STUDIA ISLAMIKA

Collegial Leadership and Election
in Muhammadiyah: Institutional Ways to Diffuse
the Religious Authority of Leaders

Hyung-Jun Kim

An Overview on Ottoman Manuscript Collection
in Sayyid Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas Library

Mehmet Özay

The Rise of Cinematic *Santri*
in Post Authoritarian Indonesia:
Figure, Field, and the Competing Discourse

Ahmad Nuril Huda

STUDIA ISLAMIKA

STUDIA ISLAMIKA
Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies
Vol. 30, no. 2, 2023

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Saiful Mujani

MANAGING EDITOR
Oman Fathurahman

EDITORS
Jamhari
Didin Syafruddin
Jajat Burhanudin
Fuad Jabali
Ali Munhanif
Ismatu Ropi
Saiful Umam
Dadi Darmadi
Jajang Jahroni
Din Wahid
Euis Nurlaelawati
Testriono

INTERNATIONAL EDITORIAL BOARD
M. Quraish Shihab (Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta, INDONESIA)
Martin van Bruinessen (Utrecht University, NETHERLANDS)
John R. Bowen (Washington University, USA)
M. Kamal Hasan (International Islamic University, MALAYSIA)
Virginia M. Hooker (Australian National University, AUSTRALIA)
Edwin P. Wieringa (Universität zu Köln, GERMANY)
Robert W. Hefner (Boston University, USA)
Rémy Madinier (Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), FRANCE)
R. Michael Feener (National University of Singapore, SINGAPORE)
Michael F. Laffan (Princeton University, USA)
Minako Sakai (The University of New South Wales, AUSTRALIA)
Annabel Teh Gallop (The British Library, UK)
Syafaatun Almirzanah (Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University of Yogyakarta, INDONESIA)
Melissa Crouch (University of New South Wales, AUSTRALIA)

ASSISTANT TO THE EDITORS
Muhammad Nida' Fadlan
Rangga Eka Saputra
Abdullah Maulani
Savran Billahi

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ADVISOR
Scott Abel
Batool Moussa

ARABIC LANGUAGE ADVISOR
Yuli Yasin

COVER DESIGNER
S. Prinka

Table of Contents

Ahmad Nuril Huda

The Rise of Cinematic *Santri* in Post Authoritarian Indonesia: Figure, Field, and the Competing Discourse

Abstract: *This article examines the past decade's cinematic rise among young pious Muslims* (santri) *affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest traditionalist Muslim group. It focuses on the social actors, the fields of cultural production, and the competing discourse central to this rise. Its main argument frames the* santri*'s turn to cinema as symbolic of various changes and continuities in multiple sectors of NU society's life. It then situates the fields and discourses of the santri's cinematic practices in the broader set of power relations, consisting of different, at times conflicting, identities and interests that come with being pious Muslims in public domains. To the extent that the efficacy of filmmaking practices and technologies has enhanced the rivalrous inclination of Islam in the post-Suharto Indonesian public sphere, the article offers an insight into the relationship between image-making practices and the politics of representation in a Southeast Asian Islam context.*

Abstrak: *Artikel ini mengkaji kebangkitan sinematik sedekade terakhir di kalangan para pemuda Muslim saleh (santri) yang berafiliasi dengan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), kelompok Muslim tradisionalis terbesar di Indonesia. Tulisan ini memusatkan perhatiannya pada aktor sosial, medan produksi kultural, dan wacana tandingan yang berperan sentral dalam kebangkitan ini. Argumen utamanya membingkai palingan santri ke jagat sinema sebagai simbol dari sejumlah perubahan dan keberlanjutan yang terjadi di berbagai sektor dari kehidupan masyarakat NU. Tulisan ini selanjutnya menempatkan medan produksi dan wacana tandingan dari praktik-praktik sinematik para santri itu dalam konteks relasi kuasa yang lebih luas, melibatkan berbagai identitas dan kepentingan berbeda dan terkadang saling berlawanan, khususnya terkait dengan hasrat menjadi subjek Muslim saleh di ruang publik. Sampai pada titik bahwa efikasi dari praktik dan teknologi pembuatan film telah meningkatkan kecendrungan persaingan Islam di ruang-ruang publik Indonesia pasca-Suharto, artikel ini menawarkan sebuah wawasan terkait keterhubungan antara praktik membuat-gambar dan politik representasi dalam sebuah konteks Islam Asia Tenggara.*

Kata kunci: Film Islami, Dakwah Termediasi, Ruang Publik, Muslim Tradisionalis.

ملخص: يتناول هذا المقال النهضة السينمائية بين جيل الشباب من المسلمين (سانتري) المنتسبين إلى نهضة العلماء (NU)، وهي أكبر جمعية إسلامية تقليدية في إندونيسيا في العقد الماضي. وينصب التركيز على الجهات الفاعلة الاجتماعية، ومجالات الإنتاج الثقافي، وتنافس الخطابات التي كانت في قلب هذه النهضة الثقافية. تؤطر الحجة الرئيسية تحول سانتري إلى السينما كرمز للتغيرات والاستمراريات المختلفة في مختلف قطاعات حياة مجتمع نهضة العلماء. وهذا يضع أيضًا مجال وخطاب الممارسة السينمائية لسانتري ضمن سلسلة أوسع من علاقات القوة، والتي تتكون من هويات ومصالح مختلفة تظهر داخل المسلمين المتدينين. إلى حد الفقرة التي أشير فيها إلى أن كفاءة الممارسات وتكنولوجيا إنتاج الأفلام قد أسهمت في تعزيز اتجاه التنافس الإسلامي في المجالات العامة في إندونيسيا بعد فترة حكم سوهارتو، يقدم هذا المقال رؤية توضيحية تتناول الارتباط بين ممارسات إعداد الأفلام وسياسات التمثيل في سياق الإسلام في جنوب شرق آسيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأفلام الإسلامية، الدعوة الوسيطة، الفضاء العام، المسلمون التقليديون.

The past decade has witnessed the rise of cinematic practices among young pious Muslims affiliated with *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), the largest traditionalist Muslim group in Indonesia. These Muslims, popularly called *santri,* acquire religious training at Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) adhering to a relatively orthodox version of Islam. Partly because of the illicit association that grows around cinematic culture, they have avoided film and cinema-going practices. However, in the aftermath of a box-office Islamic film release in 2008, many *santri* began to develop their own cinematic practices and discourses, challenging the stereotype about the incompatibility between Islam and cinema and indicating the complex roles image-making practices could play in the enunciation of Muslim visibility in public spaces.

Recent publications on NU society have primarily studied the increasing economic prosperity of NU associates (Feillard 1997), their political ideologies (Fealy 2018; Hamdani 2021), educational reforms (Lukens-Bull 2019; Srimulyani 2008) and civil society movements (Bush 2009; Ida 2004). They have rightly highlighted the importance of seeing *santri* as a social category continuously evolving across different historical moments in Indonesia and the circumstances that affect them. The study on the "media turn" (Engelke 2010) in the context of the NU people, however, has been less considered, except for the functional aspects of the internet and media technology for (learning and proselytizing) the religion (Halim 2018; Ilaihi 2019; Ritchey and Muchtar 2014). The current spread of cinematic practices among the *santri*, signifying the increasing intersection between media and religion in an Indonesian public space, thus calling forth the significance of re-examining the place and role of the religious concerning the media and the public, has surprisingly missed the attention of scholars of Indonesian cinema and Islam writ large. This paper, aiming to fill the "media" gap in NU studies, explores the current engagement of NU *santri* with filmmaking technologies and practices.

Religion and media shape each other. As a symbolic domain upon which restructuration of the very fabrics of social life occurs, the medium is an extension of various conditions enabling the believers to express and give meaning to their faiths (Larkin 2008, 108). While people may use media for religious purposes, a mode of media engagement will bring forward a novel arrangement of sociability, economic values,

political signification and other extended conditions shaping the ability, purpose and manner in which the religious people engage with the medium. An attempt to understand *santri*'s uptakes of cinema, thus, needs to employ a theoretical approach that allows for an exploration of the central actors, the socio-political circumstances and the "the unities of discourse" (Foucault 2004, 23) instrumental to their cinematic rise. Who is the social actor central to the cinematic turn among the *santri*? What makes the NU people come to the film arena and how are they enabled to do so? What are their main film discourses and how do they position themselves within the 'map' of Indonesian (Islamic) cinema? How does their turn to cinema relate to the politics of articulation of ideological differences in Indonesian Islamic public spaces?

