



## Religious Moderation at Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1 Benda – Brebes

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### Article

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### Abstract

Technological developments in the context of the industrial revolution 4.0 that affect religious practices do not automatically shift the entire religious values and principles of society. Religious disruption as an impact of that condition is actually responded well by the Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1 as salafy-modern pesantren through strengthening moderate values and characters in the perspective of Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawy al-Mālikī. By using a qualitative-descriptive approach, this study analyzes the process of internalization and dissemination of the values of religious moderation at the Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1, the teaching of tolerance reflected in the management of Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1, and the social interaction of the santri with the surrounding society in the Benda Village. This study finds that the disruption in technology which is considered major problem for the religious practices, surprisingly constructs a new pattern of religious moderation among the santri at Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1 in the midst of the era of disruption 4.0.

**Keywords:** Religious Moderation; Santri; Salafy-Modern Pesantren; Al-Hikmah 1

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### Introduction

The existence of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) as the oldest institution in Indonesia occupies a crucial position to reinforce moderation's values and principles and respond to global problems in this era of disruption. Pesantren has actively played a role in the context of human development, morals, and culture. In this regard, pesantren has produced graduates who then become central figures and have a strong influence on the nation's progress. Many of them become politicians, humanists, and even the president with the educational background from pesantren. Such a condition is reasonable if we take a look at the history where pesantren became a milestone for the achievement of the independence of this nation from the hands of the colonialists (Usman, 2013). The kyai (an honorific term for Muslim clergy) and the santri (the student of pesantren) worked hand in hand with the nationalist figures to unite their vision and will and fought at the cost of their lives for the sake of the establishment of the State of Indonesian which later could be realized in 1945. In the era of colonialism, pesantren became the center for nurturing the santri to fight against the Dutch (Hubbul wathan minal iman) and raise the spirit of the Muslim

fighters to defend the homeland. The santri undoubtedly have a high spirit of nationalism (Mu'ammad, 2014).

The romanticism of the fine history of the pesantren in contributing to this nation, as explained above, has begun to erode due to the acts of terrorism and radicalism in which most of the actors identified themselves as part of pesantren graduates (Mantu, 2015). This fact gives negative stigmas to pesantren as a breeding ground of terrorists and spreading religious radicalism (Afadlal, 2005). Such claims can be either true or wrong. It may be true as the pesantren is a place for the santri to learn religious knowledge. However, it may be wrong as not all pesantren in Indonesia teach radicalism.

Genealogically, the birth of the pesantren was related to traditionalist Islam born during the onslaught of Dutch colonialism (Hayati & Hayati, 2011). As one of the religious-based education systems from the past until now, pesantren still becomes a reference in countering issues of extremism, exclusivism, and radicalism. As a place of teaching Islam rahmat lil 'alamin, the santri at pesantren learn a comprehensive knowledge of religion especially Islamic ethics. After graduating from the pesantren, it is hoped that the santri would have a moderate view such as humanist, inclusive, and tolerant so that they can maintain the unity of this nation by understanding its socio-historical conditions (Anwar, 2011). Unfortunately, many pesantren that emerged lately are indicated to think and solve radical ideas to nurture their santri to be intolerant, exclusive, and even militant. The impact is that the orientation and the meaning of pesantren have shifted from tolerant to intolerant-religious based education system. Pesantren graduates' attitude which is like to pronounce their fellow Muslims as unbelievers (kafir) and develop radical, intolerant, and exclusive ideas often monopolize religious interpretations and are used for political interests and power. The emergence of ideas that want to break up Indonesian unity is strengthening after the propaganda of the system of an Islamic state (Khilafah).

If we refer to kitab kuning (Islamic classical text of which the paper colors are yellow) studied in pesantren, there are lots of teaching about religious moderation that has a distinctive feature such as the teaching of akhlak al-karimah (noble character) and respect for fellow human beings (Faiqoh, 2012). The pesantren's portrait, as explained by Geertz in his book "Javanese Religion" discloses that pesantren always spread religious teachings and cultural messages and incorporates the traditions of modesty of the pesantren (Yinger, Geertz, & Oliver, 1961). Pesantren, as an educational institution, always bears a message of peace in religious life. Besides having good character, santri are also equipped with wealthy Islamic literature. With this modal of thorough Islamic understanding, the santri become the frontline in counter-understanding or ideas that are not following Islam (William & Geertz, 1961).

