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Unlocking the Rusty Padlock: The Role of the Scientific Tradition of Pesantren Karanggedang on the Literacy Development in the Surrounding Village Community

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ABSTRACT

The scientific and literary construction of *pesantren* or Islamic boarding schools, especially traditional ones, is highly popular to the community and involves the surrounding villagers. The communication established between village community and *pesantren* in continuing the scientific tradition ultimately creates new socio-cultural-economic activities. Pondok Pesantren Al-Muwahidin, located in Karanggedang, Salebu Village, Majenang District, Cilacap Regency, Central Java, is one of the *pesantren* that has a role in developing community literacy as mentioned. This research aims to observe and explain the role of the scientific tradition of Pesantren Karanggedang on literacy development of the local village community. A case study approach is used in this research. The stages of research activities include data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. The data was collected from observation, interviews, and documentation. This research reveals several findings about the role of the *pesantren* scientific tradition on literacy development of the local community, which are increasing public understanding of *adab* (Islamic etiquette), reducing criminal acts, creating information circulation culture, and modernizing knowledge, arts, and culture based on tradition and religion.

Keywords: *scientific tradition of pesantren; pesantren literacy; village community literacy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The world of librarianship is no longer a narrow corner. The definition, functions, roles, and responsibilities of librarianship are expanding along with world development. In the past, people with a library science background were solely the ones that could be called as librarians, but now anyone can take on the functions and roles of a librarian. The world of librarianship that was originally perceived as the universe that only manages information in the scope of libraries, now shifts to a universe that manages information and literacy in a broad scope, especially in raising the passion for literacy from the upstream level to the downstream level.

It could be said that the librarianship world currently has a highly vital role in improving community literacy. In other words, the librarianship superstructure needs to be

able to mediate between the community and the source of information which nowadays does not only come from books (Simanjuntak, 1995). The term “superstructure” used here refers to the term presented by Karl Marx to differ it from “infrastructure” in the context of the fundamentals of social order change. In Marx's perspective, superstructure is defined as all non-material products derived from ideas, such as institutions, law, bills, religion, philosophy, and so on (Macionis & Plummer, 2005). In that sense, the librarianship superstructure should not only come from librarians, but also comes from other elements such as *pesantren* institutions, which already have a long history in building the tradition of community literacy.

Bruinessen (2020) mentioned the classical scientific tradition emerged in Javanese *pesantren* and similar institutions outside Java is a great tradition unique to Indonesia. There are also those who refer to the literacy and scientific activities of *pesantren* as well as its world of writing as a sustainable strategy of the preaching mission carried out by the Wali Songo, a group consisting nine missionaries who spread Islam accross Java in the period of 15th to 16th century, and their predecessor scholars (Sweeney, 2011; Baso, 2012). The first Dutch survey of indigenouse education conducted in 1819 gave the impression that official *pesantren* institutions were not yet established. However, informal educational institutions similar to the Islamic boarding schools are reported to be established in Priangan, Pekalongan, Rembang, Kedu, Surabaya, Madiun, and Ponorogo (Chijs, 1864). Although it is not yet known when exactly *pesantren* institutions appeared for the first time in the Nusantara (archipelago of Indonesia), its scientific tradition is still rooted strongly until now and even has a significant impact in the field of science and social activities for the surrounding villages.

Such impact is the result of the scientific and literary construction of *pesantren* that is hugely popular, especially the traditional ones. Its scientific method usually involves villagers. In this method, the *kiai* as teachers are involved at the upstream level process by collecting and producing as much information as possible before forwarding them to their *santri* (students). The students subsequently work at the downstream level by passing on the knowledge they have gained from the *kiai* to the local village community by becoming "assistants" or Quran recital teachers at the primary level. During this process, the students frequently bring other sources aside from the religious science one—usually general sciences, taken from the collections of the *pesantren's* library.

The journey to seek knowledge is not an exclusive activity for the *pesantren* community, there are social missions that must be built at the end of the road as well. "Knowledge without any action is like a tree without any fruits" is the adage the students have always held to. The closest way to practice their knowledge for the first time is to contribute to the people around the village where they study. On the other hand, students can gain new knowledge from the repertory of oral traditions owned by the village community. The oral tradition generally contains various contents of local wisdom that can be utilized and developed by *pesantren* institutions.

The communication established between the village community and the *pesantren* in continuing the scientific tradition eventually resulted in socio-cultural-economic activities, such as artistic activities, trading, and farming. This interaction, as explained by Baso (2012), produced a new scientific social-cultural network and improved the welfare of the local community. It is the very example of what the Head of the National Library of the

Republic of Indonesia, Muhammad Syarif Bando, labelled as "literacy based on social inclusion", which in this case is represented by *pesantren*.

Based on the reality, it is not an exaggeration to refer to *pesantren* as one of the centers of knowledge and literacy production in the countryside. The voice of the villagers can be represented by *santri* and *kiai*. The construction that has been implemented for centuries is permanent. In fact, the continuous interpretation of Islamic books used in *pesantren* makes it possible for the model to develop in order to solve contemporary problems. It is not an overstatement as well to say that *pesantren* institutions own quite a strategic role in order to improve the quality of human resources as part of the nation building process. During the current Covid-19 pandemic, when access to direct information is limited and people relied more on digital information, *pesantren* rises to become the vanguard of distributors or even producers of information for village and grassroots communities.

