his rice fields have become the financial resources for both his family and the *pesantren*. In addition, the alumni have created networks to maintain their relationships with the teachers as well as to support the *pesantren* financially. Despite the *pesantren's* autonomous nature *vis-à-vis* the government, its leaders keep the confidentiality of the *pesantren's* identity and any individual related to them. This subset is a small portion from the fieldwork. More specific issues will be made available in separate publications.



maintain their cultural roles in linking the community's aspiration with the government, because the *pesantren's* founding father gained an aristocratic status from his marriage to one of the sultan's family members. In other words, being unaffiliated with the government does not mean that the *kiai* opposes the government altogether. Protecting the *pesantren's* dignity from the negative consequences of being actively involved in politics remains the main concern.

With the helps from outsiders regarding the standardization of *pesantren*, the *kiai* approved the implementation of *madrasah diniyah* schooling system in 2010. The *santri* were divided into six grades according to age, making the learning more regulated both spatially and temporally. Prior to this, the *kiai* family maintained the *pesantren* education in a *laissez-faire* way, meaning that the teachers of the *pesantren* could deliver lessons according to their own schedules, instructions, methods, evaluations, and without academic report. In addition, the learning process used to take place in the masjid in two shifts: *santri* (male students) were taught in the daytime and *santrivati* (female students) in the evening. Today, both *santri* and *santrivati* learn *pesantren's* religious subjects in the evening, so they can go to school during the day. This approach was taken after a *kiai's* relative who also ran a *pesantren* applied the approach and encouraged other *pesantren* to follow. Even more, computer skills were introduced to the *santri* although they had to involve outsiders as the teachers in the *pesantren* did not have such skills. This phenomenon suggests that the *kiai* is the only and the highest decision maker in a traditional *pesantren*. The slow innovation in this *pesantren* does not always indicate the *pesantren's* resistance to modernity. In the case of this *pesantren* in Madura, the *kiai* is very open to new knowledge and technology. However, the *pesantren* community depends on outsiders' assistance the human resources are not available.

As the leader of an institution focusing on the preservation of Islamic jurisprudence and morality, the *kiai* does not really have a

milestone for the future of the *pesantren* or anything related to it. His major concern is the continuity of the *pesantren*'s mission, the Islamic outreach. Therefore, in the *pesantren*, the *kiai* serves as the one to decide whether change should be made or suspended. Hence, one cannot predict the continuation of the *pesantren* because the leaders' decisions will only be made when a social change occurs. *Kiai* will likely to negotiate the aspects of change and to base his decision on the continuation of the missions of the *pesantren*.

### *Two Progressive Pesantren in Java and Lombok*

The second and the third *pesantren* I visited are located in Java and Lombok. They are quite young *pesantren*, established in the middle of the twentieth century. The *pesantren* are progressive in terms of the nature of their Islamic outreach delivery. The government, NGOs, and international institutions recognize their efforts to make a positive change in their communities. With religious virtues as their basis, the Java *pesantren* concerns itself with the development, education, and environmental improvement in the community. The second innovative *pesantren*, the one in Lombok, emphasizes on the environmental issues, women's empowerment, and interfaith tolerance. The two *pesantren* emerged as a reaction to the socio-religious and humanitarian issues in the areas. Hence, they have been involved in the problem solving for various social issues.

Unlike most *pesantren* under the leadership of one *kiai*, collective leadership with a division of labor (specialization) applies in both researched *pesantren*, meaning that there are more than one *kiai* (Java) or *tuan guru* (Lombok) to maintain the *pesantren* at the same time. In addition, the leadership is more egalitarian in nature compared to other *pesantren*. It is common to witness the leaders blending together with the *santri* in many activities, such as when setting up a building, harvesting, and cleaning up. The *kiai* and the *tuan guru* maintain that this way they can give a real example of what they preach. Interestingly, both leaders hide their

aristocratic lineages to motivate people of non-aristocrat families that anyone can make a change. From the interviews I conducted, the *kiai* in fact belong to a *kiai* family and the *tuan guru* have an aristocratic lineage from a Lombok local king. Undoubtedly, the *kiai* inherit a cultural capital from their ancestors and attempt to spread their work ethics through *pesantren* education, making them the cultural transmitters rooted in the characters of the *pesantren's* founding fathers.

