Pesantren as the Identity of Islamic and Cultural Education in West Java

Lukman Hakim
Sekolah Tinggi Hukum (STH) Galunggung, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia; informasi@sthg.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Islamic Boarding School, Culture; Identity; Islamic Education

ABSTRACT

In West Java, religion and culture are inseparable, with each influencing the other. Pesantren, dominant Islamic educational institutions, emphasize religious teachings that impact local culture. This study seeks to examine the role of Islamic boarding schools as the embodiment of Islamic and cultural education in West Java. This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method. This study uncovers the significance of Islamic boarding school complexes in Indonesian culture and education. Islamic boarding schools have significantly contributed to the spread of Islamic knowledge and the development of cultural values, even though they may not overtly state their educational objectives. This study emphasizes the incorporation of religious knowledge and general information in contemporary Islamic boarding schools, underscoring the significance of Islamic and global education. In addition, this research emphasizes the role of cultural maintenance and Islamic boarding school modeling in forming ethical and moral values, which contribute to the nation's cultural richness. The implication of this research is that education in pesantren should continue to integrate religious and general education while preserving cultural values to serve as a means for shaping a strong and relevant cultural identity within Indonesian society.

This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-SA license.

Corresponding Author:
Lukman Hakim
Sekolah Tinggi Hukum (STH) Galunggung, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia; e-mail: informasi@sthg.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Pesantren is a traditional educational institution that has demonstrated compatibility with regional culture (Mustofa, 2011). This institution, which was born and grew alongside the advent of Islam in Java, is evidence that pesantren are able to accommodate differences, lessen social problems with local culture, and promote tolerance (Rodliyah, 2019). Pesantren is the community’s oldest and original educational institution, based on the year of its establishment. Pesantren is the result of a conversation between cultures in the archipelago and has "traditional" ties to the Hindu-Buddhist mandala educational institutions of the preceding culture (Alfurqan, 2015). There is a connection with the old tradition that makes the pesantren easily accepted by the natives. During the process of acculturation with local culture, Walisongo does not necessarily impose Islamic teachings on local culture, but rather accommodates local culture to develop and integrate with values/Islamic values through the loose application of revelation texts (Wafiroh, 2017).

The birth of pesantren is not only to fulfill the need for the importance of education, but also to broadcast Islam (Rahmawati, 2018). According to Raharjo (1985), it became the identity of the pesantren
at the beginning of its growth, namely as a center for the spread of Islam, as well as as an educational institution. More than that, pesantren is a social institution that experiences dialectics. This happened because of the process of change inside and outside the pesantren. Initially, pesantren were placed as a sub-culture, as agents of community development (community development) in villages and marginalized communities, as part of the national education system, until they became an alternative education model (Syafe‘i, 2017). The sociological context of the pesantren is the result of the projections of the pesantren community itself, the government and the general public who portray the pesantren in the fields of education, social, culture and economy (Usman, 2013).

Pesantren has been considered as a model of educational institution that has advantages both from the aspect of its scientific tradition which is one of the great traditions as well as the transmission and internalization of the morality of Muslims. Pesantren has become a kind of local genius (Mar'ati, 2014). Pesantren, as an alternative to new education in the midst of the failure of other educational institutions in fostering morals and life skills, has begun to be ogled by many parties. It has even been adopted as a new educational model, such as “college boarding schools” or cadet student dormitories, and so on (Afandi, 2019). This shows that the role of pesantren has penetrated into all fields and has even become part of our national education system, so it is very wrong when there is an assumption that the role of pesantren is very small and low in the success of national development programs (Awwaliyah, 2019).

The current Islamic boarding school continues to improve and embellish itself, and on the other hand, many parties adopt positive elements within the pesantren. Pesantren fosters a proper appreciation of all developments that occur in the present and in the future (Damanhuri et al, 2013). Pesantren has given birth to a system of language, social knowledge, equipment of life and technology, livelihood, religion and its own distinctive and unique culture. The system is certainly different from the system in other social communities. The most extreme lies in the cultural values and norms of the Islamic religion (Fahham, 2020).

Islam entered Tatar Sunda in a condition where the people had beliefs that were inherited from generation to generation from their ancestors (Darsa, 2017). When Islam in Tatar Sunda began to be spread by Sunan Gunung Djati, the task was continued by the kyai or ajengan. Kyai is the title of expert on Islam and is a charismatic leader in the religion who spreads Islam by continuing what Sunan Gunung Djati has inherited. So that the existing Hindu-Buddhist traditions are increasingly adding to the cultural treasures in Tatar Sunda (Sujati, 2019).

