

Translating Modernity: Pesantren Buntet Facing the New Era

Suparto

(UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta)

Abstract

This paper discusses issues of Islamic traditional education institutions in Java, particularly in the colleges known as pesantren. Pesantren are Islam-based institutions, and their existence cannot be detached from the history of Islam in Indonesia. Islam has developed the pesantren as a place to nurture religious leaders known as kyai and their students as santri and as a sanctuary for Islamic religious teachings that spread Islam among local inhabitants. Indonesian history records that the resistance to colonization was initially born from these institutions. Since then, a clear cleavage prevailed between pesantren and the western world, between pesantren and modern life. It has been argued that people in the pesantren are backward, anti-western and "militants", especially following the aftermath of ferocious Bali blast incident.

This paper draws on new research that examines an old pesantren in Cirebon regency, West Java, known as Pesantren Buntet. Established in 1758, it is one of the oldest pesantren in Java. The paper will shed light particularly on how its educational practices negotiate the spaces between the traditional and the modern. While it has proved impossible for this traditional pesantren to avoid the impact of the modern, there is also evidence that this pesantren is able to translate modernity while fulfilling its traditional Islamic educational duties.

Why has islamisation failed to transform the ummah, both at the individual and at the collective level? Part of the explanation is the character and orientation of dominant Islam at this point in time. It is an Islam which is conservative, orthodox and doctrinaire. It is afraid of change and transformation. It is an Islam which is more comfortable with established tradition than with new interpretations of social justice and freedom guided by the Qur'anic vision (Muzaffar, 2002, p. 222).

Introduction

Modernization is not a linear advance from darkness to light. Rather, it is a continued process of redefinition of where we, have been, now are, and have yet to go (Geertz, 1972, p. 320). Modernization also means development of a society that can be defined as advancement towards certain well-defined general objectives, which correspond to the specified condition of individuals and society in the most advanced society of the modern world (Dos Santos, 1978, p. 58). Thus any societies are drawn into a double goal in response to modernization: to remain themselves and to keep pace with unrelenting changes. Seemingly, like society,



education institutions cannot run off this reality. They must adjust to the surrounding environment and the needs of society. Which destiny they will choose depends on the progressive outlook they might have. Indigenous education institutions, like *pesantren*, seem to grapple with the new era if they want to preserve their existence.

Pesantren are well-known as the oldest education institutions in Indonesia, having been established long before Western type of education system was implemented by the government of Indonesia. There are some 14,607 *pesantren* scattered throughout Indonesia (Depag RI, 2003). As the oldest form of education institution in Indonesia, *pesantren* have proved their strong foothold in the Archipelago. They have been able to encounter problems and challenges over time and still survive up to the present. Interestingly, compared to some other indigenous institutions, like *surau* in West Sumatra and *dayah* in Aceh, *pesantren* have long survived. In addition, they have become model for those institutions. *Pesantren* are lucky compared to *Surau* and *meunasah* whose popularity has decreased in this modern time¹ (Alfian, 1985; Saby, 2001; Azra, 2003a).

During the most recent climate, *pesantren* have been central of suspicion of being the breeding ground of terrorists and *jihadists*. Sadly to say too, many have been suspected of being linked to JI (*Jamaah Islamiyah*) and other “Islamic” terrorist organisations (Sydney *Morning Herald*, 2003; *The Age*, 2003). Sheriden, in *The Weekend*, August 09, 2003, wrote that it was believed potential new terrorist recruits came out of the Indonesian *pesantren*. The poll of suspicion seems to have fallen upon the *pesantren* erroneously, particularly since the aftermath of September 11 and has been even more marked since the Bali blast, which suspiciously involved some alumni of *pesantren*, like Amrozi and Imam Samudra.

This paper examines how a *pesantren* has endured through troubled times, especially in this modern period, and how Islamic discourse is employed to boost the open-mindedness of the Muslim community. It focuses on one of the oldest *pesantren* in Indonesia that is *Pesantren Buntet*. More specifically, the discussion sheds light on the coexistence between

¹ Alfian (1985) argues that the Aceh war (started in 1873) apparently had destroyed most of these traditional religious schools. Therefore, regeneration of *ulama* could only be done through sending the children to religious schools outside Aceh, like Sumatra and Java, alternatively Egypt. Nowadays, a number of *dayah* have converted into *pesantren* model. Likewise, the Minangkabau *surau* are apparently about to close their end journey, since the bombardment of modern education has attracted students to study in the modern schooling instead. The tradition of *surau* has been vulnerable during the flow of modern education system. In ensuring their existence while adopting modern changes, many *surau* have adopted the *pesantren* system, they name themselves as *pesantren* (Azra, 2002).



traditionalism and modernism in this traditional education institution. The paper investigates how the *pesantren* can share the spaces between the two different isms and to what extent the inside actors have become innovative in marrying traditional and modern without sacrificing the Islamic spirit. Therefore to understand Islam in relation to the dynamism of Muslims' lives can be of much importance. It is also important to be able to personalize and characterize this religion, to most people in the West, remains a mystery (Huband, 1999).

Pesantren: a brief understanding

The word "*pesantren*" stems from the root word "*santri*" meaning the seeker of knowledge, with the prefix *pe* and suffix *an*, which denotes a "place of *santri*" or "*santri* theological school". This term refers to education boarding schools for the study of Islamic sciences. Quite often this term is combined with the word *pondok* which is derived from the Arabic word *funduq*, meaning hotel or dormitory. The term *pondok* literally means the "shelter made of bamboo or wood" where *santri* stayed. Therefore, people would say *pondok pesantren* to refer to an "Islamic Religious Boarding School". In this paper, "*pesantren*" is used to refer to these institutions due to its well-known meaning in Indonesia.

Pesantren are seen as one of the great Islamic legacies that has been playing important roles in disseminating Islam to the local people and safeguarding the Islamic traditions in Indonesian society (van Bruinissen, 1994). They are not only conceived of as unique institutions in modern times, but are also seen as the reservoir for cultural values and morality. The uniqueness of these institutions is historically evidenced, as the Islamic education tradition in Indonesia is constructed in its own way. *Pesantren* do not inherit their education system from colonialists; they are an indigenous Indonesian product (Madjid, 1997; Depag RI, 2003), since the early phase of educational development in Indonesia owed almost nothing to the Dutch administration. Knowing this fact, Wahid (1988) sees *pesantren* as a sub-culture of Indonesian culture. They are unit of Javanese cultures which have their own characteristics. It is believed that *pesantren* have been in existence in the regions for almost as long as Islam itself came to penetrate.

In this modern time, *pesantren* are regarded as the pioneers of religious reform. Their active involvement in the pre-independence era and post-colonial Indonesia is outstanding. The spirit of anti-colonialism was sprung from these institutions respectively. They successfully



flared up the spirit of nationalism among the *santri*. Their *kyai* have timelessly been searching for religious references to justify the means of development. As such, Islamic reform is therefore not a new impetus in Indonesia, since during the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century ideas of profound reform came from Egypt and other Middle East countries to Indonesia. The reform ideas coined by Muslim scholars in Egypt had awakened Indonesian students' awareness² of the shortcomings of and the marginalization of Muslim community in colonized countries. For instance, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani affirmed that Muslim community would not be able to compete with the West unless they could emulate Western progress.

The origin of *pesantren* has been of much interest among Islamologists or Islamic experts, such as, Pigeud (1967), Dhofier (1980), Abdullah (1996), Van Bruinessen (1994), and Nurcholish Madjid (1999). Their arguments can be divided into two main streams. The first holds that the *pesantren* are models of Islamic education institutions whose system and activities were similar to that of pre-Islamic education institutions (the Hindu-Buddhist Ashram system). It emphasizes that the *pesantren's* affinity to Hindu-Buddhist ashram models is only coincident, since Islam itself already has this kind of learning-teaching tradition. The second argument is proffered by those who believe that *pesantren* are independent institutions located in secluded regions and stemming from the same type of pre-Islamic education institutions, such as *mandala* and ashram. Thus, *pesantren* have been modeled on pre-Islamic institutions due to their resemblance as religious education institutions. Islam came to the Archipelago and Islamized past legacies including the already existing institutions.

