



## **Pesantren Intellectual Activism Outside of Islam and Muslims: Study of the *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren (2016)* Documentary Film**

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### A B S T R A C T

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This research tries to reexamine the meaning of Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) as inclusive spaces by reinterpreting the film *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren (2016)*. As a prophetic space born from a long process of Indonesian cultural and educational history, Pesantren is often attached simply as a label for traditional Islamic education and ignores its role outside of Islam, which also uses the Pesantren education model. This article strengthens the historical perspective of Pesantren as inclusive spaces that can be used and applied by people outside of Islam and Muslims in Indonesia and the world. This research uses an interdisciplinary approach (interdisciplinary studies), including literature reviews and in-depth interviews, by exploring relevant historical forms of Indonesian educational experience, starting from Hindu, Buddhist, and Kapitayan education to Islam in the Archipelago and then similar models in other parts of the world. This research shows that the normalization of Pesantren traditions as intellectual activism has been widely absorbed by cultural actors outside of Islam and Muslims as a basis for deepening

character and insight. Pesantrens, as examples of education, have been in the position of cross-cultural institutions and carry out the mission of transmitting religious and cultural knowledge outside of Islam.

## Introduction

Over the last decade, the presence of Islam in the world of film has become increasingly dynamic. Films have proven effective in reaching a wider spectrum of communities with their capacity to simplify the reception of Islamic teaching models to audiences (Sasono, 2010). The presence of films basically forms quite unique patterns of interaction and positions with social, religious, political, and cultural issues (Imanjaya, 2019). On the other hand, the presence of films, especially in religious environments such as Pesantren, marks the emergence of fragmentation of the contestation of religious authority in the public space of the modern world (Eickelman & Anderson, 2003) in addition to the articulation and face of new visual cultural expressions that are symptomatic in the environment of traditional Islamic authority (Hoesterey & Clark, 2012) like the reality that is tried to be built in the expository documentary entitled *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren* (2016) by Hamzah Sahal and Yuda Kurniawan. According to Hamzah Sahal, the film producer, this film tries to build a historical narrative, dynamics, culture, and various Pesantren educational curricula. It is the first documentary film expressing Pesantren culture. At the same time, he also said that the film was not an ideal and in-depth film to represent Pesantrens as a whole (REKAM FILMS, 2020). Although, to a certain extent, we cannot deny that the film is a cultural marker regarding the dynamic character of Pesantrens, which is always in continuity with the pace of the times.

Literally, the definition of Pesantren in the film *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren* does not stop at Islamic educational institutions where students live together in a dormitory and study under the guidance of ustaz and kiai (Dhofier, 2011) or where students devote most of their time to studying knowledge (Mas'ud, 2019). However, Pesantrens are shown to be closer to the unique culture and subculture of Indonesian society (Wahid, 1974). The reproduction of meaning was born from

several intellectual actors and main Nahdlatul Ulama figures who interpreted Pesantrens from upstream to downstream. The universe of meanings of Pesantrens starts from the landscape of Hindu, Buddhist, and Kapitayan religious education to the significance of its role in the formation of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), from meanings that have a normative, historical, prophetic to cosmopolitan tone coming from authoritative sources. Likewise, the inclusive perception of the meaning of Pesantrens as communal spaces that contribute to activities in the environment where the Pesantren is established.

In this way, the reproduction of diverse interpretations of Pesantrens mediated by local and national contexts shows that Pesantrens do not exist in an empty space and are not monolithic. To this day, the word Pesantren is used not only by traditionalist groups but also by modernist groups, Islamists, and several other groups also use it. The elasticity of the use of the meaning of Pesantren shows that the expression of Pesantren as a model of Islamic educational institutions is increasingly relevant, considering that Pesantren are formed by an intellectual understanding related to the conceptualization of how Islam accepts locality and Islam interacts with universal Islamic teachings (Lukens-Bull, 2010). This meaning then leads to the future of Pesantrens, which are expected to become role models for future global education. At this stage, Pesantrens absorb a fairly wide range of meanings from an area. From the historical aspect and flexible nature of Pesantrens, it cannot be culturally neutral.