This article frames its materials with Bourdieu's fields of cultural production. According to Bourdieu (1993), the value of an artistic work is embedded with power relations upon which the artistic work and the producer are forced to adjust and are enabled to defend and improve their positions vis-à-vis other agents. In this way, the meaning of a cultural work is never inevitable. However, it emerges through "signifying practices" (Myers 2002, 7) such as the cultural institutions and discourses that establish the social relationship within which the meaning-making practices occur. I combine this approach with the idea of "a figure of modernity" (J. Barker 2014, 1), referring to a subject position that "stands out against the ground of everyday lives" and that symbolizes larger-scale processes of a sociocultural transformation emerging at one particular time and place in society. The idea of the figure of modernity helped me recognize the social actors central to the *santri*'s cinematic turn and draw my attention to the symbolic agency these actors struggle with when defining themselves against broader processes of sociocultural transformations pertinent to both their societies and times. This figure can be a person or anything. Nevertheless, I use it here to refer to a collection of *santri* individuals central to the rise and spread of cinematic fever among the NU associates. I call it the "cinematic *santri*."

This article begins with a discussion on how the figure of the cinematic *santri* has emerged in NU proclivities. It then examines their film discourses, positionings against the country's established filmmakers and negotiation strategies for making their place in the country's film arena. Finally, it examines the connection between the

emerging cinematic *santri* figure with the politics of visibilities in Indonesia's public domains.

The Figure of Cinematic Santri

To explore the figure of cinematic *santri*, I will focus on Hamzah Sahal, my primary *santri* interlocutor, whose role in spreading a cinematic fever across NU communities has been significant.

The Case of Sahal

I first met Sahal in early 2012 at his then office, *NU-Online*, NU's media centre. He was born in 1979 to a *santri* family in Cirebon, West Java. In 1996, he left for Yogyakarta for his religious training at *Pesantren Krapyak* and years later at the city's State Institute of Islamic Studies. While a university student, he joined *Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial* (LKiS, or the Institute of Islamic and Social Studies). A year before he finished his bachelor's degree in 2007, he moved to the NU headquarters in Jakarta to begin his involvement in Lakpesdam (*Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia*, or 'NU's Institute of Research and Human Resource Development) (Sahal 2008).

Sahal has no academic background in filmmaking and does not technically know how to make films. However, throughout my fieldwork, I saw him organizing various forms of cinematic activities within the provision of NU communities, either in the NU headquarters or elsewhere. His cinematic activities include a film screening, film seminar, film discussion, film competition and (training in) filmmaking. He created an alternative network of film exhibitions for an NU audience, approached several of NU's older cultural producers for asking their patronage and built communication network with other *santri* who shared similar passions and a proclivity for activism in film. He significantly benefited from the prevalence of *NU-Online* and used his social media accounts to reach out as wide an audience as possible, thereby increasing the effect of his cinematic activism. He is one of the many *santri* in the NU headquarters and beyond who is knowledgeable of the potential of the film medium in conveying messages and influencing society. In short, he invested his energy to spread cinematic fever amongst the *santri* across different centers of NU communities.

Sahal's interest in film started at a young age. He often shared with me and others his childhood memory of him venturing into an open-air cinema, commonly held near his village. In the 1980s, open-air cinema practices were prevalent in small towns and rural areas, mostly screening local's cheap-production films of action and comedy genres and, at times, fast-tracking newly released and non-censored Hollywood films (van Heeren 2012, 38). Most parents of solid *pesantren* backgrounds would not allow their children to go to the cinema and watch films because of the growing association of cinema with secularism. Sahal's parents, however, had not seen film-watching as a problem. According to Sahal, as long as he could keep up with his parents' disciplinary practices at home, he was always allowed to watch films.

In 2008, he began to involve in film discussions with his fellow *santri* active in Lesbumi[1], which encourage him to think of the significance of screening a *film Islam* ('Islamic film') for an NU-*pesantren* audience. Three years later, he established *Lintang Sanga* (lit. Nine Stars), a mobile cinema practice in which he organized film screenings and discussions in small Javanese towns and *pesantren*. While it was only a short-lived venture, he continued organizing film screenings and filmmaking workshops. His negotiation skills and wide networks with many of the NU-*santri* people have enabled his cinematic programs to be relatively well-received among the NU people, allowing him to collaborate with many other *santri*. In 2016, Sahal received film funding from the Indonesian Ministry of Religion to produce *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren* (*A Pesantren's Way of Proselyting Islam*), a documentary film revealing the intellectual and cultural lives of the *pesantren* people. Sahal's biography and cinematic activities provide insightful openings into how the figure of cinematic *santri* has emerged.

Education and Civil Islam

Educational reform plays a crucial role in the emergence of the cinematic *santri*. Sahal's education in *pesantren*, *madrasah* and an (Islamic) university epitomizes the educational trends among present-day *santri*; it breaks with the educational trajectory of the traditionalist Muslim elders.

As early as the 1920s, a few *pesantren* began to teach a new subject in basic science, partly responding to the establishment of a *madrasah* by their modernist rivals (Hefner 2009, 61–63). Yet, the increasing

secularization of the country's Islamic education system implemented by the Indonesian government since the 1950s onward has caused more remarkable changes. It had forced *pesantren* to include general sciences in their traditional curriculum and establish an Islamic school on the *pesantren* grounds. In the 1960s, state-run Islamic universities (IAIN) expanded across the Indonesian provincial cities, providing wider opportunities for *pesantren* graduates to study at the university level (Pohl 2009).

At university campuses, many *pesantren* graduates found more room to engage in film-related activities, such as film screenings. Sahal and many other *santri* who graduated from IAIN Yogyakarta, for instance, often recalled watching a wide variety of American, French, Iranian and local films screened in *Jamaah Cinema*, a university student's cinema club in the 1990s. It was not necessarily about filmmaking, but such experiences harnessed the *santri*'s cinematic pursuit and desire to produce their films in the years to come. Sahal's educational track, reflecting general trends in Islamic education in present-day Indonesia, thus reveals that the emergence of the figure of cinematic *santri* is partly an (unintended) effect of the government's secularizing control and standardization of Muslim education in the country.

Political Islam is also instrumental in the emergence of the cinematic *santri*. By the late 1980s, NU started to witness the rise of young and progressive *santri,* dubbed as '*kaum muda* NU', who promoted an NU-style civil Islam (Hefner 2000), mainly responding to Suharto's policy on political Islam. Suharto's approach to Islam was never consistent[2] because his main interest was not about religious advancement but using the religion to advance the regime's power. The general pattern of his Islamic policy is that he suppressed Islamic political parties and was never hesitant to play the Muslim card whenever he needed to shore up his power.

In the 1970s, his Islamic policies had taken their toll on NU, exposing the latter to various measures of exclusion and pressure, such as forcing NU to merge with other Islamic parties into a single party (Feillard 1997, 135). Upset at this situation, in 1984, under the command of Abdurrahman Wahid, NU withdrew from party-politics practices and returned to what it was initially presumed to be: a socio-religious organization.[3] The withdrawal proved to have remarkable consequences. NU could improve its relationship with the government

and enjoyed a rapid development in its education, religious predication and charity programs (Feillard 1997, 128–56).

The withdrawal impacted NU's younger generation. In the 1970s, when just returning from his studies in the Middle East, Abdurrahman Wahid worked for a *pesantren*-related NGO called LP3ES (Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information). As soon as he became the leader of NU, he engineered the proliferation of various NGOs in the NU communities, such as Lakpesdam NU and later LKiS. Leaders of these NGOs were young *santri* activists often working under the supervision of NU's progressive thinkers not structurally affiliated with NU who were not structurally affiliated with NU, but played a significant role in transforming the cultural orientation of the organization (Barton 2002, 161). Through these NGOs, they sought to promote the compatibility of Islam with the values of, above all, local culture, democracy and human rights. According to Bush (2009), the work of these NGOs was strongly informed by NU's interest in political Islam vis-à-vis the modernist groups instead of the state.