Fokkens (1886 in Asrahah, et.al., 2002, p. 33), in his report "Desa's op Java en Madura", found some *pesantrens* in *tanah perdikan* (free tax lands endowed by the king) where long before the coming of Islam *mandala* and ashram had existed. The activities within the *mandala* and *ashrama* had been Islamized, yet the learning-teaching system was still maintained where teachers and students (*kyai* and *santri*) lived together. Madjid (1997) is of the opinion that *pesantren* have a historical link to pre-Islamic institutions, as he believes that

² After the opening of Sues Canal in 1869, Indonesian Islamic education institutions were highly strengthened by much a closer relationship between Indonesian *ulama* and Saudi Arabian or other Middle Eastern countries. Many *ulama* spent years there to study religious knowledge and ideas of reform. Since then, the curriculum and texts used in *pesantren* came to be standardized. In 1905, *ulama* took the initiative to introduce the *madrasah* system within the *pesantren*. In 1916, some *pesantren* built dormitories for girls, and by 1926 some *pesantren* taught secular subjects such as Dutch and Indonesian language, mathematics, geography, and world and national history.



there were *pesantren*-like institutions during Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms in Java, hence Islam was only to Islamise those institutions. He further asserts that *pesantren* are not only icons of Islamity but also of indigeneity. When Islamic community was already established, the spread of ulama and the creation of a “Muslim political community” were necessary. Therefore, old institutions, such as the ashrams (hostel), Hinduistic boarding religious centers, were riskily used as new channels for Islamic promulgation (Abdullah, 1996).

Regarding the origin of *pesantren*, Van Bruinessen (1994) asserts that *pesantren* system is an education model adopted from Islamic Middle-East education institutions. In this case, the process of Islamisation had rendered a new “imported” education model to Indonesia. He argues that al-Azhar with its *riwaq* system³ might be a model for the Indonesian *pesantren*. Van Bruinessen (1994) believes that *pesantren* were established in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. He argues, “I have attempted elsewhere to show that this view is probably incorrect and that the *pesantren* is a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging in the 18th century and only flourishing since the second half of the 19th” (Van Bruinessen, 1995, p. 171). His argument is based on his findings of some Javanese literature in which the term *pesantren* was not found. Rather he found the terms *paguron* and *padepokan* referring to Hindu-Buddhist education centres. Van Bruinessen also suggested that the development of *pesantren* did not come up in the early phase of Islamisation of Java, rather they developed and were institutionalised in the eighteenth century⁴. However his argument seems not satisfactory as he only argued on the basis of the terminology of *pesantren*. If an institution named *pesantren* did not exist before the eighteenth century, it might be due to the fact that before that period people had yet to name this institution.

Yet, it must be admitted that the term *pesantren* was not derived from Arabic words. Rather it is taken from the Tamil word *sastri* which means literate person in religious books, or it could presumably have been taken from Javanese word *cantrik* meaning students who live in parish and Spartan style⁵. Moreover, two Javanese chronicles, *Serat Cabolek* and *Serat Centini*

³ Dormitory where students and teachers live together on a twenty-hour basis.

⁴ Van Bruinessen suggests that *pesantren* began to be institutionalised as Islamic education institution since the eighteenth century. This is in line with Azra’s view (2005, p 3) which beliefs that *pesantren* and *tarekat* were gaining momentum in the eighteenth century albeit the expansion of the Dutch colonial due to the increasing number of the *Jawi* (Malay-Indonesian) *ulama* and hajs from Mecca and Medina.

⁵ Madjid (1997, p. 19) asserts that the origin of word “*santri*”, at least, derives from two references. Firstly, *santri* might stem from a Sanskrit word *sastri* which means literate. Johns, as cited in Dhofier (1999, p. 3), argues that the word *santri* is derived from Tamil word, *santiri*, meaning the religious teacher. It seems to be true that at the onset of the Islamic Javanese kingdom in Demak (Central Java), *santri* were considered as the Javanese literate group due to their knowledge of religious books. We can assume that



revealed that by the onset of sixteenth century, there had been some institutions in Java known as *pesantren* in which classical Islamic books of *fiqh* (Islamic law), *aqidah* (Islamic theology), and *tasawuf* (Islamic Sufism) were taught (Depag RI, 2001). According to the Demak chronicle, the first *pesantren* was built in Java in the fifteenth century by one of nine saints⁶ named Sunan Ampel. At that period, Majapahit kingdom was still on power under the reign of King Kertawijaya.

Pesantren in the Globalized World

Globalization has pejoratively been termed “McWorld”, shorthand for the Western-oriented global monoculture (Rifkin, 2003, p.4). This implies that what has been globalized throughout the world has brought the effects of modernization, not modernity itself, to the Islamic world. In this regard, Tibi (2000) argues that Muslims conceive, on the one hand, of Western style cultural modernity as either a cultural threat (*taghrib* or westernization) of which to be wary, or on the other hand, as a political challenge to cope with while adopting instruments of modernity on a selective basis. Negatively, globalization is widely seen as the latest stage of the exploitation of the third world by the West; a project from which the rich countries develop at the expense of the poor (Giddens, 2002). Since its negative impacts are apparent culturally, socially, and economically, globalization is believed to be a stage of recolonization of peoples and a new phase of capitalist expansion (Mohanty, 2003; Brah, 2002).

In viewing Islam’ ability facing globalization, Barber (1992) points out that Islam will not be compatible to adapt the modern world and globalization, or popularly known as the McWorld era. Barber contends that the very means used by Muslims to refuse the forces of McWorld is Jihad. The notion of Jihad against McWorld was not as an instrument of policy but as an emblem of identity, an expression of community, an end in itself. Erroneously, Barber concludes that forces of Jihad and the forces of McWorld operate with equal strength in opposite directions, the one driven by parochial hatreds, the other by universalizing markets, the one re-creating ancient sub national and ethnic borders from within, the other making

being a *santri* means being able to read the Qur’an and other religious books. Secondly, the word *santri* is perhaps from the Javanese word *cantrik* which means a person who always followed and accompanied his teacher wherever the teacher off to stay. His propose to do so was to learn a certain skill. Further, Madjid (1997) argues that the shape of relations between *guru* and *cantrik* during the Hindu-Buddhist era was maintained up to Islamic era. The term *guru* was changed into *kyai* for male and *nyai* for female.

⁶ According to Babad Tanah Jawi (History of the Land of Java) chronicle, Islam was brought and spread by the wali (saints). The wali were believed to be instrumental in the Javanese conversions. The manuscripts mentioned nine saints’ names, which are well-known as wali sanga (nine saints): Sunan Ngampel Denta, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Giri, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Sitijenar, Sunan Gunungjati and Sunan Walilantang.



national borders porous from without. Again, from this point of view, jihad is still seen as dreadful term and a blood-shedding action although the term has wide connotations.

He continued that those who do not follow the trend of globalization are regarded as non-modernist and traditionalist. Distinctive to the modern era is the notion that discourse and debate among Muslim tradition involves people on a mass scale. The impact of globalization is expressed through growing anxiety over the "homogenization", "westernization" and "Americanization" of the global film industry, pop cultures, and life styles. This phenomenon has been evident as Barber (1992) says that America has dominated the world's popular culture for much longer, and much more decisively. He asserts that McWorld is a means of ideological infiltration, that is democracy by saying: "how can democracy be secured and spread in a world whose primary tendencies are at best indifferent to it (McWorld) and at worst deeply antithetical to it (Jihad)? My guess is that globalization will eventually vanquish retribalization" (1992, p. 59).

In line with Barber's view, Daniel Pipes indubitably suggests that Muslims must adopt Westernization if they want to modernize themselves. There is no other choice except following all values from the West. He states:

Modern science and technology require an absorption of the thought processes which accompany them; so too with political institutions. Because content must be emulated no less than form, the predominance of Western civilization must be acknowledged so as to be able to learn from it. European language and Western educational institutions cannot be avoided, even if the latter do encourage freethinking and easy living. Only when Muslims explicitly accept the Western model will they be in a position to technicalize and then to develop. (Pipes 1983, 197-98).

Western social scientists tend to conflate between westernization and modernization (Tibi, 1998) something that Islam is at odds with. Current globalization also brings negative effects to some parts of this world, as religion has been left behind and marginalized by modern progress (Esposito and Watson, 2000; Bauman, 1998).

