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# Pesantren, Madrasa,, and the Future of Islamic Education in Indonesia[1]

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**Abstract**

This article delineates the development of *pesantren* and *madrasa* as a very significant part of Islamic education in Indonesia. In doing so, I explore three points related to the development. Firstly, there is an ancient tradition of accommodation in Indonesian Islamic education world. This is seen in the foundation myths that traditional *pesantren* use to understand their role in society. Secondly, there is a desire to modernize and to meet the modern needs of both students and society while maintaining firm roots in traditional Islamic education. It must be an on-going 'evolutionary' process. Thirdly, *pesantren* people have rejected the *sharia* state, the *khilafa*, the use of violence, and narrow understandings of what the nation should be. They have worked hard to distance themselves from others that seek to cloak themselves in their legitimacy. Therefore, I would argue that the *pesantren* and other forms of Islamic education will contribute to the future of Indonesia as a plural, peaceful and democratic society.

**Keywords**: *Pesantren, madrasa, islamic education*

## Introduction

In my earlier work (Lukens-Bull 2000, 2001, 2005), I was interested in the various debates and strategies concerning the negotiation of globalization and modernization through curricular modification. The focus of that work was *pesantren* that had added government recognized curriculum mostly at the junior high and high school levels. Central to the integration of government curriculum was the teaching of both religious and non-religious, or general subjects. While first conducting that research in 1994-1995, I was introduced to the PTAIN System. In the 1990s, pesantren faced certain challenges about their future and how to maintain their orginal aims. Today, IAIN are faces some of the same challenges.

The future of Indonesia and its experiment in democracy (a phrase often used in reference to the USA) are much like a car. The wheels are ormas like NU, Muhammadiyya, and Persis but the engine is Islamic education; IAIN are particularly important.

An essential part of *pesantren* education in the inculcation of Islamic values. *Pesantren* teachers stress that while a day school can teach students about religion and morality, they cannot teach the students to be moral. Moral education, in terms of moral behavior, takes experience. Hence, *pesantren* strive to create an environment in which the morals of religion can be practiced as well as studied. The students learn about them in religious lessons and are then given the opportunity to practice them (Lukens-Bull 2001). The environment includes modest, even Spartan, communal living arrangements which are used to teach the value of simple living (*kesedehanan*). The meager meals are typically rice and vegetables. Further, while there is an acknowledgment of personal property, in practice, property is communal. Simple things such as sandals are borrowed freely. Other items, if not in use, should be loaned if asked for. The *santri* who habitually refuses to loan his property will be sanctioned by his peers and sometimes by the *pesantren* staff which may include teasing or a stern reminder about Islamic brotherhood and the importance of being sincere and selfless (*ikhlas,* Lukens-Bull 2005: 60). One aspect of how education contributes to the maintainence of a plural society is in the inculation of values, including respect for the other.

Starting in the 1970s, newer, general (non-religious) education became an important part of the *pesantren* community's strategy for negotiating modernity. *Pesantren* added government recognized curricula to schools, the vast majority of which were *madrasah*, which have always had a high percentage of religion classes, although it has declined over time. *Madrasah* also existed outside the *pesantren*. A few *pesantren* opened *madrasah* following a national curriculum. In the beginning, this curriculum was 70% religious subjects, but the ratio switched in 1984 so that it was 30% religious subjects. In the closing years of the Suharto Era, *madrasah* were in the process of being changed into general schools with an Islamic character (*sekolah Islam yang berciri khas Islam)* which only had about 5% religious subjects[3]. At each grade level, there would be one special cohort who were in an intensive *madrasah* program which not only returned to the original 70: 30, ratio but added the dimension that the language of instruction was Arabic (Lukens-Bull 2005: 63-64).

Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) leaders frequently speak about how the classical tradition brought by the Wali Songo (Nine Saints or Nine Friends of God) and continued in pesantren through the study of classical texts called kitab kuning inoculates students from more radical forms of Islam. In a very real sense, the best answer to radical Islam is not liberal Islam but conservative classical Islam.