Nowadays, *pesantren* have become a "community service center" in various aspects of life. Aside from being a place to seek knowledge in, a *pesantren* ultimately carries out social functions as a place for consultation and even rehabilitation. *Pesantren* consequently do not only carry out educational functions, but also service functions to the community. The functions then form *pesantren* as institutions that have responsive nature to the needs of the community. Thus, it concludes that *pesantren* are fit to be a part of librarianship superstructure in Indonesia.

Pondok Pesantren Al-Muwahidin, located in Karanggedang, Salebu Village, Majenang District, Cilacap Regency, Central Java (hereinafter referred to as Pesantren Karanggedang), is one of the *pesantren* that plays a role in developing community literacy as mentioned. The Islamic boarding school under the patronage of the KH Sufyan Tsauri Foundation has been established since 2011 and affiliates to its center, which is Pondok Pesantren Pembangunan Miftahul Huda, situated in Cigaru, Cibeunying Village, Majenang District, Cilacap Regency, Central Java (hereinafter referred to as Pesantren Cigaru)—which has been established since 1910. Kyai Haji Sufyan Tsauri Foundation (founded on July 8, 2013 based on the Decree of the Minister of Law and Human Rights Number: AHU-7461.1H.01.04. of 2013) itself oversees various formal and non-formal education institutions, such as Pesantren Cigaru, as the oldest Islamic education institution under this foundation, and Pesantren Karanggedang.

The establishment of Pesantren Karanggedang was firstly based on the wishes of Kiai Munaji Abdul Qohar, a member of the Masyayikh Council which was tasked to implement an internal quality assurance system at Pesantren Cigaru. He wished to have place to strive and dedicate himself to Islam, especially to improve characters as taught by the Prophet Muhammad. The wish was part of his moral accountability as an *ulama* (Islamic scholars), as various Islamic literature stated that *ulama* are successors of the Prophet Muhammad (Halimi, 2008; Moesa, 2007; Shihab, 1996; Malik, 2015). Secondly, Kiai Munaji aspired to provide intensive and systematic Islamic religion education, especially to Karanggedang residents. Karanggedang Village, based on discussions with some villagers, has been known as a nest of criminals since the 1980s. Criminal acts such as fights, thefts and robberies occurred in Salebu Village and Cibeunying Village are frequently triggered by Karanggedang residents.

The purpose of Pesantren Karanggedang's establishment is actually similar to the initiation spirit of Pesantren Cigaru, which is forming a civilized society. Since its foundation, Pesantren Karanggedang has demonstrated efforts to bring a spirit of change among the community, especially in terms of literacy. It needs to be underlined here that

when we are speaking in the context of community changes around Pesantren Karanggedang, it will be automatically linked to the students of the *pesantren*, who mostly come from Karanggedang Village. It means the community mentioned in this study consists of the students themselves, their parents, and the community outside the "students-parents" relation that interacts directly with Pesantren Karanggedang. Therefore, it can be concluded that the purpose of forming the society as mentioned before is a "long-term project" of Kiai Munaji Abdul Qohar in order to transform the Karanggedang community into a civilized society.

Based on these facts, the activities carried out by Pesantren Karanggedang are proven to be closely related to the development of community literacy. The noble deeds performed by this *pesantren* institution deserve to be elucidated and disseminated in a study, especially in context of librarianship superstructure roles at the upstream and downstream levels in forming village communities.

2. OBJECTIVES

Based on the research background that has been described above, the problem formulation of this study are:

- a. To disclose the profile of Pesantren Karanggedang, Cilacap, Central Java;
- b. To disclose the role of *pesantren's* scientific tradition in Pesantren Karanggedang, Cilacap, Central Java, on literacy development of the local village community.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literacy: Definitions and Principles

The word "literacy" etymologically derives from the Latin word "*literatus*" which means "a learned person" or "one who learns". In the Middle Ages, a *literatus* was someone who was able to read, write, and speak in Latin (Gunarsa, 2004). This meaning is in line with Kern's statement, as quoted by Hayat (2010), that literacy is the ability to read and write, including the ability to appreciate literary works and evaluate them.

As time went on, Kern saw the meaning of literacy develop into one's ability to think and learn for life to survive in his/her socio-cultural environment. Robinson and McKenna (2008) supported Kern's statement by stating that literacy is a medium for individuals to be able to interact with their social environment and that it is especially related to writing skills. In the meantime, literacy often refers to one's reading and writing skills. It indicates that the person is able to understand a concept and can give an explanation of it. However, Ma'mur (2010) stated that a person's reading skills are generally better than his/her writing skills.

Reading essentially describes a complicated process of activity and involves many things. It is not only about the ability to spell writing, but also the capacity to build one's visual, psycholinguistic, and metacognitive forms. Written symbols are translated into oral words as part of the visual process on the one hand. While on the other hand there are word recognition activities, literal understanding, interpretation, critical reading, and creative understanding as part of the thinking process (Rahim, 2009).

