

# THE DYNAMIC SURVIVAL OF PESANTREN IN INDONESIA

## A BRIEF EXPLANATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL MUSLIM EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** After the ratification of Pesantren's Law, the existence of pesantren (*Islamic boarding school*) more be recognized as an integral part of the national education system. Historically, it has much uniqueness. In the modern era, its dynamics in Indonesia faced problematic situations: the pressure of the colonizers and the modernization of the educational system that provide disadvantages. Also, the decline of the centers of Islamic culture has residues. On one side, such situations force pesantren to take extra careful steps to look less agile in reforming its educational and institutional system in the context of the fulfillment of its traditional functions. On the side, the tradition of Islamic science developed is deemed to be very close to the Sufistic-juristic inclination that belongs to the non-puritan school. As the penetration of the modernization in the national education system is gradually accepted, its dialectical pattern has pushed pesantren to take the convergent process that makes this institution to compete as an educational institution and education provider as well.

**Keywords:** Pesantren, Dialectical Approach, Convergent Process

## INTRODUCTION

Various existing subjects generally elaborate on the excellence or uniqueness of *pesantren* as an educational and religious institution that be able to survive until now in the middle of the pressure of the modernization of the national education system. The uniqueness of *pesantren* is also demonstrated by its essential involvement in the long process of Islamization so that Islam can

emerge as a religion held by the majority of Indonesians, especially people in Java Island.<sup>1</sup> According to Dhofier, the tradition of *pesantren* is the spearhead of the development of the Malay Archipelago civilization between the XV century and the XVIII century. Without the habit of *pesantren*, the majority of people in the Malay Archipelago today are not necessarily Muslim.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the excellence and the uniqueness of *pesantren*, there have been suggestions from some Founding Fathers to make *pesantren*, which is close to indigenous pattern, a national school alternative. It is also considered to have a lot of strengths when compared with Western schools. The forces of *pesantren* include: first, the boarding system that allows the educators (*kyai*) to guide and monitor the students (*santri*) directly; second, the intimacy (personal relationship) between *santri* and *kyai*, which is very conducive for active learning process and thorough studies; third, the capability of *pesantren* to produce independent graduates; fourth, the simple lifestyle of *pesantren* community; fifth, the low cost of the learning and education; and sixth, the strong community participation.<sup>3</sup> In the context of the dynamics of the national education system and the shift in the educational orientation of the community, the actualization of the excellence and the uniqueness of *pesantren* is undoubtedly fascinating to be studied, given that *pesantren* is faced with situations that require it to have dialectics along with the existing development so that its "traditional" characteristics do not make the spurs of its uniqueness dull.

The dynamics of *pesantren* has lasted for a long time. The emergence of the reformers' ideals and assumptions with their modernization of education has contributed to the shaping of *pesantren's* dialectical attitudes and tendencies described as "resisting and following."<sup>4</sup> The *pesantren* world rejects the religious ideals and assumptions of the reformers. However, to survive in stemming the widespread influence of the reformers' religious belief, *pesantren* also undertakes several accommodation and adaptations that can support its continuity to preserve its traditional functions, namely: (1) the transmission and transfer of religious knowledge, (2) the maintenance of Islamic traditions, and (3) the reproduction of *ulama* (Islamic experts).<sup>5</sup> However, in the post-colonial period

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<sup>1</sup> Hasan Mu'arif Ambary, *Menemukan Peradaban: Jejak Arkeologis dan Historis Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1998), 318-319.

<sup>2</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Memadu Modernitas untuk Kemajuan Bangsa* (Yogyakarta: Nawasea Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Husni Rahim, *Arah Baru Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Logos, 2001), 150-152.

<sup>4</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru* (Jakarta: Logos, 1999), 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

when the Indonesian government has implemented the national education system, the development of *pesantren* has not been in line with the age of its emergence and its role of social transformation that has existed for many centuries.

## FIND AND DISCUSSION

### *The Historical Background of Pesantren*

The shift in the center of the Islamization process in Java from the coastal areas to the rural/remote locations and the intense penetration of Western colonizers are viewed as having a close relationship with the growing process and the secret development of *pesantren* in the rural areas. It marked the constellation shift in power in Java from the coastal areas to the remote areas along with the change of its basis from maritime trade to rural agriculture and Islamic peripheralization. It was because Islam had lost its integrative element to be able to incorporate economic, political, and religious power under the state.<sup>6</sup>