The involvement of Sahal in Lakpesdam NU and LKiS shows that the cinematic *santri* bears a relationship with the earlier emergence of NU's civil Islam activists working for their agendas in political Islam through cultural approaches. Our figure – personified by Sahal – embodies the younger generation of *santri* who, sharing a common 'activist' spirit with the *santri* civil Islam activists, work in a different arena and through a different medium.

The Emerging Film Movements, Digital Scenes and Islamic Film Genres

The cinematic *santri* fits within a broader context of the emerging film movements in the country. In the aftermath of *Reformasi*, an *indie* film entitled *Kuldesak* (1998) was released with great success,[4] largely enabled by the post-Suharto opening of the country's media markets and film industry (Sen and Hill 2007), the widespread popularity of digital technologies across the globe (Negroponte 1996) and the emerging online connectivity in Indonesia (Lim 2005). Kuldesak's success has inspired many young people around the country's urban centers to create an array of *indie* film-related activities. A few filmmakers with NU-*santri* backgrounds, such as Dimas Jayasrana, Yuda Kurniawan and Tomy W. Taslim, were also involved in the movements (van

Heeren 2012). During my fieldwork, I saw them take part in spreading the cinematic fever among the *santri.* Yuda in particular has worked with Sahal to produce *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren.* Taslim has organized film-training workshops and film festivals for high school students, including the *santri*. Dimas was active in film-related programs held at the NU headquarters. This indicates the influence of post-Suharto indie film movements on the *santri*'s cinematic rise.

Likewise, the circuit of secular films is crucial to understanding the emerging field of *santri* cinematic practices. Secular films of various genres (horror, romantic, action and comedy) and country origins (Chinese, India and America) have long dominated Indonesian film exhibition platforms like cinema theatres, TV and mobile cinema practices. The cinematic *santri* like Sahal, as evidenced by his childhood memories of attending an open-air film screening near his village, are frequent consumers of these films (despite that most of NU's conservative elders would refuse to watch them). With the rising popularity of video-based social media platforms and one-click hosting sites, such as YouTube and RapidShare, these films have become even more accessible to the cinematic *santri*.

Next to the secular films are television dramas. In the 1960s, a state-controlled television broadcasting system was founded in Indonesia to foster the development of national culture (Kitley 2000, 3). By the early 1990s, commercial TV stations began to expand in the country, triggering the rise of popular entertainment programs. A new form, locally known as sinetron (*sinema elektronik),* emerged as an Indonesian rendition of internationally popular television dramas, such as Latin telenovelas and American soap operas, which since the 1970s, had been well-received among Indonesian TV audiences. As the early 2000s marked the "conservative turn" (Bruinessen 2014, 15) in religious practices among Indonesian Muslims in the public domain, a new genre of *sinetron religi* (religious *sinetron*) emerged in Indonesian television to showcase overt themes of Islam. The religious genre quickly became a hit among Indonesian TV audiences, signifying the process of "mainstreaming Islam" into contemporary Indonesian pop culture (Rakhmani 2017).

No sooner did the religious drama dominate prime time television programs than it started to expand into domestic cinemas. In 2008, an Islamic-themed film entitled *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (AAC, Verses of

Love), produced by a modernist-affiliated Muslim filmmaker, Hanung Bramantyo, was released with great success. The film tells a dramatic love story between a pious Indonesian Muslim student at Al-Azhar University and his four competing female lovers in Cairo. Such success has triggered a booming of Islamic-themed films in the country's film industry, offering a new form of Islamic fantasies and spectacles to middle-class Muslim audiences (T. Barker 2019). Examples include *Syahadat Cinta* (The Creed of Love, 2008), *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (KCB, When Love Glorifies, 2009), *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah* (Under the Protection of Ka'bah, 2011) and *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (99 Lights in the European Sky, 2013), to name only a few. Keeping in mind the beginning of Sahal's cinematic activism in 2008, the rise of the Islamic film genre is influential to cinematic *santri* and the kind of film discourse the *santri* want to produce.

Lesbumi and NU's Cinematic Tradition

The emergence of cinematic *santri* also lends credence to NU's history of activism in the country's film arena. Upon my hangouts with the *santri*, they often emphasized the cinematic roles Lesbumi had played in the 1960s. Lesbumi was NU's art and cultural organization that was established in 1962. Although it did not specifically focus on film, many of its central figures were film workers, including Djamaluddin Malik, Usmar Ismail and Asrul Sani. While Sani and Ismail were film directors, Malik was a politician and the owner of the *Persari* film company. In 1964, Lesbumi produced a film about pilgrimages to Mecca, entitled *Tauhid* (The Unity of Allah).

Lesbumi's 1960 cinematic activism was "largely in response to Lekra's influence in the artistic and cultural field" (Sen 1994, 30). Lekra, or the Institute of People's Culture, was founded in 1950 and affiliated with PKI (the Indonesian Communist Party). By the early 1960s, the cultural debate on the search for the cultural foundation of Indonesia reached its most vitriolic stage, marked by the declaration of manifestos. Activists of Lekra had advocated "art for the people", which strongly suited the rhetoric of Sukarno's Guided Democracy.[5] Between 1963 and 1964, when the PKI was in its most stable position, they engaged in fierce attacks against their rivals, who later created *Manifesto Kebudayaan* (Cultural Manifesto), a declaration against the politicization of art (Foulcher 1986, 126).

NU leaders, refusing to use art for either aesthetic or political ends, called for religious humanism, the socio-religious functions based on a belief in Islamic monotheism and the principles of humanity (Chisaani 2008, 149). Friction between these highly fragmented groups reached its peak in the 1965-66 tragedy, which resulted in the deaths of between 500,000 and 1 million people, most of whom were those with suspected PKI affiliations. Despite NU being at the 'winning end' of the conflict, the organization disbanded Lesbumi in 1966, partly because of its decreasing importance as a political association (Jones 2013, 108).

During the New Order Era, with the abolishment of Lesbumi and the exclusion of NU from party politics, NU had a minuscule role in the country's film arena. However, a few NU religious figures participated in public debates on the use of film for *dakwah* or proselytizing Islam (Wahid 1983, 52–60) and the importance of producing films that may counter the influx of films allegedly featuring sex, violence and false representation of Islam (van Heeren 2012, 116–18).

The fall of Suharto's dictatorship in 1998, which opened up new channels for media practices, economic mobility and cultural pluralities, breathed new cinematic hope to the *santri*. During these years, with the rise of cultural practices such as those of the Kuldesak filmmakers in Indonesian cinema, discussion about upholding cultural practices for religious and political expressions intensified among the young NU *santri*. In 2005, NU re-established Lesbumi and appointed the late Alex Komang, a multi-award-winning *santri* film actor, as its vice president (PP Lesbumi NU 2010). The reestablishment of Lesbumi brings to the *santri* a sense of hope for a cinematic return. Sahal said it this way, "Lesbumi had a history [in the film arena], and NU was charged by itself to take part in *dakwa* education [...] through art and culture". This indicates the connection between the emerging cinematic *santri* figure and Lesbumi's past cinematic tradition.

Overall, the cinematic *santri* figure is the embodiment of changes and continuities in multiple sectors of the NU society life. It emerges from the state-imposed transformation of Islamic schools well responded to by NU members and from the New Order's tightening of control over Muslim politics that forced the *santri* to turn to cultural practices as a means of expression. Its emergence is part of the 1980 rise of educated middle-class Muslims in NU proclivities, who have easy access to civil Islamic discourses, digital media technologies and are

aware of the significance of filmmaking practices to demonstrate their political differences in public domains. However, to the extent that the emergence of the cinematic *santri* figure has intertwined with the socio-political backgrounds of the NU society, its cinematic activism is honed in a specific field of cultural production.

