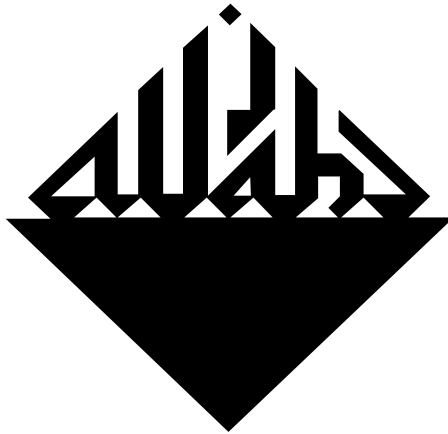


STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 29, Number 1, 2022



NAVIGATING AGAINST
SALAFI-WAHABI EXPANSION IN MALAYSIA:
THE ROLE OF STATE AND SOCIETY

Kamarulnizam Abdullah

WHAT MAKES ISLAMIC MICROFINANCE ISLAMIC?
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Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies

Vol. 29, no. 1, 2022

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STUDIA ISLAMIKA (ISSN 0215-0492; E-ISSN: 2355-6145) is an international journal published by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta, INDONESIA. It specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular, and Southeast Asian Islamic studies in general, and is intended to communicate original researches and current issues on the subject. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines. All submitted papers are subject to double-blind review process.

STUDIA ISLAMIKA has been accredited by The Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, Republic of Indonesia as an academic journal (Decree No. 32a/E/KPT/2017).

STUDIA ISLAMIKA has become a CrossRef Member since year 2014. Therefore, all articles published by STUDIA ISLAMIKA will have unique Digital Object Identifier (DOI) number.

STUDIA ISLAMIKA is indexed in Scopus since 30 May 2015.

Editorial Office:

STUDIA ISLAMIKA, Gedung Pusat Pengkajian
Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM) UIN Jakarta,
Jl. Kertamukti No. 5, Pisangan Barat, Cirendeu,
Ciputat 15419, Jakarta, Indonesia.
Phone: (62-21) 7423543, 7499272, Fax: (62-21) 7408633;
E-mail: studia.islamika@uinjkt.ac.id
Website: <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika>

Annual subscription rates from outside Indonesia, institution:
US\$ 75,00 and the cost of a single copy is US\$ 25,00;
individual: US\$ 50,00 and the cost of a single copy is US\$
20,00. Rates do not include international postage and
handling.

Please make all payment through bank transfer to: **PPIM,
Bank Mandiri KCP Tangerang Graha Karnos, Indonesia,**
account No. **101-00-0514550-1 (USD),**
Swift Code: bmrriidja

Harga berlangganan di Indonesia untuk satu tahun, lembaga:
Rp. 150.000,-, harga satu edisi Rp. 50.000,-; individu:
Rp. 100.000,-, harga satu edisi Rp. 40.000,-. Harga belum
termasuk ongkos kirim.



Pembayaran melalui **PPIM, Bank Mandiri KCP Tangerang
Graha Karnos, No. Rek: 128-00-0105080-3**

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Erwan Nurtawab & Dedi Wahyudi

Restructuring Traditional Islamic Education in Indonesia: Challenges for *Pesantren* Institution

Abstract: *This article examines the current traditional Islamic education in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, known as pesantren, following the passing of the pesantren bill into legislation by the Indonesian People's Representative Council in September 2019. We focus on aspects of the Pesantren Legislation (Undang-Undang Pesantren), which recognises pesantren as a new type of formal education and regulates the way the pesantren system is managed. People who engage in the pesantren system will certainly take advantage of this legislation. Nevertheless, they cannot avoid possible changes of established values in pesantren that have been socially reproduced for a long time. The authors argue that in the first two decades of the 21st century, Indonesian traditionalist Muslims have celebrated an important development in the pesantren tradition-based education, which received formal recognition in Indonesia's national education system.*

Keywords: Formal Religious Education, *Kitab Kuning*, Politics of Indonesian Islamic Education, Traditional Islamic Education.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji perkembangan terkini dari pendidikan Islam tradisional yang berbasis di lembaga pendidikan Islam Indonesia, yaitu pesantren, setelah Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Republik Indonesia mengesahkan Rancangan Undang-Undang tentang pesantren menjadi Undang-Undang pada September 2019. Fokus kami adalah pada aspek-aspek yang disebutkan dalam UU tentang pesantren tersebut yang dalam banyak hal mengatur bagaimana sistem pesantren seharusnya dikelola sebagai sebuah tipe pendidikan formal yang baru. Warga pesantren tentunya akan mengambil manfaat dari pengesahaan UU ini. Namun demikian, mereka tidak bisa menghindari berbagai perubahan yang mungkin terjadi dalam nilai-nilai yang telah mapan yang secara sosial direproduksi dalam lingkungan tersebut pasca proses formalisasi ini. Dalam artikel ini, penulis berargumen bahwa dalam dua dekade pertama abad ke-21 Muslim tradisional Indonesia telah merayakan sebuah periode penting dalam perkembangan pendidikan berbasis tradisi pesantren setelah jenis pendidikan ini diakui menjadi bagian dalam sistem pendidikan nasional.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Diniyah Formal, Kitab Kuning, Politik Pendidikan Islam Indonesia, Pendidikan Islam Tradisional.

ملخص: يتناول هذا المقال أحدث التطورات حول التعليم الإسلامي التقليدي القائم في المؤسسات التعليمية الإسلامية الإندونيسية والمعروفة باسم البيسانترين، وذلك بعد أن أقر مجلس النواب الشعبي في جمهورية إندونيسيا مشروع قانون البيسانترين ليصبح قانونا، في سبتمبر عام ٢٠١٩. ونحن نركز على الجوانب الواردة في القانون الذي ينظم كيفية إدارة نظام البيسانترين باعتباره نوعا جديدا من التعليم الرسمي. ومن المؤكد أن الأشخاص المنخرطين في هذا النظام سوف يستفيدون من اعتماد هذا القانون. ومع ذلك، لا يمكنهم تجنب التغيرات المحتملة التي قد تطرأ على القيم الراسخة التي أعيد إنتاجها اجتماعيا في بيئة البيسانترين بعد هذه العملية من إضفاء الطابع الرسمي. ويجادل الكاتب في هذا المقال، أنه في العقدين الأولين من القرن الحادي والعشرين، كان المسلمون التقليديون الإندونيسيون يحتفلون بمرحلة مهمة في تطور التعليم القائم على تقاليد البيسانترين، وذلك بعد حصول هذا النوع من التعليم الاعتراف الرسمي باعتباره جزءا من نظام التعليم الوطني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم الديني الرسمي، الكتاب الأصفر، سياسة التعليم الإسلامي الإندونيسي، التعليم الإسلامي التقليدي.