Nonetheless, it should be understood that Islamic critiques against globalization are mainly focused on the materialism, free market, subjectivity of human beings, rationality and rational economy applied by globalization. Muslims see that globalization requires a spiritual vision, not only rational materialism. Dismantling the very spiritual basis is to neglect the deepest meaning of life. Islam is not anti-globalization; rather it is to fill in globalization with spiritual



breaths. The globalization according to Muslim groups is Islamic, a system that provides “a holistic approach to human society in which economic growth and material advancement [are] only the means to the end not the end in itself (Rifkin, 2003, p.43). To accept globalization, Muslim communities are to rethink of anything accepted according to Islamic perspectives. The propensity to dismiss any Western cultures of globalization is possible while Muslim community must embrace instrumental modernization. Muslims adopt a social production of meaning, according to Geertz (1973), a process that is local, never global.

The Roles of Modernized Pesantren

As Islamic institutions in the globalized time, *pesantren* have been attempting to grapple with modernization and meanwhile they cannot escape from this progressive evolution. In so doing, their continued existence is heavily dependent upon their inner willingness, as the most deadly threat against indigenous education institutions is admittedly coming from within. It is clear that their sustainability is dependent on their capacity to adapt to modernization. If these institutions still cling 'stubbornly' to their stance of avoiding modernization and being proud of their glorious historical achievement, undoubtedly, the community reconstruction will only be a utopian dream. If they stay put, “immobility is not a realistic option in a world of permanent change” (Bauman, 1998, p. 2). To be an integral part of the national education system some *pesantren* have established a modern education program differently. Some *pesantren* have endeavored to reach a compromise between their education activities and the national education system through the establishment of national *madrasah* with national curriculum set up by MORA (the Ministry of Religious Affairs) and general schools with both general curriculum and Islamic subjects.

The tendency of *pesantren* to embrace changes is due to the nature of Islamic teachings and their reinterpretation. Islam adapts itself to the new environment not because of imperatives from the outside world; rather the adoption comes from within. In this respect, as Huband (1999) argues that a deeper understanding of the Islamic world must begin not from a viewpoint that Islam interacts with other cultures but with knowledge of how it relates to itself. To see how the non-Islamic world has influenced the course of Islamic history, one should carefully look at the reality on the ground, which is independent of the Western cultural onslaught. Islam's ability to reinterpret according to its Islamic hallmark has been



presented as the resurgence of modern Islam or Islamic revival. This is due to the fact that Islam has evolved, although the West generally views it as alternately stagnant, regressive, or fanatical. As for *pesantren*, they are attempting to accommodate modernization by establishing a new school model, which applies secular curricula set by the government, being responsive to the contemporary issues, building a good relationships with the government and other organizations, and crafting a good cooperation with the surrounding community in particular and Islamic community at large.

This accommodation has inevitably brought potential dilemma, as they have been imposed by the influence and interference of the government policy and regulation. Minimizing of religious teaching hours due to the national curriculum implementation seems unavoidable. Hence, their identity as *pesantren* -- a place where students study religious teachings -- has been shaken by the reduction of religious materials necessary in order to fulfill the requirements of the national curriculum. Jones (1991) argues that the adoption of formal education system has led the change of *pesantren*'s role in defining a specific sociocultural group. The serious implication is, in the long run, the regeneration of *kyai*, the propagation of a distinctively Javanese variant of Islam, and the solidarity of an elite that is based on the *kyasantri* bound for solidity.

Not least important is the vanishing of wandering *santri* due to formal education system. Unlike in the past, *santri* might stay as long as they wished to learn Islamic knowledge. They used to wander from a *pesantren* to another only to gain a particular discipline of Islamic knowledge. Nowadays, it is deemed too risky to do so since one who does not hold a formal education certificate will find it difficult to get jobs in formal sectors. However, few number of this kind of *santri* can be found in some traditional *pesantren*. There seems to be a growing tendency among *santri* to stay in one *pesantren*, especially in those that have adopted formal schooling, rather than wandering from one *pesantren* to another. "Formal *santri*" can decide as to how long they are going to stay in a *pesantren* based on the formal education program and level they are attending.

Amid the influx of material temptation, *pesantren* have been committed in nurturing the faith of Muslim community and educating the Muslim younger generation. Religion is used to counter the bombardment of modern challenges and cultural negativities, which have badly



affected many modern young people. Correspondingly, Dhofier (1999: xxiv) argues that those institutions are seen as fortresses for the defense of Islamic community and centers for the spread of the Islamic faith. In addition, the *pesantren* also play a significant role in preserving local traditions that are rich in values and norms. In this regard, Pranowo (1989) sees *pesantren* in Java as the patrons of local culture. For instance, there is an annual festival (*haul*)³ held to commemorate and pay tribute to the founders of the *pesantren*. During this event villagers and alumni come to the *pesantren*. In this joyous occasion *santri* visit their alma mater, the teachers, and the graves of the teachers; visitors enjoy various traditional performances that are played.



Picture 1: A *santri* reciting prayers in front of Mbah Muqayyim's grave

More specifically in Java, *pesantren* are regarded as the bastion of Javanese tradition where language and politeness are strongly maintained through proper conducts in daily lives and Javanese language in learning-teaching activities of *kitab kuning*. In terms of educating individuals, *pesantren* have rigorously trained *santri* towards modesty (*sederhana*), self-independence (*mandiri*), self-sustainability (*swadaya*), and self-reliance (*percaya diri*). This is to say, *santri* are hoped to have *iman* (faith) and *amal* (commitment). After graduating from the *pesantren*, they will be prepared to work in any kind of lawful profession which does not contravene the message of Allah and Muhammad. Hence, it is worth noting that today's

³ *Haul* is social events of major significance in the *pesantren* tradition. It is chief occasion for *kyais*, government officials, and lay people to meet and informally discuss important matters. Van Bruinessen (2002) argues that visiting not visiting a particular *haul* is a way of showing the degree of respect one feels for the *pesantren* concerned, the deceased *kyai* or his living descendants. A lavishly and well organized *haul* attended by people has placed the *pesantren* into a hierarchy. *Haul* is marker of identity distinguishing modernist from traditionalist Muslims. At *haul*, some form of contact is enacted with the deceased, such as visiting grave (*ziarah kubur*), invocations and parts of the Qur'an are recited and their religious merits are transferred to the deceased (*dihadiahkan*, given). A gift of merit not only entitle the beneficiary to better place in the Hereafter but add to the spiritual powers he is capable of excreting from the grave. Taking part in *haul* is believed to impart blessing and merit on each individual participant. Surely this tradition is seen as heresy and anathema to the modernist whose view asserts that death is the end of all communication and all attempts to contact spiritual beings other than God are no less than sinful *syirk*, polytheism. However, for the traditionalist, *haul* is to legitimate a chain of transmission links between students and the previous generations of teachers. It is also a means to link to the Prophet and God in terms of knowledge transmission.



pesantren can play as transmitters of Islamic knowledge, maintainers of tradition, and producers of modern *ulama* (Muslim scholars) (Azra, 1999). Piety as regulated by both shari'ah (Islamic law) and Sufism used as a criterion to measure a *santri*'s loyalty to his *pesantren* (Zulkifli, 2002, p. 37). In this case, mystique and morality are intertwined (Jones, 1991).

Regarding *pesantren*'s function, Azra (1999) observes that *pesantren* play pivotal roles in transmitting Islamic knowledge, maintenance of tradition, and reproduction of *ulama*. Correspondingly, Dhofier (1999) argues that those institutions are seen as fortresses for the defense of the Islamic community and centres for the spread of the Islamic faith. Additionally, Pranowo (1989) sees *pesantren* in Java as the patrons of local culture. Emis (2001) states that *pesantren* play as the center of Islamic studies, the centre of Islamic dakwah development, the center of moral and religious services, and the centre of solidarity and Islamic brotherhood development. All in all the *pesantren* along with the *santri* are very much concerned with the phenomena of moral decadence, as Mulkhan (2003, p. xv) points out:

In the midst of economic and political crises that have swept over the most fundamental area, morality. This has led many people to depression and loss of hopes. The *pesantren* world is called upon to play a great role in stimulating national awareness when many people have only been concerned with their own lives. *Santri* then act as if they were the inhabitants of a *padepokan* [Hindu education institution] who descended from the mountain in an effort to involve themselves finding solution [of the problems] when life in this country is full of uncertainty and desperation.