Islam first came to Indonesia when Islam and Sufism were indivisible; to be a Muslim was to be a mystic or a sufi (Johns 1987:342,). Indonesia more than any other Islamic country has maintained this aspect of classical Islam. And within Indonesia, the pesantren community is responsible for continuing the teachings and practices of classical Islam. In general, mystical traditions in all religions focus more on personal piety over social order. Mystics are often more concerned about how individuals live their lives and how they seek God than they are about having a society that enforces religious ideals. A focus on personal piety leads to a great acceptance of variation within a given tradition. Such internal tolerance naturally breeds tolerance towards those outside the tradition.

The development of pesantren in Indonesia cannot be disassociated from the development of sufi orders. From the beginning, pesantren have

served itself as the center of the teaching of sufi subjects and the kyais have been, and are, the persistent disseminators of sufi orders mainly through teaching and learning processes in the pesantren.

The pesantren world in Java is nearly as old as Islam in Java itself. Both in print, and in oral tradition, pesantrens are closely tied to the Wali Songo (the nine saints who brought Islam to Java) (Lukens-Bull 2008),. The first, if not the most famous, of the Wali Songo, Sunan Maulana Malik Ibrahim is said to have established the first pesantren in Java in 1399 CE (Common Era) in order to train muballigh (preachers) to further spread Islam in Java (Ghofier 1982). Other accounts aver that all the Wali Songo had pesantren, which is supported by a few published sources (Yunus 1979:217, Ghofier 1982). Despite that nNone of the Wali Songo pesantren have survived to present day, however, the idea all pesantrens are their intellectual descendents and all kyais are seen as inheritors of the role of the Wali Songo which is frequently mentioned in pesantren circles. There are few leaders who do claim to be descendants of one of the Wali Songo. Those men and those who affiliate themselves with them are drawing specific connections between themselves and the archetypes of kyai, the Wali Songo (Lukens-Bull 2005:1-6).

The Wali Songo, Kalijaga in particular, taught Islam through local art and culture, specifically the slametan (ritual meal) and the wayang or shadow puppet theater (Woodward 1989:96). To this day there are pesantrens that sponsor wayang, gamelan orchestras, and other cultural events (Pranowo 1991). Pesantren Lirboyo, perhaps one of the most famous traditional pesantrens, hosts an annual exhibition of Javanese martial arts (pencak silat) which draws crowds in the thousands (Lukens-Bull 2008).

Another key figure of  Wali Songo is Sunan Kudus, who is said to have originated the wayang golek, the three- dimensional wooden puppet show and for building the Kudus mosque. The cultural accommodation of the Wali Songo is further celebrated in a story that relates that local culture because the residents of Kudus were predominately Hindu., Sunan Kudus built his mosque to resemble a Hindu temple and forbade his followers from eating beef. To this day, the Kudus area, now predominately Muslim,

is known for the fact that the inhabitants do not eat beef but favor water buffalo (Lukens-Bull 2008).

The Wali Songo legends are crucial for understanding the development of Indonesian Islam. Because kyais are considered to have inherited the role of these saints, most kyais adopt the style and methods of the Wali Songo. This means meeting people where they are. Rather than preaching against popular practices like slametan and ziarah (pilgrimage to holy tombs), they accept that people want to do these things and strive to teach them a more orthodox way of conducting and understanding these rituals. This history also means that Indonesian Islam has a strong pietistic elements, meaning that doing right is left to the individual's conscience. The pace of preachers and teachers is to heighten awareness (keyakinan) so that people will be inspired to live a good Muslims. Frequently repeated is the Qur'anic injunction that there should "be no compulsion in religion" (Q.S. 2:256). Therefore the establishment of ShariaShari'a as a national law enforced by the state has long been rejected by most Indonesian Muslims.