Whereas most *pesantren* are patriarchal as indicated by the presence of males in most leading positions, in the studied *pesantren* in Java and Lombok, leaders attempt to balance the proportion of male and female members in the *pesantren* management. The Java *pesantren* appoints females as the leaders of its branches despite the fact that women in the *pesantren* form a minority. Almost similar, *santrivati* of the Lombok *pesantren* are taught to do men's jobs, such as driving and managing waste. Therefore, *santrivati* can administer their own area and minimize the involvement of *santri* to help them. Both cases show how the *pesantren* leaders take woman empowerment into account with the intention of increasing women's roles in Islamic outreach.

Another characteristic of the two *pesantren* leadership is its autonomous nature. Regarding the *pesantren* funding, although the two *pesantren* may receive financial help from outside, they refrain from actively asking for sponsorship from other parties. Furthermore, the leaders in both *pesantren* allow their lands to be cultivated or even owned by the *pesantren* if required, but they cannot make use of *pesantren's* property or facilities for their personal benefit. And for this reason, there is a separating accounting for the *pesantren* and the *kiai*. In terms of tuition fee, the Java *pesantren* can be free of charge or almost free. Similarly, studying at the Lombok *pesantren* requires a small contribution from *santri* to cover their needs. There is a shared understanding in both *pesantren* that men and women in the leadership team must run the *pesantren* while also being responsible for their families. This characteristic corresponds

to the traditional *pesantren* in Madura, where the *pesantren* is managed by collective supports, although the *kiai* remains the one with the highest responsibility.

Due to the *pesantren's* concerns in Islamic education and social issues, *pesantren* members are often involved in the communal activities outside the *pesantren*. In this context, the *pesantren* leaders believe that spiritual exercises, such as *dhikr* (remembrance) can be made in different occasions, including at work. The *tuan guru* in Lombok stated that this interpretation originated from his grand *syaiikh*. As the *syaiikh* experienced intensifying social issues outside *pesantren*, the responsibility of the *pesantren* grew bigger as well. Therefore, Sufism exercises for the *pesantren* community may alter from a conventional way, such as sitting down and chanting in the mosque, into fulfilling social tasks such as working and being involved in communal activities.

As a response to the Western education style, the Java *pesantren* uses two curriculums, that of the *madrasah* and of the *pesantren*. The *madrasah* adopts the national curriculum with a more western style, whereas the *pesantren* operates using an internal curriculum with *pesantren* courses and a credit system. *Santri* can take as many semester credits as they are able to handle and learn various life skills, such as aged care, construction, disaster management, woman and child protection, organic farming, forestry, fisheries, waste management, trading, and other skills that may be required in the community. They will also be accustomed to open a dialogue and share their knowledge with outsiders from various academic backgrounds. *Santri* and *santriwati* have to do one year of service in one of sixty-odd branches of the *pesantren* all over Indonesia. After completing the service year, they can choose whether to start their lives outside the *pesantren* or to continue their service in the *pesantren*. The number of those continuing the service in the *pesantren* increases every year. Occasionally, the *pesantren* arrange marriages among the alumni who decide stay in the *pesantren*. After several generations, the profile of the *pesantren* is strongly

preserved in the area of social work. The *pesantren*'s training prior to the marriage suggests that the leaders not only reproduce their ideology to the next generation but also facilitate the generation to continue what the previous leaders did.

Like the *pesantren* in Java, the one in Lombok expresses its appreciation to both Islamic discourses and Western education. Hence, the leaders decided to adopt three curriculums simultaneously: madrasah curriculum, *pesantren*-model curriculum,<sup>74</sup> and holistic-knowledge curriculum.<sup>75</sup> The *pesantren* gives much freedom to the *santri* and teaching staff to manage the rules and learning activities for the *santri*. The role of the *tuan guru* here is to make sure that both the *santri* and teaching staff follow the basic values of the *pesantren*. The *tuan guru* positions the *pesantren* as a field of curriculum implementation whereas written and unwritten lessons in the classroom and outside it can influence the development of *santri*'s personal identity. After accomplishing the last year of *pesantren* education, it is up to the *santri* whether to take one year of service in the *pesantren* or not. Furthermore, the *santri* are also trained to be aware of social and environmental conditions outside the *pesantren*. In the 2000s, the *pesantren* distributed at least one million seeds ready to plant in all over the island. The *santri* are also encouraged to actively engage themselves in interfaith dialogues, especially between the Muslims and Hindus in the area. In regards to the education for the *santrivati*, the *pesantren* believes that an educated mother contributes to the quality of the next generation.

