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Traditional and Resilience of Religious Moderation at Pesantren of Karangasem Muhammadiyah, Lamongan

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TRADITION AND RESILIENCE OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION AT PESANTREN OF KARANGASEM MUHAMMADIYAH, LAMONGAN

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Abstrak: Pesantren memiliki tradisi dan resiliensi moderasi Islam dari infiltrasi ideologi radikalisme agama. Tradisi moderasi itu bersumber dari pengajaran agama yang inklusif, serta kharisma dan keluasan ilmu agama dari figur kiai. Berbagai tradisi moderasi tersebut sekaligus menjadi strategi resiliensi, ditambah dengan komitmen pesantren terhadap kedaulatan negara. Secara lebih terperinci, artikel ini membahas bentuk ketahanan Pesantren Karangasem Muhammadiyah Lamongan dari ideologi ekstremisme kekerasan agama. Artikel ini mengajukan dua pertanyaan, yaitu bagaimana bentuk ketahanan Pesantren Karangasem dari ideologi ekstremisme agama dan bagaimana bentuk ketahanan tersebut dapat berimplikasi mencegah masuknya aktor-aktor Islam radikal dalam aktifitas sosial-keagamaan pesantren dan warga sekitar. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan, Pesantren Karangasem merupakan lembaga pendidikan Islam yang berkontribusi dalam mendesiminasikan moderasi beragama melalui bentuk-bentuk resiliensi yang bersumber dari karisma kiai dan tradisi intelektual Islam pesantren. Kajian ini juga menegaskan, meski infiltrasi gerakan terorisme dan radikalisme agama masif terjadi, namun praktik kosmopolitanisme Islam yang menjadi watak kehidupan beragama masyarakat pesisir Lamongan senantiasa tetap terjaga. Kata Kunci: Pesantren, Terorisme, Moderasi Beragama, Kiai, Pendidikan Islam.

Abstract: Islamic boarding school (pesantren) has the tradition and resilience of Islamic moderation from the ideological infiltration of religious radicalism. The moderation tradition stems from inclusive religious teaching, as well as the charisma and breadth of religious knowledge of kiai figures. These various traditions of moderation are at the same time a strategy for resilience, coupled with pesantren's commitment to state sovereignty. In more detail, this article discusses the resilience of the Pesantren Karangasem Muhammadiyah Lamongan from the ideology of religious violent extremism.





This article asks two questions. The first is how the form of resilience of the Pesantren Karangasem is from the ideology of religious extremism and how this form of resilience can have implications for preventing the entry of radical Islamic actors in the socio-religious activities of the pesantren and local residents. This study concludes that Pesantren Karangasem is an Islamic educational institution that contributes to disseminating religious moderation through forms of resilience that originate from the charisma of the kiai and the Islamic intellectual tradition of pesantren. This study also confirms that although massive infiltration of terrorism and religious radicalism has occurred, the practice of Islamic cosmopolitanism which is the character of the religious life of the Lamongan coastal community is always maintained. **Keywords:** Pesantren, Terrorism, Religious Moderation, Kiai, Islamic

INTRODUCTION

Education.

Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) becomes good practice in the prevention of the ideology of radical Islam. This Islamic educational institution has inherited various attitudes of openness and respect for diversity. Pesantren also has resilience based on social cohesion through the charisma of the figure of kiai (teacher in pesantren) and modern models of religious education. The resilience of pesantren takes place through an internal system that forms social cohesion, which then builds its own social identity. It is this social cohesion that fortifies the pesantren community from a new identity that came later in the form of radical Islamic actors.²

Pesantren in Indonesia always cultivate the values of peace, democracy, multiculturalism, and moderate attitude. Kathleen E. Woodward (2015) appreciated the important role of pesantren in disseminating accommodative thoughts on democracy and the political system of the nation state. This was because it was influenced by the process of teaching Islam in Pesantren which was not anti-new ideas. Woodward said that religious doctrine taught in Islamic boarding schools was not carried out rigidly and literally. On the contrary, it prioritized critical and contextual thinking.³

Although there were some scholars who identify Pesantren as a hotbed for terrorists, most of them reject it. Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikand, and Martin van Bruinessen (2008) argued that this statement was very unreasonable. Even if there we remilitias with Islamic boarding school education, it had nothing to do with the learning

³ Kathleen E. Woodward. "Indonesian Schools: Shaping the Future of Islam and Democracy in a Democratic Muslim Country". Journal of International Education and Leadership, Vol. 5, Issue 1 (2015), 2.



