

Islamic Boarding Schools, Religious Schools, and Religious Identities in South Jember: The Struggle of Local Traditions and Global Modernity

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Abstract: South Jember is known as an area rich in religious diversity, where Islamic boarding schools, religious schools, and local religious practices interact with each other in a dynamic social landscape. On the one hand, pesantren function as a center for traditional Islamic education and da'wah, while on the other hand, local beliefs persist as expressions of spirituality that are firmly rooted in the culture of the community. This struggle is even more complex when global modernity through the media, migration flows, and economic transformation presents new values that affect the construction of the religious identity of local communities. However, previous research has tended to focus more on the dominance of pesantren as formal religious institutions, while the dynamics of faith streams and their encounter with global modernity are still rarely explored. This research gap is what opens up space for more comprehensive studies. The novelty of this research is the analysis of the interaction between religious entities of Islamic boarding schools, religious streams, and global modernity in shaping the religious identity of the people of South Jember. The formulation of this research problem is *first*: How is the interaction of pesantren and religious schools in shaping the religious identity of the people of South Jember? *Second*, how does global modernity affect the struggle of local traditions and religions in the region? The research method used is a qualitative approach with ethnographic studies, involving participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and discourse analysis of local religious practices. Provisional results show that pesantren play a hegemonic role in defining orthodoxy, while faith streams find adaptive ways to survive through symbols, rituals, and cultural narratives.

Keywords: Islamic boarding schools, religious schools, religious identity, South Jember, global modernity.

Introduction

South Jember is an area that is very rich in religious and religious diversity. Here, various religious beliefs and practices coexist and thrive together. This diversity is the main characteristic of this region and an important part of its people's identity. One of the most prominent in this area is the existence of Islamic boarding schools, as a center for traditional Islamic education and da'wah. Islamic boarding schools have a big role in shaping the character and religious identity of local residents. They not only teach religious science, but also serve

as a place to strengthen morals, instill faith values, and build the spiritual strength of the community. Islamic boarding schools in South Jember have existed for a long time and have become a center of religious and cultural activities that have a great influence on people's lives.¹

In addition to pesantren, in this area there are also various local beliefs and traditions that are preserved and developed. These beliefs are usually in the form of religious practices that originate from hereditary cultures and traditions. They have distinctive cultural symbols, rituals, and stories that are an important part of the spiritual life of the

¹ Moh Toriquel Chaer, *PESANTREN DAN MODERNITAS Melacak Transformasi Sosial Pesantren dan Kebangkitan Intelektualisme Islam di Indonesia* (BuatBuku.com, 2016).

people of South Jember. These traditions of belief are often inherited from ancestors and continue to be preserved as a distinctive cultural identity that differs from formal religious practices such as Islam and Christianity. This existence and preservation shows that the people in this region highly appreciate and uphold old traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation.²

These two groups, Islamic boarding schools and local faiths, interact in a society that continues to undergo changes. The development of the times and the entry of modernity bring its own challenges. The presence of mass media, population migration, and economic and social changes have a profound influence on the way people build and understand their religious identity. The influence of globalization introduced a more open, fast, and uniform religious mindset and practice. This sometimes raises tensions and concerns that old traditions and pesantren could be eroded by fast-paced and homogeneous global trends. The people in South Jember must be good at balancing maintaining local cultural heritage and spirituality by keeping up with the times and accepting new values from outside.³

The diversity of religions and beliefs in South Jember brings great benefits to the community. Islamic boarding schools are able to shape the character and morals of citizens, as well as strengthen their Islamic identity by teaching religious teachings in depth and educating the younger generation to become good and responsible individuals. Pesantren is also a center for the development of science and morality, which helps to strengthen a sense of togetherness and tolerance in the midst of diversity. Meanwhile, local beliefs and traditions add to cultural richness and enrich religious practices that are symbolic and ritual in nature. These rituals are usually in the form of traditional ceremonies, joint prayers, or religious activities that are part of the identity of the people in this region.⁴

However, this diversity also brings challenges. Differences in beliefs and practices can lead to conflicts if there is no mutual understanding and tolerance among different religious groups. Tension can arise due to differences in interpretations of different religions or beliefs. In addition, changes in values that come from outside, such as global culture, can cause confusion and uncertainty about people's religious identities. Many people find it confusing between following old traditions and adjusting to more modern and uniform religious practices. Not everyone has equal access to education and spiritual resources. There are people who lack opportunities to learn and deepen their faith, so their religious practices can become less powerful and vulnerable to outside influences. This condition can cause social fragmentation and disrupt harmony in society.⁵

In this context, religious and cultural diversity has become an inseparable part of the identity of the people in South Jember. The Islamic boarding school that has existed for a long time has become a center for religious and cultural learning that teaches Islamic values while preserving local spiritual and cultural traditions. The majority of people embrace Islam with various streams, such as Sunni and certain orders, and they carry out religious rituals according to their own teachings. On the other hand, traditional beliefs and local belief practices are also still alive and preserved by some residents as part of their identity. These traditions are often carried out for generations and become part of daily life, strengthening the sense of togetherness and cohesiveness of the community.⁶

Currently, South Jember faces a major challenge in maintaining diversity and peace between religions in the midst of the rapid currents of modernization and globalization. Changes in lifestyle, technology, and communication affect the way people practice religious practices and build their identity. There are fears that old traditions and distinctive religious practices could be lost or

² Azyumardi Azra, *Islam in the Indonesian World: An Account of Institutional Formation* (Mizan Pustaka, 2006); Prof Dr Azyumardi Azra M.A, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah* (Prenada Media, 2013); Azyumardi Azra, *Renaissance Islam Asia Tenggara: sejarah wacana & kekuasaan* (Remaja Rosdakarya, 1999).

