



MONASH University

***Jalalayn* pedagogical practice:**

Styles of Qur'an and *tafsir* learning in contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract

This research investigates the use of a well-known work on Qur'anic commentary, i.e. *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (the Qur'anic Interpretation of the Two Jalals), for pedagogical purposes in three different settings: traditional, modern, and on the competitive stage of the Islamic skills tournaments. By observing how the same textual resource is used in pedagogy in contrasting ways, the research aims to reveal new perspectives on Islamic diversity in Indonesia. This research approaches *Jalalayn* pedagogical practice as speech events in which teachers, students and contestants use language to establish social interactions. Thus, the framework applied for this study approaches *tafsir* pedagogy as social practice through the ethnographic study of speech events. This anthropological research applies the method of participant observation as its main source for data collection. Observation was conducted during 2015-2017 in Islamic institutions in West Java Province, Indonesia.

This research approaches the pedagogy of *tafsir* (Qur'anic interpretation) as social practice that needs to be understood not only for its meanings in relation to the semantic properties of the Qur'an, but also for the ways in which the pedagogies construct and reflect institutional logics of diverse Islamic spaces. The research applies this approach to examine the emergence of traditional Qur'anic skills in public space through Islamic skills tournaments, arguing that these represent efforts to redress the inequality suffered by traditional learning since the modernisation of Islamic education in Indonesia in the early twentieth century. Core aspects of traditional Islamic learning were considered no longer appropriate, one being the use of *kitab* [books from the classical corpus] as learning texts. The research describes and analyses early 21st century attempts by the Indonesian government to equalise *kitab*-based education with the secular educational system.

The research approaches Islamic pedagogy as processes for the construction and expression of status differences. In traditional environments, conduct of learning as well as the use of physical space and fixtures affirm the hierarchies of traditional Islam. In modern learning environments, the rational and bureaucratic management of education has permeated through many aspects of teaching, removing the traditional hierarchy from the pedagogical process.

The research understands Qur'anic pedagogies as critical expressions of rivalry between differing Islamic currents in Indonesia. The research has produced findings concerning the way Islamic leaders assert polemical interpretations that affirm borders between Islamic segments. Based on this, the research finds that Qur'anic pedagogies should not be considered in isolation of polemics and disputes occurring in Indonesia's Islamic public sphere.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature



Print Name : Ervan Nurtawab

Date : 12 August 2018

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Glossary

Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama‘ah	(Arabic) This group is generally identified with the followers of the four legal schools of thought in Islamic jurisprudence, the teaching of al-Ash‘ari (d. 935) and al-Maturidi (d. 944) in theology, and the teaching of al-Junayd (d. 910) and al-Ghazali (d. 1111) in Sufism. The term is used as a self-identifying label by Muslims claiming central ground in Indonesia, often with the intent of excluding other groups from that mainstream (Chapter 7).
Aa	(Sundanese) Literally means “big brother.” A popular address term for an older male person. Students of Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 use this to address the sons and sons-in-law of Mama Ajengan Makki.
Ajengan	(Sundanese) Noted religious teachers in the Sundanese cultural region are called <i>ajengan</i> . It is equivalent to the Javanese <i>kyai</i> .
Azan	(Arabic) First call to prayer.
Badal kyai	(Arabic/Javanese) Replacement <i>kyai</i> .
Bandongan/ Bandongan Kitab	(Javanese/Arabic) A group event led by a teacher who has total control over the proceedings. A <i>bandongan</i> lesson may be open for attendance by students of all levels, or by selected ones based on their level of achievement. Students sit cross-legged on the floor to follow the <i>kyai</i> ’s progress through the book. The <i>kyai</i> reads some passages of the Arabic text and provides a translation, while students hold the same <i>kitab</i> on their laps. In listening to the <i>kyai</i> ’s reading, students keep silent and focus on making notes in their copy of the text.
Completion	This is considered a learning goal in the traditional environment. Students aspire to read the book under the guidance of the teacher, starting at the first section of the book and continuing to the end.
Dakwahan	Public speaking practice that is expected of students of the Pesantren Persis No. 99.
Fiqh	Islamic jurisprudence.
Hadith	Prophetic traditions.

Hashiyah	Gloss of a commentary.
Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam/IPA	Non-religious subjects taught in the secondary level that include all fields in natural sciences.
Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial/IPS	Non-religious subjects taught in the secondary level that include all fields in social sciences.
Imam	(Arabic) A person who leads a congregational prayer.
Iqamah	(Arabic) Second call to prayer.
Bandongan Jalalayn	(Javanese/Arabic) A group event led by a teacher who reads and explains the <i>kitab</i> entitled <i>Tafsir al-Jalalayn</i> . See also <i>bandongan</i> or <i>bandongan kitab</i> .
Jalalayn loghatan	(Arabic/Sundanese from Arabic) A re-print of <i>Tafsir al-Jalalayn</i> along with translation in a regional language. See also <i>kitab loghatan</i> .
Jawi script	Arabic-based script in which Islamic literary works are written in the Malay or Indonesian languages.
Kastrol	(Sundanese from Dutch) Big pan functioning as a rice cooker, commonly used by students of the traditional <i>pesantren</i> to cook their food.
Kitab	(Arabic) Book of classical or medieval Islamic learning written in Arabic.
Kitab kuning	Literally means “yellow book” because of the yellowish paper on which they are printed. This term refers to the Islamic classical or medieval texts in Arabic used in the <i>pesantren</i> milieu.
Kitab loghatan	Approximate meaning: ‘language books’. This is a re-print of the Islamic texts in Arabic along with translation in Malay or Indonesian, Javanese, Sundanese and Madurese, written in Arabic-based scripts known as <i>Jawi</i> and <i>Pegon</i> . See also <i>Jawi script</i> and <i>pegon script</i> .
Kitab-based learning	Pedagogical practice, using a <i>kitab</i> as the main reference or textbook.

Kursi mutola‘ah	A transit spot where the <i>kitab</i> -reading contestant is given a ten-minute preparation before contesting.
Kyai	(Javanese) A popular title for a noted religious teacher in Indonesia, especially in Java.
Madhhab	(Arabic) Schools of Islamic legal thought.
Madrasah	(Arabic) Modernized-Islamic school.
Majelis taklim/majelis	(Arabic) Literally means “gathering place for learning”. It refers to the room or hall inside a <i>pesantren</i> where the traditional <i>kitab</i> -learning runs. It also symbolizes a venue or room where a branch of the <i>kitab</i> -reading competition took place.
Mama Ajengan/Mama	(Sundanese) A popular title for addressing a noted, senior religious teacher in the Sundanese cultural regions.
Mamang or Mang	(Sundanese) Literally means uncle, but is used in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 by young students when addressing senior students.
Mawdu‘i	(Arabic) An Islamic subject that is thematically given.
Meja musabaqah	(Indonesian/Arabic) Also called <i>minbar qira’at</i> . This is a podium from where the contestants of the <i>kitab</i> -reading competition deliver their reading performances.
Minbar	(Arabic) The pulpit for delivering sermons.
Minbar qiraat	(Arabic) See <i>meja musabaqah</i> .
Moderen	(Dutch loanword) used in Indonesian to characterise an environment distinguished by an openness to contemporary values and styles of pedagogy.
MQK	<i>Kitab</i> -reading competition.
MS	Manuscripts
Mu‘adalah	(Arabic) Equivalence project initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs that aims to equalize the <i>pesantren</i> education.

Mu‘adalah mu‘allimin	(Arabic) The project initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to equalise modern <i>pesantrens</i> .
Mu‘adalah salafiyah	(Arabic) The project initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs that aims to equalise traditional <i>pesantrens</i> .
Mu‘allimin	(Arabic) Islamic studies run under a modern-based system.
Mu‘allimin school	The senior level in the hierarchy of formal education in the Persis educational milieu.
Mudir ‘amm	(Arabic) General principal of one Persis-affiliated <i>pesantren</i> .
Muhammadiyah	The biggest organization representing Modernist Muslims in Indonesia.
Mujassimah	(Arabic) Muslims believing in anthropomorphism, holding that the attribution of human characteristics to the infinite being is possible.
Murabbi	(Arabic) Student supervisor at the Persis-affiliated <i>pesantrens</i> .
Musabaqat Fahm Kutub al-Turath/MUFAKaT	(Arabic) <i>Kitab</i> -comprehension tournament. The name of event conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2011 that is originally known as the <i>kitab</i> -reading competition, or the MQK. It was then returned to its original name in the following tournament.
Nahdlatul Ulama	The biggest organization representing traditionalist Muslims in Indonesia.
Nasi berkat	A food container usually containing rice, side dishes and bananas, served for everyone attending a ritual (<i>selamatan</i>).
Ngalogat	The oral performance through which the teacher reads and translates the <i>kitab</i> , and the student’s note-taking in response.
Pasaran	(Sundanese) The short intensive <i>bandongan kitab</i> conducted during certain months, especially the fasting month and the prophet’s birth month (<i>muludan</i>), in the Sundanese cultural region.
Pegon script	Arabic-based script in which Islamic literary works are written in the Sundanese, Javanese, and Madurese cultural languages.

Pendidikan Diniyah Formal/PDF	Formal Religious Education. This is the project launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs that aims to formalize the <i>kitab</i> -based learning.
Pengajian kelas	<i>Kitab</i> teaching and learning that resembles a lesson conducted in a classroom style.
Persatuan Islam/Persis	An Islamic organization founded by modernists in 1923 in Bandung.
Persis-affiliated pesantrens	<i>Pesantrens</i> that run under the affiliation of the Persatuan Islam organization. See also <i>Persatuan Islam</i> .
Pesantren	Islamic boarding school.
Pesantren Khalafiyah	<i>Pesantrens</i> that provide modern Islamic education.
Pesantren Kombinasi	<i>Pesantrens</i> that run combinations between traditional and modern Islamic education.
Peserta tarikan kampung/tarkam	A contestant ‘hired’ by villagers to be their representative in the <i>kitab</i> -reading competition.
Posonan	This is a Javanese word derived from the Javanese word “ <i>poso</i> ” (fasting), which means the short intensive <i>bandongan kitab</i> conducted during the fasting month in Javanese <i>pesantrens</i> .
Rekal	A mini desk on which students place their <i>kitab</i> during a <i>bandongan</i> .
Rijal al-ghadd/RG	(Arabic) Literally meaning “the men of the future”. It refers to male students from all educational levels at the Persis-affiliated <i>pesantrens</i> .
Salafiyah/salaf	(Arabic) Based on the word “ <i>salafa</i> ’ (<i>those who have preceded</i>). In a general sense, this term refers to all Muslims’ emulation of the prophetic traditions (<i>Sunnah</i>). The term is politicised when it is used by Muslim groups such as those of the global Salafi movement that give higher priority in practice and belief to the literal accounts of those traditions, distinguishing themselves from others on that basis.

In the view of Mama Ajengan Makki (Chapter 4), the *salaf* are those that adhere to learning styles passed on through the *kitab*

literature of the *Ahlu Sunnah wal-Jamaah*, mediated by the class of scholars to which he belongs.

Sanad	(Arabic) A genealogy of knowledge.
Santri	(Indonesian) Students who study in the <i>pesantren</i> .
Santriyat	Female students in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 Sukabumi.
Santriyin	Male students in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 Sukabumi.
Sekolah	Formal education system.
Shafi'ite school	One of the main four schools of Islamic legal thoughts in the Sunnite tradition, founded by al-Shafi'i (d. 820).
Solawatan	The praise verses between the first call to prayer (<i>azan</i>) and the second one (<i>iqamah</i>).
Sorogan	A private tutorial. This is conducted when a student privately meets with teacher for <i>kitab</i> -reading practice. In the process, teacher usually dictates passages of Arabic text accompanied with related translation in regional languages, for example Javanese and Sundanese. The student is asked to repeat what the teacher exactly read.
Surau	Traditional institution for Islamic learning in West Sumatra.
Tabaruk	(Arabic) Blessing. This is one of the main values in traditional environment. Students seek to obtain blessings from their co-presence with the <i>kyai</i> and completion of <i>kitab</i> . Blessings are not distinct from reference. In fact, comprehension is one of the blessings received via the <i>kyai</i> .
Tafsir	(Arabic) Literally means "interpretation," "commentary," "exegesis." This is one of the main Islamic subjects that students learn at Islamic schools throughout the Muslim world. In this field of study, students engage with the semantic aspects of the Qur'an.
Tafsir 'amm	(Arabic) The subject name, 'general interpretation' under which the Qur'an is taught in some Persis-affiliated <i>Pesantrens</i> , such as Pesantren Persis No. 99.

Tafsir ahkam	(Arabic) The subject name for the study of the legal interpretation of the Qur'an taught in the <i>Mu'allimin</i> school of the Persis-affiliated <i>Pesantrens</i> .
Tafsir al-Jalalayn	Its original title is <i>Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim</i> (the interpretation of the almighty Qur'an), authored by two Egyptian scholars, i.e. Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli (d. 1459) and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505). This work is world widely well-known as <i>al-Jalalayn</i> (two Jalals) after both authors' names. Both al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti have the same name, i.e. Jalal al-Din, and common usage has added the suffix <i>-ayn</i> to the word <i>jalal</i> in order to indicate dual number (<i>al-muthanna</i>), i.e. <i>Jalalayn</i> , meaning the "two Jalals".
Takhassus	(Arabic) One year preparation course that is required for students from outside the Persis educational milieu who enrol at a Persis-affiliated <i>pesantren</i> .
Thanawi/ thanawi-diniyah wustha	(Arabic) Equal to secondary level in the structure of Islamic education.
The pesantren coordinator	Locally known as <i>lurah</i> , a senior student or young teacher at the traditional <i>pesantren</i> who takes the role of managing the <i>pesantren</i> activities and administrative matters.
Tilawah	(Arabic) Qur'anic chanting.
Tradisi	Dutch/English loanword. This is an Indonesian word which refers to the preservation of a certain set of ideas that form a legacy handed down from previous generations.
Traditional Pesantren /Salafiyah	<i>Pesantrens</i> that run traditional Islamic education.
Ummahat al-ghadd/UG	(Arabic) Literally meaning "the ladies of the future". It refers to female students from all educational levels at the Persis-affiliated <i>pesantrens</i> .
Ustaz/asatiz	(Arabic) Formally appointed teachers at the Persis-affiliated <i>pesantrens</i> .
Wahhabi	This is the name of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), who founded a group in 18 th -century Arabia, believing that Muslims must have correct belief as their basic step to a correct behaviour, and that the ruin of Islam and Muslims was caused by

their adoption of any unacceptable rituals and religious practices from other religious traditions.

Wird

(Arabic) The supplication formula after the congregational prayer, or the long prayer formula before opening the *bandongan kitab*.

Notes on transcription and transliteration

This thesis reproduces writings and speeches in Arabic, Indonesian or Malay, Sundanese, and Javanese.

In the Indonesian Muslim society, Arabic language is usually considered to be a sacred language as well as a target language that students need to learn. In the usage of Arabic terms, I consistently apply a simple way of transliteration where diacritics and long vowels are not employed, given that a misunderstanding resulted from the use of this simple way of transliteration is low. Here, there is no difference between *ṣ* and *s*, *ḍ* and *d*, as well as *ṭ* and *t*. I keep using hamza (‘) and the ‘*ayn* (‘).

All the translations of the Qur’an are directly taken from Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1946). For analytical purposes, in some cases I need to provide the transliteration of the Arabic texts, i.e. the verses of the Qur’an and the *Jalalayn*, as they were recited by the performers (i.e. teacher, student or contestant). In this regard, I follow ALA-LC Arabic Romanization and keep the final short vowel as it was recited, e.g. *wa-al-iḍāfatu* in place of *wa-al-iḍāfah* (Chapter 8, p. 137). I keep the final short vowel as it was recited. The verses of the Qur’an is transliterated in bold and in parentheses () to distinguish from other Arabic texts, i.e. the *Jalalayn* text, that comes along.

As for the use of Indonesian, Sundanese and Javanese terms, I don’t distinguish unrounded vowels like *é* and *e*. In the case of Arabic terms that already become the loanwords in Indonesian language, I consider it to be Indonesian and follow the Indonesian spelling (e.g. *umum* instead of ‘*umum*).

Chapter 1 : Introduction

Tafsir (interpretation) is amongst the core Islamic subjects studied by students at Islamic schools throughout the Muslim world. It is within this field of study that students engage with the semantic aspects of the Qur'an. From this perspective, *tafsir* appears as a highly textual field of study made up of works of scholarship about another text, the Qur'an. This textuality distinguished the subject of *tafsir* amongst the Islamic sciences. Yet *tafsir* is also pedagogical activity, social practice in which Muslims engage with the meanings of the Qur'an, but also with so many other aspects of religious and social life. In this research, I attempt a new approach to the study of *tafsir*, considering the ways in which *tafsir* work is given meaning through practical pedagogy, and the meanings of that pedagogy for Islamic social life more broadly than textual meanings.

Previous scholarship has not acknowledged the importance of pedagogical activity for understanding Islamic diversity in Indonesia. In what follows, I propose that differences in learning styles are shaped according to differences in ideas about how Muslims should exist within social realities such as family, nation, and of course the community of believers. Educational institutions play a role in strengthening the structures and processes by which learners conform to diverse Islamic institutional logics. Based on this, I approach Islamic pedagogies not only for what they show about textual meanings, but also for how they shape Muslim subjects in contrasting ways, and for the ways they are mobilised in contests between differing Muslim groups.

As far as *tafsir* is concerned, previous studies have mainly focused on the texts used, which is understandable, considering that *kitab* (books of Islamic learning written in Arabic) have for centuries held unquestionable authority as sources of knowledge in the field of *tafsir*. Furthermore, the texts on their own reveal patterns of circulation of Islamic ideas in

Southeast Asia. I know this from my own experience as a textual researcher in the field of *tafsir*. Recently, since 2007 I have been participating in a Japanese project that catalogued around 3,000 *kitab* titles circulated in the Southeast Asian region (see Kawashima et al., 2015). At the same time, previous studies have overlooked *tafsir* as pedagogical activity. This research is the first study of *tafsir* pedagogy as social practice. It is based mostly on field observation, and focusses on the practices by which a widely accepted work of *tafsir*, the *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, is given meanings in two contrasting pedagogical settings that I label, following Indonesian usage, as ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’. The analysis to follow is not however solely concerned with that binary, for I also describe and analyse exciting contemporary developments in the field of *tafsir*: the skills of *kitab*-based learning have emerged on the public stage in competitions known with an Arabic term, *Musabaqat qira’at al-kutub*, or the *kitab*-reading competition. This thesis is based on my experience observing the practice of *Jalalayn* pedagogy in these three contexts in West Java, a province of the Republic of Indonesia.

By examining the ways in which the text, the *tafsir* book known as the *Jalalayn*, is used in pedagogical practice in contrasting settings, I shed light on the ways in which different learning styles indicate Islamic diversity, and the ways pedagogy legitimises social reproduction in those contexts. Further, I explore the marginalisation of *kitab*-based learning that has taken place since the early modern Indonesian period. In the early twenty-first century, I witnessed efforts and projects by supporters of *pesantren* education to obtain equality for the *pesantren* system, with the goal of obtaining the same educational opportunities in the Indonesian educational system as those enjoyed by students in non-religious (*umum*) institutions. I show below that *tafsir*, one of the core genres of Islamic learning, is part of that struggle for equality.

1.1. Definition of *tafsir*

It is necessary to first provide a general overview of *tafsir* and how it has developed as an Islamic science and pedagogy. According to al-‘Akk (cited in Abdul-Raof, 2010, p. 84), the Arabic word *tafsir* (interpretation, commentary, exegesis) is morphologically derived from the Arabic verb *fassara* which means “to disintegrate or break down into pieces.” This is of course the basic activity of interpretation in the academic sense, in which an exegete breaks the Qur’anic text into passages by providing semantic meanings to examine their significance. However, as Rippin (2012, p. 1) notes, *tafsir* as a process and literary genre is not always about interpretation of the Qur’an, although it is generally linked to that practice. Rippin states that the word *tafsir* was also used in reference to scientific works and works of Greek philosophy, and has a similar meaning to commentary (Arabic: *sharh*).

In the first three centuries of Islamic Hijri, as Rippin (2012, p. 1) notes, there seemed to be no attempt to differentiate terms such as *tafsir*, *ta’wil* (explanation) and *ma’na* (meaning) as technical terms for exegetical activity. Between the second and fourth Hijri centuries, Esack (2005, pp. 128-129) notes that the word *tafsir* was differentiated from the word *ta’wil*, which connotes esoteric exegetical activity, towards the determination of semantic aspects of the Qur’anic text or words, a process which signalled increased speculative, intellectual understandings of the process. *Tafsir* is used to denote the exoteric exegetical activity in a reference to the Qur’an itself (*tafsir al-Qur’an bi-al-Qur’an*) and narratives transmitted from the Prophet Muhammad as well as from his companions (*tafsir al-Qur’an bi-al-riwayah*).

Al-‘Akk (cited in Abdul-Raof, 2010, p. 89) divides *tafsir* into two categories. The first is lexical exegesis. This form of *tafsir* includes all models of interpretation in terms of morphology and syntax based on examination from various sources and explication of words

with foreign origins. The second is semantic exegesis. This connects to a set of principles linked to core principles in theology, Islamic jurisprudence, deductive method (*istinbat*), and Arabic rhetoric.

Abdul-Raof (2010, p. 86) notes a Muslim consensus that the first expert in Islamic *tafsir* was the Prophet Muhammad, who held unquestionable authority to explicate the semantic aspects of the revealed Words of God to his companions. The Qur'an (Q. 16:44) reveals the role that the Prophet played as the exegete for the companions. In other words, both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars agree that the Prophet Muhammad was the first exegete as well as the receiver of revelation.

After the Prophet's lifetime, the companions became the religious authorities for the successors. *Tafsir* practice in the companions' period is characterised as generating synopses in which a general explication of Qur'anic verses is presented. During this period, according to Abdul-Raof (2010, pp. 147-168), there emerged three main institutions of *tafsir*. The first institution was established in Mecca, while the other two institutions were established in Medina and Kufah. Another main institution of *tafsir* was established in Basrah which was initiated later by the companions' successors (*tabi'in*).

In the successors' period, documentation of *tafsir* began. However, *tafsir* was more seriously codified during the post-successors' (*tabi' al-tabi'in*) period in the second Hijri (during the eighth century) during which time *tafsir* developed more independently and separated from *hadith* compilation. In the following centuries, *tafsir* discourse developed greater complexity, and was produced in a greater number of schools (for schools of Qur'anic exegesis see Goldziher, 2006 and Abdul-Raof, 2010). The modern phase in *tafsir* discourse started during the early twentieth century, when modernist exegetes recognised the need for Qur'anic interpretation to engage with the contemporary socio-political realities of the Muslim world, and to take into account challenges from expanding secular sciences.

My research took place within educational institutions that are the successors of the institutions and historical moments mentioned above. In both the institutions in which I most intensively researched, *tafsir* occupies an important part of the curriculum. The chapters that follow are based on my observations of *tafsir* pedagogy in a number of institutions in West Java during 2015 and 2017.

1.2. General picture of *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*

The full title of *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* is *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* (the Interpretation of the Almighty Qur'an), authored by two Egyptian scholars, Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli (d. 1459) and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505). Because al-Mahalli and al-Suyuti have the same name, i.e. Jalal al-Din, the book is referred to as the *Jalalayn*, a word formed by the addition of the suffix *-ayn* to the word *jalal* in order to indicate dual number (*al-muthanna*). In other words, *Jalalayn* means two Jalals. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show the frontpiece and a regular page from a printed edition in common use in West Java. Al-Mahalli, the first and initiating author, provided Qur'an commentary from the eighteenth chapter of the Qur'an, i.e. *Surat al-Kahf*, to the last chapter, i.e. *Surat al-Nas*. This has been acknowledged as unusual, for exegetes wishing to provide complete works of Qur'an interpretation generally start working from the first chapter of the Qur'an. The literature does not reveal the reason for al-Mahalli's decision to interpret the Qur'an beginning from the eighteenth chapter.

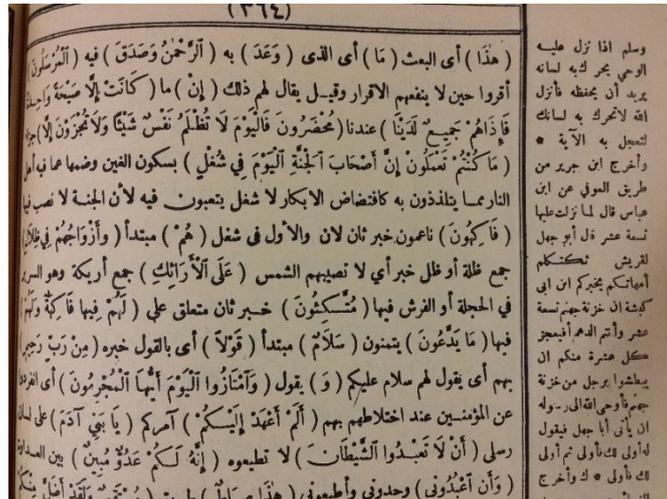


Figure 1.1. and 1.2. This printed edition of the *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* is in circulation in Indonesian *pesantrens*. Figure 1.1 indicates that the book in fact contains a number of works. The text inside the box (1.2) includes vocalised Qur’anic verses in parentheses.

The unvocalised text beside the verses is the *Jalalayn* commentary. The edge of the edition contains several other works of *tafsir*: (1) *Lubab al-nuqul fi asbab al-nuzul* by al-Suyuti; (2) *Fi ma‘rifat al-nasikh wa-al-mansukh* by Muhammad ibn Hazm; (3) *Alfiyat al-Imam Abi Zur‘ah al-‘Iraqi fi tafsir gharib alfaz al-Qur’an*; (4) *Risalah jalilah tatadammanu ma warada fi al-Qur’an al-karim min lughat al-qaba’il* by Abi al-Qasim ibn Salam. All of the language in these texts is Arabic.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab

After completing the last chapter, al-Mahalli continued by working on a commentary of the first chapter, i.e. *Surat al-Fatihah* (the Opener). He unfortunately passed away and left this work incomplete. In the six years following his death, al-Suyuti continued his teacher's project working on commentary of the remaining chapters within forty days: from the second chapter, *Surat al-Baqarah* (the Heifer), to the seventeenth chapter, i.e. *Surat al-Isra'* (the Night Journey). One of al-Mahalli's disciples, al-Suyuti was born in 1445. He had been put under the guardianship of al-Mahalli at the age of thirteen, and because of this was able to attend al-Mahalli's courses regularly (Brockelmann, *EI IV*, p. 621; Bobzin, 1985, p. 35; Iyazi, 1999, p. 445).

Several years after writing completion in 1466, some manuscripts of the *Jalalayn* were already reported to have been transported beyond Egyptian borders. As Sartain (1975, p. 48) notes, by 1470 a number of works of al-Suyuti, including the *Jalalayn* co-authored with al-Mahalli, had reached diverse parts of the Muslim world. They had reached as far as India and North and West Africa by that year (cf. Geoffroy, 2012).

A general characterisation of the *Jalalayn*, provided by Bobzin (1985, pp. 34-35), values this commentary as outstanding in the way that it belongs to the circles of traditional authority, but was also received beyond those environments. Bobzin presents a comparative analysis of this work with the *Ajurrumiyah*, a work on Arabic grammar, which like the *Jalalayn* is learnt through processes of memorisation by students. Both have for centuries been considered as ideal introductions to the fields of Qur'anic interpretation for the *Jalalayn* and Arabic grammar for the *Ajurrumiyah*.

Abdul-Raof (2010, p. 31), on the other hand, identifies the *Jalalayn* as a work of Qur'anic translation in Arabic which provides a brief commentary on the Qur'an in chapter order. Given the fact that it is not a very long work, Dodge (1962, p. 45) categorises the *Jalalayn* as a work intended to provide students with a relatively easy text for understanding

the Qur'an. Its authors, for example, omitted information on the chain of transmission when quoting *hadith*, and intended to give an overview of the Qur'an's meanings through concise explanations.

In the introduction to his English edition of the *Jalalayn*, Hamza (2007, p. xv) appreciates the value of this work for its copious information on grammatical aspects diffused with narrative elements throughout the commentary. He praises its presentation of variant readings, known as the *qira'at* (these are the possible different readings created by altering vocalisation or spelling of words). The authors of the *Jalalayn* intended to give guidance to readers that would alert them to such variations.

Bobzin (1985, p. 35) also stressed that the *Jalalayn*, despite its brevity, includes a large number of variant readings which is, in his view, surprising. He took the second chapter of the Qur'an, i.e. *Surat al-Baqarah*, as a sample of study. He found that the *Jalalayn* authors included seventy variant readings as part of their interpretation of this chapter alone. This number, he said, is already more than a half of what Mujahid (d. 936) provided for the same chapter in his copious work, regarded as the canonical work for its attention to variant readings, entitled *Kitab al-sab'ah al-qira'ah* (the Book on the Seven Readings).

These overviews of the *Jalalayn* confirm that the *Jalalayn* authors paid much attention to three main aspects of Qur'anic interpretation, i.e. variant readings, Arabic grammar and narrative elements. This attention partly accounts for the book's popularity, for in my observation of Islamic pedagogies of *tafsir* learning, I noticed that these aspects are likely to be among the frequently-elaborated aspects that both teacher and student deal with during participation in *Jalalayn* pedagogical practices.

1.3. Reception of the *Jalalayn* in Indonesian Islam

The *Jalalayn* has played a dominant role in the history of Islamic intellectual tradition in the Malay-Indonesian world. Use of the *Jalalayn* in this region can be traced back to

sixteenth-century Java. Yunus (1979, pp. 218-220), for example, claims that the *Jalalayn* was used as reference for the study of Qur'an during the period of the nine saints (*wali songo*) in Demak, the first Muslim Javanese kingdom that took power at the end of the fifteenth century and declined in the second half of the sixteenth century. Considering that the works of al-Suyuti, including the *Jalalayn*, had spread as far as India as early as 1471, it can be concluded that, if Yunus' comment is true, this work 'embarked' for Java Island very soon after it was completed, although as of yet no copy of the *Jalalayn* has been found surviving from sixteenth-century Java. We need further evidence regarding the possible use of the *Jalalayn* in the composition of Javanese Islamic texts before accepting that this work had a role in the making of Islamic intellectualism in sixteenth century Java.

Riddell (2001, p. 146) notes that reference to the *Jalalayn* in maritime Southeast Asia first emerged in the seventeenth century. Riddell conclusively identified it as the main source for the composition of *Tarjuman al-mustafid* (the Translator who Seeks Benefit), the first entire *tafsir* in Malay, completed in c. 1675 by 'Abd al-Ra'uf ibn 'Ali al-Jawi al-Fansuri (d. 1693). We can be reasonably sure then that this Arabic *tafsir* served as a pedagogic tool to understand the meaning of the Qur'an among Muslims in the seventeenth Acehnese sultanate period. While Riddell confirmed the role of the *Jalalayn* in the making of Qur'anic exegetical discourse since as early as seventeenth-century, he did not find any manuscript copy of the *Jalalayn* from seventeenth-century Aceh. However, while making an inventory of manuscripts bearing the title *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* kept in the National Library of Indonesia in Jakarta, I was able to confirm that the collection there indeed holds such a manuscript. The oldest extant manuscript of the *Jalalayn* ever found in this region is the manuscript coded by Behrend (1990) as A213 and by Van Ronkel (1913, p. 13) as CCXIII. Based on the date in the colophon (as shown in Figure 1.3.), this manuscript is dated 11 Jumadi al-Akhir, of 1084 Islamic Hijri, which coincides with 22 September 1673. Van Ronkel (1913,

references for the subject of Qur'an interpretation. The great number of extant manuscripts of the *Jalalayn* and its glosses (*hashiyah*) dominates the collection of this genre in Indonesia, especially those kept in the National Library of Jakarta. Furthermore, widespread use of the *Jalalayn* as a reference for study of the Qur'an is shown by the inventory project of Berg in 1886 regarding use of Islamic textbooks in the *pesantrens*. That inventory listed only one *tafsir* title, the *Jalalayn* (cited in Van Bruinessen, 1990, p. 253).

The composition of *tafsir* works among urban Muslim communities was a popular trend in twentieth century Indonesia, particularly due to the labours of reformist scholars.¹ These communities also saw the emergence of novel pedagogical settings, adopting some elements of Western educational styles. By this time, Indonesian students were enjoying mechanically-printed editions of the book similar to the ones used in contemporary times.

At the same time, Muslims based in rural areas maintained the traditional scholarly practices of Islam. Because this research focusses in some length on traditionalist pedagogy, I will now discuss some terms that relate specifically to traditional learning, and which I will use throughout the thesis. Two pedagogical methods stand out, the *bandongan* and the *sorogan*. The former, which literally means to listen to someone reading the Qur'an and attempt to replicate the reading, refers to pedagogical activity where students gather and listen to the *kitab*-reading and teaching of a *kyai*.² *Kyai* is a Javanese word for Islamic cleric. Note-taking is an integral part of this pedagogy. *Sorogan*, a Javanese and Sundanese word meaning to present (i.e. one's reading), is a learning interaction involving a teacher and one or a few students, usually for *kitab*-reading practice. In this learning style, oriented more to

¹ The term *reformist* here refers to movements that appeared from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries in some parts of the Muslim world, such as Arabia, India and North Africa. The main agenda of these groups was the rejection of blind imitation (*taqlid*) and fanatical adoption of earlier schools of laws (Saeed, 2006, p. 129). Some prominent reformist scholars produced *tafsirs* as media for propagating their views.

² *Bandongan* is the term used widely all over Java, including the Sundanese regencies. In Sundanese, the word is sometimes pronounced as *bandungan*. In Sukabumi, the word *balaghan* is sometimes used (probably from the Arabic *ballagha*, to convey).

reading practice than *tafsir*, students practice reading the *kitab* while the teacher supervises. Students are more active in this form. Both methods perpetuate the use of medieval Islamic works, popularly known as *kitab kuning*, meaning ‘yellow books’ because of the characteristic yellow paper on which they are printed, or simply *kitab* (for *kitab kuning* generally see Van Bruinessen, 1990 and 1995).³ An important element of this learning task is that the Arabic texts in *kitab* are generally not vocalised, meaning that mastery of correct vocalisation is a core element, and sometimes even the most important element, of *kitab*-based learning. In my field research, I mostly observed traditional pedagogy in the *bandongan* style, and for this reason, I use this term as a general label for traditional pedagogy. This style, along with other styles I encountered in modern settings, conveys and perpetuates the values that I associate with the differing Islamic outlooks prevailing in their respective environments.