¹ Marzuki, Miftahuddin, and Mukhamad Murdiono. "Multicultural Education in Salaf Pesantren and Prevention of Religious Radicalism in Indonesia" *Cakrawala Pendidikan: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*, Vol. 39, No. 1, February 2020. 14.

² Irfan Abubakar and Idris Hemay. "Pesantren Resilience: The Path to Prevent Radicalism and Violent Extremism". *Studia Islamika*. Vol. 27, No.2 (2020), 398.



system or Islamic education curriculum that took place in Islamic boarding school. The radicalization process was influenced by various factors, one of which arised because of the assumption that Muslim countries were experiencing a decline and socio-economic injustice as a result of the progress experienced by Western countries. It was this provocative discourse that most dominantly became the doctrine of radicalization of extremist groups.⁴

DISCUSSION

Various pesantren under the management of Muhammadiyah have traditions and resilience of religious moderation that are centered on two things: *First*, through various subject matter oriented towards patriotism attitude The internalization of the values of nationalism is taught in Muhammadiyah pesantren through the example of the Islamic boarding school stakeholders. Likewise, in the teaching and learning process in the classroom and the material content in various extracurricular activities always contains aspects of nationalism, as seen in the participation of students in *Hizbul Wathan* (scouting movement/ HW) and Muhammadiyah Student Association (IPM). The two autonomous Muhammadiyah organizations teach young people to become cosmopolitan human beings: respecting differences, loving peace, and living up to the values of tolerance, honesty, justice, unity, and compassion for all beings.

Second, The resilience of Muhammadiyah's pesantren also occurs because kiai becames a charismatic figure. The figure of the Islamic boarding school kiai is considered charismatic because he is skilled in Arabic, masters *nahwu* and *sharaf*, memorizes the Qur'an, and teaches books by classical theologian or Islamic scholars, as well as being able to become leaders and managers in the pesantren. The point is that kiai, as a figure of pesantren, is a role model since he masters Islamic sciences and teaches them to the wider community.

In addition, the resilience of pesantren is firmly rooted and growing because of the role of kiai and alumni who are able to become religious references for society. Thousands of Muhammadiyah pesantren alumni have become religious teachers and missionaries who play a major role in building moderate religious attitudes and understanding.

Pesantren of Karangasem Muhammadiyah, located in Paciran, Lamongan, which was founded by KH. Abdurrahman Syamsuri on October 18, 1948 is a prototype of an Islamic educational institution that has both models of resilience. This is because, *first*, as in general Islamic educational institutions under the management of Muhammadiyah, the practice of Islamic education at Pesantren of Karangasem is in line with the educational philosophy of Muhammadiyah, which emphasizes inclusiveness, rationality, plurality and mastery of information technology. Likewise with the implementation of the curriculum. Pesantren of Karangasem is always relevant to the ideology of Pancasila; *Second*, the Karangasem Islamic Boarding School is led by a charismatic kiai. KH. Abdurrahman

⁴ Bassam Tibi, The Challenge of Fundamentalism: *Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (London: Universty of California Press, 1998), 2.





Syamsuri is a local theologian who has a wide influence in the social and religious life of the people of East Java. Likewise, when this pesantren was led by Kiai Abdul Hakam Mubarok, the coastal communities of Lamongan made their Islamic views a reference for inclusive religious practices.

Both are *kiai* of pesantren who also act as educators, *mubaligh*, teachers, leaders of Muhammadiyah, and role models for the Lamongan community. Therefore, it is not surprising that the authority of the *kiai* figure is the lifeblood of the Karangasem Pesantren. This charisma is one of the social capital that affects the level of trust of the surrounding community to send their children to school at pesantren of Karangasem. Moreover, this social asset is able to fortify the pesantren environment (including the villages surrounding the pesantren) from the infiltration of ideas and movements of religious-based violent extremism.

