



Sketch Out the Myth of Wisdom and Blessing of Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

Boarding school culture is a part of Islamic social setting that acknowledges the differences of human "faith" in an intellectual approach to the problem that has been revealed in the empirical world. Boarding school tradition is one of the cultural acculturation forms of Islamic studies. There is a reflection that the "santri" relation to the "kiai" is an obedience of "*sam'an wa ta'atan*" by hoping to bless in order that they can get better lives. The blessing is part of the justification of religious symbol that is given by "santri" to their "kiai" such as blessing, "karamah" that function as the power source. Santri' assumptions to the "kiai" have the practice of "hisb" that is believed can result in blessing and clairvoyant. Those symbolic terms are like *Barakah* (blessing), *tawadu'*, *muruhah*, and other irreplaceable symbols that have negative meanings for *santri* like afraid to be cursed. Good attitudes of *kiai* always show and utilize symbols that contain moral discipline values (religion) to internalize in building a cultural formula of the blessing myths.

Keywords: *santri' sacred obedience, blessing re-internalization*

A. Introduction

Boarding school culture is a part of culture acculturation of Indonesian culture by Islamic study (Siraj, 2005). Boarding school can change and apply the principle of thinking, "*al-muhafazhah 'ala 'al-qadim ash-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah*" (keeping good classical cultural values and adopting new and more useful cultural values) correctly and precisely (Siraj, 2005). Boarding school culture is a part of Islamic social settings that acknowledges the difference of human "faith" in the intellectual approach to the problems that have been revealed empirically.

Education discourse on the basis of boarding school always becomes a part of the environment of the society which is unique and has positive living values. Generally, an Islamic boarding school is out of its surrounding. Boarding school

center at least has a leader house or *kiai's* house, mosque or mushalla, and dormitory. There is no exact model or certain rules in the physical building of boarding school. Therefore, the addition of the buildings in the boarding school environment is just an improvisation.

The model of boarding school is identical with traditional culture. It is at least must be understood by two different views. The first, its traditionalism refers to the one ideological system sourced from conspiratorial mixing between Asy'ariyah scholasticism Theology with Maturidiyah by Sufism doctrines (Islamic mysticism) that have been developed in Indonesia for a long time ago (Abdurrahman Wahid "Kata Pengantar" in Horikoshi, 1987).

Boarding school is a heritage, and at the same time, it is also a wealth of Indonesian intellectual culture in a historical range from the past to the present. We can see significant influences in the development process of the national education system, besides its existence in preserving Islamic teaching. *Pesantren* is also an entryway for many young people from poor or pious family to higher education in the humanities, medicine, social and natural science, law, medicine, and other technical fields (Woodward, Rohmaniyah, Amin, & Coleman, 2010). By virtue of the boarding school condition that is very complex, so the concept of boarding school itself becomes a reflection to the society in education and social changes. It also a gateway for many young learners from pious and poor families

In the leadership context, a "*kiai*" in boarding school tightly holds glorious values that become his hints in behaving, acting, and developing his boarding school. Glorious values become his beliefs in his life. Therefore, when there is something or behavior from "*kiai*" deviated from his own beliefs, the trust from the society on him will be faded directly or indirectly (Sujuthi & Bruinessen, 2001, p. 19). Since, in fact, glorious values that have been held by "*kiai*" or Islamic society become a soul (power) that is viewed as a gift and mercy of God, Allah the Almighty.

B. Islamic Boarding School and *Santri*' Sacred Obedience

Boarding school or Islamic boarding school (or commonly called as only "pesantren") is dormitory Islamic school (*Islamic boarding school*). Islamic boarding school students (or they are called as "*santri*") study there and stay at dormitory provided by boarding school. In common, one boarding school is led by one "*kiai*". He manages all of the boarding school lives. He sometimes points some senior *santri* to help him in managing their juniors. They are called as *lurah pondok*.

The clearer and more detailed definition of "*santri*" is given by Nurcholis Madjid as quoted by Amal Fathullah Zarkasy, he states actually the word "*santri*" are taken from the word "sastri", a Sanskrit language which has meaning "literacy" or in Indonesian "*melek huruf*" connoted to the literary class for Javanese people

because of their knowledge about religion through learning books that are written in Arabic language (Zarkasy, 1998).

