PhD Thesis Summary

Nurturing Salafi manhaj
A study of Salafi pesantren in contemporary Indonesia

DIN WAHID

PhD Public Examination, 27 January 2014
PhD in Islamic Studies
Promoter: Prof. Dr. Martin van Bruinessen
Utrecht University

Abstract
This study is about the role of Salafi pesantren (Islamic boarding school) in Salafi da’wa (conveying or inviting to the way of Islam) in Indonesia. A Salafi pesantren is a pesantren that teaches Salafism which mostly derives from the works of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia. Salafi pesantren started to emerge in the late 1980s and were established by graduates from Saudi Arabia and Yemen universities, and supported by alumni of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic (LIPIA) in Jakarta. While the precise number of Salafi pesantren is unavailable, it is estimated that the number reaches 50 pesantren. Salafi pesantren not only teach their students about Salafism, but also accustom them to practice the Salafi manhaj (path) in their daily life. The study focuses on three pesantren: al-Nur al-Atsari in Ciamis, Assunah in Cirebon (both in West Java), and al-Furqan in Gresik, East Java. I analyse various aspects of these educational institutions: their historical development, community responses, educational programs, curriculum, methods of instruction, students’ lives and activities, networks and fundraising.

Keywords
Salafi, manhaj, pesantren, madrasah, ustadh, sunna, da’wa.

Introduction
Since the last decade of the twentieth century, Indonesia has witnessed the
remarkable development of the presence of a new kind of pesantren called Salafi pesantren. The term “Salafi” derives from salaf (predecessors) and refers in this case specifically to the first three generations of the Muslim community (al-salaf al-salih). A Salafi is then defined as a person who follows the manhaj (path) of the salaf. A Salafi pesantren is a pesantren that teaches Salafism that mostly derives from the works of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia. The doctrine of Salafism can be traced back to an earlier period, to the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ahmad ibn Hanbal. In the contemporary period, Abdul Aziz Abdullah ibn Baz and Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani are among the most influential Salafi authors. Salafis texts, such as the Kitab al-Tawhid and al-Usul al-Thalatha by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the al-‘Aqida al-Wasitiyya by Ibn Taymiyya are among the main textbooks used in Salafi pesantren. Salafi pesantren started to emerge in the late 1980s and were established by fresh graduates from universities in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and supported by alumni of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic (LIPIA) in Jakarta.

As a part of the worldwide Salafi movement, Salafi pesantren are interesting to study. The emergence of the Salafi movement in Indonesia, the world’s largest Muslim country has brought about tension and conflict in the community. In Mataram, Lombok, for example, conflict between Salafis and traditional Muslims emerged in April 2006 when traditional Muslims damaged a musalla (small prayer house) that belonged to the Salafis. Conflicts between Salafis and other Muslims also took place in other regions, such as in Banjarsari, Ciamis, West Java and Sidayu, Gresik, East Java. The most striking phenomenon of the Salafi movement in Indonesia that received much attention in scholarly works was the birth of the Laskar Jihad. Under the leadership of Ja’far Umar Thalib, this paramilitary group mobilized Muslim support and called on them to carry out jihad in the Moluccas on the grounds of defending Muslims from Christian attacks. These phenomena have changed the image of Indonesian Islam from what Martin van Bruinessen termed the “smiling face of Islam” to “conservative Islam” (2013).

In this study, I focus on three pesantren: al-Nur al-Atsari in Ciamis, Assunah in Cirebon (both in West Java), and al-Furqan in Gresik, East Java. They were chosen because they represent different currents Salafism in Indonesia.

Research questions and methodology

As educational institutions, Salafi pesantren have developed a system that includes educational programs, curriculum, textbooks, and materials, as well as methods of learning. Questions on these matters include: What are the programs these pesantren offer? What kind of curriculum do the pesantren develop? What are the books the pesantren use? What kind of methods do these pesantren adopt in transferring knowledge? However, there is another important question concerning the internalization of the Salafi manhaj in the daily life of the students. The Salafi manhaj includes not only the way of thought in religious matters, but also the way of conduct in daily life. Students
in Salafi pesantren not only study Salafism, but also put its rules into practice, such as by wearing a jalabiya (long dress with long sleeves), sporting a long beard, avoiding isbal (lengthening and trailing clothing below the ankles), and abiding to a specific etiquette in having their meals. By carefully looking at the process of the internalization of the Salafi manhaj, I analyse the dynamics in the students’ lives in pesantren, the interaction between the mudir (director), ustadh (teachers) and santri (students), and the interaction between individuals in the pesantren and those outside.