³ The term *medieval* is used to identify Islamic works produced from approximately the early Islamic period in the seventh to seventeenth centuries during which time the Islamic civilisation had extensively grown ranging from North Africa to South Eastern Asia (Meri, 2006, p. xii).



Figure 1.4.: Sundanese *Jalalayn loghatan*.

The Qur’anic text is written in parentheses (), alongside the *Jalalayn* text. Sundanese translation is placed in a diagonal annotation below the main text.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab

During the late twentieth and the first decades of the twenty-first centuries, there has been an increasing trend in *pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools) whereby *kitab* in Arabic languages are translated into regional languages, such as Malay, Javanese, Madurese and Sundanese. In these texts, the translation text is written in Arabic-based scripts, known as *jawi* script for those written in Malay or Indonesian language and *pegon* script in Javanese, Sundanese and Madurese. Such translations are popularly known as *kitab loghatan* (approximate meaning: ‘languaging books’). Figure 1.4 shows a Sundanese example. The popularity of these translations acknowledges the fact that most *bandongan* is conducted in regional languages rather than Indonesian. The *Jalalayn* has been prominent amongst this turn to translation in regional languages. For example, there are two Sundanese *Jalalayn*

loghatan authored by scholars from Sukabumi, i.e. Ahmad Makki and Muhammad Abdullah (Nurtawab, 2015, p. 21).⁴

Unquestionably, the *pesantren* is the home of the *Jalalayn* pedagogy. Based on a report from the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2011, there are 4,323 registered *pesantrens* in the West Java Province (Data Pesantren di Jawa Barat, 2011). Although I have no data about how many West Javanese *pesantrens* use the *Jalalayn* as the reference for *tafsir* pedagogy, my intuitive sense is that the *Jalalayn* still dominates as the most widely-distributed *tafsir* work for the study of Qur'an in this region and beyond. Importantly, the text is not only found in the *pesantren*. In the chapters that follow, I explore an important development in Indonesian Islamic education, namely the challenge by reformist Muslims to the authority of *kitab*-learning since the early twentieth century. Against that background, it is remarkable that the *Jalalayn* is a *kitab* that has been accepted in what I call below 'classroom learning styles'. These styles are implemented in *tafsir* teaching in the modernist educational environment. Despite its reputation as a source of traditionalist learning, the *Jalalayn* has been well-received in some reformist communities and treated as a reference text for exegetical activity, based on educational values that differ from those underpinning traditional settings. The resultant spectrum of pedagogical values is a core focus of this research.

1.4. Aims of the study and research questions

The empirical focus of this research is the use of the *Jalalayn* in pedagogy. In the field part of this project, I observe *Jalalayn* learning in three different settings: traditional, modern, and in the *kitab*-reading competition stage. My purpose is to observe how the same textual

⁴ The first is entitled *Tarjamat tafsir al-Qur'an al-'azim li Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti wa-Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli* (the translation of the interpretation of the almighty Qur'an by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti wa-Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli). The second is entitled *Sa'adat al-darayn fi tarjamat tafsir al-Qur'an al-'azim li Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti wa-Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli* (the joy of two lands in the translation of the interpretation of the noble Qur'an by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti wa-Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli).

resource was used in pedagogy in contrasting ways that would reveal new perspectives on Islamic diversity in Indonesia. The research seeks answers to three primary research questions:

First, what practices comprise *Jalalayn* pedagogy, and what values underpin them? In answering this question, I explore the conventions that constitute a learning tradition, and the nature of the interpretative frame through which comprehension of the text can be successfully communicated to an audience. In addition, I observe how performers conceptualise their performance, how they speak in socially appropriate ways, and how they try to achieve acceptance from students. This involves close attention to contrasting practices across the three settings, and attention to the values that legitimise them.

Second, what are the competencies or skills that learners are ideally expected to obtain from *Jalalayn*-reading performances? And, how do they differ from context to context? I approach this question on the basis that distinctive values in a given environment generate different skills and competencies that performers need to master for a successful *Jalalayn*-reading lesson. In addition, I observe what students seek from participation in the *Jalalayn*-based learning activities in gathering hall, classroom and competition venues.

Third, how do pedagogical processes support certain ideas about social structures, hierarchies, or community? By raising this question, I observe how *Jalalayn* pedagogies contribute to the strengthening of structures in a given social space. A learning process conforms to a social structure that determines the nature of interactions between teacher and student in a specific situation. Teachers and students do not interact freely, but in accordance with social constraints that emerge in normative understandings of pedagogical practice and the mobilisation and layout of learning spaces. These constraints draw our attention to different hierarchies and role statuses.

1.5. Organisation of Chapters

The first five chapters are background chapters where I elaborate on research background, field sites, aims and research questions, literature review, theoretical framework and methodology. The five chapters after that (6-10) constitute empirical chapters where I present findings from my observations of *Jalalayn* reading performances in the gathering hall, classroom, and competition stage. I now describe each chapter in more detail.

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of relevant literature, which falls into two general approaches. The first perspective, that I call ‘textual studies’, examines scholars whose work is not field-based research. Instead, they pay attention to textual origins, connections between texts and authors, and the reception of religious texts in a given society. In the second perspective, which I label ‘sociological and anthropological studies’, I describe the work of scholars who have considered the roles played by religious texts in practices in Muslim societies, such as in the practices of education and ritual.

Chapter 3 describes social inequality in Indonesian Islamic education. With the arrival of modernism and its proliferation, traditional *kitab*-based learning, i.e. *bandongan*, began to be challenged as useful educational practice. In the pre-colonial period, the *bandongan* was criticised by Muslims who sought modernisation in Islamic education. In the post-colonial period, this traditional style of Islamic learning became more marginalised as Indonesia placed modernisation as a key entry point for religious education to achieve equality. Meanwhile, the *bandongan*, the oldest type of Islamic learning, was left behind because it did not fit national standards. In this chapter, I refer to contemporary developments, for during the first decade of the twenty-first century there emerged a political will from the government to equalise the *pesantren* system with the non-religious system, and to recognise *kitab*-based learning as a valuable element of the state education system.

In Chapter 4, I describe the three distinctive environments where I studied *Jalalayn* pedagogy: traditional, modern and competition. In this Chapter, I also justify my use of these terms, and provide background to my use of the terms traditional and modern.

In Chapter 5, the framework and method employed for analysis of *Jalalayn* practice is presented. I approach it as social practice, meaning that I understand it as interactions between subjects of different levels of authority, all of whom have shared ideas about religious authority, the values of education, hierarchies, and proper behaviour. I draw upon theory from the ethnographic study of speech events by looking at *Jalalayn*-reading performance as interactions in which teachers draw upon the use of verbal skills to achieve good outcomes.

Chapter 6 presents the educational values that bind people to the same behavioural norms within specific fields of *Jalalayn*-reading performances, i.e. gathering hall, classroom and competition stage. In this regard, values within these fields are closely linked with structure in the way they then generate shared dispositions among individuals that in turn reproduce the structure.

After Chapter 6, empirical observation commences. Chapters 7 and 8 consider the *bandongan Jalalayn* conducted in a traditional environment. The former chapter describes and analyses how the *kyai* (known in Sundanese cultural region as *Mama Ajengan* or *Mama*) delivers the *bandongan Jalalayn* to students. Meanwhile, the latter provides analysis of a specific situation that arose in my fieldwork, when a replacement *kyai* (*badal kyai*) took on the task of delivering the *bandongan Jalalayn* in the event of the *kyai* being too ill to fulfil his commitments. I focus on how the replacement *kyai* negotiated with the audience, trying various strategies to speak in socially appropriate ways. Referring to the hierarchical nature of the *pesantren* environment, I explore the close connection between status and performance style.

In Chapter 9, I examine *Jalalayn* pedagogy in the modern environment, where the subject is called General Qur'anic Interpretation, or *tafsir 'amm*. This subject was offered for the first semester students in the *Mu'allimin* school (equal to senior high school) in Pesantren Persis No. 99 in Rancabango, Garut regency of West Java. In this chapter, I observe how two formally-appointed teachers set up their classes to deliver this subject in compliance with formal guidance as prescribed in the school's curriculum.

In Chapter 10, I engage with a new context for study and performance of the *Jalalayn*, namely, competition. This setting is a product of recent developments in Indonesia's public Islamic sphere. My focus is on the values of self-confidence that are tested in the competition format, which places students in ordeals where they are required to show their knowledge of the *Jalalayn* under pressure. I also address the issue of educational inequality. I understand the *kitab*-reading competition as part of the attempt by traditionalists to gain formal-legal recognition from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs for traditional pedagogical styles.

In my conclusion, i.e. Chapter 11, I summarise the five most important conclusions from this research, emphasising them as additions to our knowledge of Islamic diversity in Indonesia.

Chapter 2 : Qur'an and *tafsir* scholarship in Indonesia: Textual/practice dichotomy

2.1. Introduction

Scholarship regarding the Qur'an and *tafsir* in Indonesia can be divided into two main perspectives based on the ways scholars have determined the object of study and frameworks employed. The first perspective, which I call 'the Qur'an and *tafsir* as text', is adopted by scholars who consider the Qur'an and *tafsir* works from linguistic, philological and historical approaches. I also include in this category the examination of manuscripts from decorative and artistic aspects. Scholars taking the second perspective, which I label 'the Qur'an and *tafsir* as social practice', have recognised the importance of ethnographic observation for understanding how religious texts are given meanings through embodied practice in Indonesian Muslim societies.

This chapter considers the contribution of previous scholarly works on the *Jalalayn* and *kitab*-based learning from these two perspectives. The first perspective has greatly contributed to shedding light on Qur'an and *tafsir* traditions throughout the region. Nevertheless, this perspective has tended to overlook the ways in which texts are integral to practice. Scholarly works that belong to the second perspective, that is those that focus on study of the Qur'an and *tafsir* as a social practice, enable us to see how texts are made use of in such practices as pedagogy, ritual and preaching events in Indonesia's Islamic communities.

In Chapter Five below, I give theoretical substance to these distinctions by taking up some ideas concerning practice of Bourdieu (1973), who considered educational systems as

processes that legitimise and enable social reproduction. The teaching of *tafsir* is a window enabling us to see how pedagogy around an Islamic text attempts to not only put the values of scripture into daily social life, but to orient subjects towards hierarchies affecting them in that social life. In other words, the pedagogies go beyond the values revealed in textual analysis, imparting social orders of various kinds. In the chapters that follow, I explore the differing hierarchies and structures that are imparted, explicitly and implicitly, in learning practices involving the *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*. I consider religious education as a medium for holders of religious authority to strengthen constitutive values and structure in a given society.

2.2. Qur'an and *tafsir* as text

Indonesia is home to about 12% of the world's Muslims. In this country, the intellectual Islamic tradition commenced its development in the sixteenth century, with evidence of the oldest extant Islamic manuscript dating from this century (for the oldest known Islamic manuscript see al-Attas, 1988). When a Muslim community started to develop, as Riddell (2017, p. 6) notes, establishment of Qur'an recitation training invariably followed. This activity was usually followed with an attempt to understand meaning of the Qur'an. In other words, the processes by which Muslims developed their communities invariably included institutional efforts to position scripture as guidance through exegetical activity and to put those meanings into practice in a particular context.

One way for this to happen was through the conduct of Friday preaching, attendance at which was obligatory for Muslims already settled in a certain place. Establishment of a mosque created more intensive religious activities. The mosque was used for congregational prayers and as a centre of Islamic learning. The Qur'an and its *tafsir* are important among the subjects that underpinned such learning.

For the most part, studies of Qur'an and *tafsir* works in Indonesia have been indebted to theoretical frameworks and methods in philological and historical studies, which make up the textual approach discussed here. Within this textual dichotomy, I have identified three categories that reflect different approaches to study of the Qur'an and *tafsir* traditions developed in the Indonesian context.

The first category belongs to scholarly attempts to trace origins, connections, transmissions, and transitions of manuscripts and printed editions in the region. For example, the functionality of the Qur'an in diplomatic relations is shown by Riddell (2002) who examined historical aspects of the oldest Qur'an manuscript from the Malay-Indonesian world ever known, MS 96 D16, which is kept in Rotterdam. Riddell connects this manuscript to efforts to build a diplomatic relationship between the Sultan of Johore and the admiral of the Dutch East India Company. Another scholarly work on the Qur'an focussing on transmission is that of Gallop & Akbar (2006). These authors examine aspects of calligraphy and illumination in the Qur'an produced during the Bantenese sultanate period. They connect the art of Bantenese Qur'an production to Persian Islamic culture.

Looking more specifically at *tafsir*, I mention the work of Peter Riddell, who has traced the origins, connections and transmission of *tafsirs*, connecting them to Islamic discourses developing in the Malay-Indonesian world. For example, Riddell (1990) analysed *Tarjuman al-Mustafid*, taking the eighteenth chapter of the Qur'an, i.e. *Surat al-Kahf* (the Cave), as a case study. In this work, previously submitted as his Ph.D. thesis in 1984, Riddell argues that Abd al-Ra'uf al-Sinkili drew mainly on the *Jalalayn* for composition of the *Tarjuman*. This argument reconsiders a general opinion that this Malay *tafsir* has for centuries been believed to be based on *Anwar al-tanzil wa-asrar al-ta'wil* (the lights of revelation and the secrets of interpretation) of al-Baydawi (d. 1286).

In another work, Riddell (2001) provided an overview of Malay Islamic discourses, based on textual scholarship, from the thirteenth century to the late twentieth century. In a more recent publication, Riddell (2017) examines a manuscript kept in the Cambridge Library collection, coded Or. Ii.6.45, from early seventeenth century Aceh. He contextualises this work as a product of Malay court religion, which was highly influential in the emergence of Malay Islamic culture. In this work, Riddell examines a Malay *tafsir* produced much earlier than *Tarjuman*.

The second category consists of works that focus on the combination of the Arabic Qur'an with local language, culture and literature or the contestation between language ideologies as inscribed in the Qur'an and those encountered in local contexts. For example, Johns (1988) examined *tafsir* works and their role in the transition process from the non-literate tradition in Malay to literary Indonesian. This author surveyed works produced from the early periods of the establishment of Islamic learning in the 1600s, identifying this as the period when the use of Arabic script became standard in Malay writing. He proposed a diglossic situation where Arabic was the learned language, and Malay was used for transmission and oral communication. He then addressed social changes in the twentieth century, when modernisation produced a more highly educated audience needing new approaches to *tafsir*.

Zimmer (2000) examined ideological encounters between the Arabic Qur'an and Sundanese Qur'anic translation and interpretation. He examined vernacularisation of the Arabic Qur'an in Sundanese translation and exegetical activities. Zimmer reflected on questions relating to the 'Sundanese-ness' of Sundanese people in West Java, who possibly maintained more egalitarian styles than those in the Javanese lands. He asserts this as a unique and important historical and cultural background to consider when examining how

Sundanese Muslims appreciate the Arabic Qur'an through recitation, reading, translation or interpretation activities.

Other works that fall into this category are those of myself (Nurtawab, 2012) and Riddell (2012). Both works are linguistic studies that examine lexical equivalents and semantic change, respectively, as evidenced in some Qur'anic translations and commentaries. In my own work (Nurtawab, 2012), I collected lexical data from two Qur'anic translations, one in the Malay language and the other in Javanese, to examine lexical equivalence in Southeast Asian Qur'anic translations. Meanwhile, Riddell (2012) examined semantic change in Malay-Indonesian Islamic texts through comparative study of lexical data from the seventeenth century Malay *tafsir* with data from three modern Indonesian works on Qur'anic *tafsir* and translation.

Some scholars have studied the Qur'an and its interpretation from the perspective of non-Arabic literature. For example, Steenbrink (1995) examined Qur'anic exegesis by Hamzah Fansuri (d. c. 1590) and Hamka (d. 1981), scholars recognised as major figures in Malay-Indonesian literature. Both are considered reputable experts with a deep knowledge of Islamic studies, especially in theology. Meanwhile, Rohmana (2015) highlighted Sundanese production of Qur'anic translation in poems, taking the translation work of Raden Wiranatakoesoema (d. 1965) as the sample of his study.

The third category consists of scholarly works presenting reflections on modernity and the efforts of exegetes to respond to changing socio-political conditions. For example, Federspiel (1994) surveyed and reviewed some selected popular works on the study of the Qur'an circulating among Indonesian Muslims. This author contextualised distribution and production of those works by emphasising the need to consider the modernisation and nationalism that had become major elements of Muslim life in twentieth century Indonesia. He notes that modern scholars like Hassan (d. 1958), Ash-Shiddieqy (d. 1975), and Hamka

(d. 1981) addressed an audience with scientific ways of thinking and nationalism. Their works in some ways overlooked some aspects of mysticism. Instead, they reflected on influences from Islamic modernism and neo-fundamentalism that emerged globally in the Muslim world during their lifetime.

Saeed (2005) compiled some papers authored by graduates of Indonesian public Islamic universities (IAIN/UIN). As he notes, this institution has greatly contributed to the consolidation of neo-modernism in that IAIN/UIN graduates put more emphasis on the essence of being a Muslim rather than its symbolic form. In Saeed's work, the first three chapters discuss three prominent Indonesian Muslim scholars and exegetes, i.e. Hamka (d. 1981), H.B. Jassin (d. 2000), and Quraish Shihab (b. 1944). The latter six chapters present specific themes in relation to proposed contextual approaches to the Qur'an and to legal issues in contemporary Indonesia.

Other scholarly works that fall into this category are that of Rohman (2016) and Sirry (2016). Rohman (2016) focuses on the progress of Qur'anic studies in Indonesia over the last several decades, exploring how they reconsider or criticise certain approaches to the Qur'an. The focus of his analysis considers three important points, i.e. thematic approaches, historicity of the Qur'an and Western hermeneutics. In this regard, Rohman documented and analysed approaches to the Qur'an in the more complex sites of Qur'anic studies in Islamic higher education institutions, such as UIN or IAIN. Sirry (2016) examined modern aspects of Hamka's commentary, arguing that what makes Hamka's commentary modern is the ways in which he dealt with modern issues like interfaith relations in his exegetical activity.

2.3. Qur'an and *tafsir* as practice

The second perspective, i.e. approaching the Qur'an and *tafsir* as practice, is adopted by scholars who explore sociological and anthropological dimensions of Islamic practices, considering the ways Muslims participate in socially-approved practices. They examine how

the Qur'an and *tafsirs* become accessible and are mediated in specific environments. Some scholars examine the art of Qur'anic chanting or Qur'an recitation training as parts of the performance of piety among Indonesian Muslims. Others have closely examined how the Qur'an and other Islamic sources are publicly accessible during Islamic oratory or preaching.

A pioneering academic study in this regard was authored by Denny (1986). He observed the Qur'anic recitation competition that has become a popular religious event in Indonesia since the 1980s. Further research on the practice of Qur'anic recitation training was conducted by Anna Gade. Gade (2004) examined aspects of Qur'anic piety among Indonesian Muslim groups and individuals, particularly how Indonesian Muslims have consciously developed and strengthened abilities in Qur'anic practice to serve the goals of memorisation, reading, expressive aesthetics and competition.

An ethnographic study on Qur'an reading published by Baker (1993) focussed on a village located in Tidore, eastern Indonesia. In this work, Baker suggests that the practice of reading included persuasive forces that directed attention away from readers' competence to understand the text's reference. Another study on the Qur'anic recitation in Indonesia, conducted by Rasmussen (2010), examined Qur'anic musicology and how Muslim women actively participate in this practice. As an ethnomusicologist, Rasmussen focused on the sounds created by Qur'anic chanting (*tilawah*). To her, music and musical performance are of importance in considering the ways we understand the Islamisation process in this region. This author presented evidence of active participation among Indonesian Muslim women in the development of Islamic music. She points to this as a distinctive characteristic of Indonesian Islam in the ways in which the word of God is freely articulated by women. Another example is Rafiq's Ph.D. Thesis (Rafiq, 2014) which examined reception of the Qur'an among members of the Banjar community, in Banjarmasin, South Borneo. Rafiq

addressed two main problems: the ways in which the Banjars perceive the Arabic Qur'an and how they fit it into local wisdoms and practices.

Recent publications that fall under this approach bring to light the ways in which sacred texts are entextualised by orators, whose performance derives authority from those processes (Millie, 2017a and 2017b). For example, Millie (2017a) examined how the Qur'an and hadith have been entextualised in oratory, exploring the competencies that underpin preachers' authority. He notes how preachers precisely quote Arabic text and translate them directly into regional languages. Millie notes two kinds of interactions that Sundanese preachers in this region commonly perform, i.e. constrained and multivocal. Constrained interaction, as Millie notes, consists of a process by which Islamic norms are verbalised and translated through the entextualisation of Arabic texts, i.e. the Qur'an and hadith. Meanwhile, multivocal interaction is linked to context, and enables preachers to show verbal skills that are in important ways totally different from the constrained one. Millie (2017b) describes the observation of preaching styles that attracted Muslims to preaching events. Oratorical events are not organised by a single actor. Instead, they are supported by many actors affiliated with socio-religious and political organisations that receive benefits from supporting oratory events.

Both of Millie's works closely examine how preachers in the West-Javanese region achieve good outcomes with audiences, performing the basic task of conveying the sacred texts to them. Through this practice, the holy texts are materialised in collective experience. However, no research has yet taken this kind of approach to *tafsir* practice. This is a little surprising, given that *tafsir* is an everyday aspect of Muslim life. In considering *tafsir* as an important subject taught in the Muslim world, especially in Indonesia, I reiterate that the *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* has for centuries held a dominant position as a pedagogical tool for study of the Qur'an. Given that oral genres have been essential forms for transmission of Islamic

knowledge to the younger Muslim generation, there are good reasons to focus on the ways the *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* is read to listeners in pedagogies conducted in diverse settings.

2.4. Islamic education and religious authority

This section highlights scholarly works that focus on Islamic education and religious authority in Indonesia. My research interest addresses Islamic pedagogical practices and how these practices and methods in Islamic learning reflect contestation of religious authority in contemporary Indonesia. The works discussed here allow us to locate pedagogy as a differentiated field of religious education of which the *Jalalayn* is part. I refer to classic works on development of Islamic education since modernisation in the early twentieth century, including Yunus (1979), Steenbrink (1986), Dhofier (1999) and Azra (2003).

The work of Yunus (1979) gained wide attention among scholars for its presentation of important data on the textbooks prescribed in Indonesian Islamic school curricula and on the evolution of learning processes. He documented the way modernisation in Dutch-sponsored schools and the modernised-Azhar curriculum in Egypt played a pivotal role in the evolution of Islamic education. He observed that Sumatran Islamic schools were more open to modernisation, while traditional learning held a strong base in *pesantren* institutions in Java, especially in the central and eastern parts of Java Island. This work is important for its reconstruction of *kitab*-based learning and its position in relation to the state educational system.

In contrast to the work of Yunus, Steenbrink (1986) presents different aspects of the recent history of Islamic education in modern Indonesia during the twentieth century, when Islamic educational institutions in the region that is now Indonesia were extensively influenced by modernity. In examining the effects of modernisation, Steenbrink notes that colonial Indonesia experienced the emergence of other types of religious education, i.e. the

madrasah system and religious education in public schools, alongside the *pesantren* system that was already established.

In post-colonial Indonesia, Muslim leaders struggled for religious affairs to be given attention by the state administration. An important development in this struggle was the formation of the Ministry for Religious Affairs that administered religious education. Steenbrink identified a ‘convergence project’ in which the Ministry shaped religious education to make it equivalent to secular education administered by the Ministry of Education. He notes that the Ministry encouraged *pesantren* institutions to modernise school management as a part of this standardisation. In addition, he highlighted an emerging trend in the post-colonial period where graduates of higher education increasingly received social acceptance in society as holders of religious authority. Steenbrink notes that the transition in authority from the *kyai* to Doctorandus (Drs.) was an important aspect of the changing landscape of Islamic authority in the period following Indonesian independence.

Along with the work of Yunus and Steenbrink, Dhofier’s (1999) work on the role of the *kyai* in the maintenance of *pesantren* and traditional Islam in Java has become a classic. This work is based on fieldwork conducted between 1977 and 1978 in two *pesantrens*, i.e. Tebuireng and Tegalsari, both in East Java. This work is important to this research, especially in my discussion of the constitutive values of learning activities in the traditional environment, and the hierarchies that prevail there.

Alongside Dhofier’s work, Azra’s (2003) work on the rise and decline of the Minangkabau *surau*, a traditional institution for Islamic learning in West Sumatra, is also considered very important. Expanded from his 1988 thesis, this author explored the role of the *surau* as an institution in maintaining traditional education in West Sumatra, with particular attention to the responses and transmission to modernity. Azra found that the Minangkabau *surau*, as a traditional institution, was very vulnerable to modernisation, and

that it struggled to continue to exist in the face of rapid change. Meanwhile, he notes a different situation in Java, where the learning styles of the *pesantren* enjoyed a far stronger basis.

More recent scholarship on Islamic education suggests different possibilities. The articles connected by Hefner and Zaman (2007) indicate recent concern with social inclusion and the relationship between Islamic learning and citizenship. Tensions on the global political stage have created rising concern about radicalism and Islamic institutions, refocussing scholarly attention on the ways education prepares Muslim students for life as citizens (e.g. Hefner, 2009).

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted scholarly works on the Qur'an and *tafsir* in the Indonesian context. The studies reviewed were categorised into two main groups, the first group being scholars who examined the Qur'an and *tafsirs* as texts that shed light on Islamic discourses and patterns of mobility in the Malay-Indonesian world since the late sixteenth century. On the other hand, the second group of scholars emphasised the importance of empirical observation of Islamic practices in diverse aspects of Muslim life. These works examined how religious texts (i.e. the Qur'an, hadith, or other Islamic texts) sustain Islamic practice that reflects local conditions of varying kinds.

The sources discussed above reveal Islamic diversity created by rivalling groups implementing contrasting Islamic programs and worldviews. In my research, I engage with this contest and rivalry by selecting field settings under the domain of rivalling groups. Specifically, I approach the ways in which pedagogy reproduces the difference that sustains that rivalry.

Chapter 3 : *Kitab*-based learning and the struggle for educational equality in contemporary Indonesia

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that *kitab*-based learning has contended with a process of marginalisation since the modernisation of the early twentieth century. In Chapter One, I introduced a form of *kitab*-based learning, namely *bandongan* or *bandongan kitab*, which I take in this thesis to be the distinctive pedagogy of traditional *pesantren*. This term confirms that in the *pesantren*, the *kitab* is the constitutive authorised reference for the study of Islam. It also confirms the *kyai*, the central figure of *bandongan* events, as the authoritative mediator of Islam in that environment. As Dhofier (1999, pp. 30-31) notes, the teaching of classical Islamic texts through this form of pedagogy constitutes a main element of the *pesantren* tradition. In this chapter, I describe the marginalisation of that method in modern Indonesia.

The *bandongan kitab* has been marginalised and considered inferior in the mainstream state educational system in post-colonial Indonesia. In this chapter, I use *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, a representative *kitab* used in the *pesantren* milieu, to explore how this marginalisation of the pedagogy took place. This does not mean that the *Jalalayn* is used only in the traditional *pesantren* milieu. Rather, as revealed in this chapter, the *Jalalayn* has acceptance as a textbook to serve study of the Qur'an in some modern Islamic schools.

In this chapter, I trace how modernisation resulting from Westernisation and Islamic modernism in Egypt greatly influenced development of Islamic education in colonial and post-colonial Indonesia. In the early twentieth century, the development of Islamic education

in Indonesia was marked by the emergence of Islamic schools that in many ways adopted elements of Western educational styles, or the modernised curriculum of the Azhar University. In this period, some Muslim groups developed new ways of handling religious education, not only to deepen religious piety, but also to encourage career orientations and professions in non-religious fields of expertise. Furthermore, modernisation introduced a new school management structure, the foundation, to replace structures under the domain of an individual figure or family. Reception of modernised-education has greatly affected the way in which religious schools are managed in a professional way.

As shown in this chapter, the state and its educational policies have been closely involved in the reception of modernised education. In the first decade of post-Indonesian independence, an issue in religious education was how Muslim religious education could be run independently by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, rather than being controlled by the Ministry of Education. Muslims successfully proposed formation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and this Ministry was established on 3 January 1946 (Panitia Hut ke-XXVII Departemen Agama, 1973, p. 13).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs became the bureaucratic mechanism for religious education to be protected and develop in Indonesia. The Ministry's aim to equalise religious education encouraged Islamic institutions, especially traditional *pesantrens*, to modernise school-management and adopt the *madrasah* system, with standardised classroom styles and curriculums. In 1949, attempts to equalise standardised religious education with secular education were successful. Since then, two educational mainstreams have been officially acknowledged in Indonesia, one under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the other under the Ministry of Education and Culture (Latif, 2008, pp. 258-259).

The *bandongan kitab* suffered in these transformative processes, as shown in this chapter. It was criticised because this learning style is difficult to standardise. First, this

learning style has typically thrived under the domain of kin groups, a social formation that is problematic against the background of a bureaucratic state. Second, this learning style does not fit the subject-based classroom style. Furthermore, the goal of learning is not oriented to seek a profession or occupation. In other words, the educational values of modern Indonesia do not favour *kitab*-based learning, resulting in a state of inequality where social spaces for this learning practice are marginalised by modernisation.

But remarkably this marginalisation process has been resisted in unexpected ways and this research is concerned with examples of such resistance, of which two are important. The first, discussed later in this chapter, has been government-led. In the early twenty-first century, the Ministry of Religious Affairs attempted to equalise *kitab*-based learning in the state educational system. By obtaining educational equality, graduates of the *pesantrens* that engage in *kitab*-based learning had educational opportunities to develop their expertise and career.

The second resistance to educational inequality was the advocacy for traditional learning styles launched by some Indonesian Islamic figures concerned that the *bandongan kitab* be acknowledged as a legitimate method for the study of Islam. One figure that attracted wide acceptance in Indonesia, especially in the West-Javanese province, is Ahmad Makki, who is known by the title *Mama Ajengan* or *Mama*, a popular title for a religious teacher in the Sundanese cultural region.

Mama Ajengan Ahmad Makki (henceforth: Mama) is a Sundanese Muslim scholar who runs a traditional *pesantren* in Sukabumi and operates a printing company to supply the *kitab loghatan*, which are re-print *kitab*s with additional translation in regional languages. This individual is important to this research in a number of ways. First, he is important because of his efforts to defend and maintain traditional *kitab*-based learning. Second, it was

at his *pesantren* in Sukabumi that I performed the field research presented in the chapters that follow.

3.2. *Kitab* and modern education in pre-colonial Indonesia: *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*

The Dutch colonial government designed an education system for Indonesian natives to meet the need for official vacancies in the Dutch colonial government. However, in 1888 the government refused to subsidise Islamic schools because they did not want to spend money for schools that, in their thinking, developed a flawed learning method where students were only to memorise Arabic texts without comprehension. Therefore, attempts to include Islamic education under the Dutch colonial system were unsuccessful. Hence, Islamic educators found ways to develop their tradition, and at the same time, many Islamic educators were open to adaptation of outside methods (Steenbrink, 1986; Latif, 2008). As Noer (2010, p. 37) notes, the Dutch colonial government only subsidised some Islamic schools that modernised their educational system in the 1930s.

In the early twentieth century there was a great shift within Muslim communities in the world, especially in Indonesia, as Islamic intellectuals engaged more thoroughly with intellectual currents in other fields, especially among urban Muslim communities. Federspiel (1970) and Noer (1980) state that the modernist-reformist movement led by Egyptian Muslim scholars, such as Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and Rashid Rida (d. 1935), inspired the emergence of similar movements elsewhere, which caused Muslim polarities that persist in early twentieth century Indonesia. These modernist-reformist Muslim groups sought a direct approach to the Qur'an and prophetic traditions in the following ways: reject blind imitations (*taqlid*); reject affiliation with a certain school of Islamic legal thought (*madhhab*), notably in Islamic jurisprudence and worships; avoid what they regarded as superstition and heresy; and to consider the *kitab*s affiliated with certain schools of Islamic legal thought as old-fashioned. Regarding the latter, most *kitab*s were replaced with new Islamic works

considered as adequate responses to changing social conditions and modern Qur'anic interpretations in light of imperialism and scientific development (on modern Muslim Qur'an interpretation see Baljon, 1961).

Yet it was not only theological differences that motivated this shift in authority, for modernist education also promoted new learning styles that diminished the authority and value of *kitab*s as learning resources. The work of Yunus (1979, especially Chapter 3), which concerns developments in Sumatra, is useful for understanding these changes. In the older styles, of which *bandongan* is representative, children attended Qur'anic recitation training in a neighbourhood (mosque, Islamic school) where they learned how to perform basic religious obligations, for example making ablutions, praying, fasting, etc. Once students completed this basic education, many continued to follow the *bandongan kitab*. Many students following this route would avoid non-religious studies. In this educational experience, which was performed under the supervision of a scholar in an institution that was owned by the scholar's family, students valued co-presence with the teacher as well as completion of *kitab* as essential elements of the study experience. Durations of study were flexible, and generally long. Yunus (1979, p. 51) notes that a student normally spent up to 15 years completing all the *bandongan kitab* before being socially accepted to teach or build an Islamic school. This long period of training was partly due to the need to accumulate qualifications sequentially, and the study of *tafsir* usually took place at an advanced level. Students were likely to be considered eligible to follow *tafsir* learning if they had completed *bandongan kitab* at a lower level either in Arabic grammar or Islamic jurisprudence.

This educational form was challenged by the reformist/modernist innovations. When the *Adabiyah* school was established in 1909 in Padang, West Sumatra, it consciously adopted elements from Dutch-sponsored schools. This school adapted the Minangkabau *surau* to the forms and values of Dutch-sponsored education, notably with use of classroom

and such facilities as board, desks and chairs (for more detail on Minangkabau *surau* see Azra, 2003). Islamic pedagogy was given decreasing emphasis in this school, which in turn led to disappearance of the traditional *surau* in the following years. From then up to 1930, Yunus (1979) explains that more modernised Islamic schools were built in this region, such as the Madrasah Diniyah Padangpanjang in 1915, the Madrasah Sumatera Thawalib in 1921 and the Madrasah Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiah in 1928.

The curriculum of the Madrasah Sumatera Thawalib also illustrates the changes. Up to and including the 1920s students were to understand the classical *tafsir* tradition in advance before they were introduced to the reform agenda in *tafsir* discourse. The *Jalalayn*, together with other classical *tafsirs*, like *Tafsir al-Baydawi* or *Tafsir al-Khazin*, were still well-received textbooks for the *tafsir* subject. In the final grade, students read *Tafsir al-Manar* authored by two prominent modernist scholars, Abduh and Rida. Things changed after the 1920s, and into the 1930s, classical *kitab*s were mostly no longer used at this school. Instead, their authority was replaced by new textbooks taken from contemporary publications of Azhar university scholars or prepared by figures who controlled the school (see also Steenbrink, 1986, p. 46).