Based on the reasons above, it shows that pesantren's role in the rejection of any kind of radicalism, extremism, and acts of terror that ruin the harmony and peace of the society becomes a crucial issue. This paper focuses on pesantren's role in managing its daily activities to establish moderate Islam, including the process of teaching and learning in classrooms, extra-curricular activities, and community service around pesantren, especially pesantren Al Hikmah 1 which combines salafi and modern models.

The study of religious moderation in pesantren has been widely carried out by authors, scholars, and academicians as conducted by Muhammad 'Ainul Yaqin (2018). He explains that the presence of Islamic moderation is expected to provide solutions by applying Islam's characters and teachings. Islamic moderation does not mean to be neutral. Nor does it mean that Islamic moderation is identified with a Western paradigm that is absolute freedom.

While Darlis (2017) emphasizes that Indonesia's diversity must be maintained and responded with a tolerant and wise attitude as it is susceptible to conflict. Based on this reason, the author then promotes Islamic moderation as one solution for a multicultural society. In line with this, Agus Akhmadi (2019) also concludes that multicultural society in Indonesia requires multicultural understanding, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious that respect differences, diversity, and willingness to interact with any group fairly. In the writer's opinion, the role of the government, religious leaders, community leaders, and religious instructors is to socialize and foster religious moderation for all Indonesian people to create harmony and peace.

The three studies mentioned above prove that this study is necessary to be conducted. However, the focus of the previous studies are wide while this study has a more specific concern: the salaf pesantren, Al-Hikmah 1 Benda, Bumiayu, Brebes. This pesantren promotes the doctrine of Ahl Sunnah wal Jama'ah and the teachings of Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawy al-Mālikī i.e.

Spiritual knowledge is related to spiritual and divine aspects. Muslim scholars interpret spirituality diversely. Spirituality is closely related to the transcendent being (Munawir Haris, 2013).

A virtue in spirituality can develop as a form of a good relationship between humans and God. A human may have strength if the person can establish a strong relationship with God (Saliyo, 2017). This virtue eventually becomes something principle and makes a positive contribution to the life of the person. Spirituality is also dealing with goals, meanings, and similarities with other people. Given that the divine energy could reflect one's actions to the environment, every person's actions, in this case, cannot be separated from his religious experience and knowledge (Hudaeri, 2007).

If a person has a high level of spirituality, it means that he is possibly open-minded, always giving and loving (Hudori, Kunci, Kecerdasan, & Hudori, 2008). An open-minded person reflects the depth of his spirituality, in which he has a very personal relationship with the transcendent figure that is God. An individual seeks a way to his God to be able to show his self-image as a good servant of God. When the dimension of spirituality and appreciation of God has no place in his life, his behavior and attitudes would be marginalized from essential values (Amir & Lesmawati, 2016). Thus, the importance of the position of spirituality in human's life depends on the culmination of one's religious experience.

Based on the above understanding, the position of the kyai in the middle of the pesantren is very central. It happens in asymmetrical patterns of social relations so that the kyai has a very decisive power. The position of the kyai in this relationship will produce certain expectations for the kyai, which arise from the santri. Kyai as a figure of the society cannot be separated from Javanese culture; first, his view or philosophy of life is very religious and mystical; second, he has a good attitude and upholds the morality and dignity of his life (Dhofier, 1994). The central position of the kyai becomes the foundation of ritual activities in the mosque. The kyai has a power that works smoothly, gently, and religiously so that any repudiation would not appear, only a mere obedience.

The reality of myth is sacred. Purity is the only ultimate reality and it presents as something completely different from the others (Mariasusai Dhavamony, 1995). My understanding and perception about the figure of the kyai as explained above reinforce my image that they are extraordinary people who have spiritual advantages i.e. karomah, and as the transmitter of barakat (blessing). Then with these advantages, the kyai has charismatic power. The charismatic kyai would have an optimistic attitude in providing hope and understanding for life improvement (Jannah, 2016). The charismatic kyai would not merely maintain the status quo from any serious disturbance challenging his position due to the change among his followers. However, the kyai also seriously strives to encourage change leading to obedience and faith as God will help a human who has good intentions.

