

COLONIALISM AND ISLAMIC MODERNISM: DIFFERENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT PATHS OF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: *This article aims to explore the influence of Islamic colonialism and modernism on the development of traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Using the path dependency theory approach, this article analyzes how these initial conditions form different development paths and how each pesantren adapts to the changing times. Netherlands colonialism gave rise to educational dualism that separated secular and religious education, while Islamic modernism encouraged the integration of general education and religion. Traditional Islamic boarding schools tend to maintain classical teaching methods and focus on religious studies, while modern Islamic boarding schools adopt a more inclusive and integrative approach. The path dependence theory helps explain the difference in the development paths of these two types of pesantren, which are influenced by initial decisions and historical conditions. This article examines the history, evolution, and long-term impact of these two development paths on the Islamic education system in Indonesia.*

Keywords: *Colonialism; Islamic Modernism; Traditional and Modern Pesantren; Path Dependence; Indonesia.*

Abstrak: Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengaruh kolonialisme dan modernisme Islam terhadap perkembangan pesantren tradisional dan modern di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan teori path dependence, artikel ini menganalisis bagaimana kondisi awal tersebut membentuk jalur perkembangan yang berbeda dan bagaimana masing-masing pesantren beradaptasi dengan perubahan zaman. Kolonialisme Belanda memunculkan dualisme pendidikan yang memisahkan pendidikan sekuler dan agama, sedangkan modernisme Islam mendorong integrasi pendidikan umum dan agama. Pesantren tradisional cenderung mempertahankan metode pengajaran klasik dan fokus pada studi agama, sementara pesantren modern mengadopsi pendekatan yang lebih inklusif dan integratif. Teori path dependence membantu menjelaskan perbedaan jalur perkembangan kedua jenis pesantren ini, yang dipengaruhi oleh keputusan awal dan kondisi historis. Artikel ini mengkaji sejarah, evolusi, dan dampak jangka panjang dari kedua jalur perkembangan tersebut terhadap sistem pendidikan Islam di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Kolonialisme; Modernisme Islam; Pesantren Tradisional dan Modern; Path Dependence; Indonesia.

Introduction

Islamic education in Indonesia has evolved through a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-political factors. Colonialism and Islamic modernism have significantly shaped the evolution of this educational landscape, leading to a complex relationship between *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and the official education system.¹ The *pesantren* system, particularly during the Dutch colonial period, faced significant challenges and opportunities. The “resist while following” approach encapsulates the dual strategy employed by these institutions, resisting the complete adoption of colonial educational models while selectively integrating beneficial elements.² The colonial era also saw the emergence of Islamic reform movements that sought to modernize Islamic education, leading to the establishment of new types of schools that blended Islamic teachings with modern subjects.³ Despite adopting certain aspects of colonial education, *pesantren* have remained steadfast in their commitment to Islamic values. The integration of modern subjects has been framed within an Islamic context, ensuring that the core mission of fostering religious knowledge and moral character is upheld.⁴ This dual focus has enabled *pesantren* to produce graduates who are not only well-versed in religious studies but also equipped with the skills necessary to navigate modern society.

Despite sharing these common roots, traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools have developed distinct educational philosophies and practices. Traditional *pesantren* typically adhere to classical teaching methods, which often include rote memorization, oral recitation, and

direct teacher-student interactions.⁵ The pedagogical approach is heavily influenced by traditional Islamic scholarship, where students engage with classical texts and religious literature, emphasizing the study of the “Yellow Book” (*Kitab Kuning*). The curriculum is often infused with local customs and traditions, creating a unique educational environment that reflects the socio-cultural context of the community.⁶ This connection to heritage is vital for instilling a sense of identity and belonging among students. Unlike traditional *pesantren*, modern Islamic boarding schools adopt a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates a wide range of subjects, including sciences, mathematics, and social studies.⁷ This approach aims to equip students with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of contemporary society. The integration of modern subjects is often accompanied by the use of innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning and technology-enhanced instruction.⁸ They emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and the application of knowledge in real-world contexts. Leaders in modern Islamic boarding schools emphasize the integration of traditional values with the modern education system by developing their curriculum to include general subjects, which reflects the fusion of traditional Islamic teachings with modern knowledge.⁹

The differences between traditional and modern *pesantren* can be traced back to early conditions, including the impact of colonial rule and the rise of Islamic modernism. Path dependence theory offers a valuable lens through which to understand how initial decisions and historical contexts shape the development trajectories of these institutions.¹⁰ The early decisions regarding the curriculum—whether to maintain a classical focus on the Yellow Book or to integrate modern subjects—have created distinct educational paths. Traditional *pesantren* that chose to preserve classical methods have reinforced their identity and practices through community support and cultural heritage, leading to a lock-in effect that makes significant changes challenging.¹¹ Conversely, modern *pesantren* that embraced a multidisciplinary approach has benefited from increasing returns associated with their ability to attract students seeking a more comprehensive education.¹² The integration of general and religious education has positioned these institutions favorably within the broader educational landscape, further entrenching their modern practices.¹³

The data in this article is based on case analysis; this study examines how these institutions have responded to changing social, political, and economic contexts, highlighting the implications of their respective educational trajectories. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic boarding

schools in adapting to the changing educational paradigm. Following the introduction, the discussion of the historical context of Islamic boarding schools, the impact of colonialism, the emergence of Islamic modernism, and the resulting differences in the development paths of traditional and modern *pesantren*. The resulting differences in the development paths of traditional and modern *pesantren* highlight the dynamic nature of Islamic education in Indonesia. Understanding these historical contexts and educational trajectories is essential for policymakers and educators as they navigate the future of Islamic education in a rapidly changing world.