On September 24, 2019 the People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Republik Indonesia*, or DPR RI) passed the *pesantren* bill into legislation, known as *Undang-Undang Number 18 Year 2019 on Pesantren* (henceforth, the 2019 *pesantren* legislation). The Minister of Religious Affairs, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, who was present at the People's Representative Council's plenary session, states that the enactment of this legislation will recognise and give strong legal standing to the *pesantren* institution—the home of traditional Islamic education—and help integrate it into the national education system (Maharani 2019). However, some Indonesian Muslim organisations, particularly those who do not support traditional education, have requested that the enactment process be postponed because some parts of the Bill are not properly elaborated. In their opinion, the Bill did not accommodate the aspirations of other Islamic institutions that also offer *pesantren*-based education. They argued against the identification of *pesantren* as only being associated with classical Islamic textual education, called *kitab kuning* (approximately meaning, yellow book), and with the existence of the respected teacher (*kiai*) in the institution. They argued that not all *pesantrens* advocate for *kitab kuning*-based learning, or have a *kiai* based in their institutions (Permana 2019).

Scholars have placed traditional Islamic education in binary opposition to modern education (Halstead 2004; Hussain 2007). Eickelman (1985, 65) and Boyle (2004, 16), for example, note that modern education treats education as a separate and independent activity. This does not align with the ways in which traditional Islamic education has developed (for example, see Nilan 2009). Boyle (2004, 22–23) states that there is a contradictory worldview regarding structures and values in both educational environments. In modern education, people pay attention to grades, which show how good someone's performance is at school. Aside from that, the system was made with a strict level of bureaucratisation. A graded-class system is based on students' ages and they are expected to grow in a group and acquire skills and knowledge in a uniform manner, based on the offered units. In traditional education, students are given the option of leaving or staying in the *pesantren*. Conversely, the modern education requires an entry examination, or a kind of test, to be administered for those who register. Then, they are scheduled to take a final examination for graduation.

Geertz (1960, 184–85) and Ricklefs (2007, 173–74) note that the adoption of Western styles in Islamic education was resented among

traditionalist Muslims (the *kolot*) in Indonesia. During the 19th century to the first part of the 20th century, the colonial government built a Dutch-sponsored education system that was very different to traditional Islamic education, especially in the ways education was managed and goals of learning were oriented. Dutch-sponsored education was developed to create skillfull workers and officials and to support the development of economy. In contrast, traditional Islamic education aims to deepen students' understanding of Islam and increase both social and individual piety (Steenbrink 1986, 24). Prominent scholars are right in placing traditional Islamic education under the *pesantren* system and modern education in binary opposition. Up to the end of the 20th-century, traditional Islamic education in Indonesia developed outside of the existing government educational system.

The existing scholarship currently highlights the interest of scholars in studying Islamic education and trends of its development in modern Indonesia. Nilan (2009), for example, was interested in the spirit of education in the *pesantren*. Some scholars note that the current state of Islamic education has been developed in response to modernity and national education policies, and as such are more concerned with general subjects (Azra, Afriyanti D., and Robert W. Hefner 2007; Hefner 2009; Lukens-Bull 2005; Subhan 2009). Others provide a historical overview of Islamic education and its current developments (Isbah 2020; Zakaria 2007). Some scholars examined current developments in the *madrasah* and *pesantren* systems to better understand social, political and religious issues, and movements in contemporary Indonesia (Hefner 2008; Pohl 2007). Other aspects of Indonesian Islamic education have also received scholars' attentions. Tan (2012) studied Islamic education in relation to the indoctrination process through formal education in a *pesantren* in Central Java. Moreover, Nurtawab (2018, 2019) examined the ways in which the traditional *pesantren* system has been marginalised and then found a way to gain formal recognition through the launch of the equivalence (*mu'adalah*) and Formal Religious Education regulations in 2014.

The ways in which the *pesantren* system started to receive formal recognition in the national educational system have been overlooked. This article therefore examines the current state of *pesantren* tradition-based education in Indonesia, which in the last two decades has become equal to Indonesia's general educational system. Our focus is on the 2019 *pesantren* legislation, which controls the management of a formalised

pesantren system of education. People who engage in the *pesantren* system will certainly take advantage of this legislation. However, they cannot avoid possible changes in established values that have long been reproduced in the *pesantren* environment. Drawing upon observations made during our visits to *pesantrens* in Jakarta, Ciamis, and Sukabumi in 2020, as well as the first author's ethnographic research in 2015-2017 in West Javanese *pesantrens*, this study sheds light on significant changes in the positioning of the *pesantren* system in contemporary Indonesia compared to its status in the late 19th to 20th centuries.

We argue that in the first two decades of the 21st century, the *pesantren* tradition-based education marked an important period of its development following its integration into the national education system. A key part of this transformation is the enactment of the *pesantren* legislation in September 2019. The Indonesian government now recognises three systems of national education: general, *madrasah* and *pesantren*. We identify this formalisation as the second convergence of systems after the enactment of the 1950 teaching legislation, which integrated the modernised Islamic school system, i.e. *madrasah*, to the educational system under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kementerian Agama*), in addition to general education under the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*).

The Politics of Islamic Education in Indonesia

We define traditional *pesantren* as an institution that offers *kitab kuning*-based learning only, not formal education. Nevertheless, students are allowed to take formal education outside the *pesantren*. Traditional *pesantren* is also called *pesantren salafiyah* or *salafi* (Dhofier 1982, 41). It is worth noting here that in the Muslim world the word *salafiyah* or *salafi* is a contested term that can be used to identify different Muslim groups (Lukens-Bull 2005, 135).