³ Martin van Bruinessen, *Rakyat kecil, Islam, dan politik* (Yayasan Benteng Budaya, 1998).

⁴ Bruinessen, *Small people, Muslims, and politics*.

⁵ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Pesantren traditions: a study of kyai's outlook on life* (Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education, and Information, 1980); Martin van Bruinessen, *The Yellow Book, Islamic Boarding Schools, and Tarekat: Islamic Traditions in Indonesia* (Mizan, 1995).

⁶ Clifford Geertz, *Abangan, santri, priyayi: in Javanese society* (Pustaka Jaya, 1983).

displaced by fast-paced, uniform global cultures. Therefore, it is crucial to find smart and sustainable ways to preserve local traditions and beliefs. Through a thoughtful approach, old traditions can remain relevant and preserved, while keeping up with the times and receiving positive influences from outside.⁷

The author wants to conduct an in-depth study on the dynamics of religion in South Jember. With a simple approach and close to daily life, the author wants to understand how Islamic boarding schools, local beliefs, and the influence of modernity shape and enrich the religious identity of the people there. This research is expected to provide benefits not only in the development of science, but also as a guide for governments, community leaders, and religious communities in building a harmonious, respectful, and tolerant society. The author believes that diversity is a wealth that must be maintained and developed. By respecting each other and talking to each other, people can remain peaceful, inclusive, and able to dialogue with different cultures and beliefs. Through this effort, it is hoped that South Jember can remain a harmonious, tolerant, and prosperous region for all residents.⁸ To be more comprehensive, there are several articles that according to the author include:

First It is a research conducted by Kemal Husen et al with the title of the research *The Role of Islamic Boarding Schools in Strengthening Indonesian Cultural Identity in the Midst of Modernization Trends in this article provides information Culture as a product of human thought and creativity that is inherited through generations, reflects the identity of a nation, in Indonesia, cultural diversity symbolizes the uniqueness of the nation. However, globalization is a significant threat to the preservation of local culture. This research aims to analyze the role of pesantren in strengthening Indonesian cultural identity in the midst of modernization. The approach in this study uses a qualitative approach. The results of this study reveal that*

culture is the work and act of human beings that are inherited from generation to generation, reflecting the identity of a nation. In Indonesia, cultural diversity is a symbol of the nation's uniqueness. However, globalization with the strong influence of foreign cultures, especially through technology and mass media, threatens the preservation of local culture. Islamic boarding schools play an important role in maintaining cultural identity, especially Islamic culture. In addition to teaching religion through the yellow book, pesantren also shape the character and moral values of its students. Islamic boarding schools not only function as religious educational institutions, but also as preservationists of local culture, by teaching social skills, leadership, and science.⁹

Second is a research conducted by Zaidatun Ini'mah Julifiyana et al with the title of research *The Influence of Multicultural Environment on the Social Identity of Adolescents at the Ulumul Qur'an Al-Qindliyyah Islamic Boarding School* in this study provides information It is important to understand how the multicultural environment in Islamic boarding schools contributes to the formation of adolescent social identity and how these Islamic boarding schools play a role in fostering harmony in the midst of diversity. This study uses a qualitative approach to explore in depth social phenomena, especially the interaction between the multicultural environment and the process of forming social identity among adolescents at the Ulumul Qur'an Al-Qindliyyah Islamic Boarding School. Success in forming an inclusive social identity shows that multicultural pesantren can be a model of education that not only strengthens religious values but also integrates the cultural values of the wider society.¹⁰

Third is a research conducted by Indra Jaya K Wardhana with the title of research *Stumbling Across the Flow of Belief in the Identity Politics of the National Education System* In this study, it provides information The adherents of religious beliefs experience contradictions in the national

⁷ INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF KEBANTENAN, THE PREHISTORIC PERIOD OF MEGALITHIC BANTEN AND PRE-ISLAMIC HISTORY (Global Creative Media, 2025).

⁸ Central Statistics Agency of Jember Regency, "Central Statistics Agency of Jember Regency," Central Statistics Agency of Jember Regency, accessed December 24, 2024, <https://jemberkab.bps.go.id>.

⁹ Kemal Husen dan Muhammad Husni, "Peran Pesantren Dalam Meneguhkan Identitas Budaya Indonesia Di Tengah Arus

Modernisasi," *IHSAN: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2025): 387–97, <https://doi.org/10.61104/ihsan.v3i1.847>.