Indonesian *pesantren* have contributed a great deal to the Indonesian education development in this modern era. For example, some of them have established a new model of *pesantren*, which are not focusing on Islamic sciences only, such as *pesantren* Gontor (East Java), Tebu Ireng (East Java), Al-Zaytun (West Java), Darun Najah (Jakarta), Darul Falah (West Java), and As-Salam (Central Java). Tebu Ireng even pioneered startling innovation by opening a graded system *madrasah* in 1916. Later development of Tebu Ireng *pesantren* has shown that in 1919 secular knowledge was included in the curriculum (Dhofier, 1994) although respectively this *pesantren* still preserve its traditional uniqueness. Nowadays, some *pesantren* have established universities and academia whose graduates are accredited by the national education system and regarded equal with those of other universities. *Pesantren* Al-Zaytun itself has opened an Integrated Agricultural Education Program. This program is projected to be the embryo of Al-Zaytun University in the years ahead. This four-semester program is collaborative activity between al Zaytun and IPB and ITB (the two largest



universities in Indonesia). In addition, *pesantren* for female *santri* have been established to fulfill the needs of society and empower education for women, such as *Pesantren Putri Aniesah*, Jember (East Java) which was established in 1981 and *Pesantren Gontor Puteri Mantingan*, Ngawi (East Java) in 1991.

In coping with modernity, *pesantren* in Indonesia can be categorized into several types. The first type consists of *pesantren*, which still retains their traditional characteristics where the *santri* stay in boarding house (*pondok*) located around the *kyai*'s house; there is no set of curriculum as it rests upon the *kyai*'s authority including the type and depth of the chosen subjects. Teaching methods employed are still traditional, such as *sorogan* (individual instruction), *bandongan* (collective learning), and memorization. *Santri*'s achievements are measured on the basis of the study of particular books (*Kitab kuning* (religious books) which vigorously are used in this type. This type of *pesantren* is widely known as *salafy*. The second type, which is called combination *pesantren*, comprises *pesantren* that include the above type with additional Islamic modern institutions (*madrasah*) where religious and secular knowledge are taught. The curriculum used in such *madrasah* is based on the local and government content set up by the central government. *Kitab kuning* are taught with graded system. Sometimes there are *pesantren* that include the second type of the *pesantren* with the availability of general, and vocational schools administered by the Ministry of National Education.

The third type is dormitory *pesantren*, since they only provide boarding accommodation to students. Activities of the *pesantren* are not that rigorous as that of the first type of *pesantren*. *Santri* just fully board at the *pesantren*, but they study at schools outside the *pesantren*. This type of *pesantren* is including university student accommodation, either open accommodation or in campus accommodation attached to a university; like *pesantren Al-Hikam* in Malang (East Java) and *Pesantren Mahasiswa* attached to State Islamic University of Jakarta. Here students do not vigorously spend their times to study religious subjects of *kitab kuning* and live common *pesantren* life; religious teachings are only extracurricular activities after campus hour. The fourth type of *pesantren* is that the *salafy pesantren* that provide the basic obligatory learning program (Wajib Belajar) administered by the government in order for the students to receive certificate equivalents to that of the formal schooling (primary and secondary levels). They do not have formal schooling. *Wajib Belajar* is not compulsory



program in this *pesantren*. Not least important is the fifth type of *pesantren*, the modern *pesantren*. The modern *pesantren* are type of *pesantren* where *santri* do not study classical Arabic books; rather they study mostly current published Arabic books on Islamic branches. A noticeable character of this *pesantren* is their bigger size with modern facilities and classrooms, *santri*'s outfits, daily activities, and the usage of Arabic and English languages in daily conversation.

Pesantren Buntet: changes and maintenance

Pesantren Buntet is located in the village of Mertapada Kulon, the Cirebon regency of the province of West Java. Its name is taken from the name of the hamlet adjacent to the village where this *pesantren* was previously located. It was built in 1758 by a former Cirebon Court Mufti, *Mbah* Muqoyyim (1689-1785). He built this *pesantren* after withdrawing himself from the Cirebon palace due to the ever-growing influence of the Dutch in the palace in 1700s. He disagreed with subservient attitude shown by *Keraton* aristocrats toward the Dutch⁷. *Mbah* Muqoyyim used his *pesantren* as a means of mobilizing the villagers and young people to eliminate the power of Dutch in Cirebon. At the present, *Pesantren* Buntet is built on five hectares land with around 40 dormitories for students. Each dormitory has around 100 students with autonomous activities led by a *kyai*. This *pesantren* is like a confederation state as Buntet consists of some forty autonomous dormitories. Each dormitory has its own name, and sometimes is named after its founder. Visiting *pesantren* Buntet is like visiting a small village where modest houses are everywhere. Small stalls selling soft drink and food, and shops providing daily needs are ubiquitous along the street before entering the *pesantren* complex. Villagers' houses and the houses of the *kyais* are in the same complex. It is hard to distinguish between the *kyais*' and the villagers' houses. Yet, the shape and the function reveal the difference. The *kyais*' houses are commonly bigger and have a large veranda where students and sometimes guests sit cross-legged before the *kyais*. After school hours from five to ten in the evening, *santri* (students) flock together to study particular subjects of religious sciences in the house of a *kyai*. During this time, the atmosphere becomes very spiritually solemn but lively with learning-teaching activities. Some houses attached to small food stalls

⁷ The disenchantment among religious people of the *keraton* was due to the *keraton* subservience towards the Dutch. In turn, they formed alternative communities which were free from the Dutch insult. Dutch-*keraton* patron-client was to defence *keraton* existence against the threats of the religious people. Thus, the gap between the *keraton* and *pesantren* or the administrator and *ulama* became even greater (Abdullah, 1996; Kartodirdjo, 1994). Consolidation in the interior was a means to release from the influence of power centre and to find opportunities to continue the process of community transformation on a broader context.



owned by the villagers are filled by *santri* during the night. They are used to having dinner outside *pondok*, buying daily needs, or just having yarns with their friends. This symbiotic condition has reflected what so called “*pesantren masyarakat*” (the *pesantren* for community) and “*masyarakat pesantren* (the community of *pesantren*)”⁸.

After the death of *Mbah Muqayyim* in 1785, the *pesantren* was vacuum without any activities. Subsequently, the leadership was taken by his son-in-law, *Kyai Muta’ad* (1785-1852). He was known as a man who even more powerfully promoted the spirit of resistance against the Dutch. During his leadership, some local prominent *kyais* were being his students, such as *Kyai Soleh* (Founder of *Pesantren Benda Kerep Cirebon*) and *Kyai Sa’id* (founder of *Pesantren Gedongan, Cirebon*). During that time, *kyai Muta’ad* tried to interpret some Arabic books into Javanese languages, such as *Ikhyā ‘Ulumuddin* (enlightening the Religious Learnings) on ethics, Sufism, and moral and *Fathul Mu’in* (The Triumph of the Helpers) on Islamic law. *Kyai Muta’ad* continued his predecessor’s system where a *kyai* did not collect money from his *santri*. The *pesantren* mainly had a huge agricultural business and *kyai* were the richest among the villagers. *Santri* helped the *pesantren* by working in the fields owned by the *kyai*. The agricultural yields were used to sustain the *pesantren* lives. As paying tribute to the *kyai*, the villagers donated their harvestings to the *pesantren*.

Kyai Abdul Jamil (1849-1919), the son of *Kyai Muta’ad*, continued the leadership of this *pesantren* after the death of his fathers. During his time, the learning facilities were developed due to the growing number of *santri*; these included dormitory, mosque, and knowledge specialization. This *pesantren* attracted many *santris* from other regions, such as East Java, Central Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi and even from Singapore. One of its *santris* was *Haji Samanhuji*, the leader of SDI (Syarekat Dagang Islam or Islamic Trade Association). Before being appointed as the grand leader of this *pesantren*, *Kyai Abdul Jamil* studied in several *pesantren* and he also went to Mecca to perform pilgrimage and stay some time to study. Together with *Kyai Said*, *Kyai Saleh Darat*, *Kyai Soleh Benda*, and *Syeikh Nawawi al Bantani*, *Kyai Abdul Jamil* issued a fatwa (religious indict) forbidding any Muslim to work

⁸ *Kyai Wawan* pointed out that this condition as evidence that the *pesantren* can build up a good relationship with the surrounding community. Additionally, the influence of the *pesantren* has well permeated into the lives of the community. It can be assumed that all individuals outside the wall of *Pesantren Buntet* are attached to the *pesantren* tradition. The surrounding community play as *magersari* (the protector) of the *kyai* and the *pesantren*. The mutual ties between the *pesantren* and the surrounding community can well be illustrated when the *pesantren* holds its annual festival (haul) or when a *kyai* has *hajatan* (ceremony relating to a particular event).



for the Dutch and study in any Dutch schools (public schools established by Dutch) or wear European cloths.