Several studies have been accumulated that examine the role of Pesantren inclusion and its closeness to cultural practices and diversity in Indonesia in films conducted by several academics. Several recorded efforts are directed towards the area of Pesantren representation on the cinema screen, such as Ekky Imanjaya in *Searching for Madani Films: Cinema and the Islamic World* stating that he tabulates the Indonesian Islamic film scene by recording the shifting issues being worked on (Imanjaya, 2019). In this book, Imanjaya discusses films that present several film issues within the Muslim world, starting from films that raise the problems of Muslims. These films try to record the global dynamics of the Islamic world, popular Islamic films, historical films, and film history to films Islam as social criticism (pik, 2019).

Apart from this book, there is also research conducted by Ahmad Nuril Huda, who tries to examine the shift in authority in the public sphere and how the dynamics of Pesantrens accept the world of technology, such as the films in Santri, Cinema and The Exploratory Form of Authority in Traditionalist Muslim Indonesia. In this research, Huda highlights Hamzah Sahal, who uses film as an instrument that challenges traditional authority in the Muslim public sphere (A. N. Huda, 2020).

Apart from these two studies, other research related to Islamic films has also flooded the perceptions of our scholars in the last decade. It is a title like this: Representation of Pesantren Education in Film (Semiotic Analysis of the Film Negeri 5 Menara). This research describes Pesantrens as a combination of modern educational traditions and traditional Pesantren education in one place. This film depicts the process of becoming a student until then achieving success as an adult by showing the tenacity of the main character (Hartiningrum dkk., 2014). In other research, Khumaidah et al. tried to read the relevance of Pesantren education in films that align with Islamic religious education learning in public schools (Khumaidah dkk., 2021).

Meanwhile, unlike Shirley, Andre Bastian Tarigan (2020) amplifies the values of religious tolerance in the film “Living With Muslims” (Tarigan, 2020). Furthermore, several new narrative offers regarding Islamic films, such as gender issues and social piety, are depicted in articles (Fairuz, 2020), (Sahal, 2021), and (NF, 2023).

From the research that has been carried out, currently, no reviews have emerged in the form of journals, articles, or books that pay attention to intellectual activism outside of Islam and Muslims who adopt Pesantrens as role models. In other words, the practices of Pesantrens in a film are mostly only depicted to the extent of the moral experience and image of the Pesantren itself. Meanwhile, the cultivation of Pesantren inclusion values, which is an alternative narrative for intellectual activism that extends beyond Pesantren groups in general and captures it as a cultural expression, has yet to be captured by many scholars.

This research wants to explore further the elasticity of the meaning of Pesantrens, starting from the derivation of the portrait of the meaning of Pesantrens in the film Jalan Dakwah Pesantren by asking two big questions, first, what is the representation that the film Jalan Dakwah Pesantren wants to convey? Second,

is it possible for the words Pesantren and santri to be used and owned by people other than Islam and Muslims? This research will explore the use and adaptation of Pesantrens and Pesantrens outside the Islamic context through the narrative conveyed in the film Jalan Dakwah Pesantren.

## **Method**

This research uses an interdisciplinary approach (Interdisciplinary Studies). First, we conducted an extensive literature review of academic texts, historical accounts, and contemporary articles to establish these terms' historical context and religious significance. This research also uses qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews with stakeholders and art practitioners in the non-Islamic world, which combines elements of Pesantrens.

Before arriving at an explanation of this scope, first, this research will explain the description of the film Jalan Dakwah Pesantren as a new movement that makes Pesantrens familiar with popular media, coupled with the landscape of the Indonesian context in the year in which the film appeared. This is important considering that Arabization driven by Islamist groups has given a different color to Indonesian Islam. Apart from that, when the film was made, the tagline "Islam Nusantara," as the main narrative of Nahdlatul Ulama, which was formulated from Gus Dur's Indigenization of Islam in the early 90s, also needed to be explained, especially about the extent of the religious acculturation process that the Pesantren wanted to achieve in the film.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Islamic Cultivation: Pesantrens, Films, and Da'wah**