A similar critique of traditional *kitab*-based learning is also provided by the modernist organisation, the Muhammadiyah. According to Muhammadiyah education policy, there was little value in pushing students to memorise Arabic text without gaining comprehension. Further, traditional teachers did not pay attention to student progress in a systematised and structural way (Wirjosukarto, 1966, pp. 120-123).

A feature of the transition from traditional to modernised Islamic schooling was that students at modernised schools had more subjects to study as part of a structured progression. With the introduction of standardised curriculum, certain core subjects became compulsory, and other avenues of study were made redundant. Moreover, the progression whereby a

student needed to complete a lower level of *kitab* before seeking completion of other *kitab*s at a higher level was no longer part of the pedagogical structure. The goals and values of learning changed as well. Amongst these changing values was the value of completion (see Chapter 6), as completion of a *kitab* was no longer the goal of learning in modernised schools. Furthermore, modern Islamic schools paid more attention to secular subjects, and the load of Islamic study was reduced.

The movement was not totally in one direction. There were traditionally-oriented Islamic schools that adopted elements of Western educational style while maintaining *kitab*s as a main element of education. The Madrasah al-Jam'iyah al-Wasliyah is an example from this period. This institution was established in 1930 to directly adopt Dutch-sponsored education while maintaining affiliation with the Shafi'ite school (Yunus, 1979, p. 195; Steenbrink, 1986, pp. 79-80). In this school, the *Jalalayn* served as an introduction to the *tafsir* subject at the secondary (*thanawi*) level, after which students could be eligible to take *tafsir* subjects in higher grades, i.e. tertiary level or *al-Qism al-'Ali*, where they studied *tafsir* works authored by al-Baydawi, al-Khazin, al-Nasafi and Ibn 'Abbas (Yunus, 1979, pp. 195-198).

Although the situation in Java resembled the Sumatran situation, there are important points of distinction. In Java, traditional Islamic education found a strong basis for support following the formation of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), the biggest organisation representative of traditionalist Muslims in Indonesia. Fealy (1998) notes that formation of this organisation indicates traditionalist resistance to marginalisation by modernists. This was especially the case in the exclusion of a traditionalist representative as part of the Indies' delegation to attend the al-Islam Congress in Hijaz in 1926. This event spurred traditional *ulamas* to protect their religious practices. In late January 1926, with the approval of K.H. Hasjim Asj'ari, K.H. Wahab Chasbullah invited a number of leading traditionalist figures to

meet in Surabaya. This meeting was convened to approve a delegation from the traditionalist group to travel to Mecca in an attempt to protect traditional religious practices.

Based on its committed defence of traditional Islamic learning (Dhofier, 1999, pp. 30-31), the NU became a 'home' for institutions dedicated to traditional *kitab*-based learning. In comparing Javanese *pesantren* and Minangkabau *surau* responses to modernisation, Azra (2003, p. 26) argues that the involution of Javanese culture enabled Muslim communities to absorb foreign elements without necessarily losing Javanese identity. This strong culture has enabled Javanese *pesantrens* to continue to the present time. In traditional educational institutions (*pesantren*) in Java, the *Jalalayn* remains the primary entry point to *tafsir* discourse, and the *bandongan* remains an authoritative pedagogical form in those institutions, which remain attractive to many students.

3.3. *Kitab*-based learning among modernist Muslim groups

Interestingly, although the *Jalalayn* clearly belongs to the corpus of traditional Islamic authority, its reception extended beyond traditionalist circles. Despite marginalisation of *bandongan* learning, the *Jalalayn* received wide acceptance among modernist Muslim groups. It is on the curriculum of some modernist institutions (minus the *bandongan* pedagogical practice). My explanation for this is twofold. First, the *Jalalayn* formed part of the educational upbringing of many influential modernist scholars, and in this sense, their understanding of the tradition of Quranic *tafsir*-learning is inseparable from this one text. Second, their understanding of that tradition gives a particular place and status to the *Jalalayn*. This specific text is iconic of that tradition, and is difficult to be replaced by another, for the *Jalalayn* (independent of the pedagogical style through which it is taught) has become a symbol of the general tradition of Islamic learning, of which modernist institutions are very respectful. In the following, I describe how the *Jalalayn* has found a place in the curriculum

of institutions belonging to two Muslim modernist organisations, i.e. the Muhammadiyah and the Persatuan Islam (Persis).

As Wirjosukarto (1966, p. 119) notes, the Pondok Muhammadiyah was established in Yogyakarta in 1920. This institution is a continuation of the Qism al-Arqa initiated by K.H.A. Dahlan, founder of the Muhammadiyah organisation, the biggest organisation representing modernist Muslims in Indonesia. After the institution's name was changed to Pondok Muhammadiyah, general subjects were taught alongside religious subjects, and these changes introduced new practices and methods in Islamic learning. The Pondok Muhammadiyah, now known as the Madrasah Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah, is regarded as the first religious educational institution run under the modern-based administration in Yogyakarta. This institution adopted a modern learning style where students study in classrooms, sitting on chairs, and using tables as a working surface. Meanwhile, teachers were equipped with chair and table as well as a board. This was clearly not an environment for *bandongan*.

Wirjosukarto (1966, p. 123) shows how the Muhammadiyah curriculum was partly shaped by the *kitab*-based tradition from which the group emerged in 1912. Aside from general subjects, the Qur'an and the hadith, the Pondok Muhammadiyah taught some *kitab*s of the Shafi'ite school, al-Ghazali's works in Sufism, *kitab*s authored by scholars who follow the doctrine of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* (Adherents to the Prophetic Tradition and the Community) as well as the *Jalalayn*.

Yet being a modernist institution, Wirjosukarto (1966, p. 123) notes that the Pondok Muhammadiyah introduced such modernist works as *Risalat al-tawhid* (the theology of unity) authored by Muhammad Abduh, some *fiqh* works designed using a new method of presentation, *Tafsir al-Manar* (the interpretation of beacon) and other *kitab*s that supported the reform agenda. Nevertheless, it is striking that the *Jalalayn*, by virtue of its symbolic value, was retained in the curriculum.

A different tendency concerning the reception of *kitab* among modernist groups emerge in Persis-affiliated *pesantren*. This group is highly relevant to this study, as a Persis *pesantren* was a field site for this research (see Chapter 9). Development of Islamic education in the Persis organisation commenced in 1936 with the formation of an educational institution known as Pendidikan Islam, or Islamic Education. This formation was partly a response to the needs of Islamic schools in the district of Bandung to provide religious training integrated in the school curriculum. A. Hassan (d. 1958), one of the founders of this organisation, arranged the *pesantren* system, popularly called the *Pesantren Persis*, that later became the benchmark for Persis-affiliated educational institutions (Noer, 1980, pp. 101-102).

The Persatuan Islam pursued the reform agenda by encouraging Muslims to take a direct approach to the Qur'an and hadith, to reject blind imitation (*taqlid*), to release themselves from strict affiliation with any single *madhhab* and to allow a mixed legal positioning between two legal opinions (*talfiq*) as long as this positioning had a proper basis in the Qur'an and authentic hadith. As Bachtiar (2012, pp. 97-98) notes, these strict principles greatly influenced the way Persis members made selection of *kitab*s for use in pedagogical practices. *Kitabs* were mostly replaced by new textbooks. Federspiel (2001, pp. 66-69) notes that the modernist perspective contributed to the emergence of new religious literary genres using the vernacular (use of Indonesian language in this regard) and increasing use of Roman script in production of the works. During the early twentieth century, Islamic literature was primarily provided in Arabic or in Arabic-based scripts.

Although *tafsir* was included as part of the curriculum in Persis *pesantren* in the pre-colonial Indonesian period, the *Jalalayn* was not among the textbooks taught. This continued at least until the period of K.H.E. Abdurrahman, who became the head of Persis from 1962 to 1983. As Bachtiar (2012) notes, this man is regarded as greatly contributing to the

institutionalisation of Islamic education in the Persatuan Islam milieu. After speaking with two of his disciples, I understand that K.H.E. Abdurrahman did not use the *Jalalayn* in his *tafsir* classes. Instead, he taught the *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*.⁵

There was an interesting development after Abdurrahman. According to Rosyidin (2009), the *Jalalayn* appeared as a prescribed textbook in the curriculum issued by the central board of the Persis organisation in 2005. This work was included as one of the references for students in the *thanawi-diniyah wustha* level (equal to junior high school level). For Bachtiar (2012, p. 99), this reception of the *Jalalayn* in the Pesantren Persis milieu indicated the value of plurality among Persis members, revealing the co-existence of various approaches to Islamic scholarship. It indicates that there are varying ways of affiliating with tradition in Persis. While some Persis members advocate forms of modern learning,⁶ others accept and advocate the use of *kitab*s in the classroom (see Chapter 6). Reception of the *Jalalayn*, and other traditional *kitab*s, indicates the intensive socio-cultural contact of Persis members with traditional education. A good example is Ustaz Aceng Zakaria, current chair of the Persis organisation. In his childhood he followed *bandongan kitab* delivered by his parents, who were teachers, for whom he acted as secretary of the study program. His parents at the time delivered the *bandongan Hikam*, the book on Sufism authored by Ibn ‘Ata’illah al-Iskandari (d. 1310). Ustaz Aceng completed this *bandongan* two or three times.

Ustaz Aceng Zakaria later studied under his cousin, Ajengan Uyum, with whom he undertook *kitab*-gatherings, such as *Safinah*, *Tijan*, *Ajurrumiyah* and Arabic conjugation.⁷

⁵ I interviewed Ustaz Aceng Zakaria on 1 December 2015 in Garut and Ustaz Romli on 11 February 2017 in Bandung.

⁶ I am grateful to my Persis informants, and especially Ustaz Moh. Iqbal Santoso, for this insight. Ustaz Iqbal, who considers himself a supporter of classroom styles, is currently general principal of Pesantren Persis No. 76 in Tarogong, Garut.

⁷ I did not ask for a further clarification regarding the full titles of *kitab*s that Ustaz Aceng completed when studying under his cousin. Nevertheless, we are able to identify them based on their widely-use in the pesantren milieu. *Safinah* more likely refers to a well-known work in *fiqh* entitled *Safinat al-naja* by Salim ibn Sumair al-Hadrami (d. 1854). Meanwhile, *Tijan* more likely refers to *Tijan al-durari* by Nawawi of Banten in theology. *Ajurrumiyah* is a well-known work in Arabic grammar authored by al-Sanhaji (d. 1324). As for his

Ajengan Uyum was a NU scholar, running a traditional *pesantren*. Completing his study under Ajengan Uyum, Ustaz Aceng Zakaria then continued to study under K.H.E. Abdurrahman. Ustaz Aceng Zakaria was very much impressed with the way his NU teachers conscientiously read chunks of Arabic texts in the *kitab*s and carefully explained them to students.

The two brothers of Ustaz Aceng Zakaria, Ustaz Atep Tontowi and Ustaz Asep Bahroyat, also have a strong background in traditional education. Both also studied under Ajengan Uyum. Ustaz Asep Bahroyat continued study in a traditional *pesantren* at Keresek for about seven years. In the Persis community, Ustaz Asep Bahroyat was known for his careful reading, just like NU teachers, especially in the way he explained Arabic pronouns, for which he was popularly called *ustaz damir* (the pronoun teacher).⁸

Ustaz Romli, general principal of Pesantren Persis No. 34 in Bandung, once studied in a traditional *pesantren* in which one of the *bandongan kitab* he followed was the *Jalalayn*.⁹ Ustaz Ujang Juanda also has a strong family background in traditional education. His brother runs the traditional *pesantren*, i.e. the Pesantren Darussalam in Cikajang. After graduating from Pesantren Persis No. 19 in Bentar, Ustaz Ujang continues to advocate *kitab*-based learning in Pesantren Persis No. 98 in Cisurupan, Garut, where he is currently in the role of general principal. Along with the *Jalalayn*, he also delivered the *Alfiyah* pedagogy in the *pesantren*.¹⁰ All these examples point to the remarkable status of the *Jalalayn* within Islamic learning in Indonesia. Although many modernists would say that the *bandongan Jalalayn* of NU institutions belong to the past, the text itself appears irreplaceable as a core element of

completed *kitab*-gatherings in Arabic conjugation, I assume that he also completed related *kitab*s that are commonly circulated in the traditional *pesantren* milieu.

⁸ Interview with Ustaz Aceng Zakaria on 1 December 2015 in Garut.

⁹ Interview with Ustaz Romli on 11 February 2017 in Bandung.

¹⁰ Interview with Ustaz Ujang Juanda on 1 February 2017 in Garut.

Islamic tradition that has resonance more widely than the pedagogical spaces where *bandongan* is maintained.

3.4. *Kitab*-based learning after independence

I have already elaborated how the authority of *kitab* was challenged with the coming of modernisation. The adoption of classroom styles and curriculum generated different values regarding the way Islamic education should be conducted in an effective and efficient way. In this section, I show the contestation between traditional education and formal administrative education (classroom style) that occurred after Indonesian independence. The core point of this contestation lies in formal administrative religious education being adopted as the preferred model in state education policy. Meanwhile, traditional learning and its *kitab*s were left behind, acknowledged in the state education system as non-formal education.

In the first decade after Indonesian independence there were attempts by Muslim groups to secure religious affairs in Indonesian public spheres. After the prominent ‘seven words’ were removed from the preamble to the 1945 Constitution, Muslim leaders struggled to seek possible ways of making Islamic affairs part of government responsibility, considering that Muslims were the majority of the population and had contributed to Indonesian independence.

Muslim representatives were consulted on these crucial issues in a discussion run by the KNIP (National committee for Indonesia, or *Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat*) in October 1949 (Latif, 2008, pp. 258-259). An issue important in this discussion was the future of religious education as, in their point of view, religious education must have legal standing and administration by the government. All Muslim members of the KNIP accepted that religious education must be administered separately from secular education and that both educational mainstreams must be treated as equal. At this important moment, this new-born country recognised two mainstreams in national education: secular education under the

Ministry of Education and religious education under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (see also Panitia Hut ke-XXVII Departemen Agama, 1973, pp. 9-10).

As noted above, in response to the inefficient administration associated with *pesantrens*, the Ministry of Religious Affairs aimed to upgrade skills in Islamic school management by implementing its convergence policy (see Steenbrink, 1986). Starting in the 1950s, the Ministry encouraged traditional *pesantrens* to accept a modernised form of Islamic school (the *madrasah* system) through which graduates would receive a formal certificate. From this point, we can see that existence of *kitab*-based learning was even further marginalised in post-colonial Indonesia.

This marginalisation manifested in a number of ways. First, the *bandongan kitab* and the *pesantren* system remained under kin-based structures, and as such, existed in a private rather than bureaucratic domain. Authority in running this learning style belongs to the individual figure, i.e. the *kyai* or highest principal of the *pesantren*. Second, the *kitab* pedagogy resists standardisation, for as I show below, it relied upon a learning process in which the student starts at the first section of the *kitab* and continues to the end. This is difficult to standardise. It is also difficult to precisely establish a fixed duration for when a student may achieve completion, and curriculum varied from one institution to another. Further, *kitab*s used as reference and learning processes greatly vary from each *pesantren* to another. And finally, co-presence with the famous teacher was an element of the educational experience.

Another reason the *bandongan kitab* became more marginalised after Indonesian independence is connected to the way in which a learning process should produce clear skills and competencies. The *bandongan kitab* has been criticised for only emphasising memorisation or completion, rather than comprehension. Also, the *bandongan kitab* is fully

oriented to deepening religious piety among audiences. Thus, there is no clear path for this learning style to result in a profession.

A side effect of the establishment of two streams in the national education structure in the first decade after Indonesian independence was the legitimisation of inequality justified on the basis of modernisation. The *pesantrens* running *bandongan kitab* were forced to accommodate modernisation if their institution and graduates wished to receive formal acknowledgement of their qualifications. But if they did so, schooling hours in the *pesantren* would have to be filled with non-religious education. This meant that *bandongan kitab* must be run as an extra learning activity taking place outside of regular school hours.

While the government has recognised two educational streams since the first decade of Indonesian independence, the *pesantren* only received formal supervision from the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1979. At that time, the Ministry launched a new sub-directorate specifically taking care of *pesantren* matters.¹¹ Although the *pesantren* institution received a level of support from the Ministry, the Ministry did not recognise *bandongan kitab* as an equalised learning practice. As I elaborate in the next section, there are current moves by the government to include *kitab*-based learning within formal education.

3.5. Struggle for educational equality

The government is now responding to the marginalisation of traditional learning styles in state policy. In 2007, The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, issued a Government Regulation on the conduct of religious education, called *Pendidikan Diniyah Formal* (PDF, Formal Religious Education). This included *kitab*-based learning and *pesantren* as parts of the state educational system. The recognition even

¹¹ For the formation of the sub-directorate for *pesantren* in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, see <<http://ditpdpontren.kemenag.go.id/profil-direktorat-pd-pontren/2017>>. (Accessed 26 January 2018).

extended to education in non-formal contexts, such as the gathering hall (*majelis taklim*) and family environment. The government recognised these two forms of Islamic religious education as having contributed to national development. More relevant to this research, however, are regulations that structure the institutional progress of *kitab*-based learning in order to locate it in a progression extending from primary level to higher education. In practice, Formal Religious Education utilises 90% of its curriculum to study *kitab*s, while the remainder is allotted to general subjects.

To implement the Government Regulation, the Ministry of Religious Affairs issued two Ministerial Regulations in 2014 that rule how the *pesantren* system can be eligible to receive acknowledgement as part of the state educational system, alongside secular education and modernised Islamic education in the *madrasah*. These two regulations deal with the regulation of *kitab*-based learning and the Ministry's project to create equivalence between the two education systems.

The regulation formalising *kitab*-based learning and its administration structures *pesantren* education in four levels: primary (*ula*), secondary (*wusta*), high (*'ulya*), and tertiary (*ma'had 'ali*). The equivalence policy aims to legitimise pedagogical practices conducted in *pesantrens* that deliver curricula outside the national curriculum, and in which pedagogical practices are provided independently under a foundation or individual figure. The *pesantrens* that fall into this category can be either in the modern (*mu'allimin*) form or traditional (*salafiyah*). This project is called *mu'adalah*, meaning equivalence.

The project of recognising *kitab*-based learning extends to other measures, such as a proposed plan to certify *kyai* for their expertise in certain Islamic subjects. To implement this project, the government plans to design a test for *kyai*. Of course, there is criticism even at this early stage. Colleagues in the *pesantren* environment told me that such a project will be extremely difficult to implement on the grounds that titles such as *kyai* or *mama* or

ajengan are not the product of professional training or courses. Rather, social acceptance of a teacher is based on their charisma and genealogy, as well as their expertise in Islamic knowledge as a noted teacher among members of a Muslim community. My colleagues also critiqued the testing process, which is open to manipulation by applicants keen to obtain recognition. Further, there have been suggestions that the *kyai* should be appointed as civil servants. These policy measures indicate a reversion of the marginalisation process that has affected *kitab*-based learning for a long time.

3.6. Ajengan Makki (Mama): an advocate of traditional learning in West Java

Traditional pedagogical practices of Islamic learning have been criticised for not positioning comprehension as a goal of learning. Despite the critics of this form of learning, traditional *kitab*-based learning is still ubiquitous in Islamic learning in contemporary Indonesia. The following typological data shows the current state of Indonesian *pesantrens* (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. *Pesantren* in number in 2012/2013

Typology	Total
Salafiyah	18,233
Khalafiyah	5,483
Kombinasi	5,819
Total	29,535

Source: *Statistik Pendidikan Islam Tahun 2012/2013*, General Directorate of Islamic Education, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Republic of Indonesia.

As indicated in the above table, 18,233 of 29,535 *pesantrens* in Indonesia are categorised as traditional (*salafiyah*), while the number of *pesantrens* that run modern Islamic education (*khalafiyah*) or a combination of the two (*kombinasi*) accounts for around 11,000 in total. This shows that most Indonesian *pesantrens* run the traditional *kitab*-gathering, regardless of whether they also provide formal education.

In this section, I provide a portrait of a prominent figure in West Java dedicated to the advocacy of traditional learning, namely Mama Ajengan Ahmad Makki ibn Abdullah Mahfudz. His *pesantren* is located in the Sukabumi regency. As I have noted, he is popularly called Mama Ajengan Ahmad Makki or Ajengan Makki (in this thesis I call him Mama). He is well-known for his efforts in building a printing company to supply *kitab loghatan* to Indonesian and Sundanese speaking communities.

The term *kitab loghatan* refers to the re-print *kitab* that contain translation or commentary in Indonesian and Sundanese. In about 1988, Ajengan Makki built a printing company to publish *kitab*s to serve traditional learning in his *pesantren*. In the following years, there was increasing demand from the public for these books as educators and students found these printed editions useful for *kitab* learning. He then expanded his business in *kitab loghatan*-printing to cover areas in Sundanese cultural regions, in West Java and Banten. Later he expanded his market to produce Indonesian *kitab loghatan* to cover wider readership in the Malay-Indonesian world.

The printing enterprise has been prosperous and productive. In a newspaper feature, a Bandung-based researcher, Iip Yahya, reported that by 2007 the Sundanese *kitab loghatan*-printing project had reached 70 titles. In addition, the printing company had printed 30 titles of Indonesian *kitab loghatan* (Yahya, 2007). In April 2018, I was informed that the number of produced Sundanese *kitab loghatan* remained stable, but the printing company was producing an increasing number of Indonesian *kitab loghatan*.

Ajengan Makki has been producing *kitab loghatan* for three decades, an effort that has been widely appreciated, and forms a prolonged advocacy of the traditional learning project. In this regard, Ajengan Makki (2010) stated:

Among the *salafiyah* pesantrens, [the Pesantren] al-Salafiyah here has the special characteristic of being able to produce the *salafiyah* kitabs. [We] translate the *kitab* and give them a commentary. [We] also compile some new interpretative/commentary

works. So, praise be to Allah, the Pesantren al-Salafiyah is able to supply the recommended *kitab* to pesantrens, especially the *kitab* that are in line with the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah*.¹²

His efforts for the cause of traditional learning have greatly contributed to the resourcing of pedagogy in the regional languages of the bilingual communities of Java. In recognition he was awarded the Rancage Literary Award in 2005 for dedication to the preservation of traditional learning practice. This award was initiated by a prominent Sundanese poet, Ajip Rosidi, and is given to those who have great dedication to preserving local literature.¹³

The efforts of Ajengan Makki to advocate for traditional learning can be traced back to his decision to change the name of his father's *pesantren*, inherited from his brothers, to Pesantren al-Salafiyah. In his understanding, the word *salafiyah* refers to the *salaf* method, which he regards as the most authentic style in Islamic learning (see Chapter 4). The change of the *pesantren* name does not indicate that his father did not run the *pesantren* in the same way. Instead, with this name change, Ajengan Makki clearly affirms he is an advocate of traditional learning styles that, as elaborated above, had become the object of marginalisation in the Indonesian educational system in the twentieth century.

As Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 is an example of a traditional *pesantren*, and because its leader has pioneered remarkable regeneration of traditional learning, I chose his *pesantren* as a field site (see Chapters 7 and 8). While there I engaged in many discussions with students who revealed diverse ways in which the educational imbalance described above was affecting the domain of the *pesantren*. It could be seen in the changing ways people used

¹² Pondok Pesantren Assalafiyah Babakan Tipar Sukabumi. *Youtube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_BvnbicB_s> (accessed 21 May 2018). English translation from spoken Indonesian is made by Nurtawab.

¹³ On the Rancage Literary Award, see Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia. (n.d.). *Ensiklopedia Sastra Indonesia*. http://ensiklopedia.kemdikbud.go.id/sastra/artikel/Hadiah_Sastra_Rancage. (Accessed 10 April 2018).

titles, such as Kyai Haji (K.H.), which refers to Islamic learning, and the titles used by those graduating from university (Doctorandus or Drs.). Students stated that people now pay more attention to academic titles attached to an Islamic authority figure. This affects the amount of honorarium paid for religious services conducted. Preachers are particularly illustrative of this, as preachers lacking a contemporary academic title only receive *nasi berkat* (a food container usually containing rice, side dishes and banana) as honorarium. But, a white envelope containing money is added to the *nasi berkat* for preachers with an academic title.

How does this *pesantren* deal with this imbalance? It gives the opportunity for *pesantren* students to take formal school courses outside the *pesantren*. During my fieldwork, the *pesantren* coordinator informed me that students of the Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 were predominantly part-time students who also undertake formal study outside the *pesantren*. This contrasts greatly with the situation of several years ago when most students of the *pesantren* were predominantly full-time students and not undertaking formal schooling.

3.7. Conclusion

Since the early twentieth century, modernisation has given high preference to classroom styles of learning. Modern schools preferred to utilise textbooks that serve objectives of learning based on applied curriculum. These are mostly current publications that can be easily applied in the classroom learning style. This new way of learning greatly diminished the authority of *kitab* which for centuries held unquestionable authority for the study of Islam. In this new environment, *kitab*-based learning was a difficult fit with modern education and was therefore considered ineffective and inefficient.

As new ways of learning that adopted modern management became more dominant, there was a push for *kitab*s to be accepted in modern Islamic schools. However, the reception of modernisation was linked to ideas of Islamic modernism that diminished the importance of *kitab*s. Most *kitab*s were accordingly removed from the curriculum because they did not

suit modern Islamic principles. Some *kitab*, such as the *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* have shown the strength and flexibility needed to sustain their relevance to both traditional and modern Islamic education.

The traditional *kitab*-based learning was criticised for resistance to standardisation characterising the national education system. First, this learning style is part of the *pesantren* system that remains the domain of individual and kin-based structures. Second, *bandongan kitab* aims to serve the goal of completion where the learning process usually starts at the first section of the *kitab* and continues to the end. As *kitab*s greatly vary in number of pages, it is difficult to standardise and fix learning duration between one *bandongan kitab* and another. *Bandongan kitab* also run at the teacher's convenience regarding start and to end. Further, the goal of this learning style is not oriented to seek a career or profession.

In the early twenty-first century there were efforts by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to equalise *kitab*-based learning in the state educational system. By obtaining this educational equality, graduates of *pesantrens* that only run *bandongan kitab* had educational opportunities for a future profession and career. Two projects have been launched by the Ministry to take over administration of the *pesantren* through formation of Formal Religious Education and the equivalence project.

Chapter 4 : **Three settings: traditional, modern and competition**

4.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces and describes the three distinctive settings where I observed *Jalalayn* pedagogical practice. These three settings are traditional, modern and competition. The chapters that follow closely examine pedagogical activity taking place in these three settings, seeking to understand them as expressions of ideas and values that are constitutive of contrasting Islamic spaces in Indonesia. I also examine pedagogical styles as responses to other styles in Indonesia, and to the ideas and values that underpin them. In this chapter, I introduce the three settings and provide background as to how they may be understood as traditional, modern or competition.

4.2. Traditional and modern

The dichotomy of traditional versus modern is much debated in anthropology and religious studies. Here, I want to give a rationalisation of my use of these terms. First, it needs to be pointed out I am drawing on emic usage. In the two learning environments that I researched, actors used the terms *tradisi* and *moderen* to characterise their own programs in a very general way. And when they did so, their understanding of the other context was a resource that helped them to define their own context. There is a historicity to this, for the modernist program emerged partly as a response to the grip of Indonesian traditions that they found objectionable (Noer, 1980). My point is that these terms are used meaningfully by actors in both environments.

A second point is that pedagogical styles are critical to these groups' self-understandings of their projects as modern or traditional. *Tradisi* involves the preservation

of a certain set of ideas that form a legacy handed down from previous generations. Where *kitab*-based learning is concerned, this shapes pedagogical styles according to a specific social structure in which the *kyai* sits at the peak as the custodian of tradition. Teaching styles are a means for preserving that structure.

Moderen, in contrast, is an environment distinguished by openness to contemporary values and styles of pedagogy. The modernist program engages with developments in the surrounding world to shape social forms of learning, pushing in the direction of values such as efficiency and rationalisation. As compared to *tradisi*, *moderen* is more open to recent developments in pedagogy and this interaction shapes notions of how subjects like *tafsir* are taught.

It is important to note that I did not encounter these alignments with modern or traditional in pure forms. Both streams display elements of the other. Rationalised pedagogical forms have a place in the traditional environment, and many teachers in the modern stream have a strong desire to preserve elements claimed as essences by the traditionalist side. These are not environments that purify themselves wholly of the rival pole.

To illustrate the difference between traditional and modern, I refer in the chapters that follow to physical features and layouts of teaching spaces. I argue that these are an expressive materialisation of the modern/traditional dichotomy that helps us understand characteristics of community as traditional and/or modern. Examples that point to these characteristics include use of physical properties such as the pulpit (*minbar*) to deliver sermons, the spot for the prayer leader (*imam*), and teacher's chair, as well as learning space lay out and, in the broader context, the learning environment. Use of these objects and spaces indicate social roles and status functions, and pedagogical activity asserts these roles and statuses. In other words, the physical properties and layout of teaching spaces helped me to analyse how

pedagogical activities using the *Jalalayn* legitimise social reproduction within the three spaces.

4.2.1. Traditional environment: Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 in Sukabumi

For the purpose of this study, I consider Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 in Sukabumi as representative of a traditional environment for the conduct of *Jalalayn*-pedagogical practice. Established by K.H. Abdullah Mahfudz in 1939, the Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 was originally named the Pesantren Babakan after the village where the *pesantren* is located. After K.H. Abdullah Mahfudz passed away in 1969, some of his immediate relatives ran the *pesantren*.¹⁴ Kholiq (2014, pp. 11-16) notes that in 1977 the fourth son of K.H. Abdullah Mahfudz, Ahmad Makki, referred to hereafter as Mama, took over the *pesantren* and changed the *pesantren*'s name to 'Pesantren al-Salafiyah'.

The terms *salafī* and *salafiyah* require some explanation. Dhofier (1999) terms *pesantren* that advocate traditional forms of Islamic learning as *pesantren salafī*. Lukens-Bull (2005, p. 135) proposes a similar meaning, stating that the term is used interchangeably to refer to ideas and practices based on the four schools of Islamic legal thought. Recent developments in Indonesia have complicated the meanings of these terms. The compound term *pesantren salafī* in Indonesia can also refer to Islamic schools that belong to, or have a connection to, the global *salafī* movement or salafism (see Wahid, 2014, especially chapters 4 and 5), a Muslim group who support a direct approach to the Qur'an and the hadith.

Nevertheless, in the Indonesian context a traditional *pesantren* is also called *pesantren salaf* or *pesantren salafiyah*. It is the connection with Indonesian tradition that motivated Mama to choose the word 'al-salafiyah' for his *pesantren*'s name. His reasoning for this is important, for it illustrates the significance of tradition for him. In the profile booklet of the

¹⁴ As Dhofier (1980, p. 50) notes, it is a domain of a particular kin group to run a traditional *pesantren*.

pesantren prepared by his son-in-law (Kholiq, 2014, pp. 16-17),¹⁵ Mama chose the word ‘al-salafiyah’ based on the word *salafa* (those who have predeceased) found in the *Jawharat al-tawhid* (the Jewel of Islamic monotheism) authored by Ibrahim al-Laqqani (d. 1631):

Fa-kull khayr fī ‘ttiba‘ man salafa
wa-kull sharr fī ibtida‘ man khalafa

Thus, every virtue [is] in the following of those who have preceded
and every unwise thing [is] in the innovation of those who came later¹⁶

A commentary on this theological work of al-Laqqani was authored by Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Bayjuri (d. 1860) and entitled *Tuhfat al-murid* (the Gift of the seeker). Al-Bayjuri provides commentary of this poem as follows: every created virtue was the result of following the example of the pious predecessors (*man salafa*), of the prophet, his companions, the companion followers, those who followed the companion followers, and the next generation, notably the main four *mujtahids* that hold consensus (*ijma‘*) and restrain Muslims from quitting the community (*jama‘ah*) through issuing legal opinions (*ifta‘*) and developing Islamic jurisprudence. As al-Bayjuri notes, imitating (*taqlid*) the four imams is therefore considered acceptable. Then, al-Bayjuri states that all bad things resulted from unacceptable innovations (*bid‘ah*) made by those who came later (*man khalafa*) (al-Bayjuri, n.d., pp. 131-132).

For Mama, this poem affirms that his *pesantren* is dedicated to preserving the traditional form of Islamic learning that he understands as the *salafiyah* or *salaf* method (*manhaj salaf*) and to following the doctrine of the People of the Prophetic Tradition and the Community, or *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama‘ah*. This group, as Dhofier (1999, p. 158) notes, is generally identified as followers of the Sunnite tradition, following one of the four schools of Islamic legal thought, the teaching of al-Ash‘ari (d. 935) and al-Maturidi (d. 944) in

¹⁵ See also the “Pondok Pesantren Assalafiyah Babakan Tipar Sukabumi.” *Youtube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_BvnbicB_s> (accessed 21 May 2018).

¹⁶ Translation is mine.

theology that is against the Mu‘tazilites (see Rudolph, 2012, p. 318), and the teaching of al-Junayd (d. 910) and al-Ghazali (d. 1111) in Sufism. In this connection, as Knysh (2000, p. 149) notes, al-Ghazali played a pivotal role in combining both Islamic and non-Islamic teachings to be institutionalised into a *sufi* practice called *tariqa*, and that, as I observed in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1, this practice is acceptable among the pesantren members.

In practice, what Mama means by the *salaf* method consists of preserving traditional learning styles in the study of classical *kitab*s, which are considered as authoritative sources for the study of Islam. A typical *kitab*-pedagogical event is one of a series which starts with the first section of the *kitab* and ends, months or even years later, at its last page, all under direction of the *kyai*. The duration of the series depends on the length of the *kitab*. In addition, the series of events is generally known by the *kitab*'s title. As noted in the previous chapter, a learning style based on completion of the *kitab* was rejected by modernists as inefficient and ineffective.

In the analysis of traditional learning that follows, I pay close attention to organisation of the learning space, which reflects and affirms the hierarchy that characterises traditional learning. The *bandongan kitab* is usually delivered by a teacher in person in the mosque. The main room that usually functions for congregational prayer is set up for students to gather and for the teacher to lead from a position of respect. In some cases, students gather in the teacher's residence. Students are grouped mainly based on their completion of previous *kitab*-gatherings, rather than by age or year of intake (for the value of completion see Chapter 6). In the *bandongan* style, both male and female students usually study simultaneously at the gathering venue, but do so while sitting in different rooms (more elaboration on the position of male and female students in the gathering is presented in Chapter 6).