¹⁰ Zaidatun Ni'mah Julifiyana et al., "THE INFLUENCE OF MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT ON ADOLESCENTS' SOCIAL IDENTITY AT ULUMUL QUR'AN AL-QINDLIYYAH ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL," *JOURNAL SAINS STUDENT RESEARCH* 2, no. 6 (2024): 275–80, <https://doi.org/10.61722/jssr.v2i6.2967>.

education system. Educational regulations and policies at the Ministry of National Education level and at the level of educational institutions do not accommodate the interests of students who adhere to religious beliefs as cultural heritage. Through the implementation of education, students who adhere to religious beliefs experience discrimination in the implementation of education through education standardization. At the same time, existence as a manifestation of identity politics emerges in response to the issue of equality. This reconciliation deconstructs the policy set out in the circular "National Standard School Examination for Students with Religious Beliefs" issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, where students get equal treatment in the educational model by adopting and accommodating religious beliefs in the formal curriculum in schools.¹¹

Fourth is a research conducted by Zainal Arifin with the title *The Implementation of Religious Learning in Fostering Religious Tolerance in Islamic Boarding Schools* in this article provides information How is the religious behavior of adolescents in an educational institution, and how are Islamic boarding schools efforts to improve multicultural-based diversity behavior. The results of this study show that: First, Adolescent Religious Behavior. That in the dimension of belief, village teenagers believe (believe) in Islam as a religion that is pleasing to Allah S.W.T, but have not been able to practice istiqomah what they believe in. Second, the efforts of Islamic boarding schools in Improving the religious behavior of adolescents. In improving the religious behavior of village teenagers, the management of the Islamic boarding school uses three efforts, namely, with an understanding, meditation and model approach. Third, Inhibiting Factors in Improving Religious Behavior. There are three factors that hinder the efforts of Islamic boarding schools in improving the religious behavior of village teenagers, the psyche of village teenagers, lack of parental encouragement, and lack of attention from village officials.¹²

Fifth is a research conducted by Fathurozi with the title of research *Harmony in Islamic Boarding Schools, Multicultural Education Model Based on Local Wisdom* in this study provides information Pesantren is a traditional educational institution in Indonesia that focuses on Islamic religious education. This research aims to explain the advantages and challenges associated with the implementation of the multicultural education model based on local wisdom, as well as provide recommendations on how pesantren can effectively strengthen multicultural education based on local wisdom. The research method used in the title *Harmony in Pesantren, a Multicultural Education Model Based on Local Wisdom* uses a Qualitative method with a case study approach. The data collection techniques in this study are observation and interviews. Data analysis uses taxonomic analysis. To test the validity or validity of the data, the researcher used triangulation. Research results. To realize the harmony of students at the Darus Sholihin Islamic Boarding School, a good attitude is instilled which includes: 1) mutual respect and appreciation. Tolerance is accepting differences, 3) an attitude of giving comfort to the interlocutor, and 4) a supportive attitude. The curriculum development model based on local wisdom includes; Diverse Curriculum Development, Intercultural Learning, Multicultural Values Education, Community and School Collaboration.¹³

This research distinguishes itself from previous research by combining three main focuses that have been studied separately: *the role of pesantren, the existence of local belief streams, and the process of forming people's religious identity in the context of modernity*. Previous studies have focused more on one aspect, such as the role of pesantren in cultural preservation (Kemal Husen et al.), the formation of adolescent social identity in the multicultural pesantren environment (Zaidatun Julifiyana), the problem of discrimination of beliefs in national education (Indra Jaya Wardhana), the pattern of fostering religious behavior of adolescents in pesantren (Zainal Arifin), or the multicultural

¹¹ Indra Jaya K. Wardhana, "STUMBLING OF THE FLOW OF BELIEFS IN THE IDENTITY POLITICS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM," *DIMENSI - Journal of Sociology* 12, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.21107/djs.v12i1.21638>.

¹² Zainal Arifin, "The Implementation of Religious Learning in Fostering Religious Tolerance in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Kartika:*

Journal of Islamic Studies 2, no. 1 (2022): 81–92, <https://doi.org/10.59240/kjsk.v2i1.7>.

¹³ Fathurrozi Fathurrozi, "Harmony in Islamic Boarding Schools, a Multicultural Education Model Based on Local Wisdom," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 3, no. 6 (2023): 10222–37, <https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative/article/view/7239>.

education model based on local wisdom (Fathurozi). There is no research that explicitly examines the interaction and tension between pesantren and local faith streams in the same area, as well as how the two negotiate with the flow of global modernity in a real social context such as South Jember.

In terms of novelty, this research offers a new contribution by analyzing the dynamics of the religious diversity of the people of South Jember as *an arena for identity struggles*, places where Islamic boarding schools, schools of belief, and modern values interact simultaneously. This research presents a more comprehensive perspective because it not only sees pesantren as an agent of cultural preservation, but also assesses how people adhering to local beliefs maintain their spiritual identity amid the influence of globalization. In addition, this research provides novelty through an approach that places South Jember as a *social laboratory space*, where the encounter between Islamic tradition of Islamic boarding schools, local traditions, and modernity takes place intensely, resulting in findings that are more contextual and grounded than previous research that tends to be normative or focused on one institution only.