The Evolution and Educational Structure of Pondok Pesantren

The establishment of *pesantren* represents a significant form of institutionalization and professionalization of *'ulamā'* (Islamic scholars).¹⁴ This process involves creating a structured organizational framework, including a well-defined educational curriculum, governance, and learning systems. The role of Sufis, especially *Wali Songo*, has succeeded in acculturating culture through performing arts, literature, or daily religious practices, with *pesantren* being its main pillar.¹⁵ The professionalization of *'ulamā'* involves equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfill their roles as educators and community leaders effectively.¹⁶

This educational institution has undergone a transformation influenced by various factors, including the adaptation of Hindu-Buddhist educational systems during the Majapahit era.¹⁷ This historical influence is reinforced by the term *pesantren*, which originated from the Indian word *shastri*, meaning "Hindu scholar." When Islam arrived in the archipelago, Islamic missionaries retained this educational model but replaced its content with Islamic teachings, "a new wine in a very old bottle."¹⁸ Additionally, *pesantren* was also influenced by Middle Eastern networks, particularly through Sufi beliefs and practices.¹⁹ The influence of the Middle East on *pesantren* is evident in the use of the term '*pondok*.' Linguistically, '*funduq*' in Arabic means "residence," and over time, it has come to denote a simple sleeping space.²⁰

Initially, *pesantren* grew based on a voluntaristic relationship between the *kiai*, *santri*, and the community. The *pesantren* complex generally consists of a mosque, the *kiai's* house, and dormitories built on land donated by village economic elites. The *kiai* and his family typically act as the main *wāqif* (donor), with their house and land being used for the education and residence of the *santri*.²¹ The *kiai* educates the *santri* in various religious sciences and practices, including worship, Arabic grammar, creed, and Sufism. Additionally, spiritual practices within *pesantren* often refer to

Sufism and *'ubūdiyyah* (devotion), emphasizing the inner dimension of Islam, spiritual purification, and devotion to God. The integration of Sufi practices and *'ubūdiyyah* enriches the spiritual landscape of pesantren. The *kiai's* leadership style, characterized by spiritual guidance, ethical values, and a deep connection to Islamic teachings, plays a crucial role in enhancing the spirituality and character development of the *santri*. The *kiai's* role as a spiritual leader is vital in shaping the ethical and moral compass of the *santri* within the pesantren community.²²

The *kiai*, as a respected religious leader within the *pesantren*, provides knowledge, wisdom, and blessings to the *santri*, forming social relationships marked by obedience, respect, and deep spiritual connections. The concept of *barakah* (divine blessing) is deeply ingrained in the *pesantren* ethos, where the *kiai* is believed to have the ability to bestow blessings upon the *santri* through their spiritual practices and teachings.²³ The concept of blessing is fundamental to the spiritual journey and education of the *santri* within the *pesantren* environment. In turn, the *santri* wholeheartedly imitate the actions and teachings of the *kiai* in their quest for blessings and spiritual growth. The *kiai* is identified as a “cultural broker,” which elevates them to the status of village elites who play roles beyond religious boundaries; ulama are also involved in social and political issues, at least within the community where the *pesantren* is established.²⁴ The *kiai* is capable of filtering and conveying external information deemed beneficial to the *pesantren* community, contributing to the preservation of Islamic values and traditions.

The mosque functions as a spiritual and religious center within the Islamic community. It not only serves as a place of worship but also as a space for education, community engagement, and various social services. The mosque provides a platform for learning about religious teachings, values, and practices.²⁵ Within the mosque, various social and religious activities take place, ranging from prayers and religious classes to community events and social services. These activities contribute to the holistic development of individuals, fostering their spiritual well-being, and promoting a sense of community cohesion.

The *pondok* or dormitory is a distinctive feature of the *pesantren* tradition that sets it apart from mosque-based education in most other parts of the Islamic world. The dormitory serves as a space where *santri* immerse themselves in Islamic teachings, cultivating a sense of discipline, spirituality, and camaraderie among the students. One key aspect of the dormitory system is the promotion of equality among *santri*, regardless of their background or social status. In the dormitory, all *santri* are given

equal opportunities to learn, grow personally, and develop spiritually. This emphasis on equality fosters a sense of friendship, mutual respect, and solidarity among students, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment.²⁶ The supervision provided by the *kiai*, assisted by *ustādh* (teachers), in the dormitory system is crucial to ensure the spiritual and educational well-being of the *santri*. Through this supervision, the dormitory system also serves as a space where *santri* engages in social and religious activities, further enriching their educational experience. These activities, ranging from congregational prayers and religious classes to group discussions and community service projects, contribute to the holistic development of the *santri*.²⁷

As a traditional Islamic educational institution, the *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) has become an inseparable characteristic and a hallmark of the teaching and learning process in *pesantren*. These classical Islamic texts, written by earlier scholars, include lessons on various aspects of Islamic knowledge and Arabic language. In the past, the teaching of classical Islamic texts was the only formal education provided in *pesantren* environments. There are eight areas of knowledge covered in these texts: *Naḥw* and *Ṣaraf* (morphology), *Fiqh*, *Uṣūl Fiqh*, *Ḥadīth*, *Tafsīr*, *Taubīd*, *Ṭaṣawwuf*, and *Akhlāq* (ethics), as well as other branches like *Tārikh* (history) and *Balāghah* (rhetoric). These texts can be categorized according to their educational levels, such as basic, intermediate, and advanced. Generally, the texts taught in *pesantren* in Java are similar. Currently, most *pesantren* have incorporated general knowledge into their curriculum as an important part of education, yet the teaching of classical Islamic texts is still given high priority.²⁸