Traditional learning uses two main methods: *sorogan* and *bandongan*. The former, rather like a private tutorial, is conducted when a student privately meets with teacher. In this process, the teacher usually dictates passages of Arabic text accompanied with related translation in regional languages, for example Javanese or Sundanese. The student is asked to imitate the teacher's reading. (It is important to bear in mind that the *Jalalayn* text is not vocalised). The student may be asked to read some passages of the text with translation, while the teacher listens and making necessary corrections. The latter is a group event led by a teacher who has control over proceedings. A *bandongan* lesson is sometimes open for attendance by students of all levels, or for selected students based on level of achievement. Students sit cross-legged on the floor and follow the *kyai*'s progress through the book. The *kyai* reads some passages of Arabic text and provides a translation, with students holding the same *kitab* on their laps. In listening to the *kyai*'s reading, students remain silent and focus on making notes in their copy of the text (Zuhri, 1987, pp. 98-103; Dhofier, 1999, pp. 10-13).

Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 conducts teaching in both *bandongan* and *sorogan*. Along with these two pedagogical methods, Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 also runs what it calls 'class-gatherings' (*pengajian kelas*), which resemble a lesson conducted in a classroom. I refer to this as a class-gathering because attendance was only open to students of the same level. This type of gathering is designed as an additional tutorial for students based on skill and completion achievements: preparation, first beginner, upper beginner and advanced. Class-gatherings are taught by senior students who also take responsibility in the *pesantren*'s management.

Traditional learning involves one-way communication where the *kyai* speaks for the whole gathering. The *kyai* does not use supporting equipment like markers, whiteboards or LCD projectors, and will usually sit for the duration of the lesson. Students give complete

attention to the *kyai*'s voice, while keeping their eyes on their own *kitab*. Nobody looks at the teacher's face, for looking directly toward the *kyai*'s face, especially from up close, might be considered impolite. Everyone brings their own *kitab* and writing tool. I did not observe students sharing a *kitab* during a *bandongan*.

To a degree, traditional learning can involve the use of technology. Some students bring a small desk, called a *rekal*, to support their book.¹⁷ But the equipment that is most frequently used in the traditional *kitab*-gathering is a sound system or speaker, which allows female students to follow the *kyai*'s lesson from their own dormitory. Along with the sound system or speaker, a white board is provided in the hall. I did not observe the *kyai* using this board.

Oral performance in which the teacher reads and translates the book is called *ngalogat*. This term also describes student activity when taking notes based on the teacher's explanation. Yahya (2003, pp. 295-296) explains that the *ngalogat* process consists of the teacher's explanation primarily of grammatical aspects of the text being studied. Here, he gives a very brief example of *ngalogat*. Arabic grammar includes two kinds of sentence (*jumlah*), i.e. a nominal sentence (*al-jumlah al-ismiyah*) and verbal sentence (*al-jumlah al-fi'liyah*). A nominal sentence contains the subject (*al-mubtada*) and predicate (*al-khabar*). In the sentence *al-kitab jadid* (the book [is] new), the definite noun *al-kitab* grammatically stands in the subject position and the word *jadid* in the predicate position. In the Sundanese traditional pedagogical style, as Yahya notes, a teacher would read and explain this sentence to the students as follows:

Sundanese **al-kitab**, ari ieu buku, eta, **jadid**, anyar.¹⁸

¹⁷ At first, students in this *pesantren* usually put their *kitab*s on the lap during a gathering. A generous benefactor then donated a number of mini desks for the purpose of making students more comfortable.

¹⁸ In a *ngalogat* process, the Sundanese word *ari* (Javanese: *utawi*) is used to identify *al-kitab* as the subject (*al-mubtada*), and the Sundanese word *eta* (Javanese: *iku*) to identify the word *jadid* as the predicate in a nominal sentence. The experienced student is familiar with this note-taking mode and easily follows the teacher's recitation. English translation is mine.

Indonesian **al-kitab**, adapun ini buku, adalah, **jadid**, baru.

English **al-kitab**, that is, this book, is, **jadid**, new

In contrast, a verbal sentence consists of verb (*fi'l*), subject (*fa'il*) and object (*maf'ul bih*). In the sentence *kataba 'Ali al-risalah* (Ali wrote the letter), the word *kataba* grammatically stands as the verb, the word *'Ali* is the active participle, and the word *al-risalah* is the object. The teacher will explain the sentence to the students as follows:

Sundanese **kataba**, geus nulis, saha, **'Ali**, Ali, **al-risalah**, eta surat.¹⁹

Indonesian **kataba**, sudah menulis, siapa, **'Ali**, Ali, **al-risalah**, surat tersebut.

English **kataba**, already wrote, who?, **'Ali**, Ali, **al-risalah**, the letter.

Students take notes on their own kitabs during the event using certain commonly-agreed or locally practiced symbols or abbreviations which refer to terms in Arabic codes. For example, the letter *mim* (م) identifies the subject (*al-mubtada*) and the letter *kha* (خ) identifies the predicate (*al-khabar*) in a nominal sentence.²⁰

4.2.2. Modern environment: Pesantren Persis No. 99 in Garut

The second setting is an example of what is referred to in Indonesia as a *moderen* (modern) Islamic educational setting. A modern environment in this regard refers to Islamic schools that include Western elements in educational style, in accordance with the reform agenda. This openness to Western pedagogical styles is common in Indonesia. Noer (2010, pp. 38-39) notes that both Muhammadiyah and Persis have physically arranged pedagogical settings to follow a Dutch or Western educational environment, such as the use of classroom with related facilities and uniform. Noer stresses that such Western-oriented schools are

¹⁹ The Sundanese word *saha* (Javanese: *sapa*) is used to identify the word *'Ali* as the active participle (*fa'il*) in a verbal sentence.

²⁰ Regarding the application of grammatical symbols in Javanese *ngalogat* see al-Manduri. *Kayfiyat al-ma'ani bi-al-ikhtisar li-talabat al-madaris wa-al-ma'ahid al-diniyah* (Tulungagung: al-Hidayah, n.d.). Another elaboration of traditional styles in Islamic learning is provided in Zuhri (1987, pp. 98-103).

managed by Islamic-oriented organisations, and for that reason cannot be included in the category of ‘Western-style’ schools. The *pesantren* institution that I visited to observe *tafsir* learning styles in the modern environment belonged to the Persatuan Islam organisation.

A hallmark of Persis education is that it is conducted on rational principles of administration. On the basis of administrative rationality, Rosyidin (2009) likened Persis education to the formal education system called *sekolah* (school). A Persis-affiliated *pesantren* is usually, but not always, a school and offers stages of formal school from primary to senior high school levels. In this regard, Persis education has adopted the concept of modern education. Its pedagogical process requires planning, implementation, study-result assessment and learning-process monitoring and evaluation. An illustrative example is the move by most Persis-affiliated *pesantrens* from the *Shawal-Sha‘ban* (months of the Arabic calendar) calendrical system for the academic year to the July-June system, following the stipulations of the government’s academic calendar. As Rosyidin (2009, p. 377) notes, this move was implemented in 1990.

But this administrative orientation does not define a Persis school in the eyes of its members. Rather, they characterise the school by referring to its reform agenda. In an interview I conducted, Ustaz Iqbal Santoso, the current general principal of the Pesantren Persis in Tarogong, Garut, characterised the school by emphasising the values of the Persis reform agenda. The reformist educational program, in his view, defines a Persis school. Ustaz Iqbal stressed the importance of being efficient and effective as core values in a reformist educational environment. The school’s methods and practices should enable non-religious and Islamic subjects to be taught in the same curriculum.²¹

Nevertheless, the modern school is not completely free of the hallmarks of the traditional *pesantren*, and in fact the tradition and modern combine in interesting ways, such

²¹ I interviewed Ustaz Iqbal Santoso on 6 February 2017 in Garut.

as in management structures. Traditional *pesantren* are generally owned and managed by families, while modern schools are generally owned and managed by foundations.²² Not surprisingly, when a *pesantren* is under ownership of a foundation, the *kyai*'s control over the educational institution is diminished (Bachtiar, 2012, pp. 111-128). Yet Persis schools nevertheless need to have a *kyai*-like figure as the figurehead of the institution, for this is a clear public expectation. In other words, Persis-affiliated *pesantrens* still need the popular figure of a *kyai* to promote their institution. Furthermore, influence from traditional Islamic education is inevitable because many Persis members were previously educated in traditional institutions or came from an NU-family background. I met a Persis figure whose close relatives were running a traditional *pesantren* in the same district.²³

In fieldwork I noticed that Persis implements theme-based learning in a classroom style and is averse to completion as the main goal of learning. Nevertheless, the *kitab* per se is not considered by Persis as anathema to their pedagogical project. As Rosyidin (2009, p. 341) notes, the curriculum for Persis education is established by the central board of Persis. It is therefore not restricted to the Islamic curriculum issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Each Persis-affiliated *pesantren* can implement its own version of Persis pedagogy in classrooms. As a result, some Persis-affiliated *pesantrens* use the *Jalalayn* as the main resource for general interpretation of the Qur'an or the *tafsir 'amm*.

I selected Pesantren Persis No. 99, located in the village of Rancabango, Garut, as a field site because it is a self-professed modern Islamic teaching institution where the *Jalalayn* is on the curriculum. Built in 1990 by Ustaz Aceng Zakaria, currently serving as

²² For description of kinship and marriage as main factors in a traditional *pesantren* management see Dhofier (1980).

²³ In my conversation with some Persis members they acknowledged that many Persis members have developed a close cultural connection with the NU community. The dynamics that happened between these two groups and the fact that they are culturally close to each other is illustrated in a pithy saying I heard in the Persis environment: "The NU member that supports change is a Persis member, while the Persis member that wishes to maintain the status quo is an NU member." Expressions such as this may be contested by many NU members, many of whom see themselves as more progressive.

the national Persis chairman, this is a modern educational environment in the sense that this *pesantren* has school management, curriculum-based subjects from secular disciplines, and utilises classrooms.

Pesantren Persis No. 99 delivers formal education from primary to senior high school levels. The school level where the *Jalalayn* is taught is called *Mu'allimin*, equal to senior high school level. Students are formally registered based on majors offered by the school. During my fieldwork, the *Mu'allimin* school offered two main majors, i.e. natural sciences (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam* or *IPA*) and social sciences (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* or *IPS*). Students complete 'secular' subjects within their majors, but also receive Islamic pedagogy set down in guidelines issued by the Persis organisation (for more on Persis formal education see Rosyidin, 2009). Teachers are formally appointed after the school reviews their professional profile, referring to documents such as the candidate's certificate of tertiary education. Administrative processes such as this formal appointment system create a bureaucratic equality and inclusive social acceptance among individuals in this environment.

One teacher who delivers the *tafsir 'amm* subject described how he took some subjects on Qur'an commentary when he was a student of the *Mu'allimin* school at a Persis-affiliated *pesantren* in Garut. He took a *tafsir* subject that was in essence similar to the *tafsir 'amm* that he now teaches. But, the *pesantren* at the time did not use the *Jalalayn* as a textbook, and instead used the *Safwat al-tafasir* (Best of the Qur'anic commentaries) by 'Ali al-Sabuni (b. 1930), Professor of Islamic studies at King Abdul Aziz University at Mecca, as the main reference. He also took another *tafsir* subject on legal interpretation, or the *tafsir ahkam*, similar to the subject on legal interpretation in the *Mu'allimin* school where he is now based. His university title as Master in Islamic Studies was a main consideration behind the school principal's decision to appoint him to teach the subject using the *Jalalayn*.

Pesantren Persis No. 99 has three formally appointed staff teaching the *tafsir 'amm* subject, a subject that aims to provide general interpretation of the Qur'an. One teacher was appointed to teach this subject in the preparation (*takhassus*) grade, which is a catch-up grade for students coming from outside the Persis-affiliated *pesantrens*. Another two teachers were appointed to teach this subject across all *Mu'allimin* grades.

4.3. Kitab-reading competition

In the two settings described above, traditional and modern, the *Jalalayn* is used primarily as a reference for study of Qur'anic interpretation. The third setting involves a different situation, for it positions the *Jalalayn* as material for a contest in which participants compete for recognition of their knowledge of the book. This competition, known as the *Musabaqat Qira'at al-Kutub* (*kitab-reading competition*), has attracted attention and given new meanings to traditional *tafsir* pedagogy, and has provided a stage for people belonging within a *pesantren* to publicly display their skills on stages outside the *pesantren*. The *Jalalayn* is used as competition material in the branch of Qur'anic interpretation at the intermediate level.

There is an interesting political background to the emergence of such competitions, for it has been Muslim-based political parties that have aroused public interest in holding contests, evidence of the increasing prominence of Islamic voices in current Indonesian politics. Nevertheless, partisan political activities are not of great interest here. Instead, I focus on the equality issue mentioned above. Public display in these competitions is an important element of attempts by practitioners of traditional learning to gain educational equality.

Involvement of the Indonesian government in celebrating religion in the Indonesian Muslim public sphere can be traced to the 1960s. It emerged through sponsorship and conduct of Qur'anic recitation tournaments, which were sponsored by an Indonesian

ministry, i.e. the Ministry of the Religious Affairs. The goal of this sponsorship was to increase the quality of Qur'anic recitation among young Indonesian Muslims. In May 1977, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Department of Home Affairs supported the launch of the Institute for the Development of the Recitation of the Qur'an (*Lembaga Pengembangan Tilawatil Qur'an*, or LPTQ). Since then, the LPTQ commenced a program to manage and promote practices of Qur'anic recitation in collaboration with various levels of government administration and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Gade, 2004, p. 233).

Inspired by the popularity of the recital competition, and as the government was prepared to fund such activities, *pesantren*-based figures initiated the *kitab*-reading competition in the early 2000s. In 2002, the LPTQ of Banten organised and managed a *kitab*-reading competition as a branch in the Quran recitation tournament (*Musabaqat Tilawat al-Qur'an*, or MTQ) held in that province. This may have been the first such competition, although my research did not include comprehensive inquiry around this issue, so I make this assertion in a qualified way. When I asked the LPTQ of Banten member in 2017 why this happened in Banten, he replied that the LPTQ members considered the *kitab*-reading activity as 'local content' and decided to promote this pedagogical practice in competition because it was an established learning style among Bantenese Muslims.²⁴ Nevertheless, as at the time of writing, no organisation such as the LPTQ had been formally appointed to manage such events and *kitab*-practices in Indonesia.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, in collaboration with the West Java provincial government, supported the first *kitab*-reading competition at the national level in 2004 in Bandung, and it has since then received wide acceptance in Indonesian Muslim communities. Branches of the Ministry at regional levels in West Java (provincial and regency/municipality) run this event regularly. Competitions at regional levels facilitate

²⁴ My interview with Dr. Ahmad Tholabi Kharlie on 4 June 2017, the LPTQ of Banten member.

selection of the best contestants to participate in the national level competition, including the first national event in 2004. In 2011, the event's name changed to the *kitab*-comprehension tournament (known as the *Musabaqat Fahm Kutub al-Turath*, or MUFaKaT). It was then returned to its original name in the following tournament and has retained that name up until the most recent tournament conducted in 2017 in Jepara, Central Java.

In an important development, the *kitab*-reading competition dovetailed with the educational policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As noted already, the Ministry launched two programs: the *Formal Religious Education* (PDF) reforms and the *Mu'adalah* (the equivalence project). These were both intended to bring the traditional Islamic educational system into the scope of governmental regulation (see Chapter 3). During my observation of the 2017 *kitab*-reading competition in the Ciamis regency (see description in Chapter 10), I noticed that the Ministry used the competition format to support the launch of the Formal Religious Education. The publically visible spectacle of the symbols of traditional Islamic learning on the national public stage harmonise with the goals of the equivalence project.²⁵ Up until 2014, selection of *kitab*s used as materials for the *kitab*-reading competition were mainly based on popularity and wide circulation in the *pasantren* milieu. This has changed recently. In 2017, *kitab*s prescribed by the Ministry in the Formal Religious Education's program began to be used as competition material, replacing the existing ones. Two examples of the newly-prescribed texts are the *tafsir* of Nawawi Banten (d. 1897), a prominent nineteenth-century Muslim scholar from Banten who resided in Arabia, and the *al-Rahiq al-makhtum* (the sealed nectar) of Safi al-Rahman al-Mubarakfuri (d. 2006), an Indian Muslim scholar, in the branch of Islamic history. *Al-Rahiq al-makhtum* is considered a 'new' publication on the grounds that the author just passed away in 2006.

²⁵ This conclusion was based on my interview with Dr. Suwendi (an officer in the Ministry of Religious Affairs) on 9 May 2017 in Jakarta.

This *kitab* has been increasingly in demand for pedagogical purposes in Ciamis *pesantrens* after the MQK event organizers used it for the 2017 *kitab* reading competition.

While the competition experienced change in the use of *kitab* and addition of new branches, the Ministry attempted to standardise the competition through adoption of the national language (i.e. Indonesian) to be used in performances and communication on the stage. As I discuss below in Chapter Ten, however, *bandongan* styles have traditionally been conducted in regional languages. This has interesting effects in the conduct of the competition.

The *kitab*-reading competition differs radically from the two settings elaborated above (i.e. traditional and modern). Contestant performances are solely for judges to score. Contestants do not focus on conveying their comprehension of the text to an audience of students taking notes. They are not conducting a lesson. The audience and judges are not attending the event to study as students do in their classrooms or gathering halls of the *pesantrens*. They attend the *kitab*-reading competition to participate as a contestant, a judge, an official, a committee member, an observer, etc. The *kitab*-reading competition is the arena where reputable students selected as contestants have a chance to perform publically and possibly win a trophy.

The competition used as a sample in this research was at the level of regency, and took place in the Ciamis Regency when it was held for the first time in 2005. The organiser of the event was at the time still trying to negotiate an ideal format and organisation. The competition was conducted as part of celebrating the 363rd Ciamis regency anniversary. In its organisation, the Ministry collaborated with the Offices for Religious Affairs (*Kantor Urusan Agama*, or KUA). The former sent an invitation letter to each KUA office in the Regency inviting them to send two contestants, a male and a female, under twenty-five years old.

The print guideline for the 2017 *kitab*-reading competition states that those eligible to register as contestants are students who have been staying and actively studying in the *pesantren* within the last twelve months or more. This was to prevent *pesantren* from sending talented graduates. The committee also applied a restriction on contestants' ages. For example, those eligible to take part in the basic level of competition must be under fifteen years old. Equally, eligible students for intermediate and advanced levels must be aged under eighteen and twenty-one years old, respectively.

These attempts to ensure fair play by competitors resulted in the increasingly administrative/bureaucratic nature of the event. Prospective contestants were required to attach valid documents to prove that they met requirements. To prove that an applicant is not a person hired by a *pesantren* to compete on its behalf, those interested to apply for the competition must attach a certified copy of a school report and a letter of statement signed by the *pesantren*'s principal confirming their presence as an active student at least within the last twelve months. The applicant must also attach a certified copy of a national identification (*Kartu Tanda Penduduk*, or KTP) or a certified copy of their birth certificate. Failure in submitting the required documents may result in a failed application. The competition ethic of this event obliges organisers to be exceedingly bureaucratic in management of the competition.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced three different environments where *Jalalayn*-pedagogical practice takes place. The first two settings are examples of environments where teachers, to whom I refer in the following chapters as performers, regularly use the *Jalalayn* as a reference in *tafsir* pedagogy. In the competition setting, the *Jalalayn* serves as textual reference for a public contest in Islamic knowledge.

Chapter 5 : Framework and method

5.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the framework and method employed for analysis of *Jalalayn* pedagogical practice. *Jalalayn* pedagogical practice is a speech event in which *kyai*, teacher and contestants use language to establish a social interaction with listeners. Thus, the framework applied for this study considers *tafsir* pedagogy as a social practice (Bourdieu, 1973; 1993), using the method of ethnographic study of speech events (Duranti, 2002) and *tafsir* pedagogy as a display of public speaking skills (Hymes, 1975; Bauman, 1978; Goffman, 1981).

Participant observation was the main method of data collection. I conducted this participatory research during 2015-2017 in West Java Province. As noted in the preceding chapter, the first two field sites are Islamic educational institutions that offer traditional and modern Islamic learning styles in Sukabumi and Garut, respectively. The third field site is the *Jalalayn*-reading competition conducted in Ciamis in 2017. In addition to participant observation, I conducted in-depth interviews with informants that play vital roles in relevant Islamic pedagogical practices. These were mostly teachers, students, tournament officials and contestants.

5.2. *Jalalayn*-reading as a social practice

In examining how the *Jalalayn* was read to listeners in three different settings, I utilise the practice theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1993). The approach is appropriate, as this research deals with differing ways subjects of the one society undertake essentially the same action – *tafsir* pedagogy – and this focus calls for a reflexive approach to explore the dynamics of practice and power in society. Bourdieu notes that social life can be best

understood through the relationship between structures, tendencies and actions that lead to long-lasting action orientations produced through interaction between social structures and embodied knowledge that in turn produce a structure.

Bourdieu's conception of social reproduction has greatly influenced many fields of study including education, society, and culture. His work is well known in the field of education for his explanation of how a given social group organises a social strategy to maintain privileged status and respect in society through use of social and cultural capital (Johannesson & Popkewitz, 2001, pp. 229-230). In this regard, Bourdieu (1973, p. 80) states:

The educational system reproduces all the more perfectly the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among classes (and sections of a class) in that the culture which it transmits is closer to the dominant culture and that the mode of inculcation to which it has recourse is less removed from the mode of inculcation practised by the family.

According to Bourdieu, the education system has been monopolised by certain groups whose social capital enabled preservation of instruments of the dominant culture. The education system strengthens social structure and cultural order in a given society. My research deals with something not encountered by Bourdieu, and that is the co-existence of different education systems seeking to preserve different cultural orders. The conditions of this co-existence are explored in the chapters to follow. Nevertheless, Bourdieu's conception applies generally to the teaching activity encountered in the research: I approach *Jalalayn* pedagogy as social practice, understanding contrasting modes of teaching as manifestations of contestation amongst groups of Indonesian Muslims. Holders of religious authority in traditional and modern educational environments act as guardians, mediating constitutive values and structures to contemporary realities in response to the voices of others. Beyond that, their pedagogical practice transmits the culture of the environments in which the pedagogy is considered appropriate.

Bourdieu (1993, pp. 72-95) states that interaction between two or more individuals that possess shared dispositions shows that practices among them are regulated in connection to their reactions to previous practices. Thus, actions indicate expectations based on previous reactions. To Bourdieu, structures that result from a particular condition and in turn strengthen such conditions create a habitus that he defines as “systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 72). He describes this as principles that function to structure actions and representations that are *regulated* and *regular* in a given field. In this regard, habitus, as a generative scheme and practical logic, produces practices and regularities.

As an Indonesian Muslim, I have experienced firsthand the life of a student in the educational settings of interest in this research, as well as the Western academic environment, so I am equipped to make observations of pedagogical practice in the three environments targeted here. Given that structures constitutive in an environment play a vital role in shaping shared dispositions, my awareness of those established structures confirm my ability to conduct this research.

Nevertheless, the goals of this research required me to go beyond my insider knowledge. For this reason, I found the methodological concept of *classroom ethnography* (Bloome, 2013, pp. 7-26) useful for conceptualising pedagogy as an activity that reproduces social and cultural processes. The main innovation of classroom ethnography is to refocus the researcher’s attention from the narrow focus on teaching as the conveyance of knowledge to one that takes account of students’ social identities, including their racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender and economic identities.

For my research, however, the benefit of classroom ethnography was that it enabled me to understand pedagogical practice as a way of reproducing social realities in ways that followed the norms of different Islamic worldviews. For example, Bloome encourages

researchers to pay attention to physical aspects of the teaching space, including furnishings, fixtures and layout. It is important, he states, to pay attention to how students utilise chairs and distance in teaching settings. In a learning event, some students may compete to sit on chairs closest to the teacher to make them ‘the most-liked students’. Yet, others may attempt to hide by sitting far from the teacher. Who sits with whom and where is important to consider in terms of how students develop social structures.

Early in this research I realised that physical features of a learning space were not just useful in a practical sense, but were also tools for expressing norms about social structure. In applying classroom ethnography in the *pesantren*, modern school and competition setting, I did not just make lists of furniture or tools in a classroom and describe how these items influence learning practices compared to another classroom, I also analysed how these items reflect and refract institutional realities outside the classroom. Awareness of the constitutive physical aspects of an environment tells us how structures and agency are linked in the production of practices. This research found that physical properties and layout of field sites express a social hierarchy, manifest in objects like chairs of different kinds, the spot used by the prayer leader, the pulpit to deliver sermons, etc. These things constrain individual behaviour, for performers, speakers and listeners are bound to act in accordance with available choices in relation to their social roles and status.

This was not the only example of the meaningfulness of pedagogical practices as reproductions of cultural and social orders. Another was the recent emergence of *kitab*-based learning on the competition stage. It would be incorrect to see these displays of learning purely as pedagogical events. Rather, in contemporary Indonesia, these practices are considered by traditionalists to be constitutive of their environment, and may then be exploited by them as forms for asserting the presence and value of traditional Islam to

Indonesian society. Once again, pedagogy leads us to the task of reproducing cultural and social orders.

5.3. *Jalalayn*-reading as a speech event

This study also employs ethnographic study of speech events to examine how the *Jalalayn* is taught to situated audiences in different circumstances. This is central to my method, for as I stated in Chapter Two, my goal is to treat *tafsir* as practice and not as text. And the dominant medium of this practice is speech. In other words, *tafsir* can be understood here as speech event.

Duranti (2002, pp. 280-330) notes that speech events are activities determined by rules and norms of speech. I cover a wide variety of rules and norms in the chapters below. More specifically, I pay attention to norms and rules of speech that relate to hierarchy and status difference, for these are highly significant to religious pedagogy. Socio-linguists and linguistic-anthropologists, as Collins (2009, p. 39) notes, generally argue that language is a primary medium through which humans articulate social identities, engage in established cultural practices and maintain social relationships. In any education system, the role of language, mainly formalised language, is fundamental in that knowledge is transmitted and constructed through constitutive teacher-student relationships. In accordance with these ideas, this research required me to be open to contrasting norms about who may be allowed to speak, when, and in what style. I encountered surprising diversity in these norms. For example, as I discuss in Chapter 8, I had the chance over a period of time to observe the same subject being taught to the same class in the same room by teachers of different status. During the lesson taught by the senior one, no student dared to speak. When he was ill, and was replaced by a junior teacher, that junior teacher had to fight valiantly to maintain student attention to his teaching.

5.4. *Jalalayn*-reading as a performance

In this study, I consider *Jalalayn*-reading as a display of verbal artistry. The theory utilised in this research was developed by Bauman (1978) in his work, *Verbal art as performance*. Bauman emphasises a concept of performance that enables us to understand the role of artistry in genres of speaking, which includes the performance situation involving performers, art form, audience and setting (Bauman, 1978, p. 4). To Bauman (1978, p. 8), the concept of verbal art in anthropology, linguistics or literature was restricted in previous scholarship to its manifestation in specific usage or formal features in texts. Hence, the researcher would seek aesthetic quality of language in the construction of textual forms. Bauman reminds us that it is necessary to move from this text-centred approach to the performance approach by examining how texts are implemented in action.

Performance as a mode of verbal communication contains the basic assumption that the performer is responsible for display of communicative competence, which resides in mastery of knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways. This concept includes performer accountability to determine where and when communication is appropriate, beyond its referential content. Audiences, on the other hand, see the performance as something to be evaluated, including the skills and effective display of competence during the performance (Bauman, 1978, p. 11).

In considering *Jalalayn*-reading as performance, this study examines how specific persons are attributed with a level of authority to teach or deliver to the religious gathering in distinctive fields. Each field has its own social mechanisms to accept someone as a teacher, or performer, who is deemed qualified take charge of the pedagogical task. Equally, on the competition stage contestants are selected to represent their villages or municipalities because others considered them qualified after passing through lower levels of competition. For this reason, becoming a performer of *kitab*-reading, either as a teacher or contestant,

indicates social prestige among certain social groups where their performances are subject to audience evaluation.

Each speech community utilises a set of different communicative means for, using Bauman's term, 'keying' the performance frame. The basic task of the ethnography of performance is to observe the communicative means that are culturally specific in serving the keying of performance (Bauman, 1978, pp. 16-22). Based on my field experience, and referring to Bauman's list of strategies for keying, I provide a brief explanation of how *tafsir* pedagogy is keyed as performance, referring to seven of Bauman's keys. The first key is *special codes* which refers for example to use of old-fashioned dialect that differs from the language of everyday speech. In *Jalalayn*-reading performance, skilful public speakers present their own style when public speaking and maximise the use of fashioned language to maintain intimate interactions with an audience during the performance. For example, I observed a *tafsir* lesson in which the teacher used the form of chanting to convey his lesson, relying on skills he had learned in his own study experience in West Javanese *pesantren*.

The second key is the use of *figurative language*, language that creates meanings through imaginative and symbolic invocations of similarity (simile, metaphor, allegory etc), rather than ordinary language. This is of course central to *tafsir*, for interpretation and the conveyance of meanings through similarity is basic to the nature of the task. Performers also rely on figurative language to provide a fresh perspective to an audience. In traditional and modern environments, use of figurative language has assisted teachers to convey the main messages of the text in ways that are considered to be applicable to everyday life.

For example, I observed a teacher representing the epic Qur'anic story of the conflict between the Prophet Moses and the Pharaoh as symbolising the battle between truth (Sundanese: *kaalusan*) and falsehood (Sundanese: *kagorengan*) (on this metaphor see Chapter 8). On another occasion, I observed a teacher appropriating in a whiteboard sketch

the traditional Jolly Roger flag used by pirates to indicate the position of the unbelieving Meccans fighting against Muslims at Mt. Uhud (on this metaphor see Chapter 9).

The third key is *parallelism*. In a performance, some repetition may occur in creating combinations of certain intonations, phonics, grammars and semantics, as well as unmodified and modified elements in the construction of speech (Bauman, 1978, pp. 16-22). Repetition has a special function in *tafsir* pedagogy for the teacher must facilitate student note-taking, especially to record correct vocalisation, and this requires repetition to enable proper note-taking. In most cases, such repetition is combined with patterned intonation through which the teacher imparts a collective consensus regarding the way in which text is to be read (vocalisation, syntax, etc.).

The fourth key is *special paralinguistic features* which include non-verbal features in an utterance, such as rate, length, pause duration, pitch contour, tone of voice, loudness and stress. This involves paying attention not only to speaker facial gestures and paralinguistic features, but also listener responses in a communication event that might appear to consist of one-way communication. Goffman (1981, pp. 5-77) stresses the importance of considering back-channel expressions in an on-going interaction between speaker and listeners, particularly in terms of listener responses of cheering, laughter, chuckles, applause, and so on. Awareness of listener gestures lets speakers know whether they have successfully engaged listeners in the created setting and whether their speech is socially acceptable and accessible to listeners. Another paralinguistic feature that differs between traditional and classroom learning is style of verbal communication, particularly how a teacher utilises the teaching space and moves through it. In traditional learning, teachers tend to occupy one spot during the gathering, while classroom teachers have more flexibility to walk around and occupy two or more spaces.

The fifth key is *special formulae* in which certain speech communities have distinctive formulae, especially in opening or closing oral performances. Regarding the opening session of a traditional gathering, it is common for teachers to recite a long prayer (*wird*) before they recite phrases of Arabic text to be reviewed. In the closing session, teachers usually say “And God knows best” (Arabic: *Wa-Allahu a‘lam bi-al-sawab*) as a closing statement which declares their dependence on God in delivering the instruction. This phrase also indicates that the gathering is closed and advises students to chant a prayer together before breaking from the gathering. In the modern environment, on the other hand, classes are also opened and closed in ways that remind students of structured learning requirements and other information connected to learning goals.

The sixth key is an *appeal to tradition* which acknowledges that each member of a speech community has a more or less shared standard of judgement based on reference to past practice. I have already indicated that the *Jalalayn* is wholly understood with respect to past practice in all environments in which it is taught. The text is in fact an index of past performances that symbolises Islamic authority in a wide sense. Apart from that, there are more specific and sometimes political appeals to tradition. For example, speakers may frame listeners to receive certain reference or ways of thinking, while reminding them of potential problems of accepting contradictory ways of thinking. These reminders, as I explore below, can express rejections and exclusions of other Islamic views circulating in public space and media.

The seventh key is *disclaimer of performance*. This means that certain speech communities usually open a performance with a denial of personal competence. The purpose of this is not to show that a performer is unskilled, rather it is intended for the purposes of etiquette and politeness. In the Indonesian context, it is common for a public speaker to ‘talk one’s self down’ before or after delivering a speech.

The seven keys described above are important to this research as they enable observation of *Jalalayn* pedagogy beyond the text itself. The keys reveal *Jalalayn*-reading as an exercise in the art of speaking where commonly accepted features of communication are locally practiced in different ways by different performers. *Jalalayn*-reading in this regard is a form of performance where performers, mostly teachers in this case, and audiences, mostly students, speak in socially accepted ways according to applied rules and methods. In the following chapters, I connect these rules and methods to Bourdieu's (1973) observation that the educational system reproduces the constitutive social structure.

5.5. In the field: Sukabumi, Garut and Ciamis

The core fieldwork of this research is my participant-observation in three different fields, i.e. two different Islamic schools (i.e. traditional and modern) in Sukabumi and Garut and, the third, the event known as the *Musabaqat qira'at al-kutub*, or the *kitab*-reading competition in Ciamis. Before I conducted all the fieldwork, I received an ethical research clearance from Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) in October 2015.²⁶

The regencies of Sukabumi, Garut and Ciamis are located in the southern part of the West Java province. These three regencies have a greater number of traditional *pesantrens* than other kinds of Islamic schools. Although modern-based and combination-based *pesantrens* are in the minority in this region, development of these two types of *pesantren* varies from one regency to another depending on how Islamic organisations, under which Islamic schools are managed, developed in the area.

As an observer, I share some aspects of socio-religious and cultural life with the people who live in the region where I conducted fieldwork. I was educated for three years in a West-

²⁶ Project Number: CF15/3012 – 2015001233, approved from 6 October 2015 to 6 October 2020.