After the death of *Kyai* Jamil in 1919, his eldest son, *Kyai* Abbas (d. 1946) continued to lead this *pesantren*. His initial education was provided at home within the *pesantren* vicinity. His father had invited some *ustadz* (teachers) to come to the *pesantren* to teach *Kyai* Abbas. After he grew up, he was sent to many *pesantren*, such as the *pesantren* of *Kyai* Nasuha (Plered-Cirebon), *Kyai* Ubaidillah (Tegal) and *Kyai* Asy'ari (Tebu Ireng). Afterwards, he went to Mecca to deepen his knowledge on *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), *qiro'at* (styles of Qur'anic recitation), and *hadith* (narratives in the Prophet's tradition).

After returning to Indonesia, he was assigned as chief of NU⁹ (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) advisors (*Mustasyar*) and chief of NU legislature (*Syuriah*) at the NU branch office in Cirebon. He was actively involved as an Islamic law advisor in SDI, a Japanese legislative member, and a founder of *Putera* and *Peta* (both were local armed forces organized by the Japanese government). During his time of leadership, more students came to *Pesantren* Buntet from various levels of the community, although peasant children were still the majority. In 1928, he established *madrasah diniyah* (traditional Islamic school which specialised in Islamic religious sciences) and in 1938 *madrasah* (Islamic school with secular subjects, such as Indonesian language, history, natural science and geography). At this time, *Kyai* Abbas had endeavoured to integrate religious knowledge and secular knowledge for his *santris*, among whom were *Kyai* A. Wahib Wahab (former Minister of Religious Affairs), K. Zayadi, K. Dimiyati Banten, Prof. Ibrahim Husein, and *Kyai* Tb. Mansyur Ma'mun.

Kyai Abbas harmoniously developed strong cooperation with the surrounding communities by giving regular public teaching in his *langgar* (prayer room). It was said that many people flooded his place just to listen to his religious advice. He was also known as *pendekar* (expert in martial arts). There is an anecdote about *Kyai* Abbas's fondness of martial arts. One of his

⁹ Established in 1926 in response to Islamic reformism from the Middle East, NU is Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, boasting a membership of about 35 million at least. NU and the traditionalists are led by *kyai/ulama* (Islamic scholars). NU leaders cooperated with Indonesian nationalists in the struggle against the Dutch and compromised not to organize the state along Islamic lines. Between 1952 and 1984 the organization participated in national politics as a political party, initially as its own party and later as part of the United Development Party (PPP). In 1984 the organization decided to withdraw from official party activity and return to its roots as a socio-religious movement. Around the same time, a new generation of leaders within NU had hoped to transform the organization into a vehicle for the creation of a democratically oriented Muslim civil society. Its then leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, had a grand vision of "Indonesianizing" Islam into a civic-oriented, pluralistic and ethical force in society.



students Prof Husein witnessed how many pendekars visited *Kyai Abbas*. One day, he saw the guest together with the *kyai* came into *kyai*'s room. Husein only heard the cracking sound of duel between *kyai* and his guest (Royyani, 2004). Due to his expertise, *Kyai Abbas* was involved in an independence war, such as war of 10 November 1945 in Surabaya. He passed away through heart failure after being shocked at hearing that the Linggar Jati agreement in 1946 had been signed, which later disadvantaged the Indonesian position. It seemed he was greatly disappointed by that fact as he believed that consensus from this conference would disadvantage Indonesia.

The leadership of this *pesantren* was still continued by the son of *Kyai Abbas*, *Kyai Mustahdi Abbas* (1946-1975). After spending years studying under his father's tutelage, young Mustahdi continued to study at various *pesantren*, such as Jombang, Lasem, Lirboyo, Tremas, and Pacitan. During his time, Islamic learning circles (*pengajian*) were not carried out regularly due to the difficult situation at the time of war. After 1949, Buntet returned to normal as *santri*, *ustadz*, *kyais*, and members of community could return from hiding during the delicate periods of war. They were able to participate in *pengajian* and *ngaji kitab* (learning religious books). *Kyai Mustahdi Abbas* also developed the *madrasah* system in Buntet in much more modern and courageous steps. He tried to adopt the national education system by establishing new types of *madrasah*, such as the six year *madrasah* ibtdaiyah (primary Islamic school) in 1950; a four year training for male religious school teachers (PGA) in 1958. Later he established the six year program in the same school for females in 1960.

The development included three year *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (Lower Secondary Islamic School) in 1965; three year *Madrasah Aliyah* (Upper Secondary Islamic School), which was later converted to *Madrasah Aliyah Agama Islam Negeri* (MAAIN) and became a government owned *madrasah* in 1970s; three year *Madrasah Aliyah NU* (MANU) in 1968, and a College/Academy of Al Qur'an al Karim in 1970. During his time, Buntet was organized within a foundation called LPI (*Lembaga Pendidikan Islam*/Institution of Islamic Education) to administer all activities under one organization. LPI was then renamed to YLPI (*Yayasan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam*) on 29 June 1992. As *yayasan* (foundation), the organization of *pesantren* becomes communal responsibility of *kyai* at Buntet. The establishment of this foundation was signaled the end of single leadership and the beginning



of collective leadership for the betterment of the *pesantren*. LPI's maxim is "*al jami' bayna al qadiim al shalih wa al jadiid al nafi' wa bayna al 'ilm al waasi' wa al iimaan al raashih*" (the integration of old that still good and new useful things and of wide knowledge and strong faith). *Kyai* Mustahdi Abbas urged his alumni to conduct a congress to account for contemporary Islamic education issues; as a result, a body of alumni was founded, called IKBP (*Ikatan Alumni Buntet Pesantren/Association of Buntet alumni*) in the 1970s.

Kyai Mustamid Abbas (1975-1988), little brother of Mustahdi Abbas, took over the *pesantren* leadership after the death of his brother. He had studied in some *pesantren*, such as Jombang, Lasem, Lirboyo and Tremas. He was an active member of Syuriah NU in West Java and member of MPR (People's Consultative Assembly) of *utusan golongan* (community representative). He was the first *ulama* who accepted *pancasila* as the national ideological foundation of Indonesian life in 1983. In addition, he urged NU to return to its *khithah* (ultimate guideline) of 1926. During his time, networks with Middle Eastern countries were extended by measures like sending some *santris* to Egypt to study in al Azhar or other Middle Eastern universities under the sponsorship of Middle East countries. Moreover, he paved the way to uphold a warmer connection with the Indonesian government and its elites.



Picture 2: Kitab Kuning course

Kyai Abdullah Abbas (1988-date), the little brother of *Kyai* Mustamid, received the baton of leadership after the death of his brother. He has continued and broadened the roles of *pesantren* Buntet in its education efforts while still preserving its old characteristics, such as Islamic learning circles based on classical religious books. Pre-School education was also established in 1997, the Nursing Academy (three year program after secondary level) in 1996, along with the computer and language course, and the health center for the *santri* and the



community. Moreover, *Kyai* Abdullah forbids his children to be actively involved in any political practice. He is now eighty-four years old. Nevertheless, his dedication to the NU organization has continued very strong to the present. His daughter, Ismah, stated that her father is not a conservative *kyai*, he is very progressive as he believes that women must attain a higher education. It has been evident that Ismah got her bachelor degree of psychology from a prominent university in Yogyakarta.