Colonialism and the Rise of Islamic Intellectualism During the Dutch colonial period, *pesantren* became the sole place of learning for the Muslim community. The development of Islamic educational institutions coincided with the ethical policy approach introduced by the Dutch government in 1901, which emphasized a more ethical and moral governance system. Education played a crucial role in this policy, as the government established educational institutions ranging from elementary schools to medical academies with the aim of reducing illiteracy. This policy created opportunities for the configuration of indigenous elites within the overall educational landscape under Dutch colonial rule, aiming to develop the local population's capabilities through Western education.²⁹ However, discriminatory practices inherent in the colonial education system reinforced social inequalities,

particularly in access to quality education, creating a divide between the children of colonial officials and ordinary citizens. By the time Indonesia gained independence in 1945, approximately 90 percent of the population was illiterate.³⁰

The introduction of Western education and administrative systems by colonial powers inadvertently sparked an intellectual renewal process within the Muslim community, prompting a reevaluation of traditional knowledge systems and fostering new interest in education. This reform was primarily driven by a focus on individual religious renewal, encouraging Muslims to adapt to the changing landscape shaped by colonial forces. The discursive interaction between traditional Islamic teachings and Western education laid the foundation for educational reform approaches within the Muslim community, where the integration of modern ideas became a subject of debate and adaptation. This shift was marked by struggles against intellectual colonialism, where education in the language of the former colonizers was seen as a means to perpetuate dominance and undermine local cultural values.

The introduction of Western educational systems by colonial powers not only facilitated intellectual renewal but also triggered resistance and a reassessment of educational practices to realign with Islamic values and principles. The reform movements emerging from this interaction sought to navigate the complexities of integrating Western knowledge with Islamic principles, leading to a reevaluation of traditional educational systems. Islamic education began to adopt elements influenced by Western educational practices, reflecting a blend of traditional Islamic teachings with modern educational approaches.

During the Dutch East Indies era, *pesantren* evolved into religious communities, symbols of resistance, and Islamic identity.³¹ At that time, *pesantren* seemed to become the choice of Muslims to preserve their independence and cultural pride in the face of increasing Dutch colonization. Throughout the colonial era, the existence and development of *pesantren* were largely beyond the control of the colonial government. Instead, *pesantren* developed networks with Islamic learning centers in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.³²

The Cairo network accelerated the transformation of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, as Cairo equipped students from various parts of the Muslim world with ideas of Islamic modernism, along with urban living experiences.³³ Cairo alumni who adopted the modern system provided an alternative to the traditional *pesantren* system.³⁴ Cairo also equipped students from different parts of the Muslim world with ideas of

reformism or Islamic modernism alongside urban living experiences where 'modern.' *Madrasahs*, in addition to using new books, also incorporated new methods to better understand Islam from a modern perspective.

Islamic Modernism: Adaptation and Evolution of Pesantren Education

Islamic modernism is a movement that seeks to reconcile Islamic teachings with modernity and address the challenges posed by Western colonialism and cultural influence. This movement believes that Islamic teachings have been continuously altered under foreign influence, with Islamic principles often being misunderstood, misused, or even ignored, leading Muslims astray from the right path (*sirāt al-mustaqīm*) and causing division within the community. Principles of Islamic modernism include calls for the reinterpretation of Islamic texts in contemporary contexts, an emphasis on rationality and *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), a focus on social justice and equality, and a commitment to education and progress.³⁵

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā represent a period of transformation in Islamic intellectual history, marked by a commitment to reform, modernization, and the synthesis of Islamic tradition with the demands of the modern world. Al-Afghānī, known for his vision of Pan-Islamism and anti-colonial activism, inspired a generation of reformists. His emphasis on Islamic unity, anti-imperialism, and the need for Muslim societies to advance through education and reform had a profound impact on the intellectual landscape of the Muslim world. 'Abduh's reformist agenda focused on reconciling Islamic principles with modernity, advocating for educational reform, and promoting *ijtihad* in Islamic jurisprudence. His efforts to modernize Islamic thought and institutions, including his role in shaping the modern curriculum of al-Azhar University, reflect his commitment to revitalizing Islamic education and promoting a more progressive interpretation of Islam.³⁶ Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā continued the reformist legacy by advocating a return to the fundamentals of Islam while addressing modern challenges. Riḍā's work emphasized the importance of social and political reform, the revival of Islamic scholarship, and the application of Islamic principles to contemporary issues.³⁷ His efforts to establish a modern Islamic state and promote Islamic values in society underscore his commitment to reforming Islamic thought and practice in the modern era.

The influence of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī on Muslim reformists in Indonesia has been significant, as their ideas encouraged critical engagement with traditional Islamic practices while advocating modernity as a tool for revitalizing Islamic thought. 'Abduh's

and al-Afghānī's reformist ideologies provided a foundation for Indonesian reformists to address the complexities of integrating Western knowledge with Islamic principles, promoting an approach that remains faithful to Islamic tradition while adapting to contemporary challenges. Their legacy in Indonesia is evident in the ongoing efforts by reformists to reconcile traditional teachings with the realities of the modern world, shaping a dynamic, evolving, and globally relevant vision of Islam.³⁸

The contributions of these three figures to Islamic thought, educational reform, and social renewal continue to have a profound impact on the reform of Islamic education in Nusantara. Abdullah Ahmad played a significant role in the transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly through the establishment of Madrasah Adabiyah in Padang, West Sumatra, in 1909. This institution marked an important moment in the history of Islamic education in Indonesia by integrating general subjects into the curriculum, thus modernizing the traditional Islamic education system.³⁹ Ahmad's efforts were part of a broader educational reform movement in the region, such as Zainuddin Labay El Yunusy, who also contributed to the modernization of Islamic education by integrating general subjects into the curriculum and advocating for education for women.⁴⁰ These reformers aimed to revitalize Islamic education to be more aligned with the contemporary world, reflecting broader reformist trends within the Muslim community. This initiative played a significant role in shaping the direction of Islamic education in Indonesia and influencing educational discourse in the region.⁴¹

Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah, played a crucial role in modernizing Islamic education in Indonesia. He emphasized the importance of combining traditional Islamic teachings with modern knowledge to create a holistic educational system. Dahlan's leadership and vision brought changes to Islamic education, focusing on progressive values and modern approaches to teaching.⁴² His efforts in updating Islamic education were marked by a commitment to integrating religious and general knowledge, developing curricula, and improving the quality of education in Islamic institutions.⁴³ Muhammadiyah, as an Islamic reform organization in Indonesia, has significantly influenced Islamic education and the educational landscape in the country. One of its major contributions is the establishment of educational institutions known as Pesantren Mu'allimin, such as Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, which offers a combination of religious and general education. These institutions have introduced innovative educational models like "met de Qur'an," also known as "public school plus," which integrates

traditional Islamic teachings with modern educational practices.⁴⁴ This approach aligns with Muhammadiyah's goal to provide comprehensive education that integrates religious studies with contemporary knowledge.

The curriculum in institutions like Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, known as Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyyah (KMI), emphasizes principles such as competence, simplicity, independence, Islamic brotherhood, and freedom.⁴⁵ This curriculum framework reflects Muhammadiyah's holistic approach to education, aiming to educate students academically, morally, and spiritually. Teachers in Muhammadiyah educational institutions are expected to uphold high ethical standards, including fulfilling obligations to students, showing care and kindness, maintaining fairness, and providing constant supervision to ensure students' well-being and moral development.⁴⁶ In addition to educational initiatives, Muhammadiyah's broader social and community activities, such as the Muhammadiyah Alliance, have had a significant impact on Indonesian society. Through initiatives like establishing branches and engaging in charitable efforts, Muhammadiyah has contributed to creating a more cohesive and socially aware Muslim community. By promoting the principles of *tawhīd* faith and participating in charitable activities, Muhammadiyah has helped shape a community that is both religiously informed and socially engaged, responsive to the needs of the broader society.

Hasyim Asy'ari, a significant figure in Islamic education, has left an enduring legacy through his work *Adāb al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim*. This book summarizes his teachings on the ethics and interactions between scholars and students in the pursuit of knowledge. Asy'ari emphasizes the importance of purifying one's intentions, seeking knowledge for the pleasure of Allah, and approaching learning with seriousness and trust in the expertise and integrity of the teacher.⁴⁷ His teachings also highlight the importance of studying essential knowledge, adopting practical knowledge that supports everyday life, and interacting wisely with different scholarly perspectives. The concept of *ʿAdāb al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim* goes beyond mere academic achievement; it encompasses the formation of moral and ethical values in both educators and students. Asy'ari's emphasis on ethics in student-teacher interaction underscores the importance of creating a respectful and conducive learning environment. This ethical framework guides the behavior of both teachers and students, encouraging mutual respect, diligence in learning, and adherence to moral principles.⁴⁸ The text serves as a guide for character development and pedagogical practices within educational settings. The book outlines the ethics and

responsibilities of students towards teachers, the expected conduct of teachers in their instructional roles, and broader ethical considerations underpinning the educational process. As the education system evolves to meet contemporary societal needs, the ethical guidelines outlined by Asy'ari provide a timeless foundation for fostering well-rounded individuals who prioritize moral values alongside academic achievement.⁴⁹ By incorporating Asy'ari's teachings into modern educational practices, educators can cultivate a holistic approach to learning that emphasizes character development alongside academic success.

The Development Paths of Traditional and Modern Pesantren

The development paths of traditional and modern *pesantren* in Indonesia illustrate a significant evolution in Islamic education, reflecting broader societal changes and educational needs.

Traditional Pesantren

Traditional *pesantren* primarily utilize classical texts known as '*kitab kuning*' and employ traditional pedagogical methods such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, *halaqah*, and *mudhākarah*.⁵⁰ These methods emphasize direct interaction between students and teachers, fostering a deep understanding of Islamic texts and values. The approach influenced by Sufism adopted by *pesantren* emphasizes spiritual practices such as *dhikr* (remembering Allah) and *tawakkal* (surrender to Allah). These practices enhance the spiritual development of students and contribute to the *pesantren*'s function as cultural and spiritual centers within their communities.

The curriculum based on *kitab kuning* is a defining feature of *pesantren* education, offering students a strong foundation in Islamic knowledge. Adherence to this traditional teaching method reflects the commitment of the Islamic boarding schools to preserve their cultural and educational heritage that has been passed down from generation to generation. *Kitab kuning* can be seen as an effort to contextualize the teachings of Islam. This function is evident in the tradition of *sharh* (commentary) that develops in Islamic boarding schools.⁵¹ These texts not only provide religious guidance but also serve as a universal reference for dealing with the various challenges faced by individuals in the Islamic boarding school community.⁵²

The content of *kitab kuning* is diverse, covering Islamic religious sciences based on Arabic books compiled in the Middle Ages, making it a significant educational tool in Indonesia. It covers a wide range of topics, including theology, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Islamic ethics, mysticism, Quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*), prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), Arabic grammar,

and Islamic history. One of the key aspects of *kitab kuning* is its emphasis on Islamic teachings and practices, offering guidance on rituals, moral conduct, and social responsibilities. It addresses topics such as the pillars of Islam, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, charity (*zakāt*), and other religious obligations. Additionally, *kitab kuning* explores the interpretation of Islamic law, ethical principles, and the importance of spirituality in daily life.