Writing, according to Sutari (1997), is the process of describing a message into a form of script so that it can be read and comprehended by others. It contains systematically and logically structured thoughts, ideas, opinions, and experiences. Reading and writing thus are

two inseparable skills. Someone who writes generally does reading first. Eventually, literacy skills—including reading and writing skills—will be highly beneficial to be used in one's survival in society.

Kern (2000) explained there are at least seven principles of literacy. First, literacy involves interpretation of the author/speaker and the reader/listener to be participated in the follow up. Second, it requires collaboration. Third, it demands a convention or mutual agreement. Fourth, it requires cultural knowledge. Fifth, it involves reflection and self-reflection. Sixth, literacy is not limited to oral or written language systems. Seventh, literacy is the ability to identify, to determine, to find, to evaluate, to create something effectively and systematically, to use and communicate information to address various problems.

Literacy eventually can be interpreted as the ability to obtain information and use it in order to develop beneficial science for the community. Literacy becomes a set of actual skills for each individual that is not only used in processing cognitive abilities, but also used in processing taste, sharpening sensitivity, and awakening human consciousness (Alfathon, 2021).

Pesantren

There is actually no fixed definition of *pondok pesantren* due to its highly flexible nature since long ago. However, we need to first view it etymologically. "Pondok pesantren" consists of two words, which are "pondok" (lit: cottage) and "pesantren". Dhofier (1982) described the word "pondok" comes from the Arabic word فندق (read: *funduq*) which means "lodging", "dorm", or "simple guesthouse". In practice, "pondok" is indeed a simple residence for students who study in *pesantren*. As for the word "pesantren", according to Maskur (2019), it is derived from the word "santri" in which the prefix "pe-" and the suffix "-an" attached to, so it becomes "pesantrian" or "pesantren" in Bahasa Indonesia. The word "pesantren" in the online version of Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (the official dictionary of Indonesian language) is classified into nouns, it is thus interpreted as a dormitory where students study in. This meaning is similar to the word "pondok".

Nurcholis Madjid had given an explanation of the origin of the word "santri" in his work entitled *Bilik-bilik Pesantren: Sebuah Potret Perjalanan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1997). He mentioned that there were two opinions about the history of the word. The first opinion stated that the word "santri" came from "sastri", a word in Sanskrit which means "literacy". The second one argued that the word "santri" is derived from the Javanese word "cantrik" which means "someone who always follows a teacher to wherever the teacher settles".

Pondok Pesantren are presumably the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Nusantara (the Indonesian archipelago). However, the information about the origins of *pesantren* is very limited and there are no definite facts on when this institution was first established. Bruinessen (2020) wrote that *pesantren* being referred to as the oldest Islamic educational institutions was actually just an extrapolation or a data expansion from observations at the end of the 19th century. He agreed with the opinions of Pigeaud (1970) and Graaf (1974) and explained that *pesantren* were the second most important type of Islamic education centers after mosques in the early 16th century period. However, Bruinessen questioned the opinion of both in stating that the term "pesantren" had emerged from the era. According to him, the term "pesantren" has only appeared recently and was younger than pre-Islamic terms such as *mandala* and *asyarama*, both of which also refer to religious educational institutions at that time.

Fokkens (1887) stated *desa perdikan* was a bridge for the continuity of *pesantren* with pre-Islamic religious institutions. *Desa perdikan* was a territory of a kingdom or a duchy which was exempt from taxes and was free from the forced labor system. However, this kind of village was still tasked to maintain an important site such as inscription relics or tombs located in the village or not far from the village. Maintaining the tomb or important royal site became a pride for the person or family who was assigned the task, regardless of what their religion was. Later, the family members who were entrusted with the task became influential figures, especially when Islam came to Indonesia, the villagers referred to them as "teachers". Gradually, the role of these people was institutionalized in the form of *pesantren* (Guillot, 1985).

The first Dutch survey of indigenous education conducted in 1819 conveyed the impression that the official *pesantren* institution had not been established before 1742—the year in which Pondok Pesantren Tegalsari in Ponorogo was established. However, informal educational institutions similar to *pesantren* were reported to be established in Priangan, Pekalongan, Rembang, Kedu, Surabaya, Madiun, and Ponorogo. Consequently, there are no *pesantren* documented that are older than Pesantren Tegalsari in Ponorogo in official records.

Another opinion stated that the embryo of *pesantren* has emerged since Shaikh Maulana Malik Ibrahim brought Islam into Java in the 15th century and Sunan Ampel or Raden Rahmat founded Pesantren Kembang Kuning in Surabaya not long after the era of Maulana Malik Ibrahim. The forerunner of *pesantren* in the 15th and 16th centuries were also frequently associated with the Sufi. This was based on the early spread of Islam in Nusantara that was closer to the activities of *tarekat*, in which certain dhikr and wirid (both consists of meditation, prayer, and Quran recitation) are carried out through the practice of suluk. Suluk practice is usually performed by staying in a place such as a hut or a mosque under the guidance of a Mursyid, a spritual instructor. Mahfud (2018) elaborated that *pesantren* grew around the people affected by the political and cultural impact of local clerics' rejection of the Dutch East Indies Colonial Government.