Materials and Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach¹⁴ with an ethnographic study design to explore in depth the dynamics of interaction between Islamic boarding schools, religious streams, and the influence of global modernity in shaping the religious identity of the people of South Jember. The ethnographic approach was chosen because it is able to capture practices, symbols, rituals, and social constructions that live in people's daily lives, especially in the context of complex and layered religion. The main data collection techniques include participatory observation in several Islamic boarding schools and communities of local believers, as well as in-depth interviews with kiai, traditional leaders, local ritual

caregivers, students, and the general public. To enrich the understanding of the social context and the structure of power relations, this research also utilizes the analysis of documents, such as pesantren archives, records of indigenous communities, and local media products.

The collected data was analyzed using a combination of thematic analysis and discourse analysis. Thematic analysis is used to identify patterns of interaction, conflict, and negotiation between pesantren and schools of belief, as well as people's responses to global modernity. Meanwhile, discourse analysis is used to read the construction of people's religious identities through language, narratives, and symbols used in ritual practices and daily conversations. The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation techniques, method triangulation, and member checking, so that the findings can comprehensively and credibly describe social reality. Through this method, the research was able to produce a deep understanding of how the struggle of local traditions and global modernity is reproduced in the religious life of the people of South Jember.

Results and Discussion

The first finding is the Hegemony of Islamic Boarding Schools in the Formation of Religious Identity which shows that Islamic boarding schools in South Jember, especially in Sukoreno Village, have a hegemonic role in shaping the religious orientation of the community. Pesantren not only function as a center for Islamic education, but also as a moral institution that organizes the way citizens understand orthodoxy and the limits of the purity of religious teachings. Kyai acts as an interpreter, mediator, as well as a *cultural broker* who bridges the teachings of fiqh with the cultural practices of the local community. Through recitation, tahlilan rituals, istighotsah, and the tradition of the yellow book, pesantren produce religious habits that emphasize moderation, balance, and social ethics.

¹⁴ Lexi Moleong, "Research methods," *Jakarta: Rineka Cipta*, 2010, http://a-research.upi.edu/operator/upload/t_pd_0704893_chapter3.pdf; Burhan Bungin, *Qualitative research methodology: Methodological actualization towards a variety of contemporary variants*, Grafindo

persada, 2007; Miles Huberman and Matthew B. Miles, "Qualitative data analysis," *Publisher of the University of Indonesia, Jakarta*, 1992; John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach* (Student Library, 2019).

This dominance makes pesantren the main reference in determining the direction of the religious diversity of residents, including in assessing local belief practices.

The second finding, Resilience and Adaptation of Local Belief Streams illustrates that local belief streams, including the Javanese tradition and follower groups such as Sapto Dharmo, remain as part of the spiritual identity of the community. Their teachings and rituals did not disappear even when faced with the dominance of Islamic boarding schools. Traditions such as salvation, ruwatan, village cleansing, pilgrimage to ancestral graves, and nyadran undergo a process of reinterpretation: not deleted, but reinterpreted in the framework of local Islam. Adherence to the school of faith shows adaptive ability through symbols, cultural narratives, and flexible ritual practices. The religious identity of the residents so that it is not single, but layered, reflects *the multiple religious belonging* typical of the Javanese people. Third Finding, Social Harmony through Cultural Negotiation as Interaction between Islamic boarding school groups and adherents of local beliefs in Sukoreno does not create open conflict. On the contrary, society develops a strategy of harmony through mutual respect and avoidance of confrontation. Religious differences are not a threat to social unity because the two have found a stable pattern of relations. This harmony strategy runs through cultural encounters, informal authority of village leaders, and social habits that place harmony as the main value. Pesantren exist not as an oppressor of local traditions, but as an interpreter who directs cultural rituals to be in harmony with Islamic values without eliminating their social function.

Fourth Finding, Synthesis of Tradition and Islam of the Archipelago in Religious Practice. Where religious identity in Sukoreno emerged as a synthesis between Islamic teachings of Islamic boarding schools, Javanese traditions, and rural social structures. Religious practices are not strictly separated between "pure Islam" and "local culture," but become complementary meeting spaces. This synthesis can be seen in the way residents carry out

communal rituals, interpret offerings or salvation, understand prayers, and position kyai and traditional elders. This phenomenon shows the syncretic, flexible, and contextual pattern of Islam in the archipelago, as in the classical analysis of Clifford Geertz and Ricklefs. Fifth Finding, The Influence of Digital Modernity and Religion through social media, migration, and economic transformation brings new values, including digital variants of religion such as hijrah-salafi that are more textual and normative. However, the people of Sukoreno were not completely dragged into the current of puritanism. They take elements that are considered beneficial such as the regularity of worship, the Islamic lifestyle, or modern moral discourse, without having to abandon local traditions or delegitimize community rituals. Pesantren again function as a cultural buffer, ensuring that people do not lose their spiritual roots in the midst of exposure to modernity. The Sixth Finding, Religious Identity as a Sustainable Negotiation Process shows that the religious identity of the people of South Jember is not something static, but continues to be negotiated through dialogue between three forces: pesantren, local traditions, and global modernity. This identity is formed from the process of adaptation, reinterpretation, and value affirmation. The community not only accepts influence, but also processes it according to social and spiritual needs. This is what makes Sukoreno's religious identity flexible, adaptive, and inclusive to the changing times.

