

## **THE TRADITIONALISM OF THE ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE ERA OF MODERNIZATION**

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**Abstract:** In a system, education cannot be separated from the various life systems that surround it. The education system must always metamorphose towards a more ideal level. In the modern era, it is assumed that traditional Islamic boarding schools will experience changes, but the problem is when carrying out changes (modernization) do salafiyyah Islamic boarding schools leave their traditions? This study aims to find out how the policy of the Islamic boarding school will be carried out when there is a need to maintain its traditions and the desire for modernization? This is because the connotations between tradition and modernization are two camps that are difficult to unite. Answering these questions, the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School is used as a material for discussion, using qualitative descriptive methods and historical sociological and phenomenological approaches the author tries to analyze the education system that is run. The results of the research show that the education system of the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School is a combination of elements of traditionalism and modernization. The renewal of the salafiyyah Islamic boarding school education system on the one hand is a linear process, meaning that the elements of the education system have been updated in response to modernity, but on the other hand, there is a necessity to stick to the traditional paradigm. So, in essence, the changes that occur in the boarding school system are a process of changing the creation of integral education.

**Keywords:** Islamic Boarding School; Education System; Modernization; Traditionalism.

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is a dualism in education; religious education and general education. One of the religious education (Islam) is "Islamic boarding school". The discourse of modernizing the Islamic education system in Indonesia has also experienced a "feud" between the traditionalist group presented by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the reformist group, Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah and NU are mainstream Islamic social organizations in Indonesia established before Indonesia's independence. These two organizations drive the renewal of Islamic thought, da'wah, social, health, and education. They have thousands of educational institutions spread throughout Indonesia and play an essential role in developing Islamic education (Hamami, 2021). Indonesia also received an excellent predicate in terms of security due to the lack of riots involving ethnic and religious groups despite being multi-cultural and religious (Musawar & Suhirman, 2021). Of course, this is inseparable from the role played by NU and Muhammadiyah.

As the organizer of Islamic boarding school education within NU itself, the discourse of modernization has not been entirely accepted by all parties, even amid the modernization of pesantren recently, there are several tendencies for pesantren to maintain or even return to their

salafiyyah character (Azra, 2019). The interaction of salafiyyah Islamic boarding schools with modernity has made pesantren a dilemmatic choice. The two became rivalries that gave rise to bargaining and even a kind of tug of war which was quite tiring, giving rise to new paradigms in Islamic boarding school education. In response to these two interests, various patterns of Islamic boarding schools arise, so these educational institutions do not have uniformity compared to government-owned educational institutions. This is natural because Islamic boarding schools are managed by various parties with different perceptions about qualified education systems.

Islamic boarding schools have existed in Indonesia from pre-colonial times until today (Isbah, 2020). Its existence in various regions essentially has its own experiences. In East Lampung Regency, the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School is classified as a boarding school that is still young because it is only about 7 years old. However, the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School (PP) cannot be said to be an institution that does not have high integrity because the founder and caretaker of the pesantren, as well as some of the administrators and Asatidz, had previously been in the pesantren world for a long time, especially the caregiver KH. Muchtar Sya'roni Ms. is the Rois Syuriah of East Lampung district for 2009-2014 and 2014-2019. Previously, he had also founded the Salafiyyah Miftahul Falaah Islamic Boarding School, which still exists since it was founded about 37 years ago.

Several previous studies discuss the state of pesantren. For example, Ahmad explained the contribution of traditional pesantren to the Indonesian people. In his research, it is explained that many national figures were born from the womb of conventional Islamic boarding schools. Still, he has not yet relevant the pesantren education system to the current era (Muhakamurrohman, 2014). Hamid, in his research, reveals the thoughts of Imam Zarkasyi in modernizing traditional pesantren by introducing a modern system (Zarkasyi, 2020). However, introducing it is like creating a new education system and merging the existence of the salafiyyah education system. Sura, in his work, describes the challenges of pesantren in the era of globalization and the changes made by traditional pesantren (Suradi, 2018). However, he did not reveal and emphasize the basic ideology that Traditionalist Islamic boarding schools must defend. So far, the author has not found any significant field research discussing these three aspects systematically. This study aims to directly reveal the thoughts of traditional boarding school caregivers to maintain the ideology of their traditional pesantren and be applied in the salafiyyah education system faced with the current era of modernization.