In the first author's fieldwork in a traditional West Javanese *pesantren* in the early 2016, he talked with a senior student, who said that the villagers were becoming more aware of academic titles attached to people who perform traditional religious ceremonies such as *slametan* or *kenduren*. For them, an *ajengan* (a traditional religious teacher in a Sundanese region) should be granted a degree, for which they would be given more admiration. For example, when a villager invites an *ajengan* with a university degree to perform a religious ceremony, the villager

usually bring both *nasi berkat* (a container with cooked rice and side dishes) and an envelope containing some amount of money. Those without a degree might have a different experience; they would just receive the food container for doing the same service.¹

Since the late 19th century, the *pesantren* tradition-based education has been considered marginal in mainstream Indonesian education. Even after Indonesian independence in 1945, the system was regarded as non-formal education unless they were modernised under the *madrrasah* system. For the majority of students that the first author observed, they saw the choice between taking formal education and staying² in the *pesantren* as two different things. Formal education is seen as a way of securing their future. Meanwhile, religious education is seen as a way of seeking blessings through their co-presence with the *kiai*. Another senior student who the first author talked to said that in his first year of the *pesantren*, the majority of students had stayed at the *pesantren* without taking formal education, and that they were proud of studying Islam in that way. When the senior student was interviewed, a very different situation was observed, with most of those coming to the *pesantren* also taking formal education. They went to their schools outside the *pesantren* every morning and usually came back in early afternoon to attend *kitab* lessons.

Rahman (1982, 43) identified the emergence of a secularistic paradigm between the late medieval period to the mid-19th century, owing to the failure of Islamic institutions to meet the needs of changing societies. This paradigm, as Rahman notes, affected all aspects of modern Muslim life, particularly education. Rahman identified key historical factors that can help us understand stark differences in modern development throughout the Muslim world. The first factor is how Muslim societies in some Muslim countries like in Turkey and Arabia were able to develop more independently while they were under the control of European colonialism. The second is the way that Muslim leaders maintained their leaderships and relationships with ruling powers prior to the colonial invasion. The third relates to the ways in which Islamic education had been previously developed; and the last deals with the colonial governments such as the British, French, and Dutch.

Having considered the above factors, Rahman (1982, 43) identified education in the Muslim world, including in Indonesia, as an institution that had been subject to great intervention by the colonial government. Rahman states that in Indonesia the *ulama* institutions and their roles were not concentrated although they were able to become a strong

element in the government. In early 19th-century Indonesia, Steenbrink (1995, 119–20) notes that the colonial government considered developing an educational institution for the Indonesian people that was based on the established *pesantren* system. They rejected that proposal on the grounds that the *pesantren* system was based on a bad pedagogical practice; that is, the memorisation of long Arabic texts without proper comprehension. The late 19th-century colonial government decided to build an educational system that was very different to *pesantren*-based traditional Islamic education. As Steenbrink (1984: 158-159) notes, the *pesantren* was at that time the only educational institution that was established and ubiquitous throughout the country (see also Dhofier 1982; Latif 2008; Yunus 1979).

In the early 20th century, Islamic modernism from the Azhar University in Egypt began to influence more Indonesian Muslim leaders, and this movement was considered dangerous by the Dutch (Hing 1977, 157). In the 1930s, the colonial government started to subsidise the modernisation of Islamic schools through the cooperation of the Dutch (Noer 2010, 37). Steenbrink (1986, 87–88) and Dhofier (1982, 41) note that the majority of the *pesantren* rejected changes in their system. Following Indonesian independence, *pesantrens* that modernised their curricula by adding general subjects in addition to Islamic subjects were able to expand significantly. Many traditional institutions ceased operations because they only had a small number of students or no member of the *kiai*'s family was able to inherit the leadership after the *kiai* passed away (see also Wagiman 1997).

The above description corresponds to what was happening in the global Muslim world. Boyle (2004, 23), for example, notes that increasingly, Islamic education replicated the management of public schools. One example is in the way that students are grouped. Previously, Islamic schools—or more specifically Qur'anic schools—were grouped based on students' acquired skills and knowledge. More Islamic schools are now using grouping students in classrooms based on their age, bringing chairs and tables to classrooms, and including more general subjects in the curricula. Islamic schools have been then transformed into modern institutions that in many ways look similar to public schools.

The newly formed Indonesian government accepted the formation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kementerian Agama*) in 1946. This ministry is also home to the development of religious education where in 1950 the People Representative's Council passed the teaching bill

on the principles of education and teaching at schools into legislation (henceforth, the 1950 teaching legislation). Article 10 of the legislation states that those who took religious education recognised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs fulfilled compulsory educational requirements. Since then, Indonesia has recognised two streams in the national education system: general education under the Ministry of Education and Culture and religious education under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The *pesantren* tradition-based education system was left behind, as the government considered this type of education to be non-formal. As Steenbrink notes, the *madrasah* system under the 1950 teaching legislation has been imitating public schools while also offering more Islamic subjects (Pohl 2007, 135–41; Steenbrink 1986, 88).

As aforementioned, the *pesantren* tradition-based education was left behind because it developed outside of the national system. The system was then modernised in the sense that many *kiai* accepted the use of a microphone or other modern devices to improve the quality and reach of their teaching. More students in the traditional *pesantren* also accepted the use of modern writing tools such as pen rather than a sharpened bamboo stick with traditional ink called *mangsi* or *dawat*. The administration of *kitab* learning however did not change significantly, as the system—which involves the selection of all *kitab*s in pedagogical practices—remained within the domain of *kiai* and, therefore, was difficult to standardise. The effect of not recognising this system as formal led to objections from graduates of the *pesantren*-based education, who found it difficult to pursue further education or look for a job.

It is worth mentioning that the Ministry of Religious Affairs remained partnered with *pesantren* institutions following the recognition of the *madrasah* system in 1950. As Steenbrink (1986, 88–97) notes, the Ministry did not intervene in the *pesantren* institution and Qur'anic traditional education. However, the *pesantren* was modernised so as to ensure that graduates can contribute to national development. Moreover, the adoption of the *madrasah* system in the *pesantren* enabled the Ministry subsidise the institution (see also Dhofier 1982, 41)

Levels of education in the *madrasah* system are set up to be equal with those in general education under The Ministry of Education and Culture, i.e. *ibtida'iyah*, *tsanawiyah* and *alimah* (Table 2). The *madrasah* curriculum was divided to one-third for Islamic subjects, and the rest for general subjects. Steenbrink (1986, 97) and Dhofier (1982, 33–43)

note that in an attempt to gain public recognition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs modernised the *madrasah* system by not only offering Islamic subjects, but also general subjects. Many *madrasah* institutions were reluctant to accept the government's subsidy because of the mandated reduction of Islamic subjects in their curricula. As Lukens-Bull (2005) and Subhan (2009) note, the Ministry also took the view that the *madrasah* system would not achieve the same level as public schools, unless they were willing to include the same proportion of general subjects as those at public schools. In this regard, Steenbrink (1986, 7) states that in the second part of the 20th-century, Indonesian general education had emerged and developed without reference to the traditional Islamic education. Conversely, formal Islamic education developed to correspond more closely to general education.