Discussion

ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS, RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS, AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES



Pictures of Ft Pondok Pesantren¹⁵

Pesantren occupy a very central position in the socio-religious life of rural communities in Indonesia. As the oldest and most deep-rooted Islamic educational institution, pesantren not only function as a place of religious learning, but also as a social institution that has a great influence on the formation of values, morality, and the collective identity of citizens.¹⁶ In the context of an agrarian society, pesantren become a spiritual and moral reference center, where people seek religious legitimacy, social advice, and solving daily problems. This long historical and cultural role makes pesantren the main pillar in maintaining social stability and the sustainability of religious traditions. The religious pattern of the Sukarno community reflects the typical character of Islamic boarding schools in East Java: moderate, traditional, but still adaptive to social changes. This pattern arises from a combination of the tradition of the yellow book, the ritual of Islam of the archipelago, and the authority of kyai who acts as a *cultural broker*, namely a figure who bridges normative religious teachings with local culture. Islamic boarding schools ensure the continuity of the salaf tradition, but at the same time are able to respond to social developments and the challenges of modernity.¹⁷

The role of pesantren in the formation of the religious identity of the Sukarno community can be seen from three main aspects. First, formal and informal education that instills an understanding of fiqh, Sufism, and adab. These values are spread through routine recitation, kyai advice, and religious rites involving all citizens. Second, the culture of pesantren forms a religious habitus through the traditions of tahlilan, manaqiban, maulidan, istighotsah, and the study of the yellow book which strengthens the Islamic identity of the archipelago.¹⁸ Third, the charismatic authority of the

kyai becomes the center of religious legitimacy, so that the attitude of the community towards new beliefs or groups is highly dependent on the views of the pesantren. With these educational, cultural, and authoritative functions, pesantren in Sukarno play an important role in regulating the direction of the community's religious diversity while maintaining the harmony and religious identity of the village. Pesantren not only educate, but also form the boundaries of orthodoxy and become the foundation for the religious diversity of rural communities.¹⁹



Sapto Dharmo Stream Stream²⁰

Sapto Dharmo is a moral and spiritual teaching that grows from the Javanese tradition and is rooted in ethical values, wisdom, and life balance. Etymologically, *sapto* means seven, while *dharma* refers to the principle of truth or moral obligation. Thus, Sapto Dharmo is understood as seven basic principles that guide human behavior in order to live in harmony with noble values.²¹ Although not as famous as formal teachings such as Pancasila, Sapto Dharmo still has an important position in the formation of the character of Javanese society which still holds tightly to the Javanese tradition. This teaching has a historical relationship with the concept of dharma in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, which during the time of the ancient Javanese kingdoms such as Mataram and Majapahit was used as the basis of moral education for leaders. The

¹⁶ M. Faishal Khoirurrijal dkk., "Societal Development through Eco-Pesantren Programs: Actualizing the Functions of Pesantren in Empowering Society," *Scholars: Journal of Education and Society* 21, no. 2 (2023): 209–23.

¹⁷ Fauzi N. Majid dan N. Nurwahidin, "The Role of Pesantren in Maintaining National Resilience in the Modern Era," *Journal of Islamic Education Research* 13, no. 1 (2025): 13–25.

¹⁸ Devano Hilmy Al-Ghifari dkk., "Traditional Authority of Kyai and Its Impact on Religious Moderation in East Java Pesantren," *IJIBS* 2, no. 2 (2024): 129–44.

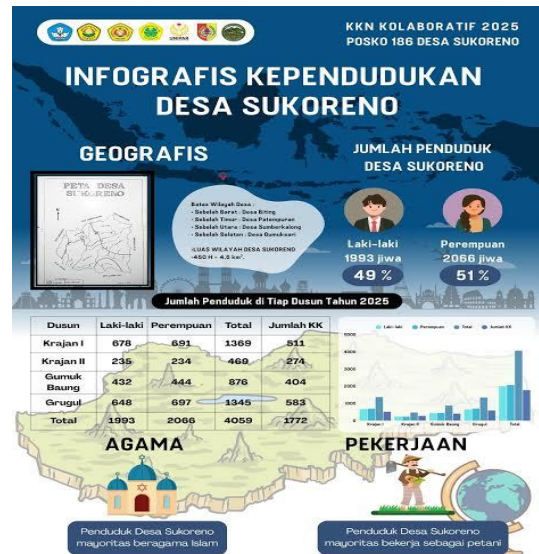
¹⁹ Yusuf Agung Subekti and Mutamakin Mutamakin, "Kyai's Example in Creating Religious Culture in Children's Islamic Boarding Schools," *TA'LIMUNA: Journal of Islamic Education* 11, no. 1 (2022): 69–84.