Jalan Dakwah Pesantren film, directed by Yuda Kurniawan, presents a unique and in-depth view of the world of Pesantrens and their role in society. This film opens with the tradition of Alfiyah Ibn Malik's learn Dedham (Mudzakkir & Umam, 2022), in which the students in the congregation sing with a beautiful rhythm. The Pesantren biorama lasts from after sleeping until going to sleep again. This film presents a unique and enlightening narrative about the long journey of the Pesantren. The film Jalan Dakwah Pesantren, directed by Yuda Kurniawan,

presents a unique and in-depth view of the world of Pesantrens and their role in society. The Pesantren, established as the oldest educational institution in Indonesia, is the Director's entry point in mapping the formation of the nation's culture. Through his recorded interview, Yuda also emphasized that when this film was made in 2015, there were many phenomena of fighting over what was proper among Muslims. It was not uncommon for them to express violence. However, Yuda sees that Pesantrens have a nonviolent tone and strongly reflect *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Kurniawan, 2018). This film is worthy of discussion in the contest between cinema and Pesantren themes. This film was considered a success, with more than a hundred domestic and abroad screenings, without using the facilities of the cinema industry if we use the box office measure as a lens of success. Almost all screenings are carried out alternatively in madrasas, public schools, fields, and Pesantrens. It was recorded that it had been watched by twenty-five thousand people in 2017 (Alawi, 2017) before finally being on YouTube three years ago and having been viewed five thousand five hundred times.

The film *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren* records several Pesantrens to show a variety of distinctive and similar curricula in order to build student habits in them such as sleeping for a limited amount of time, memorizing language theory by making it into songs that are sung, praying in congregation, studying the Yellow Book which is adjusted to the level abilities, practicing art, as well as the essential ability to live independently as a single individual in a collective in the same place of residence.

Yuda also completes this film by presenting all interviews with well-known Pesantren figures from various regions, such as Agus Sunyoto (Historian), Ahmad Baso (Pesantren researcher), Mustofa Bisri (Raudlatut Thalibin Pesantren, Rembang), Said Aqil Siradj (General Administrator of Nahdlatul Ulama - PBNU), M. Yusuf Chudlori (API Tegalrejo Pesantren, Magelang), Zaim Ahmad Syakir (Kauman Pesantren, Lasem), M. Jadul Maula (Kaliopak Pesantren, Jogja), Nashir Abdul Fatah (Tambak Beras Pesantren, Jombang), Hindun Anisah (Hasyim Asy'ari Pesantren, Jepara), Abun Bunyamin (Cipasung Pesantren, Tasikmalaya), Abdul Ghaffar Rozin (PBNU), and Hilmy M. Chasbullah (Krapyak Pesantren, Yogyakarta).

The figures interviewed explained the history of Pesantrens, which adopted educational concepts from the Hindu and Buddhist eras, such as *Dukuh* on



Paguron and Dormitory, which had roots in Indonesia's original/ancestral religion called Kapitayan. This story is also linked to the historical story of the arrival of Islam during the Samudera Pasai era, the presence of Pesantrens since the mode of institutionalization of education, and the evolution of its distribution and development of its form. This film highlights Pesantrens' efforts to involve and impact the broader community through various forms of da'wah, which prioritize spiritual values as a solution and are based on tiered, comprehensive, and applicable religious teaching. This includes community outreach programs, social activism, opening religious studies to non-Pesantren village communities, and inter-ethnic and religious dialogue initiatives.

Pesantrens, the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia, have played an essential role in shaping the national education system and its growth and development as Indonesian culture (Fuad dkk., 2020). The learning culture in Pesantrens is firmly rooted in rules, norms, and beliefs passed down from generation to generation and continue to develop and adapt to changing times. The value of Pesantrens, which uphold the adage "Preserving good traditions and embracing new ones which are better," has been well conveyed in its existence (Rahmat, 2002), (Anshori & Mustaqim, 2014). In addition, the dynamic nature of Pesantrens can be seen from their continuous adaptation to societal changes. Pesantrens have continued as the world has developed but have embraced new forms of expression and engagement. One important aspect of Pesantren dynamics is its involvement with film as a medium for spreading its messages and values. This progressive dimension is in line with the awareness offered by Khaled Abou El Fadl in the form of a positive response to the negative perception of the world press, which assesses that Islam is always slow in responding to the pace of the times so that there is a gap related to modernization in the mainstream and in the Islamic world itself (Hasan, 2017).