Javanese *pesantren* that adopted a combination of traditional and modern educational environments. During this time, I acquired high competency in Sundanese. This competency helped me to understand how modern and traditional Islamic institutions preserve social structures and values. Although I am not Sundanese, the experience of having been a student in a *pesantren* enabled me to adapt and make good friendships. When I did not understand meaning or context, I was able to consult with respondents who, in most cases, were able to provide an explanation.

My first contact with people in the Persis-affiliated *pesantren* began with a discussion with my former schoolmate in Pesantren Darussalam Ciamis. This friend has a connection with the Persis organisation and I used her knowledge and personal experience of the Persis educational milieu to gather information regarding the use of *kitab* in their learning practices. My dialogue with this first informant confirmed that some Persis-educational institutions teach the *tafsir* subject using the *Jalalayn* as the main reference.

I chose Pesantren Persis No. 99, located in Rancabango, Garut, as a fieldsite for observing the modern *Jalalayn* pedagogy for two reasons. The first was based on the high profile of Ustaz Aceng Zakaria (Figure 5.1.), who is currently the principal of the *pesantren* and an influential figure amongst the Persis community. This profile was strengthened when Persis Congress delegates elected him as the national chairman of this organisation for the period 2015-2020. The second reason was simpler, and that is that the institution continues to base its general *tafsir* course on the *Jalalayn*.

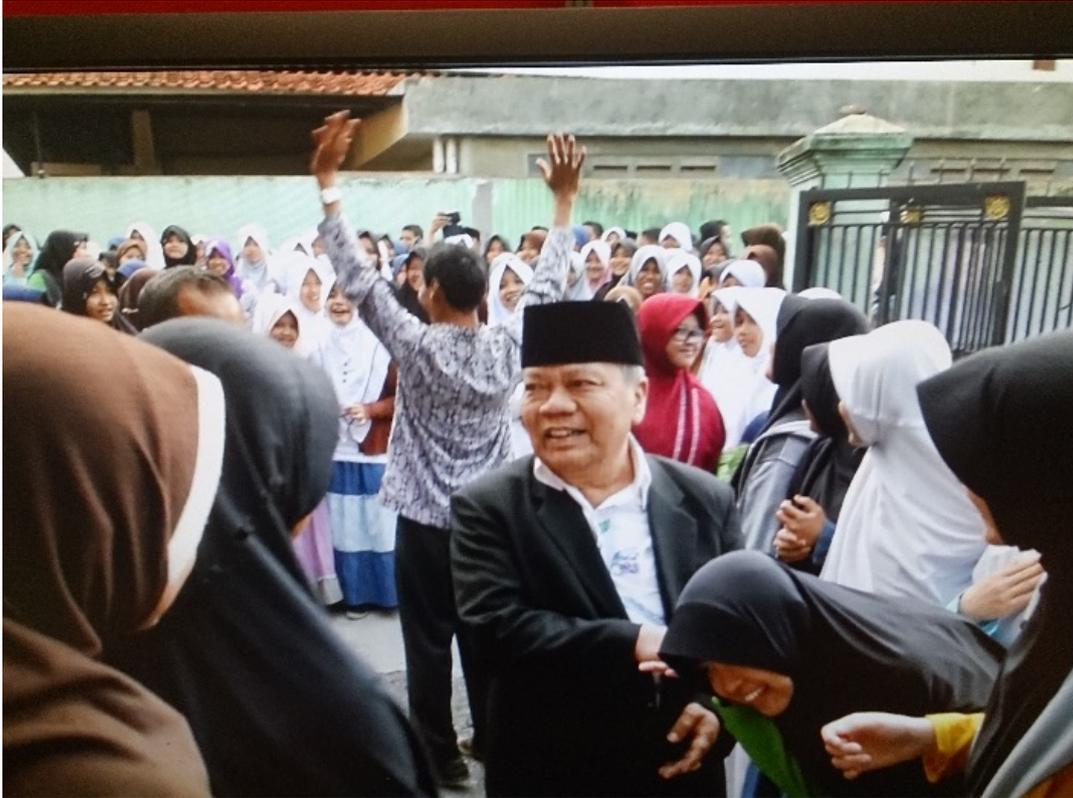


Figure 5.1.: Ustaz Aceng Zakaria, founder and general principal of Pesantren Persis No. 99. This photo shows the celebration of the *pesantren* community in front of his home after he was elected as the general chairman of the Persis organisation for the period 2015-2020.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 23 November 2015, Garut.

One week after arriving in Jakarta for fieldwork, I travelled to Garut to be met by my former schoolmate, who had offered to bring me to the school and introduce me to the staff there. He took me to the village of Rancabango where the *pesantren* (Pesantren Persis No. 99) is located, close to Mt Guntur, a volcanic mountain in the Garut regency. At this time, I was fortunate to meet not only Ustaz Lutfi, the principal of the *Mu'allimin* school, but also Ustaz Aceng. Ustaz Aceng warmly welcomed me and invited me to stay at the *pesantren* guesthouse. My informant told me that I was fortunate to be able to see him on my first day of my visit as he is a busy person, particularly as Persis members were at the time preparing for the general congress to elect a new central board, which meant his schedule was busier than usual.

During my stay at the *pesantren*, I learnt that this *pesantren* is managed in a bureaucratic style. Staff are classified into a hierarchy based on their appointed administrative roles. The highest rank in the structure of this institutional milieu is that of general principal (*mudir 'amm*), a position held by Ustaz Aceng, who takes control of the institution as a whole. Those who administer the *pesantren* school levels (primary to secondary) are called principals (*mudir*). Below the principals are teachers (*ustaz* or *asatiz* in plural form), formally appointed based on tertiary qualification. Under the teachers are student supervisors (*murabbi*). They are usually graduates of the *Mu'allimin* school, some of them undertaking an undergraduate program in Islamic studies at the Persis Islamic institute (STAPII) in Garut or State Islamic University in Bandung. While these student supervisors are not formally qualified to teach within the school, they organise *pesantren* activities and run informal education under administration of the *pesantren*. Under the *murabbi* are students, referred to by the Persis people as men of the future (*rijal al-ghadd*, or RG) for male students, and mothers of the future (*ummahat al-ghadd*, or UG) for female students.

During my stay at Pesantren Persis No. 99, I had the opportunity to observe *pesantren* activities from 3 or 4 am until about 10 to 11 pm over a period of one month from November to mid December of 2015. Apart from observing the *tafsir 'amm*, I also observed another *tafsir* subject, *tafsir ahkam*, on a few occasions. Along with observation, I conducted interviews. I interviewed the general principal (i.e. Ustaz Aceng Zakaria), the *Mu'allimin* principal (i.e. Ust Lutfi Lukman Hakim), and teachers of the *tafsir 'amm* subject. I also interviewed some Persis figures in Garut and Bandung between 2015 and 2017.

I conducted focus group discussions with *Mu'allimin* students in November 2015. These groups covered issues including student attitudes to the *tafsir 'amm* subject, interest in religious subjects and future plans after completion of study. Photos were taken to obtain

representative pictures of the institutions, the *Mu'allimin* school, and student activities with special attention to the conduct of the *tafsir 'amm* class.

Once observations and interviews in Garut were completed, I travelled to Sukabumi for observation of traditional practices in *tafsir* learning. Through colleagues, I had already established a relationship with Pesantren al-Salafiyah No.1 and had obtained permission to conduct research there.

On arriving at the *pesantren*, I was informed by the *pesantren* coordinator that Mama Makki, the leading figure of the *pesantren*, was experiencing ill health. The *pesantren* coordinator apologised in advance should Mama's teaching schedule not run as expected. Indeed, Mama was unable to attend some scheduled events, which had a positive benefit for this research as I was able to observe a senior student filling in for him. The efforts of this student, as described in Chapter 8, revealed important aspects of *pesantren* pedagogy.

I conducted participant observation in this *pesantren* from December 2015 to January 2016. During fieldwork, I stayed in a room next to the *pesantren* office (see Figure 5.2). As commonly found in a traditional *pesantren*, a room usually contains multipurpose cabinets set up to create small spaces for students to sleep in and aisles to walk through. Some senior students were often present in the space made by the cabinets, meaning that the office and room in which I stayed seemed crowded every day.

We usually cooked our own lunch and dinner. One corner was set up as a cooking area with a simple gas stove and cookware, such as a big pan (*kastrol*) functioning as rice cooker and a frying pan. All these things were placed on the floor. We usually cooked, then put all the cooked food onto a big plate, which was usually enjoyed by four to five people.



Figure 5.2.: The researcher (left) with a senior student in the office of Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1, Sukabumi; on the wall are pictures of Mama Ajengan Makki (left), his wife Ummi Ajengan (right), and his father, K.H. Abdullah Mahfudz (centre). The room next to the office is where I stayed, cooked and dined during my fieldwork in this *pesantren*.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 20 January 2016, Sukabumi.

While at Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1, I was a member of the male community. Female students conducted *pesantren* activities in an area not publicly accessible. People of the *pesantren* call male students *santriyin* and female students *santriyat*. Both words are derived from the vernacular Indonesian, *santri*, and modified by adopting Arabic grammar to create masculine and feminine plural nouns, i.e. *santriyin* and *santriyat*, respectively.

I obtained consent to observe all male *pesantren* activities. As for female activities, I was advised to seek consent from Umi Ajengan, Mama's wife. However, I decided not to observe female pedagogical activities in detail because they occurred simultaneously with male *kitab*-gatherings delivered by Mama. Female students received extra learning from

Umi, including the *bandongan Jalalayn*. But I decided not to observe these lessons because of complexities involved in obtaining permission to do so. However, I did interview female students about their experiences.

Along with conducting observations and interviews, I took photos and obtained permission to copy some pages of *kitab*s that contained notes made by their owners. This was important as I was able to observe handwritten notes concerning translation and the use of codes pointing to grammatical position written in Arabic-based script, known as *pegon*. The codes can be conventionally identified because the *pesantren* provides guidelines for students to take notes using codes. When students become more senior, they commonly create modified codes that can be read only by the creator. For this reason, I created a list of codes made by students whose *kitab*s were selected to be copied. The completed list allowed me to read notes taken during *bandongan*.

The *kitab*-reading competition was the third sample of this study. I first attended a *kitab*-reading competition during a fieldwork period at the Persis-affiliated *pesantren* in Garut. I travelled to Balaraja in the Tangerang regency of Banten on 25 November 2015 to attend a *kitab*-reading competition as an event of the Qur'an chanting tournament. This municipality level tournament was conducted in all municipalities of this regency on the same day. This competition was not used as the sample for this research because the *Jalalayn* was not used at this event. With the help of colleagues, I was eventually able to attend the event conducted in Ciamis in May of 2017, where the contestants' knowledge of the *Jalalayn* was the basic format of the context.

Selection of the *Jalalayn*-reading competition in Ciamis as a field site was partly due to relationships with colleagues regularly involved in event organisation as committee member, judge and official. These colleagues kindly helped with fieldwork. The competition was the sixth *kitab*-reading competition held in Ciamis since the early 2000s and was

organised by the branch office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs at Ciamis Regency level. The research activity involved observing the competitive event, which was an engrossing experience as the competition involves students being subjected to rigorous testing of their knowledge of the *Jalalayn* and ability to speak convincingly in an impromptu situation. Along with observation, I conducted in-depth interviews with participants and committee members regarding their roles in the event and their dispositions towards it.

Chapter 6 : Values in *Jalalayn* pedagogical practice: *majelis*, classroom and competition stage

6.1. Introduction

This chapter examines pedagogical values in the different settings of the research. By values, I mean the dispositions of students and teachers that reveal approval of pedagogies and features of them. In this way of looking at values, they appear as things that are held by individuals. Yet I also see values as things that bind participants within shared understandings of what is valuable and what is not. In this sense, values are understood as elements of social structures which generate shared dispositions among individuals that in turn reproduce the structures. In exploring *Jalalayn*-reading performances as a social practice, I examine how the pedagogies are understood as valuable, and also how they impose shared understanding upon Muslims. The examination involves an attempt to understand individuals' subjectivities about pedagogy, but also the ways in which those pedagogies impose upon people in ways they might not be explicitly aware of.

To recap some basics, in the field of traditional *Jalalayn*-reading the pedagogical environment is known as *majelis* (approximate meaning: gathering hall). In this environment the *kyai* is the authoritative transmitter of knowledge. Specific conventions determine who can become a *kyai*. Male students of the *pesantren* will only become *kyai* if they are taken as the *kyai*'s son-in-law. In contrast, in a modern setting *Jalalayn*-learning takes place in the formal educational space of classrooms. In this setting, those authorised to teach have a professional qualification. In the *kitab*-reading competition environment, a stage is provided for contestants to demonstrate their competency in *kitab*-reading as they compete for a trophy.

6.2. Seeking completion: values in the traditional *pesantren*

The ways in which students value *bandongan kitab* in the *pesantren* were not apparent to me in the early stages of my research. My own educational experiences were in a modernist environment, and of course, studying at a major university does not at all resemble the dispositions that motivate *pesantren* students in Sukabumi. I had to be open to conceptions of learning that differed greatly from my own experience as an Indonesian Muslim.

In the traditional *pesantren*, *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* is taught at the intermediate and upper levels. Students who wish to study this commentary must have completed some *kitab*s at a basic level and gained a level of competency in Arabic. Completion is a learning goal in the sense that a learning activity in the traditional environment starts at the first section of the book and continues to the end. Completion is a pedagogical value sought by students studying in the traditional *pesantren* milieu.

Completion is linked to another pedagogical value, the gaining of blessings (*tabaruk*). Scholars have generally considered *tabaruk* as distinct from textual semantics, but this is not the correct approach for this research. In my experience, blessings are not distinct from reference, for comprehension is regarded as a blessing received via the *kyai*, and co-presence with the *kyai* is sought to receive such blessing. Indeed, students have a prayer that expresses this: *Robbī zidnī ‘ilman, wa-‘rzuqnī fahman* (Oh Lord, increase my knowledge, and bestow understanding upon me). For students in the traditional *pesantren*, completion constitutes a gateway to gaining understanding that God gives to those who seek knowledge in association with the *kyai*.

Completion determines the duration of a student's study experience. There is no strict rule regarding how long a student should stay in the traditional *pesantren*. Instead, the target is to complete the *kitab* under the guidance of the *kyai*. Once the *kitab* is completed, students

are acknowledged as belonging within the *kyai*'s genealogy of knowledge or *sanad*. In other words, the value of completion is connected to students' attempts to receive a place within the *kyai*'s genealogy of knowledge. It is worth noting here that granting the genealogy of knowledge generally, but not always, means that students receive a written certificate, or *ijazah*, showing their genealogy of knowledge to the author of the *kitab* (refer to Figure 6.1. here). Even without a certificate, completion creates a substantive link between student and *kyai*.



Figure 6.1.: The message printed on this t-shirt, “*Guruku kyai, bukan Mbah Google*” (My teacher is a *kyai*, not Grandfather Google), shows the pride felt by *pesantren* learners towards their genealogy with the *kyai*.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 1 May 2017, Ciamis.

The value of completion is dependent upon a style of learning that encourages co-presence with the *kyai*. Students are not obsessed with the referential meanings of the *kitab* and are reassured by the *kyai* to trust in God's plan (*tawakkul*) that they will receive comprehension of the *kitab*'s content following the completion of *bandongan kitab*.

Importantly, the students in this environment do not sit an examination to test their competency, and for the most part they are not bothered by the state of their knowledge of the book's reference. There is no failure, for a student may choose to re-schedule time to attend the same course of *bandongan* with the same teacher or others based on the schedule offered by given *pesantrens*.

The fasting month provides an opportunity to undertake further study, as short, intensive *bandongans* are held during this month in certain *pesantrens*. An East Javanese informant told me that in central and eastern parts of Java this short, intensive course is known as *posonan*, derived from the Javanese word *poso* which means 'fasting' by adding *-nan* to refer to the activity. In the Western Javanese region, this is known as *pasaran*, possibly derived from *pasar* (market) as this activity creates a crowd of people such as is encountered at a market. Participants in these are attracted to the opportunity to follow the offered *bandongan* in certain *pesantrens*.

Some senior students told me their stories of seeking *kitab*-completion. For example, participant Mang Asep stated that along with attending regular gatherings in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No.1, he also attended short, intensive gatherings held in other *pesantrens*. He completed the book entitled *Ta'lim al-muta'allim* (Instruction of the student) on learning ethics and the *Alfiyah* on Arabic grammar four times during his stay in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No.1, while he again completed both *kitab*s twice through participation in short *bandongan*. Another student, Mang Acep, told me that he completed a *kitab* on the law of inheritance seven times in addition to successfully completing other *kitab*s.

In Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 (a field site in this study), a *pesantren* leader explained how the *pesantren* runs *bandongan kitab* by concentrating on completing *kitab*s that are relatively short and practical. In contrast, the *bandongan Jalalayn* is a lengthy undertaking, requiring more than five years to progress through the greater part of the text. For Mang

Asep, the *Jalalayn* was the only book he had not been able to complete, even though he commenced study in 2009. He recalled that the *Jalalayn*-gathering had just commenced in his first days of staying at the *pesantren*. During my attendance in early 2016, the *bandongan Jalalayn* had reached the interpretation of the last ten sections of thirty sections of the Qur'an. Seven years had elapsed since the *bandongan Jalalayn* in this *pesantren* had started in 2009, but it was not yet completed at the time of my fieldwork in early 2016.

Different conditions are encountered in other parts of Java. A graduate of an East Javanese *pesantren*, Muhammad, told me how the *Jalalayn* is completed there. Large books, including the *Jalalayn*, can be completed in combinations of intensive and short gatherings. In his *pesantren* in East Java, teachers are known as experts in pedagogy of specific *kitab*. One teacher specialising in the *Jalalayn* scheduled his group to take one year to complete the *kitab*. His gathering started with a twenty-day short session during the fasting month. During this short session, the target was to complete the first half of the *Jalalayn*. The teacher completed the second half of the book during regular gatherings.

In the traditional environment, the value of completion is embedded in students from childhood. Muhammad continued his story, stating that before he studied in the *pesantren* he graduated from, his parents encouraged him to undertake short, intensive *bandongan kitab* during the fasting month. It was a common practice for teenagers in many parts of rural East Java to seek *kitab* completion. This was not only due to obedience to parents, but taking part in short gatherings was also a way of enjoying sociality within a group. Muhammad and his friends were very pleased when the *kitab* learning was completed and they were awarded a statement of genealogy (*dapat sanad*). He told me that comprehension of the referential properties of the text was not the point for them.

The point I wish to make is that the *bandongan* is valued by these students because of the unique capability of the *kyai* to access blessings for students attending it. The mastery of

reference is not high amongst their concerns, especially beside the blessings they hope to receive from the *kyai*'s co-presence. Muhammad keeps the following advice from a *kyai* in his mind:

The point is attending the *bandongan*. Don't think about whether [you] can [understand] or not. Whether people can [understand] or not, that is the blessing that might be given to everyone. [So,] the point is to just learn. Don't think whether [you] can [understand]. If God wills it, the ones among you who have studied, I don't think God will not open his blessings to them.²⁷

For students, returning to seek further completions of the same *kitab*, with the same or different teacher, is part of their journey to gain such blessings. They are proud to have a link in the teacher's genealogical chain. They know the names of the teachers of their teachers, and aspiration to join that genealogy is a pedagogical value that motivates their learning program. Not surprisingly, they attempt to gain more genealogical chains of individual authority, which re-strengthen their personal relationship when they return to complete the book with the same *kyai* or different teachers.

6.2.1. *Majelis*

In this section, discussion of values is continued by addressing the way the physical environment expresses and asserts the social hierarchy in the traditional environment. In Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1, pedagogical activity of Islamic learning is centred in the mosque, a building with three spaces used as *majelis*. The main prayer room features a space for the prayer leader and pulpit, and is frequently used by Mama to deliver *bandongan*. The second *majelis* space is located next to the main prayer room and the third *majelis* space is located on the first floor.

In the first and second *majelis* spaces, I identified two different places that Mama used to deliver *bandongan*, pulpit and chair. When a gathering was scheduled to co-occur with

²⁷ Based on my personal communication with Muhammad, the graduate of an East-Javanese *pesantren* in November 2017.

conduct of congregational prayer, Mama used the main prayer room and moved to the pulpit after fulfilling the role of prayer leader. Male students sat cross-legged in the main prayer room on ground level, while female students sat in the third *majelis* on the first floor. Female students also had the opportunity to remain in the female dormitory and hear Mama's speech via the *pesantren* sound system.

Mama used the second *majelis*, next to the main prayer room, for *bandongan* that did not coincide with congregational prayer. When using this *majelis* he occupied a wooden rocking chair that remained in this room. Male students occupied this *majelis* when Mama was there. In this case, female students were required to exit their dormitory to listen in the first *majelis*. As these two *majelis* are separated by a wall of the mosque building with many big windows, curtains hanging on the windows were drawn so that male and female students did not see each other.

The layout and use of *majelis* spaces symbolises a hierarchy which exerts a strong effect on pedagogical practices. As Dhofier (1980) notes, a traditional *pesantren* is generally under control of a specific kin group and this control may extend for generations. In such an educational environment, teachers are not formally appointed. Rather, a man's elevation to the status of *kyai* is not solely based on his learning, but also on familial relations. This has an interesting effect on student perceptions of their own competency. Based on my observations, students who achieve deep knowledge in their studies and are asked because of that to teach in the *pesantren* do not feel that they might be rising above the level of student. They do not feel themselves to be a 'real teacher' unless, as Dhofier (1980, p. 50) notes, the *kyai* of the *pesantren* takes them as his son-in-law.

Some places in the *majelis* are reserved for exclusive use by Mama, i.e. the prayer leader's spot, pulpit and rocking wooden chair. Other people avoid occupying these places, and those who wish to lead a gathering in the same venue find alternate places to deliver

their speech. When a young, senior student was asked to deliver a *bandongan*, I saw him choose to sit cross-legged on the floor, avoiding the places and chair used by the *kyai*.

The arrangement of furniture in the second *majelis* included three chairs (see Figure 6.2). First, the rocking wooden decorative chair with table is exclusively for Mama. The second is a modified desk with a spot for a cross-legged seat, a unique chair usually used by Mama's son. The third chair is made of plastic and accompanies a simple wooden square table. This chair is usually used by ordinary teachers, like senior students. This table and chair are moved to the edge of the *majelis* when not in use.



Figure 6.2.: Three chairs for different teachers in a *majelis* setting: a rocking chair with a wooden decorative table is for the *kyai*; a modified desk with a spot for a cross-legged seat next to the unused pulpit is for the *kyai*'s son; and a plastic chair accompanied by a simple wooden table is for ordinary teachers.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 13 December 2015, Sukabumi.

Similar constraints affect the place used to lead prayers. An observation during my fieldwork illustrates the importance of its hierarchical meanings. I attended dawn prayer on

one occasion when the prayer leader was absent. None of the assembled worshippers (*jemaah salat*), mostly students, was willing to take the prayer leader's role. Neither Mama nor his close relatives were available after completion of the praise verses (*solawatan*) sung between the first call to prayer (*azan*) and second (*iqamah*). In the meantime, the *solawatan* continued. It lasted so long that a student was urged to do a second call to prayer, even though no one could confirm whether Mama would attend or not. No student was brave enough to step up to the prayer leader's role. An ordinary local person, more advanced in age, came to the mosque to join prayer. He was surprised that the prayer had not yet started and asked why nobody had stepped forward to serve as the prayer leader. In response, they asked him to be the prayer leader! He spontaneously rejected the request. But as time went on and no one was filling the role of prayer leader, he accepted the request. He did not position himself in the space of a prayer leader. Instead, he stood in the middle of the first line of worshippers. People spontaneously moved back to stand in the second line. When he was about to start the prayer, he noticed Mama's brother entering the mosque. The ordinary villager asked him to take the prayer leader's role. He, Mama's brother, accepted and moved to the prayer leader's space.

When the collective prayer was completed, Mama's brother consulted the group regarding how the supplication formula (*wird*) should proceed and he then performed the supplication formula as precisely as possible. At this point, Mama's custom was to shake the hand of each congregation member, but his brother preferred not to do so even though the congregation was willing. The reason for his decision was that he did not feel an equal of his brother as a leader of the community. This example shows how awareness of the hierarchy around the *kyai*'s family determines conduct in this environment.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I follow the effects of this hierarchy into the *bandongan* itself. I analyse and describe how different teachers receive different evaluations from students. As

I observed, a *bandongan* by Mama was always quiet. Students prepared their work in advance to follow his teaching and attended with great respect and politeness. No one dared to bring coffee or a cigarette to Mama's gathering. However, there was a different atmosphere when other teachers led gatherings, and some students felt relaxed enough to bring coffee and cigarettes.

6.3. Objectification: values in a modernised Islamic education

In this section I move to the second field of study, the modernised Islamic educational institution. An obvious difference to the traditional setting is that in the modern school, Islamic education is objectified to produce competencies and skills that students have equal opportunity to achieve. Eickelman (1992) notes that Muslim countries in the post-colonial period have undergone a paradigm shift that marginalises roles that have for centuries been played by traditional masters of Islamic texts as holders of religious authority. This shift was influenced by the coming of modernism to Muslim countries that challenged traditional values in Islamic education. With this change, Islam was refigured as a totalising resource that could provide relevance in all aspects of socio-political life.

As part of this refiguring, which also implemented steps to maintain Islam's relevance in times of political and social change, modern Islamic schools opened their curricula to non-religious subjects, realising that to fail to do so would see Muslims fall behind (see my Chapter 4 above for Indonesian examples). This was particularly appreciated by urban Muslims who depended on their education for future career and prosperity, but who also wished to maintain piety in all aspects of life at the same time. These changes brought new entitlements to religious authority in Muslim societies. In this way, objectification is linked to democratisation, for traditional elite owners of knowledge were marginalised, while new elite groups claimed new forms of authority based on new forms of competencies and formal qualifications from modernised Islamic schools. In those modern environments, the physical

properties and lay out of the teaching space are provided for everyone to utilise to support the pedagogy, unlike in the traditional environment where some spaces and physical properties, like pulpit and chair, reflect social hierarchy.

Pesantren Persis No. 99 is an example of an educational environment that displays the objectifying processes just described, and the change in Muslim authority that went with it. In this section I want to explore the values of pedagogy that emerge in the objectifying process just mentioned, but later in this section I explore some ambivalences that go with it. I found that *kitab*-based learning sits rather uneasily in that environment.

The rationalised and bureaucratised nature of modern pedagogy is clear in Pesantren Persis No. 99. All activities are formally scheduled in an academic calendar that includes semester durations, class period, examination, breaks and holidays. Each course unit has targets that students must achieve by completion. Teachers use the targets as a guideline to assess student performance. Achievement in reaching the prescribed targets is considered a learning goal in the conduct of modern Islamic education.

The value of achievement in the modern educational environment is in student acquisition of competencies prescribed in the school curriculum. Those competencies mainly draw upon educational policy of the government and/or central Islamic foundation. Achievement is a learning goal based on targets that are formally measured through examination (see Figure 6.3). These examinations are a significant contrast with the values in the *pesantren*, for they make individual students accountable to institutionally-defined targets, something completely absent from the *pesantren*.



Figure 6.3.: Examination in progress to measure individual competency.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 7 December 2015, Garut.

The pedagogical value of achievement is linked to other values, including formality, discipline and orientation to the future. The roles of people with a school (i.e. teacher, student, and staff) are formally administered and teachers are formally appointed to deliver a subject based on their tertiary qualifications. Equally, students are formally registered in a cohort. The presence of teachers and students in a classroom are formally scheduled as well.

Formalities concerning class attendance are linked to the pedagogical value of discipline. Teacher performance in delivering units is subject to evaluation by school management, while student attendance is subject to assessment by the teacher. For example, a student's ability to be ready at a classroom on time or before the class starts is part of a teacher's professional concern. As teaching may be interrupted by students entering or exiting the classroom, teachers use their authority to allow or not allow students to do so.

This is different to the traditional gathering hall described above where it is uncommon for a *kyai* to mark attendance.

These values of course are values that a student of one of Indonesia's secular schools would also hope to acquire, and in this sense, Pesantren Persis No. 99 is providing an Islamic education suitable to contemporary Indonesia. But at the same time, I noticed this orientation brought with it some ambivalences about the value of *tafsir* learning in general, but especially about the *kitab*-based study. I now want to explore those ambivalences.

I conducted two round table discussions in Pesantren Persis No. 99. Issues addressed in these discussions included the reasons for enrolling at this school and future career plans. Both groups revealed a striking similarity: only one of around ten participants in both groups planned to undertake a future career in Islamic studies. Most participants planned to take general subjects at a prominent university, such as Gadjah Mada University (UGM) or Pajajaran University (UNPAD). A small number did not have fixed plans for their future as yet.

The above finding correlates with the increasing trend among Indonesian Muslim parents that consider the *pesantren* institution as a place to protect their children from bad behaviour, such as engaging in sexual activity and misuse of narcotics.²⁸ A similar theme emerged during informal conversation with two female students who had just enrolled at this *pesantren*. They had come to the *pesantren* from public junior high schools in a large city. Both stated that their parents had wanted them to enrol here. They had wanted to study in the *pesantren* closest to their home, but their parents encouraged them to enrol at this *pesantren*, and to do their best to feel at home. The families had the impression that the

²⁸ The *Mu'allimin* principal, Ustaz Lutfi, notes that in the past the majority of students in Pesantren Persis No. 99 were children of Persis members. Currently, the number of people who enrol without prior connection to Persis is the same as for those from families already affiliated with the organisation. He once talked to parents regarding the reasons they choose this *pesantren*. Their responses were similar: the *pesantren* is an environment where bad behaviour is controlled.

pesantren was a highly moral environment. They understood that when students misbehaved in the *pesantren*, this was simple childishness, in contrast to the misbehaviour occurring outside the *pesantren*, which might involve sexual activity and narcotics.

But the parental preference for the *pesantren* as a moral environment does not mean students will be keen on studying religious subjects like *tafsir*. Indeed, they arrived with low levels of religious knowledge, and were required to take a year foundation class (*takhassus*) before commencing grade one. In the foundation class, the school offers subjects in Islamic studies and Arabic language as well as two non-religious subjects, i.e. English and Psychology.²⁹ These two female students preferred the non-religious subjects and told me of their future plans to undertake tertiary education in non-religious disciplines at a prominent Indonesian university.

Concerned about future work prospects, the students clearly expressed preference for non-religious subjects that may be beneficial to their future careers. Accordingly, dedication to Islamic studies seemed quite low. I once attended a *tafsir* 'amm class where the teacher suspended the class as too many students were arriving late. Further, the students were not well-prepared for the class. This teacher realised that not many students were committed to take the subject, and admonished the students about the importance of being disciplined and respectful in their study.

A further ambivalence about the value of *kitab*-based learning and *tafsir* emerged from the institutional side. As noted, a standardised curriculum is important in the modern Islamic education. A modern institution evaluates its programs within their budget based on values of effectiveness and efficiency. During fieldwork I observed that the values of effectiveness and efficiency generated a dynamic among Persis members that problematises whether they

²⁹ Based on the print version of weekly subject schedule for even semester 2015-2016 of the *Mu'allimin* school, the foundation class only offered two general subjects, i.e. English and Psychology. These were the only two subjects offered in the foundation class that the two female students to whom I talked liked most.

should preserve the learning tradition, and suggested that tradition might conflict with effective and efficient school management. Continued study of the *Jalalayn* in Pesantren Persis classrooms was subject to contestation between the attempt to preserve a tradition in Islamic learning and a desire to expand the adoption of modern values. Some Persis members attempt to preserve the *kitab*-based learning tradition. These are commonly senior members and have a traditional background in Islamic learning. They are happy to put up with the problems of fitting the tradition into classroom-based modern pedagogical practices.

Other Persis teachers are graduates of universities, such as the Islamic and Arabic College of Indonesia (*Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Bahasa Arab*, or LIPIA, a branch of a Saudi Arabian university based in Jakarta), the Azhar University at Cairo, or Indonesian Islamic universities, and have a different perspective. I interviewed Ustadz Iqbal Santoso, the general principal (*mudir 'amm*) of Pesantren Persis in Tarogong. He stated that he supports an Islamic education based on effectiveness and efficiency values. Ustadz Iqbal stated that the spirit of Islamic reform, as initiated by A. Hassan, must continue to inform Islamic pedagogical practices that enable achievement of goals and objectives. Concerning *kitab*-based learning in the classroom, and specifically the use of the *Jalalayn* in the *tafsir* subject, Ustadz Iqbal admits it is difficult to find qualified teachers to deliver the *Jalalayn*-based subject because this book is not a regular text in universities. As teacher selection is based on tertiary qualifications, subjects in Islamic studies are more thematic and integrated, rather than relying on a specific text. Ustadz Iqbal does not question which *tafsir* teachers use as long as they achieve the goals of *tafsir* learning.

Ustadz Aceng Zakaria presents a contrasting position. As noted above, he is the current Persis chairman and general principal of the Pesantren Persis No. 99. He continues to support the usage of the *Jalalayn* in *tafsir* learning because, in his point of view, graduates of Persis-affiliated *pesantrens* are expected to have competency in *tafsir*. By being engaged with the

Islamic legacy (*turath*), a student's competency is linked to the genealogy of *ulama*, as commonly practiced in traditional education. To Ustaz Aceng Zakaria, this is an important and relevant value that should be preserved in Islamic learning. This is a fascinating position for him to take, for it suggests an evaluation of *kitab*-based learning very similar to that of Mama Makki in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1. The value in the present is based on the past (*turath*).

Yet perhaps Ustaz Aceng represents a diminishing audience within Persis. The objectifying processes described above have developed in different directions. The perception that the *kitab* benefit students because they belong to the legacy of the *ulama* is being overcome by the values of efficient, standardised values. Pesantren Persis No. 99's formally-appointed teachers are open to reception of new methods and technology to support successful learning. While I did not observe use of digital technology in *tafsir 'amm* learning, two teachers in this subject stated that they are open to use of technology as necessary. One teacher welcomes the possibility of downloading a digital file of the *kitab* from a smartphone application to support learning. I attended one *tafsir ahkam* class in which the teacher utilised an LCD projector to show a digital file of one book on Qur'an commentary. These preferences suggest declining support for *kitab*-based learning.

6.3.1. Classroom setting and conduct of *Jalalayn*-learning

Most classrooms have a standardised range of facilities, furnished with stylish folding chairs with table and sound system. The remainder use older wooden square chairs and tables, one for each student. Classroom arrangements are set up to serve teaching and pedagogical activities. The physical infrastructure provided in a modern educational environment is intended to be functional and serviceable for *all* school members. Facilities provided in a classroom must meet requirements set at the national level.