²⁰ <https://paseban-jati.blogspot.com/2016/01/ajaran-kerohanian-sapto-darmo.html>

²¹ Zola Panji Wicaksono and Benni Setiawan, "Building Harmony Through Inclusive Intercultural Communication: A Case Study of the Sapta Darma Faith Stream," *Organic culture* 12, no. 2 (2023), <https://e-journal.unair.ac.id/BIOKULTUR/article/download/52513/27558>.

principles of harmony, fairness, responsibility, and wisdom are measures of leadership quality.²²

From this context, Sapto Dharmo develops as an ethics that emphasizes a balance between personal behavior, social relationships, and spiritual responsibility. Although the term does not always appear explicitly in classical texts, its essence is reflected in works such as *Serat Wulangreh*, *Serat Centhini*, and various moral teaching fibers from figures such as Sunan Kalijaga to Ki Ageng Suryomentaram.²³ Sapto Dharmo is then formulated in seven main principles: loyalty (*loyalty*), courage (*wani/fall*), steadfastness of attitude (*tanggong*), proficiency (*trengginas*), situational sensitivity (responsiveness), humility (*andhap asor*), and tolerance (*tepa selira*). These values are the ideal qualities to form a socially and spiritually mature person. As a guideline for life, Sapto Dharmo is not conveyed through rigid theological doctrines, but through the daily practice and example of the elders. In the modern era, this teaching was used in fostering the character of state apparatus during the New Order period, although it tended to be interpreted administratively. Until now, Sapto Dharmo remains relevant as a local Javanese wisdom that emphasizes balance, morality, and humanity in social life.²⁴



Geographical Data Images of Sukoreno Village²⁵

The religious identity of the people of Sukorno Village is formed through a negotiation process between the heritage of the Islamic boarding school, the practice of Islam in the archipelago, and elements of local belief. This identity is not singular, but lives through social interactions, religious rituals, authority structures, and daily cultural dynamics. Therefore, the people of Sukorno show a pattern of *multiple religious belonging*, namely a flexible and adaptive religiosity, where formal Islamic teachings blend with local traditions without causing significant conflicts. Geographically, Sukorno Village has an area of about 4.5 km² with a population of 4,059 people in 2025. The population is spread over four hamlets: Krajan I, Krajan II, Gumuk Baung, and Grugul with the majority working as farmers. This homogeneous structure of agrarian society reinforces the long-rooted pattern of communal and traditional religiosity.²⁶

The influence of pesantren is clearly seen through the values of *tawasuth* (moderation),

²² Samsul Ariyadi, *Reception of the Qur'an and the Form of Modern Javanese Spirituality: A Study of the Practice of Mujahadah and Semaan al-Qur'an Mantab Purbojati Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat Palace* (A-Four Publishers, 2021), https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=qsxVEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Spiritualisme+Jawa:+Meraba+Dimensi+dan+Pergulatan+Religiusitas+Orang+Jawa.%E2%80%9D&ots=nO3-IY78sa&sig=3iltw1wNXHzYSfTc7UgTRm28_Us.

²³ The Boy Who Was Born To Be A Hero, *INTERNALIZATION OF JAVANESE SLAMETAN TRADITIONAL VALUES IN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION* (Widina Publisher, 2025), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=FaBeEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Etika+Sosial+dalam+Ajaran+Kejawen:+Telaah+Nilai+%E2%80%98Tepa+Selira%E2%80%99,+%E2%80%98Andhap+>

Asor%E2%80%99,+dan+%E2%80%98Tanggap&ots=Zd_roDfh1s&sig=_g8mZvkXNmau6hGJOnb-fAMtvIQ.

²⁴ Muzayyanah Siti, "ACTUALIZATION OF JAVANESE ETHICAL VALUES IN THE TRANSMIGRANT COMMUNITY (Study in Tunggul Village, Banjar Agung District, Tulung Bawang Regency)" (PhD Thesis, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, 2021).

²⁵ Collaborative KKN 2025 Post 186 Sukoreno Village. (2025). *Population Infographic of Sukoreno Village*. Sukoreno Village KKN Documentation.