Mysticism as found in traditional pesantren follows the sober mysticism of al-Ghazali and hence balances the mystical dimensions of the faith with the normative practices. Furthermore, mysticism is seen as a critical component in pesantren education not only does it provide the basis for a moral compass but because, it provides a sense of balance and direction in an often confusing modern world.

Gus Ishom of Tebu Ireng, said that tasawwuf (A: mysticism, Sufism) is central in moral education. He expounded that in Islam there is a "triangle" of major "sciences" (ilmu): tawuh}i>d (A: theology; especially as regards the nature of Allah), fiqh (A: religious law), and tas}awwuf. Each of these sciences makes different contributions. Tawuh}i>d establishes the basis of faith. bBecause faith is not enough and needs "good works" ('amal) to actualize it., Ffiqh provides the believers with guidelines on how to live right and perform good works. Since because good works, alone, are empty if the motivation is impure, tas}awwuf is needed to instill moral and ethical values in believers. The association of Sufism and ethics as in appears in the Indonesian pesantren may be traced to a single highly influential Islamic thinker, namely al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali is famous for his sober mysticism,

which balanced theology and tasawwuf and his extensive works on ethics Abdul Quasem 1975). The use and study of al-Ghazali's works that many are abundant in the pesantren world associate mysticism and ethics. In history and legend as well, mysticism comes came to Indonesia through the role of Wali Songo, the nine saints who a were responsible for bringing Islam to the archipelago. (Lukens-Bull 2005).

Although not universally true, there is strong tendency for mystical traditions to enhance tolerance. First and foremost, mystical traditions allow the logical possibility of more than one may to be faithful. In the Indonesian context, mystical practice acknowledges and allows a wide range of practices including saint's grave visitation pilgrim (ziarah), ritual meals (slametan), and the use of amulets. On the other hand, modernists have discouraged many of these practices even to the extent of destroying graveyards. While it may be true that common people (wong cilik) may become confused (from an orthodox point of view) and pray to the saints, or propitiate spirits during a slametan, various kyais have repeatedly told me that it is critical to embrace these practices. Only by embracing the practices of the common person, can religious leaders bring them into a fuller and more correct understanding. Greater tolerance within a religion opens the logical possibility of greater tolerance between religions. A clear lesson from the Wali Songo legends is Indonesia's long history on emphasizing personal piety and personal responsibility (Lukens-Bull 2008)

**Modern Education and Modern People**

In *salaf pesantren*, the whole day is dedicated to religious training. Accepting government education cuts the day in half. Hence, *pesantren* are jealous of this time and try to reclaim as much as possible for religious training. This accommodation allows that not all pesantren graduates will have the knowledge of *kyai*. The one point no one in the community is willing to concede is that graduates should have the morality of *kyai*. Further, the teaching the basics of Classical Islam, based in the *kitab kuning* is seen a way to prevent the growth of Islamist extremism.

Many *pesantren* people associate the processes of modernization and globalization with the loss of traditional values. Nafik of Al-Hikam, said that this happens mostly because many naive people link Westernization and modernization, a linkage Howard Federspiel attributes to the writings of Siradjuddin Abbas (1996:202). Nafik argued that much of what is done in Indonesia today is Westernization without any real modernization. Education can overcome such naiveté and hence, he says, the goal of Al-Hikam is to train modern people (arts & sciences students) with traditional values. People so trained will be able to lead the nation so that it can engage in globalization and forge a new national identity consistent with an (imagined) Islamic heritage (Lukens-Bull 2005).

Are *pesantren* people modern? Using the institutional based definitions of modernization theories, they most certainly are. Modernization theorists looked as such markers as technology use, labor specialization, financial institution, political interest groups, and nationalism over group interest. *Pesantren* have incorporated technology in both curriculum and methods. Aside from the simple use of public address systems to preach and make announcements within a *pondok*, telephones, computers, the Internet, automobiles to go to meetings and preaching dates, airplanes to go to Mecca, *pesantren* teach their students how to use these things. Concerning the specialization of labor, secular education provides students the basic skills and socialization needed to be trained in specific labor fields. My discussion of banks in Tebu Ireng indicated some of the critical importance of banking to *pesantren* people. They seek to create a banking system that is not usurious but can meet the financial needs of a developing country.