---

<sup>74</sup> This *pesantren* follows its *pesantren*-model curriculum in Java in some aspects, such as Arabic language, English language, Islamic jurisprudence, Quranic recitation rules, computer, arts, and Arabic calligraphy. The *tuan guru* is an alumnus of the *pesantren* model and he considered the curriculum in the *pesantren* best represent progressive *pesantren* curriculum at this moment.

<sup>75</sup> This curriculum recognized considers both religious disciplines and non-religious ones cannot be separated one to another. In their theological view, all knowledge is coming from God through every entities created by God. Therefore, this curriculum covers what is in the classroom and what is outside it. The purpose is to create *santri* who are pious and have strong leadership.

Aside from the roles of the *kiai* and *tuan guru* in their pesantren and local communities, their involvement in the politics is of high interest. Unlike politicians in general, both leaders visit their constituents in person and persuade them to support their candidacy. The trust in *pesantren* leadership is the main attribute, on which the reputation and continuation of a *pesantren* depend. Losing trust in a *kiai* patron could lead to the *pesantren*'s reputation decline. Despite the fact that the *kiai* and *tuan guru* never won an election, they keep educating their disciples to be responsible with their political decisions. They believe that any decision made in life will be accounted for in the hereafter. In other words, the *pesantren* leaders' views on seemingly non-religious areas, such as politics, are based on religion. This characteristic is apparent in the *pesantren* whose leaders have a cosmopolitan background.

The three *pesantren* in Madura, Java, and Lombok show that the figure of a *pesantren* leadership has two dimensions, namely the *kiai* as an integral part of the *pesantren* and the *kiai* as a *pesantren* director. As an integral part, the *kiai* cannot be replaced by an outsider. Therefore, the rise and fall of a *pesantren* relies much on the directing ability of this naturally irreplaceable leadership. In addition, the success of *pesantren* alumni also depends on the *pesantren*'s charismatic leader.<sup>76</sup> A *kiai* is often the only patron and source of knowledge in many *santri*'s lives. In several innovative *pesantren*, however, a single-source leadership model has transformed into a more collective leadership, with everyone involved holds a division of labor. Interestingly, the *kiai*'s family members have the priority to occupy these positions. For the *tuan guru* in Lombok, *pesantren darah biru*<sup>77</sup> has more sense of responsibility for maintaining the *pesantren*, not only because it has a religious education mission but it also serves as a familial heritage. "For *darah biru*, maintaining the *pesantren* is

---

<sup>76</sup> Nurcholish Majid, *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: Sebuah Potret Perjalanan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1997).

<sup>77</sup> *Darah biru* literally means blue blood, an idiomatic phrase for aristocratic descents.

like *menggenggam bara dalam sekam*<sup>78</sup> – the non-*darab biru* would not be able to endure a series of painful situations”, the *tuan guru* said.

## Conclusions

Throughout the centuries, *pesantren* in Indonesia have experienced transformations in terms of leadership characteristics. *Pesantren*, which was initially religious and spiritual in nature, has broaden its spectrum and embraced other characteristics. *Pesantren leadership* can be social-religious or militia. It can also adopt a collective leadership, instead of a single-source leadership model. The case studies suggest that *pesantren* leadership is fluid and in constant negotiation with the social dynamics and adjustment to the different circumstances. The changes in *pesantren* leadership suggest that the spirit of Islamic outreach sometimes takes on the character of moral leadership, in which the *kiai* and their followers share the common values and navigate in the same direction under the *kiai* leadership. *Pesantren* disciples/followers take up a position of subservience toward their charismatic *kiai* because both the leaders and followers share the same religious virtues, creating a mutual understanding around the issues in the community and how to come to a resolution.