General Discussion

From the above description, *Pesantren* Buntet positioned itself as a combination *pesantren*, or a hybrid *pesantren* where traditional and modern are mixed. Many *kyais* of Buntet have argued that the *pesantren*, to some degree, is modern, especially in terms of education facilities and the programs offered. Nonetheless, it still stands on its traditionality¹⁰, such as the day-to-day activities and traditions, *santri*'s behavior and the cloth worn, the teaching of *kitab kuning* with *bandongan* (communal) and *sorogan* (individual) methods, and the affiliation to NU as a traditional organization. The recent development of the *pesantren* which espouses the formal *madrasah* system has forced *santri* to abandon the wandering *santri* style, as education certificate needs them to complete the formal program. Many *kyais* of Buntet contended that *pesantren* is actually a small NU, whereas NU is the biggest *pesantren*. Due to the preservation of old values, Buntet still relies upon the fame of its grand *kyai* and its traditional activities. Moreover, the concept of *barakah* (Allah's blessing) by venerating and respecting a *kyai* is still well maintained¹¹.

¹⁰ Shils (1981, p. 12) notes that tradition, in the most general sense, means a *traditum*, that is anything which is transmitted from the past and maintained at the present. Luke (1996, p. 114) shows that tradition is derived from Latin word *tradere* implying transmitting or giving something up to another. *Traditio* is the process of giving, and *traditum* is the thing being transmitted. Thompson (1996, pp. 89-108) adds that to explore character of tradition, four aspects of tradition must be understood: hermeneutic, normative, legitimation, and identity aspects. The hermeneutic aspect sees tradition as a set of background assumptions that are taken for granted to understand the world by the individuals in the conduct of their daily lives; the normative aspect regard tradition as a set of assumptions, form of beliefs, and pattern of actions that are handed down from the past and serve as a normative guide for present attitudes; the legitimation aspect necessitates authority of enacted rules based charisma, devotion, belief in the sanctity etc; and the identity aspect suggests a set of assumptions, beliefs, and patterns of behaviour handed down from the past that provide the symbolic materials for the formation of identity both at the individual and collective level.

¹¹ Many *santri* interviewed believed that their *kyai* have the spiritual attributes, *karamah* (elevated rank in the eyes of Allah) as a source of *barakah*. Having *karamah* and *barakah* leads the *kyai* to develop a charismatic leadership. Dhofier (1980b) points out that *karamah*, *barakah*, and deep knowledge of Islamic teachings are essential elements for *pesantren* leadership. The story of Mbah Muqayyim and *Kyai* Abbas show the extraordinary ability to get rid of threats during colonial wars. People believe that without possessing *karamah*, the *kyai* would not able to defeat the enemies. Additionally, Dhofier (1980b) believes that almost all famous *kyai* who have been able to develop big *pesantren* are classified as *kyai* with extraordinary *karamah* and *barakah*. Romas (2003) criticize the existence of *kyai*'s absolute authority in a traditional *pesantren*. He contends that a *kyai* has use the notion of *barakah* to justify abusive roles either personal or structural means. The *santri* are powerless and subjugated by the condition of created heaven. *Santri* do not have freedom to express and develop their own potentiality and ability and lose their personal confidence.



Culturally, a *kyai* is considered as a little king who holds power and authority within the *pesantren*. The *kyai*'s charisma is also no less influential in promoting this tradition, as the charisma can bring about extraordinary loyalty among the members of community (Sobary, 1988). The notion of *barakah* and *syafa'at* provided by the *kyai* has caused the *santri* to pay loyalty and honor. The relationship between *kyai* and *santri* is not based on equality. Rather it results in authoritarian, dominant and hegemonic roles of the *kyai*, as they have much more power than that of the *santri* (Romas, 2003). *Kyai* maintains their position by exerting structural and personal power, and their position, therefore, is very central within the *pesantren*. *Kyai*'s authority is very powerful and absolute permeating *pesantren* community, especially in the traditional *pesantren*. However, in some 'modernized' *pesantren* the *kyai*'s absolute authority has been decentralized through the establishment of a foundation as a body under which a *pesantren* is organized. Collective *kyai* are responsible for the success of *pesantren* life. Although the establishment of YLPI means the elimination of single authority, Buntet seems still to highly respect *Kyai* Abdullah Abbas as person of reference. Many people in the *pesantren* believe that *Mbah* Dullah (short name of *Kyai* Abdullah Abbas) is one of *pesantren*'s *jimat*¹². His dedication to the *pesantren* and NU organization is of much profound. During *haul* many people, *santri* and alumni visit him and ask his prayer for their best. Sometimes, political elites come to this *pesantren* to visit some *kyai* of *Buntet* for many purposes, one of which is seeking *barakah*.

This is because the status of *kyai* in local Indonesian society rests upon a complex set of beliefs and values (Winzeler, 1974; Lapidus, 2002). In particular *kyai* are traditionally viewed as religious figures that most clearly embody in their learning and modest and devout personal life-styles the virtues, wisdom and power of Islam. Through the *kyai*'s position, messages for the development can be disseminated to the lay people. The *kyai* along with his *santri* are actively involved in rural development programs where most *pesantren* are situated. Moreover, the *kyai* do not only teach and preach Islamic values within and outside the *pesantren*, but they also invite surrounding community members to attend public lectures he held in the *pesantren* on a weekly basis. Due to his position in the society and charismatic leadership, some political elites are used to visiting the *kyai*. A local staff at the Directorate of *Pesantren* Development, Department of Religious Affairs, argued that the visit of many elites to the *pesantren* is actually not sincere, as they have their own political motives to take advantage of the *kyai*'s position.

¹² Literally, it means amulet, or it can also stand for *barang siji kang dirumat* (the only one thing that must be taken care of). He is the only direct son of *Mbah* Abbas left in *Pesantren* Buntet.



Kyai are powerful as their functions are seen to be the central of continued existence of Islamic society. Admittedly, they might derive influence from other sources, from land, or from access to the ruling elites, but the central strand in the power of most is that Muslim have already known that there is no more important work than transmitting and guarding knowledge of the world of God and knowledge of how to know God. They transmitted Islamic knowledge and wisdom to the generations which are to succeed them. Without such *kyai* it is hard to see how Islamic society could long survive. Following the Prophet as the perfect man (*insaan kamiil*), *kyai*'s followers attempt to emulate they way they drink, sit, speak, dress, stand and the like.

In Buntet, the *kyai* are considered charismatic leader in Weberian concept. A *kyai*'s charisma is based on the belief in his spiritual powers and ability to bestow blessing due to his contact with the world unseen. It is this attitude towards the dead that most sharply distinguishes traditional Islam from the modernists and fundamentalists, who hold that after death, no communication is possible and who condemn all attempts to contact the dead as shirk, idolatry (Van Bruinessen, 1994). Knowledge genealogy is of much vital in this *pesantren*. Therefore, *santri* are bound to respect their teachers. In this regard, Tibawi (1972) suggests that the relationship between master and disciple is personal not institutional. This nature seems to be influenced by medieval Islamic education. Alumni of this *pesantren* are also committed to maintain an everlasting relationship. It is deemed to be the very *akhlaq* (morality) of *santri*. The *pesantren* frequently see that excellent behavior is much more important than mastering much knowledge (Zulkifli, 2002). The *kyai*'s method in implanting excellent *akhlaq* among their *santri* is so instrumental. Dhofier (1980a, p. 265) points out that :

The success of *pesantren* leaders in producing numerous highly qualified Islamic scholars is due to the *kyai*'s method of learning. The intention is not to fill the minds of the students with information, but to refine their morals, educate their spirits, propagate their virtue, teach them propriety, and prepare them for a life full of sincerity and purity.

By all means, the *kyai* enjoyed social privilege and high social status ever since Islam came to Java (Dhofier, 1980b). The introduction of Islam to the local people needed the *kyai*'s authority and competence. Thus, the people considered *kyai* as figures of reference with



whom they consulted about any aspect of life. They need *kyai*'s guidance and decisions on matters relating to birth, marriage, divorce, property, inheritance, death, and the like. Having such a position, the influence of a *kyai* is very strong in the Javanese society; a *kyai* is seen as learned and knowledgeable person in religious teachings (Dhofier, 1980b).