Pondok Pesantren Assya'roniyyah wants to continue to adhere to the Salafiyyah education system, but in reality, it is not an easy thing to maintain, new problems keep popping up, such as the number of students getting less and less and people's interest in collaborative education between religious education and general education. On that basis, researchers are interested in seeing how the PP education system is. Assya'roniyyah faced a dilemma as mentioned above.

Strictly speaking, when faced with the need to maintain traditionalism and the desire to modernize (renewal)? how does this Islamic boarding school present its system? The results of this study are expected to contribute in the form of an overview of the social conditions of Islamic boarding schools, which have a concept of organizing their education system so that observers of Islamic education and all parties can understand and support the existence of Islamic boarding schools.

## **METHOD**

This type of research is qualitative research, the author tries to describe the social *situations* it is in the scope of the problem of Islamic boarding school education, then relates it to the theoretical basis of this research. In its implementation, researchers use case *studies*, namely strategies or methods as well as research results in certain cases. This research is intended to collect data, make meaning, and gain an understanding of the case (Syaodih, 2009). In this case, the case study is the one at the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School.

In terms of approach, this research uses a historical, sociological, and phenomenological approach. The historical approach is used to publish the history of Islamic boarding schools. The sociological approach is used to find out the dynamics of human interactions that occur in the life of Islamic boarding schools that can be fully revealed. While the phenomenological approach is used to emphasize a person's subjective experience and the interpretation given to his surroundings. Data collection techniques in this study used the method of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The object of observation in this study consists of three components, namely: a) *Place* or a place where interactions in social situations are taking place. As for this research, it is at the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School. b) *Actors*, actors, or people who play a certain role in action research include Pesantren Caregivers, Chairpersons of Foundations, Educators or *Asatidz*, Management, and Santri. c) *Activity*, or activities carried out by actors in ongoing social situations.

Meanwhile, about the informants selected, the researcher uses a purposive sampling technique, namely the researcher chooses people who are considered to know the problems to be studied. In the initial stage when entering the field, the sample of data sources is selected from those who have *authority* and *power* so that it will make it easier for researchers to collect data anywhere. In this case, the researcher chose the caretaker of the Islamic boarding school, namely KH. Muchtar Sya'roni as the data source in the early stages of the research, then with H. Agus M. Bahrul Ulum as the Chair of the Foundation followed by H. Agus M. Afifudin as the academic director of PP Assya'roniyyah, then the *Asatidz*, Islamic boarding school administrators and students.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Traditionalism

As the oldest institutions in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools have always preserved educational values based on traditional teaching. The preservation of formal systems and methodologies has made pesantren of this model to be called traditional pesantren. Protection of these values can be easily traced in the lives of students who live in simplicity every day, learn selflessly and responsibly, and are bound by a high sense of solidarity.

The salafiyah Islamic boarding school education system as a traditional Islamic educational institution can be seen in two senses, namely the understanding from a physical point of view and an understanding from a cultural perspective. From this point of view *physical*, the pesantren is an educational complex consisting of at least five essential elements, namely the hut, the mosque, the santri, the yellow books (classical), and the kai (Dhofier, 2011). In terms of the teaching method, Islamic boarding schools also have their characteristics such as the slogan method, wetonan (band organ), memorization (tahfidz), mudzakah (deliberation), munazharah, lectures, and others (Suwito, 2004). From a *cultural point of view*, traditionalism includes a broader understanding starting from the distinctive values that are intrinsically inherent in the pattern of life of the santri community, such as obedience and obedience to the kyai as the central figure, sincere and *humble attitudes*, as well as traditions in religion that are passed down from generation to generation. Because of the unique life of the pesantren, Abdurrahman Wahid placed the position of pesantren as a sub-culture, with three main elements forming (sub-culture) pesantren, namely: independent pesantren leadership; books that become general references that last from time to time; and the value *system used* in the pesantren environment is strongly influenced by the provisions of fiqh, then the values of Sufism are practiced in the form of the leading practice (*fadhail al-a`mal*) (Djamas, 2009), and Ash'ariyyah theology or *ahl al-sunnah was al-jama`ah*.