One of the main developments in making the *madrasah* system equal to general education is the signing of an agreement between the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of Education and Culture and the Minister of Home Affairs known as the "Three Ministers' Joint Agreement Number 9 Year 1975" (*Surat Keputusan Bersama Tiga Menteri*, or *SKB Tiga Menteri 6/1975*). The aim of the agreement was to recognise the *madrasah* system as equal to general education, on the condition that the former offers more general subjects (Hefner 2009; Subhan 2009, 216; Zuhdi 2005). Zuhdi (2005) and Subhan (2009, 217) argue that the *SKB Tiga Menteri* was a turning point in the transformation of Indonesian *madrasahs* into more modern and secular institutions. The mainstreaming of general subjects in the *madrasah* curriculum helped better align them with public schools.

Lukens-Bull (2005, 63–64) notes that the process of mainstreaming the *madrasah* curriculum primarily occurred in 1994, when the proportion of religious education was reduced to 11%. Many *madrasah* institutions however decided to increase the proportion of Islamic subjects while including the same proportion of general subjects. In this regard, the first author's experience of taking the *tsanawiyah* program—Islamic junior high school—in a *madrasah* based in Jakarta in 1993–1996 helps us understand how *madrasah* institutions adopted both general and Islamic curricula as a whole. The teaching process looked more like a full-day school because the *madrasah* adopted 100% Islamic subjects as well as 100% of general subjects (cf. Saridjo 1996; Subhan 2009, 218). The adoption of both curricula in this *madrasah* continues up to the present day.

In the second half of the 20th-century, Islamic education did not promote *pesantren* tradition-based education. More *kitab kuning* or classical Islamic texts were excluded from the *madrasah* curriculum. Lukens-Bull (2005, 64) notes that many respected teachers affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama, the biggest representative organisation for traditionalist Muslims in Indonesia, complained that the *madrasah* system failed to meet the needs of the students to learn their religion. In order to address these gaps, they tried to add more hours for Islamic subjects each day, while shortening the duration of teaching for each subject. The results were below target. When monitoring the implementation of the *SKB Tiga Menteri* in his visit to *Madrasah Aliyah*, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Munawir Sjadzali (1983-1993), found that the students lacked capability in both Arabic language and literature. This encouraged him to develop an alternative program that allocates more Islamic subjects by using references in Arabic texts. The program started in 1988 and was known as *Madrasah Aliyah Program Khusus* (MAPK). Many Indonesian Muslim scholars state that the program was very successful in producing Muslim intellectuals. Despite this, the program ended in the middle of the 1990s (Subhan 2009, 228). The emergence of this program however, as Subhan (2009, 229) notes, is evidence of how strong the mainstreaming of general subjects in the *madrasah* system was.

Steenbrink (1986, 7) stated that since the early 20th century, Islamic education began to develop styles of Islamic pedagogy that were gradually integrated into public schools. This is relevant to Islamic education that was modernised under the *madrasah* system. However, this was not the case with the *pesantren* tradition-based education, which remained the same as those established a century ago. As for the *pesantren* system, we argue that it has a distinctive period of development in 21st-century Indonesia. Following the 1998 reform period, Muslim traditionalists gained political momentum and were able to consolidate the recognition of the *pesantren* tradition-based education as equal to other streams in the Indonesian educational system.

***Pesantren* as a New Type of Formal Education**

We have presented a general picture of Indonesian Islamic education from the 19th century to the late 20th century. It is important to note that the *pesantren* system was in the periphery of the Indonesian educational mainstream, although the establishment of this institution

can be traced back to early 19th century, and even further. The *pesantren* tradition-based education system was minimised following Indonesian independence in 1945. The recognition of religious education under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1950 did not help *pesantren* institutions with increasing their role in education. This is because the *madrasah* system is better able to incorporate more general subjects and to reduce the proportion of Islamic subjects. The *pesantren* tradition-based education remained dominant among kinship groups, as it was not economically capable of contributing to national development.

In this section, we argue that following the 1998 reform period the Indonesian public witnessed a significant change in political representation, whereby traditionalist Muslims were able to consolidate their resources to gain greater political power and diplomacy. In particular, they were able to advocate for the *pesantren* tradition-based education to be part of the national education system. It began with the enactment of the 2003 legislation on the national education system. Article 30 (3-5) of the legislation states that religious education can be conducted in formal, non-formal and informal forms of education, and that this type of education can have its base in *pesantren* institutions or other established religious institutions.

In 2007, the Indonesian President issued a government regulation on the conduct of religious education, recognising that this type of education has greatly contributed to national development. This regulation elaborates that religious education—such as the *pesantren* institution—can be managed in a formal way. Following this government regulation, the Minister of Religious Affairs then issued two Ministerial Regulations in 2014 to formally recognise the *pesantren* tradition-based education. The first regulation deals with equivalence policy (*mu'adalah*). As Nurtawab (2018, 45) notes, this policy formally recognises the pedagogical practices of the *pesantren* system by using curricula outside the national curriculum. In its implementation, the equivalence policy falls into two main categories based on the common categories of the Indonesian *pesantrens*: modern (*mu'allimin*) and traditional (*salafiyah*). The second regulation deals with the launch of Formal Religious Education (*Pendidikan Diniyah Formal*, or PDF). The latter is the *kitab kuning*-based education that allocates 70% or more of the curriculum to Islamic and Arabic studies, and 30% to general subjects.

It is worth examining the number of *pesantrens* and students since the 1980s. The Ministry of Religious Affairs published a directory on the existing *pesantren* institutions throughout Indonesia in 1982. Dhofier in his forward for this directory stated that the total number of registered *pesantrens* was 4,890 with 735,417 students. After four decades, we can see a significant increase in the number of *pesantrens* and students.