In tradition, every kyai who teaches his knowledge to the students must stay in a pesantren educational institution. Pesantren is a very old Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, especially in Java, where the education system follows the pattern of Hinduism in India (Hasyim, 2015). The central figure possessed by a kyai in Tatar Sunda gave birth to the Islamic tradition in Tatar Sunda bringing new changes in the political, social, cultural, and legal fields. The presence of Islamic law has made its people carry out parts of Islamic law which resulted in Sundanese culture experiencing a change between Islamic law and customary law. The existence of these changes in the creativity of the Sundanese people in Tatar Sunda gives a new touch in the Islamic world. The kyai as the central figure who has made an extraordinary contribution to the creation of harmony between Islam and Pasundan culture (Kusdiana, 2014).

The existence of pesantren as one of the traditional educational institutions in Tatar Sunda is not underestimated. With these institutions, every Sundanese Tatar culture will still be preserved by its students when they graduate from the institution (Lugina, 2018). The implication is for the community that the arrival of the students who have been trained in religious education in their daily lives will follow the pattern of community life, which in the end between the Islamic teachings obtained when studying will be mixed with the cultures of the local community (Paturohman, 2012).

The impact is that there is a special peculiarity for the Sunda Tatar area in particular, the acculturation of local culture with Islamic teachings further strengthens the ties of local culture with Islam so that some Sundanese Tatar people conclude that Sundanese society is an Islamic society and
Islam is the religion of the Sundanese people (Sujati, 2019). The impact felt by this region is that the Tatar Sunda region is one of the strong Islamic bases on the island of Java with a dominant percentage of Muslims (Anwar et al, 2016).

Previous research, such as that conducted by Usman (2013); Herningrum et al. (2020), and Sadali (2020) explain that Islamic boarding schools have only been centers of Islamic religious education so far the novelty has emerged that Islamic boarding schools can also be places of cultural education. The peculiarities of the Sunda Tatar region are related to local cultural values that are carried out by the Sundanese people based on Islamic law, which are elaborated into a Sundanese Islamic tradition (Musthafa, 2010). In many daily activities such as *muamalah*, marriage, inheritance rights, and circumcision. All aspects of the law are compiled into Sundanese Islamic law which in the end makes a rich Sundanese Tatar cultural treasures that are dynamic and harmonious (Suherman, 1995), while maintaining the values of local wisdom by practicing Islamic law without letting go of local culture which in the end is getting worse. Making Sundanese Islamic culture can be maintained until now in the midst of the currents of Transnational ideology that seeks to undermine the unity and integrity of the Indonesian nation (Abdurrahman, 2015). In this case, the acculturation of culture, religion, and norms becomes a process that is set in such a way as to create Islam with a local flavor. Will this undermine the values of Islamic purity? Or does Islam provide space for local wisdom that makes it more colourful? departing from this, this paper will explain Pesantren as the Identity of Islamic and Cultural Education in West Java.

This research is significant because it explores the evolving role of Islamic boarding schools, emphasizing their newfound role as centers for both Islamic religious and cultural education. It also sheds light on the unique cultural values of the Sundanese people in the Sunda Tatar region, where Islamic law is integrated into a distinct Sundanese Islamic tradition. Understanding this dynamic helps maintain and enrich Sundanese Islamic culture while preserving local wisdom, even in the face of transnational ideologies that challenge Indonesian unity. The research ultimately examines whether the acculturation of culture, religion, and norms can create a harmonious blend of Islam with local flavors, without compromising the purity of Islamic values.

2. METHOD

This study is a qualitative research that utilises data to address problem-solving in accordance with social reality (Moleong, 2019). According to Moleong, qualitative research is a type of research that seeks to understand various phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behaviour, perception, and motivation for action. This understanding is achieved through a holistic approach, using descriptive language and words, within a specific natural context, and employing a range of scientific methods. This study aims to offer a comprehensive elucidation of Pesantren as a defining institution for Islamic and cultural education in West Java. This study is characterised by its descriptive nature, since it aims to provide a detailed account of occurrences or events, as well as the characteristics of a particular population or location. It achieves this by gathering factual information, analysing the situation, and making assessments, all with the goal of obtaining a clear and comprehensive understanding (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). The objective of this research is to generate a methodical, objective, and precise depiction/representation/illustration of the data, characteristics, and associations among the analysed occurrences. This study involves analysing and organising the collected data to derive recorded findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Islamic Boarding School’s Cultural Roots

In contrast to other educational institutions, which generally state the goals of education clearly, for example, formulated in the articles of association, pesantren, especially old pesantren, generally do
not explicitly formulate the basis and objectives of their education. This is carried away by the simplicity of the pesantren in accordance with the motivation of its establishment, where the kyai teach and the students learn, on the basis of worship and have never been associated with certain goals in the field of livelihood or certain levels and positions in social and economic hierarchies (Rusydiyah, 2017).