*Pesantren* people are involved in a myriad of interest groups that increase their participation in national debates. Chief among these is *Nahdlatul Ulama*, however, it should be remembered that NU is an umbrella organization and that there are many other interest groups under its aegis. *Pesantren* people also participate in interest groups outside of the NU organization and culture.

The concrete things that *pesantren* people have done to shape Indonesian national character include fighting for Indonesian

independence, participating in the early debates about the nature of the Republic's constitution, insisting that "belief in God" was the first point in the national Ideology, insisting that all Indonesians receive a minimal level of religious education, and insisting that the government assist Muslims with performing the *hajj*. In addition, the *pesantren* world has contributed to the establishment, and maintenance, of a secular state. The existence of a secular government has created great difficulties in other Islamic countries (e.g., Iran, Egypt), however in Indonesia the secular state and the Islamic community have reached an accommodation, as was discussed in chapter three. The withdrawal of NU from politics was in part in support of the secular state, not of the current regime, perhaps, but of the idea of a democratic state that represents all Indonesians. A man with Abdurrahman Wahid's pedigree and charisma could easily lead a movement to establish an Islamic state, but instead he was a key leader in the pro-democracy movement and many *kyai* were active in trying to keep his presidency democratic[4].

One of the chief ways for this community to negotiate modernity has been through education. Abdurrahman Wahid argues that *pesantren* need to be able to make two contributions to society: workers, who have *pesantren* morals and ethics, and *ulama* who can engage in a globalizing, technologically oriented society**.** Many agree that *pesantren* must deal with the changing world and prepare their graduates for college and the workforce. To do any less is a disservice to the students. Further, most parents, especially from urban and urbanizing areas, will not send their children to a *salaf pondok*; they want their children to be able to succeed. Therefore, these *pesantren* have not only government recognized *Madrasah* system schools but have National system schools as well. Some *salaf kyai* look at modernizing *pesantren* and say that if the religious education drops to less than fifty percent, there is little purpose in parents sending their children there or even calling the school a *pesantren*. It should be noted that large *salaf pesantren* still exist and many in the classicalist Muslim community still value traditional education and want their children to be trained in that fashion, rather than in secular subjects.

**Defending the Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating with Radicals**

In recent years, the processes of Islamization, globalization, and democratization have allowed expressions of Islam not previously witnessed in the country. For example, the emergence of radical groups like Laskar Jihad and Jemaah Islamiyah in the early to mid 1990s. Large scale acts of terrors and the "War on Terror" have forced moderate Indonesian Muslims to negotiate their identity vis-à-vis small minorities of Islamic radicals.

I returned to Indonesia in May 2000 with an interest in how the mainstream Indonesian Muslims, including the *pesantren* community, were responding to Laskar Jihad and other radical groups. An interesting question is that if the majority of Indonesian Muslims are not radicals, why was Laskar Jihad allowed to walk the streets brandishing, at least symbolic weapons, collect money on the streets of Java, and distributing literature. I interviewed a number of leaders from NU and from other Muslim organizations. I also listened to a number of debates and speeches during this time. In the context of increased Islamic radicalism, there was great interest in carefully defining one's own identity vis-à-vis radicalism. Some Muslims were sympathetic but not supportive; others were opposed to Laskar Jihad's basic charter. This material allows us to consider the *pesantren* world vis-à-vis other Muslims in Indonesia.

At Al-Hikam and some other *pesantren*, the teachers and staff are proactively moving to ensure that classical Islam rather than fundamentalism is the basis of the Indonesian Islamic negotiation of modernity. Muslim scripturalists, sometimes referred to as fundamentalists, reject historical commentary on religious issues, that is the classical texts, in favor of the personal reading of the Qur'an and Hadith. Because *pesantren* people maintain the use of the classical texts as a source of religious authority they are not scripturalists. Further, Hasyim Muzadi has stated that the historical interpretations of great scholars are a tempering factor that can prevent extremism.