It is important to realize that Salafi pesantren are embedded in a network of similar pesantren, and thus are not isolated, but connected to their counterparts both in Indonesia and abroad. This network is maintained through collaborative actions, such as teacher exchanges. The Salafis also keep in touch with their sheikhs in the Middle East by inviting them to teach in the Salafi dawra (educational visits) in Indonesia. Other means of preserving these linkages is by sending students to study with them and asking them for various fatwa on cases happening in the country. Another important issue concerning the pesantren is fundraising. The key question in this matter is how Salafi pesantren obtain their funds. Do they receive financial support from international donors?

This study employs an anthropological approach. To collect data, I spent seventeen months doing fieldwork divided over two periods; the first was conducted from mid-August 2008 to mid-April 2009, while the second was carried out from mid-December 2009 to mid-September 2010. During the first period, I visited fourteen Salafi pesantren in Java. During my visits, I stayed in the pesantren and interviewed the mudir and ustadh, and had informal talks with santri. My stays gave me the opportunity to closely observe all santri activities in the pesantren. I participated in some of their activities, such as performing collective prayers in the mosque, attending religious lectures in the morning after dawn prayer or in the evening after sunset prayer, attending lessons in the classrooms, and having meals together with ustadh. My participation in these activities aimed at observing exactly what happened during these activities: how teachers delivered lectures; how they explained and elaborated on these lessons; what kind of questions students and other participants posed; how teachers reacted to these questions; and what the ustadh did during the lessons in the classrooms and during public lectures.

During my first fieldwork, I also visited Salafi and non-Salafi foundations that supported the Salafi da’wa, such as the Lajna Khayriyya Mushtaraka and the Dewan Da’wah, while I interviewed some prominent figures of the institutions. I also attended Salafi public lectures held in various mosques in Jakarta, Cirebon, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Gresik. In such events, I observed the situation during the lectures and had informal conversations with participants, asking them about the reasons behind their interest in Salafism.

My findings from the first fieldwork brought me to focus on the aforementioned pesantren in my second fieldwork. In my view, these three pesantren are interesting because they have survived while encountering
serious community challenges, especially from local religious leaders. Pesantren al-Nur al-Atsari, for example, was attacked by villagers in 2002, while Pesantren al-Furqan was disbanded by the sub-district authorities in 1994. Having survived serious trouble, the pesantren have grown and developed significantly and currently leave other traditional pesantren in their villages behind.

Different from the first fieldwork when I stayed in the pesantren, during the second fieldwork I resided in the house of a villager. Nevertheless, I still visited the pesantren, interviewed ustadh, made informal conversations with santri and administrative staff members in order to update my data. I applied this strategy in order to witness objectively the responses of the communities surrounding the pesantren. Outside the pesantren, I interviewed the local leaders of Muslim organizations, such as the Muhammadiyah, the NU, Persatuan Islam (Persis), and Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI). I also had informal talks with ordinary people, such as retailers in the traditional markets, and observed how ordinary people reacted to the Salafis, examining whether or not their responses different from those of their leaders.

In addition to observation and interviews, also other primary sources such as documents like CDs and DVDs that record Salafis’ lectures, leaflets and booklets were also the main references of this study. Salafi textbooks written by Indonesian Salafi figures and Salafi periodicals are indeed important sources for this study, and the internet was without doubt a vital source. This is because all Salafi groups, institutions and pesantren, and even Salafi individuals have created their own websites and blogs. Moreover, lectures on Salafism may now easily be found on YouTube. During this study, I also often listened to Salafi radio stations that put on air various programs, such as public lectures, tartil (Qur’anic recitation), and questions and answers on religious matters.

LITERATURE SUMMARY

Much research has been carried out on Islamic educational institutions, particularly on madrasah and pesantren, and on Salafism. The Islamic educational system and its institutions have received much attention, especially after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001 and the Bali bombing in October 2002.\footnote{See, for example, Alexander Evans (2006), Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey (2006), and Justin Magouirk (2008).}

A classic reference on pesantren is no doubt Zamakhshyari Dhofier’s work, Tradisi pesantren (1984). Employing an anthropological approach to the subject, the author discusses important aspects of pesantren, such as their curriculum, methods of learning, intellectual traditions, and the networks of the pesantren and their leaders, kyai. His inquiry into pesantren and kyai’s networks is a valuable contribution to the study of Islamic education in Indonesia. In his research, the author found that the endogamous marriage system between families of great kyai has become an essential factor in the establishment of the religious authority of a kyai. In addition to having deep knowledge of Islam,
the endogamous marriage system guarantees the strong authority of a junior kyai in establishing a new pesantren.