The management of the educational institution is in the form of a dormitory in which it is a special community under *kiai's* leadership and assisted by some *kiai* or teachers stay together with *santri*. There is a mosque or other buildings that become a worship center and *santri'* activity center, while boarding or dormitory is used as living place of *santri* and their collective lives, they learn how to life independently, responsible, and socialize with other *santri* (Maghfur, 2018) just like a life of a family (Noer, 2001).

Education in boarding school aims to deepen knowledge of Al-Qur'an and Sunnah by learning the Arabic language and Arabic language rules. Islamic boarding school emphasizes more on simplicity value, sincerity, independence, and self-control. All *santri* are separated from their parents and their families, therefore they can increase their relationship with *Kiai* and Allah. In brief, boarding school can be thought of as a traditional institution in understanding, reflecting, and applying Islamic study (*tafaqquh fiddin*) by accentuating Islamic moral as the philosophy of life in society.

Furthermore, M. Arifin defines Islamic boarding school as an Islamic educational institution grows and recognized by society, Islamic boarding school applies dormitory system (college) in which every *santri* receives Islamic education through reciting system or madrasah where all things are fully under control by leadership of one or more *kiai* with special characteristics such as charismatic and independent in everything (Arifin, 1995). *Santri* acknowledges their *kiai* as a charismatic figure and vice that can substitute parents' role (*in loco parentis*). *Kiai* is a model (*uswah*) of attitude and *santri'* behavior. The socialization process and interaction that happen in boarding school enable them to imitate the good act and behavior of their *Kiai*. They are also able to identify *Kiai* as an ideal figure as a connector of scientific genealogy from Islamic scholars as science heir at Islamic golden age in the past.

The obedience focuses on special relations for instance, teacher and student relationship. A *Kiai* has the power to give reward and punishment to his *santri*. Gifted rewards are blessings believed by all *santri* that they will get them if they obey him. While the punishment may in the form of warning that threat *santri*, for example, they will not get blessed knowledge (Dhofier, 1982). The value of obedience, loyalty, and fanaticism from the *santri* to the Islamic religion, because literally, they are very obedient to do Islamic ways, such taking pray five times, do fasting, giving tithe and charity, and also engage in struggle to defend the Islamic religion, even the desire to pilgrim to Mecca is very great, as great as their desire to study in Islamic boarding school.

Generally, in doing Islamic life, a majority of Pamekasan society follow *Ahl al sunnah wa al jamaah* theology and profess Imam Syafi'i doctrine (*mazhab* Imam Syafi'i). This school is also followed by majority of Indonesian Muslims (Smith, 2014).

The high desire of *santri*' in obeying demand or instruction from the authoritative figure such as *Kiai* shows the strong relationship between them and their *Kiai*. The *santri* who have difficulties to get off of authoritative ability will lower their independencies, especially in controlling their emotions and values. *Santri* who are in obedient relationship to some of the authoritative figure will always feel under controlled by other people. Therefore, they think they don't need any effort to determine their own decisions (independent behavior) since everything has been determined by their authoritative figure (Dhofier, 1982).

The *santri*' obedience can be simplified that *santri* will receive any kind of statements given by their *Kiai* without bravery to re-asking about it, they speak when they are asked, and doing anything ordered by him without bravery to refuse it. The willingness they have is based on their own will to get better things. The expectation to get its goodness (by obeying *kiai*) is more valuable than just creating their own goodness. In this condition, *santri* have less chance to get stimulations to play new roles with more responsibility. As a result, they will be difficult to develop *their sense of independence* (Dhofier, 1982).