Table 1a: Numbers of *pesantren* and its students in 2020

Students at dormitories & at home		Types of <i>Pesantren</i>	
At dormitories	At home	<i>Kitab kuning</i> -based learning plus formal education	<i>Kitab kuning</i> -based learning only
1,172,075	2,903,057	14,306	12,661
Total: 4,075,132 students		Total: 26,967 <i>pesantrens</i>	

Adapted from: ditpdpontren.kemenag.go.id/pdpp/grafik.

Retrieved on May 19, 2020.

Table 1b: *Pesantren* in number in 2012/2013

Typology	Total
Salafiyah	18,233
Khalafiyah	5,483
Kombinasi	5,819
Total	29,535

Source: *Statistik Pendidikan Islam Tahun 2012/2013*,

General Directorate of Islamic Education,
the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Republic of Indonesia

As shown in Table 1a, there is a change in the way that the Ministry of Religious Affairs categorises *pesantren* institutions compared to the data compiled in the years 2012 and 2013 (Table 1b), which divided *pesantrens* into three categories: *salafiyah*, *khalafiyah*, and *kombinasi* or a combination of the two. Dhofier (1982, 41) defines the *pesantren khalafiyah* as a *pesantren* that offers more general subjects or offers general education in the *pesantren* environment. Table 1a therefore only shows the *pesantrens* that offer *kitab kuning*-based education. In other words, the above data excludes the *pesantren khalafiyah* that in the 2012/2013 data contributed 5,483 institutions out of 29,535 *pesantrens* in total. Table 1a shows that more

than 4 million students are currently taking *kitab kuning*-based education at almost 27,000 *pesantrens* in total. About 40% (12,661) of the *pesantrens* in total offer traditional Islamic education only, that is the *kitab kuning*-based learning using traditional methods (*bandongan* and *sorogan*).

Steenbrink (1986, 102) notes that the ability of the *pesantren* institution to survive—or even to develop in quantity—in the midst of its marginalisation for about two centuries, has allowed them to preserve their learning tradition and identity. The fact that traditional Islamic education has increased in number shows that *pesantren* institutions are used to living with modernity, although they refuse to adopt it. As Nurtawab (2019) notes, 21st-century Indonesia saw the incorporation of *pesantren* tradition-based education—with all their established traditional learning methods—into the mainstream education system.

The process of formalising traditional Islamic education reached a peak with the enactment of the *pesantren* legislation on September 24, 2019. Under the first convergence process in 1950, the *pesantren* system had to be modernised and run classrooms under the *madrasah* system. In contrast, the 2019 legislation recognises many aspects of the traditional *pesantren* tradition, including those that advocate *kitab kuning* learning. According to the legislation, the government is now responsible for supporting the administration of the *pesantren* tradition-based education just as they support both general schools and *madrasah*. Levels of education offered in the the *pesantren* tradition-based education are now equal to those in the general and *madrasah* systems (see Table 2).

Table 2: Three mainstreams in the current Indonesian educational system

Levels of education	General system UU 20/2003 on National education system	Madrasah system UU 20/2003 on National education system	Pesantren education UU 18/2019 on <i>Pesantren</i>
Primary	Sekolah Dasar (SD)	Madrasah Ibtida'iyah (MI)	PDF Ula / Mu'adalah Ula
Secondary	Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP)	Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs)	PDF Wustha / Mu'adalah Wustha
	Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) or equals	Madrasah Aliyah (MA) or equals	PDF 'Ulya / Mu'adalah 'Ulya
Higher education	University (Undergraduate, Magister and Doctor)		Ma'had 'Aly (Undergraduate, Magister and Doctor)

There was an attempt by representatives of some Islamic organisations to postpone the enactment of the *pesantren* bill because, to them, some aspects in the draft were not properly presented. One of their concerns related to the definition of *pesantren*, which was more oriented to *kitab kuning* learning practices. However, some members of the People's Representative Council claimed that all of the draft accommodated all Muslim groups' aspirations. For example, the 2019 legislation states that *pesantren* is categorised as an Islamic institution that offers *kitab kuning* learning, or offers Islamic studies in the modern form, known as *mu'allimin*, or offers Islamic education in other forms that are integrated with general education.³

A new development in the current traditional Islamic education is that the *pesantren* is now eligible to open *pesantren* tradition-based education at the university level, known as *Ma'had 'Aly*. This is a new mainstream form of higher education that will attract graduates of the *pesantren* to take *kitab kuning*-based Islamic studies at the university level.⁴

From Kin Group to Government: Values Contested

In this section, we examine the way that the *pesantren* tradition-based education is administered. The government recognises that *pesantren* institutions have greatly contributed to Indonesian independence as well as to national development. In order to assure the continuation of the *pesantren*'s role in education and social engagement, the government issued a regulation to legitimise the conduct of *pesantren* tradition-based education.

We selected some articles in the 2019 *pesantren* legislation to examine the ways in which the formalisation process reflects contestations between the established values of the *pesantren* tradition and those brought from the implementation of the new regulation. In addition to that, the data collection from our observation of a formalised-*bandongan kitab* in a Sukabumi *pesantren* will be presented to show how some values changed when the *kitab* learning activities become part of the state administration.⁵

Here, our focus is on the way the *pesantren* institution socially reproduces structured values in a new type of formal education and how they transform following the adoption of a new administration. We need to keep in mind that the main difference between the 2019

pesantren legislation and previous regulations that had been enacted during the 20th century is that the 2019 legislation significantly formalises the whole *pesantren* system and their traditional styles of *kitab kuning*-based learning, becoming a legally recognised part of the Indonesian education system. Dhofier (1980: 47-58) notes that the existence of the *pesantren* is inherently related to the *kiai* and his kin group or, more generally, their networks. There are values that all members of society have embodied to behave in a way that is socially acceptable, and those values have for years been socially reproduced to strengthen the structure in a given environment.



Figure 1: Students wearing t-shirt of “Guruku kyai, Bukan Mbah Google (My teacher is a *kiai*, Not Grandfather Google), showing a student’s pride of being linked with the respected teacher.”