Geographically PP Assya`roniyyah is located in a rural area. However, this pesantren requires santri to reside and reside in dormitories. Almost all cottage buildings are permanent and semi-permanent buildings. In this boarding school, there are 10 dormitories inhabited by 130 male *santri* and 12 dormitories inhabited by 180 female *santri*, the total number of students recorded is 310 *sentry*.

Gus Bahrul Uluum views that the obligation of students to be in dormitories as a condition for registration of PP Assya`roniyyah is not only intended to maintain the traditionality of Islamic boarding schools but has real relevance in educational efforts. According to him, by staying in the pesantren complex, the formation of the character (morals) of the students can be incentivized. Santri who lives in Islamic boarding schools, gets more guidance, especially in implementing

worship. According to Gus Uluum's assessment, mukim students generally have better character (morals) than students *bat*. This assessment is based on the students' attitude towards the teachers in the pesantren, the spirit of learning, and discipline. In addition, their obedience is more visible, and their greeting is more polite. The emotional relationship created will also create a good family atmosphere between students and educators.

Commitment to keep teaching the yellow books in PP Assya'roniyyah is given to continue the primary goal of the pesantren, namely educating prospective ulama who are loyal to the *Ahl-al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah* or traditional Islamic ideology (salafiyyah). According to the krai, the yellow book is the main characteristic of Islamic boarding schools that must be preserved. Their belief that the sciences taught in the yellow book still have relevance for all ages. The reforms carried out by Islamic boarding schools should not displace the existence of the yellow book. The fault is not in the yellow book, but in the past, the educational orientation of Islamic boarding schools was still narrow; only aimed at *tafaqquh fi al-din* (ukhrowi) and put aside the practical needs obtained through general sciences (dinuawi) so that Islamic boarding schools seem old-fashioned and left behind. The yellow book is still helpful as a treasure trove of Islamic scholarship and from a practical point of view in everyday life.

When the author talked with the leadership of PP Assya'roniyyah regarding the ideals of his students, he said:

"At this time, pesantren do not expect all of their students to become Kyai or Ulama. Three to five percent of the santri who become ulama are enough to provide benefits for the future of Islam. The current pesantren alumni are expected to be able to fill all lines of employment in various sectors of life, both within the government and in private companies. By occupying strategic positions, it is hoped that alumni will be able to carry Islamic values in the various types of work they are involved in so that Islamic teachings are not only in theory but can be applied in all aspects of life (KH Muhtar Sya'roni, komunikasi pribadi, t.t.).

In the PP teaching system, Assya'roniyyah also remains istiqomah using the bandongan system (halaqoh) and the sorogan system. In some of his studies, he used the methods of *mudzakarah*, *muhadharah*, and *tahfidz*. Traditionalism is a commitment carried out so that PP Assya'roniyyah can maintain the Islamic tradition, reproduce the Ulama and become the transmission of Islamic knowledge. In addition, the culture of the Salafi boarding school is to practice the values of fiqh, Sufism, and morality. The correct religious ideology according to the pesantren kyai is ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah which is culturally affiliated to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) with unique characteristics such as Syafi'i madhhab, monotheistic faith following Asy'ariyah Maturidiyah and in the field of Sufism following Imam Junaid Al-Baghdadi and Imam Al-Ghozali. Apart from that, Salaf pesantren santri also have different scientific qualities from modern Pondok santri, among others, as follows:

1. Mastering the yellow book or classical Islamic literature and various religious disciplines.

2. Master the grammar of Arabic or Nahwu, Sharaf, balaghah (ma`any, bayan, badi '), and logic in depth. These sciences are studied seriously and given a significant portion in the curriculum of pesantren salaf in addition to Syafi'i school jurisprudence.
3. In understanding the Arabic book, Salaf students use the system of meaning of *gandul* and the meaning of free translation at the same time.