Therefore, to find out the purpose of the education organized by the pesantren, the path that must be taken is to understand the functions that are carried out and developed by the pesantren itself, both in relation to the santri and the surrounding community. The same thing was also done by the guardians in Java in pioneering an Islamic educational institution, for example Syeih Maulana Malik Ibrahim who is considered the founding father of the Islamic boarding school, Sunan Bonang or also Sunan Giri. Namely, they established a boarding school with the aim of being an institution that was used to spread religion and a place to study Islam.

The objective and function of the pesantren as an institution for the propagation of Islam is to affect the location and its surroundings so that individuals who have never or have never accepted Islam can come to accept it and even become devout Muslims. However, pesantren as a venue to learn Islam is not, as the primary purpose of a pesantren is to study and expand Islamic religious knowledge. And these roles are nearly capable of influencing the surrounding culture, particularly among faithful Muslims and a great number of experts with profound Islamic ideas (Maesaroh & Achdiani, 2017).

Instead of the social and cultural transformation carried out by pesantren, in the next process it gave birth to new impacts and one of them was an increasingly complex reorientation of the entire development of society. One of the forms of reorientation is because pesantren then becomes social legitimacy. Part of the reorientation of the functions and objectives described by Abdurrahman Wahid is that, among others, Islamic boarding schools have a role in teaching religion, namely basic values and elements of Islamic rituals. And pesantren as a socio-cultural institution, meaning that its functions and roles are aimed at the formation of an ideal society. As well as the function of pesantren as a social, political force, in this case, pesantren as a source or political action, but more directed at creating moral conditions that will always exercise control in socio-political life (Wahid, 2001).

Whatever happens in the world of pesantren, including the segmentation of its functions and objectives, something that cannot be separated is that the relationships and changes that occur in pesantren are due to substantial and mechanistic phenomena between kyai, santri, methods and the yellow book as well as methodological relationships. The system developed by pesantren is an institution that emerges from religion and Islamic tradition. In particular, Nurcholis Madjid (1997), explains that the cultural root of the value system developed by pesantren is ahlussunnah wal congregation. Where, if discussed further, these cultural roots will form several segments of Islamic boarding school thought that lead to the ideological characteristics of its understanding, the most visible is that its intellectual context is formed through ideology of thought, for example in fiqh - it is more dominated by the teachings of syafi’iyah, although Usually, pesantren legitimize the Arbain madhhab, as well as in the monotheistic thought of pesantren, it is influenced by the thoughts of Abu Hasan al-Ash’ary and also al-Ghazali. Likewise, the pattern of curriculum formulation and the books used use the legality of the Ahlussunnah wal Jama’ah (Sunni madhhab) (Madjid, 1997).

Locally, the notion of centralization of pesantren which leads to the formation of ideological thought, also affects the pattern of centralization of the system that develops in pesantren. In the world of Islamic boarding schools, the highest legality is owned by the Kyai, where besides being a formal leader in the pesantren, he is also a figure who directs the cultural orientation and scientific tradition of each pesantren. The uniqueness that occurs in such boarding schools, becomes part of a tradition that needs to be developed, because each of them has the effectiveness to carry out cultural mobilization and its educational components (Purnomo, 2017).

The combination of fiqh and sufism that so powerfully influences the daily culture of the pesantren world has resulted in the emergence of the thinking and behavior of the pesantren community about the “normative-mystical” treasures of Islamic knowledge dominated by the deductive-dogmatic form of religious reasoning as opposed to logical factual induction. So that students will demonstrate
mastery of the scientific discipline that underpins their ability to be isti’dal and istimbath from the text, which is the defining attribute of the pesantren curriculum. Through the sorogan and bandongan learning systems that are commonly used in the pesantren world by explaining the meaning of gandul, accompanied by a grammatical explanation of utawi iki iku, and with a strong emphasis on linguistic analysis and less emphasis on context/historical analysis, the reproduction pattern feels increasingly reinforced in the process of scientific transmission. Because this style of education describes more types of face-to-face, oral, and personal-monologue communication (Kamal, 2020).