This also applies to non-Pesantren Muslim communities and/or even non-Muslim Indonesian communities who view Pesantrens in general as traditional and outdated institutions. This assumption, of course, did not just appear suddenly. It has its roots in the history of Islam and Indonesia itself, marked by the rejection of literature by fiqh scholars from the Royal Palace of Aceh Darussalam from India during the time of Sultan Iskandar II (1631-1641 AD) who considered literary

works to be full of myth, fantasy and useless for Muslims (Kamil, 2009).

This attitude did not immediately disappear with the times but instead left an increasingly lasting trace with the shift in the pattern of the boarding school (learning context since pre-Islamic times) with the congregation's character and orientation towards the study of jurisprudence (Anam, 2007). This makes the course of Islamic thought, which can also be read as the thought and position of Pesantrens in the country, tend to prioritize formalism and give the impression of exclusivity. Pesantrens are only owned, used, and touched upon by those involved.

In recent years, there has been a growing trend in using films as a platform to explore and promote Pesantren teachings and principles. Confessing the Apostle by director Helfi Kardit (2008), 3 Prayers 3 Love (2008) by director Nurman Hakim, Perempuan Berkalung Turban by director Hanung Bramantyo (2009), Closed Eyes by director Garin Nugroho (2011), Negeri 5 Menara by director Affandi Abdul Rachman (2012), Sang Kiai by director Rako Prijanto (2013), Pesantren by director Shalahuddin Siregar (2019). The development of films highlighting the nuances of Pesantrens has become a milestone in the struggle between popular media and Islam, which is now increasingly becoming an unlimited form of expression. This is influenced by the structure of religious authority, which is narrowed down to Islamists, modernists, and traditionalists, where the intersection between the three gives rise to the contestation of religious authority in the field of narratives and symbols (Farah, 2019), (Muliono dkk., 2019).

The presence of Pesantren films, at least Hamzah said, played a role in preventing the rise of the Islamic film genre, which normalizes Arabized Islamic practices in Indonesia, such as the film *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (2008) (A. N. Huda, 2020). The form of symbolic hegemony conveyed through the Arabization campaign received strong opposition from traditional groups because it was seen as putting Islam out of place instead of accelerating the erosion of divisions. The danger of the Arabization process or the process of identifying ourselves with Middle Eastern culture is that we are uprooted from our cultural roots (Wahid, 1989). The tendency of traditionalist groups to seek authentic Islamic values through the idea of Islam Nusantara relies on attitudes towards the social context and locality in Indonesia (Buhori, 2017). In this way, the return of Pesantrens to the national film scene



since 1960 – namely Usmar Ismail and Asrul Sani through Lesbumi NU – marks how hesitation in familiarizing with technology is an obsolete problem (N. Huda dkk., 2022). Although some Pesantrens still adhere to the Salafi ethos regarding how they limit contact with the new world (Iqbal, 2013).

In line with Seno Gumira Ajidarma's explanation that film exists as language, moving in the formation of known meaning because it relies on dominant discourse so that the act of communication or way of language is recognized by the audience (Ajidarma, 2023). Filmmakers have realized the power of visual media to reach wider audiences and communicate complex ideas in more accessible ways. However, only a few filmmakers who highlight the nuances of Pesantrens have mastered the field of Pesantren psychological life. This then makes existing films often trapped in a shallow view of the manifestation of religious life and increasingly thickens the sacralization of religion in the public sphere or, at a more extreme level, the occurrence of Arabization, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Therefore, it seems that it is not excessive to ask for an acceleration of the contact between Pesantrens and cinema and the technology in it to experience wide distribution, both as an escalation of the learning curriculum in Pesantrens, as well as designating Pesantrens as objects of discussion that are spelled out, read, understood and made public. On another level, if both insiders and outsiders capture this opportunity, then the glory of film variants that are fluent in Pesantren life, which also offer experience in the sophistication of cinema technology, will be found more frequently and will be more ready to compete in the mainstream distribution field. The intersection between Pesantrens and films is seen as an object of thought and an actualization of fulfilling the needs of an adaptive preaching medium in the era of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0.