²⁶ Ahmad Arif Widiyanto and Fitriatul Hasanah, "Hegemony of 'Official Religion' and the Ambiguity of Freedom of Belief of Sapta Darma Believers in Jember, East Java," *SMART Journal (Studies of Society, Religion, and Tradition)* 10, no. 2 (2024): 261–76.

tawazun (balance), and tawadhu'. Pesantren functions as a moral center and shaping the ethics of the community's religion, especially through activities such as recitation, tahlilan, and the tradition of the yellow book. Meanwhile, local faith streams remain part of the spiritual lives of citizens, providing a cosmological dimension in man's relationship with nature and ancestors. Although there is friction between Islamic boarding school groups and adherents of local faiths, especially regarding the boundaries of orthodoxy, these tensions rarely manifest as open conflicts. Differences are more often negotiated subtly through cultural gatherings and informal authority of community leaders.²⁷

THE STRUGGLE OF LOCAL TRADITIONS AND GLOBAL MODERNITY

The struggle between local traditions and global modernity in Sukoreno is a dynamic that lives in the daily life of the community, where elements of agrarian culture, Javanese practices, and pesantren teachings meet each other, negotiate, and adapt sustainably. This process never takes place rigidly, but rather comes as a subtle dialectic, like a flow of water that meets but still finds its balance. Sukoreno, with its strong social structure of pesantren and deep-rooted local traditions, is a concrete example of how the religious identity of the Javanese people continues to be formed through the encounter between ancestral heritage values and the currents of modernity that come from outside.



Photos of Sukoreno Community Meeting

The people of Sukoreno live in a relatively harmonious social order between the residents of the pesantren and adherents of the school of belief. There is no open conflict, although their religious practices have different cosmological and ritual grounds. This shows that spiritual diversity is not a spark of tension, but is understood as part of the collective identity of the village community. This harmonization can be seen in various traditions that continue to be carried out such as salvation, village cleansing, nyadran, ruwatan, to pilgrimage to the tomb of ancestors which are Javanese rites that have lived long before the establishment of the Islamic boarding school. The ritual remains sustainable, not because it is contrary to the teachings of the pesantren, but because it has undergone a process of reinterpretation and domestication according to the local Islamic context.²⁸ This phenomenon is in line with Clifford Geertz's study in *The Religion of Java*, which shows that Javanese people are accustomed to living in a plural and compatible spiritual landscape between formal religion and local traditions.²⁹

The role of pesantren in this struggle is very significant, especially through the position of the kiai as a moral and cultural authority. The kiai in Sukoreno are moderate towards local traditions. They do not negate cultural rituals, but set limits so that the practice does not deviate from the Islamic faith. This attitude is in accordance with the character of Islam of the archipelago which is based on the principles of *tawassuth* (moderate), *tasamuh* (tolerant), *tawazun* (balanced), and *'adl* (justice). Pesantren do not exist as an institution that oppresses local traditions, but as a new interpreter who directs Javanese rituals to a form that is in accordance with Islamic values. For example, the prayer in salvation or nyadran is now oriented to God, not to the spirit of the ancestors. Ruwatan is no longer understood as an attempt to resist reinforcements through supernatural powers, but as

²⁷ Budi Ichwayudi and Syabrowi Syabrowi, "Islam Nusantara as a Religious Identity in Indonesia: An Analysis of the Main Values of the Hadith Perspective," *Medina-Te: Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 1 (2023): 53–63.

²⁸ Sunyoto and Wagima "PANCASILA VILLAGE AS A HARMONIOUS LIVING SPACE: INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES FROM THE ARCHIPELAGO WITH THE TRADITIONS

OF FAITH ADHERENTS IN PANCASILA VILLAGE, SUKORNO, JEMBER," September 15, 2025, Sukoreno Village, Gang 5.

²⁹ Shoni Rahmatullah Amrozi, "Keberagaman Orang Jawa Dalam Pandangan Clifford Geertz Dan Mark R. Woodward: Javanese Diversity In The View Of Clifford Geertz And Mark R. Woodward," *Phenomenon* 20, no. 1 (2021): 45–60.

a symbol of asking for salvation.³⁰ This kind of process is confirmed by Martin van Bruinessen in his study on Javanese Islam, who states that traditional Islamic boarding schools actually have great ability to Islamize traditions without having to erase their cultural forms.³¹

Students and people affiliated with Islamic boarding schools also do not show a confrontational attitude towards Javanese rituals. They are neutral: they do not prohibit, do not hostile, but also do not actively participate in rites that are considered too close to non-orthodox beliefs. This attitude is more inclined towards passive tolerance, a form of social compromise that allows people to live peacefully despite having different spiritual perspectives.³² Andrew Beatty in his work on Javanese society shows that local harmony is often built through the strategy of "avoiding confrontation" and maintaining a sense of harmony. This pattern is very noticeable in Sukoreno; Society prioritizes social harmony over theological tension.³³

From a cultural perspective, the sustainability of Javanese rituals in Sukoreno is not only due to spiritual beliefs, but also because of its social function. Traditions such as village cleanliness, nyadran, and pilgrimage to ancestral graves play a role in strengthening social cohesion and community solidarity. These communal rituals are a place for cross-generational encounters and religious identities, so that their existence is more socio-cultural than theological. Therefore, pesantren do not feel threatened by the existence of local traditions, because the rite does not seek to replace Islamic teachings, but rather complements the

spiritual and social needs of the community.³⁴ Ricklefs in his work *Mystic Synthesis in Java* explains that Javanese people have a historical ability to conflate elements of Islam and ancestral traditions into one stable syncretic identity.³⁵ Sukoreno is an actual example of such synthesis in the modern era.