Those all match to the concept or development pattern happen in Islamic boarding school as this institution is encouraged by religious motives (Patriadi, Bakar, & Hamat, 2015) in which it emphasizes more on increasing *ubudiah* on Fiqh studies and obedience of moral is emphasized on morals education studies. The obedient pattern of the teacher and student becomes characteristic of the education system in boarding school. Boarding school firmly creates obedience moral as a motto from its education system. Like a written motto "politeness is more precise than cleverness". This obedience value is as form *santri*' ethic to put *Kiai*'s position on the highest and noble hierarchy. This condition as explained by Sondang P. Siagian is one of the main characteristics of traditional society that has very high respect to the older (Siagian, 1994). Because of the knowledge he has in which in this case is *Kiai* himself. This relation pattern is an indicator of the continuation of charismatic leadership and paternalistic. This pattern is also a big modal for *Kiai* and boarding school in developing their *santri*, since in every act chosen by *Kiai* will be fully supported and followed by them.

The highest respect is given to their *Kiai*. *Santri* give more respect to their *Kiai* than to their parent. It occurs since *Kiai* has been meritorious in giving guidance and moral education that can not be done by other society. With his status, then a *kiai* is very respected, obeyed, and everything he does in his daily activities is reflections

that become good belief and referral. The figure of *Kiai* is considered as the one that has un-doubtful devotion level. As a result, there is one concept that doing a good thing to the educated (*alim*) and *wara'* one will automatically get the blessing from God, Allah SWT (Wahid, 1998).

By all of its limitation, boarding school is still able to show off as one institution that runs almost 24 hours a day. The activities and learning interactions run well, it integrates the teaching atmosphere and familial. *Kiai*, as the central figure in boarding school, can play central and strategic roles that determine the development of boarding school and *santri*. The strong personality he has, the deep understanding and strong religious experiences becomes a guarantee for someone to select her/his to choose the boarding school.

The obedience to the *Kiai* and independence are two psychological aspects that are sticky to the *santri'* life in boarding school. Theoretically, this obedience at a certain level will lower the development of their independence because their obedience forces them to follow whatever the order was given by other people. Obedience is the change of behavior and acts to compliance order or submission of other people (Wahid, 1998).

In *prismatic theory*, it is mentioned that there are three models of changes that grow in the middle of society, they are *fused society*, *prismatic (transition)*, and *diffracted (separation/independence)*. *Fused society* is a society that always compliance and obeys someone who becomes their ideal figure. While *prismatic society* is a society where they are actually able to think rationally but on the other hand, they can not go from strong tight of their obedience. And the last *diffracted society* (separated or independent society) is a society that has been able to go out from the dependency of certain role models. Even, the existence of role models in their society does not influence at all.

Kiai becomes the center of information and he is the only one or in Clifford Geertz's term is the only agent that connects to the outside. *Kiai* is very dominant to his *santri*. His role is very dominant, It can be seen from the *santri'* obedience (*tawadhu'*) (*sam'an wa thā'atan*) to the everything ordered by *Kiai*, they always think every order are the right ways to be followed. *Kiai* has a *polymorphic* role, where he is the "main source" which is very strong (Panjaitan, 2008). It is assumed that *Kiai* can solve every problem occurred in society. In those cases, A. Mughni states that knowledge is not only considered as a corpus of formal admission, but also the authenticity of knowledge is also made of words from some "big" ones whom their authority have been well recognized, at least by their *santri*. Whatever a *Kiai* says, it must be received reluctantly since it was seen as absolute rightness (Mughni, 2002). Some characteristics of *santri* that have absolute obedience (to their "kiai") are in their daily life, they always take the information and values wholly

from "kiai" in every aspect of life such as religious moral, intellectual aspect, and social aspect (Syarif, 2010).

Thus, Kiai is at least able to give a good model and uniquely such as what has been written by Michael Josephson, the founder of *Josephson Institute of Ethics in Amerika*, he formulates that globally, there are six pillars of characters that have to be developed for *santri*, the first is *trustworthiness*, doing trustful thing, believable, matched between speaking and acting, brave because of right, build a good reputation, love the family and loyal to the nation. The second is *respect*, respect to others, to obey the law, tolerant to each difference, good act and speak politely, emphatic, and does not become a threat to the others, and bring peace.