After the Javanese political hegemony shifted from the coast, Demak, to the remote areas, first to Pajang and finally to Mataram, Javanese tradition increasingly showed its form. One of the important consequences is the separation of the three prominent institutions that had supported Demak and other coastal *kadipatens* (regions in a Sultanate), namely *keraton* (royal palace) as the center of power, market as the center of trade, and *pesantren* as the center of religious matters.<sup>7</sup> The historical process was suspected as the end of the power of *ulama*-plus-king and the beginning of the process of *pesantren*-based traditional Islamic formation.<sup>8</sup> Besides, the historical process was also judged as the cause of the transformation of the knowledge system and the deformation of the religiosity pattern, from rational design to a mythical way.<sup>9</sup> The change included from pluralistic urban culture into homogeneous rural culture and from

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<sup>6</sup> A. E. Priyono, "Periferalisasi, Oposisi dan Integrasi Islam di Indonesia: Menyimak Pemikiran Dr. Kuntowijoyo" in Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi untuk Aksi* (Bandung: Mizan, 7<sup>th</sup>ed, 1996), 27-29.

<sup>7</sup> Taufik Abdullah, "Islam dan Pembentukan Tradisi di Asia Tenggara: Sebuah Perspektif Perbandingan", in Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique, *Tradisi dan Kebangkitan Islam di Asia Tenggara* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1989), 88.

<sup>8</sup> Jajat Burhanudin, "Ulama dan Politik Pembentukan Umat: Sekilas Pengalaman Sejarah Indonesia", in Jajat Burhanudin and Ahmad Baedowi (ed.), *Transformasi Otoritas Keagamaan* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2003), 11.

<sup>9</sup> A. E. Priyono, "Periferalisasi", in Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam*, 29-30.

open, dynamic coastal-trader culture into static and enclosed rural-remote culture.<sup>10</sup>

Remote (rural) areas had strong roots sustaining the tradition of “Javanese religious tradition,” a tradition resulting from a potent “syncretic” mix between the beliefs of Animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.<sup>11</sup> Remote (rural) areas also relied on agrarian-agricultural livelihoods. Because the da'wah (preaching) mission was brought by Sufi *da'is* (preachers) from fertile agricultural regions, with *tasawuf* (Islamic mysticism) pattern attached to the initial process of Islamization, the tradition which was the result of the combination had become the part of the primary element framing the *pesantren* cultural formation. The high respect to teachers (*kyai*) and the figure of *kyai* who not only knew the intricacies of Islam but also deepened the “mysticism” was a historical indication of the tradition of *pesantren*. It served as the continuation of the acculturation of the rural “Javanese religious tradition” that had agrarian-agricultural livelihood with a healthy pattern of *tasawuf*.<sup>12</sup> In line with this view, there is an opinion stating that historically, *pesantren* was the result of the modification performed by the Muslims by developing a Javanese religious education system.<sup>26</sup> This fact, among others, can be traced back from the pattern of leadership in *pesantren*: the practice of charismatic leadership. Based on that perspective, it is understandable why the process of *pesantren*-based Islamization does not lead to cultural discontinuity from the time before the arrival of Islam. On the one hand, because of the model of Islamization applied, many elements recognize Islam spreading rapidly in a relatively short period of time as an “indigenous” and acculturative movement, whose teachings have been “localized” (vernacularization). On the other hand, there is an assumption that Islam in Indonesia is not “true Islam.” It is Islam that is entirely different from Islam in the Middle East because it has been much interfered with its local culture and experienced the least “Arabization.”<sup>13</sup>

The conversion of the people of the Archipelago into Islam, according to Azyumardi Azra, was not exclusive, so it was more appropriately called as “adhesion.” This was because most of the Malay-Indonesian Muslims who just

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<sup>10</sup> Pramono U. Tanthowi, “Muhammadiyah: Mengusung Otentisitas Membendung Lokalitas?”, *Tashwirul Afkar* (14<sup>th</sup> ed, 2003), 109.

<sup>11</sup> Kuntowijoyo, *Selamat Tinggal Mitos, Selamat Datang Realitas* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), 108.

<sup>12</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, cet. VI, 1994), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Peter G. Riddell, *Islam and The Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (London: Hurst & Company, 2001), 8.

embraced Islam still kept their old religious beliefs and practices.<sup>14</sup> For that reason, what happened in the Islamization in Java was more like the "Javanization" of Islam rather than the "Islamization" of Java.<sup>15</sup> That was highly possible since the Sufi teachers managed to present Islam in an exciting form, especially by emphasizing continuity rather than a change in the beliefs and the practices of local religious traditions.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the model of Islam spread throughout this region during the early period of Islam in the Archipelago was a syncretic-Sufism model which, in certain respects, was incompatible with the *Sharia* teachings.<sup>17</sup> The Sufi teachers, who generally had an inclusive view, encouraged the development of the style of Islam that no longer appeared in its rigid exclusivity as a religion of revelation, but rather very accommodating to the established local value and belief systems. Moreover, the range of their *da'wah* also managed to enter closed remote areas and those dominated by agrarian culture.