Kitab kuning serves as a repository of classical Islamic knowledge, preserving a fundamental resource for understanding the Qur'an and Ḥadīth, providing insights into the interpretation and application of Islamic teachings. The text plays a crucial role in shaping the intellectual and spiritual development known as *Ahlussunah wal Jama'ah* or *Aswaja*. The doctrine of this teaching is based on the theological thought of Abū Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 935) and Abū Maṣū'ir al-Māturīdī (d. 944), following one of the *al-madhāhib al-arba'ah*, or four madhabs, namely Ḥanafī (d. 765), Mālikī (d. 796), Shāfi'ī (d. 820) or Hanbalī (d. 844) in the teachings of *fiqh*, and practicing the teachings of Junaid al-Baghdādī (d. 910) and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in *taṣawwuf*.⁵³ The appeal of *Aswaja's* ideology lies in its concept of what constitutes proper behavior, where *kiai* and the members of the *pesantren* see the material world only as a tool to achieve a better life in the hereafter, the material world is seen as a mandate or belief, from Allah, which will question how responsibly we use it. The *Aswaja* ideology emphasizes the belief that we are created by the body as servants. *Aswaja* implies that life in this world revolves around the non-stop implementation of religious duties, or worship. This kind of ideology has a serious impact on every aspect of life, even on political preferences.⁵⁴

The practice of *Aswaja* values can be clearly seen in the daily life of Islamic boarding schools. In accordance with Sufism, for example, the students of Islamic boarding schools are trained to live simply, sleeping on the floor or sharing a small room with seven to ten other students, even though some of them come from wealthy families.⁵⁵ Other spiritual attributes based on *Aswaja* values are *wirā'i* (forbidden forms of cleanliness and despicable actions), *khushu'* (intimate feelings and remembering God), *tawakkal* (absolute dependence), *ṣabr* (patience), *tawāḍu'* (humility), *ikhhlās* (sincerity), and *ṣiddīq* (truth).

One of the Indonesian scholars who wrote many books of *sharḥ* is Nawawi Banten. Born in Tanara, Banten, his real name is Muhammad bin Umar Nawawi al-Jawi al-Bantani. He came from a family of religious leaders. His father, Umar bin 'Arabi was a chieftain of Tanara, appointed by the Netherlands. Nawawi came to Mecca in 1828 when he was 15 years

old, after having previously studied Islam for several years with several scholars in Java. Like other immigrants in Java, Nawawi first studied with Jawi scholars who lived there, including Sheikh Abdul Ghani of Bima, an island in Sumbawa, Sheikh Akhmad Khatib of Sambas in Kalimantan, and Sheikh Ahmad bin Zaid, a *sheikh* for the *hajj* contingent from Solo, Central Java. In addition, he also learned Islam from Arab scholars such as Yusuf Sumbulaweni, Nahrawi, and Abdul Hamid al-Daghestani.⁵⁶ Nawawi Banten has a special place in the intellectual tradition in Islamic boarding schools. His books were popular and became the source of the formation of Islamic discourse based on Islamic boarding schools. Among the works of Nawawi Banten, there are books that are *sharḥ* from a number of original books in Arabic. Some examples are *Tījān al-Darārī*, which is a commentary on *Risālah fī al-Tawḥīd* by Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī (d. 1861), *Fath al-Majīd*, which is a commentary on *al-Durr al-Farīd* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Naḥrāwī, and *Nūr al-Zalām*, which is a commentary on *‘Aqīdah al-‘Awām* by Aḥmad al-Marzūqī.

The commentary books, or *sharḥ*, play a pivotal role in the educational framework of Islamic boarding schools by establishing the authority of scholars and serving as a medium to articulate their religious missions. These two functions, the books of *sharḥ*—as well as fatwas—are strong evidence for the contextualization of Islamic teachings in the archipelago carried out by Islamic boarding school scholars. They provide a basis for the development of *fatwā* (legal opinions) that address specific societal needs and challenges. This process of issuing fatwas is vital for the contextualization of Islamic teachings, allowing scholars to adapt religious principles to the unique socio-cultural landscape of Indonesia. Such adaptations are necessary to ensure that Islamic teachings remain relevant and applicable to the lives of local communities.⁵⁷ The books of *sharḥ* are a strong foundation for the Islamic discourse that develops in the archipelago, which has a number of characteristics that are different from the Islamic discourse that develops in the Middle East. For instance, the integration of local cultural practices within the framework of Islamic teachings is evident in various fatwas issued by scholars, which often reflect a blend of traditional Islamic values and contemporary societal norms.⁵⁸ This adaptability is crucial for fostering a harmonious relationship between Islamic teachings and the diverse cultural practices found across Indonesia.

The practices of teaching the *kitab kuning*, influenced by Sufism, with its emphasis on inner spirituality and personal connection to the divine, is integrated into the curriculum and daily life of many pesantren. The practice of *dhikr* is often a communal activity that fosters a sense of belonging and

spiritual unity among students, reinforcing their commitment to Islamic teachings and community values.⁵⁹ This collective remembrance serves as a powerful tool for emotional and spiritual resilience, helping students navigate life's challenges while maintaining a strong connection to their faith. Furthermore, the act of *tawakkal* encourages students to develop trust in Allah's plan, promoting a mindset of reliance and humility that is essential for personal growth and community service.⁶⁰ Moreover, the leadership within *pesantren*, often embodied by the *kiai*, plays a significant role in promoting Sufi values and practices. The *kiai* guides students in their spiritual journeys and embodies the principles of Sufism, serving as a model for students to emulate. This leadership style, characterized by charisma and a deep commitment to spiritual and moral education, reinforces the *pesantren's* role as a center of spiritual guidance and cultural preservation.