Based on these various opinions, it can be concluded that *pesantren* are educational institutions that are quite old, although it was not yet formally institutionalized at the beginning of its establishment as it is today. The model of *pesantren* was possibly adopted from the Pre-Islamic education model and it continues to develop to this day while emphasizing on human resource formation. Judging from its history, *pesantren* ultimately bring benefits which are not only for their students, but also for the residents around them.

The development of the times and technology brought changes in learning in *pesantren*, especially in their forms and education systems, although it did not eliminate *pesantren*'s uniqueness in the teaching of the yellow book, . Effendi (2014) categorized *pesantren* into two types, namely salafi and khalafi styled *pesantren*. Salafi *pesantren* utilize special *pesantren* education in their curriculum and teaching methods up to this time. The materials taught are dominated by Islamic studies using classical Arabic scriptures. The Khalafi *pesantren* has included modern elements in its education system, such as using the national curriculum and tiering their classical learning activities to be more like public schools.

Nafi, *et al* (2007) formulated that one of the main objectives of the establishment of this Islamic religion-based educational institution is to guide each student to achieve *wisdom* in their social roles and responsibilities. Students in *pesantren* are forged to be humble, both in seeking knowledge and living their daily lives. Such a forge is expected to mold the students into wise personalities.

The function of *pesantren* actively develops according to the social dynamics of the global community. At the beginning of its establishment history, *pesantren* intended to function as a social institution and as *syiar*, the symbol of greatness of Islam. Recently, Azra (2017) noted that these functions developed into a means of transmitting knowledge, maintaining Islamic traditions, and worked as a means of knowledge reproduction for scholars. In addition, *pesantren* have a function as providers of religious and public education as well. They also expand their function as institutions of social solidarity and community development.

According to Azhar (2021), *the pesantren* institution is one of the important elements of educational architecture in Indonesia. The education system of *pesantren* which uses two spheres of formal and non-formal education at the same time has proven to be effective and has contributed greatly to the development of education in Nusantara. *Pesantren*, in this case, becomes key players in creating a generation that has good morals and comprehends national ideology. It is also undeniable that the graduates of *pesantren* have numerous roles in various sectors of nation-building in the social and community sector .

Such roles and contribution, according to Zainudin (2017), is inseparable from the tradition of text —and context—based science and literacy in *pesantren* which frequently receives criticism from many parties. The text-based scientific and literary traditions in *pesantren* cannot be separated from the tradition of the yellow book which is based on the Shafi'i *madhab* (Islamic school of thought and law) in its *fiqh* field, the Asy'ariyah concept in its theology, and Ghozali in its *tasawwuf* field. Ramzy (1993) argued that such tradition gave an impression that *pesantren* have become very exclusive and seemed to have lost its dynamic spirit because it is considered not building a critical attitude towards the knowledge presented.

However, if we look further back, the scientific and literary traditions in *pesantren* are actually rooted in the writing of the Quran on a medium (Zuhairini, et al, 1993). The literary tradition of the Arab society up to that time was dominated by oral practice, while the tradition of writing was not considered important. Nevertheless, the arrival of Islam strengthen the tradition of writing with the efforts to write the Quran in various medium. The civilization renewal from the oral tradition to the written one brought by the Prophet Muhammad was getting stronger by the time Islam began to spread in various parts of the world and finally became a center of knowledge in the 8th century AD. This explains that the civilization of a nation can be built by strengthening the literary tradition of its people.

Such literary and scientific traditions are the legacy carried on by *pesantren* when they are firmly rooted in the Indonesian archipelago. It is based on the yellow book, which has been studied in the archipelago since the 16th century according to Bruinessen. The yellow book was brought by the Nusantara scholars who studied in Mecca—at that time Mecca was not yet part of the state of Saudi Arabia. After finishing their studies and returning to their homeland, the scholars established *pesantren*, which then were still very informal, in mosques or *surau* (small mosques) near where they lived.

The yellow book generally is an Arabic religious book written by Muslim scholars and philosophers since ancient times. According to Azra (1999), the book sometimes used regional languages as well, such as Javanese, Malay, and others, but it was still written in Arabic script without vowel mark (*harakat*). The absence of the *harakat* makes the script commonly referred to by locals as *huruf gundul* (lit: bald letters). It thus can be concluded from the usage of language in the yellow book that the clerics of Nusantara also composed

their works and taught them to the students. The yellow book became popular as the main teaching material in *pesantren*, especially in the 19th century when Europeans set foot on Nusantara. In those days, the yellow book was commonly used as a reference on anti-colonial attitudes. Once again, the literary and scientific tradition of *pesantren* was able to make a nation rise from being fall behind due to colonization. The yellow book then becomes a typical Islamic pattern and culture in Nusantara.

Referring to its history, *pesantren* institutions have actually become a medium of information and literacy for the people of the Indonesian archipelago. These Islamic education institutions have played a role in disseminating Islamic information by providing teaching to students for centuries. The students afterwards implements their knowledge in the community. Wahid (2001) explained that in addition to preaching Islam peacefully, the main task of *pesantren* is to educate. It means that, alongside their other functions, the main identity of *pesantren* is education. As long as *pesantren* have the capability to carry out educational functions that are relevant to the people's lives, they can maintain their survival. Therefore, we can comprehend that since their foundation, *pesantren* have established themselves as part of the formation of literacy in the Indonesian archipelago. Early *pesantren*, although not yet formally institutionalized, were communities that had access to information—in this context was science—and literature, and they were then able to narrate that information or knowledge in various mediums.