Besides, the charismatic character of the kyai would create a belief among the santri that he has transcendental qualities as he has reached the level of ma'rifat (escatic experience). This reflects the sincerity, holiness, and transcendental intelligence of the kyai in front of his santri, giving rise to a particular mystery, admiration, and honesty in the personality of the kyai so that he deserves to be the role model for them. The spirituality and charisma of the kyai would be a theoretical basis of this study. Not only can it help conceptually in understanding the kyai's personality in the salaf pesantren, but it can also be used as an instrument for the realization of religious moderation in pesantren. This is inevitable given that the understanding and knowledge about religious moderation in Indonesia is being implemented in a multicultural society.

Hence, the research problems in this study would focus on the attitude of religious moderation at Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1 Benda (hereinafter referred to Al-Hikmah), Bumiayu, Brebes Regency with research questions as follows: a). How is the internalization and dissemination of the values of religious moderation at the Al-Hikmah 1? b). How is the process of modeling tolerance applied in the management of Al-Hikmah 1? c). How is the social interaction of the male and female santri of Al-Hikmah 1 with the surrounding community in Benda Village? These issues would be analysed with qualitative methods by focusing on a narrative approach. Observation and in-depth interviews in finding the data were intended to gather experience and understanding of the moderate expression among the santri of Al-Hikmah 1.

## Research Method

This type of research is qualitative with retrieve data from the field (field research). Data collection techniques are carried out through a series of observation activities, interviews, and documentation. Interviews were conducted on caregivers of the Al Hikmah 1 Islamic boarding school, teachers, religious scholars, and other communities. Data collection is also done using interpretation techniques and verification for later analysis. Locus research was at the Al Hikmah 1 Islamic boarding

school to explore the implementation of the concept of religious moderation in the learning system at the boarding school.

## Results and Discussion

### Religious Moderation at the Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1: Internalization and Dissemination of Religious Moderation Values

A comprehensive understanding of religious moderation becomes the main capital for the construction of the individual's moderate character. Therefore, the internalization of moderate values is crucial in the context of the management and development of Al-Hikmah 1. The internalization of the values of moderation at Al-Hikmah 1 is realized through three priority agendas. First, it is implemented in the curriculum of educational institutions from MI to Midwifery Academy. The moderation curriculum is the forerunner to moderate construction for the santri and other people who take part in religious instruction (Ngaji) regularly at the Al-Hikmah 1. Secondly, the moderate value internalization through routine activities carried out at the pesantren, such as mujahadah, routine religious instruction, halaqah, and regular seminars. Thirdly, the dissemination of moderate value through the activities of delegating the santri to several regions to fulfill the need of the community for religious teachers who understand religion.

The dissemination of moderate values and ideas at Al-Hikmah 1 is carried out through routine religious instruction and mujahadah activities. These activities are not only addressed to the santri of Al-Hikmah only but also open to the public. Such externalization is a stressing point in the effort to create a moderate environment. The seriousness of the Al-Hikmah 1 in managing the activities for the dissemination of moderate value and idea is reflected through the emergence of audience segmentation (audience) in every activity. Mujahadah is a joint prayer activity or wirid (remembrance) held every Friday Kliwon at Al-Hikmah 1.

An interesting view of the ritual of mujahadah is public enthusiasm. The mujahadah can be attended by thousands of pilgrims (jamaah) coming from Benda and Brebes as well as other regions around Brebes. The pilgrims' professional backgrounds and social status also varied, ranging from those with ordinary social status (middle) to those who work as government employees, bankers, nurses, and doctors. The existence and popularity of the mujahadah ritual are recognized by the pilgrims. K.H. Labib Shodiq Sukhaimi, a charismatic figure, as the custodian of Al-Hikmah always emulates his great teacher Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawy al-Mālikī from Mecca as the main factor attracting the many enthusiastic pilgrims of the Mujahadah. The food providing in the large portion after the ritual also becomes one of the characteristics in the ritual of mujahadah.

K.H. Labib Shodiq Sukhaimi always makes his teacher, Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawy al-Mālikī, as the role model. For instance, Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawy al-Mālikī built a hut in Rusaifah Makkah with a huge number of students, coming from any region in the world, studying, eating, and drinking without paying anything. Even Sayyid Alawy al-Mālikī gives scholarships to his students. After several years of study, the students usually would return to their countries to call for Islam (da'wah). One of the teachings of Sayyid Alawy al-Mālikī to his students, including KH. Labib Shodiq Sukhaimi, is to be a teacher who is always affectionate with his students, not harsh, not excessive, and always welcome for discussion (hiwar) with wisdom and mauidhah hasanah the method of da'wah. This method of teaching is also taken by KH. Labib Shodiq Sukhaimi who then applies it at his pesantren.