Pesantren Lirboyo, with its deep-rooted history and commitment to Islamic teachings, has emerged as a beacon of spiritual guidance and educational excellence for generations of students.⁶¹ One key factor in the rise of Pesantren Lirboyo as a center of spiritual reference is its adherence to traditional Islamic teachings and practices. The *pesantren's* curriculum, based on classical Islamic texts like *kitab kuning*, emphasizes the importance of religious morality and the implementation of Islamic teachings in daily life. By maintaining a strong connection to traditional Islamic knowledge and practices, Pesantren Lirboyo has established itself as a respected institution within the broader Islamic education landscape.

Pesantren Lirboyo's commitment to open and tolerant Indonesian culture has contributed to its reputation as a center of spiritual reference and education. The *pesantren's* emphasis on promoting an inclusive and harmonious society aligns with the values of unity, diversity, and tolerance that are essential in Indonesian society. The leadership within Pesantren Lirboyo, particularly the *kiai*, plays a crucial role in shaping the institution's spiritual direction and educational philosophy. The *kiai's* strong and authoritative leadership character, combined with a commitment to maintaining traditions while interacting with global values, has been instrumental in guiding the *pesantren* towards spiritual excellence and educational advancement. Pesantren Lirboyo's ability to adapt to modern challenges while preserving its traditional values has been a key factor in its evolution as a center of spiritual reference and education. By integrating digital technology and modern educational approaches into its curriculum, Pesantren Lirboyo has been able to enhance its educational offerings while staying true to its foundational principles.⁶² The journey

of Pesantren Lirboyo to becoming a center of spiritual reference and education in the traditional pesantren landscape of Indonesia is marked by a steadfast commitment to Islamic teachings, a dedication to cultural values, strong leadership, and a willingness to adapt to modern challenges while preserving traditional heritage.

The Evolution of Modern Pesantren

The evolution of modern *pesantren* in Indonesia reflects a significant transformation driven by the integration of general education with religious teachings. This shift, influenced by Islamic modernism, has created a distinct path of development that aligns with contemporary educational demands and national policies. The integration of Islamic education with general subjects and technology is a response to globalization and the need for educational institutions to adapt to modern times. The early decision to incorporate general education into the *pesantren* curriculum was a pivotal moment that marked the beginning of a new educational paradigm. This integration allows students to gain a comprehensive education that encompasses both religious and secular knowledge, preparing them for the complexities of modern society.⁶³ The modernization of *pesantren* is not merely about adding general subjects; it involves a holistic approach that aims to develop well-rounded individuals who can navigate both religious and secular spheres effectively.

These changes involve the adaptation of the curriculum that includes Islamic studies and modern subjects, the application of advanced teaching methods, and the integration of technology-based education. The evolution of *pesantren* has given rise to various types, including traditional, modern, and semi-modern *pesantren*, each with a different educational approach. Efforts towards the sustainable development of Islamic boarding schools have been focused on diversifying leadership and educational institutions, integrating classical and modern education, incorporating technology, and restructuring the education system.

Pesantren Tebuireng, founded by Hadratus Syaikh Hasyim Asy'ari in 1899, exemplifies the evolution of pesantren in Indonesia from traditional to modern educational paradigms. Initially, Pesantren Tebuireng adhered to a traditional education system that focused primarily on the study of *kitab kuning*, which are classical Islamic texts. Over the years, however, the institution has undergone a significant transformation, integrating general education with religious curricula, thereby positioning itself as one of the leading modern Islamic boarding schools in the country.⁶⁴ The integration of general education into the curriculum of Pesantren Tebuireng is a

reflection of the broader influence of Islamic modernism, which advocates for the adaptation of Islamic teachings to contemporary societal needs. This shift is not merely a response to external pressures but is also aligned with national education policies that emphasize the importance of holistic education.⁶⁵ By establishing formal schools, including junior and senior high schools, as well as universities, Pesantren Tebuireng has expanded its educational offerings, allowing students to receive a comprehensive education that encompasses both religious and secular subjects.

This transformation is indicative of a broader trend among Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, where there is a growing recognition of the need to equip students with skills relevant to the modern world. The integration of technology and general subjects into the curriculum is essential for preparing students to navigate the complexities of contemporary society. As a result, modern *pesantren* like Pesantren Tebuireng are not only centers for religious education but also play a crucial role in fostering intellectual and moral development among their students.⁶⁶ Moreover, the establishment of formal educational institutions within the pesantren framework allows for a more structured approach to education, which is essential for meeting the diverse needs of students. This dual focus on religious and general education enables students to develop a well-rounded skill set that prepares them for various career paths while maintaining a strong foundation in Islamic values. The ability to adapt to changing educational demands is a hallmark of modern *pesantren*, ensuring their relevance in an increasingly globalized world.

Pesantren Tebuireng's affiliation with Nahdlatul Ulama has positioned it as a key player in promoting a moderate and inclusive interpretation of Islam. The *pesantren's* commitment to multicultural education fosters an environment of tolerance and understanding among its students, which is crucial in countering the rise of religious radicalism in Indonesia. This educational philosophy not only enhances the moral and ethical development of students but also prepares them to engage constructively with diverse perspectives within their communities. The role of Pesantren Tebuireng in shaping Islamic education policies is further evidenced by its innovative use of digital media for outreach and education. By leveraging technology, the *pesantren* has expanded its reach and influence, allowing it to disseminate Islamic teachings more widely and effectively.⁶⁷ This adaptability to modern communication methods demonstrates Pesantren Tebuireng's commitment to remaining relevant in an increasingly digital world while upholding its traditional values.