### **Modernization**

In the early twentieth century Muslim society was a rising community. Ricklefs, as quoted by Arief Subhan, said that "an era is dawning" marked by the birth of the Islamic reform movement. Islamic regions in the Middle East, such as Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, and to a certain extent, Saudi Arabia, are undergoing Islamic reform movements. The modernization that took place in the Middle East spread throughout the Islamic world, including Indonesia (Subhan, 2012).

In Indonesia itself, there have been various changes in Islam that can be described as revival, renewal, and even enlightenment (renaissance). The education sector is no exception. Changes in education patterns and systems in Islamic boarding schools are a response to the modernization of Islamic education as implications and socio-economic changes in society. Karel A. Steenbrink identified that there were 4 crucial driving factors for the change in Islamic education in Indonesia, especially at the beginning of the 20th century, namely: 1) the emergence in several places of the desire to return to the Qur'an and Sunnah, which is the central theme of This tendency is to reject *taqlid*. 2) the nature of resistance to the Dutch colonial rulers, 3) the strong efforts of the Muslims to strengthen their organization in the socio-economic field 4) the renewal of Islamic education.

The modernization of education in PP Assya`roniyyah stems from the wishes and aspirations of the guardians of students and the community to make public education. Mrs. Nyai Umi Latifah, the wife of KH. Muchtar Sya`roni also agreed and said that the system implemented by the Islamic boarding school at that time was considered not as expected by the community. Pesantren's education has not been able to communicate with the outside world. He also realized that along with the times and advances in technology, the education system *Salaf* tends to be monotonous and less varied. On that basis, he received input from the community and the guardians of the center to continue implementing salafiyyah education and added general education to answer and respond to the process of development of the times.

This is in line with what has been conveyed by his son Gus Muhammad Bahru Uluum as Chairman of the Assya`roniyyah Foundation when the author was interviewed as follows:

"If Islamic boarding school education is slow and insensitive in responding to changing times and community needs, then in the future pesantren will not be able to compete with public schools. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools must start holding communication and *sharing* between institutions so that they can establish mutually beneficial partnerships."

The concrete steps taken by PP Assya'roniyyah in the modernization of the pesantren education system include reforming madrasa education, curriculum integration, modernizing teaching methods and facilities (infrastructure) of pesantren, such as the realization of a computer laboratory, futsal field, drum band equipment and internet networks within the pesantren (Ust. Saepudin, S.Pd.I, personal communication, t.t.). Next, PP Assya'roniyyah organizes various educational programs, including the renewal of the madrasa education pathway carried out classically. In the morning, there are formal (general) school activities, and in the evening, the implementation of the madrasah diniyyah. In this madrasa education, the students are divided into several levels or levels of education, and each level consists of classes. For public schools consist of; MI Assya'roniyyah, Islamic Middle School Assya'roniyyah and SMK Islam Assya'roniyyah. for the madrasah diniyyah level are; Ula, Wustho and Ulya. The delivery of subject matter in schools and madrasahs at PP Assya'roniyyah uses several teaching methods according to the level of need and looks at their effectiveness. Currently, the teaching method in the madrasa is not only using conventional methods but has undergone changes and uses variations of ways according to the times. In addition, there are also various types of additional educational programs, namely Majelis Murotilil Qur'an (MMQ) and Tahfidzul Qur'an.