### **Sastri, Santri, and the Space Beyond**

The narrative of the long journey of Pesantrens as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia was conveyed by Agus Sunyoto, Historian and Chair of Lesbumi PBNU at that time, including an explanation of the origins of the words Pesantren and santri. Agus explained, citing the arguments of colonial scholars, that Pesantrens are a continuation of the chain of pre-Islamic education: hermitage,

hamlet, dormitory, and college. However, specific communities can inherit this continuity by adopting similar roles and functions. Sunan Ampel, as the main figure in the existence of the Pesantren through the Ampel Denta Pesantren, is said by Agus to have adopted a system closer to Islam, namely Dukuh, which originates from the Hindu religious tradition. In the Hindu tradition, the Dukuh is the center of transmission of the Holy Scriptures. At the same time, the Holy Scriptures in Sanskrit are called “sastra,” people who study “sastra” are called “sastri,” but “sastri” alone is not enough; they must be loyal and obedient to the teacher or in other words “apprentice.” From “sastri” and “cantrik,” the derivative became santri (a new term was created whose creator is unknown), which gradually spread to the emergence of the term Pesantren (Sunyoto, 2012), (Abdurrahman, 2020).

Pesantrens developed rapidly in the 18th century, precisely in Tegalsari Village, Ponorogo, East Java. The Tegalsari Pesantren, under the guidance of Kiai Hasan Besari, is an old Pesantren that plays a vital role in connecting the genealogy of Islamic knowledge in Java (Ricklefs, 1998), (Nurdianto dkk., 2019). In Tegalsari, the social history of Pesantrens as a continuation of pre-Islamic educational institutions – closely related to mystical and supernatural things – makes them an oasis of popular culture for various communities (Baso, 2012).

Kiai Sadrach, a Javanese Christian missionary figure, is said to have received his education at an Pesantren. Likewise, the Pamungkas Poet, Ki Ronggowarsito Bagoes Boerhan, was born after the gilding of the Tegalsari Pesantren. Likewise, abangans, nobles, and even champions gain knowledge of supernatural powers from Pesantren kiai. Thus, the inclusive style of Pesantrens as cross-community institutions has been widespread since the early era of the Tegalsari Pesantren, Ponorogo. Therefore, referring to Pesantrens as Islamic educational institutions sounds more like a sectarian effort, which, in turn, will only alienate supporting communities from Pesantrens (Baso, 2012).

In line with this, the discourse on accepting students from other religions in madrasas was also raised by the General Chair of PBNU, KH Yahya Cholil Staquf. According to Gus Yahya, the madrasa paradigm of the madrasa education curriculum model still adheres to the medieval curriculum, including perceptions regarding different groups. Therefore, amid a heterogeneous Indonesian society,

madrasas must carry out reforms so that anyone with any religion can access them to strengthen national integration (Maryani, 2023).

Meanwhile, Yusuf Chudlori from the Tegalrejo Pesantren, Magelang, views Pesantrens as “kawah-candradimuka” in providing students with an understanding of Islam, which is a blessing for the universe (Islam rahmatan lil alamin). Strengthening this meaning was implemented in the birth of national brotherhood (Ukhuwah Wathoniyah) by addressing differences as sunnatullah. Gus Mus strengthened his nationalism through a spirit of patriotism against the invaders. Tegalrejo Pesantren is an Pesantren founded by Kiai Chudlori. Kiai Chudlori’s closeness to the people of the Kedu area (Magelang, Temanggung, Wonosobo, and Purworejo) and the unique tradition of “ngrowot” are elements of how Islam does not erase locality. Apart from that, Kiai Chudlori, who imitates the learning traditions of Ki Ronggowarsito, is very close to people across communities (Baso, 2012).

The intersection with the culture of the Tegalrejo Pesantren was found in a saga about Kiai Chudlori, who chose to use money from community donations to buy a new gamelan instrument rather than use it to build a mosque under the pretext of harmony between the villagers because if you prioritize an excellent mosque. However, if life is not harmonious, the mosque will become quiet (Mojokdotco, 2023). At first glance, this attitude aligns with AA Navis’ short story entitled “Robohnya Surau Kami.” Tegalrejo also embraces all types of regional arts, such as wayang, musical orchestras, and Nathan, into a series of performances that enliven Haflah. The flexible culture of Pesantrens, reflected in Tegalrejo, strengthens Pesantrens’ contact with cross-community groups that respect old values and noble traditions. Thus, the power of traditional Pesantren knowledge not only takes the form of religious domination in the form of strict religious dogmas but also looks flexible. and acculturative (Setiawan, 2021).