The third is *responsibility*, future-oriented, making good things diligently, discipline and introspection, thinking before acting and ready to take any consequence, and responsible for everything they do and say, and being a good example to the others. The fourth is *fairness*, act based on the rules, open-minded and listen to other people, does not exploit others, treating other people fairly. The fifth is *caring*, attention and full of affection, care to the other, easy to forgive, helping to those in need. The sixth is *citizenship*, being sociable, can work in a group, respect others, love and save the environment, willing to sacrifice (Josephson, 2014).

C. Blessing Re-internalization

Kiai as the first arena for socialization and *santri* interaction. The developed values are dominantly resulting in the feeling of togetherness among the *santri*. This feeling is less able to stimulate *santri* to be independent, whether it is emotional, behavior, and values. *Santri*'s relation to "Kiai" is an obedience *sam'an wa ṭā'atan* by expecting a blessing in order that they get a better life. Therefore, it is not wrong if Olesen states that religious symbol justification that is given by the *santri* to the "kiai" such as blessing, and *karamah* become the main power sources.

Kiai is believed as the one who has religious knowledge and also has supernatural power in terms of Sufism which is commonly called as *kashf* or *irfan* (*Kashf* or *'irfan* have the same meaning with *mukashafah* or *ma'rifah*. He has very high spiritual position, he is considered able to find the true truth, understanding and unity in love to God). He is also considered as the one who has the practice of *hizb* which is believed able to bring blessing and clairvoyant. Some symbolic terms such as; blessing, *tawadu'*, *muruh* and also other symbols that have negative meanings, for instance, *tola* and *bhâsto* are also irreplaceable.

By two models of powers, they are *traditional power* and *charismatic domination* "Kiai" as an elite figure which is religious-charismatic, is believed because of his sacred knowledge and his *karamah*. Certainly, his attitudes will be *hujjah* to the *religious-charismatic* to influence *santri* (Syarif, 2010). Kiai's role

models always show and use symbols that contain moral obedient values (religion) to internalize in building formula of the culture of blessing myths. The figure of Kiai is considered as the one that has un-doubtful devotion level. As a result, there is one concept that doing a good thing to the educated (*alim*) and *wara'* one will automatically get the blessing from God, Allah SWT.

"Kiai" always get high respect in each aspect of life. For example, In the social aspect, Kiai often becomes a place to cry on who can give advice and solve the problems that society has, whether it is simple cases or complicated cases. The concrete example is in giving a name to the baby, the society usually comes to Kiai and asks him to give a suggestion about the best name of their baby. In other cases, sometimes, Kiai is visited by some people to ask about the best day to open a new business, build a house, or any kind of problems happen in society. In solving each problem proposed by the society, "Kiai" sometimes uses a psychological approach to give advice where he also adds religious moral inside there. These conditions make the position of "Kiai" higher and exist on the elite stage. As a result, the figure of "Kiai" becomes an extraordinary leader for the society.

Kuntowijoyo says that *Kiai* is an elite figure in a village who is special to handle religious ceremony (Kuntowijoyo, 2002). He is not only a central figure and leader of the *santri*, but he is also obeyed by the society in abroad. He himself is recognized as one of Islamic scholar that heritage the prophet. He is also as a continuation of genealogy from the Islamic scholar as prophet heir, also to continue the previous Islamic scholar genealogy and also as the heir of the greatness of classical Islam (Syarif, 2010). In a rational relationship between the *santri* and Kiai, there are human emotional bonds and theological-spiritual bonds that are presented together, walk together and complete each other. The attitude of the *santri* that are usually obedient and submissive wholly to the Kiai, such as symbolized in a motto *sam'an wa tã'atan* (listening dan obedience), *cangkolang*, *ngereng kasokan*, and other terms that contain absolute obedient values of *santri* (Syarif, 2010).

Sam'an wa tã'atan is a symbol of *tawadlu'*. The obedience states that all of *dawuh* (*demand*) and order from their *Kiai* must always be obeyed. *Cangkolang*, an obedience concept which is shown that all of *santri* are afraid of doing something that is considered *su'ul adab* (violating the values of *santri'* obedience) like does not follow what is ordered by Kiai so that makes him angry. The meaning of *cangkolang* for the *santri* contains the moral value sanction. If the *santri* have made *cangkolang* to the *kiai*, they will not be blessed. So that all of science and knowledge they have been gotten will not be useful and they will get imperfection of life. *Ngereng kasokan* is another obedience concept without any reward. All orders and *Kiai's* decisions must be followed and obeyed because they believe that their obedience is not meaningless, they believe they can get a reward, pray, and blessing.