Pesantren Buntet shows endogamous marriage system to ensure the continuity of *pesantren*. Bellow (2003, p. 116) affirms that there are, at least, three advantages of such a close marital system: First, it keeps property within the lineage. The second, it strengthens solidarity by doubling blood and marriage ties within the family. The third, it also toughens cultural integrity, since someone from other blood ties with their foreign cultures will experience difficulties to assimilate with the culture. Abdullah (1996) is of the opinion that genealogical ties can support links among the *pesantren* and sense of solidarity between teachers and students. It is also pertinently admitted that "a tradition of consanguineous marriage among patrilineal relatives produces a tightly braided line of great endurance and resiliency (Bellow, 2003, p. 116). *Kyai* regard a family as the most important unit of Muslim society through which the future generations are maintained. The family institution is not only a means to maintain and develop *santri*'s culture, but also for *pesantren*'s protection. Dhofier (1980b, p. 50) points out:

These groups [*kyai*] are Muslim scholars, imbued with a strong sense of duty to urge people to follow Islamic principles seriously and perform religious rituals intensively, and they have an interest in maintaining their *pesantren* leadership, preserving their position as part of the elite sector of the Javanese community, and in keeping their abundant wealth.

In short, the continued existence of *pesantren* Buntet can be seen from some factors: First, the *kyai* tend to have a progressive response towards changing social climate; second, regeneration of *kyai* has been well prepared through genealogical leadership; third, endogamous marriage is maintained to ensure cultural and economical strength of the *pesantren* besides to secure esteemed pedigree; fourth, the government's initiative and policies through the Ministry of Religious Affairs have contributed the advancement of the *pesantren* institutions. In addition, the government does not apply a single education system for the populace, as two government departments (Department of National Education and Department of Religious Affairs) handle the education policies. Community participation to education service both individual and organization is encouraged; and fifth, the support of



Muslim community; sixth, the support of alumni and *pesantren* network. This last factor has been evident as Buntet has developed a good relationship with the alumni and particularly with those who have established their own *pesantren*. Hence, *Pesantren* Buntet can be seen as the major *pesantren* on which alumni's *pesantren* depend¹³. Last but not least, the Islamic teaching is considered to be the very basis of the pesanten development. These seven factors interconnect each other to guarantee the continuation of the *pesantren*. It is not less true that “through the notion of “cultural resistance” inherited from the Walisongo, the *pesantren* tradition displayed its dynamism to flexibly absorb local and foreign elements but still to stand uniquely on Islamic principles” (Mas’ud, 2000, p. 198).

It is quite interesting in the case of *pesantren* Buntet, presumably like other old *pesantren* in Indonesia. The *pesantren* has been able to share the space between old and new without sacrificing the very religious mission. Buntet has positioned in the middle between modern and traditional respectively. It seems that Buntet has experienced what so called involution, a concept Geertz borrows from Alexander Goldenweiser. Geertz (1963, p. 81). The concept is to describe “those culture which, after having reached what would seem to be definitive form, nonetheless fail either to stabilize or transform themselves into a new pattern but rather continue to develop by becoming internally more complicated.” Thus, involuted institutions are those which rather than evolving into a new form, internally become more and more complex in such a way that they look less likely to evolve due to the internal accommodation (Rice, 1980, p. 160). Hence, it is obvious for a hybrid *pesantren* to stand in between. Regarding the coexistence between modern and traditional, Luke (1996) points out that there are actual inter-plays of many other identities and differences in which one finds tradition-in-modernity or modernity as tradition.

It can be argued that the process of *pesantren*'s involution is inextricable from the roles of the agents of the *pesantren*. Agents in society have three attributes to make change: intention or purpose, reflexivity, and power (Giddens, 1984). These attributes reflect the willingness of change from within. Intention is based on sound knowledge and understanding of what must be taken. Agents have knowledge of their action which constitutes their competence in deciding which way they want to go. Reflexivity means more than their awareness of the

¹³ This relationship has created stratification among *pesantren* and *kyai*. Dhofier (1980b, p. 49-50) argued that the *kyai* at the major *pesantren* form part of the national elite; *kyai* at the secondary *pesantren* become part of the provincial elites; and *kyai* of minor *pesantren* form part of local district elites.



meanings of their actions. He claims that reflexivity should be understood not merely as self-consciousness but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life (Giddens, 1984, p.3). In so doing, an agent must own power. Evidently, a *kyai*, as he holds legitimate power in society, can play significant roles in transforming the *pesantren* institution. The *kyai*'s moral capacity and wide religious knowledge equip them with such legitimation to bring such a change to the *pesantren*. Thus, modern outlook can well grow within a traditional *pesantren*, like Buntet. In the minds of *kyai*, it is possible to accept the authority of the "infidels" or new modern things as long as they do not destroy the *kyai*'s goal of spreading Islam. Dhofier (1999) argues that such a political thinking, to some degree, is still maintained in up to the present.

Conclusion

Pesantren education can be understood as lifelong education, since there is no age limitation and everybody is welcome to study in the *pesantren*. The *pesantren* Buntet which was established in the eighteenth century has been able to maintain its being. Although modern life has been bombarding the fabric of Indonesian society, *pesantren* are still seen as alternative institution, which enable the less fortunate to enjoy an affordable education service. As traditional institution, *Pesantren* Buntet has proved that it can embrace modernity without discharging its basic Islamic spirit and traditional features. Islam is used as spiritual impetus to welcome modernity and retain traditionality. Hence, traditional in this case does not mean a marginalization and an alienation of modern outlooks. It has been clear now that *pesantren* are not only the place of religious learning, but also secular and worldly activities. If schools make people modern, then *pesantren* leaders are seeking to make people modern in a distinctly Islamic way. The combination of religious training, character development, and secular education is designed to create people who can live and compete in a changing world and maintain traditional Values (Lukens Bull, 2002). Thus, suffice it to say that tradition never ceases, only it does so beside, inside, behind, between, or beneath the practices and structures of modernity.

The long existing *Pesantren* Buntet can be seen from its self-sustainable character. In the past, it kept distance from the colonial government and did not receive financial funding whatsoever from the Dutch government. It became the hub of the independence struggle. The *pesantren* has also been able to maintain networks with its alumni through yearly festivals,



cultural events, and alumni networks. Its ability to tighten communication and connections with the surrounding communities is outstanding. The leadership regeneration of this *pesantren* is worthy of note, since the leadership is handed down from generation to generation through consensus agreed upon by the members of family. Its leadership style is unlike in the past where only a single grand *kyai* became centre of *pesantren* life. The leadership is positioned as collective responsibility. The elder *kyai* is appointed as a symbol of authority. Although cadre for the *pesantren* leadership is organized through family ties, *pesantren* Buntet has attempted to be committed to support the excellence of education for the masses; evidence has shown that the *kyais* of Buntet have welcome various education programs which are not confined to the religious sciences. Nowadays, every activity is coordinated by a body of *kyais* within the foundation. Moreover, education programs provided within this *pesantren* are designed not only for the revival of religious learning, but also for responding to the demands of daily life. Besides the progressive outlook of the actors inside the *pesantren*, the continuation of this *pesantren* is secured by the achievement of their alumni network, the support of the Muslim community and the government policies. Thus, it can be argued that Indonesian *pesantren* are avant-garde of progressive Islamic education institutions; something that many people tend to neglect and generalize “the color” of Islam.

Reference:

Abdullah, Taufik

1996 *Pesantren in Historical Perspectives*, in Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique (eds) *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of South Asean Studies.

Alfian

1985 *The Ulama in Acehese Society, in Indonesia*, in Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique, and Yasmin Hussain (eds). *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: ISEAS. Pp. 82-86.

Asrahah, Hanun et.al.

2002 *Pesantren di Jawa: Asal-Usul, Perkembangan Pelembagaan*. Jakarta:Depag RI.

Atmodarminto

2000 *Babad Demak dalam Tafsir Sosio-Politik Keislaman dan Kebangsaan*. Jakarta:Selamat.

Azra, Azyumardi

1999 *Esei-Esei Intelektual Muslim dan Pendidikan Islam*. Jakarta: Logos.

2003a *Pendidikan Islam Tradisional dalam Transisi dan Modernisasi*. Jakarta: Logos.