As most Islamic educational institutions affiliated with Muhammadiyah, Pesantren of Karangasem applies the concept of progressive Islamic education. This pesantren, which is located on the coast of Lamongan, has vission, mission, dan practice of Islamic education curriculum that is in line with the educational philosophy of Muhammadiyah. This Islamic boarding school has a vision to create human beings with spiritual, intellectual and moral balance. Meanwhile, its mission is to make a social life full of peace and tranquility. This vision and mission does not contradict Muhammadiyah's commitment to the state, instead it is a derivative of the key concepts of Muhammadiyah's educational philosophy.

The practice of Islamic education at Pesantren of Karangasem is also not contrary to the national education curriculum. The Islamic boarding school education device is an implementation of an open-minded attitude. The teaching and learning of Islamic sciences is implemented through an integrated approach, an educational method that combines Islamic sciences with general science (secular).

One of the educational institutions under the auspices of the Pesantren of Karangasem is MTS Muhamamdiyah 2. This school collaborates with Cambridge Assessment Education, Cambridge University, by opening an international class entitled *Information Technology Class Program* (ITCP). The teaching in this program is in English. This program also applies a curriculum which is the result of a combination of the national curriculum and the Cambridge University curriculum. The students who are included in this program must stay in the Islamic boarding school and are obliged to memorize a minimum of two juz of the Qur'an, as well as participate in various other Islamic activities.⁵

The ITCP program is an interpretation of the leaders of the Pesantren of Karangasem on the message of Kiai Dahlan's thought that hopes that Muhammadiyah education is encouraged to produce "progressive kiai." In a contextual understanding,

⁶ Here is the statement of KH.A. Dahlan that becomes one of the basic Islamic education philosophy of Muhammaadiyah, "Dadijo kiai sing kemadjoean, ojo kesel anggonmu njamboet gawe kanggo Muhammadiyah". In MT Arifin, Gerakan Pembaruan Muhammadiyah dalam Bidang Pendidikan: Reformasi Gagasan dan Teknik (Surakarta: Bagian Penalaran, Lembaga Pembinaan Mahasiswa UMS, 1985), 74. The article of MT. Arifin was referred to Ky. Sahlan Rosyidi,



 $^{^5}$ Suara Muhammadiyah, "Sambut Tahun Ajaran Baru, Matsamuda Buka Dua Program Unggulan", (7 Desember 2019).



the good practice of producing "progressive kiai" is carried out by realizing three superior programs: (1) Quran memorization; (2) foreign language mastery (Arabic and English); (3) and academic achievement. Through these three programs, Pesantren of Karangasem will be able to harvest *mubaligh*, *hafidz*, *kiai* and scientists who are able to take part at a global level, and remain committed to defending and advancing religion, nation, and state.⁷

Pesantren of Karangasem that have around 2.750 students and 650 employees characterizes itself as an Islamic educational institution that is at the forefront in shaping the generation of al-Qur'an with global perspective. Every student who is in the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Islamic Junior High School) and Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic Senior High School) grades is obligated to memorize al-Qur'an, at least 2-5 juz. Meanwhile, regular junior high and senior high school students are not required to achieve it, but are encouraged to keep memorizing. Various special programs that support the improvement of memorization are held in order to motivate the students to be diligent in maintaining memorization, such as Daurah Tahifdz and international cooperation with the association of Tahfidzul Qur'an Institutions throughout Selangor, Malaysia, al-Qur'an calligraphy skills, and the Khattil al Qur'an competition.

In addition, the students are also taught a number of books of hadith, *tafsir* (interpretation), and *akidah* (faith). Two books of hadith that are popularly used in many Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding schools are *Bulughul Maram* and *Riyadhus Sholihin*. The first book was written by Imam Ibn Hajar al-Astqalani and the second was the work of Imam Abu Zakariya Yahya bin Syaraf an-Nawawy. Both were included in the ranks of the great scholars in the 7th and 8th centuries Hijri. Other books that are taught in afternoon *diniyah* classes are *Ta'limul Muta'alim*, *Minhajul Muslim*, and *Bidayatul Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid*. That last mentioned book is the work of an Islamic philosopher in the middle ages, Ibnu Rusyd. The book *Bidayatul Mujtahid* teaches about various opinions of scholars on fiqh issues.