As globalization creates more complex challenges, *pesantren* leadership is required to acquire a wider range of knowledge. A collective leadership model in newly emerged progressive *pesantren* might offer a good solution, wherein leaders of different kinds of expertise collaborate effectively.

The emerging progressive *pesantren* led by young *kiai* seem to be a new phenomenon in the world of Indonesian Islamic education. However, historically, both *pesantren* and *kiai* have always had to adapt to social and political dynamics, which sometimes are against Islamic virtues, such as political injustice and oppression. The innovation in contemporary *pesantren* is the most recent form of adjustment related to

---

<sup>78</sup> Holding burning coals in the husk, dealing with a thing gradually getting worse.

Islamic outreach. Whereas the traditional models of Islamic outreach in *pesantren* are found mostly in a slowly changed society,<sup>79</sup> in a more active community,<sup>80</sup> Muslims demand religious reforms, not only in displaying greater piety in social life, but also in reconstructing piety through contemporary modes, such as democracy and modernity. Modernization in the Indonesian Islamic world involves faith and piety at its heart, to counter the “secularization of consciousness” which marks much of the modern world.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> The slowly changed society in this context refers to a society in the neighborhood or greater area, which is physically surrounding *pesantren*.

<sup>80</sup> Different from the previously mentioned society, the society in this context refers to networks of community members in which the community members do not have to live physically in neighboring places.

<sup>81</sup> Elisabeth Jackson and Lyn Parker, “Enriched with Knowledge’: Modernisation, Islamisation and the Future of Islamic Education in Indonesia,” *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* Vol. 42, No. 1, 2008, pp. 22-23.



## Bibliography

- Abdullah, Taufik, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933)*, Cornell University Modern Indonesia Project Monograph Series, Ithaca, N.Y.; Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1971.
- Antlov, Hans and Sven Cederroth, *Leadership on Java: Gentle Hints, Authoritarian Rule*, Studies in Asian Topics, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1994.
- Anwar, Dewi Fortuna, "The Habibie Presidency: Catapulting Towards Reform," Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy (eds.), *Soeharto's New Order and Its Legacy: Essays in Honour of Harold Crouch*, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: The Australian National University, 2010.
- Aspinall, Edward, *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance, and Regime Change in Indonesia*. East-West Center Series on Contemporary Issues in Asia and the Pacific, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Azra, Azyumardi. "Distinguishing Indonesian Islam Some Lessons to Learn," Jajat Burhanudin and Kees van Dijk (eds.), *Islam in Indonesia Contrasting Images and Interpretations*, edited Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013.
- Benda, Harry J., "Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-45," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1955.
- Boland, B. J., *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, Verhandelingen Van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde, 59. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971.
- Bourchier, David, *Illiberal Democracy in Indonesia: The Ideology of the Family State*, Taylor and Francis Inc., 2014.
- Bruinessen, Martin van, "Pesantren and *Kitāb Kuning*: Continuity and Change in a Tradition of Religious Learning," Wolfgang Marschall (ed.), *Texts from the Islands. Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World*, Berne: University of Berne, 1994.
- Burhanudin, Jajat, "Redefining the Roles of Islamic Organizations in the Reformasi Era," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2010.