If it is analyzed further, besides being triggered by the style of *da'wah* successfully shown by the Sufi teachers, the acceleration of the spread of Islam, especially in the coastal areas, were also supported by the emergence of the "trading period" caused by the getting-more- dominant position of the Archipelago (*Nusantara*) in East-West trade. Azra mentions several essential factors that have encouraged the Islamization. The first is the portability of the Islamic faith system. The Islamic faith system is ready for use and applicable everywhere so that it is suitable for the dynamic adherents. It is on the contrary to the local belief systems that centered on the worship of ancestral spirits. The second is the association of Islam with wealth. The preachers were wealthy merchants who were not only involved in trades but also in politics and diplomatic matters. The third is the introduction of the relatively universal culture of literary-civilization. This introduction succeeded in building the spirit of rationalism and intellectualism not only within the royal palace but also among the ordinary people.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global dan Lokal* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), 20.

<sup>15</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Renaissance Islam Asia Tenggara: Sejarah Wacana dan Kekuasaan* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 1999), 66.

<sup>16</sup> Robert W. Hefner, "Islam dalam Era Nation States: Politik dan Pembaruan Islam Asia Tenggara", in Moeflich Hasbullah (editor), *Asia Tenggara Konsentrasi Baru Kebangkitan Islam* (Bandung: Fokus Media, 2003), 83.

<sup>17</sup> Allen M. Sievers, *The Mystical World of Indonesia: Culture, Economic and Development in Conflict* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Azra, *Renaissance Islam*, 23.

In the middle of the penetration of colonialism (with the superiority of its modern-secular education system), *pesantren* implemented a dual strategy to maintain its religious-cultural identity, namely hidden opposition and open resistance. The covert opposition was actualized in the form of conservative, defensive, and isolationist attitudes. At the same time, the available resistance was manifested in the form of inflaming non-cooperative attitudes and anti-colonial spirits. These steps were motivated by the increasing penetration of modern Western culture, and the discriminatory policies of the colonial government against Muslims had left a bitter experience. These issues built negative images of Western colonizers.<sup>36</sup> As the spirit to struggle for independence was rumbling in various corners of the world and the country, the backgrounds triggered *pesantren* to be actively involved in the struggle against the Western colonizers openly.<sup>19</sup>

That involvement, in the end, shaped the consciousness of “protonationalism” among the community of traditional Islam oriented towards the creation and promotion of nationality vis a vis the colonizers. As a result, it could change the function of *pesantren* that was initially as an educational institution into a center of anti-Dutch sentiment.<sup>20</sup> This militancy of cultural resistance policy had a double effect, like a double-edged knife. On the one hand, it succeeded in maintaining a high level of relentless heroism among Muslims and *pesantren* communities. On the other hand, it marginalized the world of *pesantren* from the mainstream of socio-cultural interaction and education, which was increasingly surpassed by the modern interaction patterns so that *pesantren* lacked was not benefitted by its participation and self-engagement in the militancy.<sup>21</sup>

The emergence of the reformers' ideas and assumptions with their modernization of education was considered to contribute to the shaping of the attitudes and tendencies that strengthened the solidarity and integrity of *pesantren* communities. Concerning the emergence and expansion of the modern Islamic educational system initiated by the reformists, the response of *pesantren* was described as “resisting and following.”<sup>22</sup> *Pesantren* communities rejected the religious ideals and assumptions of the reformers. However, to survive in preventing the widespread influence of the reformers' religious belief,

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<sup>19</sup> Mu'arif Ambary, *Menemukan Peradaban*, 318.

<sup>20</sup> Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara, *Menemukan Sejarah: Wacana Pergerakan Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 4<sup>th</sup> ed, 1998), 240.

<sup>21</sup> Nurcholish Madjid, *Indonesia Kita* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2004), 25.

<sup>22</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru* (Jakarta: Logos, 1999), 99.

*pesantren* undertook some accommodation and adaptations to support its continuity. The implications of this view, along with the sense of “marginalization,” were that *pesantren* became allergic and had a suspicious attitude towards all-new (modern) values originating from the West. It was expected if *pesantren* at that time was closer to conservatism because it was reluctant to move away from its old tradition that was closed and resistant to change (modernity). As a result, *pesantren* was imaged as the basis of the traditional Islamic world. It was a world that inherited and maintained a strong continuity of Islamic tradition that had been formulated and developed by the former *ulamas* so that the gap between *pesantren* and the outside world was created. As an educational institution, the pattern was still maintained by some traditional *pesantrens* insisting on being solely oriented towards preserving the functions of (1) the transmission and transfer of religious knowledge; (2) the maintenance of Islamic traditions, and (3) the reproduction of *ulama*.