The teaching of books by classical scholars at Pesantren of Karangasem has become an integral part of the intellectual tradition of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. The teaching of the book lasts as long as the history of the founding of the pesantren. Since its establishment in 1948 until 1997, Kiai Abdurrahman Syamsuri taught classical Islamic books to students directly. The teaching methods applied were *sorogan* dan *bandongan*. However, After Kiai Abdurrahman passed away, the teaching of the

Perkembangan Filsafat Pendidikan dalam Muhammadiyah (Semarang: PWM Dikdasmen Jawa Tengah, 1975), 8.

⁸ Sorogan is a classical Islamic teaching method in traditional Islamic boarding schools where students come to the kiai, then the kiai reads, interprets and explains the meaning sentence by sentence. It is called sorogan because it comes from the Javanese language which means to thrust. While bandongan is the same as wetonan which means a teaching method like lectures. Look at M. Habib Chirzin, "Agama dan Ilmu dalam Pesantren" in M. Dawam Rahardjo (Ed.), *Pesantren dan Pembaharuan*. 5th Ed. (Jakarta, LP3ES: 1995), 88.



⁷ Cited from the statement of Head of Karangasem Fatih Futhoni Islamic Boarding School Education Section in Suara Muhammadiyah, "Pesantren Karangasem Paciran Cetak Generasi Qur'ani Berwawasan Global" (23 Oktober 2018). Dikutip pada Senin, 25 Januari 2021.



book was continued by his son, Kiai Abdul Hakam Mubarok, and two other educators in the Islamic boarding school, Kiai Anwar Mu'rob and Kiai Mufti Labib.

Along with advances in information technology, the teaching of books by classical scholars at the Pesantren of Karangasem is no longer carried out in form of *sorogan* or *wetonan*. In August 2020, the pesantren administrators initiated a YouTube application-based television called *Al Manar TV*. This social media involvement is intended so that the study of classical Islamic books, interpretations of the Qur'an, and Islamic lectures can be enjoyed by all students, local residents, and the wider community.

The students are expected to be able to understand the classical Islamic books taught at the Pesantren of Karangasem. This is intended to be a provision of knowledge that can be given to the wider community in the future.

Mastery of classical Islamic books contributes to the formation of a cosmopolitan style of Islamic thought for all stakeholders of Karangasem Islamic Boarding School. Meanwhile, for the surrounding community, religious recitations held after dawn prayers and broadcast through *Al Manar TV* can be an alternative to get references to moderate Islamic views. Moreover, the religious life of the Lamongan coastal community is being faced with religious infiltration initiated by fundamentalist Islamic movements.

In general, the tradition of studying classical Islamic books in pesantren has been going on for a long time. The books are taught by a kiai by not just being read and interpreted from Arabic texts into Indonesian or Javanese. The purpose of these classical Islamic books is to teach students to have a moderate, inclusive attitude and respect different views. As is the case with studying the book *Bidayatul Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid*, which is taught so that students are accustomed to dealing with differences of opinion and are open to new ideas even though what is being challenged is figh issues.

On the other hand, Pesantren of Karangasem also emphasizes various extracurricular activities that support the ability of students in foreign languages. Every morning Arabic and English courses are held for all students with their respective grade levels. Then, students are also trained to be able to make speeches in these two languages through the *Muhadlorah* program. Meanwhile, extracurricular activities aimed at strengthening the commitment of students to state sovereignty, character building, and leadership development are carried out through Scouts and the involvement of students in the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IPM).

Pesantren of Karangasem can be considered as an open, transparent, competent, and dynamic Islamic boarding school with respect to the times. The integration of Islamic and general education which is implemented in pesantren curriculum is proof that this Islamic boarding school is competent and able to answer the challenges of the times.

Various programs of learning activities and Islamic activities of the students are important to create resilience from the infiltration of terrorism ideology. Moreover, Pesantren of Karangasem is located around the north coast of Lamongan, which is a vulnerable area exposed to the ideas of terrorism and various acts of religious violent extremism in the last two decades. Moreover, this area was once the enclave of the ISIS movement.

In general, the resilience model owned by Karangasem Islamic Boarding School can also fortify local residents from extremist ideologies. This is because the Lamongan





coastal community, which has a strong character and is geographically densely populated with a strong Islamic culture, can create opportunities for the entry of radical Islamic actors.