In Pesantren Persis No. 99 all pedagogical activities are subject to formal administration. Teachers are appointed to deliver a subject according to their tertiary qualifications. Students are formally registered based on their cohort. The roles of people in this *pesantren* are based on bureaucratic procedures. Social practices and interactions between individuals (i.e. students and teachers) are therefore mainly influenced by bureaucratic administration.

The *tafsir* subject in which the *Jalalayn* forms the subject text, like other subjects, follows bureaucratic procedures in that this subject is part of courses offered for a cohort of students to learn in a semester period. The *Mu'allimin* principal noted that the general *tafsir* subject was previously called the *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, but this was changed in 2010 to *tafsir 'amm*, reflecting the intention of the school to use the subject to introduce students to general interpretation of the Qur'an.

Conduct of *Jalalayn*-based learning in the classroom environment has a similar flow to the traditional context, consisting in the main of two activities, entextualisation and elaboration. The teacher verbally entextualises passages of both the Qur'an and the *Jalalayn*, and follows this with translation into standard Indonesian language. At the same time, students focus on vocalising the recited passages of the text and inscribe a translation above the related text based on the teacher's recitation. The teacher may point to a student and ask them to repeat the recitation with a translation. They interrupt a student's recitation when needed to make a correction or provide more explanation. The explanation provided in this session is mostly related to the linguistic aspects of the recited text. If the explanation requires it, the teacher will use the board on the wall. When a student is finished with recitation the teacher continues this activity by asking other students to do the same.

During the elaboration phase the teacher has more communication with students and students move their attention from the book to the teacher. Thus, the classroom environment

changes to become dialogic. Students freely interrupt to raise questions and the teacher encourages students to be actively engaged in discussion. During fieldwork, I observed that a switching to Sundanese language was common during interactions of elaboration.

My participatory research at Pesantren Persis No. 99 found that story-telling is treated as a useful way of making the *tafsir 'amm* subject easier for students to understand. This is in line with information I obtained during focus group discussions. Students generally agreed that what they remember most clearly from this subject is the Qur'anic stories related by the teacher. However, the chunks of the *Jalalayn* text they had highlighted because they might later be tested on them were easily forgotten.

Outside of the classroom, the *Mu'allimin* school set up other places for students to undertake extra-curricular activities. One important place is the *pesantren* mosque which functions as a laboratory for students to practice giving religious services. All *pesantren* members legally eligible to lead prayer may do so, and this is socially acceptable. Both teachers and senior students can lead congregational prayers. The pulpit is also publicly accessible for students to practice public speaking.

During my research in Pesantren Persis No. 99 I regularly attended sessions of congregational prayer in the *pesantren* mosque. I noted that person appointed to recite the call to prayer (*muazin*) included a pause between the first call to prayer (*azan*) and the second (*iqamah* or *qomat*). However, on many occasions there was almost no pause time between the first call to prayer and the second. I consulted on this matter with a teacher who explained that absence of a pause between the first call to prayer and the second is likely to happen in conduct of a congregational prayer where the optional prayer (*salat sunnah*) before the compulsory prayer is not recommended (*mu'akkadah*). Therefore, in conduct of the noon prayer, for example, a few minutes pause is allowed to pass between the first call to prayer

and the second, to enable those attending to do the optional prayer (i.e. *qabliyah zuhur*), which is a recommended prayer.³⁰

The point I seek to address here is not about the pause between the first and the second calls to prayer in Islamic legal perspectives. Rather, I emphasise that a shared disposition in achieved social status generated by a bureaucratic administration (either as a teacher or student) does not impede anyone who meets the legal requirements from acting as prayer leader for congregational prayers. Equally, the pulpit for delivering a sermon is also accessible for students to practice of Islamic preaching, known as *dakwahan*. It is acceptable for teacher and student to occupy the prayer leader's spot and lead congregational prayers. On many occasions during fieldwork I noted that the general principal of the *pesantren* occupied a space in the back line as a follower (*makmum*), particularly when he arrived at the mosque just in time to join the prayer.

6.4. Self-confidence as value in the *kitab*-reading competition

In this section, I deal with the newest setting, where *kitab*-reading takes place as performance on the competition stage. I elaborate on values that bind people to act based on their stage roles and status during the contest.

In the *kitab*-reading competition the value of self-confidence is a goal of participation in the competition. The process requires contestants to speak publicly in socially appropriate ways and values the contestant's ability to be a capable speaker under pressure. The contest values self-confidence as an attribute of the young Muslim. In this way, it differs radically from the other environments considered in this study. The competition has strict rules for the selection of contestants, and only confident speakers are selected. The emphasis on self-

³⁰ It is now common in many mosques for a *jam iqamah* (timer to remind the second call to prayer) to be hung on the wall in the prayer leader's spot. Based on my experience attending congregational prayers in these mosques, those in charge of mosque management (*takmir masjid*) usually set up a pause time from five to ten minutes between the first call to prayer and second one for the conduct of all five daily prayers.

confidence connects to a second value: spectacle. The competition is a spectator event where the public are enabled to watch the *kitab*-reading ordeal being experienced by the contestant.

The spectatorial side of the event is critical to it, for it gives the event a value *in the present*. That is to say, it is a stimulating and enjoyable event to attend. The tight selection criteria are ways to ensure this, for the success of the competition relies upon contestants willing to back their confidence. It is not enough that the contestant have a high level of *Jalalayn* knowledge, for they must also have the willingness and ability to speak in public. They must be willing to face the ordeal that the judges will impose upon them.

I observed that fair play, in a procedural sense, is another value that underpins the competition. Participation in *kitab-reading* competition is regulated to prevent unfair practices. For example, there is a strict rule that contestants must be truly representatives of the village or municipality where they study. The print guideline states that those eligible to register as contestants are students who have been staying and actively studying in a *pesantren* within the last twelve months or more. In other words, they are not students who stay and study in another area, known among local people as *peserta tarikan kampong* or *tarkam*, a contestant hired by villagers to be their representative.



Figure 6.4.: Two representatives from the committee sit at a shared desk. One takes the role of MC and timekeeper. This image shows a contestant approaching the desk to receive a piece of paper. Contestants do not know what they will read on stage until they have received this piece of paper from them.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 1 May 2017, Ciamis.

The value of procedural fairness in the *kitab*-reading competition is also linked with the organiser's efforts to create a genuine ordeal where possible attempts are made to prevent contestants from cheating. This is necessary to ensure that the competition involves genuine unpredictability. In the tournament, contestants are not notified of the chapter of the Qur'an and its verses they will present on until receiving a paper slip during the turn of the contestant preceding them as shown in Figure 6.4. As will be elaborated in Chapter 10, creation of such unpredictability generates an ordeal situation where a contestant must think of their reading performance and give a response in a short period of time.

6.4.1. The contest setting for the *Jalalayn*-reading competition

The layout of the contest is dedicated to the creation of the ordeal in which the contestant's knowledge and confidence are tested, and also to the creation of the spectacle.

The contest that I observed was held in the pilgrimage dormitory (*asrama haji*) in the Ciamis Islamic Centre. All rooms on the ground floor of the building were set up as contest rooms. As shown in Figure 6.5., the *majelis* for the *Jalalayn*-reading competition consisted of: (1) plastic chairs for audience or waiting contestants; (2) the *kursi mutala'ah*, which is the 'transit' chair occupied by the next-to-appear contestant, who, having just been assigned the text for interpretation, is busy preparing their presentation; (3) three desks for judges; (4) one desk for two representative committee members; (5) the *meja musabaqah* (competition desk or stage), also known as *minbar qira'at*, which is the podium from which the contestant delivers their reading. On the wall behind this is a banner announcing the event.

The contestant waiting in the transit seat has just received a piece of paper specifying the verses that will form the subject matter of their performance. The creation of this space splits the competition venue into two spaces, one being a space where chatting between waiting contestants is allowed and the other being the controlled space of formal communication. Those who occupy this transit space are about to move to the competition stage from which they will deliver their performance. This space is designed to isolate a contestant from conversation with other contestants and assists the organiser in assuring a genuine performance from all contestants.



Figure 6.5.: *Jalalayn*-reading competition setting.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 1 May 2017, Garut.

The *majelis* becomes a theatrical arena where contestants, selected from a group of elite students, have the opportunity to conduct a public *kitab*-reading before the judges, selected from a group of elite teachers. In this arena, teachers and students exchange their regular roles. Teachers who regularly stand alone in front of students now listen to students standing alone on the stage as a performer of a public *Jalalayn*-reading.

The *Jalalayn*-reading competition involves stage roles of various kinds, including judges, representative committee members (MC and timer), contestants and contest officials. The competition can only run if judges and representative committee members are in their respective spaces. Contestants are advised to stay inside the venue to anticipate being summoned. On the other hand, contestant officials are not required to supervise their contingent while the event is in progress. However, they are usually present to support their contingent when he or she is on stage to perform their public *kitab*-reading.

The judges assess conducted *Jalalayn*-reading performances. In doing so, they pay attention to how contestants recite, translate and elaborate the selected passage of Arabic text from the Qur'an and the *Jalalayn*. The judges ask the contestant questions to measure their knowledge and their ability to provide a quick response. Judges then calculate points for contestants based on their performance. The best three performers are nominated to win a trophy in the closing ceremony.

The division of the contest space (*majelis*) into the diverse groups of attendees gives the event a sense of excitement, for the various groups interact with each other. The contestant, struggling through their ordeal, pays close attention to the questions from the judges. The spectators respond excitedly, sometimes with applause and cheers, to the performance of the contestant, acknowledging their display of self-confidence. The judges also interact with the spectators, turning to them to make jokes and ask questions during their examination of contestants. This is nothing like the *kitab* performances in the other settings I attended. The ordeal is created as a spectacle, orchestrated to generate excitement and tension.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted values associated with *kitab*-based pedagogy in the three settings of the research. The traditional environment embodies values that depend on the *kyai*-student relationship as the fundamental premise of *kitab*-based learning. In this environment, Islamic education develops on top of shared recognition of genealogical transmission from teacher to student, which motivates students to complete *kitab* in co-presence with the *kyai*. The importance of the *kyai*'s position in the traditional environment is embodied in the physical layout, which people negotiate with full knowledge of the meanings of fixtures and furniture.

In contrast, the modern environment projects values that place significance on objectification and democratisation in Islamic education. According to these values, all roles are potentially accessible based on competency and educational qualification. Students enter formal education through enrolment. Pedagogical practices are organised based on effectiveness and efficiency, oriented to achieve skills and competencies as prescribed in the curriculum for a future career and profession.

This chapter also engaged with a relatively new environment for *kitab*-based learning, namely the competition stage. While *kitab*-based learning in traditional and modern environments generally positions students as receivers of knowledge via oral speech from the *kyai* or teacher, in competition students are encouraged to demonstrate publically their self-confidence as they endure the ordeal of being tested for their knowledge of *tafsir* and their self-confidence.

Chapter 7 : Maintenance of the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah*: *bandongan Jalalayn* and the Islamic public sphere

7.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the pedagogical styles of Mama, the figure at the peak of the social hierarchy in the traditional teaching environment. I describe and analyse two of the *bandongan Jalalayn* that I attended under his leadership during my participatory research in his *pesantren*. In doing so, I am furthering one of the specific methodological goals of this research, and that is to recognise that *tafsir* pedagogy consists of speech, and close attention to that speech is required to uncover the meanings of this pedagogy as social practice. In fact, there is copious speech in Mama's *bandongan*. The two *bandongans* discussed here are among the longest sessions that I attended during fieldwork, yet Mama's son-in-law told me that if I had been present in this *pesantren* several years earlier I would have witnessed Mama as a more energetic *kyai* teaching for even longer periods. While I was there, his health was interfering with his ability to fulfil commitments.

In an earlier chapter I observed how in Mama's understanding of Islam pedagogical practice was proper if it reproduced the example provided by the pious ancestors. I found in my field research that he asserted this understanding during his teaching in ways that created a dialogue of a conflictual nature with other understandings of proper Islam circulating in contemporary Indonesia. His pedagogical style entered into polemics that are happening in Indonesia right now. To give substance to this observation, I must first give brief interpretations of two terms central to those polemics: *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah* and *Wahhabi*.

In Mama's view, the former group, *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah*, are the traditionalists of the *salaf* people, who perpetuate traditional formats in Islamic learning through the teaching of classical Islamic texts (see Chapter 4). As Dhofier (1999, p. 158) notes, this term is generally identified with followers of the four legal schools of thought in Islamic jurisprudence, the teachings of al-Ash'ari (d. 935) and al-Maturidi (d. 944) in theology, and the teachings of al-Junayd (d. 910) and al-Ghazali (d. 1111) in Sufism. Feener (2007, pp. 155-158) notes that in the last period of the New Order, the Nahdlatul Ulama (i.e. the largest organisation representative of traditionalist Muslims in Indonesia) started to formulate a systematic concept of the term *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah*. A major statement of the new conception was written by Said Agiel Siradj, the then leader of NU, in 1997. According to Feener's reading, in this booklet Siradj defined the way of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah* as the pursuit of moderation (*tawassut*) based on the values of balance (*tawazun*) and equity (*tasamuh*).

Wahhabism was founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792) in eighteenth-century Arabia (DeLong-Bas, 2004). Al-Wahhab asserted that correct beliefs were a basic step to correct Islam, and that the ruin of Islam and Muslims was caused by the adoption of unacceptable rituals and religious practices from other religious traditions, for example praying to saints and believing they were capable of giving blessings.

Some scholars have made distinctions between Wahhabism and Salafism by tracing their contrasting histories. Wahid (2014, pp. 21-25), for example, explains that the former group refers to the purification movement of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the late eighteenth century, while the latter points to the *ahl al-hadith* movement that emerged in the second century after the hijra. Despite this distinction, he admits that in the Indonesian context some Salafi supporters are happy to label their movement as Wahhabi. According to Saat (2017, p. 6), evidence of Wahhabi-Salafism influence in the Southeast Asian region

dates back to the nineteenth century when supporters returned from their pilgrimages and studies of Islam in Arabia. Increasingly intensive penetration of this group emerged in the 1970s, when the Saudi Arabian government began propagating the ideology through donations to mosques and religious institutions.

The Wahhabi-Salafi group has become an important phenomenon in the contemporary Indonesian Islamic public sphere. Saat (2017, p. 6) notes that, although the group shares many perspectives in Islamic principles with other modernist groups, such as the Muhammadiyah and Persis, the Wahhabi-Salafi group can be distinguished by the way they have distanced themselves from the collective modernist groups (i.e. Muhammadiyah and Persis). This distancing underpins Indonesian debates about Wahhabism that Mama contributes to in his *Jalalayn* pedagogy.

The way Mama selects certain themes for differing levels of elaboration is very important data in understanding his support for maintaining the doctrine. Along with providing linguistic and synoptic explanations, Mama approaches *bandongan Jalalayn* as a medium for him to disseminate knowledge and wisdom that students need to retain and understand for their future lives. He is shaping Muslims for the future in his teaching. His perception of this duty leads to a highly political *tafsir*-elaboration that responds to the voices of other teachers and leaders circulating in the Indonesian public sphere. I cannot say this for other teachers I described in this thesis. They did not so explicitly advocate for politicised causes in their teaching, focussing mostly on correct recitation and vocalisation.

My central argument in this chapter is that through his enthusiasm for providing correct readings of the verses of the Qur'an dealing from the theological perspective, he strives to preserve the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah*. This involves him in making students aware of potential problems caused by Wahhabi and Shi'ite interpretations

of the verses under study. Mama considers their products of interpretation as heretical and therefore dangerous.

Mama shows that *tafsir* pedagogical practices are not conducted in isolation of the political and social realities of contemporary Sukabumi, West Java and Indonesia. Because he is a mediator protecting the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah* from other voices circulating in the dialogical public sphere, we can see how a person's utterances are never made in solitude, but are responses to the word of others (Bakhtin, 2006). Thus, Mama's *bandongan Jalalayn* is geared towards the voices of others, and his interlocutors are the advocates of Shi'ite and Wahhabi doctrines that he sees as threats. In this way, Mama's *bandongan* becomes a dialogical event.

7.2. Mama's *bandongan Jalalayn*: an ethnographic description

My routines while I was in the *pesantren* included waiting at the *pesantren* office before going to the mosque for night prayer at around 7pm. I ensured I was present when the *bandongan Jalalayn* was scheduled to occur. According to the *pesantren* coordinator, Mama normally led congregational prayers. He always did this when intending to deliver a *bandongan* after completion of prayer. For students, the attendance of Mama to lead prayer was a sign that his *bandongan* would start soon after completion of the prayer and supplication formulas. After it was completed, students prepared themselves with their *kitab*, pen and mini desk (*rekal*) (see Figure 7.1.).



Figure 7.1.: Securing a spot against the wall in a *bandongan* is a common practice among male students, some putting their *kitab*s on their lap, some using the mini-desk called *rekal*.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 13 December 2015, Sukabumi.

Students select their own spot to follow Mama's gathering. Males sit on the ground floor in front of Mama, while females are on the first floor, from where they can see Mama (see Figure 7.2.). Students predominantly prefer to select a spot at the back of the hall or against a wall (see Figure 7.1.) which usually results in a ten-metre gap (my estimate) between Mama's position at the pulpit and the first line of students sitting at the front. This distance is a way of showing respect to the teacher in the gathering, as it is considered polite to avoid placing one's body in the teacher's presence. The positioning of two audio speakers at the left and right back corners of the hall also encourages students to be positioned closer to the back of the hall. I personally preferred to secure a spot at the right back next to the sound speakers.



Figure 7.2.: In Mama's *bandongan Jalalayn*, male students sit on the ground floor while females sit on the first floor.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 13 December 2015, Sukabumi.

I was told many amusing stories about how students who unexpectedly find themselves in the same place as Mama try to hide from him in order to express the respect they feel to the *kyai*. For example, the *pesantren* coordinator told a funny story of a student encountering Mama at night. Mama was walking along a dark lane beside a building and the student happened to be there. The student was surprised and not able to hide other than by squeezing his entire body against the wall like a lizard. Similar funny stories are told in many *pesantrens*. I noted that students would give way, kiss his hand or greet him by bowing their heads in respect when coming across the *kyai*.

As noted above, Mama's *bandongan Jalalayn* generally consists of two parts: entextualisation and *tafsir*-elaboration. Entextualisation is defined by Bauman & Briggs (1990, p. 73) as "the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of

linguistic production into a unit - a *text* - that can be lifted out of its interactional setting". As Keane (2007, pp. 14-15) notes, linguistic anthropologists have developed this term to analyse the objectification of language in the society. The process shows how chunks of discourse, or text, can be decontextualized or recontextualized in the immediate situation, after being extracted from previous contexts. This language movement enables culture, including religion, to circulate via scriptures, sermons, pedagogical textbooks, and so forth. It is useful to consider this definition in the case of *bandongan kitab* by referring to Millie (2017a) who describes how Islamic norms, mostly in Arabic language from the Qur'an and the hadith, are verbalised and translated in preaching events. Here, entextualisation lies in the way a preacher recites passages of Arabic text and then presents a translation.

Mama entextualises when he recites verses of the Qur'an and the related *Jalalayn* commentary to students. He then repeats the recitation with the related translation in Sundanese. Students remain silent, focussing on note-taking on their copy of the *kitab* (see Figure 7.3.), which is the activity locally known as *ngalogat* (see Chapter 4). After that, *tafsir*-elaboration is the next part of Mama's *bandongan*, during which he conveys his reference of recited verses of the Qur'an and the related *Jalalayn* commentary, as well as his response to contemporary realities in the broader social context.

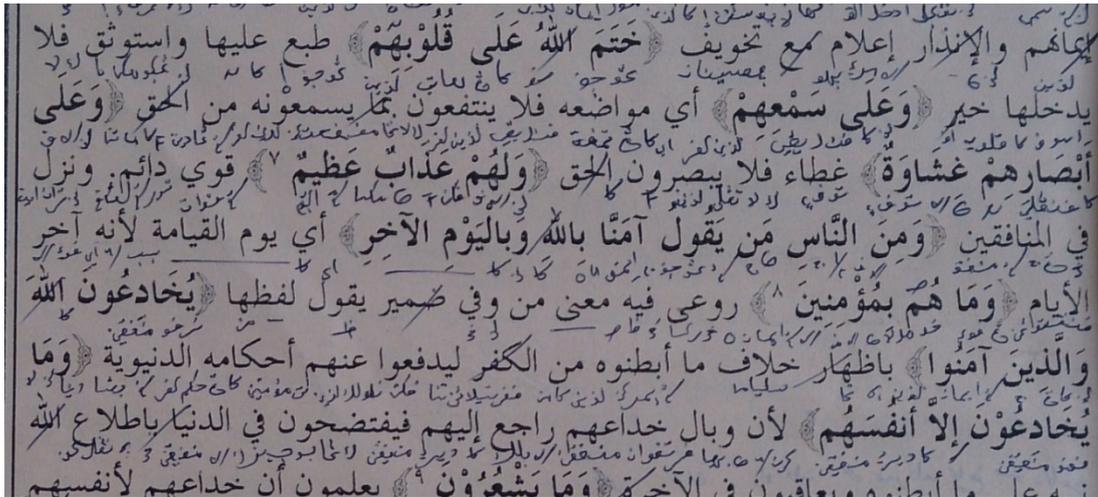


Figure 7.3.: Hand-written notes made during a *bandongan Jalalayn*. The notes below the printed Arabic text are in Sundanese.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, January 2016, Sukabumi.

The entextualisation activity is indispensable in traditional pedagogical practices. It may happen that the *kyai* appoints someone to replace him as teacher for the *bandongan Jalalayn*. In such cases, the replacement *kyai* may omit the elaboration, but the recitation and translation of entextualisation are indispensable, providing the basis for students to take notes on their own *kitab*s. An informant told me that *kitab*s used by older people, generally parents, are commonly passed on to younger people for the sake of improving those older books. The new owner will often make additional notes or corrections in the same *kitab*.

After the entextualising process was complete, Mama usually paused for breath. Then, he would move to elaboration of the recited verses of the Qur'an and the *Jalayn*. In doing so, he usually started with the entextualising process again, but a little bit faster. This repetition marked the starting point for him to deliver an elaboration. It means that the first part, i.e. recitation along with translation, provides students with a synoptic explanation before they are ready to receive more.

In general, note-taking is intensive during entextualisation, when students pay attention to vocalisation and the meanings of individual words. Students pay particular

attention to the note-taking activity to capture the *kyai*'s recitation of the Arabic text and its related translation. After that, they listen more closely to the *kyai*'s speech without necessarily taking notes. In other words, notes-taking occurs without fail during entextualisation, but is uncommon in *tafsir*-elaboration. In this way, pedagogical practice of elaboration resembles preaching events described in Millie (2012 and 2013). A senior student whose note-taking activity I selected for observation at a *bandongan Jalalayn* asked me whether he ought to continue note-taking during the elaboration phase. Not really knowing how to answer, I suggested he do so. The result was that the part of his text that included notes taken during elaboration looked very different to the preceding sections because of the many notes he made.

The duration of a *bandongan* greatly depends on Mama's feelings and comfort at the time. The elaboration part normally took about two-thirds of the entire *bandongan*. The *pesantren* coordinator told me that when he was in good health, the night *bandongan* usually lasted so long that many students would fall asleep on their mini desk or on the floor. In that case, Mama would stop the gathering and leave them asleep. During fieldwork Mama's health condition influenced the length of his *bandongan kitab*. For example, the first *bandongan Jalalayn* I attended was short. It started around 8.30pm, almost one hour later than usual, and because it started so late the *bandongan* was shorter than usual, lasting for about one and a half hours.

7.3. Against the Shi'ite veneration to the heirs of the Prophet

This section examines the first of two *bandongan Jalalayn* analysed in this study. Following usual practice, the *bandongan* took place after Mama had led the routine night congregational prayers. Following convention, students know that the session begins shortly after the supplication formula with which the prayer concluded, which lasted for about twenty minutes. Mama then moved to take his seat on the pulpit. Students were ready sitting

cross-legged on the floor. No one talked each other and the *majelis* completely quiet. A soft greeting word from Mama broke the silence with the help of a microphone so that his voice can be heard by everyone in the hall. Students altogether responded his greeting word.

Mama then recited the prayer formula, i.e. recitation of certain Arabic words, for example seeking God's forgiveness (*astaghfiru Allah*), to open the *bandongan* while students listened until he clearly pronounced the word "al-fatihah". This was a signal from Mama for all present in the *majelis* to recite the first chapter of the Qur'an, i.e. *Surat al-Fatihah*. The students then recited this chapter and followed the prayer formula.

I observed that Mama was trying to find the correct verse to start. It appeared that he remembered the chapter, i.e. *Surat al-Furqan* [25] (the Criterion), but he did not exactly remember the verse. The students kept silent waiting for what Mama would say next. Mama asked the students for help. A student answered, telling him the verse was number 54. Mama then read the verse to students and stopped at verse 60. Students then re-read the recited verses together. The *majelis* soon became quiet again while anticipating Mama's next speech. To provide background to my description, it is necessary to provide a translation version of the verses of the Qur'an that formed the lesson. Here are the verses as translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1946, pp. 939-941):

***Surat al-Furqan* [25] verses 54-60**

- Verse 54 It is He Who has created man from water: Then has He established relationship of lineage and marriage: for thy Lord has power (over all things).
- Verse 55 Yet do they worship, besides God, things that can neither profit them nor harm them: and the Misbeliever is a helper (of Evil), against his own Lord!
- Verse 56 But thee We only sent to give glad tidings and admonition
- Verse 57 Say: "No reward do I ask of you for it but this: that each one who will may take a (straight) Path to his Lord."
- Verse 58 And put thy trust in Him Who lives and dies not; and celebrate His praise; and enough is He to be acquainted with the faults of His servants;

Verse 59 He Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between, in six days, and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority): God Most Gracious: Ask thou, then, about Him of any acquainted (with such things).

Verse 60 When it is said to them, “Adore ye (God) Most Gracious!”, They say, “And what is (God) Most Gracious? Shall we adore that which thou commandest us?” and it increases their flight (from the Truth)

As I explained in Chapter 6, a full sequence of *bandongan kitab* in the traditional *pesantren* starts from the first page and ends at the last section of the book, a process which can take years to complete. In line with this, the individual *bandongan Jalalayn* that make up the sequence also follow the order of the verses. In following the order of the text, teacher and students encounter a variety of different themes and subjects for elaboration. This was the case with the *bandongan Jalalayn* discussed here. The seven verses excerpted above express a number of different subjects for elaboration.

In his elaboration, Mama emphasised to students the meanings of verses in ways that reflected his orientation as an advocate of the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah*. In general, Mama focussed on two important subjects from the subject verses. Firstly, on the veneration of the Prophet's kin (verse 57) and, secondly, on anthropomorphism (verse 59). In this particular *bandongan*, Mama completed his elaboration of the former subject, but had to hold over his elaboration of the latter subject for the next *bandongan*, which I discuss in the next section.

In accordance with common practice of traditional *kitab* learning, the teaching process is delivered in monologue. Students at one point will imitate the *kyai*'s recitation, but they follow the elaboration in silence. Normally, there is neither dialogue nor question and answer exchanges during the *bandongan*. I observed students following Mama's *bandongan Jalalayn* without any interruptions for questions or comments.

The first verse that Mama elaborated upon (54) was on the biological process of human reproduction. Mama showed his openness to modern scientific advances in explaining the biological process of human reproduction. Mama presented the explanation of human creation to prove causality as a sign of God's power. He described the stages of human reproduction by questioning where the 'water' comes from. He himself answered the question, stating that it comes from foods eaten by men. Consumed food is processed, then changed into hormones and then sperm. Through this process, humans have their descendants through the marriage institution so they are able to create an extended family for the next generation. From this point, Mama turned his attention to explanation of God's attributes, i.e. power (*qudrah*) and free will (*iradah*), in relation to God's power to make all these things come into existence.

Having finished explaining the theological aspects of human reproduction, Mama continued to the next verse (55), which condemns the pagans for worshipping idols. Mama gave the example of pagan disobedience to God by calling devils for help and surrendering themselves to them. However, he did not spend much time elaborating on the pagans and their disobedience to God. He continued his elaboration of verse 57. This is a message about the Prophet's rejection of earthly rewards for conveying Allah's messages. Mama used this verse as an opportunity to spend more time talking about the Shi'ite doctrine on the veneration of the heirs of the Prophet.

Mama quoted a similar verse mentioned in the 42nd chapter of the Qur'an, i.e. al-Shura' [42]:23, where God says: "[O Muhammad], 'I do not ask you for this message any payment [only] good will through kinship.'" Mama stated that the Prophet did not ask any payment. But there is a specifically Shi'ite interpretation of this, asserting that that the Prophet did not ask for any payment except for love to him *and his descendants*. Mama noted that love for the Prophet is in itself acceptable payment as the Prophet does not need earthly payment

from his clan. Mama then advised students to take care to use the *tafsir* works recommended in the *pesantren* milieu as reference to prevent incorrect interpretations. Mama said:

In the verse above, the Prophet did not ask any reward, but the Shi'ite group and their supporters interpret the Prophet's statement as saying that the Prophet did not ask for any reward, but that he expected love to be given to the Prophet. The love to the Prophet however is also considered reward. ... There is one prophetic tradition, transmitted in the Shi'ite tradition, [saying] that on the occasion of this verse's revelation, one companion asked [the Prophet]: "Who is meant by *al-mawaddah fi al-qurba*?" The Prophet said, "[They are] the Prophet's descendents that need to be loved." They meant our Masters, Hasan [and] Husayn. In fact, this verse was previously revealed in Mecca when the Prophet was there. For this reason, such an interpretation is rejected. In [the tafsir of] Ibn Kathir, it is explained that the tradition was transmitted by Husayn al-Ashqar.³¹

Mama told students that this verse showed that the prophet did not expect payment in the form of protection from his clan for his mission, because every tribal member should give protection to other members. Mama noted that this verse was revealed during the Meccan period when Fatimah, the youngest daughter of the Prophet, was five years old. She therefore had no connection with this revealed verse. He then stated that the Prophet was commanded to say this to make his clan refrain from being hostile to him. The Prophet hoped that his clan would cease deterring him from propagating God's mission, whether they accepted it or rejected it, because they were bound by ties of kinship (Sundanese: *nyaah ka barayaan*). Mama concluded that the expression of love within the clan in the phrase "*illa al-mawaddah fi al-qurba* ([only] good will through kinship)" should be understood as a request that they not to be hostile to the Prophet. Mama then warned his students of potential problems from the Shi'ite group who tended to make incorrect arguments and interpretations.

Mama continued by expressing his disapproval of an argument of Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), the famous Sufi mystic known as 'the Great Shaykh' (*al-shaykh al-akbar*) and known for his masterpieces, i.e. *al-Futuhah al-Makkiyah* (the Meccan openings) and *Fusus al-hikam*

³¹ By mentioning this transmitter, Mama is discrediting the authenticity of the tradition.

(The ringstones of wisdom), whom Mama considers to be a supporter of the Shi'ite position (for Ibn 'Arabi see Corbin, 1997; Chittick, 2007). Ibn 'Arabi once stated, Mama said, that Muslims are ordered to venerate the descendants of the Prophet (for example, see Takim, 2006, p. 44). Mama argues against this statement, pointing out that veneration of the Prophet's heirs was something that the Prophet had been forbidden to ask for. Mama made a counter argument by raising the following question: "For what reason would the Prophet ask his clan to give their veneration to his descendants through his daughter, Fatimah, and his grandsons, Hasan and Husayn?" In fact, he continued, Fatimah was five years old at the time, and his clan had been alienated by the Meccans.

There is a contemporary context that explains why Mama would consider this topic as deserving of significant attention and why he would bring the political debates on the legitimate successor to the Prophet that took place in the early Islamic period to the attention of his students in Sukabumi. The verse is significant in terms of Sunnite-Shi'ite tension. According to Abdul-Raof (2010, p. 59), Shi'ite exegetes have used this verse, along with other related passages in the Qur'an, to legitimise the descendent of the Prophet as the successor to him. The mainstream Sunnite exegetes, on the other hand, consider this as an objectionable interpretation and reject it.

Attention given by Mama to the Shi'ite interpretation of the verse reflects the moral panic that has emerged among Indonesian Muslims over past decades. In his attempt to protect his students, Mama said:

Be careful of the Shi'ite groups! They have unsuitably disseminated incorrect information. Please disregard them!

As Formichi (2014, p. 4) has analysed, the Islamic resurgence among Indonesian Muslims during the 1970s-1980s resulted in emergence of Islamic study circles (*halaqah*) in some prominent Indonesian universities where Islamic works of Sunnite authors were read along

with those authored by Shi'ite scholars. Formichi (2014, p. 14) notes that the late 1990s was a turning point in Sunnite-Shi'ite relations in Indonesia as a large number of supporters launched a campaign to blame Shi'ite members and sympathisers. Since then, anti-Shi'ite propaganda has spread throughout the region. Against this background, we can see how Mama's *bandongan* pedagogy engages directly with contemporary realities in his environment. His response to that reality is to attempt to protect his students from what he considers as incorrect belief and interpretation, specifically those disseminated by the Shi'ite group.

Mama dealt briefly with the following verse (58), providing a short elaboration, advising students to believe in God and surrender to His causation. Everything that happens is entirely based on God's scenario. He affirmed that people who did good things would receive their rewards. Those who did bad things, on the other hand, would get their punishment. Mama then reminded students to put trust in God by reciting the prayer formulas that he has taught them.

Mama then jumped to the elaboration of the next verse (59) dealing with anthropomorphism, an aspect of theology that gives God attributes of creation. The anthropomorphic theme found in this verse is the image of God sitting on the Throne after He created the universe within six days. Mama asserted that the phrase 'six days' in this verse does not refer to earthly time. He elaborated on the solar system in which nine planets spin around the sun. Each planet moreover has satellites rotating it in their own orbits. In this explanation, Mama seemed to assert that earthly time is created through the motion of sky objects. Earthly time therefore cannot be referred to what God really means by the phrase 'six days'. In this regard, Mama said:

So, the sun did not yet exist. Due to the absence of the sun, daytime could not exist because daytime can only exist after the sun and the earth have existed... Here [in the phrase 'six days' found in this verse], daytime did not exist because the sun was not created yet. So, the rotation of the earth on its axis did not exist, and the earth had

only just been created. The fact is that God can create all things in one second, so why did He create the universe in six days? With this, God is teaching humans that every undertaking must be given its proper time.