The Dutch scholar Karel A. Steenbrink’s work Pesantren, madrasah, sekolah; Pendidikan Islam dalam kurun moderen (1986) is important to gain an understanding in the history and development of Islamic educational institutions. As reflected in the title of the book, this work provides us with a gradual shift in the Islamic education system from pesantren to madrasah and finally to sekolah (public school). As traditional Islamic boarding schools, pesantren taught only religious subjects. However, the modernization of Islamic education the government introduced in the mid-1970s forced Muslim educators to adopt a new form of educational institution, the madrasah. Unlike pesantren, the madrasah curriculum covers both religious and secular subjects. Furthermore, Muslims also have adopted the sekolah system that train students in more secular subjects. Taking this gradual shift in the adoption of a secular educational system into account, Steenbrink predicts that in the future, the segregation between these three forms of Islamic educational institutions will become fluid and blurred. He puts this gradual move in a phrase that reads “From Kyai Haji (K.H.) to Drs.”

Martin van Bruinessen’s work Kitab Kuning, pesantren, dan tarekat; Tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia (1995) remains important in pesantren studies. In addition to a discussion on pesantren and their living traditions, the contribution of this work lies in its discussion of the so-called “Kitab Kuning”, classic sources of Islamic teachings that constitute the trademark of traditional pesantren. Based on extensive research in 46 pesantren throughout Indonesia, the author identified the most popular books pesantren use in all branches of Islamic knowledge and Arabic, including Arabic and its tools (nahw ‘syntax’, sarf ‘morphology’, balagha ‘eloquence’, mantiq ‘logic’), fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), usul al-fiqh (Methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence), hadith, ilm al-hadith (science of hadith), ‘aqida (creed), tafsir (interpretation), akhlaq (ethics), tasawuf, and sirat al-nabi (history of the Prophet).

The contemporary development of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia has been studied in Jajat Burhanudin and Dina Afrianty (2006) Mencetak Muslim modern; Peta pendidikan Islam Indonesia. In this book, researchers from the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN, State Islamic University) Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta discuss the various models of Islamic educational institutions in some provinces in Indonesia including traditional and modern pesantren, madrasah, and integrated Islamic schools. The book examines the changes and continuity within Islamic education in response to modern challenges.

Robert W. Hefner’s work Making modern Muslims; The politics of Islamic education in Southeast Asia (2009) has contributed to a better understanding of Islamic education. The book discusses various types of Islamic educational institutions in Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Cambodia), and their attempts to reform in response to social, cultural and political changes. The work also examines their curricula
on contemporary issues, including citizenship, pluralism and gender equity.

Recent studies on pesantren and madrasah are found in Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikand, and Martin van Bruinessen (2008), *The madrasah in Asia, political activism, and transnational linkages*. This work gives us a better understanding of the madrasah, Islamic educational institutions that have been recently alleged as being incubators of Muslim fundamentalist. The book discusses various types of madrasah; traditional, modern, and Salafi, in the different countries in Asia. Some elements of the madrasah, such as the curriculum, methods of instruction, institutional reforms, and networks are discussed in the book. Madrasah networks have connected them to the wider world and enabled them to communicate with their counterparts both in their home countries and outside.

Like pesantren and madrasah, the contemporary Salafi movement has received serious attention in scholarly works. The first extensive work of the contemporary Salafi movement in Indonesia is no doubt Noorhaidi Hasan’s *Laskar Jihad; Islam, militancy, and the quest for identity in Post-New Order Indonesia* (2006). It portrays the origins, development, and fragmentation of Salafism and Salafis’ engagement in the jihad in conflict areas in the Moluccas. Focusing on the Laskar Jihad, the author discusses not only the drama of jihad itself, but also the processes of mobilizing support, including getting fatwa from Salafi sheikhs in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, Muslims’ support in the home country, and warrior recruitment. One of the interesting conclusions the author draws is that the Salafi doctrine on the obedience to the ruler was not strong enough; once the Salafis had opportunity to exercise power, they abused it.