The teaching of Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawy al-Mālikī about polite attitude and da'wah with wisdom and good advice is derived from his understanding of tolerant and moderate (wasatiyyah) Islam. Wasatiyah itself is taken from the word wasath meaning something in the middle. In Mufradât Alfâzh Al-Qur'ân, it means, "Something that has two ends of equal size". Terminologically, wasatiyyah is a commendable condition that keeps a person from having extreme attitudes, exaggeration, and neglect. Al-Wasathiyah can also be interpreted as a balanced and equal condition between the two sides where one side/aspect does not exceed the other aspect, so there is no overdoing or neglect, not exceeding the limits, and reducing.

In madrasah, the santri will also get non-Islamic sciences equals to the level of SLTP and SLTA with a teaching period of 6 years. But, there is no age limit for the santri who study at Madrasah Mu'allimin compared to those who study at SLTP must be at least 11 years old. The grading system in Madrasah Mu'allimin from grade 1 to 6 will be determined based on their basic ability in understanding the Islamic teachings. Thus, it is understood if there is a significant age difference in the profile of the students of Madrasah Mu'allimin. The santri who study at Madrasah Mu'allimin at the end of their studies will receive three certificates i.e. a certificate as mu'allimin, SLTP certificate,

and SLTA certificate. The special education classification at Madrasah Mu'allimin is a response of Al-Hikmah 1 to prepare religious leaders and scholars who are skilled and knowledgeable.

### **Religious Moderation at the Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1: The Kiyai as the Role Model for the Optimization of Religious Practices**

Habituation of moderation in daily activities becomes a challenge for the people considering the strengthening of other religious and socio-cultural identities today. Therefore, optimizing religious practices based on moderation values is one of the efforts taken by Al-Hikmah 1. There are three types of optimization of moderate religious practices at Al-Hikmah 1 by making the kyai as the role model. Firstly, through the mainstreaming of the morals and creeds (aqidah) of the santri with the basis of moderate values. Secondly, related to the example of tolerance and humanity. This point becomes important to build the harmony of social interaction with the community. Thirdly is related to the management of learning and penalties and rewards for the santri who emulate Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawy al-Mālikī.

The mainstreaming of the morals and creeds of the santri following the principle of moderation becomes a stressing point of learning activity at Al-Hikmah 1. The kyai has enjoined that moderate values must be the principle and foundation of morals and creed of the santri which then differentiates the santri as well as the alumni of Al-Hikmah 1 from those of other pesantren. The establishment of morals and creeds of the santri is not only for the sake of the identity of Al-Hikmah 1 among other pesantren. More than that, the function of mainstreaming is aimed at the moderation of the morals and creeds of the santri itself. Hence, the implementation of morals and creeds of the santri in daily activities becomes the main achievement of the learning process at Al-Hikmah 1. The promotion of moderation values is also always echoed in Friday's sermons and other religious instruction and the kyai always emphasizes that it is more important than seeking knowledge. The principle is that if moderate character and creed have been developing, seeking knowledge will follow.

Among the moral teaching from Sayyid Muhammad ibn Alawy al-Mālikī in his daily life is always to be patient with people who are not in line with our thoughts or school. All those who are opposing us must be faced patiently and with wisdom. We are supposed to solve problems with the truth and the right arguments not with emotions and disputes (Kataby, 1994). Sayyid Alawy al-Mālikī exactly knows that the weaknesses of Islam are in the conflict of its ulama and this is what the enemy of Islam wants. Sayyid Alawy al-Mālikī accepted that he was deposed from his position both at the university and his religious forum at Masjidil Haram. He received it with patience and hearty even though he always respected those who had a different understanding (al-Maliky, 2003). As a result, many of his opposition understand it and sympathy with his preaching. In every book that he wrote, there are no words or expressions of insulting, berating, mocking or criticizing those who have different thoughts (Kataby, 1994).