Mama then deliberated aloud about this, questioning the idea of the creation of nature in ‘six days’, pointing out that God could surely make all of His creatures into existence by His direct command: “Be, and it is”. Mama interprets this to be a message to humans that everything needs its own process to come into existence. God decided to create the heavens and the earth in certain period of time. Humans therefore should consider that any accomplishments they wish to achieve also need to follow certain processes appropriate to them.

His elaboration on the importance of time in human life led him to reflect on conditions in the *pesantren*, on the length of time which students remained there, their struggles against adversity and physical condition. He reflected that current times demand a learning process that enables completion in a much shorter time period, but he himself had spent years studying to completion. He advised students to consider a lengthy stay in the *pesantren*, as little could be obtained during a three month or even three year stay in the *pesantren*. A proper course of study would take a long period of time, putting aside issues such as the availability of teachers and *kitab*s. Mama is an advocate of the traditional format of pedagogy. Thus, he advocates traditional values of *kitab*-learning to students, and especially the value of completion, which he views as being threatened by demands for fast results.

In accordance with his usual habits, Mama ended the gathering by mentioning his shortcomings and weaknesses. He then asked for the *santri* to favour him by sincerely understanding his physical condition. For a brief moment, he mentioned the phrase of verse 59 “and is firmly established on the Throne”, and appeared to gain alertness once again, even though he was clearly finishing. He seemed to be more enthusiastic to go on explaining this word. But, he quickly realised that midnight had approached so he promised to elaborate on

this subject during the next gathering. Once Mama said *Wa-Allah a'lam bi-al-sawab* (And God knows best), all the students spontaneously chanted the closing prayer. After this, the students continued by attending a private tutorial on *kitab*-reading in a small group under the supervision of a senior student.

7.4. In response to Wahhabi understandings on anthropomorphism

In this section, I examine the second of the two *bandongan* by Mama to be analysed here, during which he acted as defender of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah*. He defended the group by making counter arguments against the Wahhabi group on anthropomorphism, dealing with the attribution of creation to God. Again, Mama used the *Jalalayn* to support his conviction that verses of the Qur'an should be interpreted using the 'correct' theological framework.

Monday night, after completion of the *Isya* congregational prayer, was the scheduled time for Mama's *bandongan Jalalayn*. As had been the case a few days earlier, Mama was healthy enough to lead congregational prayer. The *bandongan* started soon after the *wird* was completed. During entextualisation, Mama recited the next five verses of the Qur'an from *Surat al-Furqan*, i.e. verses 61-65. He did not elaborate on them, however, on this occasion. Instead, his focus returned to explanation of the word "istiwa" (translated as "to sit" by those who agree with the attribution of the created to God) in the previous verse (verse 59) that he had promised to elaborate in the last *bandongan* (see the translated verses above).

Mama took this opportunity to provide students with a more detailed elaboration of what he considered correct understanding of God's attributes, based on the anthropomorphic verses of the Qur'an. In particular, he again referenced the Indonesian contemporary public sphere, in which some groups have prominently proposed interpretations contradictory to the teachings of al-Ash'ari and al-Maturidi, the dominant theologians of Mama's outlook. In

this regard, he took upon himself the role of protector of the doctrine of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah*. In effect, he was responding to the voices of rival interpreters in Indonesian Islam.

Mama commenced by returning to the theme of his earlier *bandongan*, restating his position that creation of the universe in 'six days' is not to be read in the context of earthly that exists due to the orbit of celestial elements. He categorised this verse as an example of paronomasia (Arabic: *tawriyah*). This is a figure of speech that has a surface meaning (*qarib*) that is not the intended meaning, and at the same time has an underlying meaning (*ba'id*) that is the intended meaning (for paronomasia in the Qur'an see Abdul-Raof, 2006, pp. 254-255).

Mama explained that the word *istiwa* symbolises the power that God possesses. By understanding this word as power that God controls over all created things, Mama stated that the word "to sit on the Throne" must be understood in the sense that God has full power over all creatures. Mama then concluded that this is the way that true *salaf* scholars interpret the verse, by moving to other hidden meanings, while admitting that the way God established Himself on the Throne actually means that only God knows best and no one knows how.

Mama has emphasised causality, as the universe had been created through a process, yet at the same time he tried to avoid a literal understanding. He warned students against interpreting the words "God sitting on the Throne" as an anticipatory move to avoid being trapped into likening God to creation, an accusation of considerable seriousness in Islamic theology. This style opposes another interpretation that reads the text, and specifically the words 'to sit', literally.

Mama then criticised a group who claimed to be followers of *Salaf* schools, "But", Mama said, "They are not from the *Salaf*!" Although he did not identify the group by name,

he identified the group as those who support the doctrine of anthropomorphism. Here, Mama said:

There are people who claim to be followers of the *salaf*. Nevertheless, they have actually distorted the *salaf* theology by interpreting God establishing Himself on the Throne as if He were sitting [on His throne]. But, the way God sits is not the same as the human does.

Mama strongly disagrees with the interpretation of 'to sit' as referring to a human act where one part of the body, i.e. the buttocks, take a sitting position. Mama's interpretation is: "God sits on the Throne, but the way He sits is not the same as the human does. Instead, he sits just as it befits Him". To interpret it otherwise would lead to attribution of human form to God, and to the claim that He acts as humans do. If God is understood in that way, God is then comprised of parts that humans possess. Mama stated that going too far in attempting to understand God's attributes, as the Wahhabi have done, is dangerous. It therefore cannot be accepted.

Humans are appropriately comprised of parts, i.e. hand, leg, head, etc. If God were comprised of such parts, Mama said, then God is then no longer Oneness without resemblance (*wahdaniyah*) and this is absolutely impossible. The two authors of the *Jalalayn*, he continued, kept the word *istiwa* untranslated and interpreted it as something that is appropriately left to God alone who knows best about what He actually means with the word. Mama then asserted that the interpretation of the *Jalalayn* authors in this verse symbolises the attitude of true *salaf* scholars, who are very careful of interpreting anthropomorphic verses.

Mama then mentioned two groups who reveal themselves as heretical in their interpretative styles in attributing human form and behaviour to the Supreme Being. The first group, i.e. the anthropomorphists (*kaum mujassimah*), state that the attribution of human characteristics to the infinite being is possible, while the second group (*ulama golongan*

mujassimah) argue that God can be attributed to the created, but what God can be attributed is not the same as things in the created world. Mama identified the latter as supporting the former. He referred to the latter as the Wahhabi group and confirmed his disagreement with them.

So, there is a group stating that God sits just like a human sits, and they are the anthropomorphists. There is also another group who allow that God can be embodied, but not in a body like a human body. Here, the Wahhabi are close to that group. They state that God sits, but not in the way a human sits.

Mama went back to the possibility that the words ‘to sit’ meant the positioning of the buttocks on the chair and affirmed that it was impossible for God to have such an attribution because such language expression belongs to the human being. God is the creator of all beings. He is the before without beginning (Arabic: *qadim*). Mama reminded students of what they have learned in other of his *bandongan kitab*. Mama advised his students to interpret Qur’anic verses and hadith dealing with anthropomorphism by investigating them using acceptable interpretive frames, then relegate the question to God alone. He made a proprietorial claim about ideology of the *Jalalayn* when he told his students:

The *Jalalayn* is a *tafsir* book that follows the school of the *salaf* scholars. In this book, the word *istiwa* is kept untranslated, and only Allah knows the intention of this word.

Throughout this gathering, Mama took a dialogical position that committed him to a distinct side in conflicts among Muslims throughout Muslim history. The *Jalalayn* is important in his dialogue for, to Mama, this particular *kitab* is a canonical expression of *salaf* belief. In joining the debate, Mama strengthens his position as a follower and defender of the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama‘ah* and shapes his students as Muslims who will do the same in the future.

7.5. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted how interpretation is produced during pedagogical practices to strengthen the doctrine that a teacher conveys to students. Mama sees the *Jalalayn* as the legitimate bridging source between *salaf* generations that he considers to hold the correct creed of Sunnite Islam and the situated students in his gatherings. He creates a dialogical confrontation with absent opponents, dedicating his interpretations to protecting the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah* legacy as the correct articulation of belief about God and the created's relation to the Deity. At the same time, he appoints himself as protector of the legacy from possible dangers caused by unacceptable Wahhabi and Shi'ite creeds on the related verses of the Qur'an. Islamic doctrines on anthropomorphism and veneration of the family of the Prophet – central to *tafsir* discourse, are the battleground for his protective strategies.

Mama's defence against the Shi'ite and the Wahhabi groups is part of the fragmentation and dispute that characterise contemporary realities of Islam in Indonesia, specifically those that identify Shi'ite and Wahhabi as threats (Formichi, 2014; Saat, 2017). Mama is contributing to the dialogical processes that Bakhtin identified. Voices respond to other voices, and the *bandongan* is a site where this confrontation unfolds. This defence and advocacy by Mama is also relevant to my argument about educational inequality. In contemporary Indonesia, *kitab*s have emerged in the Indonesian public sphere through *kitab*-reading competitions. This is relevant to this ideological conflict I have highlighted here. As elaborated in Chapter 10, the project of protecting and disseminating the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah* has become part of the background for the competition.

Chapter 8 : Status and performance style: a *bandongan Jalalayn* with a 'replacement *kyai*'

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse an unusual situation that arose during fieldwork when the *kyai* (i.e. Mama) was replaced in his regular teaching schedule by a senior student, Mang Asep, who normally took the role of *pesantren* coordinator. This situation occurred as Mama was not able to deliver his gatherings due to his weak physical condition. He decided to appoint the *pesantren* coordinator twice to deliver the gathering on his behalf. Mang Asep had no choice but to obey Mama's instruction to the best of his ability.

As noted in Chapter 6, different status levels of people in the *pesantren* are reflected and expressed in the way they utilise physical properties and lay out of *pesantren* infrastructure. In this chapter, I explore audience evaluation, which is very important in understanding different ways the pedagogy of Mama and Mang Asep succeed in context. I found that students did not consider co-presence with Mang Asep as having the same value as co-presence with Mama. Instead, they recognised Mang Asep as a friend with whom jokes and insinuations were regular elements of everyday sociality. Therefore, Mang Asep had to find an appropriate teaching strategy that would be positively evaluated.

The students in the traditional learning environment are reluctant to reflect on the possibility of their elevation to the status of teacher. They are not like the teachers in Pesantren Persis No. 99, whose qualifications are recognised by tertiary certification. The recognised way for them to achieve teacher status is to be taken by the *kyai* as a son-in-law. This did not apply in Mang Asep's case, and he could not rely on familial status as the basis for a positive reception for his *bandongan*. Being appointed as a replacement *kyai* put

pressure on him to find appropriate ways of conducting the gathering. This unforeseen situation offered me some methodological possibilities. By observing Mang Asep's efforts to fill in for his superior, I was able to better understand how status affects pedagogical style in the *bandongan*. Some of these connections have already been mentioned in previous chapters. For example, unwritten norms about the use of physical props prevented Mang Asep from using the pulpit that Mama usually occupied. To use the pulpit would be to claim before the students that he possessed the same competence as Mama, and invite comparison with his deep knowledge of the Qur'anic verses and wisdom. By avoiding the pulpit, he reveals his knowledge about hierarchy and space, a knowledge that he is imparting to students in his pedagogy. Similarly, Mang Asep knew that he could not replicate Mama's performance style, even though he himself was a person of significant learning. However, he realised that he would risk a negative evaluation if he tried to do that. Instead, he had to rely on his own strategies. This chapter describes his efforts to do so.

The unforeseen events that moved Mang Asep into the position of *Jalalayn* teacher had other benefits for this research beyond the status issue, for I had a chance to observe a different pedagogical style to that of Mama. There were two important characteristics in the way Mang Asep delivered his *bandongan*. First, he focused on what I call 'dictation with translation'. This activity relies on repetition where a teacher recites parts of Arabic text along with related translation. It is part of the basic method of the *bandongan* in which entextualisation of the Qur'an, via the *Jalalayn* text, is the key focus. The striking aspect was his repetition of passages and translations, fully controlling his tempo and making a clear intonation in the recitation of each passage of text and related translation. Asep's performance revealed the importance of repetition to *bandongan* pedagogy.

The second characteristic was his use of chanting. Mang Asep frequently sang his dictation with translation, which I refer to as '*kitab*-chanting'. Mang Asep informed me that

he obtained his ability in *kitab*-chanting from a short intensive *bandongan kitab* he attended in a *pesantren* located in Cianjur regency. Other literature (e.g. Millie, 2008) confirms that such chanting is commonly used by teachers in the *pesantren* milieu. In this chapter, I analyse how this pedagogical skill offers benefits to teachers in traditional Islamic education. For Mang Asep, trying to secure participation from students with whom he had been in contact on a daily basis as *pesantren* coordinator, not as *kyai*, the skill of chanting made his job easier.

8.2. *Bandongan Jalalayn* by the replacement *kyai*: a description

This section first provides a descriptive overview of the teaching performance by Mang Asep and follows with a more detailed analysis of performance components. The first example of Mang Asep's teaching I attended took place on a Sunday night in the second week of January 2016, which was the first day of *bandongan Jalalayn* after school holidays. These holidays were not an official holiday on the *pesantren* calendar. As explained in previous chapters, the majority of students who stayed in this *pesantren* also attended a formal school located outside the *pesantren*. Schools that provided a two week school holiday over the Christmas-New Year period urged the *pesantren* to allow students to visit their parents and family, and this request had been granted by Mama.

In usual circumstances, Mama would have led a number of *bandongan* after night prayer (mostly after 7pm) in the week after the holidays, including the *bandongan Jalalayn*. Once the night prayer and supplication formula were completed, a person usually announced that the *bandongan kitab* would start soon and advised students to be ready at the gathering hall. During this week Mama's health was particularly poor, which caused uncertainty about whether his *bandongan* would proceed. Students assembled in the *majelis* without clear information regarding whether Mama would come to deliver his *bandongan*. On this Sunday, Mama did not come. I stood at the *pesantren* office with Mang Asep who was carrying his

smartphone, keeping in touch with Mama. As *pesantren* coordinator, he was in charge of assuring that *kitab* pedagogy occurred at the scheduled time, including those by Mama. When he received confirmation of attendance from Mama he would ask somebody to make an announcement using the mosque microphone.

On this occasion, Mama instructed Mang Asep to replace him as teacher of the *bandongan Jalalayn*. Students waiting for Mama in the *majelis* looked on from their spots as Mang Asep, a person with whom they were very familiar and friendly, approached the prayer leader's spot and pulpit. But he did not occupy the pulpit, the spot that Mama usually used for gathering in the main prayer room. Instead, he moved the microphone to floor level on which students were seated and delivered his gathering in a cross-legged sitting position.

Having made himself comfortable on the floor, Mang Asep remained quiet for a while, reciting a prayer in his heart. By now the students seemed to have adequately understood the situation because no one raised any questions. Or possibly, they were not brave enough to ask about Mama's condition until further notice. Mang Asep softly said, "*al-fatihah*", breaking the silence. All students altogether recited *Surat al-Fatihah*. He then said: "In the name of God the Most Gracious the Most Merciful, *Surat al-Shu'ara* verse one", informing the audience that he was going to begin the recitation. He recited *basmalah* again and continued to recite the relevant Arabic texts from the Qur'an and the *Jalalayn*, along with Sundanese translation.

I observed that Mang Asep did not bring the printed edition of the *Jalalayn* he usually brought. Instead, he brought the printed edition of the *Jalalayn* (Sundanese *Jalalayn loghatan*), which includes Sundanese translation. This edition was prepared by Mama and printed by the *pesantren* (for Mama's *kitab loghatan* and his printing company see Chapter 3). As he told me after completion of the *bandongan*, many young traditional teachers found

Mama's *kitab loghatan* very useful as a guide for teaching. Some had even visited the *pesantren* to express their gratitude to Mama.

This book is especially useful when someone is required to deliver a *bandongan* without prior notice. For Mang Asep, Mama's *kitab loghatan* assisted him in his recital of the text and translation in circumstances where he did not have the opportunity to prepare at length. He considered ways to ensure that his performance would be positively evaluated by the students. The two strategies that were most prominent in his effort to secure participation were dictation with translation and *kitab*-chanting.

He turned to these strategies because he had to deal with something unthinkable in the *bandongan* of Mama Makki, and that was the students' lack of attention and respect. After about five minutes had passed a student deliberately let off a ringtone sound from his phone, which encouraged some students to respond by coughing. This was a sign of lack of respect for the replacement teacher and recognition that the students received him more as a peer than a superior. This noise seemed to distract his concentration. He stopped dictation with translation and commenced to give an explanation. When the students were again settled, he continued dictation with translation.

After ten minutes, it was clear that Mang Asep was facing an unsupportive audience. The students were reacting to his talking with laughter. I realised that the students had been attending classes since early in the morning, and by the evening they were fatigued. Mang Asep was sympathetic to this. He then began to teach in his chanting style, hoping that this would restore student attention, but stopped, perhaps out of uncertainty about what to do, and went back to dictation with translation (all the while repeating his recitation and translations). After seven minutes had passed since the first phone melody, an unknown person made another ring that attracted other students to react. Mang Asep was distracted again by this noise.

He then stopped the entextualisation/recitation and commenced *tafsir* elaboration. As I explained in Chapter 7, in a *bandongan kitab* the elaboration invariably comes after the entextualisation activity. In contrast with his recitation, he seemed to feel more relaxed with *tafsir*-elaboration, for he could exploit his public speaking ability and achieve more intimacy with the audience. He had more freedom. I saw that most students were initially paying full attention to him and enjoying the way he secured participation. However, it was not long before someone deliberately made their phone ring again. He continued presenting his elaboration, rich in jokes and insinuations. For example, he made a short play out of spelling peculiarity well known to Sundanese Muslims. Sundanese commonly pronounce the sound *za* as it were *ja*, and share the final sounds *z* and *s*. In spelling, this often leads to confusion between the Arabic letter *za* (ز), and another letter, *ja* (ج). Based on shared recognition of this Sundanese trait, he was able to twist the Arabic word '*aziz* (mighty) into the word *najis*, meaning uncleanness, while reminding students to always pronounce Arabic letters with good fluency. With these tricks, he was successful in securing students' attention, but they also raised the general level of noise and enjoyment. Some students humourously engaged with one another, which in turn stimulated reactions from others. After returning once more to dictation with translation, I could see that the atmosphere of the gathering had changed decisively as many students were not paying attention.

Sensing his attempts to secure attention had not been successful, he asked students about what time they wanted this *bandongan* to end, perhaps out of frustration, indicating clearly that he and the students were aware that Mang Asep was a 'mere' replacement. Based on exchanges of this kind, and the general atmosphere of the event, it seemed clear that teacher and students were in tacit agreement that Mang Asep was not to be shown the respect a *kyai* deserves, and Mang Asep seemed temporarily to accept this. The *majelis* remained

noisy and boisterous and it seemed that Mang Asep was searching for a way to win students' commitment.

Eventually, Mang Asep captured student attention by his chanting, which he continued for a good time, working through the text with his melodic delivery of Mama's Sundanese *Jalalayn loghatan*. This calmed students and focussed their attention more closely on his performance. He paused, wanting to continue elaboration in a particular direction, but seemed to check himself as he realised that it was then late in the evening. He asked the students where he should end this *bandongan*. They just laughed, showing that they agreed to stop at this point.

In his closing words, while keeping his mouth away from the microphone, Mang Asep informed the students on the current condition of Mama and his family members. Mama had been in a weak condition that prevented him from fulfilling his commitments. He then closed his *bandongan* by asking the students to pray for Mama's well-being. This *bandongan* had been a success, because Mang Asep had moved through the text, and the negotiation between students and teacher had been positive and – in a chaotic way – respectful. But it had required effort from Mang Asep as he had to change strategies constantly, working hard to earn student attention. In the traditional *kitab*-learning, this was not a problem a 'real' *kyai* ever faced.

8.3. Dictation with translation: text recitation by the replacement *kyai*

In this section, I discuss the way the replacement *kyai* conducted his *bandongan* using a different pedagogical style to that usually adopted by Mama. He did this, I argue, in order to fulfil his obligation to obey the *kyai*'s order, while at the same time adopting a style that would not be considered a replica of Mama's style. In his *bandongan* style, Mama takes the role of the old wise man, the *kyai*, who has an obligation to protect the successor generations from potential dangers. The students show him full respect and consider their

co-presence with him as part of seeking a blessing. Students look forward to listening to Mama's speech and consider it a wisdom likely to guide them to the right path in future life. Therefore, Mama's *bandongan* always seemed ordered and quiet.

Taking the role of the old, wise man wasn't an option for the replacement *kyai* because of the students' perception that Mang Asep was their peer. Given that situation, he decided to focus on a particular style of entextualisation. The characteristic of the entextualisation performance made by the replacement *kyai* is in the way he recited the Arabic text and related translation as a form of dictation. Differing from the *kyai*'s style, he paid far greater attention to making the text correctly legible for students. He designed his performance to enable students to make adequate notes on their own *kitab*s. By doing so, he accommodated the students' need to move through the Arabic text, while assisting them through repetition.

The transcript below is an example of the replacement *kyai*'s dictation with translation. I transcribed the performance to enable the various textual inputs constituting the event to be distinguished. The actual verse of the Qur'an under study can be distinguished because it is transliterated in parentheses and in bold, while the *Jalalayn* text, which is in fact the primary text being studied in this gathering, is in bold with no brackets. The Sundanese part of Mang Asep's performance is written in plain (non-bold) text. The symbol [–] indicates rising intonation.

Mang Asep's dictation with translation was uttered a little bit slower than the *kyai*'s recitation. Nevertheless, Mang Asep did it with strong intonation that, in my opinion, is intended to make it easily audible for the students listening.

Surat al-Shu‘ara’ [26]: 1-2.

Transcript	Translation
(Ṭā Sīn Mīm)	(Ṭā Sīn Mīm)
Allāhu—, ari Allah	Allāhu—, that is, the God
Allāhu—, ari Allah	Allāhu—, that is, the God
A‘lamu—, eta maha uninga	A‘lamu—, is the all knowing
Allāhu—, ari Allah	Allāhu—, that is, the God
A‘lamu—, eta maha uninga	A‘lamu—, is the all knowing
Bi-murādihi, kana muradna Allah	Bi-murādihi, of the knowledge of the God
A‘lamu—, eta anu maha uninga	A‘lamu—, is the One who is all knowing
Bi-murādihi, kana muradna Allah	Bi-murādihi, of the knowledge of the God
Bi-dhālika—, kana maknana lafaz ṭā sīn mīm	Bi-dhālika—, with the meaning of the expression ṭā sīn mīm
(Tilka—), ari ieu eta ayat	(Tilka—), that is, with the verse
Ay—, tegesna mah, hādhihi al-āyāt , dina pirang-pirang ayat	Ay—, that is, hādhihi al-āyāt , in these verses
Ay—, tegesna mah, hādhihi al-āyāt , dina pirang-pirang ayat	Ay— that is, hādhihi al-āyāt , in these verses
(Ā—yatu al-kitābi—), eta— pirang-pirang ayat tina al-quran	(Ā—yatu al-kitābi—), that is— these verses from the Quran
(Ā—yatu al-kitābi—), eta— pirang-pirang ayat tina al-quran	(Ā—yatu al-kitābi—), that is— these verses from the Quran
al-Qur’āni—, tegesna mah al-Quran	al-Qur’āni—, that is, the Quran
al-Qur’āni—, tegesna mah al-Quran	al-Qur’āni—, that is, the Quran
Wa-al-idāfatu—, jeung ari idofat	Wa-al-idāfatu—, and the <i>idafa</i>
Bi-ma‘ná, eta tetep kalawan makna	Bi-ma‘ná, that is firmly referred to the meaning
Mina (al-mubīnā), tegesna mah anu pertela	Mina (al-mubīnā), that is those who explain ³²
Mina (al-mubīnā), tegesna mah anu pertela	Mina (al-mubīnā) that is those who explain
Al-muḥiri—, anu ngazohirkeun, al-ḥaqqu, kana haq	Al-muḥiri—, that make it clear, al-ḥaqqu, the truth
Mina al-bāṭil, tina anu batal	Mina al-bāṭil, from the idle
Al-muḥiri—, anu ngazohirkeun, al-ḥaqqu kana haq	Al-muḥiri—, that make it clear, al-ḥaqqu, the truth

³² Mang Asep’s dictation is incorrect here. **Mina (al-mubīnā)** should be **Mina (al-mubīn)** [that is clear].

mina al-bāṭil tina perkara anu batil

mina al-bāṭil, from the case that is false³³

The above transcript shows that continual repetition is the core feature of Mang Asep's dictation with translation. He divided the Arabic text into either one word or one phrase segment. These were sufficiently short so they could be translated in repeated units. I noticed that it worked well as students had more time to take appropriate notes. However, the process failed to retain the attention of many students.

8.4. Dictation with translation in a chanting style

In this section, I discuss the chanting strategy that Mang Asep relied upon to conduct his *bandongan Jalalayn*. What I show is that chanting is a skill that offers a teacher a number of advantages in *bandongan* pedagogy. Most obviously, in a learning environment where study of an entire text is a prerequisite for completion, chanting text of the *kitab* is an efficient way to progress through the text. Chanting is a way of retaining student attention and refreshing listeners whose commitment to the interaction is wavering. In other words, chanting supports the goal of completion as a value in the traditional environment.

The use of chanting to serve the goal of progression through the text is commonly found in short *kitab*-intensive courses, known as *pasar*an in Sundanese or *poson*an in Javanese. *Pasar*an or *poson*an can be defined as short intensive *kitab bandongan* that enable completion of either a whole *kitab* or parts of it. Such intensive gatherings regularly run in specific months of the Islamic calendar, i.e. fasting month Ramadan (*poson*an) and Rabi' al-Awwal (Javanese or Sundanese: *muludan*). The duration of such gatherings varies from 15 to 40 days. The short intensive *kitab bandongan* differs from those focussed on in this dissertation, which take place amidst regular routines of *pesantren* education. They are more oriented to rapid movement through the text towards completion. Participants taking part in

³³ In this segment, Mang Asep corrects his earlier translation of **Mina al-bāṭil** from 'the idle' to 'false'.

short study courses are keen to become part of the genealogical chain of learning in which the teacher is a link and, for this reason, the passages of text invariably need to be recited more quickly. In these conditions, students are advised to pay full attention to recitation, but the interpretation part of the event is sometimes neglected. Chanting is useful because it is relaxing for listeners and can be used by the teacher to gain student attention.

The practice of *kitab*-chanting was unusual in this *pesantren*. The chanting of Mang Asep was the only chanting in all *bandongan kitab* I observed during fieldwork in this *pesantren*, aside from occasional prayers loudly recited with melody. Mang Asep told me that this practice was probably not popular in Sukabumi, although there may be some traditional teachers who have the capability to chant the *kitab*.

I tried to trace the melody he used using the recording I had made, and found that it was influenced by the melody that belongs to the Sundanese *tembang* (sung verse), previously known as the *Cianjuran* style.³⁴ According to Van Zanten (1989), the *Cianjuran* style of Sundanese *tembang* is a genre in Sundanese music first developed in about 1850. It was called *Cianjuran* after the Cianjur regency as the origin of this musical genre. In the colonial period, Cianjur was the centre of the Priangan region before being replaced by Bandung in post-colonial Indonesia as capital city of the West-Java province. Commonly encountered melodies of the Sundanese *tembang* have been adopted, modified or developed by Islamic teachers as a strategy to serve the goal of completion in the *kitab*-gathering.

My ethnomusicologist colleague identified it as an example of the *pelog-degung* scale modified from the Sundanese *tembang*. In the Sundanese *tembang*, the *pelog-degung* scale is usually accompanied by Sundanese musical instruments, i.e. flute, zither and *degung* (bronze percussion instruments). In this music genre, musicians intend to create a mood of

³⁴ I am indebted to the ethnomusicologist Muhammad Rayhan Sudrajat for identifying the melody.

relaxation. It is not surprising that the replacement *kyai* used this particular melody, for it had the effect of reducing the restlessness of the class he was teaching.

Although my musical analysis is necessarily limited, there are some interesting observations to be made concerning pitch, which point to advantages for a teacher who uses chanting in his pedagogy. In the first *bandongan* I attended under Mang Asep, it struck me that he was pitching his chant high. By contrast, in the second *bandongan*, it sounded as if he were pitching it lower, at a more comfortable and relaxed pitch level. Referring to my recordings, I confirmed the disparities in pitch. Although the melodies were the same in both, the first had indeed been higher than the second.

I connect this difference to differing conditions in the gatherings and to different benefits to be gained from chanting. As conveyed in my analysis above, in the first gathering Mang Asep faced an audience of students who felt free to express their emotions, making jokes, and even letting off ring tones just for fun. By delivering his chant at a high, urgent pitch he was able to control the noisy situation and get student commitment back to the interaction. By the second gathering, student excitement at the novelty of Mang Asep acting as teacher had diminished. They realised in advance that Mama would not come, and that his position would be replaced by the *pesantren* coordinator. Mang Asep's second *bandongan* was much quieter than the first, for students had come to accept that he was their teacher, and not just their peer. As a result, he spent less time and energy to secure student participation. His *Jalalayn*-chanting performance therefore was intended to progress through the text to serve the goal of completion. There was no need for the chant to have an urgent quality.

The comparison reveals two different functions of *kitab*-chanting of which a teacher such as Mang Asep can take advantage (in addition to the general goal of progress towards completion). First, chanting in the *Jalalayn*-reading is used to control a noisy situation and

suppress noises that threaten success of the getharing. Second, chanting helps ensure participation in a relaxed learning activity that moves efficiently through the text.

Without doubt, *kitab*-chanting is a common practice in traditional *pesantrens* in West Java. It is a pedagogical skill that offers a number of advantages for traditional teachers intent on teaching successfully. The advantages I identify are confirmed in an analysis by Millie (2008), who focussed on something different to what I experienced in Sukabumi. The audience analysed by Millie was a mixed one including *santri* and unlearned Muslims. Ordinary (i.e. non-student) participants have limited access to the knowledge and textual skills required to follow the *bandongan kitab* in the *pesantren*, and their intention to attend the *bandongan* is not to deepen their authority in knowledge and textual skills. They are more oriented to obtaining blessings from the event. This is evident as they do not bring the *kitab* and pen to the gathering, the two media that are minimal requirements for students wanting to follow the gathering as a textual exercise. With chanting, the teacher can provide a lesson that includes ordinary people. It broadens the range of participation beyond textual learners to unlearned people who wish to participate in *pesantren* learning, an activity regarded as noble in West Java. Thus, *Kitab*-chanting is a functional and inclusive pedagogy for traditional *kitab* study.

8.5. Mama and his replacement: different status, different performance

In this section, I make a final comparison between the *bandongan* performances delivered by Mama and those by the replacement *kyai*, referring to the second part of the *bandongan*, the elaboration part. I refer to a *bandongan* by Mang Asep in which he was still acting as the replacement of Mama, but which occurred subsequently to the one described above. The core theme explored is the connection between status and performance style. This is difficult to capture if our perception of pedagogy is restricted to modern styles. In modern settings, the rational, bureaucratic nature of the learning setting implies a uniformity

of pedagogical style. All teachers basically do the same thing. But this obscures the reality of what happens in the traditional *bandongan*. Status weighs heavily on the negotiation between teacher and student. It affects what we might call the ‘frame’ of the negotiation, as Bauman (1978, p. 9) states:

Performance sets up, or represents, an interpretative frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood, and that this frame contrasts with at least one other frame, the literal.

In this regard, we need to consider how these two performers are socially accepted in this particular environment. Mama is widely recognised as a charismatic *ulama* who possesses, in the eyes of students of his *pesantren*, knowledge that might also be called wisdom. Students consider their co-presence with Mama during his *bandongan kitab* as a method to seek blessings. This is a goal of learning that students seek during their study in the *pesantren*.

These understandings shape the frame within which Mama’s *bandongan* performance is interpreted. They compell students to focus their attention and discipline their behaviour to hear his wise messages. Conversation between them during his *bandongan* would be considered very impolite and would hinder them from obtaining blessings due to misconduct. Mama sets up his *bandongan* as an arena where a wise old man gives his students words of wisdom and transmits deep understanding of Islamic knowledge to his followers, the successor generation. This is the concept of *salafi* that I introduced earlier in this dissertation. It is as if the presence of the *kyai* equals the presence of the community and its legacy. He models his teaching on the ones who came before, bringing values and wisdom to those who come after.

The replacement *kyai*, on the other hand, was known for occupying a position as the *pesantren* coordinator and as a senior student of the *pesantren*. The replacement *kyai*’s *bandongan* was therefore evaluated as a young man’s performance. Thus, he was compelled

to subject himself to audience evaluation based on his own exercise of skills and knowledge. He had to differentiate himself. That is the frame for understanding his messages. In Mama's *bandongan*, no one dared to make noise. All are poised to take notes for every word that Mama says. Even a pen that falls onto the floor can be clearly heard by everyone. Yet Mang Asep was aware that his temporary status as replacement *kyai* would not automatically change his primary status as a senior student in the eyes of students. Instead, he was also seeking blessings, like his audience, by doing the things that his beloved teacher ordered. He deliberately tried to reframe his performance so his listeners would not imagine him as a *kyai* in his performance.

As part of this process of differentiation, in the interpretation part, Mang Asep styled himself as a motivator of his juniors, urging them to be optimistic in life. In his attempt to maintain student commitment to paying attention during his speech, he established an interaction that was more joyful and light because of its jokes and insinuations, and he chanted some parts of the text to secure participation in dictation with translation. Importantly, the replacement *kyai* began to show skills that would make students realise he was more than 'just a replacement' as he was able to teach in ways different to Mama. As a senior student and young person, he motivated his junior colleagues to lift their spirit in learning and life. In doing so, he showed considerable skill, adapting verses of the Qur'an and the *Jalalayn* into messages that support the common challenges of daily life.

An example is his adaptation of metaphors from the story of the epic rivalry between the Prophet Moses and the Pharaoh, found in the verses of the Qur'an. The contest and confrontation of these verses are generally appealing to students. Importantly, he conveyed the messages to students by setting up a situation that made everyone react cheerfully, not seriously, as they would have responded to Mama. These verses were not amongst those under study in the *bandongan*, but he digressed into this story as the basis for reminding

listeners that everyone faces goodness as opposed to evil. No one can escape from this ‘battle’ he said. I could see students responding to his speech intonation, that made them feel as if they were listening to something of importance. He closed his messages on this theme with this: “*Moal rame dunia lamun euweuh aya nu kitu* (The world would not be so stimulating if there were no such thing as that battle)”. This brought applause and cheers from his listeners. He did not finish with a message that left the lesson as a burden on his listeners. He was moving towards the kind of recognition that grounds a scholar’s reputation as something more than ‘just a replacement *kyai*’. He was being received as a successful motivational speaker, motivating students to never give up doing good things wherever they are even though they will face obstacles and problems.