Charismatic Kiai Figure

The north coast of East Java is a paradoxical area. On the one hand, it is known as *santri* area, but on the other hand, it is a location for movements for organizations characterized by religious extremism. The reason for being called as santri cultured society is because there are many pesantrens with charismatic kiai leadership. In the pre-independence era, there were a number of popular kiai such as Kiai Abdurrahman Syamsuri (Karangasem Islamic Boarding School), Kiai Abdul Ghofur and Kiai Mustofa Karim (Kranji Islamic Boarding School), and Kiai Amin (Al-Amin Tunggul Islamic Boarding School). These kiai have strong authority because of their breadth in understanding Islamic sciences. These kiai always act as charismatic theologian in the community and become leaders on the battlefield.

One of the charismatic kiai who left a great legacy in the Islamic intellectual tradition of Islamic boarding school is Kiai Abdurrahman Syamsuri. He was born on October I, 1925. His father, Kiai Syamsuri, and his grandfather, Kiai Idris, were two respected kiai in Lamongan. Kiai Abdurrahman's grandfather and father taught him religious sciences since he was little. Both of them became role models who inspired Kiai Abdurrahman to become *mubaligh*, teacher, kiai, as well as organizational activist. He was a polite, diligent, and intelligent child. Because of his speed in mastering the religious sciences, his father sent little Abdurrahman to Kiai Fattah in Tulungagung to memorize and study the knowledge of the Qur'an. Kiai Abdurrahman completed memorizing 30 juz of the Qur'an at the age of 15.

Kiai Abdurrahman was a key agent in building resilience from the ideology of religious-based violent extremism in Karangasem Islamic Boarding School. He was known as a charismatic scholar because of his simple life, in addition to having intellectual depth in the field of Islamic sciences. Kiai Abdurrahman lives his life as a farmer and carpenter and limestone from morning to evening. Then at evening, he gave lectures and taught the Ouran to his students.

Kiai Abdurrahman was known as a *mubaligh* who is polite, tolerant, compassionate, had wide associations, and was open-minded. He was able to make friends with various movement figures and scholars from various organizations with different ideologies. Kiai Abdurrahman's association with leaders of Islamic organizations, such as M. Nastir, H. Misbach, and many Islamic boarding schools' *kiai* in East Java earned him the admiration of many people.

In terms of leadership, he was a member of the Lamongan DPRD from Masyumi Party (1958). He is also known to have been active in Islamic youth organizations, the Anshor Youth Movement (GP Anshor) and the Indonesian Islamic Youth Movement (GPII); as well as his leadership in Islamic society organization, Director of PGA Muhammadiyah, Paciran (1957), Head of Education and Teaching Council, PCM Blimbing (1960), Head of PCM Paciran (1967), Head of PDM Lamongan (1977-1992), *Tarjih* and *Tanwir* Assembly, PP Muhammadiyah (1978-1992), Head of Education Section Ittihad





al'Ma'ahid al-Islamiyah, and member of Indonesian Ulama Council, Level I Regionns of East Java (1971).9

In addition to being a kiai and leader of a pesantren, Kiai Abdurrahman was also an activist in the Islamic movement, *mubaligh*, politician, teacher, as well as a court judge who deals with divorce. He was also a *hafidz* who mastered *nahwu*, *sharaf*, *al-jalalain tafsir* (interpretation), *musthalahul hadist*, *figh*, *faraidh* and other various Islamic sciences.

This was because Kiai Abdurrahman had an educational background from a number of Salafiyah-style Islamic boarding schools in East Java, such as the Kranji Pesantren (Lamongan), Pesantren of Mangunsari (Tulungagung), Pesantren of Tebu Ireng (Jombang), and Pesantren of Kedunglo (Kediri). Therefore, Kiai Abdurrahman's charisma had succeeded in attracting teenagers from many villages on the coast of Lamongan to study at Pesantren of Karangasem since its inception.