**Will The Real Pesantren Please Stand Up?**

Another way, the NU *pesantren* community attempts to distances itself from other interpretations of Islam is by carefully applying the label "*pesantren*" and discussing what the features are of a "real *pesantren*." A real *pesantren* must maintain certain key features: 1) the use of classical texts, at least in translation or in derivative forms, but preferably in the original Javanese and Arabic; 2) character development and moral training; 3) an emphasis on the balance between normative and mystical Islam.

The *pesantren* community sought to created new way to deal with moderning, one that imagines an Islamic modernity. Repeatedly, I heard the argument that *pesantren* must change to deal with changing times; globalization requires new educational strategies. Some *kyai* use a market analogy and suggest that *pesantren* must become competitive or be driven out of the market. In other ways, however, the *pesantren* world seems to be taking the first attitude and would strongly oppose an Indonesian Atatürk; they wish to be selective about what is borrowed from the West. However, *pesantren* people would be as equally opposed to an Indonesian Khomeni because of their commitment to classical Islam. And this is the key difference; fundamentalists are not only selective about modernism, they are also selective about religion. Most Islamic fundamentalists reject the traditions that include such figures as *Shaikh* Abdu'l l-Qadir Gilani and Imam Al-Ghazali, traditions to which *pesantren* people hold firmly (Lukens-Bull 2005).

*Pesantren* people are doing more than simply trying to marry the best of both worlds, they are making an Islamic modernity. If modernity entails a set of attitudes about authority, time, society, politics, economics, and religion, then the leaders of the *pesantren* world are trying to shape those attitudes. The ultimate concern is still with salvation and the hereafter. Concerns about this world are fine as long as the hereafter is not forgotten. They are aware of the Enlightenment thesis that this world is all there is, and they consciously reject it.

The esteemed sociologist Robert Bellah pointed out that modernity should be seen not 'as a form of political or economic system, but as a spiritual phenomena or a kind of mentality' (1968). By defining modernity as a kind of mentality, *pesantren* people have moved the discussion from changes in institutions, about which they may have little control, to matters of the heart and mind. Capitalism, urbanization, and secularization are here to stay. Democratization may or may not continue to influence Indonesia. Keeping a focus on the institutions of the modern world, radical Islamists have only one choice – to oppose modernity. By shifting the focus of modernity to mentality, the *pesantren* community can imagine a modernity in their own image. Of course, they want the technology and the benefits of some of the institutional changes associated with modernity. However, in terms of the mentality of modernism, they wish to define an Islamic modernity. There are certain values and morals they wish to have underpin modernity. These values include Islamic brotherhood (*Ahwuya Islamiya)*, selflessness (*keikhlasan*), simplicity in living (*kesederhanaan*), and self-sufficiency (*kemandirian*). Also included is a concern for social justice and serving the needs of the poor.

Taken together these values define a modernity quite different from that practiced in the West. Perhaps the greatest concern *pesantren* people have about modernization is the threat of egoism, or the emphasis on individual gain over communal gain. The values of Islamic brotherhood and selflessness, then, are seen as safeguards to heartless entrepreneuralism. "Simplicity in living" is a control for rampant consumerism, and with the emergence of credit cards, a way to avoid the financial morass in which many Americans find themselves. "Self-sufficiency" gives both the individual and the nation continued independence. For individuals, it means that one should seek self-employment, the very entrepreneurialism that development requires, however, one controlled by Islamic values. For the nation, it means avoiding the kind of metropole-satellite relationship that André Gunder-Frank says creates underdevelopment (1966).

Finally, *pesantren* people are carving out a new kind of identity. They reject both an Atatürkian blind embracing, and a Khomenian blind rejection, of all that is Western and modern; they are cautious of

globalization and its McWorldian tendencies but nonetheless actively engage it, through the peaceful *jihad* of *pesantren* education.