During an interview with the caretaker of the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School, KH Muchtar Sya'roni said "The Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School organizes formal education (MI-SMP-SMA Islam Assya'roniyyah) as well as part of maintaining the existence of the current traditional pesantren. In the past, the santri maintained their food by being accompanied by workers looking for money for their survival. Currently, the guardians of the students do not want to house their children if it is not accompanied by formal education."

From the explanation above, it can be seen that PP Assya'roniyyah currently teaches not only religious sciences sourced from the yellow book but also general sciences through the madrasa system or formal schools. Thus, the dichotomy of science as a paradigm has been applied in Islamic boarding schools in the context of PP Assya'roniyyah. On that basis, the author is interested in confirming the classification of science according to Imam Al-Ghazali; were studying religion is *fardhu 'ain* and general knowledge is *fardhu kifayah*. Such a concept has given rise to an understanding that studying religious knowledge alone produces rewards while studying general knowledge is only for worldly interests with no ukhrawi value (Karim, 2010).

The question is whether PP still holds such a concept. Assya'roniyyah? Responding to this question, Agus HM Afiffudin, S.Pd.I commented, "Islam is not against general science, but what needs to be underlined is the intention to achieve it, which needs to be straightened out or corrected. If we use it for good, it will also be of worship value. As an educational institution, we strive to accommodate the needs of the world and the hereafter so that students can achieve two good things. In the Qur'an, Allah SWT says: *"Our Lord, give us goodness in this world and goodness*

*in the hereafter and protect us from the torments of hell".* (Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 201) Ideologically, religious knowledge must remain elevated, but the pesantren need to get the same (balanced) allocation in practice. Religious knowledge must still be glorified because developing general knowledge must be based on the spirit of religion. In other words, the development of general knowledge must be based on religious principles. In addition, the Islamic concept is clear that the hereafter is better than worldly life. (Surah Al-Dhuha [93]: 4) One thing that needs to be clarified is that the concept that Imam Al-Ghazali proposed should not make Muslims underestimate the sciences. general, let alone reject it."

Furthermore, in carrying out the modernization of PP, Assya`roniyyah also renews the components of education, starting from the formulation, reorientation, and integration of the vision, mission, and educational goals. At this time, the curriculum of PP Assya`roniyyah is divided into two: *First*, the curriculum made by the Islamic boarding school itself (Islamic boarding school) and *second*, the school's curriculum (Kemendikbud and Ministry of Religion). The curriculum of this Islamic boarding school is strived to accommodate the yellow book subjects and general subjects in a balanced way. By following the government curriculum, efforts to develop students' potential holistically (totally) have been included in the educational agenda of this pesantren. The accreditation of education at both SMP I Assya`roniyyah and SMK I Assya`roniyyah has indicated that this pesantren has met the minimum standards of an educational institution. Along with changes and developments in the curriculum and becoming an education and teaching program, the composition and qualifications of the teacher council in PP Assya`roniyyah also change according to the various fields of study being taught. The teaching staff is not only graduates of Islamic Higher Education (PTAIS), but also graduates of General Higher Education (PTU), and some are still high school graduates.

According to KH Muchtar Sya'roni, the salafiyyah education system that does not teach general (modern) science will be left behind for the existence of Muslims, even though the contemporary education system is inseparable from shortcomings and fragility, especially about moral formation (character). On this basis, efforts to reform the education system must not stop and must be carried out continuously. The ability of Islamic boarding schools to accommodate the positive sides of the traditional education system and the modern education system and discard the negative sides of both will be an advantage of Islamic boarding schools, which other institutions do not have. Kyai then mentions the principles that have become a kind of pesantren jargon in dealing with all changes:

المحافظة على القديم الصالح والأخذ بالجدید الأصالح

"preserve the good old traditions, and take on the better new traditions"



## **The traditionalism of The Islamic Boarding School Education System**

The changes and developments of the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School, especially in curriculum and educational or teaching programs, show that this pesantren is not closed, nor is it a static educational institution. Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School is an educational institution that is "literate" to the changing times. This pesantren has carefully structured its education system through the selection process, following the times and willing to accept government policies as long as the policy is considered excellent and useful. With this principle, this pesantren is expected to *survive* and be able to compete in the current era of modernization to provide more benefits for Muslims. However, this educational institution still needs to continue making many improvements, especially regarding physical development or buildings, to make them look more affluent and more modern (luxury).