The Cultural Fields: *Santri* NU-Style Film

Santri's ideas about Islamic cinema are diverse, and I propose understanding them through what I call the "*santri* NU-style film". It refers to the space of film styles (Bourdieu 1984, 165) the *santri* is (inspired) to produce. Some of my *santri* interlocutors often talked about the importance of producing films that promote 'NU-pesantren messages'. When talking about it, they often cited *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (3 Payers 3 Loves, 2008) as an example. Directed by *pesantren*-graduate filmmaker Nurman Hakim, *3 Doa* portrays three pupils living in a traditional Javanese *pesantren*, in which religious tolerance, local tradition and principles of humanity are highly valued; resonant of 1960s Lesbumi's religious humanism.

However, their conception of NU-*pesantren* film does not necessarily refer to films about *pesantren*. Most films the *santri* played in their film-screening projects do not contain overt symbols of either Islam or *pesantren*. An example is *Pengejar Angin* (The Wind Chaser, 2011), a film by Hestu Saputra that Sahal played for his NU audience in Brebes, Central Java. Sahal selected Saputra's film because, according to him, it bears virtues that fit the *pesantren* values, such as education, local culture, religious tolerance and nationalism; issues very much rooted in NU's civil society discourse.

While their discourses about Islamic cinema are heterogeneous, they are often hostile to each other. My discussion with Ali, a *santri* studying at a traditional *pesantren* in Kediri, East Java, reveals this point. Ali once produced *Para Penambang* (The Sand Miners), a film about socioeconomic problems faced by the sand miners living near his *pesantren*. By then, Ali and I were talking about Hakim's *3 Doa*. In particular, our discussion was about Hakim's 'brave' move of normalizing an implied homosexual-intercourse scene in his film. Considering the widespread taboo of homosexuality and the increasing cry for criminalizing homosexual behaviour in Muslim Indonesia, the homosexual love scene in Hakim's film is controversial to most Indonesian film audiences, let alone to the *santri*.

Regarding this, Ali told me that he would have never filmed the issue of homosexuality in *pesantren* the way Hakim did in his film. Understandably, for Ali, still living in a *pesantren* compound in a local region (certain regions are sometimes less accepting of so-called liberal thinking), the sheer mention of actions of homosexuality is already taboo, let alone depicting them in a film. However, for Hakim, now living in Jakarta, a graduate of the country's most established film school, a frequent attendant of public discussions at Salihara[6] and a recipient of film funding from international donors, the case is different. The homosexual scene in his film is not only poetically feasible but also what politically has made his film widely reputable among the global film festival audiences.

This diversity reflects the heterogeneity of NU, both as an organization and a religious community. As an organization, the leadership of NU consists of different categories, including politicians, *ulama* and reformers. As a religious community, it has roughly 80 million members with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds comprising various factions, ranging from conservative and moderate to 'hybrid' forms of neo-modernist, post-traditionalist and liberal Islam (Bush 2009; Kersten 2016). Given this breadth, no one in NU has a definitive claim to the monopoly of the interpretation of Islam in and for NU society at large. In contrast, a religious truth in NU is produced, interpreted and even contested among different NU leaders and members, emphasizing the diffuse nature of NU society. The various conflicting discourses concerning the ideals of an Islamic film among the *santri* echo the heterogeneity of NU society.

Still, *santri* can recognize films of their peers. Ali, for example, still considered Hakim's *3 Doa* a *pesantren* film, however critical he was of it. One thing is obvious: the heterogeneity of *santri*'s film discourses shares one feature that ties them together within the same 'spaces of style', that is, proximity with either the *pesantren* tradition or NU as an organization rooted deeply in *pesantren* tradition. In other words, *santri*'s conception of NU-*pesantren* films refers to those narrating an understanding of Islam and the lived realities of Islamic characteristics of NU-*pesantren* tradition, which I call the *santri* NU-style film**.**

Their NU-style film discourse, however, has rendered them distinctive from the country's other, more established filmmakers.

Vexing Marginality

In early April 2012, several young *santri* in the NU headquarters organized a film day celebration, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Lesbumi and the 62nd year of the so-called National Filmmaking Day, officially occurring every 28th through 30th of March. The initial plan for the celebration was to run a week-long screening of film. Upon a preparatory meeting, seven films were listed. They include Usmar Ismail's *Darah dan Doa* (Blood and Prayer, 1950) and *Lewat Djam Malam* (After the Curfew, 1954), Asrul Sani's *Pagar Kawat Berduri* (Barbed Wire, 1961) and *Tauhid* (The Unity of Allah, 1964), Erros Djarot's *Tjoet Nyak Dien* (1988), Nurman Hakim's *3 Doa* and Ifa Isfansjah's *Sang Penari* (The Dancer, 2011). The celebration also planned to hold a series of film seminars inviting some notable filmmakers such as Ifa Isfansjah, Riri Reza and Nia Dinata.

The selection of these films was based on common criteria. The first four films were attractive to the *santri* because of their directors' involvement in Lesbumi back in the 1960s. Djarot's film was selected because its intense message of patriotism highly resonates with NU's nationalist narratives. While Hakim's film had an obvious *pesantren* theme, Isfansjah's film was political. It was initially a novel by Ahmad Tohari, an influential NU-affiliated cultural producer. The film, portraying a miserable and manipulated life of a dancer against the backdrop of the 1965-66 mass killings, was politically significant for the *santri*, particularly regarding NU's undisputable involvement in the tragedy.

A member of the committee, I was in charge of the films' availability. When doing it, I had problems with finding film copies of 'the Lesbumi directors' and *Sang Penari*. Isfansjah's film was a newly released work whose DVD copy was not yet publicly available. I wrote an email to Isfansjah asking to get a copy of his film. I did this more than once, but I did not hear back from him. When I explained it to Sahal and Komang, both hinted that other filmmakers invited to the film seminars offered similar responses. As for the other films, they were supposedly only available in *Sinematek Indonesia,* a center of film archives and library established in 1975 by a former Lesbumi filmmaker, Misbach Yusa Biran (Biran 2008a, 249). It turned out that the library, no longer headed by Biran, now charges a considerable cost for every film to rent. This has frustrated the *santri*, given the past involvement of Biran in Lesbumi.

The holding of the film day celebration reveals similar problems. Partly troubled by the film availability, the committee dropped most of the films from the initial list and postponed the screening event three weeks later. The screening, originally planned to be held in the conference room of the NU building, was moved to an auditorium of an Islamic university in Jakarta and only contained Usmar's *film*.[7] Sahal said he still planned to play another title from the list at a neighboring *pesantren*. However, the plan was not realized until I returned to the Netherlands in July 2012.

Likewise, the film seminar was cut to a half-day event from originally a three-day plan. None of the invited filmmakers showed up in the room. The film critic who accepted the offer to give a keynote speech, Hikmat Darmawan, was a backup. Efficaciously, he opened his talk by telling the audience about his surprise at receiving the invitation from Lesbumi and at knowing what the invitation was. He acknowledged that he did not expect that NU still had Lesbumi and that the NU people were (still) interested in cinema. As a film critic, in my assumption, Darmawan is knowledgeable about the development of cinema issues and discourses in Indonesia, although he was probably pretending to be naive when stating his "ignorance" about Lesbumi. However, he was rightly putting his finger on *santri*'s insignificant position in the country's film arena.

The *santri* are conscious of this marginality. When I asked Sahal about the difficulty of handling his cinematic projects, he said as follows. "Our main difficulty is the (dearth of) human resources. After Lesbumi went dormant for many years, we became *unfamiliar* with that kind of media (film)."

It is true that the majority of the cinematic *santri* have no formal training in filmmaking. However, the *santri* are aware that the involvement of Ismail, Sani and Biran in Lesbumi was due to the then political turbulence that forced them to find an institution able to protect their cinematic expressions (Biran 2008b, xii). Without them, Lesbumi would have lacked film directors among its board membership. Among Lesbumi's top film figures, only Malik was 'officially' a member of NU. He was a big name in the country's film industry but was not a film director. This means *santri* had been unfamiliar with filmmaking skills even when Lesbumi was at its best. Thus, their problem is neither about the unfamiliarity nor the lack of filmmaking knowledge but

about their state of being unrecognized in the national film arena. To rephrase Sahal's statement, Lesbumi's political exile from the film arena has displaced the position of the *santri* on the map of Indonesia's film area. The responses from Darmawan and the invited filmmakers well translated the negligibility of the cinematic *santri* to the country's more established, sometimes new, dominant filmmakers.