Finally, Abdurrahman Wahid, underlined that the value institutions that developed in the pesantren were related to the vision to achieve acceptance by Allah in the future occupying the most important position. This is what is called an orientation towards the afterlife (the hereafter view of life). Another form of this view of life is a sincere willingness to accept whatever level life gives, even with limited material, but the most important thing is to be satisfied by very eschatological spiritual pleasures (afterlife). Therefore, this value system has a positive meaning, namely the ability to easily accept status changes and the flexibility of students to live independently (Wahid, 2001).

So the jargons and terminology in Islamic boarding school education, especially in suplimating these values, are more emphasizing the side of life that puts forward ethical, moral and spiritual elements rather than the orientation of the formation of intelligence and intelligence institutions, at least the vision that pesantren wants to display is the existence of a life that is full of life. balanced from the dimensions of the life of the world and the hereafter, although using certain priorities. The pesantren tradition with its advantages and disadvantages is a treasure of the nation’s culture, pesantren has a big role in indigenizing Islam so that it is easy to digest and avoids conflictual conflicts at the beginning of its emergence and development with local culture. Through the inheritance of medieval Islamic traditions and acculturation with local culture. In terms of patterns of continuity (continuity) and change (change) gets a balanced portion as an implementation in growing a self-sufficient and self-sufficient community. Related to the attitude of pesantren towards the outside world (change), there is an assumption that pesantren is allergic to change. This assumption is clearly unreasonable and unfounded. This is because recently the dynamics of pesantren have proven to be far beyond its initial definition and its traditional function, namely as an institution. religion that functions only as tafaqquh fii al diin in its narrow sense and only functions to transmit Islamic sciences, maintain Islamic traditions and produce scholars.

In some aspects, pesantren has the potential to be developed into religious, educational, and social institutions that are suitable for the cultural conditions of the nation. Moreover, pesantren is proven to be able to present itself as an institution that continues to exist in the face of all dynamics of social change with its two main educational characteristics, namely the cultural character that allows students to learn completely, not only in terms of knowledge transfer but also the formation of personality aspects as a whole. Second, strong community participation.

3.2 Pesantren as the identity of Islamic education and culture

Pondok Pesantren is the world’s oldest Islamic school and a product of Indonesian culture. The establishment of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia began with the introduction of Islam, which adopted a religious education system that had established long before Islam’s arrival in the island. As an educational institution with deep roots in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools are considered as having played a significant part in the nation’s past. Pesantren is recognized as playing an important social role, in addition to its existence as an Islamic educational institution. Viewed from the perspective of the sociology of education, pesantren can be categorized into two things, namely first, pesantren as an institution that can act as social change; an institution that can change the structures of ideas and thoughts in society. Second, pesantren is an institution that can act as a culture changer, an institution that can change the various cultures that exist in society (Huda, 2018).

The integration of religious knowledge and general science is a feature of the modern pesantren learning system that understands tafaqquh fii al-din in the form of a combination of religious knowledge
and general science aimed at providing broader insights. However, the merger of the two sciences is not the result of the integration of naqli science and aqli science which is conceptually designed, or in other words it is not the result of an integral concept of science, but rather an effort to integrate religious knowledge and general science by studying them simultaneously. These efforts are made to build the diversity of students' understanding by deepening their religious knowledge, especially regarding the diversity of religious understanding and broadening their horizons about differences and diversity of social, culture, ethnicity, customs, language, and gender through general sciences such as social sciences, anthropology, natural sciences, arts and culture.

The wealth of traditions that are entwined in the realm of pesantren can be used as capital to attain a new tradition’s pinnacle and glory. In this regard, the school system has a significant impact on the formation of traditions. In this era of modernization, pesantren are necessary to improve the fundamentals of their educational approach in addition to undergoing the transition phase required to strengthen their traditions. When discussing the world of pesantren, the system, tradition, and process of pesantren education that can assure the continuity of the spirit of education itself must be reformed (Harisa, 2020).

The principle of preserving local culture developed by the moderate pesantren world reminds of the global ethics developed by Hans Kung, a contemporary German religious scholar who develops dialogue by taking local values into account. With the campaigned jargon, namely "not only freedom, but also justice, not only equality but also pluralism, not only brotherhood of men, but also women, not only side by side, but also peace" (Fata, 2015).

This demonstrates that the world of Islamic boarding schools is extremely concerned with the aforementioned values. The local culture adopted by the pesantren community, for instance, is indicative of the group's efforts to build harmony. In addition, the intellectual tradition of pesantren reflects the preservation of culture. Lessons taught in Islamic boarding schools consist of the yellow book literature, which is passed down from generation to generation and is directly tied to religion. The classics represent the correct tradition and maintain the religious sciences that were widely disseminated to the Islamic community by the great thinkers of the past.