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 2017 in Ciamis

The embodied values that are likely to be contested following the formalisation of the *pesantren* institution deal with the orientation of *kitab kuning*-pedagogy, which focuses on completion (*khataman*) as a learning goal. Nurtawab (2018, 85–93) notes that it is very common in the traditional environment for a student to complete a *kitab* more than once, or even many times, with the same respected teacher or others. Traditional students commonly seek their co-presence with the respected teacher, through which they would be given blessings (*tabāruk*). For students, the blessings include the referential aspect of

the *kitab* they completed with the teacher. Both values of completion and co-presence with teacher are closely linked to the students' pride with the knowledge they obtained and the link (*sanad keilmuan*) they made with their teachers. As Maftuhin (2018, xvii) notes, one of the important links for *kitab kuning*-based Islamic knowledge in Indonesia is through Syekh Mahfudz al-Tarmasi (d. 1920), a well-known Islamic scholar in the early 20th-century Indonesia (cf. Rachman 1977, 77–96). Traditional students believe that co-presence with respected teachers in seeking blessings through the conduct of *kitab kuning*-readings is a prerequisite for studying Islam, and that studying Islam on the *internet* with *mbah google* (Grandfather Google, a popular term among Indonesians for a search engine used for browsing anything on the internet) is taken as socially unacceptable (Figure 1).

Our observation of a formalised-*bandongan kitab* in a Sukabumi *pesantren* shows that certain pedagogical values have changed following the formalisation of *bandongan-kitab*. One example is the pedagogical value that attaches to the objective of learning, that is completion. In the traditional environment, completion of *kitab*-learning can vary greatly. A thick *kitab* will need a longer time to complete. The completion also greatly depends on the availability of the *kiai* and on how he sets up his *bandongan-kitab*. Having co-presence with the *kiai* to complete certain *kitab*s over several years was a common practice of students in the traditional environment. In the formalised *bandongan-kitab*, all *kitab* learnings have fixed schedules and periods of time, and then end with examinations.

Article 5(2) of the 2019 *pesantren* legislation identifies the basic elements of the *pesantren* institution: dormitory, mosque, *kitab kuning*-based learning, students (*santri*) and respected teacher (*kiai*). There is a strong tendency for these elements to refer to what has been commonly found in the traditional environment—and are therefore uncommon in other educational environments. The traditional Muslim public take these elements for granted as basic components when referring to the *pesantren* institution.

It has been accepted that the *kiai* title is granted based on his charismatic leadership, and therefore is not a granted degree. This process is now standardised, whereby the title of *kiai* is granted subject to a formal regulation. The legislation mentions some criteria

as the minimum requirements for someone to be deemed eligible to be granted a *kiai* title. Article 9(1) of the 2019 legislation states that someone granted a *kiai* title has to: first, be a graduate of the *pesantren* institution; second, have obtained a higher education in Islamic studies; and/or, third, have competency in Islamic studies. The last two criteria indicate a flexible assessment. The second and third criteria indicate that those who graduated from an Islamic studies program at the university level and/or those who—after studying Islam by themselves or with someone—have acquired a high level of Islamic knowledge and skills, can be granted a *kiai* title. However, there is some ambiguity in the interpretation of the criteria. It is unclear whether someone should meet all three criteria or one of them only. The use of the words “and/or” opens multiple possibilities.

In the formalised-*bandongan kitab*, the *kiai* no longer becomes a central figure that attracts students to come study. A younger teacher who is considered competent can be formally assigned to teach *kitab* based on the prescribed curriculum, although the teacher is not taken as the *kiai*'s associate. The elevation from student to the position of teacher in their own almamater is possible, however the succession of the *pesantren* leader remains the same, with only the *kiai*'s family members being eligible to replace him.



Figure 2: *Santri* conducting *sorogan*
Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 2015 in Sukabumi



Figure 3: *Bandongan kitab* is the traditional learning method in *pesantrens*
Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 2016 in Sukabumi

The 2019 *pesantren* legislation recognises traditional learning methods (*sorogan* and *bandongan kitab*) as legal methods for conducting formal religious education (see Figures 2 and 3).⁶ This differs significantly from Islamic education in the 19th and 20th centuries, whereby *pesantrens* were required to be modernised to be recognised by the government. As discussed above, traditional Islamic education received strong criticism for its pedagogy, which prioritised the memorisation of long texts, usually in Arabic, without proper comprehension. The formalised *kitab*-learning is now taught differently, with a formalised *bandongan-kitab* being taught through a more dialogic approach. Teachers have also become more aware of the presence of students in the classroom, as they check their attendance with reference to a class list (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Teacher with a list of absence and *santri* wearing uniforms equipped with stationery and school bag in a formalised *bandongan-kitab* in a Sukabumi *pesantren*
Photo: Ustadz Reza Dzulkfli Syakir, 2018 in Sukabumi.

The 2019 *pesantren* legislation advises that the *pesantren* tradition-based education should be conducted in a systematic, integrated and comprehensive way.⁷ Despite some modification as shown in Table 2, the levels of *pesantren* education generally reflect the picture of a traditional student who since a young age started learning Qur'anic recitation and received basic levels of Islamic knowledge. The student gradually progresses to higher levels to study more *kitab*s from various disciplines in Islamic studies and Arabic. At this stage, the student might move to one *pesantren* to another and finally stay a little bit longer in a big *pesantren*. At the end, the *kiai* might see that the (male) student has achieved a satisfactory level in the mastery of classical Islamic texts and might allow him to go back home to build his own *pesantren*. Many of them then travelled to the centres of Islamic studies in Mecca, Medina or Cairo (Dhofier 1982, 24–28; Yunus 1979, 54–61). Following the enactment of this legislation, the government is now responsible for administering the *kitab kuning*-based education. In so doing, the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Directorate for Religious Education and Pesantren, had to develop criteria by which the *pesantren* system can be standardised and receive legal recognition in the national education system. Levels of the *pesantren* tradition-based education are therefore formalised, standardised and set up as equal to those in the general education and *madrasah* systems (Table 2).

Aside from the fact that the *pesantren* system remains the domain of kinship groups, another obstacle in the standardisation of the *pesantren* tradition-based education is due to the fact that the *kitab*-learning tradition greatly varies in one region to another, depending on the individual *kiai*'s style and expertise (cf. Wagiman 1997, 78). In the first author's conversation with a senior teacher at one *pesantren* in Ciamis, the participant explained that there are different types of *kitab*s used in the West Javanese *pesantrens* compared to those in the East Javanese province. There is a tendency for the formal curriculum, which is provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Directorate for Religious Education and Pesantren for the conduct of Formal Religious Education (where the formalised *bandongan kitab* is based), to refer to the tradition established in the East Javanese *pesantrens*. As a result, the *pesantren* institutions located in other Indonesian provinces might face difficulties in meeting the standardised curriculum.