Roel Meijer (2009) has edited *Global Salafism* that provided us with a comprehensive understanding of the movement. The significance of this book lies in its discussion of all aspects connected with the Salafi movement in the world, including its basic principles and doctrines, the various types of Salafism (quietist, politico, and jihadist), and the various movements of Salafism that exist worldwide.

A more recent work on Salafism is Zoltan Pall’s (2012) *Lebanese Salafis between the Gulf and Europe*. It discusses the emergence of the Salafi movement in Tripoli and Northern Lebanon, and its fragmentation into “purist” and “haraki” (activist). In his research, Pall discovered that the first group of Salafis is supported by the Kuwait-based foundation, the Jam’iyyat Ihya’ al-Turath, while the haraki group received generous funds from the Qatar-based Sheikh Eid Charity Foundation. More interesting is Pall’s criticism of Quintan Wiktorowicz’s typology of the Salafi movements that classifies them into “purist”, “politico” and “jihadi”. After criticizing this typology, Pall proposes a new classification that categorizes them into “purist” and “haraki” with subdivisions of each.

**Summary of findings and conclusions**

Salafis in Indonesia are far from monolithic. I classify them in Indonesia into three categories: “purist”, “haraki” and “jihadist”. The purists are those who...
advocate absolute compliance to the ruler and concentrate their activities in da’wa and education. They use peaceful means to achieve their goal, the Islamic community. Within this category, there are three sub-groups, which I call “rejectionist”, “cooperationist”, and “tanzimi” (from Arabic tanzim, ‘organization’). “Rejectionist” purists are exclusive; they reject all collaboration with groups and organizations that they consider as hizbi (partisan, causing divisions) which includes almost everyone else. In education, they reject the national curriculum. Laskar Jihad’s former activists fall into this category. “Cooperationist” purists are more inclusive; they are willing to cooperate, under certain conditions, with other Muslim groups as well as the government. Abu Nida and his group who receive grants from the Jam’iyyat Ihya’ al-Turath are classified among this faction.

I use the term “tanzimi” for those quietist Salafis who consider it permissible to establish formal organizations. The Wahdah Islamiyah in Makassar, South Sulawesi, and the Harakah Sunniyah untuk Masyarakat Islami (HASMI) in Bogor, West Java, belong to this category. Both the Wahdah and HASMI are structurally organized from central boards to branches. Unlike “rejectionist” and “cooperationist” who consider the structural organizational form bid’a (religious innovations), the “tanzimi” faction believes that an organizational format is needed in order to be able to cope with the current challenges da’wa faces.

The second type of Salafis are the “haraki” (from Arabic haraka, ‘movement’), also called “politicos” by some scholars. Unlike the “purists” who maintain unconditional obedience to the ruler, the “haraki” object to total submission to the government. They believe that Islam is an all-encompassing worldview that covers all aspects of life, including rituals, social norms, economics, and politics. Consequently, a ruler must implement Islamic norms and regulations and thus he has to submit to and enact Islamic laws. Failure to implement Islamic law results in criticism by the ruled. Pondok Pesantren Islam al-Mukmin, Ngruki, Surakarta, Central Java, is considered to belong to this category. The last category of Salafism is the “jihadists”. In contrast to the “haraki” who criticizes the government verbally and refrain from violent actions, the “jihadist” group goes further by taking up arms against Muslim rulers.

Salafi pesantren offer various educational programs from Kindergarten up to the tertiary level, and they have developed their own curriculum. There appear some differences between them. Pesantren associated with “rejectionist” Salafis offer less programs, notably Tahfiz (memorization of the Qur’an), and Tadrib al-Du’at (Training for Preachers). They have derived their curriculum from Yemen and only teach religious subjects. Through these programs, they want to duplicate the Darul Hadith, a Salafi learning centre founded by Sheikh Muqbil in Damaj, Yemen, where many “rejectionist” Salafis have graduated. The only secular subjects these pesantren teach to their students are the national language and mathematics. These subjects are needed because Indonesian is a tool for communication, while mathematics is important in doing business.
On the other hand, pesantren associated with “cooperationist” Salafis offer a wider range of programs: Kindergarten, Elementary School, Tsanawiyah, Aliyah, and Ma’had ‘Aly. These pesantren, such as al-Furqan and Assunnah, show a more inclusive tendency than their “rejectionist” Salafi counterparts. They have adopted the national curriculum for secular subjects, combining this with the Saudi curriculum for religious subjects. They teach all secular subjects outlined by the government and let their students participate in national examination so that they can continue their studies at higher levels in public schools.