From Tegalrejo, we move south to Kasihan, Bantul Yogyakarta. There sits an arts hermitage which, through its official social media Bagong Kussudiardja Arts Padepokan, said that the establishment of PSBK (Padepokan Seni Bagong Kussudiardja, 1978) was inspired by the Pesantren education system and life in it, such as the daily lives of students, the relationship between students and educators, also the discipline, devotion and hard work of the students to study at

the Pesantren. This stimulus was received by Bagong Kussudiardja when he took part in the filming process of the film *Al-Kautsar* (1977) by Chaerul Umam, which was held at the Tegalrejo Pesantren, Magelang, with WS Rendra, who was being hit by the escapism of the New Order Government's repression, but at the same time marked spiritual maturity by making this film as a field of poetic preaching.

Using reckless capital, Bagong was determined to build a building on approximately five thousand square meters of land, which he bought cheaply at that time because it was on the bank of the Koteng River, far from urban areas. Bagong stole the concept of Pesantren by turning it into a Tactile Space, namely a space that presents knowledge that cannot be obtained by representation but must be through the presence of the individual who experiences it because this knowledge is obtained in a way that is bodily and rooted in the social environment (Carolan, 2007).

In the archipelago's treasures, Tactile Space is also called a hermitage, which provides lodgings for its cantriks (that is how Bagong calls male students cantrik and women: mentrik), a tiered curriculum in the arts, a cross-subsidy system for financing its operations, and The most crucial thing is to activate a pattern of patronage for those who are considered qualified and sufficient to be used as a reference in terms of physical skills, international public recognition, depth of knowledge, breadth of experience, and the spirit of a leader and educator. Almost the same pattern is carried out by kiai in Pesantrens, who are qualified and knowledgeable and often have recognition and even social movements.

Education pattern by staying together for a short period, every six months according to the hermitage curriculum, service pattern by helping with domestic and administrative affairs of the hermitage's "kiai," serving by being a teacher for the junior class which is accompanied by regulatory instruments as an ethical agreement When studying, for Bagong it will support the formation of individual habituation to be disciplined, creative, independent, and success in science will exceed the surface level or barokah (blessing) known in Pesantrens. Moreover, it is accompanied by a strong emotional relationship like that of Pesantren students and their kiai—that concept which Bagong stole.

Hindun Anisah and M. Hilmy Chasbullah, in the film *Al-Kautsar*, stated that the teaching method in Pesantrens is not tied to certain lesson hours but focuses

on students' activities throughout the day. This has proven effective in activating students' affective, psychomotor, and cognitive abilities. The exemplary system and non-transactional relationships built emotionally make Pesantren education oriented towards the principle of benefit to many people. The exemplary behavior transmitted from living side by side in the dormitory and using prayer space for teachers and kiai makes the impression of a santri even though he is already an alumnus.

The direction of the Pesantren's movement, which is acculturative and dialogical and uses religion as a perspective in looking at life's problems, is also implemented in the hermitage. Cantrik-mentrik not only learns the technicalities of dancing, painting, batik, and musical instruments, as is the case in general, but also the concept of exploring sources for creating works based on the richness of movement, color, pattern, motif, sound, and materials spread throughout the archipelago as a language for expressing values, with a religious-humanist pattern to answer the reality of contemporary problems. Bagong also equips its students to go out into the community to explore the creation of works close to their local context, flexible in adapting to local resources and needs, and quickly grasp the content of the educational message rather than mere entertainment. This practice is close to the community outreach and social activism programs carried out by Pesantrens by holding recitations outside the building.

In other words, Bagong activates the santri spirit for its students, by making art not just for art, but a dialogical space for the diversity of society. Like religious knowledge studied in Pesantrens, art is explored and presented as a method of approach, a basis for thinking and expression, which Bagong transmits to prepare students to face and serve their community when they return home. In line with his artistic vision, which is still echoed by the successors and administrators of the Padepokan, "I always have the desire to instill a sense of responsibility in those who study at the Padepokan, so that they feel the need to dedicate themselves to society and humanity, for the sake of or through art. That is the goal of Padepokan. So, it's not for producing artists," said Bagong Kussudiardja.