However, the most significant question may be whether or not we in the West are willing to think of modernity as a mental state rather than a set of institutions. And whether, as mental states, there might not be mutually compatible, but different versions of modernity. Can we give up our precious institutions that we associate with being modern and democratic? By this I mean, can we accept that there may be other ways to achieve the same goals? Can we accept Islamic versions of democracy, human rights, and civil society as equally good as ours even though they would not work in our societies? Or must we remake Islamic socities in our own image? What I have learned from *pesantren* people is that for a peaceful world, our struggles to improve the world must start with ourselves and then through education and persuasion move out to others (Lukens-Bull 2005).

Many *pesantren* found it increasingly difficult to maintain the balance between the traditional Islamic education and government schools. In fact, Tebu Ireng, the most famous *pesantren* of all was, according to some, no longer able to train religious scholars (Lukens-Bull 2005: 43) and many schools have refocused their purpose. No longer do they seek to train clerics and scholars, but now they seek to train people for the general workforce who have the morality of Muslim clerics and scholars (Lukens-Bull 2000). One result is that many of these *pesantren* were no longer able to produce graduates who have the knowledge and skills to become religious leaders. The *pesantren* community asked from whence the future leadership willcome. One possible answer given in the mid-90s was Ph.D. holders.

In the 1990s, many *kyai* saw the bureaucratization of Indonesian Islamic leadership as inevitable, but they were not pleased by the education being received by future religious bureaucrats. To compensate for the perceived inadequacy of an IAIN education, some students, mostly from *kyai* families, endured a double education process, first attending a very traditional *pesantren* like Lirboyo or Al-Fallah and then obtaining a degree from IAIN. However, pursuing double education is long and difficult and few families could afford it. Therefore, an alternative explored by some was

to combine the two. Given that the credentialing system centered on IAIN, several *kyai* have sought to supplement the education given there with a simultaneous *pesantren* education. Since IAIN students were free to take lodging wherever they wish, *pesantren* attract many students, in part because of the religious atmosphere and education and in part because they are cheaper than other options. This involved an adjustment to the traditional *pesantren* practice of not allowing students to leave on a regular basis. The prediction being made in the 1990s was that PTAIN would become the source of future Islamic leadership. There was the hope that maybe the PTAIN would become a higher level pesantren. The fact that PTAIN are not may be some of the reason for critiques of the system.

In East Java, the *pesantren* community has long been concerned about IAIN curriculum and the changes taking place. Concerning the future of Islamic education, Jabar Adlan stated in1995 that he saw Ph.D. programs as the final step, replacing such *pesantren* as Tebu Ireng, which he thought could no longer fill the role of creating leaders. Further, the roles of *ulama* and Muslim intellectuals would be combined. He predicted that, in the future, religious authority will come as much from advanced degrees as from community recognition. However, the vast majority of Ph.Ds. in religious studies and affiliated fields are held by PTAIN faculty members and more recently earned through an IAIN or UIN. Therefore there is a certain dimension of government control over this process.

The current debates about PTAIN echo discussions about *pesantren* education in the 1990s. As I have explored elsewhere, *pesantren* education has made a number of accommodations to modern educational demands (2005). This shift in educational goals means that it was no longer possible to give all students the same level of traditional skills and a "secular" education. Therefore, the emphasis in *pesantren* shifted to character development and moral education. In *pesantren*, the key methodology for this is to create an environment in which desired values are inculcated and reinforced. PTAIN in 2008 were facing some of the same issues and have proposed a similar solution.