However, the cinematic *santri* are also marginal within the NU organization. The poor management of the film day celebration indicates that they received little support from the highest organizational structure of NU, the PBNU. This lack of support is not likely because of PBNU's shortage of assets, but as Sahal said, "it is because film is only one out of various aspirations handled by PBNU, and it has no priority among the NU elites". I will explore this point below.

Struggle to Win the Elites' Hearts

Zastrouw Al-Ngatawi, the former president of Lesbumi, once insinuated the weak position of Lesbumi within the PBNU, and as such is because partisan politics is more attractive to the eye of NU elites (Alawi 2013). Despite often hearing of similar insinuations from other *santri,* I do not want to take it at face value. Instead, I will use it to understand the complexities of aspiration in NU as a nationwide-scale organization with so many members and often-divergent interests and within which cinematic aspiration of the *santri* is only a part. In doing so, I will look into the relentless debate amongst the NU elites regarding how NU wants to define its organizational platform, that is, as a social-religious or political organization, a debate having its roots in the first days of NU's establishment.

When first established, NU was a socio-religious organization, and it remained so until joining Masyumi, which in 1948 became a political party. Nonetheless, since its birth, it has been rife with struggles and there has been tensions between the socio-religious and political interplays (Bruinessen 1994, 17–45; Feillard 1999, 7–15). Apart from connecting the traditionalist *ulama*, the establishment of NU was to counter the foundation of Muhammadiyah and the rise of reformist movements in the Muslim world. While its transformation to a political party only made its political orientation explicit, NU's withdrawal from party-politics practices in 1984 was interpreted differently by the NU elites and its ordinary members. They saw it either as a complete

departure of NU from party politics toward purely socio-religious activism or as the giving of total freedom by NU to its members for their alignment with any political party. Wahid, however, went on to regard it as "a strategic move that would allow NU to concentrate its energies in those spheres of informal political activity" (Hefner 2000, 169), thereby enabling NU to survive Suharto's oppressive policy on political Islam. History proved that when the repression was lifted, NU declared PKB ('The Resurgence of the Nation Party') as its official party in 1999 and Wahid ascended to the presidential palace. In this way, NU is a self-professed socio-religious organization with solid political drives.

However, how is NU's entanglement with the socio-religious and the political interplays influential to the *santri*'s cinematic project? To explain this, I will turn to my observation to the first NU documentary film competition, organized by Sahal at the 33rd NU's national congress, held on 1st-5th August 2015 in Jombang, East Java.[8]

I was at the congress for the full five days. It was rife with political maneuvers. No sooner had the participants arrived than they split into two opposite blocks of the two leading candidates for the PBNU top leadership. Joko Widodo, who had recently become president of Indonesia, opened the congress. On the first day, a rumor circulated that many participants still did not get the badges that would allow them to enter the congress venue. On the second day, when the first plenary session on 'rule and regulation of the congress' commenced, the venue's water and air conditioning systems were mysteriously turned off, heightening the participants' emotional state, which was already tense.

Part of the tension was due to a question from participants about changing the election format for *Rais Am,* the president-general of NU's administration body. The question was an effort to return the ulama's power to the politicians within the NU.[9] The tension between the groups increased over the next four days. The committee postponed the panel sessions to the third day - more than 24 hours behind the original schedule. While the religious panel was uncharacteristically fast and smooth, the panel discussing the organization's structure, in which the discussion of the selection format resumed, lasted until a very late evening of the fourth day.

I attended the conference partly because I wanted to follow the announcement of the film competition. The announcement schedule,

however, had always been uncertain. Initially, it would be held on the first day of the congress, but later I was informed that it was changed to the fifth day, coinciding with the election schedule for PBNU's new top leaders. On the fifth day's evening, an hour before the election started, I met Sahal in front of the entrance venue. He told me that the film competition's announcement would be at 9 p.m. in Pendapa hall, about three hundred meters from the congress's location.

Since the first day of the conference, I had seen an enormous crowd of *santri* surrounding places of the congress. However, on this night, it was at its busiest. Everyone seemed to be flocking to the main venue of the conference. As the election drew near, I went back inside the venue and observed the heightened tension. A large fenced area was installed inside the ground, guarded by many *Banser*, NU's paramilitary division. Only the voting participants of the conference were allowed to enter it. Those not authorized to get in, including me, gathered around the fence. The election process lasted until dawn.

Nevertheless, before 9 p.m., I managed to leave the venue through the crowd of people, hastily heading to Pendapa but only to find out that no one was there. I checked other nearby possible locations thinking that I might have misheard what Sahal said. Still, I could neither find him nor able to spot any conferring ceremony of a sort.

I did not try to reach Sahal afterward, partly because I tried to understand his disappointment at how the film competition he organized ended, and I was also sure he would share his film organizing experience on his social media account. Three months later, he proved me right as he wrote the following on his Facebook account:

> The *khataman* (closing ceremony) of the competition was lukewarm as if nothing was happening. There was no *sembelih jago* (a rooster slaughtering), no *tumpeng* (a plate of cone-shaped rice decorated with various fruits) and no prayers from the elder as a *khataman* of *pengajian* (religious learning) usually looks. Whereas we had run the competition as if it were national-level religious learning.[10] ...It had no trophy-conferring ceremony. *The plan of compiling the seven best films was not yet realized.* Furthermore, the plan for screening the films was still uncertain. A film competition by NU could (have) be(en) organized in a proper, continuous way because NU is not *a political party*. Do you agree, Bro(ther)?

Significantly, the chaos at the congress mirrors NU's complicity between the religious and the political in PBNU, in which the latter seems to be more attractive than the former. This complicity is

inevitable because NU is a large organization with various interests. Still, the film competition story reverberates that the popularity of the political among the NU elites has rendered cultural activities such as filmic practices unpopular. To say it bluntly, film and filmmaking are not highly valued among the NU elites. Aware of their marginal position, the cinematic *santri* have developed a strategy to sustain their existence, as I will discuss below.

'Lesbumi film(s)': A Creative Strategy

The term 'Lesbumi' often appears in *santri*'s conversations about film as one kind of filmic ideal the *santri* want to establish. The seven films listed for the film day celebration validate this point. Sani's *Tauhid* ('The Unity of Allah' 1964) was the only film of Lesbumi production and the *santri* knew it very well. However, they often used the term "Lesbumi films" (*Film-film Lesbumi*) in a plural form to refer to the film list. I had never asked them why they did this, partly because I was unaware of this issue when doing the fieldwork.

The context of their talk about it is revealing, though. The *santri* often mixed up Lesbumi films with those produced by the Lesbumi filmmakers at a time beyond their involvement in the organization. Usmar's *Lewat Djam Malam* ('After the Curfew' 1954) is an example. When I indirectly asked Sahal if it was a Lesbumi film, he refused to call it so because its production was before the establishment of Lesbumi in 1962. Nevertheless, on the occasion of the film day celebration, many *santri* watching the film sympathized with it due to its association with Lesbumi. The term "Lesbumi" seemed to have attained a new meaning to the *santri* of many decades later. It is now used in such a way to include particular films of Lesbumi filmmaker activists, irrespective of their production times.

The creation of a new meaning is central to the ways *santri* have idealized Lesbumi for their cinematic project. In the process of such creation, as the time extension indicates, films of the Lesbumi filmmaker activists seemed to be experiencing a sort of distortion by which they become augmented from "the memory once they were made" (Barthes 1972, 142). This way, Lesbumi has become a mythical type of discourse amongst the *santri*.

The Lesbumi strategy, however, is creative. The name has provided the NU people with a claim to cinematic tradition in the Indonesian

film field, as it contains, to use the *santri*'s term, a "*sanad*" ('*isnād*'), or a genealogical linkage connecting the *santri* to the NU-earlier generations in the film arena.[11] By referring to Lesbumi, the *santri* create a legitimate continuity in their project with the cinematic tradition of their elders. By way of extension, they innovate through such continuity to create an opening space in the cinematic field that will render their state of being unrecognized to become more visible and recognizable, that is, to have a place "on the map" (Ferguson 1999, 235) among the others in the 'national' film world.