Another point to consider is that the system has to maintain quality control mechanisms. One example is the examination process for measuring students' performances. It is very likely that some modern values will be assimilated into the established structure of the traditional environment. This may place more pressure on traditional students to pay more attention to the referential aspect of the *kitab*. A student's efforts to be co-present with the teacher is to seek blessings, and those blessings can mean anything including the referential meanings of the *kitab*.

Students of traditional *pesantren* might not consider this to be a big problem because they also take formal education (see Table 1a). Even if there is no formal education offered in a *pesantren* environment (contributing about 40% out of the *pesantrens* in total), the first author observed that they were predominantly taking formal education outside the *pesantren*. With long experience in the formal education system, traditional students might assume that the knowledge acquired from their Islamic studies in *kitab kuning* learning need to be formally assessed through an examination. In this regard, the 2019 *pesantren* legislation advises that the final stage of students' graduation is in the hands of the Minister of Religious Affairs through the conduct of the National Standardised End Examination of Formal Religious Education (*Ujian Akhir Pendidikan Diniyah Formal Berstandar Nasional*, or UAPDFBN), also known as *Imtihan Watani* (Arabic, literally meaning 'National Examination').⁸

The Ministry of Religious Affairs' Directorate for Religious Education and *Pesantren* conducted the first national examination on March 10-12, 2018. Hundreds of students from 14 Formal Religious Education institutions in 6 provinces (Aceh, West Java, Central Java, East Java, South Sulawesi and North Kalimantan) reportedly took part in examinations (MoeslimChoice March 12, 2018). In the national examination conducted in March 12-14, 2020, there was a significant increase in the number of participants taking part in the examination, accounting for 3,500 participants from 49 Formal Religious Education institutions where 32 out of the 49 institutions are in the senior secondary level (*PDF Ulya*) and the rest from institutions in the junior secondary level (*PDF Wustha*) (The official website of the Ministry of Religious Affairs branch at the West Java province March 14, 2020).

We were fortunate to visit two *pesantrens* that offer Formal Religious Education in Jakarta and Ciamis in March 2020, one day before the governors of both Jakarta and West Java provinces approved the semi-lockdown policy (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar*, or PSBB) to slow the spread of Covid-19. Due to the pandemic, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' General Directorate for Islamic Education decided to not use the national examination as the main consideration for students' graduation or for entry examination to the next grade in the Formal Religious Education program. Instead, the examination results-based measurement can be replaced by assessments based on academic reports or other academic achievements (The official website of the General Directorate for Islamic Education March 28, 2020).

While the number of Formal Religious Education has increased, we suggest that the non-formal *kitab* learning can remain a common practice in the future. Students are used to approaching senior colleagues within the *pesantren* environment, and to attending intensive *kitab* courses conducted by a *kiai* in other *pesantren*, locally known as *pasaran* or *kilatan*. The latter type of *kitab* learning is usually conducted in specific months such as Ramadan where a teacher gets through the *kitab* with a quick reading while the participants listen to it. The first author interviewed two senior students about their attempt to complete *kitab*s with their senior colleagues. The first student said that he completed *Alfiyah* and *Ta'lim muta'allim* a whole four times during his stay at the *pesantren*. He also completed both *kitab*s twice in *pasaran* events. The second student said that he completed *Rahbiyah* seven times with his senior colleagues in the *pesantren*, at their own convenience. The 2019 *pesantren* legislation also allows *pesantren* institutions that offer non-formal *kitab* learning to take an equivalence program (*mu'adalah*), or otherwise allow the students to participate in the national examination. After taking these programs, they are eligible to acquire a certificate of graduation and reserve equal rights to pursue their studies or look for a job.⁹

It is difficult to formalise many parts of *pesantren* tradition-based education. The formalisation process was not a new phenomenon in 21st-century Indonesia. Many attempts have been made by previous governments; however, they were unsuccessful because the *pesantrens* rejected any attempts at incorporating Western elements in traditional Islamic education. As Dhofier (1980, 1982) notes, *pesantren* institutions

are controlled entirely by the *kiai's* family, and the *kiai* as the founder of the institution reserves full rights to control how it is managed. The influence of the *kiai's* charismatic leadership and the difficulty involved with securing a successor greatly contributed to the decline of many traditional Islamic institutions after the death of the founder.

The 2019 *pesantren* legislation regulates the role of the *kiai* as the one who determines the development of their *pesantren* institutions. The *kiai* is advised to form and lead the teachers assembly (*Majelis Masyayikh*) and council (*Dewan Masyayikh*). Under Article 20(1), this assembly is coordinated by the *kiai* and is tasked with designing the curriculum of the *pesantren* based on instructions from the Ministry of Religious Affairs' General Directorate for Islamic Education. The curriculum should contain 70% or more for *kitab kuning* learning, and the rest should be dedicated to general subjects such as Indonesian language, civic education, and others. Another task of the assembly is to maintain quality control by preserving learning traditions. However, these tasks must adhere to ministerial regulations. Following the enactment of the 2019 *pesantren* legislation, both *kiai* and public officers now share the administration of *pesantren* tradition-based education.

Conclusion

In this article, we have highlighted attempts to formalise traditional Islamic education under the Indonesian education system. Muslim traditionalists took advantage of the 1998 reform period that created an open and liberal democracy in Indonesia. They were able to consolidate their power and bring ideas about what constitutes “Indonesian Islam (*Islam Nusantara*)” and traditional Islamic education to the Indonesian public sphere. The 2019 *pesantren* legalisation recognises and provides equal standing to the knowledge and expertise acquired through this educational process. As discussed, the legalisation process undoubtedly led to the transformation of pedagogical values that have been long-established in the *pesantren* milieu, which were compromised to better align with modernity and formal administration.