**PTAIN As Extension of Pesantren**

In the 1970s IAIN were created, in part, to be tertiary education for *pesantren* and *madrasah* graduates. IAIN were not born out of nothing but was presaged by two institutions: one focused on the training of Islamic teachers for government curricula schools, called *Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri* (PTAIN; not to be confused with the current usage of the acronym) and the other, the *Akademi Dinas Ilmu Agama* (Government Worker' Academy of Religious Science) was designed to train government functionaries in the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) (Abdullah 1999). Hence, the largest *fakultas* in IAIN, across all campuses, were *Syari'ah* (Islamic law) and *Tarbiyah* (education). These two *fakultas* provide the judges, teachers, and officials for Indonesia's religious bureaucracy and religious educational system (Steenbrink 1974: 159) including those for the Marriage Registration section of the Department of Religious Affairs. Azyumardi Azra, past Rector of UIN Jakarta argues that the IAIN is not and has never been a "seminary" and has always had an agenda beyond simply training religious leaders (2011: 44).

The creation of PTAIN came at time when Islam was being pushed to the margins of Indonesian politics. A number of events in the early history of the Republic of Indonesia had placed Islam in the margins. Some would include removal of a *syari'ah* requirement from the preamble of the Indonesian constitution, the so-called Jakarta Charter. Other important episodes include betrayals from both the Left (the Madiun Affair) and the Right (Darul Islam) (Pringle 2010: 69-70). During the 1965-66 bloodlettings which followed an allegedly communist coup attempt, the Indonesian military recruited Muslim militias to help in the killing of an estimated 500,000 people. After this empowerment as partners with the state, Suharto understandably wanted to remove any potential threat to his own power. One way to do this was ensuring that the PTAIN Systembe explicitly apolitical.

Given Harun Nasution's importance, it is useful to summarize some of his key ideas, particularly as found in his book *Islam Ditinjau dari Berbagai Aspek (Islam from Different Perspectives*, 1977). Nasution promoted a

framework in which Islam was seen as a culture and a civilization as well as a religion. The framework distinguished between absolute Islam, which is defined as Quran and Hadith and is eternally true and cannot be modified and relative Islam, which can be modified as circumstances change and includes philosophy, Sufism, and "deviant" perspectives (Cone 2002: 58, Saeed 1999, Kersten 2009: 95). Meuleman (2000: 288-289) identifies four aspects of Nasution's perspective. The first is that the primary difference between Islamic theologies is not on basic tenets, but on the relative place of reason and revelation in knowing these tenets. Second, unlike the compartmentalized specialization Dhofier ascribed to the *pesantren* community (1999: 8), Nasution took a more holistic approach to Islam. The third feature of Nasution's approach, according to Meuleman, is his effort to move beyond the exclusivity and defensiveness of the Muslim community. Finally, for Nasution education was for the growth and development of the Muslim community (Meuleman 2000: 289).

Nasution's book *Islam Ditinjau dari Berbagai Aspek* was quickly criticized by other Muslim intellectuals, such as Muhammad Rasjidi, a PhD from Sorbonne, and Nasution's former mentor (Saleh 2001: 201). Rasjidi wrote a special report for the Ministry of Religious Affairs opposing the use of Nasution's text. Despite this, it became a standard text at nearly all PTAIN campuses for decades. Rasjidi objected to Nasution's approach on the ground that it could weaken one's belief (Saleh 2001: 201). Rasjidi's objections were not given much credence. Adian Husaini attributes this either to an outright endorsement of Harun's views or a gross incompetence on the part of the Ministry (2008: 57).

Harun's former students and others who knew him describe a much more complex man than the single dimensional Neo-Mutazalite that he is often depicted as being. He was "very Sufi" according to his former students and even belonged to a Sufi brotherhood (*tarekat*). In fact, Harun is credited with instituting and requiring two fields previously "forbidden" (or at least, absent) at IAIN: philosophy and *tassawuf* (Sufism).