### ***Cultural Values of Pesantren Education***

According to A. Mukti Ali, at least two factors are causing religious teaching (Islam) in Indonesia not to develop well. The first is the mystical grassroots that make the pattern of spiritual life in Indonesia more concerned with “*amaliah*” (practice) than “thought.” The second is the thoughts of *ulama* in Indonesia about Islam that emphasize the field of fiqh with a more normative approach more.<sup>23</sup> Of course, *pesantren*, which is claimed as one of the fountainheads of Islam in the country, is considered responsible for the emergence of such educational philosophy phenomena. This is strengthened by Abdurrahman Wahid stating that the dominant position in the establishment of values in the *pesantren* environment is held by the law of Fiqh and followed by the tradition of the Sufis.<sup>24</sup> The dominance of the law of Fiqh and Sufism is a consequence of Sunni ideology and the tradition of Imam al-Ghazali's thoughts, which have much colored the establishment of the values of *pesantren*.

As elaborated above, the background of the emergence of *pesantren* has a close relationship with the *mysticism*-style of Islam that firstly entered Indonesia. After being “ruralized” and experiencing the clash with “colonialization” in its struggle, *pesantren* absorbed a lot the static and the syncretic village culture, which was far from the reach of the industrial revolution and poor in production technology. Therefore, *pesantren* can be viewed as the arena of the flourishing of

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<sup>23</sup> A. Mukti Ali, *Ilmu Perbandingan Agama di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), 19.

<sup>24</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan: Nilai-Nilai Indonesia dan Transformasi Kebudayaan* (Jakarta: the Wahid Institute, 2007), 107, 127-129.

the “epistemic system” resulting from a unique encounter between the vertical social category (*wong cilik*) (ordinary people) and the horizontal cultural categories (*santri*),<sup>25</sup> between the tendency of religious orthodoxy (*madhhab*) and cultural alienation. If it is interpreted by using the periodization paradigm of Islamic development in Indonesia, as proposed by Kuntowijoyo, there are three periods, namely the period of myth, the period of ideology, and the period of ideas/knowledge.<sup>26</sup> Thus, with such a system of knowledge, *pesantren* is deemed to still not entirely depart from the “period of myth.” It is because its intellectual consciousness is still influenced by religious-mystical belief<sup>50</sup> and is still experiencing severe discrepancies with the fulfillment of scientific-technological demands. Besides, the social structure of *pesantren* is a reflection of the concept of education as the path to wisdom (in the Sufism sense) rather than the path to knowledge (in a scientific-philosophical sense).<sup>27</sup> The *kyai* occupies the top hierarchy followed by the assistant to the *kyais*, senior *santris*, and junior *santris* based on their piety and knowledge level. It is believed that the higher the hierarchical level of a person in a *pesantren* community is, the better the charisma and other abilities are.

Around the twentieth century AD, a network of *ulamas* from the Middle East and from the Archipelago (*Nusantara*) that had “intellectual content” of Neo-Sufism was formed. Somewhat different from the previous Sufism ideal, neo-Sufism put a greater emphasis on the loyalty to Sharia (Fiqh).<sup>28</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century AD, Islam in the Archipelago could be considered to have reached the peak of geographical expansion and enter the consolidation phase in various regions as the result of the formation of the network of *ulamas* and the institutions of Islamic studies centers, such as *pesantren* and *madrasah* (Islamic school), with the affiliation to the intellectual center of the Islamic world in Haramain. Started from here, the tradition of *pesantren's* educational philosophy shifted to the tradition of Sufism-Fiqh (legalistic-mysticism) as a new “synthetic” formula between Islamic exoterism and esoterism. Consequently, in addition to the mysticism or *tasawuf* tendencies that were increasingly directed towards

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<sup>25</sup> Kuntowijoyo, *Budaya dan Masyarakat* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1987), 60.

<sup>26</sup> Kuntowijoyo, “Periodisasi Sejarah Kesadaran Keagamaan Umat Islam Indonesia: Mitos, Ideologi dan Ilmu” (The Speech of the Inauguration of Gadjah Mada University Professorship, 2001). Historically, the period of myth occurred before XIX century, in XIX, and in the beginning of XX century. Myth in Indonesia is divided into old myth, new myth and contemporary myth.

<sup>27</sup> Benedict Anderson, “Bahasa Politik Indonesia”, in Yudi Latief et. al. (ed.), *Bahasa dan Kekuasaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), 128.

<sup>28</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama' Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara abad XVII dan XVIII* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 294. Alwi Shihab, *Islam Sufistik*, trans. Muhammad Nursamad (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), 32, 263.



their widely recognized or non-deviating features, Fiqh was used more as a benchmark in determining behavior.<sup>29</sup> However, it did not work with the puritanic style that was less tolerant towards the “local” or formalistic traditions emphasizing more on the formalization of the religious law because its concern was mainly aimed at a ritual activity and spiritual purification.