The methodology used to teach Salafism varies in line with the ages of the students. Children at kindergarten and elementary school levels, for example, are introduced to Salafism in a simple way, such as by memorizing prayers based on accepted hadiths and not allowing them to sing songs or to draw living creatures like animals and people. Meanwhile, students at higher levels learn Salafism by studying textbooks and they have to memorize the lessons, especially the dalil (religious arguments). More importantly, Salafi pesantren not only teach their students about Salafism but also stimulate them to practice the Salafi manhaj in daily life such as by wearing the jalabiya, sporting long beards, avoiding isbal, and having meals together eating from one big tray. All these practices aim at accustoming them to the Salafi manhaj so that they become true Salafis (Salafi kaffah).

The flow of international donors to Salafi pesantren proves the existence of pesantren transnational networks. My inquiry found that most Salafi pesantren receive financial support from international sources, both from charity foundations and individuals. The Kuwaiti charitable foundation, Jam‘iyyat Ihya’ al-Turath al-Islami, remains the main donor that grants large sums of money to Salafi pesantren and institutions. Smaller amounts of money have been granted to Salafi institutions by the Qatari Sheikh Eid Charity foundation.

The Salafis and Salafi pesantren are connected with their counterparts in the Middle East, notably Saudi Arabia and Yemen, from which Indonesian Salafis graduated. Like Salafis worldwide, Indonesian Salafis maintain their traditional networks that connect them with their sheikhs in the Middle East through various means, such as by seeking their fatwa on specific matters, asking them to deliver religious lessons in their dawra, and sending students over to study with them. Moreover, Indonesian Salafis have developed regional networks in Southeast Asia, especially between Salafis in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Salafi pesantren, dawra, and radio stations are instrumental in establishing and maintaining this network. The presence of some students from Malaysia and Singapore at Salafi pesantren in Batam and Solo, and the invitation of Indonesian Salafi ustadh by their counterparts in Singapore and Malaysia to deliver Salafi lessons confirm this network. Hang radio station in Batam, Riau Islands, deserves particular attention in this connection. It broadcasts religious lectures to which Salafis in Singapore listen.

Muslim communities have responded in various ways to the emergence of Salafi pesantren in their surroundings. Traditionalist Muslims from the
Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) show strong opposition to Salafism which ranges from verbal attacks to violent actions. The main reasons of their opposition are the Salafis’ critique of their religious practices which they consider bid‘a; and the Salafis’ attitude towards other Muslims. The Salafis’ criticism of the religious beliefs and practices of the local community has aroused the anger of the community and especially of its religious leaders. For these leaders, Salafis’ questioning of the religious arguments behind their practices means challenging their religious authority. Moreover, local religious leaders who maintain these traditions benefit economically. Thus, Salafis’ questioning of their religious arguments poses a threat to their religious authority and thus to their economic resources. Furthermore, some Salafis limit their social interaction to their own circles and therefore local people perceive them as anti-social, exclusive and arrogant, which, in some cases, also invokes the local people’s anger.

A more positive response comes from the local leaders of reformist Muslim organizations, the Muhammadiyah and Persis. Although they disagree with the Salafis on the obligation of Muslims to follow the examples of the Salaf, these organizations view them as their partners in combating the spread of bid‘a. This assessment is obvious, for example, from the arguments of Nawawi Bakri, the chair of the Muhammadiyah branch in Sidayu, and Ade Abdurrahman, the chair of the Persis branch in Banjarsari. Both leaders voice their appreciation of Salafism in its struggle against bid‘a. However, conflict between them flares up when Salafism takes over their assets, such as seizing mosques and pesantren. The case of Pesantren al-Hikmah in Sidayu reflects the Muhammadiyah’s view towards Salafism. The pesantren belongs to the Muhammadiyah but its management is assigned to Salafis due to lack of Muhammadiyah figures to lead it. Despite the fact that Bakri has no objection to this assignment, other Muhammadiyah figures show their anxiety.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hefner, Robert W. 2009. Making modern Muslims; The politics of Islamic education
Noor, Farish A, Yoginder Sikand, and Martin van Bruinessen. 2008. The madrasah in Asia; Political activism and transnational linkages. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
Pall, Zoltan. 2012. Lebanese Salafis between the Gulf and Europe. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.