The Competing Discourse

The proliferation of new media technologies in Muslim societies has invited the emergence of a Muslim public (Eickelman and Salvatore 2002), where Muslims of various ideologies will compete to dominate the 'right' interpretation of Islam. While related scholarship on the contexts of Southeast Asian Muslims has primarily focused on the modernist (Aljunied 2017) and Islamist groups (Hew 2018; Lim 2005), information on how media technology has created a Muslim public in a traditionalist Muslim context is still lacking. I dedicate this section to examining the competing discourse behind the emerging cinematic *santri* figure.

One of the oldest narratives in the study of Indonesian Islam suggests the significance of a 'traditionalist-modernist' divide for understanding NU's political expressions in public spheres (Geertz 1960). This divide emerged from a religious conflict between the traditionalist and modernist groups. The former are loyal adherents (*taklid*) to *the ulama* of the Classical Era of Islam who observe cultural practices of Islamic rituals. The latter groups, which first arrived in what is now Indonesia by the early twentieth century, are widely known for their strict reference to the Qur'an and *Hadis* and their advocacy for 'purifying' Islam from local customs. They reject the latter's practice of *taklid* and regard the cultural practices of Islamic rituals as *bidah* (unacceptable innovation). Their rivalry became acuminous when the modernists established *Muhammadiyah* (1912) as an institutional means to spread their understanding of the religion. As a response, the traditionalists created an organization of their own in 1926, *Nahdlatul Ulama*.

Some scholars refused the modernist-traditionalist rivalry discourse when discussing Islam in Indonesia (Barton 1996; Effendy 2004;

Fealy 1996), perhaps because of NU's intermittent rapprochement with the modernist Muslims, such as its involvement in Masyumi[12], a modernist-dominated Islamic political party active during the Sukarno era (Feillard 1997). However, Robin Bush (2009) has argued for the continuing relevance of this rivalry. She stated that the eventual split of NU with Masyumi in 1952, which was triggered by the traditionalists' severe disappointment at the attitudes of modernist factions of the party toward the NU *ulama,* was so traumatic for the NU people that they passed their memories about it from generation to generation. As a result, their memories of the conflict are still vivid even among the younger generation of NU and continue to occasion their socio-political and cultural behaviors in contemporary public domains.

Concerning such rivalry, the cinematic *santri* often discussed their film-related programs around the spirit of "cinematic battle" (Heryanto 2014). The following story reveals this point. One evening, I attended a meeting at the NU building in preparation for the film day celebration I discussed earlier. Upon our conversation, a *santri* poet who was part of the committee casually commented on their film project.

> "So, I am more interested in putting it (the cinematic project) in the framework of *budaya tanding* (counterculture). It is a [battle of] film versus film. [We use] film as a battle arena to fight against values offered by other films. I found this interesting. As a traditional organization, NU has a media (film), which is very modern. There has been an idea [of NU film production], and it must come true. However, Muhammadiyah does not have one. I think this is important".

While he was naive to disregard Muhammadiyah's interest in producing film[13], the other *santri* present in the meeting all confirmed his statement, indicating the significance of *santri*'s rivalry discourse against the modernist filmmaker. Tomy Taslim even responded to it by proposing the urgency of preparing a new generation of *santri* filmmakers who would later produce films upholding the NU virtues.[14] He said, "If we want to make a film in the context of counter culture, we have to learn about making film seriously. We have to train our younger *santri* with filmmaking skills. We have to prepare it".

Central in their rivalry discourse is how Islam in general and the NU people, in particular, have been portrayed in Indonesian cinema. Sahal's comments on the representation of *santri* in the country's film culture support my argument.

There was no complete portrayal of the *santri* society in national films. NU in a specific way did not appear. But Islam probably did. What is covered was (only) Islam, which was far from the realities of Islam in the archipelago at large, let alone the Islam of NU (emphasis is mine). …in general, those Islamic films were not worrying, despite many having criticized us. For an example, (the critic of NU by) *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Woman on Turban) was okay. But he (the film director) made a mistake when making that film. For instance, the way he (mistakenly) wrote *al-Huda* in Arabic (the name of the pesantren's library in the film) was an indication that he had not 'finished' yet learning about Islam. If he were to criticize (the *santri* society), he could have balanced it with (reflecting on) the positive side of the *santri* too. Yes, the novel it was based on was not my preference: full of rage, nothing enjoyable. I only read its first 75 pages. It was a project by the Ford Foundation. However, to say it in general, these Islamic films were disappointing. They were trapped in the superficial symbols of Islam.

Sahal's answer indicates that the *santri*'s cinematic discourse emerges around the popularity of Islamic films in post-authoritarian Indonesia, seen by the *santri* to have wrongfully depicted the religion and the NU society. The fact that he mentioned *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, a film of Bramantyo's direction, is telling. It is a feminist film about a young woman in a traditional *pesantren* who speaks about gender equality against a patriarchal culture in Islamic institutions and society at large. Putatively attacking the heart of NU's patriarchal culture, the film has aroused heated debates among traditionalist Muslims. Sahal's mention of Bramantyo's film and the *santri*'s calls for using film as a counterculture against the Muhammadiyah indicate that the competition between the traditionalist and modernist Muslims over the interpretation of Islam now extends into the film field.

Muslim competitors, however, do not come only from the modernist side. In my several meetings with the late Alex Komang, I often heard him saying as follows:

"NU has to make a film. Otherwise, our cinemas would only play film *seolah-olah Islam* (films that only superficially deal with Islam), such as AAC and KCB. If the NU people make a film about Islam, then the portrayal of Islam in the film will be the Islam that fits with NU's virtues."

Komang's mention of AAC and KCB as films of superficial Islam is worth exploring. Heryanto (2014) has analysed the competition around the production of both films, but I will do it here in a way that explains why the *santri* considered them as films of the same kind. Despite being

directed by different filmmakers, both films similarly tell a dramatic love story between Indonesian *Azharis* in Cairo. While the film's main characters are portrayed as young, intelligent and pious individuals aspiring to a chaste and benign way of living, dialogues in both films are full of didactic purposes strengthened by lavish quotations from the Islamic texts. In the words of film critic Eric Sasono, (2013, 46) "personal issues dominate the discourse of piety in these films".

Their similarity is understandable because they are based on novels of the same author, Habiburrahman el-Shirazy. He is an NU-affiliated *pesantren* graduate who continued his Islamic training in a modern *madrasah* in Solo and later in Al-Azhar University. However, during his study in Cairo, he began to affiliate himself with the Islamist groups in Indonesia, evidenced by his leadership role in FLP, an Islamic writing club associated with the *Tarbiyah* movement.[15] It is an Islamist predication movement mushrooming across mosques of the top Indonesian secular universities in the 1980s.

Many of its members were children of the rising Muslim middle-class families who benefited from the New Order's economic growth in the 1980s (Rinaldo 2007, 35). Its pioneers had close links to ex-Masyumi members sending the former to Egypt or Saudi Arabia to study Islam, in which they learned the teachings of the Muslim Brotherhood (Machmudi 2008, 93). By the early 2000s, they founded PKS (Prosperous Justice Party), campaigning to establish an Islamic state through party-political activism, officially declaring their visibility in Indonesia's public spaces.

Novels written by el-Shirazy typically present Muslim characters as models of modesty, chastity, and benevolence (Arnez 2009, 46). When Bramantyo filmed AAC, he decorated the novel's narratives with elements that putatively make them more titillating to the film audience, such as the use of a non-Muslim actress and Bollywood flavors, slightly changing the novel's main Islamic messages. The change has spiked a tension on the part of the novel's author, driving the latter to turn to the late Chaerul Umam for filming his later novel KCB. Umam has directed films of Islamic themes since the 1970s, mostly collaborating with a modernist associated filmmaker, Asrul Sani. His films include *Al Kautsar* (The Heavenly River, 1977) and *Titian Serambut Dibelah Tujuh* (The Hairlike Bridge, 1982). Yet, since the late 1990s, his religious attitude has become more conservative, partly

evidenced by the proselytizing excess of his 1997's film *Fatahillah*. It proved that the film version of KCB appeared as a faithful rendition of the Islamic messages outlined by its novel author. It even required its leading actors to have the ability to read the Qur'an and avoided making scenes that show a physical contact between unmarried actors and actresses (Heryanto 2014).