The tradition of *Kitab Kuning* educational philosophy of *pesantren* was allegedly derived from the Javanese ulama who succeeded in studying in Haramain (Middle East) and even became a Grand Master there, especially after the opening of new sailing routes and the emergence of new economic power among Muslim *santri* farmers. It enabled them to do *rihlah* (religious travels) to the Holy Land for hajj to deepen their religious knowledge. This tradition of educational philosophy has underlain the traditional Islamic intellectual development of *pesantren* whose main content ranged from Ash’ari’s *aqidah* (creed), Shafi’i’s Fiqh school, and al-Ghazali’s ethics or mysticism, and the author of similar books, along with the instrument of traditional Arabic grammar.<sup>30</sup> There is indeed a paradox in the tradition of *pesantren*. On the one side, the tradition of *pesantren* is firmly rooted in the Archipelago (*Nusantara*) with its indigenous patterns. For that reason, although it serves as a traditional Islamic educational institution, in some aspects, it is different from any traditional institution in the Islamic world. On the other side, with the tradition of *Kitab Kuning*, it is “internationally” oriented to Haramain as the center of the orientation, not Indonesia. Javanese ulama and great *kyais* of *pesantren* can be regarded as a bridge between the great tradition of Islamic educational philosophy which is internationally oriented with the simple Islamic variant of the country.

The potent combination of Sufism-Fiqh affects the “culture of life” of the *pesantren* world. It has triggered the mindset and behavior of *pesantren* communities regarding the treasures of Islamic knowledge that is always in the “normative-mystical” formulation path. One apparent implication is that the teaching-learning process in *pesantren* appears to be dominated more by the deductive-dogmatic religious model of thought rather than the factual inductive-rational model.<sup>31</sup> It is the legacy of the exclusion of science and philosophy from the curriculum of educational institutions par excellence since the end of the

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<sup>29</sup> Affandi Mochtar, “Kitab Kuning in Pesantren: Its Dynamic Aspects, Position, and Significance”, *International Journal of Islamic Studies* (IJPS) (Vol. 3, No. 1, 2009), 32.

<sup>30</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning: Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), 19-21.

<sup>31</sup> Mastuhu, *Dinamika Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren* (Jakarta: INIS, 1994), 69.

Golden Age of Islam and the impact of the strict control of the colonial government on religious activities and all forms of Islamic educational institutions organized by indigenous peoples in the XIX/XX centuries. There are many analyses of the causes of the exclusion of science and philosophy, and one of them is from Fazlur Rahman and Aydin Sayili. They claim that the reasons include (1) the spread of Sufism which is generally hostile to the rational sciences and the whole intellectualism, (2) the classification of academic disciplines which leads to the dichotomization, (3) the establishment of *madrasah* meant to the development of the Islamic philosophies and not meant for the teaching of science, and (4) the disharmony in the interaction among theology, philosophy, and science, which is even mutually exclusive.<sup>32</sup>

With the characteristics of such a tradition of *pesantren's* educational philosophy, it is reasonable to classify it into the normative tradition. According to Kuntowijoyo, the tradition of normative educational philosophy has two possibilities, namely the declarative and the apologetical.<sup>33</sup> The declarative normative tradition leads to the orientation of *dakwah* and the spirit of desire to show the glory, excellence, and truth of Islamic teachings with their doctrinal-theological arguments. Meanwhile, the apologetic normative tradition maintained certain aspects of Islamic teachings discredited or suspected by the outsiders. This tradition of educational philosophy aims to confirm the understanding of Islam by the outsiders although it is often trapped in the "romanticism" of the history of Islamic glory and the inability to distinguish between teachings and understanding.<sup>34</sup> In the sociology of knowledge, the strengthening of the normative tradition among Muslims was motivated by the threat of Western civilization and the pressure of colonialization. The tradition of the normative educational philosophy can be observed also through the "reproductive" pattern in the paradigm of *pesantren's* educational philosophy. The conceptualization of knowledge represents this pattern as something that can only be obtained by way of transfer, inheritance, transmission, not as something that can be created<sup>35</sup> as Western experimental science. Thus, the idea of 'cultural preservation' is truly reflected in the intellectual tradition of

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<sup>32</sup> Aydin Sayili, "Sebab-Sebab Kemunduran Sains Islam," *al-Hikmah* (No. 13, April-June 1994), 85.

<sup>33</sup> Kuntowijoyo, *Muslim Tanpa Masjid; Esai-esai Agama, Budaya dan Politik dalam Bingkai Strukturalisme Transendental* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), 102-103.