At least thousands of cantriks from various regions in Indonesia and Asia from 1978 to 2003 have moved away and returned home to create their own "hermitage" in their place of origin while still characterizing Bagongan in their

distribution work. After Bagong died in 2003, the hermitage evolved into a more representative space. During its development, Butet Kartaredjasa, a veteran and famous Indonesian artist who is also Bagong Kussudiardja's biological son, also grew the hermitage to this day as a Foundation Trustee. Butet, who has recently said that he is very obsessed with the wisdom of Pesantren kiai, such as the eccentric Kiai Chudlori Tegalrejo, underlined that the physical building is not for the family to inherit, nor is it to inherit the artistic practices of Bagong for everyone who will proceed in this place. Butet, who said that he was at odds in artistic ideology with his father, prioritized the spirit of the cultural vision that Bagong created through various artistic mediums and was not moving towards uniformity of artistic practice, which would tend to result in stagnant thinking and artistic practice innovation that did not adapt to the spirit of the times. Therefore, since 2007, the hermitage has transformed from being based on patrons and studios to becoming a non-patron arts center accessible not only to artists or those with the ability and knowledge of art but also intended for anyone. The post-Bagong Padepokan has replaced the pattern of patronage, which relies on one person as a whole, with production work that provides various programs ranging from facilitating presentations and exhibitions, applying art to educational work, and appreciation to residencies. It is the latter, residency, that is closest to being declared as a nyantrik work practice (Antariksa, 2016) for artists minus "kiai" in post-Bagong hermitages (Hutomo & Saputri, 2016).

In 2018, researchers were involved in an artist residency program entitled "Post-Skilled Artists." This program brings together individual artists from various regions in Indonesia to live in hermitages. The program lasts for approximately nine months with a curriculum oriented like an Pesantren (forming a habitus of expertise and social piety) and has the same breath: not tied to a specific time unit. The seven of us were seated based on different artistic and educational backgrounds. It is similar to the current independent curriculum, which is based on project completion and relies on the andragogy education system. The most challenging thing was the collaborative work and adaptation we had to go through due to the intensity of meeting times and very tight activity scheduling. What was done then was worthy of being close to Pesantren methods in art, even though it did not fully adopt Pesantren patterns and conceptions.



From the story of Kiai Sadrach and the Bagong Kussudiardja Arts Padepokan, it is clear that the ethical and moral values that develop in Pesantrens are never interpreted rigidly, only for the Pesantren group. On several occasions, Gus Mus assessed that the word *santri* is intended for those who have received boarding school or boarding school education and those who have morals and character like *santri* (Triono, 2023). This meaning emphasizes *santri* cultivation as an adjective for those who uphold noble and noble values, so that quite a few communities are formed that have a “*santri spirit*” even in professions that are not closely related to the Islamic religion.

### **Pesantren: Melting Pot and Mecca of Tolerance**

This paper also wants to explore the possibility that the terms “Pesantren” and “*santri*” have transcended their traditional Islamic context and have found resonance in non-Islamic environments. The integration of Pesantren elements in various aspects of non-Islamic life has shown flexibility in cultural boundaries. It offers the potential for intercultural exchange and meaningful impact (Nafis, 2014).

of religious background. Likewise, the reproduction of the term “*santri*” has also experienced a shift in meaning. Previously, this word referred to Pesantren students who had an exclusively Islamic background. However, in a broader scope, currently, “*santri*” includes students or individuals who study at educational institutions with an Pesantren values orientation, regardless of their religious beliefs. This reflects adapting and accommodating Pesantren traditions and practices in various social and cultural environments. The integration of Pesantren elements in a non-Islamic environment also provides a clear example of the flexibility of cultural boundaries. The moral values, leadership, discipline, and independence taught in Pesantrens have found their place in various life contexts, including secular organizations, general education environments, and community groups. Thus, Pesantrens have become a bridge for interaction and understanding between different cultures.