4. METHODS

This research is a case study research using a qualitative approach method. This approach method is fit to be used in depth to answer the objectives proposed. Case study research is a research process that is carried out in depth, intensively, thoroughly, and systematically, on a research subject which can be in the form of individuals or certain social units (Idrus, 2009). In that case, the researcher tries to find all the important variables, data, and information related to the research subject, including its present state and the previous state as well as various other distinctive characters. Furchan (2007) argued that the advantage of case study research is that it has its own rare traits due to the uniqueness of the research subject.

This case study research uses a qualitative approach method. According to Sugiyono (2012), the qualitative approach method is carried out in a triangulated or combined way, its analysis is inductive, and the research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. The data to be searched in case study research will be more appropriate if it is observed directly for further analysis and interpretation of the meaning of the data. This is due to all of the collected data having the possibility to be the key to what is being studied. The data can be in the form of interview manuscripts, field notes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, or official documents.

Data is a record of a collection of facts (Vardiansyah, 2008). The term data itself comes from the Latin word "*datum*" which means "something given". The data in the qualitative research constitutes the whole social situation that includes several aspects. The first aspect is *actors*: data sources in the form of people, which in this case are the director of the *pesantren*, *ustadz* (teachers), students, and the community around *pesantren*. Second, *places*: data source in the form of places. Third, *activities*: the data source in the form of activities, which in the context of this study is the scientific tradition of the *pesantren* and the literary activities of the surrounding community that can be recorded as of documents, recordings,

interview results, and observation results. Therefore, the data in this study is a record of a collection of facts extracted from the activities of Pesantren Karanggedang's scientific tradition on the surrounding village communities' literacy. This data is used as the primary data of this study. The secondary data that is used in this study includes a) documents or archives, records of relevant events that have passed. This data is needed as additional information in research activities, b) photos or videos: printed or digital images that can provide an overview of the activities of the scientific and literary traditions of the village community.

These data were gathered using a data collection method. Researchers used several methods of data collection. First, observation. Second, interview. Third, documentation. Documentation is a supporting method in collecting the research data.

The participants involved in this study were determined using purposive sampling technique. It was then determined that the participants in this study consisted of director and caretakers of the *pesantren*, *ustadz*, students, the community around the boarding school, and key informants. The participants were selected due to their roles in the implementation of management and learning in the *pesantren* as well as their observation on the development of Pesantren Karanggedang from its inception until now. Participants were interviewed for gathering the information needed to complete the research data.

Following the data collection, data processing and analysis were carried out systematically. The process included data collection, data input, data analysis, verification and drawing conclusions. The authors used a data processing and analysis model with the *Miles and Huberman* model as described by Sugiyono in *Metode Penelitian: Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D* (2012). The reason for the use of this model is that it allowed the researchers to perform an analysis after data was collected. This model made the research data collected fairly comprehensive and complete.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pesantren Karanggedang: History and Concise Profile

Pesantren Karanggedang is quite far from the hustle and bustle of a metropolitan city. Located about 320 kilometers from Jakarta and 60 kilometers from the capital of Cilacap Regency, residents around this *pesantren* depend their economic life on farming, being laborers in industrial timber plantations, or becoming construction workers. The establishment of Pesantren Karanggedang was firstly based on the wishes of Kiai Munaji Abdul Qohar to have place to strive and dedicate himself to Islam, especially to improve characters as taught by the Prophet Muhammad. Secondly, Kiai Munaji aspired to provide intensive and systematic Islamic religion education, especially to Karanggedang residents.

These spirits motivated Kiai Munaji to build Pesantren Karanggedang in 2010 on a grant land given by his relatives, which was only two kilometers away from Pesantren Cigaru. The land which is about 1.4 hectares is located on Haji Ibrahim Street, RT/RW 002/001, Karanggedang, Salebu Village, Majenang District.

Before the construction of Pesantren Karanggedang began, Kiai Munaji first visited the houses of Karanggedang residents one by one, especially the houses around the place where he planned to build a *pesantren* and a mosque. The man of humble and patient figure was strongly determined to visit each of more than 35 residents' houses. Aside from requesting permission to establish a mosque and a *pesantren*, he did the visit to establish cordial

relations with the residents, as well as to explore the life problems faced by the local community. In fact, never once did Mbah Munaji, the nickname given by the residents of Karanggedang for Kiai Munaji (hereinafter, these two terms will be used interchangeably), mentioned the worship issue of the residents who are known to be very *abangan* (a way of practicing Islam in a much more syncretic version than the orthodox one).

The mosque was the first building constructed by Kiai Munaji in order for it to be a place of worship as well as a means of conveying knowledge. The groundbreaking was carried out in 2011. The mosque building, simple rooms for *santri*, and residences of *pesantren*'s administrators were completed in mid-2013. Learning and Quran recitation activities began shortly afterwards with elementary materials taught in a simple way. The Quran and the daily prayers for children and adolescents performed after Asr prayer in the afternoon were taught using the *sorogan* method, in which the prayers were taught directly to each student. Parents were taught the yellow book with the most general material, such as basic *fiqh*, which was carried out by *bandongan* method—or commonly known by the locals as “ear recitation” because the method was conducted by just listening to the teacher—which was performed after the congregational Isha prayer. Mbah Munaji asked senior students from Pesantren Cigaru to teach afternoon lessons for children and adolescents, while he himself delivered the evening lessons.