Several components in the Nasution curriculum continue to have significant presence on IAIN campuses; his influence is everywhere in the

system (Kartanegara 2010: 107). The first is freedom of religious thought, particularly the ability to study all the *maddhab.* This academic freedom even extended to the margins of Islam including the so-called heretical rationalism of the Mu'tazilates, the sometimes excessive mysticism of Sufism and the less orthodox views of Ibn Arabi (Saeed 1999: 188, Kersten 2009: 95). More than just studying different approaches, Azra argues that this aspect of Nasution's curriculum encouraged students to learn different perspectives within Islam's scholarly traditions and taught them that such studies did not oblige them to follow the perspectives which they studied (Azra 2011: 51). This approach was a key reason given by Malaysian students studying at IAIN North Sumatra as to why they prefer to study in Indonesia rather than on clearly nicer campuses in Malaysia. The second component was paying greater attention to historical and sociological approaches (Azra 2011: 51). As a consequence, an increasing number of IAIN faculty were sent to Western countries to take graduate degrees, this was especially true when Munawir Sjadzali lead the Ministry of Religious Affairs from 1983 to 1994 (Kinoshita 2009: 7, Feener 2007: 138-139). Sjadzali, who had served for a time as an instructor at McGill, held up Mukti Ali, Harun Nasution and Muhammad Rasjidi as examples to be emulated and therefore pushed for intensifying the practice of sending IAIN instructors to the West for graduate education (Kasdi 2003: 3).We will return to a discussion of the impact of such programs in the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to note that Western academic approaches to religion and culture entered the PTAIN system through these Western graduates and fundamentally changed the very questions being asked. No longer was Islamic studies exclusively concerned with eternal truths but also became concerned with local wisdom (*kearifan lokal).* The third change was the requirement of a general introduction course in Islamic Studies required of all students. It is no longer required but it figures into the debates about what Islamic Studies is and should be. Overall, the reforms introduced under Nasution aimed to have PTAINs "become institutes for the development of religious sciences, rather than centers of Islamic doctrine" (Meuleman 2002: 286).

## Conclusion

I have tried to make three points in this paper. First that there is an ancient traditon of accomodation in Indonesian Islamic Education. This is seen in the foundation myths (Wali Songo) that traditional pesantren use to understand their role in society. It is also seen in the kind of openminded approach to very aspects of Islamic thinking at IAIN and even in constructive engagment in comparative religion. Let us not forget there is an tie between pesantren and organization like NU where NKRI Harga Mati is not a just a slogan, people have indeed dies. Second, there is at levels of Indonesian Islamic eduction a desire to modernize and to meet the modern needs of both students and society while maintaining firm roots in tradtional Islamic education. This is an issue that has not once and for all, nor can it be. It must be an on-going "evolutionary" process. Third, pesantren people (and other major elements of Indonesian Islam) have rejected the sharia state, the khilfa, the use of violence, and narrow understandings of what the nation should be. They have worked hard to distiance themseves from others that seek to cloak themselves in thier legitimiacy. Most recently, by rejecting FPI claims to be part of NU. It is in maintaining these three strategies that pesantren, and other forms of Islamic education will contribute to the future of Indonesia as a plural, peaceful, and democratic society.

## Endnotes:

[1]Prepared for presentation at the Laboratorium Bantenology, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten.

[2] Ph. D. Student, Political Science Department, Northwestern University and Arryman Scholar at the Equality, Development, and Globalization Studies (EDGS), Buffet Institute, Evanston Illinois. He studies the intersection of religion and politics through comparative historical and ethnographic method. Currently he is working on the questions regarding causes and consequences of different religious governance in Southeast Asia. Correspondence can be directed at gdemetera2018@u.northwestern.edu or rlukens@unf.edu

[3]After the end of the Suharto regime, the effort to convert *Madrasah* to this the lower percentage religious curriculum came to an end.

[3]*Pesantren* Tebu Ireng in Cukir also had some school accredited in the government general school system which had a few required religion classes. However, this kind of school in *pesantren* is exceedingly rare, if not unique.

[4] I cannot explore the complexity of the Gus Dur presidency and the seeming decay of democratic ideal when it was threatened. For a further treatment of the man and his time in office, see Barton 2002.

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