**Auliya Ridwan:** *The Dynamics of Pesantren*.....

- Castles, Lance, "Notes on the Islamic School at Gontor," *Indonesia*, No. 1, 1966.
- Dhofier, Zamakhsyari, "The *Pesantren* Tradition: A Study of the Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of the Traditional Ideology of Islam in Java," *Phd Thesis*, Australian National University, 1980.
- Dhofier, Zamakhsyari, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai*, Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, 1982.
- Djajadiningrat, Loekman and Ch O. van der Plas, *From Illiteracy to University*, New York: Institute of Pacific relations. 8th conference Mont Tremblant Que. 1942., 1944.
- Drakeley, Steven, *The History of Indonesia*. The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005.
- Fauzia, Amelia, *Faith and the State a History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia*. Vol. 1, Brill's Southeast Asian Library, Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Fealy, Greg, "Nahdlatul Ulama and the Decline of Parliamentary Democracy," David Bourchier and J. D. Legge (eds.), *Democracy in Indonesia, 1950s and 1990s*, Clayton, Vic.: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1994.
- Ileto, Reynaldo, "Religion and Anti-Colonial Movements," Nicholas Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, Vol 2, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Ismail, Faisal, "The Nahdlatul Ulama: Its Early History and Contribution to the Establishment of Indonesian State," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2011.
- Jackson, Elisabeth and Lyn Parker, "Enriched with Knowledge?: Modernisation, Islamisation and the Future of Islamic Education in Indonesia," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2008.
- Jones, Sydney, "New Order Repression and the Birth of Jemaah Islamiyah," Edward Aspinall, Greg Fealy, and Harold A. Crouch (eds.), *Soeharto's New Order and Its Legacy Essays in Honour of Harold Crouch*, Acton, A.C.T.: ANU E Press, 2010.

- Lukens-Bull, Ronald A., "The Tradition of Pluralism, Accommodation, and Anti-Radicalism in the *Pesantren* Community," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2008.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii and George A. Fowler, *Islam, Humanity and the Indonesian Identity, Debates on Islam and Society*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2018.
- Majid, Nurcholish, *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren : Sebuah Potret Perjalanan*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1997.
- Moesa, Ali Maschan, *Nasionalisme Kiai: Konstruksi Sosial Berbasis Agama*, Surabaya; Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Ampel Press; LKiS: Distribusi, LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2007.
- Muhaimin, Abdul Ghoffur, "The Islamic Traditions of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat among Javanese Muslims," Australian National University, 1995.
- OECD/ADB. *Education in Indonesia: Rising to the Challenge*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2015.
- Persis. "Sejarah Persatuan Islam." 2015. Accessed 2017 <http://persis.or.id/sejarah-persatuan-islam/>.
- Pigeaud, Theodore G. TH. and Hermanus Johannes de Graaf, *Islamic States in Java 1500-1700 : Eight Dutch Books and Articles by H. J. De Graaf*, Verhandelingen Van Het Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Landen Volkenkunde 70, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976.
- Pohl, Florian, "Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the *Pesantren* Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia," *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 2006.
- Reid, Anthony, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Ricklefs, M. C., *A History of Modern Indonesia since C. 1200*. 3rd ed. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Schwarz, Adam, "Indonesia after Suharto," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 4, 1997.
- Smith, Bianca J. and Mark R. Woodward, *Gender and Power in Indonesian Islam: Leaders, Feminists, Sufis and Pesantren Selves*, Asian Studies Association of Australia Women in Asia Series, London; New York:

Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014.

- Srimulyani, Eka, *Women from Traditional Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia: Negotiating Public Spaces*, Iias Publications Series Monographs, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012.
- Syakur, Abd., “Gerakan Tarekat Shiddiqiyah Pusat Losari, Ploso, Jombang: Studi Tentang Strategi Bertahan, Struktur Mobilisasi, dan Proses Pembimbingan,” UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2008.
- Tan, Charlene, *Islamic Education and Indoctrination: The Case in Indonesia*. Routledge Research in Education, New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Thomas, R. Murray, “Educational Remnants of Military Occupation: The Japanese in Indonesia,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 6, No. 11, 1966.
- Turmudi, Endang, “Religion and Politics: A Study on Political Attitudes of Devout Muslims and the Role of the “Kyai” in Contemporary Java,” *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1995.
- , “Struggling for the Umma: Changing Leadership Roles of *Kiai* in Jombang, East Java,” Australian National University, 1996.
- Wirosuhardjo, Kartomo, *Pts Sayang, Pts Perlu Ditimbang: Perguruan Tinggi Swasta Dalam Sorotan*, Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2015.
- Zayd, Nasr Abu, *Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Historical Analysis*, Amsterdam University Press, 2006.
- Zulkifli, *Sufism in Java: The Role of the Pesantren in the Maintenance of Sufism in Java*, Leiden, Netherlands: Indonesian-Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies, 2002.