El-Shirazy's films' emphasis on the personal dimensions of Islamic piety, seen by the *santri* as "films of superficial Islam", is in sharp opposition to the latter's NU-style film discourse. That said, the *santri*'s comeback to the film arena is an oscillation of an implacable debate regarding the questions about who has the authority for "picturing Islam" (George 2010) in public domains. A similar debate has forced the 1920s NU elders to establish their organization. Today's situation, however, slightly differs. The debate is no longer between the traditionalists and the modernists. A new rival has emerged into the field, namely the Islamist groups represented by the Tarbiyah movement. However, the new rival is comparable to the modernists despite some overlapping interests as they see pop culture as a means by which *dakwah* can occur (T. Barker 2019). The brand-new form of rivalry has challenged the NU *santri* to, once again, answer it with "a reform of their own" (Hefner 2009). They equipped themselves with the same weapon and turned back to the film arena. The rise of the cinematic *santri* figure embodies McLuhan's thesis (1964), "the medium is the message". It becomes an extension of various conditions that enable Muslim groups in society to express and compete their interpretations of Islam in public domains.

Conclusion

Indonesia's modern figure of cinematic *santri* refers to a younger generation of *santri* who have turned to the efficacy of filmmaking practices and technologies for articulating their religious and political differences in public spaces. It emerges from the changes and continuities in multiple sectors of NU society's life. It is part of the 1980s rise of educated middle-class Muslims in NU proclivities, who have relatively easy access to discourses of civil Islam and the advancements of media technology. It is also an outcome of NU's politically laden cinematic activism during the 1960s and a response to the post-Suharto rise of Islamic cinema.

Their emergence, however, is entangled in a vexing marginality that comes from, firstly, the country's more established filmmakers and, secondly, their NU elite leaders, who tend to undervalue the significance of a film and popular culture movement. Such marginality has encouraged them to create a strategy that will make them visible on the map of the country's film arena, such as by linking themselves with the elder Lesbumi's 'NU filmmakers' of the 1960s.

The cinematic *santri* have aspired to films that signify NU-*pesantren* values, such as educational virtues, local culture, religious tolerance and nationalistic ideals. These issues are deeply rooted in NU's civil society discourse. They placed this discourse against the modernist and Islamist groups whose films are seen by the *santri* to have mainly dealt with the 'superficial' aspects of Islam; the rise of cinematic *santri* has enhanced the rivalrous inclination of public Islam in Indonesia. Finally, to the extent that the cinematic *santri* resonates with the competition between different identities and interests that come with being pious Muslims in Indonesian public domains, this article offers an insight into the relationship between image-making technologies and the politics of Muslim visibilities in a Southeast Asian context.

Endnotes

• The research was fully funded by the generosity of NISIS (Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies).

1. Lesbumi, or *Lembaga Seniman dan Budayawan Muslim Indonesia,* is NU's wing organization for Muslim artists and cultural activists.

2. In the 1970s, he marginalized Muslims in favor of secular nationalist and Javanese *abangan* groups. In the 1980s, he courted NU to be his allies before turning to conservative Muslims of ICMI in the early 1990s and wooing the ultraconservative Islamists in the last years of his dictatorship (Hefner 2000, 208).

3. The withdrawal is popularly known as *Kembali Ke Khittah 26* (Returning to the 1926 Original Principles).

4. It is an anthology film featuring the voices of urban, middle-class Jakartan youth concerning issues of, among others, drug addiction, (homo)sexuality and the rebellious agency of the self (van Heeren 2012, 53). The film was directed by Riri Riza, Nan Achnas, Mira Lesmana and Rizal Mantovani.

5. Sukarno's Guided Democracy revolved around his rhetoric of anti-America, pro-communist, anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism and slogans of political ideology.

6. Salihara is a community of cultural producers associated with liberal and secular thoughts, established, among others, by a cultural activist and writer, Goenawan Muhamad.

7. I finally managed to get a copy of all (old) films from 'a black market', except for '*Tauhid*', indicating that the problem is bigger than the film availability.

8. The congress, held every five years to elect the new top leaders of NU, is significant for the 'restructuration' of NU for the five years to come.

9. The structure of NU consists of *Syuriah* and *Tanfidziyah*. The former, consisting of NU's senior *ulama,* is conceived as the legislative body upon which the highest authority of NU is vested. The latter, consisting of those dealing with NU's practical decisions on a daily basis, is conceived as the executive body. Thus, the Tanfidziyah, seen as 'political', are theoretically subjected to the authority of the Syuriah. However, at the practical level, the power relation between the two councils has constantly been negotiated and reversed over time (Bush 2009, 14).

10. No less than seventy filmmakers from Aceh, Yogyakarta, South Sulawesi and other provinces participated in the competition.

11. The term *sanad* refers to a chain of oral transmission of a prophet tradition, made up of a list of reliable and pious Muslims through whom the tradition reaches the latest transmitter from the prophet in an unbroken linkage, a guarantee of tradition's authenticity (Brown 1996, 81). Influenced by such tradition, the *santri* is intensely aware of a notion of "being connected" to their greater masters in the past through their Islamic knowledge studied in *pesantren* (Bruinessen 2008, 221).

12. Masyumi refers to the Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims.

13. As I have said earlier, a similar cinematic movement in the provision of Muhammadiyah communities has preceded if not surpassed that in the NU societies. The 2013 release of *Sang Kyai* (The Imam), a biopic of Hasyim Asy'ari, one of the NU's founders, for example, was preceded by the 2010 production of *Sang Pencerah* (The Enlightener), a biopic film of Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah.

14. He is a *santri* film activist who has founded *filmpelajar.com*, a film festival platform for students.

15. My use of the term Islamist refers to the alignment of resurgent Islam with political ideology (Lybarger 2007, 1) and suggests its diverse forms (Çinar 2005, 13).

Bibliography

Alawi, Abdullah. 2013. "Zastrow Al-Ngatawi: Di NU, Lesbumi Masih Marginal." *NU Online*. https://www.nu.or.id/wawancara/di-nu-lesbumi-masih-marginal-aMYjH (October 9, 2015).

Aljunied, Khairudin. 2017. *Muslim Cosmopolitanism: Southeast Asian Islam in Comparative Perspective*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Arnez, Monika. 2009. "Dakwah by the Pen." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 37(107): 45–64.

Barker, Joshua. 2014. "Introduction." In *Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Barker, Thomas. 2019. *Indonesian Cinema after the New Order: Going Mainstream*. 1st ed. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Barthes, Roland. 1972. *Mythologies*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Barton, Greg. 1996. "Islam, Pancasila and the Middle Path of Tawassuth; The Thought of Achmad Siddiq." In *Nahdlatul Ulama, Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia*, eds. Greg Fealy and Greg Barton. Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 110–28.

———. 2002. *Abdurrahman Wahid: Muslim Democrat, Indonesian President*. Honalulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Biran, H. Misbach Yusa. 2008a. *Buku Kenang-kenangan Orang Bandel*. Depok: Komunitas Bambu.

———. 2008b. "Kata Pengantar". In: Chisaan, Choirotun, *Lesbumi: Strategi Politik Kebudayaan,* pp. xi-xii. Yogyakarta: LKIS.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

———. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Brown, Daniel W. 1996. *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bruinessen, Martin van. 1994. *NU: Tradisi, Relasi-relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru*. Yogyakarta: LKiS Yogyakarta.

———. 2008. "Traditionalist and Islamist Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia." In *The Madrasa in Asia: Political Activism and Transnational Linkages*, eds. Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikand, and Martin van Bruinessen. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 217–46.

———. 2014. *Conservative Turn: Islam Indonesia dalam Ancaman Fundamentalisme*. Bandung: Mizan.

Bush, Robin. 2009. *Nahdlatul Ulama and the Struggle for Power Within Islam and Politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Chisaan, Choirotun. 2008. *Lesbumi: Strategi Politik Kebudayaan*. Yogyakarta: LKiS Yogyakarta.