<sup>34</sup> M. A. Sahal Mahfudh, *Nuansa Fiqh Sosial* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 4<sup>th</sup> ed, 2004), xxxv.

<sup>35</sup> See Affandi Mochtar, "Tradisi Kitab Kuning: Sebuah Observasi Umum", in Marzuki Wahid, et. al., (ed.), *Pesantren Masa Depan: Wacana Pemberdayaan dan Transformasi Pesantren* (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1999), 233.

*pesantren*.<sup>36</sup> This can be seen from the decodification of the educational philosophy in *Kitab Kuning*, as the realization of the explanation and preservation of the content of standard texts (*babon* books), which has led to the involution process of the development of religious studies to be a more detailed academic discipline that is more detailed.<sup>37</sup>

### ***The Dynamical Religious Intellectualism of Pesantren***

In the sociological perspective of knowledge, the structure of consciousness is always placed in the context of specific social situations. Changes in a social context are believed to lead to the changes in the construction of consciousness. Similarly, the difference in rural culture, where *pesantren* grows and develops, from agrarian to industrial form has caused the changes in the structure of consciousness of *pesantren* communities. This structure of consciousness is construed by “reason” and “ethos” as an epistemic-ethical insight that builds the view of *pesantren*. It is recognized that the tradition of *pesantren* has created a sub-culture. Still, it does not mean that it is an “isolated entity” that is entirely untouched by the shift and change (modernization) of the outside world. That is because the existence of *pesantren* has the interest to obtain sociological-contextual relevance to remain to survive and exist. Due to the rapid flow of global change, *pesantren* is required to accept the logic of change, yet still, firmly hold its tradition without being traditional.

Tebuireng *Pesantren*, for example, has reformed its education system but not by leaving its traditional system neither as a medieval Islamic reformulation. The educational reform in this *pesantren* had started since the era of Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, who pioneered the classical education through *madrasahs* in 1919, and the reform continued until the next leadership period.<sup>38</sup> Not far different from Tebuireng *pesantren*, Lirboyo *Pesantren*, Kediri, also does the same thing such as the reform in the institution, management, and the aspects of its education.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, other *pesantrens*, even including those who in fact, are considered very traditional, also have accommodated the demands of change, rationalization, and technicalization. The educational reform of *pesantren* is deemed to be positively correlated with the result of the 27th NU National Congress in Situbondo on the need for a new orientation in education to trigger the

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<sup>36</sup>Abdurrahman Mas'ud, *Intelektual Pesantren: Perhelatan Agama dan Tradisi* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2004), 11.

<sup>37</sup>Kuntowijoyo, *Islam sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi dan Etika* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2004), 6-7.

<sup>38</sup>Salahuddin Wahid, *Transformasi Pesantren Tebuireng: Menjaga Tradisi di Tengah Tantangan* (Malang: UIN Maliki Press, 2011), 41-42.

awareness of *pesantren* communities to organize their education system to respond the demands of modernity.<sup>39</sup>

Pesantren is generally viewed as the basis of traditional Islam with its *Kitab Kuning*.<sup>40</sup> It is Islam that is still firmly bound by the thought of the *ulamas* of the Classical-Medieval period of Islam, especially the X-XV centuries AD. The development of Islamic studies in the Classical-Medieval period, as described by George Makdisi, was marked by two movements, namely humanism, and scholasticism.<sup>41</sup> The humanism movement gave rise to the “orthodoxy” (official-dominant ideology) in the humanistic-linguistics. This way, the study of Arabic then gained intellectual supremacy in the discourse of Islamic educational philosophy.

Meanwhile, the scholasticism movement led to the birth of the orthodoxy of religion together with the acquisition of Fiqh (read: Fiqh experts) of intellectual-political supremacy in the religious consciousness of the *ummah*. Besides, generally, the works produced by the Arab thoughts of Islam at the end of that period, as inherited a lot by the tradition of *pesantren's* educational philosophy, were firmly attached to one of the following typologies, namely (1) the completeness of incomplete texts, (2) the correction of texts containing errors, (3) explanation of vague books, (4) the merging of separate but interrelated texts (but without any synthesis effort), (5) the structuring of confusing written texts, (6) the drawing of the conclusion of approved premises. From the condition of such intellectual traditions, it can be predicted that products of ideas that emerged from the rules would be dominated by the textual, theological, and reproductive patterns. Therefore, it is also very reasonable if there are opinions that the contact between mysticism and orthodoxy, considered as the mark of the transformation phase of the tradition of *pesantren's* educational philosophy in the history of Islamic thoughts in Indonesia, was a battle of two movements that had lost their critical-rationality dimension.