As traditional educational institutions in Indonesia, Pesantrens have attracted the attention of intellectual activism outside of Islam and Muslim circles as role models for fighting for broader social, educational, and cultural goals. *Intellectual*

*activism* is a social movement involving intellectuals and academics to increase public awareness of social, political, and economic issues related to justice, human rights, and social change. This movement often combines scientific knowledge and thinking with concrete action to achieve a more just and inclusive social transformation. However, it needs to be acknowledged that implementing Pesantrens as role models in intellectual activism can also pose challenges. Some of these are the potential for misinterpretation or errors in understanding religious teachings and negative responses from groups who do not fully accept the concepts and values taught in Pesantrens (Kesuma, 2017) besides being a transfer of knowledge, pesantren also as a cadre of scholars' and as preserver of Islamic culture. The challenge of pesantren education today is globalization that can bring positive and negative impacts. The principle of pesantren is *al muhafadzah 'ala al qadim al shalih, wa al akhdzu bi al jadid al ashlah*, that is to maintain a positive tradition, and to balance with taking positive new things. Problems related to civic values will be addressed through the principles held by pesantren. Pesantrens should also make effective, efficient, and equitable reshuffling as human beings (*al musawah bain al nas*).

The strength of Pesantrens lies in their loyalty to rooted traditions, but it is fearless in innovating and adapting to the times. The film *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren* conveys that Pesantrens are comprehensive institutions, covering many aspects of life, from religion to the arts and community life to its role in shaping national civilization. In its telling, this film also illustrates how Pesantrens are places of religious education and act as maintainers and livelihoods of high-value local traditions. Pesantrens maintain noble ancestral values and contribute to cultural development in modern society. This film shows how Pesantrens can become a strong foundation for maintaining national identity while continuing to move forward in the era of globalization.

At the level of meaning expressed in the film, the inclusive values of Pesantrens are interpreted not only as a one-sided instrument of religious moderation but also are captured through the flexibility of the meaning of Pesantrens as instruments of civilization that are close not only to Islamic groups but also to groups outside Islam. As an instrument of civilization, the relevance of the meaning of Pesantren inclusion for pluralism in Indonesia and the world certainly influences how they

strengthen the position of Pesantren as a space for contemplation that enriches people's capacity to digest and accept the term Pesantren through cultural and national experiences. This discourse offer is vital because educational inequality is still an unresolved issue, apart from the ability to carry out acculturation, which aims to maintain social integration in the context of a super-heterogeneous society.

Overall, intellectual activism outside Islam and Muslims adopting Pesantrens as role models is an exciting phenomenon that reflects the increasing complexity of social demands and the need to seek inspiration from various traditions and cultures. Expanding the meaning and integration of Pesantrens and Pesantrens in non-Islamic environments indicates the sustainability and relevance of Pesantren values in this global era. Amid this integration process, Pesantrens also open up opportunities for intercultural exchange by sharing values, practices, and perspectives between Pesantrens and their non-Islamic environments, resulting in a rich dialogue between the two. Thus, opportunities open up to build broad networks, respect cultural and religious differences, and promote tolerance while enriching the commonality of universal human values.

## **Conclusion**

The film Jalan Dakwah Pesantren restores the name of Pesantrens in contestation over the structure of religious authority in Indonesia. This new role shows that Pesantrens as inclusive spaces have experienced a shift in the meaning of the terms "Pesantren" and "Santri" from a traditional Islamic context into a more flexible realm, such as Tactile Space or Padepokan. Pesantrens have become more inclusive, where Pesantren values are applied in various aspects of life and adopted by alternative educational institutions worldwide. There is an impression that Pesantrens are potential oases of significant cultural encounters and exchanges. Pesantrens are seen as a model of future education with moral values, leadership, and discipline and can enrich society amid today's chaotic world. However, on the other hand, implementing Pesantrens as role models in intellectual activism also raises challenges, including the potential for misunderstanding and negative responses from some groups who may not fully understand the values of Pesantrens.

Pesantrens are not only places for religious education but are also guardians

and maintainers of high-value local traditions and play a role in cultural development in modern society. Pesantrens can maintain national identity while moving forward in the era of globalization. In the context of inclusion, the Pesantren Da'wah Road, which is funded by the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag RI), strengthens the value of Pesantrens as instruments of civilization that are relevant for pluralism, both in Indonesia and in the world, as well as enriching the community's capacity to accept and digest Pesantren values through cultural experiences. And nation, even though groups outside Islam and Muslims apply it. Therefore, the offer to expand the meaning and integration of Pesantrens in non-Islamic environments reflects significant adaptation, making Pesantrens a source of inspiration in various fields. Nevertheless, challenges remain, and a deeper understanding and wise approach is needed in introducing Pesantren values to the broader community.

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