In addition to strong local traditions, global modernity also exerts a new influence on people's religious practices. Internet access, social media, labor migration, and economic change have opened up space for new religious patterns, including the emergence of puritanical Islamic discourses such as hijrah-salafi. This digital religious pattern is often more normative, textual, and tends to be less tolerant of rituals that are considered "heretical" or "syncretic." However, the people of Sukoreno did not necessarily follow the flow in its entirety.³⁶ They adopt some modern values such as professionalism, rationality, or urban lifestyle, without having to abandon the local traditions that have become the foundation of their identity. The encounter between Islamic boarding schools, local traditions, and digital Islamic discourse creates a new dialectic, but does not lead to clashes. Pesantren continue to play a role as a cultural buffer and interpreter of local identity, so that people do not lose their spiritual orientation in facing the changing times.³⁷ In this context, modernity is not a threat that erases tradition, but a challenge that forces society to renegotiate their identity. The practice of Javanese still exists, but its articulation is increasingly directed towards Islamic narratives. The pesantren still maintains orthodoxy, but its boundaries are driven by the principles of local wisdom. Modernity

³⁰ Sunyoto and Wagima "PANCASILA VILLAGE AS A HARMONIOUS LIVING SPACE: INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES FROM THE ARCHIPELAGO WITH THE TRADITIONS OF FAITH ADHERENTS IN PANCASILA VILLAGE, SUKORNO, JEMBER," September 15, 2025, Sukoreno Village, Gang 5.

³¹ Misbakhul Khaer, "The Interconnectedness of the Tarekat with the Outside World in the View of Martin Van Bruinessen," *Spirituality* 6 (2022): 27–38.

³² Sunyoto and Wagima "PANCASILA VILLAGE AS A HARMONIOUS LIVING SPACE: INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES FROM THE ARCHIPELAGO WITH THE TRADITIONS OF FAITH ADHERENTS IN PANCASILA VILLAGE, SUKORNO, JEMBER," September 15, 2025, Sukoreno Village, Gang 5.

³³ Neng Nurya Safitri, "Gus Dur's Philosophical Approach to Pluralism: Insights for Social Harmony in Indonesia," *Islamic Thought Review* 2, no. 2 (2024): 129–39.

³⁴ Sunyoto and Wagima "PANCASILA VILLAGE AS A HARMONIOUS LIVING SPACE: INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC

VALUES FROM THE ARCHIPELAGO WITH THE TRADITIONS OF FAITH ADHERENTS IN PANCASILA VILLAGE, SUKORNO, JEMBER," September 15, 2025, Sukoreno Village, Gang 5.

³⁵ Mohammad Lukman Chakim and Muhammad Habib Adi Putra, "A Study of the Encounter of Kejawen Mysticism and Islamic Mysticism," *Spirituality*. Accessed from <https://iainkediri.airconditioning.id>, 2023, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/88d8/49e8ad2920ae823674cee0aeba76b372fd5.pdf>.

³⁶ Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, "Digital Islam: New Space for Authority and Religious Commodification among Islamic Preachers in Contemporary Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 19, no. 1 (2025): 161–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-024-00570-z>.

³⁷ Syamsul Rijal, "Pursuing Hijrah to Salafi Path: Urban Muslim Youth and the Quest for Self-Transformation in Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 19, no. 1 (2025): 101–21, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-024-00564-x>.

entered, but was unable to break the cultural roots that had been firmly rooted. This struggle is what forms the religious identity of the Sukoreno people who are flexible, adaptive, and inclusive.³⁸

Conclusions

In this study, it can be concluded that the interaction between pesantren and religious schools in South Jember takes place through a delicate and sustainable cultural negotiation process. Pesantren, with the scientific and moral authority possessed by the kiai, serves as a center for the formation of orthodoxy as well as an interpreter of local traditions so that they remain in harmony with Islamic values. On the other hand, local schools of belief maintain their existence through cultural symbols, rites, and narratives that are passed down from generation to generation. The meeting of the two did not result in open conflict, but formed a pattern of social harmony built on the basis of respect, passive tolerance, and strategies of avoiding confrontation. The religious identity of the people of South Jember is therefore not single, but is formed as a synthesis between pesantren teachings, Javanese values, and the flexible and inclusive practice of Islam in the archipelago.

Global modernity presents new dynamics that also affect the construction of people's religion. The flow of digital information, migration, and economic change bring puritan and normative religious patterns that are increasingly accessible, especially through social media. However, society does not accept modernity raw, but cultivates it through a local value frame that has taken root. Pesantren plays a role as a cultural buffer that keeps the influence of modernity from erasing tradition, but instead enriching the way people understand religion. This dialectic between modernity, local traditions, and pesantren authority produces an adaptive, dynamic, and still rooted in local wisdom, making South Jember a space where tradition and modernity do not negate each other, but strengthen each other.

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³⁸ Yudha Catur Pamungkas et al., "The construction of social reality in Indonesia in the role of media and cultural identity in the

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