Thus, it cannot be negated that the structure of the Arab logic of Islam has much influenced the tradition of *pesantren's* educational philosophy and morality since its transmission of the system of values and its universal educational philosophy are derived from the product of thoughts from the

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<sup>39</sup> Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Islam dalam Bingkai Keindonesiaan dan Kemanusiaan: Sebuah Refleksi Sejarah* (Bandung: Mizan, 2009), 235-236.

<sup>40</sup> Yanwar Pribadi, “Religious Networks in Madura: Pesantren, Nahdlatul Ulama and Kiai as the Core of Santri Culture,” *al-Jami'ah Journal of Islamic Studies* (Vol. 51, Number 1, 2013), 7.

<sup>41</sup> George Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), xix.

Scholastic era of Islam. At least two arguments are supporting this assumption, namely: (1) the opinion of Martin van Bruinessen stating that the principal reason underlying the emergence of *pesantren* is to transmit the product of traditional Scholastic Islamic thoughts and (2) the opinion of Abdurrahman Wahid confirming that educationally, the role of the classic books, commonly called *Kitab Kuning*, is to provide information to *santri* not only about the inheritance of the jurisprudence in the past or about the light path to reach the essence of *'ubudiyah* (self-servitude) to God but also about the roles of life in the future for society.

One of the prominent features of the epistemic insight developed in the structure of Arab logic of Islam that serves the historical root of the *Kitab Kuning* tradition is the orientation of morality to knowledge (*al-ittijâh min al-sulûk wa al-akhlâq ila al-ma'rifah*).<sup>42</sup> The characteristic of this epistemic insight can be seen from the dominance (hegemony) of the “good-bad” ethics-practice, not the scientific view of “right-wrong” towards *pesantren* community, even in their academic activities. For instance, if it is examined closely, at the end of each study of topic of *Kitab Kuning*, there is the phrase “*wallâhu a'lam bi al-sawâb*” (Allah is Omniscient) teaching the relativism-theocentric concept. It is the concept that claims the absolute truth exists in the revelation of God, while human understanding is relative. However, in reality, such a concept is often not well appreciated. As a result, *pesantren* that should always be open to be “critical” becomes “finalistic” and blind following (based on the existing thoughts). This attitude is supported by rural milieu that in the colonial penetration. They tended to be *nrimo* (submissive/ obedience). This means that the theocentric-relativism concept only underlies the ethical view of *pesantren's* educational philosophy and has not yet touched its epistemological domain. As a result, this concept then has experienced the deviation of meaning because it is appreciated as a form of passivity and submission to literalness of texts, not as the encouragement of curiosity to dare explore the “depth” and “breadth” of the contents and go beyond their historicity and limits.

In addition to the achievements and uniqueness in absorbing the universal values of *kitab kuning* (yellow book), *pesantren*, in its history until now, it is also considered quite successful in obtaining its achievement and uniqueness, primarily related to (1) the religious spiritual, mental appreciation and *tafaqquh fi al-dîn* (deepening the religious knowledge) (2) the preservation of religious values, such as simplicity, sincerity, *ukhuwah* (bond), devotion, and self-reliance

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<sup>42</sup> M. Abid al-Jabiri, *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabî* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, 1991), 30.

(3) the tendency to social effects than civil effects, (4) the birth of both formal and non-formal leaders who influence the communities of the surroundings, and (5) the propagation of Islamic *da'wah* that has resulted in Muslims as the majority in Indonesia.<sup>43</sup> Most of the achievements and uniqueness of *pesantren* are now starting to be questioned because many *kyais* of *pesantren* involve themselves in the area of practical politics and make *pesantren* as part of a political vehicle to gain power. Because it is considered to be out of the *khittah* (path; way; baseline), the fact is seen as a phenomenon that *kyais* are “jumping the wall” by involving themselves in politics.<sup>44</sup> According to Djohan Effendi, it is associated with the curriculum of *pesantren* that frequently produces *ulamas* with intellectual excellence, but they are fragile in the resistance to economic matters. They cannot resist the temptation of politics and power. Indeed, in the ideological political climate and the culture of the politicization of religion, the status of *kyais* with their large numbers of followers (*santri* and *ummah*) is considered to have a high selling value. They will be highly recognized by politicians. Here, the dialectic of *pesantren* has resulted in the shift of orientation, one that becomes very pragmatic-functional which is strongly driven by the consideration of economic calculations.

In fact, the phenomenon of jumping the wall in the broad sense can also be attached to *kyais* or alumni of *pesantren* who have succeeded in becoming intellectual pioneers in the country because they have made *pesantren* widely known as “the village of civilization”. They play an essential role in many areas of contemporary life, such as education, politics, economics, and socio-cultural arena. It is named as “jumping the wall” because they have made a leap that transcends (read: break) the divisions of *khittah* of traditional *pesantren* by renewing the intellectual and cultural spirits. That is the leap in the the dynamics of *pesantren* through the process of giving meaning to the adage of “preserving positive old values and taking better new values” as a reflection of “neo-modernist” *pesantren* by integrating the roots of tradition and modernity.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the accusation that the *pesantren* world is closely related to the image of intellectual retardation is worth being criticized because many of the alumni today have proven to be able to compete not only in Indonesia but also in the heart of the contemporary civilization.