The relationship of rationality between Kiai and *santri* in the concept of traditional Islamic boarding school is built by implementing blessing concept of *Kiai*. The implementation of blessing concept, *karomah*, and advantages are clearly seen from *santri*' attitude to their "*Kiai*". On the other hand, Kiai and the *santri* loving each other, respecting each other and appreciating each other. The attitude of loving each other is viewed by the prayers which are said over by the Kiai in every prayer. The successful of morality can be seen from the communication pattern of the *santri* whom always *tawadlu'*, *obedient and submissive* to the Kiai, teachers, parents or to the society.

While, some people think traditional Islamic boarding school has been able to create spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence of the *santri* through doctrine, habits, practices, and religious obligations and also their adult association and wise in the society. One motto that has a doctrine of blessing is "there is no happiness and advantages in the world and here-after, besides useful knowledge and strong devotion to the God". The internalization of blessed values give positive impacts to *santri*, it will increase their faith and put themselves to obey their teachers.

The blessing is an effort to grow and develop the gifted potentials (*fitrah*), whether physical or spiritual, based on the values of spiritual Sufism. The goal that wants to be achieved is to design human with the perfect personalities individually or socially and have a spirit of Tauhid. The sacrifice and sincerity move dynamically and just oriented to God. *Tauhid* is the starting point of Prophet Muhammad spirit in proclaiming Islamic studies to all people in the world. It is done as an effort to change mindset and point of view of mecca's society in which they at the beginning do not admit about Islam, our prophet Muhammad SAW has big modal, He made Tauhid as the only alternative solution in order that they have humility to receive the truth of Islam (*doctrine of Islam truth*).

D. The myth of Wisdom and Blessing and Its Relation to the 4.0 Industry Era

Indeed, to face the challenge of globalization and the industry 4.0 era, all *pasantren* may need to do a reconstruction to adapt to the era in which all things become internet of things today. All *santri* may be required to have qualified competence to be able to compete in trade, labors, technology, and industry worldwide. They should, therefore, equip and explore themselves with science and recent technology to be more competitive and responsive in the 4.0 Industry Era. Related to that case, Shihab et al as quoted by Hasbi Indra concern about possible negative impacts caused by the broader sense of a reconstruction demand of Islamic boarding school, they state that it may lead the people to be more rational, secular, hedonistic, and consumptive (Indra, 2017).

Shihab's concern is very reasonable since, in the 4.0 industry era, human is like demanded to do everything by their own, they should use their rational mind to make their own decisions (*decentralized decision making*), even they may be less to communicate face to face with others since communication and cooperation can be done in real time via wireless web. If this thing is taught to *santri* extremely, the obedience value and close relationship between *kiai* and *santri* will be considered faded.

But, this is not about that case, means that the 4.0 industry era is just a new era, not a destructive era. Therefore, there is no reason to be too worried with. Religious values like *santri*'s sacred obedience and politeness can be fundamental values to face the Industry 4.0 era. Without sacred obedience and politeness values, the graduation of *Islamic* boarding school will be difficult to communicate or to interact with new cultural environments, and with people from diverse religion. In fact, the sacred obedience and politeness must be needed. How is it possible for the Indonesian *santri* to learn about technology from new cultural environments (like in Japan) without obey to their national rule and being polite to the society there, and so do with the labors, trade, or industrial places where politeness and obedience values are adamant for all the employees and the boss.

As Veronique Altglas states that religions can be claimed inherently think globality (Altglas, n.d.). Religion is always about wholeness not isolatedness. It explains about the universe and the origins of it, it covers the start and the end of the time, its cycle, the human nature, and also the meaning of life. Lehman in (Altglas, n.d.) calls religion as "*original globalizer*", he gives example by describing the expansion of so-called "*world religions*" through missionary activities (often alongside colonization) needed the development of universalistic ambition as well as comprehending the others, permit them to surpass their former collective identity and culture, and to disseminate their religious metaculture while being absorbed locally. Consequently, if religion is considered as constructing the global including the 4.0 industry era, then all Islamic values like obedience and politeness should be cultivated seriously in Islamic boarding school system.