Pesantren Darussalam Gontor (Ponorogo, East Java) is a symbol

of Modern Islamic Boarding School, founded in 1926 and known as a pioneer of modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Pesantren Darussalam Gontor has adapted its curricula to align with contemporary educational standards, integrating both Islamic studies and secular subjects while employing modern teaching methodologies.⁶⁸ This shift aims to enhance educational quality and ensure that students are equipped with skills relevant to the modern world. The core mission of both traditional and modern *pesantren* remains community-oriented education, focusing on moral and character development among students. This is encapsulated in the concept of *Panca Jiwa* (Five Spirits), which includes values such as sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, Islamic brotherhood, and accountable freedom. Despite their differing approaches, both types of *pesantren* strive to cultivate a strong sense of identity and purpose among their students, preparing them to contribute positively to society.⁶⁹

Modernization efforts at Pesantren Darussalam Gontor have been significant, encompassing various aspects of educational development and institutional advancement. Central to this modernization is the integration of moral values within the educational framework, reflecting a commitment to a holistic education that fosters not only academic excellence but also ethical behavior and character development. The emphasis on moral values at Pesantren Darussalam Gontor aligns with the institution's broader philosophy of providing a comprehensive education that includes spiritual, intellectual, and ethical dimensions. In its pursuit of comprehensive education, Pesantren Darussalam Gontor has adopted the *Panca Jiwa* philosophy, which highlights five essential principles: personal morality, health, knowledge, freedom of thought, and theological aspects based on integral educational values. This philosophy serves as a guiding framework for shaping the educational environment at Pesantren Darussalam Gontor, promoting a culture that values moral integrity, intellectual growth, and personal development.

Pesantren Darussalam Gontor's educational approach reflects an inclusive ethos that seeks to meet the diverse needs and backgrounds of its students. Through programs and activities that promote tolerance, multicultural understanding, and the integration of traditional and modern educational practices, Pesantren Darussalam Gontor strives to create an inclusive learning environment that accommodates various learning styles and perspectives.⁷⁰ This inclusive approach is crucial for fostering a sense of community, respecting diversity, and promoting mutual understanding within the educational community.

The modern curriculum at Pesantren Darussalam Gontor is designed

to reflect the institution's commitment to excellence and innovation in education. By incorporating elements such as emotional intelligence, language learning models, and leadership based on the *Trimurti* concept, Pesantren Darussalam Gontor's curriculum demonstrates a dynamic and forward-thinking approach to pedagogy.⁷¹ The curriculum's emphasis on quality management, emotional intelligence, and leadership development underscores Pesantren Darussalam Gontor's dedication to providing a comprehensive education that prepares students for success in a rapidly changing world. Moreover, Pesantren Darussalam Gontor's commitment to teaching foreign languages, particularly English and Arabic, reflects an awareness of the importance of global communication skills in today's interconnected world. Proficiency in these languages enables students to access a broader range of knowledge and engage with diverse cultures, thereby enhancing their ability to contribute positively to society. This linguistic competence is particularly relevant in the context of globalization, where cross-cultural interactions are increasingly common. This *pesantren* adopts a classical system with structured formal education, complete with exams and certifications. Pesantren Darussalam Gontor teaches not only religious sciences, but also general subjects such as mathematics, science, and foreign languages. It prepares students to play a role in the global world while still adhering to Islamic values. Pesantren Darussalam Gontor has successfully implemented a *waqf* (endowment) system to support its educational initiatives, demonstrating a model of self-sufficiency that traditional *pesantren* are increasingly looking to emulate. This approach enhances the financial stability of these institutions and reinforces their role as vital community resources.⁷²

Pesantren Sidogiri, located in Pasuruan, East Java, represents a compelling case of how traditional Islamic boarding schools can embrace modernization while preserving their foundational roots. This institution exemplifies a fusion of traditional and modern educational practices, allowing it to adapt to contemporary educational demands without sacrificing its commitment to classical Islamic teachings. Pesantren Sidogiri's approach involves the integration of *kitab kuning* with general subjects such as mathematics, science, and social studies.⁷³ This combination allows students to receive a comprehensive education that encompasses both religious and secular knowledge. The curriculum is designed to ensure that students are well-versed in Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and ethics while also being equipped with the skills necessary to navigate the modern world.

Despite the incorporation of general subjects, Pesantren Sidogiri

retains its traditional pedagogical methods, which include *sorogan* and *bandongan*. These methods emphasize direct interaction between students and teachers, fostering a deep understanding of the material and encouraging critical thinking. The traditional methodology is pivotal in preserving the essence of Islamic education, ensuring that students not only learn the content but also internalize the values and principles underlying their studies. The fusion of traditional and modern education at Pesantren Sidogiri is underpinned by a strong commitment to Islamic values. The *pesantren* emphasizes character development, moral education, and community service, which are integral components of its educational philosophy. This holistic approach prepares students to become responsible and ethical members of society, capable of contributing positively to their communities while adhering to their faith. Pesantren Sidogiri's willingness to adapt to modern educational challenges reflects a broader trend among Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. By embracing modernization, Pesantren Sidogiri not only enhances the educational experience for its students but also ensures its relevance in an increasingly globalized world. This adaptability is crucial for addressing the diverse needs of students and preparing them for future challenges.

Pesantren Self-Reinforcing Mechanisms and Increased Returns

The evolution of traditional and modern *pesantren* over time in response to external influences can be seen in the fact that these Islamic educational institutions have undergone significant transformations to adapt to the dynamics of society and the changing educational paradigm. Traditional *pesantren*, which are rooted in historical and cultural traditions, face challenges in maintaining their identity while responding to external pressures for modernization and innovation.⁷⁴ Resistance to change within traditional *pesantren*, as expressed by, reflects a deep commitment to maintaining traditional values and structures, especially in terms of authority and teacher-student relationships. On the other hand, modern *pesantren* emerged in response to the evolving educational landscape and the need to integrate traditional Islamic teachings with contemporary knowledge and practice. The development of modern *pesantren* represents an evolution in Islamic education, which combines elements of extracurricular activities and cultural aspects to improve student learning achievement.⁷⁵ This shift towards a more holistic approach to education marks a shift away from the traditional model of Islamic boarding school education, reflecting a willingness to accept change and innovation.