However, this did not indicate that the process of establishing Pesantren Karanggedang went smoothly. Kiai Munaji's efforts had received ordeals from community leaders after the *pesantren*'s mosque, which was named the Al-Muwahidin (The Unifier) Mosque, was established and recitations for the community began to be held. The name was chosen because the mosque became a unifying symbol for the five small *musalla* (mosques) that had previously been built in Karanggedang. Before the Al-Muwahidin mosque was established, each *musalla* had its own recitation activities. With the establishment of Al-Muwahidin, according to the discussion of local community leaders, it was agreed that the initial activities of recitation at the mosque would be joined in turns by residents of all ages who previously studied religion in the small *musalla*. Apparently this method was not fully accepted by some local community leaders because it was considered reducing their influence on the local residents.

Problems with residents became even more critical when Mbah Munaji's son-in-law named Gus Fajar began holding the Bahtsul Masa'il forum in 2015 to discuss problems in the daily lives of residents related to *fiqh*. Basically, this forum was a deliberative assembly that was usually held by intellectual scholars to discuss contemporary issues based on contextual *fiqh* interpretations. However, the implementation of this forum among the people of Karanggedang seemed to be done hastily and did not work as expected. Many of the residents felt that they misunderstood and could not accept what was discussed in the forum. The reason was that the Islamic law taught in the forum was difficult to be applied in their daily lives and they felt that there was no middle ground from the existing law. Gradually the number of people attending the forum decreased. By the time Gus Fajar stopped being the director of the *pesantren* in 2017, the evening recitations were no longer in demand.

Afterwards, the newly founded *pesantren* had been running without certainty for two years. The senior students were fortunately still solemn in their task teaching children and youth in the afternoon, even though the number of students had decreased from 50 to 30 and they did not have any kind of teaching curriculum. It was only in September 2019, when a senior *santri* of Kiai Munaji named Kiai Ali Masykur was asked to become the director,

Pesantren Karanggedang began to show rapid development, both in terms of the number of students, class levels, and learning models.

After being given the mandate to develop the Pesantren Karanggedang, Kiai Ali Masykur applied the *madrasah diniyah* (informal primary Islamic education institutions) learning system in the morning, afternoon, and evening. The learning system utilized two typical *pesantren* teaching methods, namely *sorogan* for teaching the Qur'an and specialized yellow book, as well as *bandongan* for teaching general yellow book.

The number of Pesantren Karanggedang students then grew rapidly. In less than six months since Kiai Ali Masykur was appointed as the director of the *pesantren*, the number of teenage students has increased more than doubled to 60 children. They were divided into three class levels, namely class I (age 5 years), class II (age 6-12 years), and class III (age >12 years). In the first three months of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were almost no learning activities. Then there was a significant increase in students when the pandemic was considered to have subsided in mid-2020 with the number of teenage and children students reaching 118 people. Currently, the total number of students has reached 124 people divided into four grade levels with the additional class IV (age > 15 years). Each grade level has a teacher assigned to be student guardian. Each student guardian is responsible for the development of the *santri*'s comprehension at their grade level. Hence, if there is one student lacking in comprehension, a suitable solution will be provided. There are 11 teachers at Pesantren Karanggedang who teach different materials.

Each level group gets its own material. The Qur'an becomes the main material taught for all grade levels. The yellow book has just been taught fundamentally in this *pesantren* and has a different level of difficulty between one grade level to another. Even though the yellow book seems very complicated because of the *huruf gundul*, the material presented is actually not very deep. Gus Faisal, the eldest son of Kiai Munaji who is now the director of the Pesantren Karanggedang, is aware that the background of the students, who mostly come from the surrounding community, cannot be given heavy materials. The target of this *pesantren* indeed has not yet to make someone becomes a *mubaligh* (preacher of Islam). According to Kiai Ali Masykur, Mbah Munaji had conveyed several wills to the director and teachers of the *pesantren* before his death. First, they need to keep the relationship between the *pesantren* and the community by involving the *pesantren* in various activities of the surrounding community. Second, it is not necessary to provide students who came from the Karanggedang community with too much knowledge yet, the most important thing is that the students are able to pray properly and read the Quran correctly. Third, they need to teach manners and courtesy to the students. Fourth, they need to foster the spirit of the students to gain higher knowledge by providing motivation and activities that will be useful for them in the future.

Mbah Munaji understood the background of the people of Karanggedang very well. Several residents and students said that the people of Karanggedang can not yet be separated from the *abangan* and criminal attributes. They are attributed as *abangan* because they do not carry out orthodox Islamic practice. As for the "criminal" attribute, this village has long been known as a "base camp" for various crimes, such as theft, gambling, fights, etc. Although recitation activities in musallas in this village have been carried out for a long time, it has not been able to stop these criminal acts. Therefore, Mbah Munaji adopted the friendly approach described before, which is referred to by Gus Faisal as "unlocking the

rusty padlock”. Since the founding of the Pesantren Karanggedang, testimonies about crimes committed by Karanggedang residents are no longer heard.