Since the enactment of the 2019 *pesantren* legislation, the Indonesian government now recognises three mainstreams in the national education system, the first two being the result of convergence reforms in 1950 and the third due to the 2019 legislation. Those who graduated from the *pesantren* system now have equal rights to pursue their studies and

look for a formal job. During the 20th-century, Muslim traditionalists objected to the modernisation of their traditional learning methods. In the present-day, these methods were successfully integrated into the national education system, and *pesantren* tradition-based education is now required to have formal indicators to contribute to national development. Both traditional and modern values that seemed to have been in binary opposition during the 19th and 20th centuries are now trying to co-exist in a formalised and bureaucratised *pesantren* tradition-based education system.

In conclusion, Indonesian Muslims witnessed a significant shift in how 21st-century *pesantren* institutions relate with existing political powers. During the 20th-century, both colonial and Indonesian governments offered subsidies to *pesantrens*, on the condition that they modernise their curriculum and learning methods. However, *pesantrens* took modernisation as a threat that, in their view, could potentially weaken the established values of traditional Islam. Twenty-first century Indonesia then witnessed the mainstreaming of the *pesantren* system with the passing of the *pesantren* bill into legislation in September 2019. Future research should focus on how the legislation discusses traditional Islamic education. The implementation of the legislation brings us to question how non-traditionalist Muslim groups then navigate these new regulations and administer their *pesantren* institutions.

Endnotes

- Research for this article was financed by the Institute for Research and Social Engagement (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat, or LP2M) Institut Agama Islam Negeri Metro for Financial Year 2020. We would like to thank all our informants and colleagues who helped us during the fieldwork. We are also grateful to Professor Julian Millie for kindly reading an early version of this work and to anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback. We take all responsibilities for any errors that might be found in this article.
1. This story is previously mentioned in Nurtawab (2018, 49).
 2. We use the term “staying” rather than “studying” here to affirm the intention of some senior students not taking formal education to live with the *kiai* family and to serve them daily.
 3. Articles 1(2) and 5(1).
 4. Article 22(1-7).
 5. At the time of our visit, the *pesantren* was experiencing a lockdown to slow the spread of Covid-19. This made it impossible for us to conduct direct observations. However, we had access to buildings such as the venue of the formalised-*bandongan* kitab. We were also able to interview the staff from the Formal Religious Education program. The teacher appointed to give the *bandongan Jalalayn* kindly recorded his teachings for the purpose of this study, and for that we are very much grateful.
 6. For more elaboration on *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods, see Dhofier (1982, 28–33).
 7. UU 18/2019, article 13(1).
 8. Article 21(1). The implementation of the current national examination refers to the Decree of the General Directorate for Islamic Education issued in 2019.
 9. Article 23(1).

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- Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Nomor 4503 Tahun 2019 tentang Ujian Akhir Pendidikan Diniyah Formal Berstandar Nasional (*The Decree of the General Director of Islamic Education No. 4503 year 2019 on The National-Standardised End Examination of Formal Religious Education*).
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Kerangka Dasar dan Struktur Kurikulum *Pendidikan Diniyah Formal Ulya* (*The Decree of the General Director of Islamic Education No. 6036 year 2015 on the Structure and Curriculum of the Formal Religious Education at the Senior level*).

Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam *Nomor 6963 Tahun 2017 tentang Kerangka Dasar dan Struktur Kurikulum Pendidikan Diniyah Formal Wustha* (*The Decree of the General Director of Islamic Education No. 6963 year 2017 on the Structure and Curriculum of the Formal Religious Education at the Junior level*).

Peraturan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia Nomor 13 Tahun 2014 tentang Pendidikan Keagamaan Islam (*The Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Republic of Indonesia, No. 13 year 2014 on Islamic education*).

Peraturan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia Nomor 18 Tahun 2014 tentang Satuan Pendidikan Mu'adalah pada Pondok Pesantren (*The Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Republic of Indonesia, No. 18 year 2014 on the Mu'adalah education in the Pondok Pesantren*).

Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Nomor 55 Tahun 2007 tentang Pendidikan Agama dan Pendidikan Keagamaan (*The Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia No. 55 year 2007 on Religion Education and Religious Education*).

Undang-Undang 1950 No. 4 tentang Pengadjaran: Peraturan tentang Dasar Pendidikan dan Pengadjaran di Sekolah (*The Legislation 1950 No. 4 on Teaching: Regulations on the Education and Teaching Principles at Schools*).

Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 Tentang Pesantren (*The Legislation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 Year 2019 on Pesantren*).

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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.

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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:

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عنوان المراسلة:

Editorial Office:
STUDIA ISLAMIKA, Gedung Pusat Pengkajian
Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM) UIN Jakarta,
Jl. Kertamukti No. 5, Pisangan Barat, Cirendeu,
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Website: <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika>

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للأفراد: ٥٠ دولار أمريكي، ونسخة واحدة قيمتها ٢٠ دولار أمريكي.
والقيمة لا تشمل نفقة الإرسال بالبريد الجوي.

رقم الحساب:

خارج إندونيسيا (دولار أمريكي):
PPIM, Bank Mandiri KCP Tangerang Graha Karnos, Indonesia
account No. 101-00-0514550-1 (USD).

داخل إندونيسيا (روبية):

PPIM, Bank Mandiri KCP Tangerang Graha Karnos, Indonesia
No Rek: 128-00-0105080-3 (Rp).

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مراجعة اللغة العربية:

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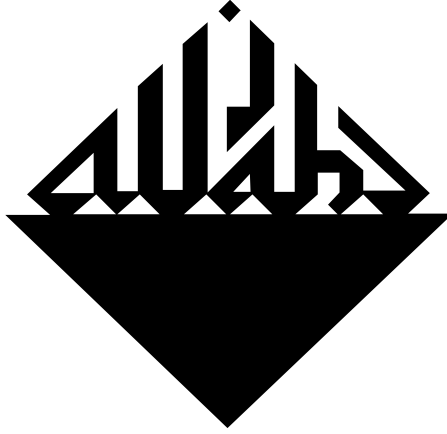
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مجلة إندونيسية للدراسات الإسلامية



DEMOCRATIC DILEMMA OF MALAY ISLAMIC PARTY: PAS, COALITION PATTERN, AND RISING SOCIAL ISSUES

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Zuly Qodir, Hasse Jubba, & Mega Hidayati

التعليم الإسلامي المقترح
لدى كياهي سهل محفوظ (١٩٣٧-٢٠١٤)
إرحام