Suppose it is associated with the theory of change. In that case, it can be understood that the salafiyah Islamic boarding school education system in the modern era is a cyclical change process on the one hand and linear transformation (development) on the other. Cycle changes are due to the necessity of maintaining the paradigm and even wanting to return to past conditions, while linear changes (developments) are because Islamic boarding schools have tried to adapt their system (educational components) to the modern education paradigm. As in the rules of nahwu science in the book Al-Jurumiyyah which explains the theory of change:

الْإِعْرَابُ هُوَ تَغْيِيرُ آخِرِ الْكَلِمِ لِاخْتِلَافِ الْعَوَامِلِ الدَّخِلَةِ عَلَيْهَا لَفْظًا أَوْ تَقْدِيرًا

"What is meant by I'rab is (taghyir) or a change at the end of each sentence due to differences in the *amil* that entered him either lafadz or estimates (taqdir)".

If applied in life, the rule is explained that the change will not occur without an effort to change it. The essence of these modernization steps is the implication of the mobility of various living systems, namely ideological, economic, political, social, and cultural. Various aspects of the reforms carried out are an effort to make the education system relevant for Islamic boarding schools. The expectations of the update are:

1. To eliminate discrimination, dichotomy, and marginalization of Islamic boarding schools;
2. Islamic boarding schools survive (survive); and
3. Islamic boarding schools can produce competitive outputs.

By this, I mean that apart from being deductive, this research also has the possibility of giving birth to a new understanding of (inductive) social change. Combining traditional and modern elements in the salafiyah Islamic boarding school education system provides an understanding that change can occur integrally.

One unfortunate thing about the education system run by PP Assya'roniyyah is the lack of language skills development, both English and Arabic. The Islamic boarding school does not apply the two international languages in its environment. The language used is Javanese. Even some teachers do not use Indonesian when teaching in the classroom. This impacts the difficulty of graduate students to continue their studies in the international world. Language as a communication tool in a globalized world needs serious attention from educational institutions. In this case, salafiyyah pesantren are still inferior to modern pesantren, such as Gontor; for example, the use of language in communication in the pesantren environment is an absolute must.

## CONCLUSION

From the description above, it can be concluded that the salafiyyah Islamic boarding school education system is a combination of traditional and modern elements. The Salafiyyah Islamic Boarding School is not in a hurry to transform itself into a (modern) general educational institution, nor does it stick with its traditional system. Both are harmoniously combined towards a goal, namely integral education. Even though the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School has modernized, it still calls itself a traditional Islamic boarding school or salafiyyah because the modernization carried out by PP Assya'roniyyah is part of efforts to maintain the existence of conventional pesantren. In this case, there is a change in the meaning of salafiyyah, not as a traditional Islamic boarding school that only teaches religious sciences. "Salafiyyah" refers to a movement of understanding and enthusiasm for practicing pure Islam; the early generations of Islam and the Middle Ages (salaf al-shalih) serve as miniatures of those who practice pure Islam.

There are at least three reasons why elements of traditionalism are preserved, namely to maintain the ideology of Ahl al-Sunah was al-Jama'ah, so as not to lose the identity or identity of Islamic boarding schools and the fact that these elements have relevance to life in this era modernization. The concept of relevance is the principle on which the Assya'roniyyah Islamic Boarding School is based in managing its system; this Islamic boarding school will also be accommodative to a plan if the system is "beneficial", and anticipatory a system if the system is "harmful", this indicates that the Pesantren is not a closed educational institution. System educational boarding school run is an attempt to produce *output* that corresponds to the needs of society, both in the context of the ideal qualifications as a religious, community members, citizens, and employment needs.

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