- 2003b Bali and Southeast Asia Islam: Debunking the Myths, in Kumar Ramakrishna and See Seng Tan (eds), *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang technological University of Singapore. Pp. 39-57.
- 2005 *Militancy and Jihad in Indonesia: Historical Perspective*. Unpublished paper presented at CSCI Inaugural Public Dialogue 'Militancy, Ideas of Jihad and Islam', Center for the Study of Contemporary Islam, University of Melbourne, 13 April 2005.
- Barber, Benjamin R.
1992 Jihad vs McWorld. *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1992, Vol. 296, Pp. 53-65.
- Barber, Benjamin
1995 *Jihad Vs McWorld*. New York: Times Books.
- Bauman, Zygmunt
1998 *Globalization, the Human Consequences*. UK: Polity Press.
- Bellow, Adam
2003 *In Praise of Nepotism: A Natural History*. USA: Doubleday.
- Brah, Avtar
2002 Global Motilities, Local Predicaments: Globalization and the Critical Imagination. *Feminist review* 70, 2002. pp. 30-45.
- Depag RI.
2001 *Pola Pengembangan Pondok Pesantren*. Jakarta: Dirjenbagais.
2003 *Ringkasan Nasional Laporan Statistik EMIS, Pondok Pesantren, Tahun Pelajaran 2002-2003*. Jakarta: Dirjenbagais.
- Dhofier, Zamakhsyari
1980a *The Pesantren Tradition: A study of the Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of the Traditional Ideology of Islam in Java*. Unpublished P.hD thesis, Australian National University Canberra.
1980b Kinship and Marriage among the Javanese *Kyai*. *Indonesia* 29 (April 1980). Pp. 47-58.
1999 *The Pesantren Tradition: The Role of the Kyai in The Maintenance of Traditional Islam in Java*. USA: Program for Southeast Asian Studies Arizona State University.
- Dos Santos, T.
1978 *The Crisis of Development Theory and the Problem of Dependence in Latin America*. In Henry Bernstein (ed). *Underdevelopment and Development, the Third World Today*. Australia: Penguin Books.
- Emis.
2001 *Summary Emis Narrative and Statistical Report Pondok Pesantren Twenty Six Provinces Republic of Indonesia School Year 2000-2001*. Jakarta: Ministry of Religious Affairs Directorate General for Development of Islamic Institutions, Directorate for Development of Islamic Schools.
- Geertz, Clifford
1963 *Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.



- 1972 The Politics of Meaning. In Claire Holt, Benedict R.O'G. Anderson, and James Siegel (eds) *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. New York: Cornell University.
- 1973 The Interpretation of Cultures. New York: Basic Books.
- Giddens, Anthony
- 1984 The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration Berkeley: University of California.
- 2002 Runaway World: How Globalisation Is Reshaping Our Lives. Great Britain: Profile Books.
- Huband, Mark
- 1999 Warriors of the Prophet: the Struggle for Islam. USA: Westview Press.
- Jones, Sydney
- 1991 The Javanese *Pesantren*: Between Elite and Peasantry, in Charles F Keyes, E. Jane Keyes, and Nancy Donnelly (eds) *Reshaping Local Worlds: Formal Education and Cultural Change in Rural Southeast Asia*. USA: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies.
- Kartodirdjo, Sartono
- 1994 The Development and Demise of the Traditional Javanese Aristocracy, in Hans Antlov and Sven Cederroth (eds) *Leadership on Java: Gentle Hints, Authoritarian Rule*. Great Britain: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies. Pp. 21-32.
- Lapidus, Ira M.
- 2002 History of Islamic Societies, 2nd edition. UK: Cambridge University.
- Lukens Bull, Ronald Alan
- 1997 A Peaceful Jihad; Javanese Islamic Education and Religious Identity Construction. Ph.D. thesis, Arizona State University.
- 2002 Teaching Morality: Javanese Islamic Education in a Globalizing Era, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 3 (2000). Pp. 26-47).
- Luke, Timothy W. Luke
- Identity, Meaning and Globalization: Detraditionalization in Postmodern Space-Time Compression, in Paul Heelas, Scott Lash, and Paul Morris (eds) *Detraditionalization*. UK: Blackwell Publishers. Pp. 109-133.
- Madjid, Nurcholish
- 1997 Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: Sebuah Potret Perjalanan. Jakarta: Penerbit Paramadina.
- Mas'ud, Abdurrahman
- 2000 "Why the *Pesantren* In Indonesia Remains Unique and Stronger," in Isma-ae Alee et.al. (ed.), *Islamic Studies In Asean: Presentations of an International Seminar*. Thailand: Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus, pp.186-203.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade
- 2003 Feminism without Borders: Decolonising Theory, Practising Solidarity. USA: Duke University Press.
- Mulkhan, Abdul Munir
- 2003 *Pesantren* di Tengah Dinamika Bangsa, in EZ Fanani and Elly el Fajri (eds). *Menggagas Pesantren Masa Depan: Geliat Suara Santri untuk Indonesia Baru*. Yogyakarta: Qirtas. Pp. xi-xvi.



- Nagata, Judith
 1994 How to be Islamic without being an Islamic State: Contested Models of Development in Malaysia, in Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan (eds) *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*. London: Routledge. pp. 63-90.
- Pigeud, Th. G
 1967 Literature of Java: Descriptive List of Javanese Manuscript. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Pipes, Daniel
 1983 In The Path of God: Islam and Political Power. New York: Basic Books.
- Pranowo, Bambang
 1989 Traditional Islam in Contemporary Rural Java: The Case of Tegal Rejo *Pesantren*, in M.C. Rickelfs (ed) *Islam in the Indonesian Social Context*. Clayton, Victoria: Monash University, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies. Pp. 39-56.
- Rice, Kenneth A.
 1980 *Geertz and Culture*. US: The University of Michigan Press.
- Ricklefs, M.C.
 1990 A History of Modern Indonesia. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Rifkin Ira
 2003 Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization: Making Sense of Economic and Cultural Upheaval. Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing.
- Romas, Chumaidi Syarief
 2003 Kekerasan di Kerajaan Surgawi. Yogyakarta: LKPM.
- Ronny, Muhammad Fathi
 2004 Pesantren Buntet Melintas Sejarah. Cirebon: AnNur Press.
- Saby, Yusny
 2001 The *Ulama* in Aceh: A Brief Historical Survey. *Studia Islamica Journal*, Vol. 8, Number 1, 2001. Pp. 1-54.
- Sidney Morning Herald
 2003 Australia Should Fund Indonesian Schools: Rudd, August 31, 2003 available: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/08/31/1062268464063.html>, accessed: 1/09/2003
- Sheridan, Greg
 2003 Jakarta Calling, *The Weekend*, August 09, 2003, available online at: http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,6895504%5E12377..., accessed: 1/09/2003.
- Shils, Edward
 1981 *Tradition*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Sobary, Mohammad
 1988 Diskursus Islam Sosial Memahami Zaman Mencari Solusi. Zaman: Bandung.
- Suminto, Aqib
 1985 *Politik Islam Hindia Belanda, het Kantoort voor Inlandsche Zaken*. Jakarta : Lembaga Penelitian Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial (LP3ES).



The Age. 2003. Indonesian Schools "Feeding Terror", August 31, 2003, available online at: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/08/31/1062268465911.html>, accessed: 1/09/2003.

Thompson, John B.

1996 Tradition and Self in a Mediated World, in Paul Heelas, Scott Lash, and Paul Morris (eds) *Detraditionalization*. UK: Blackwell Publishers. Pp. 89-108.

Tibawi, Abdul Latief

1972 Arabic and Islamic Themes. London: Luzac.

Van Bruinessen, Martin

1994 *Pesantren and Kitab kuning: Maintenance and Continuation of a Tradition of Religious Learning*, in Wolfgang Marshall (ed), *Texts from the Islands. Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World* [Ethnologica Bernica, 4]. Berne: University of Berne, 1994, pp. 121-145.

Van Bruinessen, Martin.

2000 "Shari`a court, tarekat and *pesantren*: religious institutions in the sultanate of Banten", *Archipel* 50 (1995), 165-200.

Zulkifli

2002 Sufism in Java: The Role of the Pesantren in the Maintenance of Sufism in Java. Jakarta, Leiden: INIS.

Wahid, Abdurrahman

1988 *Pesantren Sebagai Sub-Kultur*, in Dawam Rahardjo (ed). *Pesantren dan Pembaharuan*. Jakarta: LP3ES. Pp. 39-60.