Wahid firmly ordained pesantren as a sub-culture that was transformed into one of the pillars of Indonesian culture and identity with all its plurality. As a socio-cultural political entity. Without aiming to reduce the roles of pesantren in all their dimensions, below is a reflection of pesantren as a unique culture, which is closer to the ideology of peace than violence and hostility. The main characteristics of pesantren culture include:

3.2.1 Modeling (Exemplary)

In Islamic teachings, the term uswatun hasanah or sunnah hasanah refers to the ideal example that should or must be followed in this community. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, modeling is more likely to be viewed as tasyabbuh, which is the process of a character's self-identification. In this instance, what comprises modeling is the pesantren tradition of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar. In the realm of Islamic boarding schools, the da'wah Islamiyyah or amr ma'ruf nahi munkar is enforced not only via words, but also by behavior and acts (da'wah bil hal). The world of Islamic boarding schools has played its Islamization function in the sectors of education, culture, socioeconomics, and transformation in this instance. Thus, the immense potential of the pesantren world to empower the community has spawned new prospects and bolstered the pesantren’s status as an independent institution, not dependent on external parties, including the government. Pesantren belongs morally to the community under the direction of the kiai authority, uswatun hasanah, who is also a model and a sociopolitical ethical reference (Nuh, 2010).

3.2.2 Cultural Maintenance

Maintaining the culture and still relying on the basic teachings of Islam is a pesantren culture that has developed for centuries. This attitude is nothing but a logical consequence of modeling. The concept of cultural preservation affects the pesantren world’s intellectual life. The courses taught at this
institution under the direction and blessing of a kiai as the principal teacher or irsyadu ustadzin are classic books or yellow books that have been passed down from one generation to the next, demonstrating the leadership effectiveness of the kiai. The teachings of the Yellow Book provide continuity with the authentic tradition, alqadim al-salih, which preserves the classical and medieval religious sciences. Fulfilling an educational function, the material taught in pesantren not only gives students access to references to the golden life of the legacy of past Islamic civilizations, but also shows a concrete future role, namely to live a Javanese Muslim life: a way of life that longs for peace, harmony with society, environment, and God (Fata, 2015).

3.2.3 High Scientific Culture
The pesantren realm is always linked with the scientific world. The definition of pesantren always refers to the educational process, which includes educators, students, and students, in addition to teaching and learning facilities. The ideal reference for Islamic boarding schools includes the Qur’an and Hadith, the ideal figures of classical times such as Imam Bukhari, and the oral tradition that develops and always glorifies the figures of the great Javanese clerics, such as Nawawi al-Bantani (d. 1897 AD) and Mahfudz al-Tarmasi (d. 1917 AD) (Nuh, 2010: 32). Being a Muslim necessitates being a santri, and being a santri necessitates not being separated from educational pursuits. In Islamic boarding schools, the school day consists of twenty-four hours. In this community, the status of santri is always more prestigious than the status of non-santri. The reference is unmistakably the phrase from the Qur’an that offers believers and knowledgeable people an honorable and exceptional status. Full day and night education in the world of Islamic boarding schools with a relative time limit and an unbroken teacher-student interaction is the execution of the Prophet’s teachings that emphasize the necessity of seeking knowledge from infancy to death (minal mahdi illallahdi). In conclusion, the fundamental tenets of Islam serve as the ideological foundation for the santri to seek their faith as a source of knowledge and direction in this world and the next.

4. CONCLUSION
Pesantren is an educational institution that has several functions including the function of Tafaqqah fi al-din (deepening knowledge about religion), the function of Tarbiyah al akhlaq (the formation of personality / character) and the function of community development or social rehabilitation centers. Islamic boarding schools have a high level of integrity with the surrounding community, the general public views pesantren as an ideal special community, especially in the field of religious moral life. The pesantren tradition with its advantages and disadvantages is a treasure of the nation’s culture, pesantren has a big role in indigenizing Islam so that it is easy to digest and avoids conflictual conflicts at the beginning of its emergence and development with local culture. According to Abdurrahman Wahid, boarding schools are part of a sub-culture that has become the identity of Indonesian religious and cultural education with all its plurality. This can be seen from the main characteristics of pesantren culture which include exemplary, maintaining culture and having a high scientific culture.

REFERENCES


Lukman Hakim/ Pesantren as the Identity of Islamic and Cultural Education in West Java