The Role of the Scientific Tradition of Pesantren Karanggedang in the Development of Local Community Literacy

a) Increasing the Community’s Understanding of Adab (Manners)

Pesantren can be social agents in making socio-cultural-economic and other changes. Achieving this goal must begin with changing aspects of the character of the community around the *pesantren*. In that case, a *pesantren* is an institution that historically has shaped the character of the community as its initial goal. It gives the possibility for *pesantren* to emerge as social agents in making socio-cultural-economic and other changes. The community around the *pesantren* thus has high hopes for this religious-based educational institution. The community around Pesantren Karanggedang views that the institution founded by Kiai Munaji is able to improve the social conditions of the residents because it is considered to have the capability to change the education level for the younger generation. Such views are eventually used by Pesantren Karanggedang to introduce the discourse of "manners before knowledge" to the community. As a result, the residents of Karanggedang flocked to send or order their children to simultaneously learn manners and knowledge.

The *adab* and knowledge mentioned above are then learned in the *pesantren* through role models and learning materials. It is from the role models that the community imitates the manners and knowledge which ultimately triggered them to seek and absorb other skills and information. Studying at a *pesantren* means gaining knowledge directly from a teacher—one who is an expert in the field, which can only be obtained if a *santri* lives close to the teacher while studying. Therefore, coherence between teachers and *adab*-knowledge becomes a very important element in the understanding of *adab* in Pesantren Karanggedang, as well as in other *pesantren*. The emphasis on manners has been exemplified by Mbah Munaji to the people of Karanggedang since the pioneering of the *pesantren*. The example of Mbah Munaji's *akhlakul karimah* (lit: noble morals) is continued by the administrators and teachers of Pesantren Karanggedang. They are well aware that most of the *santri* do not have a religious background, which is why they provide learning by prioritizing patience in order for the goal of providing an understanding of etiquette and morals to the students can be successful. Material about *akhlak* or morality is also included through the yellow book learning to provide theoretical understanding.

The manners taught to the students, both directly through the yellow book material and indirectly through attitudes and actions, made a quick impact on the parents of the students. Some students admitted that their parents were shocked when their children now always kissed their hands (*salim*) before going out and after arriving at home. Such a simple action turns out to have a big impression on the parents of the students. It can be said that the parents were moved to see changes in attitudes that rarely or never happened previously.

b) Reducing Criminal Acts

Pesantren Karanggedang becomes a *diniyah*-based educational institution that is able to indirectly change the morals of the surrounding community. The negative stigma against the Karanggedang community, who was previously known as *abangan* and the nest of criminals and others, have changed drastically after Pesantren Karanggedang was established. This happened naturally after children and youth in Karanggedang began to study at the *pesantren* founded by Kiai Munaji. Continuing the points previously discussed (a. Increasing the Community's Understanding of Adab), the moral values of the community were automatically formed as a result of the *modeling* shown by Kiai Munaji to the community and it is passed on by the administrators and teachers to the students.

Furthermore, the establishment of Pesantren Karanggedang has become a social control for the surrounding community. The establishment of Pesantren Karanggedang gave rise to the assumption "it is bad to commit a sin because we live near a *pesantren*" that popped up in the minds of the residents. Moreover, the attitude and charisma of Kiai Munaji has previously been rooted in such a way in the daily consciousness (cognitive-behavior) of the residents. These acts can be considered as a way to rehabilitate residents through existence, education, and motivation, in which residents eventually adjust their attitude to the presence.

c) Creating Information Circulation Culture

Information can be obtained from various sources, including individuals and groups of people who can be considered as reference groups. In the perspective of the marketing world, a group of people can be a reference, a reference group, which significantly influences a person's behavior when providing information on a product (Sumarwan, 2004). If this point of view is implemented in the circulation of information in the community, forming a reference group then becomes very important in order for the circulation of information to be carried out.

The existence of Pesantren Karanggedang indirectly forms the reference group, a group of people who have information in any aspect that may be useful to many people. The reference group was formed and created a culture of information circulation through the *pesantren*. The *pesantren*'s scientific tradition based on the yellow book became the basis for the formation of the reference group in the community and later in the *diniyah* activities of Pesantren Karanggedang itself.

During the pioneering period, Pesantren Karanggedang held a session of teaching the yellow book material to parents and elders in the local area every Tuesday night. Residents used this session to seek information related to aspects of their lives, such as agriculture, carpentry, and more to other residents who understand the practical information they were looking for. The activities also indirectly formed special reference groups. Such as agriculture reference groups and carpentry reference groups. Hence each citizen with the same livelihood would gather in groups during the lecture. Gathering in groups according to these livelihoods did not indicate that residents did not mingle with other livelihood groups, but that the community took advantage of the rare opportunity to be able to gather large numbers of residents to seek as much information as possible.

The community itself admitted that they were lacking in reading or seeking information from newspapers. Moreover, television was no longer an option for them to

find information that can be used in practical daily activities, especially in the time when information from the village, sub-district, or district was unreliable. It then became the reason for people to make the Tuesday night recitation taught by Kiai Munaji as a means of seeking information, apart from being a means of seeking knowledge as well. The information exchanged between reference groups and individuals occurred intensively in the recitation activities.