The 4.0 industry era is identical with the massive use of internet or wireless connection in which it enables human to communicate without direct touch, they can send messages instantly, and etc. The practice of wireless messages have been proven in the process of the revelation of Qur'an where Angel Jibreel delivered a number of verses to Prophet Mohammad, it is all unseen matters. It is hard to imagine it, and it is considered as a mythical thing until it is found today that it is reasonable. Simply, if it is studied deeply, found that Prophet Mohammad practiced wireless technology long before 4.0 generations did. Yet, some practices in Islam cannot just be viewed as worship practice. However, it may contain a new science

and innovation that is undiscovered. Dawam Raharjo in (Zaelani, 2015) states that the study of Islam is not only expected to please Allah SWT but also expected to the welfare of mankind.

The case above is also relevant to the values held by *santri* in Islamic boarding schools. They are always *tawadlu'*, *obedient and submissive* to the Kiai and their teacher. They respect their *kiai* as a charismatic, educated, and *wara'* figure, even more, they believe that obeying *kiai* by doing what he orders and avoid what he forbid will bring God's *blessing* for themselves. *Kiai* is believed as people who have *karomah* (a supernatural power, invulnerability, and safety).

In one side, *a blessing* may be considered an abstract concept since it is concerned with the bestowal of divine favor (Szuchewycs, 2006), it is a magical power that is unseen and untouchable. However, the blessing is essentially a vehicle used to transform ordinary moments of sensible life into a contract with the divine, to turn common items into things holy (Rivard, 2001). Understanding their content, for example, *santri* were tasked to memorize *Al-fiyah* book by Ibn Malik, can therefore enable them to master *nahwu shorof* to understand the grammatical form of Arabic language, after they graduated, he got the scholarship because of his proficiency in Arabic language, then becomes a successful lecture in University. He believes becoming a lecture is a *blessing* which is sacred and holy, it is something bestowed by God because of obeying the *kiai*. However, tracked back from the story, it is an ordinary moment and sensible that if you learn, you will know something that brings benefit for your future.

Being too obedient may be thought as the traditional value that avoids *santri* to be independent. However, if they can get the blessing, they will not only get their independence, but also good life. Religion and spirituality (including all positive values embedded) is needed by all people (not only *santri*) since those have positive influence to the work performance, job satisfaction, and good quality of life (Amaliah, Aspiranti, & Purnamasari, 2015) which are expected by almost all people in the competition midst of the 4.0 industry era.

On the whole, the 4.0 industry era that requires the human to be competent in technology does not mean, at the same time, changing the true identity of *santri*. They will keep their sacred obedience, politeness, and other religious values cultivated in *pesantren* to face every situation in real world. They are sure that meritorious blessing will come to them if they follow those values. Technology which is vital in this era is considered as just an instrument to ease their activity, but beyond that, a teacher, which is in this case *kiai* is the most important for them. He is the one that is believed to bring in blessing, teaches them about how to socialize, to collaborate, to respect each other, to get a good career, and other non-digital

things. As Bill Gates states “Technology is just a tool...a teacher is the most important”.

E. Conclusion

The *santri* are absolute to obey to the *Kiai* and teacher. And it can not be left from the tradition (culture) of Islamic boarding school, and it have been a part from the illustration of Islamic boarding school life, and show that the formula of charismatic that *Kiai* has is utilized to defend his leadership to the *santri* that stand on two powers, they are traditional and charismatic domination. While, the blessing becomes a part of *santri*' spiritual ways in respecting *Kiai*, so that the myth values of *santri*' obedience becomes a part of obedient symbols that is framed under Islamic moral values in defending blessed myth. Therefore, it is not excessive if we say that "the obedient values of the *santri* are a part of the struggle to get meritorious blessing".

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