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<sup>43</sup> Abdul Rachman Shaleh, *Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan: Visi, Misi dan Aksi* (Jakarta: Gemawindu Pancaperkasa, 2000), 225-226.

<sup>44</sup> Djohan Effendi, “Pesantren dan Kampung Peradaban”, in Hasbi Indra, *Pesantren dan Transformasi Sosial* (Jakarta: Penamadani, 2003), xviii.

<sup>45</sup> Mujamil Qomar, *Pesantren: Dari Transformasi Metodologi Menuju Demokratisasi Institusi* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2005), 74.

In the Reform era, the existence of *pesantren* increasingly gained the attention of the government, so it is possible to integrate it into the national education system, and this demands the restructuring of curriculum and identity.<sup>46</sup> The enactment of Government Regulation (PP) Number 55 of 2007 concerning religious education and religious studies and its standardization requires *pesantren* to improve itself. Here, *pesantren* is recognized both as an educational institution and educational provider as well. Meanwhile, as an educational institution, *pesantren* can still maintain its traditional curriculum, although not “exclusively,” to gain equal recognition from the government. In contrast, as an educational provider, *pesantren* can facilitate the implementation of education by following the national education system from the elementary level to the university level.

The mystical-Fiqh tradition is the primary dimension of the realization of the *pesantren's* cultural pattern in the discourse of its educational philosophy and religious morality. Any reform generated by such a tradition and development in it is always full of “normative” and “moral-religious” perspective. In other words, the image of *pesantren* seems difficult to be separated from the normative and moral-religious framework because to be the change or the reform of *pesantren* that leads to the separation of the framework (tradition) is like the separation of a living thing from its habitat. On the one hand, if it is examined from the internal aspects of the institution, the sustainability of the paradigm of thought is conditioned by the interrelationships of the elements of *pesantren* covering the boarding, the mosque, the teaching of classical Islamic books, the *santris*, and the *kyais*, along with the interiorization of the three main cultural elements of *pesantren*, namely the pattern of leadership in it, the universal literature that has been maintained for centuries, and the uniqueness of its value system separated from the one followed by the society. Thus, there are at least two main factors that support the paradigm of thought of *pesantren* thinking, namely the institutional factors and the *pesantren's* cultural factors.

## CONCLUSION

The *pesantren* tradition has proven to give an important contribution in acculturating Islam so that it can be easily processed and prevented from any conflicts with local culture through the inheritance of Islamic tradition of *kitab kuning* (yellow book) and the acculturation with local (indigenous) culture.

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<sup>46</sup> Ronald Alan Lukens-Bull, *Jihad Ala Pesantren di Mata Antropolog Amerika* (Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2004), 150.

*Pesantren* is also recognized to have a decisive role in developing nationalism and the independence of a community although generally, the graduates are more active in the traditional sector. Because of this role, during the colonial period, *pesantren* was considered as an enemy and a “wild” educational institution. Until now, *pesantren* is still closely related to the label as an educational and religious institution that can survive in the middle of the modernization of the education system. That is what underlies the assumption of some experts about the flexible culture of *pesantren* or the sub-culture of *pesantren* through the contextual process. In line with its essential function, *pesantren* continues to prioritize the efforts in transmitting Islamic philosophies, maintaining Islamic traditions, and reproducing *ulamas* in the philosophy of *preserving positive old practices and taking better new practices*.

This philosophy is both the strengths and the weaknesses of *pesantren*. It is a strength because it can lead the *khittah* (baseline) of *pesantren*, encourage it to reform, and place it as an educational and religious institution highly committed to guarding the preservation of Islamic traditions. Meanwhile, it is a weakness because it is often considered an imbalance where the “conservative” tendency is more dominant than the self-openness to reform. This philosophy conditions the *pesantren* world as an educational institution to keep contributing to the preservation of Islamic treasures through the teaching of *kitab kuning* that completely lacks the rational-philosophical and scientific-experimental studies. In this context, the intellectual tradition in the teaching of *kitab kuning* is a reflection of the tendency of religious ethos based on religious morality found in *pesantren*. Because of the pressure of the modernization of the national education system, some *pesantrens* converge. To overcome various weaknesses, they do self-repositioning not only as educational institutions but also as educational providers by opening their facilities for the implementation of the modern education system. Here, *pesantren* grows dynamically through the reform of its academic *khittah* (baseline) and *pesantren's* spirit.

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