Çinar, Alev. 2005. *Modernity, Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places and Time.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Effendy, Bahtiar. 2004. *Islam and the State in Indonesia*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Eickelman, Dale F., and Armando Salvatore. 2002. "The Public Sphere and Muslim Identities." *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie* 43(1): 92–115.

Engelke, Matthew. 2010. "Religion and the Turn: A Review Essay." *American Ethnologist* 37(2): 371–79.

Fealy, Greg. 1996. "Wahab Chasbullah, Traditionalism and the Political Development of Nahdlatul Ulama." In *Nahdlatul Ulama, Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia*, eds. Greg Barton and Greg Fealy. Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1–41.

———. 2018. "Nahdlatul Ulama and the Politics Trap." *New Mandala*. https://www.newmandala.org/nahdlatul-ulama-politics-trap/ (April 28, 2022).

Feillard, Andrée. 1997. "Traditionalist Islam and the State in Indonesia: The Road to Legitimacy and Renewal." In *Islam in an Era of Nation-States: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

———. 1999. *NU Vis-a-Vis Negara: Pencarian Isi, Bentuk, dan Makna*. Yogyakarta: LKiS Yogyakarta.

Ferguson, James. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. 1st ed. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Foucault, Michel. 2004. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.

Foulcher, Keith. 1986. *Social Commitment in Literature and the Arts: The Indonesian "Institute of People's Culture" 1950-1965*. Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University.

Geertz, Clifford. 1960. *The Religion of Java*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

George, Kenneth M. 2010. *Picturing Islam: Art and Ethics in a Muslim Lifeworld*. West Sussex: Willey-Blackwell.

Halim, Wahyuddin. 2018. "Young Islamic Preachers on Facebook: Pesantren As'adiyah and Its Engagement with Social Media." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46(134): 44–60.

Hamdani, Hamdani. 2021. "Defending Islam Nusantara at the Frontline." *Islam Nusantara: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture* 2(1): 21–40.

Heeren, Katinka van. 2012. *Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past*. Leiden: Brill.

Hefner, Robert W. 2000. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

———. 2009. "Islamic School, Social Movement and Democracy in Indonesia." In *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 55–105.

Heryanto, Ariel. 2014. *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*. Singapore and Japan: NUS Press and Kyoto University Press.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. "The Art of Dakwah: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46(134): 61–79.

Ida, Laode; 2004. *NU Muda: Kaum Progresif dan Sekularisme Baru*. Jakarta: Erlangga.

Ilaihi, Wahyu. 2019. "Online Education: Online Pesantren." In *Ritual in a Digital Age*, eds. Martin Hoondert and Suzanne ven der Beek. Groningen: University of Groningen, 123–40.

Jones, Tod. 2013. "Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era." In *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State*, Leiden: Brill.

Kersten, Carool. 2016. *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kitley, Philip. 2000. *Television, Nation, and Culture in Indonesia*. 1st ed. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Larkin, Brian. 2008. *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Lukens-Bull, Ronald. 2019. "Pesantren, Madrasa and the Future of Islamic Education in Indonesia." *Kawalu: Journal of Local Culture* 6(1): 29.

Lybarger, Loren D. 2007. *Identity and Religion in Palestine: The Struggle between Islamism and Secularism in the Occupied Territories.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Machmudi, Yon. 2008. *Islamising Indonesia: The Rise of Jemaah Tarbiyah and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)*. Canberra: ANU Press.

McLuhan, Marshall, and Lewis H. Lapham. 1964. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Reprint edition. London and New York: Routledge Classics.

Myers, Fred R. 2002. *Painting Culture: The Making of an Aboriginal High Art*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Negroponte, Nicholas. 1996. *Being Digital*. First Edition. New York: Vintage.

Pohl, Florian. 2009. *Islamic Education and the Public Sphere*. Münster, New York, München, and Berlin: Waxmann Verlag.

PP Lesbumi NU. 2010. "Rapat Kerja Pengurus Pusat (PP) Lesbumi NU Masa Khidmat 2010-2015." *Rapat LESBUMI PBNU*. https://lesbumi.wordpress.com/2010/10/23/hello-world/ (September 9, 2015).

Rakhmani, Inaya. 2017. *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia: Television, Identity, and the Middle Class*. Berlin: Springer.

Rinaldo, Rachel. 2007. "Mobilizing Piety: Women, Islam and the Public Sphere in Indonesia." Ph.D. Thesis. The University of Chicago.

Ritchey, Jeff, and Nurhaya Muchtar. 2014. "Indonesian Pesantren and Community Social Change: Moderate Islam's Use of Media and Technology as Tools for Community Engagement." *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 26(3): 323–37.

Sahal, Hamzah. 2008. "Hamzah Sahal." *Sahhala*. https://sahhala.wordpress.com/profile/ (September 19, 2015).

Sasono, Eric. 2013. "Islamic Revivalism and Religious Piety in Indonesian Cinema." In *Performance, Popular Culture, and Piety in Muslim Southeast Asia*, ed. Timothy P. Daniels. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 45–75.

Sen, Krishna. 1994. *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*. London and New Jersey: Zed Book Ltd.

Sen, Krishna, and David T. Hill. 2007. *Media, Culture, and Politics in Indonesia*. Jakarta: Equinox Publishing.

Srimulyani, Eka. 2008. *Women from Traditional Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia: Negotiating Public Spaces*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Wahid, Abdurrahman. 1983. "Film Dakwah: Diperlukan Keragaman Wajah dan Kebebasan Bentuk." In *Seni dalam Masyarakat Indonesia*, ed. Edi Sedyawati. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 52–60.

Ahmad Nuril Huda, *Research Center for Area Studies, Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia.* Email: ahmad.nuril.huda@brin.go.id.

Guidelines

Submission of Articles

S*tudia Islamika*, published three times a year since 1994, is a bilingual (English and Arabic), peer-reviewed journal, and specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular and Southeast Asian Islamic studies in general. The aim is to provide readers with a better understanding of Indonesia and Southeast Asia's Muslim history and present developments through the publication of articles, research reports, and book reviews.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

Articles should be written in American English between approximately 10.000-15.000 words including text, all tables and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submission must include 150 words abstract and 5 keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should

be translated into English. *Studia Islamika* accepts only electronic submissions. All manuscripts should be sent in Ms. Word to: http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika.

All notes must appear in the text as citations. A citation usually requires only the last name of the author(s), year of publication, and (sometimes) page numbers. For example: (Hefner 2009a, 45; Geertz 1966, 114). Explanatory footnotes may be included but should not be used for simple citations. All works cited must appear in the reference list at the end of the article. In matter of bibliographical style, *Studia Islamika* follows the American Political Science Association (APSA) manual style, such as below:

1. Hefner, Robert. 2009a. "Introduction: The Political Cultures of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia," in *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert Hefner, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
4. Wahid, Din. 2014. *Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia*. PhD dissertation. Utrecht University.
5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

Arabic romanization should be written as follows:

Letters: *ʾ*, *b*, *t*, *th*, *j*, *ḥ*, *kh*, *d*, *dh*, *r*, *z*, *s*, *sh*, *ṣ*, *ḍ*, *ṭ*, *ẓ*, *ʿ*, *gh*, *f*, *q*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *h*, *w*, *y*. Short vowels: *a*, *i*, *u*. long vowels: *ā*, *ī*, *ū*. Diphthongs: *aw*, *ay*. *Tā marbūṭā*: *t*. Article: *al-*. For detail information on Arabic Romanization, please refer the transliteration system of the Library of Congress (LC) Guidelines.

ستوديا اسلاميكا

Islam, Modern Turkey, and a Javanese Intellectual: The Sutomo's Visit to Turkey in 1937

Yon Machmudi & Frial R. Supratman

Locality, Equality, and Piety: *Pesantren* Ecofeminism Movement in Indonesia

Mardian Sulistyati

من الامتياز الاجتماعي إلى التسامح الديني: صورة لتعايش مجتمع مينانجكاباو المسلم ومجتمع نياس المسيحي

أندري أشهدي وسيبرييونو