Once a *pesantren* adopts a particular educational model, it tends to

develop institutional practices, norms, and values that align with that model. This inertia makes it challenging to shift to a different approach, as existing faculty, students, and community expectations become entrenched in the established system. The educational pattern in modern Islamic boarding schools reflects a combination of traditional values and contemporary approaches, with the aim of meeting the characteristics of modern Islamic boarding schools.⁷⁶ Islamic boarding schools have explored innovative management practices to meet the challenges of modernization, including integrating general and religious education, promoting character education, and fostering partnerships. The revitalization of *pesantren* education involves the integration of religious and scientific knowledge, collaboration, and adequate support to improve Islamic education in the modern era. The integration of formal and informal education, the teaching of various subjects inside and outside the classroom, and the transition of ownership status to *waqf* are some of the changes observed in *pesantren* education.

The identity of a *pesantren* is often closely tied to its educational philosophy. For instance, traditional *pesantren* that emphasize classical texts may cultivate a strong cultural identity around the mastery of *kitab kuning*, making it difficult to incorporate general subjects without facing resistance from stakeholders who value the preservation of this identity. In the era of globalization and the industrial revolution, *pesantren* are faced with the task of modernizing themselves while maintaining their core Islamic identity.⁷⁷ These institutions have sought to strike a balance between tradition and modernity, providing an education rooted in the teachings of Islam while equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in a rapidly evolving world. Islamic boarding schools play an important role in shaping students' character, instilling moral values, and fostering a sense of unity among the community.

One of the main strategies Islamic boarding schools use to adapt to contemporary changes is integrating modern systems and technologies into their educational practices. By incorporating technology and social media into the learning process, *pesantren* have improved the quality of their education and remain in line with progress in the digital era. This adaptation shows the willingness of *pesantren* to embrace innovation while remaining true to their Islamic heritage. In addition, *pesantren* are also actively involved in economic ventures and sustainable development initiatives, contributing to the economic progress of their communities. Through business collaboration and the application of innovative economic models, *pesantren* can not only survive but also make a significant

contribution to the achievement of sustainable development goals.⁷⁸ This multifaceted approach emphasizes the ability of Islamic boarding schools to respond to social, political, and economic changes.

The latest developments and future directions of Islamic boarding school education involve various innovative approaches aimed at improving the quality and relevance of Islamic education in facing contemporary challenges. *Pesantren* emphasizes the integration of religious and scientific knowledge, reflecting the growing trend towards a more holistic approach to education within *pesantren*. By combining general subjects such as math, science, and language programs, *pesantren* seeks to equip students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for the complexities of the modern world. Institutional reform and sustainable practices are also the main focus for the future of Islamic boarding school education.⁷⁹

Diversification in leadership, educational institutions, curriculum integration, technology-based education, and responsiveness to the times were identified as important strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability and relevance of Islamic boarding schools in the ever-evolving educational landscape. These approaches highlight the adaptability and resilience of Islamic boarding schools in the face of external influences and meet the needs of contemporary students. In addition, the introduction of foreign languages, such as English and Mandarin, into the Islamic boarding school curriculum reflects a response to the demands of globalization and changes in the linguistic landscape. Furthermore, the adoption of innovative teaching methods such as contextual learning, hands-on methods in Arabic language teaching, and translanguaging shows a commitment to improving pedagogical practices within Islamic boarding schools. These approaches aim to improve learning outcomes, engage students effectively, and adapt to the changing educational landscape.

Conclusion

Pesantren has been important in shaping Indonesia's educational landscape for centuries. These institutions not only focus on religious teaching but also have a crucial role in preparing students to face the challenges of the modern world. *Pesantren* has strong roots in Indonesian society, characterized by strong social relations and community solidarity, and function as pillars of the development of Islamic civilization. Despite the country's ever-evolving social, political, and economic dynamics, *pesantren* retain their traditional values and Islamic identity, offering a unique educational experience that integrates religious teachings with character development.

The historical impact of colonialism and modernism on Islamic boarding schools is very significant, affecting the direction of the development of this Islamic educational institution in Indonesia. During the colonial period, Islamic boarding schools faced challenges due to policies that limited their growth and autonomy. This policy imposes restrictions on Islamic boarding schools, affecting their institutional development and educational practices in a lasting way. The influence of colonialism on Islamic boarding schools is not only limited to policy but also involves a dialectical-resistance relationship between Islamic boarding schools and the colonial government of the Netherlands. This relationship is marked by tension and negotiation as Islamic boarding schools seek to maintain their traditional values and practices amid external pressures. This historical dynamic continues to shape the ethos and methodology of Islamic boarding school education to this day.

In addition, the introduction of the secular system during the colonial era complicated the process of Islamization and affected the educational landscape in Indonesia. The application of secular values and systems challenges the traditional Islamic education offered by Islamic boarding schools, leading to a complex interaction between religious teachings and modern educational approaches. This external influence has left a deep imprint on the educational framework and ideological orientation of Islamic boarding schools. In response to external pressures, Islamic boarding schools have evolved over time to overcome the challenges posed by colonialism and modernism. The emergence of modern Islamic boarding schools reflects a strategic adaptation to the evolving educational environment and the need to blend traditional Islamic teachings with contemporary knowledge and practices. By integrating modern education, extracurricular activities, and cultural elements, modern Islamic boarding schools have adapted to external influences while maintaining the basic values of Islamic education.

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