Kiai Abdurrahman taught them various Islamic books by classical Islamic scholars. When teaching the classical Islamic books, he used sorogan method, which was typical of the Islamic learning model in traditional pesantren. Some of the classical Islamic books that he taught were Fathul Mu'in, Kitab Taqrib, Rahmatul Ummah, Tafsir Jalalain, dan Kifayatul Akhyar. 11

Kiai Abdurrahman also taught *tajwid* and *tartil* of the Qur'an, *nahwu* and *sharaf*, *tafsir*, the science of the Qur'an and the science of al-Hadith. In this context, it can be understood that Kiai Abdurrahman orientated the Pesantren of Karangasem as a hut as well as a madrasa which became a place to live and study together. He was also a reference for the surrounding community in various religious and social matters, such as the distribution of inheritance, naming children, marital affairs, divorce and so on.

Mastery of various classical Islamic books, preachers, and competent social activists is an authentic recognition from the Lamongan community towards Kiai Abdurrahman as a charismatic kiai. Zamakhsyari Dhofier argues that the more difficult the classical Islamic books are taught, the more a kiai will be admired by the public. The possession of charisma in Islamic boarding school kiai in general, including Pesantren of Karangasem which has had thousands of students since the 1980s, is the embodiment of the Islamic doctrine which regulates that every human being has a relationship between

 $^{^{12}}$ The mention of "Karangasem" is based on two facts, namely a large yard where a large and shady tamarind tree stands. When entering prayer time, students climb this tamarind tree and sound the call to prayer on the tree. Look at Faris Ma'ani, Bambang Siswoyo, and Haris Abdul Hakim. Sekokoh Karang, Seteduh Pohon Asem..., 29-32.



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⁹ Cited from Robithoh Islami. "Geliat Perguruan Muhammadiyah....", 48-49, in Ihsan Ahmad Fauzan, *Pondok Karangasem, Perspektif Kesejarahan dan Kelembagaan* (Lamongan: Biro Administrasi Informatika dan Lembaga Pendidikan Komputer Karangasem), 18.

¹⁰ Robithoh Islami. "Geliat Perguruan Muhammadiyah: Pesantren Karangasem Paciran Lamongan 1976-1983". Skripsi (Surabaya: UNAIR, 2011), 50-54.

 $^{^{11}}$ Cited from interview of Robithoh Islami to Imam Nawawi in Robithoh Islami "Geliat Perguruan Muhammadiyah ..., $52\,$



each other and also with God. In this context, Islamic teachings provide breadth for the kiai figure to establish a very strong relationship with the community. 13

Closing

The form of tradition and resilience of religious moderation in Pesantren of Karangasem stems from the charisma of the kiai who lead the pesantren. This authority is obtained from their legitimacy as scholars who master Islamic sciences, memorize the Qur'an, teachers and advocates of religion, as well as leaders and activists of religious organizations. The various Islamic views of the pesantren kiai are based on their studies of authoritative Islamic books written by classical scholars. This charisma is embedded indirectly from the students and the surrounding community, thus making the kiai a role model in behaving according to Islamic teachings.

In addition, a form of religious moderation resilience is also found in the practice of Islamic education that has been running at Pesantren of Karangasem. The Islamic education curriculum follows the national curriculum, by integrating it into various Islamic subject matter. An example is that students are encouraged to learn and memorize the Qur'an and al-Hadith, as well as master Arabic and English. To foster an attitude of nationalism, pesantren facilitates the students with extracurricular activities such as joining IPM and scouts. Then, teaching classical Islamic books educates students to respect teachers or older people, be open to different views (religious), tolerant, justice, peace, and care about humanitarian issues.

The tradition and resilience of religious moderation at Pesantren of Karangasem has implications for the formation of a moderate and cosmopolitan Lamongan coastal community's religious style. This is due to two things; *First*, the charismatic kiai figure inspires local residents to behave religiously as reflected by their role models; *Second*, Pesantren of Karangasem has hundreds of alumni who become *mubaligh* and religious teachers spread across a number of areas on the coast of Java such as Babat, Gresik, Bojonegoro, Surabaya, Tuban, Pati, Rembang and others. These alumni become important agents in the spread of moderate Islamic character. They can be called as local kiai in a village, who become role models and have leadership influence at the local level, so that their role in the community can be a resilience of religious moderation from the infiltration of movements of radical Islamic actors.

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¹³ Zamaksyari Dhofier. Tradisi Pesantren....., 95.



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