Therefore, the ulama of the Salaf al-Salih (the righteous predecessor) considered that differences in view is natural and avoid denouncing each other. Even the imam (mujtahid) forbade anyone not to use their fatwa and claim it as the only truth that must be followed and therefore cause a split among the ulama. Some of them sometimes practice the results of ijtihad of other ulama to seek relief or conformity with the Muslims in general. Such practice is similar to that of the Al-Hikmah 1 that always puts forward a tolerant attitude in dealing with the issues of the society or lives of the santri.

### **Religious Moderation at the Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1: Social Interaction of the Santri Al-Hikmah 1**

The idea and value of moderation as the main character of education at Al-Hikmah 1 becomes an important capital for the santri in conducting social interaction with the surrounding community. Therefore, to view the social interaction of the santri in this study is important as the presence of the pesantren usually creates social problems such as the emergence of social gaps between the santri and the surrounding community. The social interactions of the santri of Al-Hikmah 1 are realized in three agendas; first, BSK (Religious Social Service Activities) that is carried out periodically. This activity becomes a medium for the santri to interact with the community around the Al-Hikmah 1. Secondly, the routine activities are carried out in the month of Sya'ban when the santri are designated to teach in villages and organize some of the religious activities such as examining Quran recitation



and praying for those who have died. Thirdly, the santri involvement in community events in general, such as feast day celebrations, and private events of the community.

BSK is a routine program of Al-Hikmah 1, which is carried out periodically by designating the santri of Al-Hikmah 1 to carry out social activities. The main purpose of this activity is to socialize the Pesantren Al-Hikmah 1 to the public. Although socialization emphasizes the profile of the pesantren, the socialization process that takes place between the santri and the society creates social interaction and negotiation. Usually, the santri of Al-Hikmah 1 are assigned to visit schools in Brebes to socialize the educational units of Al-Hikmah 1. Besides, the santri also held religious and social activities for the society to popularize the characters and distinction of the Al-Hikmah 1 that has complete facilities of education starting from elementary school to academy. In this regard, the social dynamics that occur in social interaction become a means for the implementation of moderate values, given that the socio-cultural character and identity of the people are different from each other.

The implementation of moderate values and ideas can also be seen from the santri routine agenda during Nisfu Sya'ban. In this month, the santri will spread and serve the community through routine religious activities. The villages that would be the main destination for this community service are determined based on the availability of religious teachers (ustadz) or religious leaders in that village. The villages with a small number of religious teachers will be the main destination for the community service. Often, the santri also give religious instruction/sermon adjusted with the characters of the society where they are designated.

The implementation of moderate ideas and values by the santri of Al-Hikmah 1 becomes a basic capital for the formation of the character of the santri. Therefore, the moderate character possessed by the santri of Al-Hikmah 1 becomes a distinction from those of other pesantren. The social interactions through BSK activities, the monthly routine activities of Sya'ban, and other festivity activities become a space for collaboration between the santri and the villagers. Finally, moderate ideas and values would be the basic values in the daily negotiation process.

## Conclusions

The social dynamics in the era of disruption that have endangered the religious practices are not automatically shifting the overall philosophical values of religion, especially the philosophical value of religious moderation in Islam. This study of moderation practices in the daily activities of the santri of Al-Hikmah 1 found that the changing era and the strengthening of religious group identities have constructed the implementation of new patterns of moderation in the santri's daily activities, both in everyday life and in the learning curriculum. The santri really adhere to a moderate lifestyle that combines the salaf tradition and the modern tradition without having to go to extremes in either of the two models. It is also found in the pesantren education curriculum which all adhere to the characterization and exemplary of Sayyid Muhammad 'Alawy al Maliky as a religious moderation figure who is a teacher of the Al Hikmah 1 Islamic boarding school caregiver. Hence, religious moderation should be implemented through pesantren's specific activities and disseminated to the public through social programs.

Various experiences on the expression of moderation of the santri and Kyai are analyzed through a descriptive-qualitative approach to get a comprehensive understanding and meaning. The interpretation of activities and moderate relations of the santri are collected by observation techniques and in-depth interviews. Yet, the issue related to obstacles emerging during the establishment of the moderate character and values of the santri, especially concerning technological disruption, has not become the point of analysis in this study. Thus, that point can be developed into a separate study to complement the study of religious moderation in the disruption era.

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