Indirect circulation of information also occurs among the parents of students—especially among mothers who take their children to the *pesantren* as students of grades I (A and B) and II. It is not uncommon for the parents to come into the classroom and pay attention to what their children are learning after dropping them off. This allows the parents to listen to the material being taught and ask questions on behalf of their children when something is not clear. The parents frequently exchange recipes as well at the moment.

In this context, it can be assumed that *pesantren* have become a “public service center” in various aspects of life. In addition to being a place for seeking knowledge, *pesantren* ultimately carry out social functions as a place for gathering information and even a location of rehabilitation as previously explained. *Pesantren* thus do not only carry out the function of education, but also the function of community service. This makes *pesantren* an institution that is responsive to the needs of the community, although in the case of Pesantren Karanggedang, it is carried out indirectly.

d) Modernizing Knowledge, Arts, and Culture based on Tradition and Religion

During its inception, Pesantren Karanggedang utilized aspects which were already a part of the community. Pesantren Karanggedang introduced the *diniyah* system to the community in a systematic, scheduled, and tested method. A consensus was created afterwards to formulate a new teaching method as a result of a combination of the scientific tradition of *pesantren* and modern methods according to the demands of the times, which was named "Kanca Sinau". There are several aspects of the tradition that are integrated in the new teaching method: the method of *bandongan*, which is implemented collectively in the hope of forming a solid student community who possess diverse understanding, as well as other traditional elements from the community as a support for learning materials. Meanwhile, the modern aspect is more about the method of forming the mindset of students. This method is carried out regularly every Wednesday after the congregational Zuhur prayer until the time of the Asr prayer. This learning method was initially intended only for interested students. However, it turned out that most of the students, especially grades II-IV, were very enthusiastic about this method due to the various kinds of unfamiliar materials being taught, such as writing and painting.

"Kanca Sinau" focuses on self-understanding of a contextual-contemporary problem experienced directly by each student. Students are given applied art and cultural material, such as writing, painting, and other creative activities in order for them to comprehend it easily. The *santri* will be asked to create a work individually or in groups by involving the local community. In training of writing, for instance, they are tasked to write about the history of their own village based on interviews with their parents or with other people whom they think have the knowledge. Once it is completed, each of the tasks will be discussed together and they will find a way to solve the existing problems. In addition to being a medium for preserving the artistic and noble heritage of the ancestors, the Kanca

Sinau method is also utilized as a medium to bring *pesantren* closer to the surrounding community, as well as a means of gathering between santri, the community, and experts because it is not uncommon for *pesantren* to invite people who are the specialists in their fields. Through this activity, Pesantren Karanggedang will later be formed as a center for religious education. It will also become a community cultural center that can be an alternative medium to present solutions to the problems of the local community in particular and the village community in general.

Aside from Kanca Sinau, Pesantren Karanggedang also prioritizes *Hadrah* (Islamic) arts to attract students to the *diniyah* education. The art of *hadrah* using *kuda lumping*, which is a traditional Javanese dance using bamboo horses, has become a tradition in Salebu Village and Karanggedang, even though the community does not have a deep understanding of religion (read: *abangan*). However, *kuda lumping* requires substantial funds for practice and performances, thus it becomes less popular in the community. It needs to be emphasized in this context that the students who participate in *hadrah* activities are not only male students, but also the female *santri*.

Based on the explanation before, it can be concluded that Pesantren Karanggedang is carrying out what Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) called "social construction" by carrying out the process of externalizing, objectifying, and internalizing of knowledge, arts, and culture described above as part of the literacy development of the local community. The externalization referred here is how Pesantren Karanggedang adapts to the surrounding community. The Objectivity process is carried out when the old values in society and the new values by the *pesantren* interact. While in the internalization phase, Pesantren Karanggedang consciously identifies itself with the surrounding community and interprets the values behind the existing interactions.

6. CONCLUSION

The scientific tradition of *pesantren* that is linked by Pesantren Karanggedang and all its elements proves that such a scientific tradition model is not eroded by time, in fact it directly makes the surrounding environment metamorphose in several ways. First, there is an increase in the manners of the community around the *pesantren*. Second, the scientific tradition helps decline the number of criminalities conducted by the residents around the *pesantren* or ones occurred in the local community. Third, the tradition contributes to the creation of a more intense culture of information among the public. Fourth, it brings modernization of science and religious-based art and cultural activities.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the research conducted, there are several recommendations as follows:

- a. The government could consider collaborating with *pesantren* in developing public literacy, especially in rural-based communities. The development of literacy based on *pesantren* and village communities can be a quite effective option for literacy development in the future.
- b. Literacy observers can disclose the role of oral traditions developed in the *pesantren* community further from now on, as well as recording them as library materials, so that in the future society will be able to learn more about the wealth that is stored in each individual rural community.

- c. The government has the capability to develop *pesantren* and rural community literacy in this context, so that both are able to take a balancing step in the rural-urban social order.
- d. An interdisciplinary and social history approach in examining *pesantren* literacy and its relation to rural communities needs to be done frequently in order to disclose more aspects that have not been revealed.

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