Despite being very aware of the status differential, Mang Asep claimed the *bandongan* as his own. Mama provided a detailed understanding of the verses being studied, especially of the verse that deals with theology, reaching out into the busy public Islamic sphere of West Java. By so doing, Mama wishes to preserve the doctrine of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama‘ah* and wants students to acquire deep understanding of the doctrine. At the same time, he warns of potential problems that result from the Wahhabi and Shi’ite understandings of the same verse. Mang Asep did not seek the same goal. He did undertake the sort of deliberation produced by Mama. Instead, he concentrated on guiding students towards a well-recorded note-taking activity by performing the dictation with translation, created an inclusive and relaxed engagement with his chanting, and attracted and inspired students with his motivational style.

8.6. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted that in the traditional environment different status of the teacher affects the *bandongan* performance set up and audience evaluation. I have shown how the strong connection between teacher status and their performance is constitutive to

some degree of pedagogical styles, and from this perspective, the pedagogical styles replicate the status rules of the broader community. In this regard, in the traditional environment a successful *bandongan* performance is not only measured by expertise in certain fields of knowledge. It also depends on how the performer realises his current social acceptance among the group and is then able to adapt to the situation.

Based on this heavily hierarchialised background, the replacement *kyai* provided an opportunity to observe a teacher working for acceptance when he could not take the respect of students for granted. Two obvious strategies that the replacement *kyai* used were dictation with translation and *kitab*-chanting, both of which enabled him to progress through the text assuring that everyone was able to make notes properly. He had to overcome problems that threatened his lesson and a striking way to do this was his reliance on chanting skills he obtained by taking an intensive short *kitab* course in Cianjur regency. This skill delivered him a number of benefits, just as it has done for other West Javanese teachers before him.

While I observed Mang Asep's performances, I noticed that he seemed to be emerging as a *bandongan* teacher with his own style. After being entrusted the role of teacher by the *kyai* in unexpected circumstances, he used skills he had acquired during his career to fill the role successfully, emerging in his own rite as a teacher in the process.

Chapter 9 : *Jalalayn* pedagogical practices in the classroom

9.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the *Jalalayn*-based pedagogy in a modern educational environment, namely the *Mu'allimin* (senior level) school of the Persis-affiliated *pesantren*, Pesantren Persis No. 99. In this school, *tafsir* is taught under the subject heading *tafsir 'amm* (general interpretation of the Qur'an). Leadership structure is a useful way to approach general differences between Pesantren Persis No. 99 and Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1. Unlike Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1, Pesantren Persis No. 99 is part of an administrative structure wider than the school alone. As Bachtiar (2012, pp. 124-128) noted, Persis-affiliated *pesantrens* are formally under the educational department of Persis branch offices. Nevertheless, some big, influential Persis-affiliated *pesantrens* under the leadership of important Persis figures (*Kyai Persis*) have a level of independence in decision-making.

Pesantren Persis No. 99 is a large, influential Persis-affiliated *pesantrens*, and its general principal, Ustaz Aceng Zakaria, occupies the highest role in Persis nationally as general Persis chairman. It runs according to bureaucratic principles and formality is followed in decision-making, such as hiring staff. The school hires career educators who may apply for jobs in similar institutions. In such processes, Ustaz Aceng is responsible as general principal to making decisions concerning the qualifications of people applying to teach in the *Mu'allimin* school.

In the modern environment, individual students are required to obtain specific competencies prescribed in the school's curriculum. The institution determines targets that students need to achieve when taking a course unit that are later measured in a formal way through examination. Management of roles at the school (i.e. teacher, student and staff) is

administered according to bureaucratic procedures. Students are formally registered as a cohort. The presence of teachers and students in classrooms are formally scheduled also. In short, Pesantren Persis No. 99 is an Islamic school that runs according to processes also found in the national, secular system. Its willingness to adapt from that system harmonises with the definition of 'modern' that I have implemented throughout this thesis, as a tendency to reach out positively to emerging realities of contemporary society.

In this chapter, I draw on fieldwork experiences with two teachers, Ustaz A and Ustaz B. Both teachers had accepted formal appointment at the *Mu'allimin* school to deliver the *tafsir 'amm* subject. Both teachers have tertiary qualifications in Islamic studies. Ustaz A is a graduate of Pesantren Persis No. 99 and was once a student in the *Jalalayn*-based class for general interpretation of the Qur'an. He took Islamic subjects and Arabic courses at the Islamic and Arabic College of Indonesia (*Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Bahasa Arab*, or LIPIA) in Jakarta for about four years. After that, he took an undergraduate program at a private Islamic university (*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam*, or STAI) in Jakarta. On the other hand, Ustaz B graduated from the *Mu'allimin* school at another Persis-affiliated *pesantren* where the *Jalalayn* is not taught. In other words, he studied the same subject as Ustaz A, but using a different textbook. He undertook his undergraduate program at the *tafsir-hadith* department at the Islamic university of Persis (*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Persatuan Islam*, or STAIPI) in Garut. Then, he received a Masters Degree in *hadith* from the State Islamic University (UIN) in Bandung. There are important differences in these two educational backgrounds. Ustaz A studied at LIPIA, a school known for strict emphasis on mastery of textual sources, while Ustaz B studied at one of Indonesia's State Islamic Universities where a wide range of disciplines are admitted to the Islamic studies program.

The teaching styles of the two teachers show different strategies of learning, the first being more formal and monologic and the second more informal and dialogic. Teaching for

students at a lower grade, Ustaz A used the method that Goffman (1981, p. 171) calls “aloud reading lecture”. In his class, he mainly concentrated on Arabic grammar, focussing on its importance for specific examples of interpretation. His method required students to memorise. Therefore, reflection upon the meanings of the text was less emphasised. The teacher for the higher grade, that I call Ustaz B, on the other hand, used a ‘fresh-talk lecture’ method in which he developed an egalitarian interaction with students, opening the lesson up to a wide range of sources. He also paid much attention to making the Qur’an accessible to students’ daily lives. Furthermore, he reflected on the text under study, producing wide-ranging interpretations from diverse sources for students. In this chapter, I build on these differences to make some conclusions about the nature of modern Islamic pedagogy and the directions it has been heading since Islamic educational institutions began to replicate the forms and styles of secular educational systems.

After presenting a description of the setting (9.2), I present my analysis in two parts. This division recognises a constant in *Jalalayn* pedagogy in traditional and modern environments, the division in practice of the *Jalalayn* lessons into two parts, i.e. a part dedicated to textual pedagogy, in which entextualisation is the main activity (9.3) and a part dedicated to *tafsir*-elaboration (9.4). In my analysis that follows, I emphasise that Ustaz A and Ustaz B differently performed their *tafsir*-elaborations. Ustaz A’s approach was to remain close to the literal text and this is reflected in the word he used to describe his textual pedagogy, *ngahuapan* (literally meaning: ‘feeding the baby’). Ustaz B, on the other hand, seemed to free himself to reflect on the text being studied and opened possibilities of other interpretations not based on the textbook. I observed that these approaches contrast significantly, but are acceptable in the Persis milieu.

9.2. *Jalalayn*-based classroom: the ethnographic setting

One week after commencement of my participatory research in this *pesantren*, I observed the *tafsir 'amm* class. It was a Saturday, the first day on which *pesantren* members formally start their weekly routine of pedagogical activities. In the morning approaching 7am, I walked to the *Mu'allimin* school to attend the weekly assembly, known as the *upacara bai'at* (Oath Ceremony). As is usually found in most Indonesian schools, the *Mu'allimin* school is a U-shaped building encompassing a multifunctional open space where the assembly is usually conducted. Male and female students dressed formally and stood in line facing the assembly instructor, as shown in Figure 9.1.



Figure 9.1.: Weekly assembly in the *Mu'allimin* school of Pesantren Persis No. 99.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 14 November 2015, Garut.

Together with the teachers, I stood behind the instructor facing the students. In this assembly, students declare a list of commitments, in Arabic language, that I translate as follows:

“In the name of God the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, I declare to my teacher that I will; obey my teacher; respect my teacher; be dedicated to my parents; carry out the interpretation of legal sources [*ijtihad*] with honesty; not lie; not be hostile towards another; not insult anyone; pray at all scheduled times; recite the Qur’an everyday; not smoke cigarettes; not display the intimate parts of my body except those usually shown; avoid wrongdoings, obvious or hidden; There is not a secret consultation between three, but He makes the fourth among them, nor between five but He makes the sixth, nor between fewer or more, but He is in their midst, wheresoever they be.” [the last section is verse 7 of the 58th chapter of the Qur’an, i.e. *Surat al-Mujadilah*, reproduced here following the translation made by Ali (1946, pp. 1512-1513)].

The instructor gave a speech after completion of the oath. Once the assembly came to an end, one teacher took over the podium announcing that an observer was visiting to conduct participatory research at the school. He then invited me to give an introductory speech to the audience. On that occasion, I took my chance to introduce my professional background and my intention to stay for several weeks in the pesantren for research purposes. The audience applauded my decision to choose this institution as one of my field sites.

In the semester that I observed, three teachers were assigned to deliver the *tafsir ‘amm* subject, two for Grades 1 to 3 while the third was responsible for the one year preparation class. I did not observe *tafsir ‘amm* in the preparation class as I was not granted consent to do so. In this connection, I assume that as a new teacher he was still not confident enough for his *tafsir ‘amm* class to be observed. However, I obtained consent to observe *tafsir ‘amm* classes conducted in the three grades of the *Mu‘allimin*. Ustaz A and Ustaz B teach the *Jalalayn* at these levels.

In the weekly class schedule issued by the school, Ustaz A had two full days teaching at the school on Sundays and Mondays. His teaching was structured in this way because he was also running a new branch of a Pesantren Persis in the northern part of Garut regency. Therefore, he had to be a competent manager. In addition to *tafsir 'amm*, he was also appointed to teach *tafsir ahkam* (legal interpretation) in all classes in Grade 1. Ustaz B was scheduled to deliver classes on school days, except Wednesday. In this semester, he was assigned to teach *tafsir 'amm* in Grades 2 and 3. He also taught two Arabic subjects, i.e. Arabic grammar and conjugation in some Grade 2 classes.

I first attended a *tafsir 'amm* class for female students in Grade 3. For them, *Tafsir 'amm* class started soon after completion of the weekly Saturday assembly. There were about 15 female students in this standard size classroom and everyone seemed comfortable. The students sat on chairs with small desk surfaces attached at the side and the mobility of these enabled students to move their chairs together to the middle of the classroom where they appeared to enjoy sitting close to each other.

The classroom was set up with two speakers, installed at the top right and left sides of the room. At the time of my class attendance, this sound equipment was not used as teachers could easily be heard by their class. The teacher's desk was placed in the centre front of the room with the board hanging up on the wall behind the teacher's desk. Each class of students had one *tafsir 'amm* class in a week, for two teaching hours, which involved about ninety minutes of pedagogical contact. After completion of the class, I usually went back to the staff room, while the teacher sometimes continued to teach other subjects in a different class.

Morning break time lasted for about ten minutes. School staff usually played a CD of Qur'an recitation through speakers that broadcast loudly so that everyone in this school environment could hear during break time. During the break, teachers usually come back to

the teacher staff room for a chat and coffee, which offered valuable opportunities for me to speak with them.

Teachers frequently struggle to secure active student participation in *tafsir 'amm*, for their classes were often interrupted by students knocking on the door asking permission to join the class. When this happened, they would remind all students of the importance of discipline as an important value to seek in learning. I observed a teacher advising his students that they were obliged to show respect in all subjects, even subjects that are not their favourites. In other words, *tafsir 'amm* was not among the most attractive subjects for students.

As noted in Chapter 6, few students are interested in preparing for a future in Islamic scholarship, and this contributes to the low commitment shown by students towards Islamic subjects like *tafsir 'amm*. Nevertheless, this lack of interest is not necessarily bad news for the Persis organisation, as this community holds the perspective that the life of a Muslim does not involve a distinction between secular and religious in terms of knowledge. The *pesantren* prepares students for life in a wide variety of professions and vocations.

9.3. *Ngahuapan*: textual pedagogy

In the first part of the classroom *Jalalayn* pedagogy I observed, teachers aimed to enable students to acquire competency in reading and translating Arabic text. Textual competencies such as literacy in Arabic and translation are stipulated as learning goals in *tafsir 'amm*. Students acquire these skills in a cohort-based sequence structured to grow in difficulty as the years progress, and sit examinations designed to test the competencies they have acquired at a specific level.

9.3.1. The performance of Ustaz A

The *tafsir 'amm* class discussed here took place at 10am on a day on which Ustaz A was scheduled to teach *tafsir 'amm* in three classes, all belonging to Grade 1, and all attended by students of a single gender. Attendance at classes is basically segregated according to gender, except one or two classes for which they do not have enough students of the same gender (i.e. male or female) to be separated into two classes.

I observed the class from the back of the classroom. No students spoke when Ustaz A entered the room. His first act was to open the list of students that he carried with the textbook. He called students one by one in alphabetical order and marked their attendance or absence. Students loudly confirmed their presence once they heard their names called. Or, their friends would let the teacher know if their friend was absent. Once the last student was called, he smiled and called my name, presenting me as a new student in this class with the title *al-ustaz duktur* (Professor Doctor).

Ustaz A's style of opening the class was direct and formal. He engaged pleasantly with students, but in a contrasting way to Ustaz B (as explained below). Ustaz A strictly controlled responses from students, allowing limited opportunities for student input and did not work hard to attract student attention. He strode slowly around the classroom while teaching, creating a solemn and serious atmosphere. Here is a translation of the verses under study, excerpted from the translation of Ali (1946, pp. 127-128):

***Surat Ali 'Imran* [3] verses 20-21**

Verse 20 So if they dispute with thee, Say: "I have submitted my whole self to God and so have those who follow me." And say to the People of the Book and to those who are unlearned: "Do ye (also) submit yourselves?" If they do, they are in right guidance, but if they turn back, thy duty is to convey the Message; and in God's sight are (all) His servants.

Verse 21 As to those who deny the Signs of God, and in defiance of right, slay the prophets, and slay those who teach just dealing with mankind, announce to them a grievous penalty.

Under Ustaz A, the *ngahuapan* process takes up most of the class time, which is not surprising considering the linguistic and synoptic understanding of Arabic text and translation are skills on which students will later be examined. I observed that Ustaz A's method for conveying textual skills consisted of three parts. The first two of these form what he refers to as *ngahuapan*, but which are in fact an entextualisation-based activity not dissimilar to what I found in the traditional environment (as elaborated in Chapter 7). First he vocalises, ensuring students are able to mark the correct vowels as he does so, then he translates. In the third part, which I call confirmation, Ustaz A selects a student and asks them alternately to read the recited text along with translation, trying to obtain confirmation that the *ngahuapan* has been successful. Illustration 9.2. is my diagrammatic representation of the process.

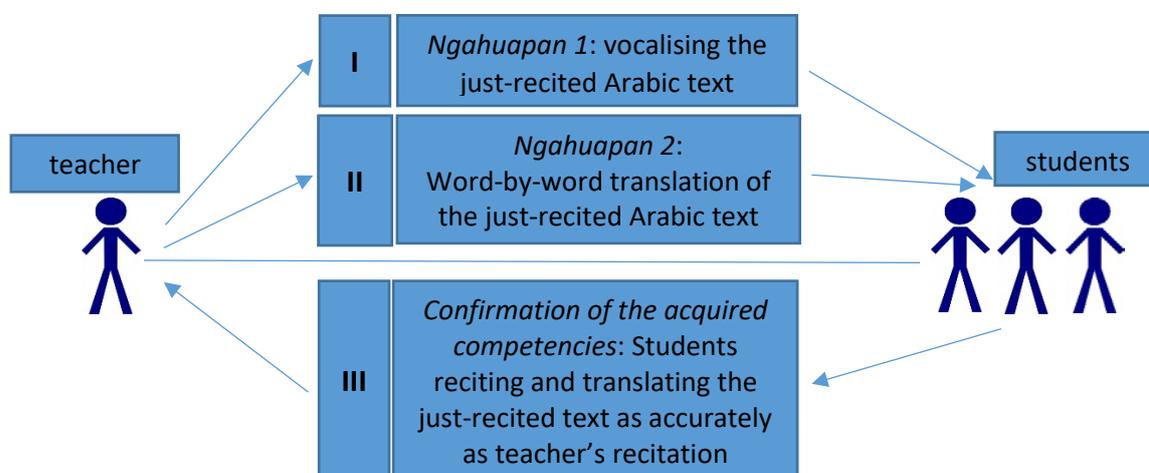


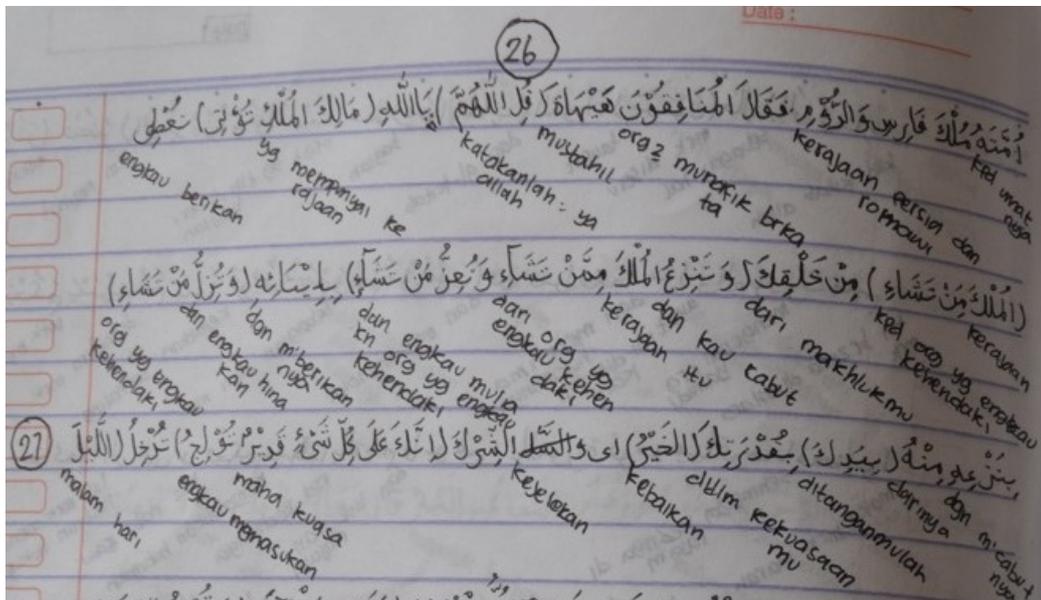
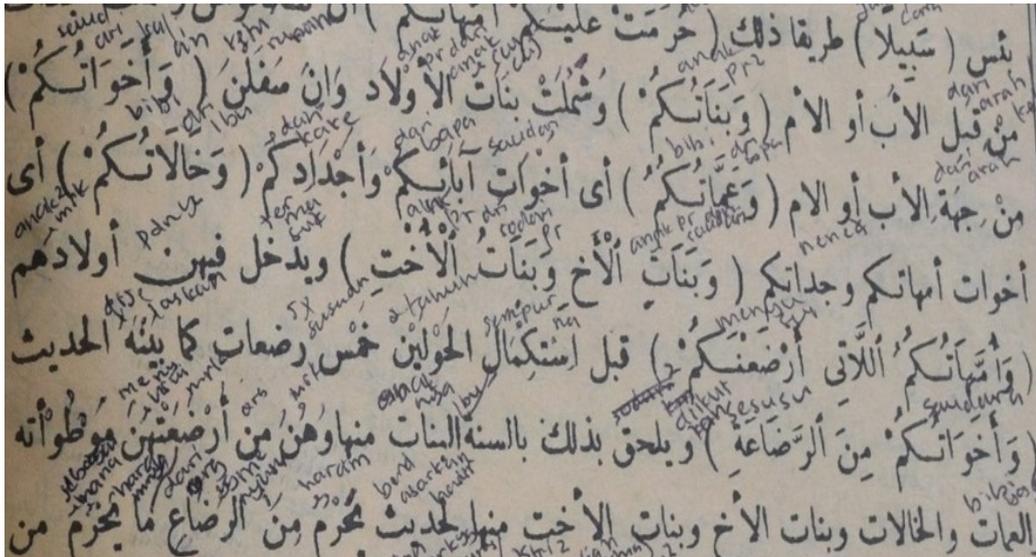
Figure 9.2: The *ngahuapan* process as practiced in Pesantren Persis No. 99.

I now focus on these three phases in more detail, drawing on the differences between this performance and those observed in the traditional environment. As noted, Ustaz A commenced by reciting, with attention to vocalisation. While he did this, students vocalised their texts. He did this a number of times, more quickly as he proceeded, giving students ample time to vocalise. As an observer, I was struck by the students' seriousness in doing

this, although it made sense as they would later be examined on their knowledge of the recited text.

In the second phase, interesting divergences emerged. He recited again, but this time, added an Indonesian translation to his recitation. Once again, he did this a number of times, ensuring that no one would miss the translation he dictated. I noticed students make notes of translation using Roman script. In the traditional environment, as observed in Chapter 7, students used Arabic letters for adding their translations to the text. Furthermore, a number of students, especially female students, had taken the trouble to write out passages of the texts, i.e. the Qur'an and the *Jalalayn*, into blank exercise books as part of their preparation. This practice allowed them to set up more space between lines of text, enabling them to more comfortably add a diagonally-slanted translation in Roman script, as shown in Figure 9.4. I did not observe this in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1.

I also noted that students used a pencil to make vocalisation and translation notes (see Figure 9.3.). The reasons for this emerged in a reminder I heard Ustaz A give to students: to avoid using a ballpoint for note-taking because the notes would be very hard to rub out. "Use a pencil, don't use a pen, for pen ink can't be rubbed out and will make a mess [in your *kitab*]. All those notes will [resemble] knotted, curly [*jabrik*] hair", he reminded a student. This practice contrasts with what I found in the traditional environment where students normally use ballpoint pens for note-taking.



Figures 9.3 and 9.4.: Two examples of note-taking activity in the *Jalalayn* pedagogical practices in classroom. Note that the students have used Roman script rather than Arabic script for the Indonesian notes they make, in contrast to the practice encountered in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 (traditional environment).

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, December 2015, Garut.

In Pesantren Persis No. 99, hand written notes are considered as temporary in the sense that students take notes as a means to achieve required skills and competencies. Therefore, they feel a necessity to keep the *kitab* clean by making notes which can be rubbed out, enabling the book to be used again in the future. I observed that the Persis students, especially

female students, are aware of the value of personal organisation, such as tidiness in presentation, and they usually transferred the text being discussed to a blank exercise book, as shown in Figure 9.4. Aside from allowing more space for translation notes, using an exercise book means they can keep the textbook clean.

In the traditional environment, students are more accustomed to using Arabic-based letters from a young age for note-taking purposes and permanent notes are valued because the books become heirlooms. For students without a background in the traditional *pesantren*, even though whose Arabic might be good, it is difficult to adapt to the use of Arabic-based letters for Sundanese or Indonesian.

Returning to the classroom observation, thirty minutes had elapsed when a disturbance caused interruption of class interaction. A number of late students knocked on the door and asked permission to join the class. This disturbance highlights a distinction between this environment and the traditional environment of Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1. As noted in Chapter 6, in the modern learning environment the value of discipline in attendance is considered a main point for teachers to assess student participation in the classroom. In contrast, traditional *kitab* learning, or *bandongan*, does not enforce the discipline to attend on time and the *kyai* does not mark student attendance before delivering his *bandongan*. Further, the *majelis* usually has entry doors for students to enter without being noticed by the *kyai*. Students are keen to use those entrances so they can enter without drawing the attention of the *kyai*. The classroom, on the other hand, has limited access to enter and exit. The teacher requires early attendance and does not allow late students to join the class, or a late student may enter with a notification that marks may be deducted.

As noted above, the last part of the language skill transmission of Ustaz A is *confirmation*. This part aims to determine whether students have firmly received Ustaz A's language skills in reading and translation. "Ok, read it again Saeful (*Ok, sekali lagi Saeful*

dibaca ulang)!”), he asked a student. The student whose name was called read out loud the verses to others. “Tariq Muhammad Azhar”, he called. A student responded in Sundanese, “He is still not here, Sir (*Teu acan ka dieu Ustaz*)”. “Not here yet (*Belum*)?”, Ustaz A responded in surprise. He kept his eye on students at the back and said in Sundanese, “Usman, read it again, Man (*Usman, baca deui Man*)!”. The student, Usman, loudly read the verses to the audience. This continued until four students had read out loud. As they did this, other students double checked their vocalisations and translations on their *kitab* or notebook.

Although students of traditional *kitab* learning also recite verses together in imitation of the example of the *kyai*, this individual accountability is absent in the traditional *pesantren*. It is not the *kyai*'s duty to check whether his students have successfully received competency in textual skills by selecting some to read the just-recited text along with translation. Rather, the *kyai*'s duty is to assist students to achieve completion of the text and connect them to the noble lineage of learning. This difference reflects the bureaucratisation of the modern environment that makes students (and teachers) individually accountable. What is interesting is that bureaucratisation requires more open and dialogically-oriented communication between teacher and students. Here, students acquire competencies that are constantly evaluated by the teacher during classroom interaction or later in examination.

After one hour of class time had elapsed I observed many students starting to lose focus. But, they did not deliberately make noise, and continued to show full of respect to the teacher. In this tightly-controlled pedagogical situation, there was no need for Ustaz A to search for ways to secure participation. “Are you sleepy? Are you ready to read? (*Tunduh nya. Siap baca*)?”, he said lightheartedly in mixed Sundanese-Indonesian codes to a student who was losing focus, asking him to read the just-recited text to other students.

The above discussion shows that classroom style changes the ways *kitab* as the source of authority is taught. Modern classroom learning is not based on students' intention to have

a co-presence with the *kyai* to complete *kitab*s. Instead, the roles of all participants are established through formal bureaucratisation. The duration of subjects are formally scheduled based on the semester academic calendar with specific competencies that students must achieve and be tested on through examination. Individual students and teachers are made accountable.

9.3.2. The Performance of Ustaz B

As compared to the class of Ustaz A, Ustaz B's *tafsir 'amm* class was more egalitarian, friendly and relaxed. Through many small exchanges, he set up a responsive and warm audience during the class. Ustaz B did not constrain opportunities for input from students, so his teaching seemed more dialogic and fresh to the audience. Compared to Ustaz A's class, a class by Ustaz B featured far greater use of the language of daily interaction, Sundanese, and became more relaxed and open as a result.

To open his class, Ustaz B briefly introduced me in advance as a person who would be observing the class. He referred to me by the Sundanese word to indicate a big brother, *akang*. This cultural reference made the situation more intimate. He then started to attract student attention, talking in Sundanese, asking about the specific verse they were to study that day. This question did not need a correct answer as the teacher seemed to know the verse already. Rather, the question was posed to get a good response from students so the class interaction may seem more friendly. His way of opening his class was as follows:

Teacher:	“Yah ini yang ikut bersama kita, hmmm melihat bagaimana kita belajar <i>Jalalayn</i> . Ayat sabarahaeun?”	“Yes, so here we are together, hmmm, looking at how we will study the <i>Jalalayn</i> . What verse are we up to now?”
Students:	“Dua puluh lima”	“Twenty-five”

He then informed me that the topic he would deliver for this class was the same as the one I had just observed. “If [you] want a different topic, [you] can [observe it] later in grade

two”, he said offering me to observe another of his *tafsir* ‘*amm* classes. After letting me know about the content of the day, he jumped to a question that demanded attention from the students, who responded enthusiastically. His mix of Indonesian and Sundanese helped create a relaxed situation and enabled smooth access to the topic of the day. The following excerpt indicates his style, noting that all students in this class were female:

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Teacher: | Karena kelasnya sama, jadi masih sama Kang Ervan. Kalau yang beda besok di kelas dua. Ayat dua puluh lima tentang menikahi hamba sahaya, boleh tidak? | Since the class will be the same, so [the topic] will be the same, Brother Ervan. If you want a different [topic], [come] tomorrow for grade two. [Now we are studying] verse twenty-five on marrying a woman slave, is this allowed or not? |
| Students: | Boleeehhhh! | Allowed! [loud response] |
| Teacher | Ari hoyong...kalau perempuan dimadu? | If they want to [laughter]...and if a woman is thereby made to become a co-wife? |
| Students | Waahhh, bolehhhh! | [loudly] Oh! Allowed! |
| A student: | Diracun? | What about poisoned? (The wordplay is on <i>dimadu</i> two lines previous, which can be interpreted as ‘to be given honey’). |
| Teacher: | Dimadu bisa, kalau diracun.... | Given a bee honey is possible, but poisoned ... [Students laugh] |
| A different student: | Nggak, suami koq diracun! | No, a husband cannot be poisoned! |
| Teacher | Okkeh ayat dua lima baca heula sareng nya biasa, sok! | Ok, verse twenty-five, read it together first as usual, let’s go! |

The above excerpt shows the dialogical informality of Ustaz B’s style. This egalitarian exchange indicates the freedom with which students engaged in the class interaction. Ustaz B sought to recap by asking questions of the students, some of whom offered humorous and mischievous responses. A student felt comfortable enough to play with words to suggest a different understanding and express her opposition to the concept of polygamy, likening *diracun* (literally meaning: “to be given poison”) with *dimadu* (playing on the meaning: “to be given honey”). The figurative opposition between honey and poison became popular in Indonesia in the 1980s and the following decades through a song, *Madu dan Racun* (Honey

and Poison), by an Indonesian singer, Arie Wibowo (d. 2011). The famous lyric that I am discussing here is as follows:

Madu di tangan kananmu	Honey in your right hand
Racun di tangan kirimu	Poison in your left hand
Aku tak tahu mana yang akan kau berikan padaku	I don't know which one you will give to me

The above lyric does not mention or refer to polygamy. Instead, it refers to a male-female relationship in which the speaker is unsure of the future of the relationship. A good future is symbolised by honey, a bad future by poison. The symbolic contrast is used in daily spoken language to express speakers' positions toward polygamy. *Dimadu*, a passive form of the verb *madu*, refers to the practice of polygamy. It implicitly proposes that polygamy is a good thing for a woman, meaning "giving something sweet to a woman". The opposite one, *diracun*, sees the practice in a negative light. In this case, Ustaz B's style allowed students to freely speak up, as a classroom ice breaker, that in turn created effective two-way communication between teacher and students.

After this opening, he asked students to open the *kitab* and find the requested page, telling them to recite some verses altogether. The students remained silent, wondering who was leading the recitation until a student accidentally started to recite alone. She felt embarrassed and all the students giggled accordingly. Both teacher and students seemed to look at each other until the teacher gave a verbal sign to start reciting the Qur'an together. This miscommunication contributed to the creation of a good and warm interaction. When they finished reciting verse twenty-five, the teacher appeared to realise that there were two verses to be studied in this meeting. He asked the students to continue reciting another verse. Here is the translation version of the recited verses (Ali, 1946, pp. 187-188):

Surat al-Nisa' [4] verses 25-26

Verse 25 If any of you have not the means wherewith to wed free believing women, they may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess: And God hath full knowledge about your Faith. Ye are one from another: wed them with the leave of their owners, and give them their dowers, according to what is reasonable: they should be chaste, not lustful, nor taking paramours: when they are taken in wedlock, if they fall into shame, their punishment is half that for free women. This (permission) is for those among you who fear sin; but it is better for you that ye practise self-restraint. And God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

Verse 26 God doth wish to make clear to you and to show you the ordinances of those before you; and (He Doth wish to) turn to you (In Mercy): and God is All-knowing, All-wise.

Ustaz B's pedagogy was light and enjoyable because of his constant good humour. He moved between parts of the lesson smoothly, as indicated by the word play below, which occurred when he called for a student to read. In this example, the teacher spoke to a student named Sofia:

Teacher: "Sofi-A, bukan Sofi-B. Ayo "Sofi-A, not Sofi-B. Read, Sofia!"
Sofia"

Sofia: "Ayat na heula Taz atau...?" "The verse just before, Ustaz, or...?"

Teacher: "Langsunglah men-tarjim satu- "Just go directly, translate one by
satu!" one!"

In this example, Sofia was asked to recite the verses and translate them. Unlike Ustaz A's class, Ustaz B did not dictate the verses himself in advance for students to listen. Instead, he directly invited students one by one to read the text along with translation to other students. This increased the level of student participation and made the recitation activity more dialogic. His style contrasted with Ustaz A's, who chose to implement firmer management of the pedagogical process.

9.4. *Tafsir*-elaboration: text and meaning

Differences in styles of the two teachers emerged clearly in the elaboration phase, specifically in the extent to which they remained within, or moved away from, the literal textual meanings of the *Jalalayn* text. My point is that the two teachers have different approaches to the *Jalalayn* as source of authority. Ustaz A was reluctant to lose sight of the literal text in his elaboration, whereas Ustaz B was more open to a broader range of contexts. While Ustaz A required students to limit their understanding to what the text offered, Ustaz B engaged in interpretation that covered a wider field of reference. For Ustaz B, the *Jalalayn* pedagogy was an exercise that opened up study of a wide range of Islamic and non-religious resources, including the great figures of sufism and his preference for visual illustration using the white board.

Ustaz A positioned himself as an authority responsible for transmitting content of the *kitab*. He orally presented the content and made it accessible to listeners. Conveyance of linguistic meanings was foremost in his mind. To him, students succeed when they are capable of reading recited Arabic texts and correctly presenting the related translation. Accurate repetition of the way he reads and translates the text is a skill and competence that students must master during his class. Further, the historical facts he relied upon in his pedagogy were limited to those mentioned in the *Jalalayn* or the gloss of Imam al-Sawi (d. 1825), which he used during his class. A student achieves basic competency when they have memorised these. The narratives related to students by Ustaz A were all confined by the *kitab*. I noted this in connection with verse 21 of *Surat Ali 'Imran* [3], translated above, which mentions the slaying of prophets. To this teacher, the number of prophets killed was important and necessary knowledge for students. This information is contained in both the *Jalalayn* and al-Sawi's gloss.

In contrast, Ustaz B reflected on the subject text to students based not only on the *Jalayan*, but also on his general knowledge and a wider range of symbolic possibilities. As noted in Ustaz B's presentation of textual pedagogy, this teacher frequently interrupted student recitations to make correction, give appreciation, or explain certain parts of the text that, in his opinion, required elaboration. In doing so, he did not ask the student reading to stop, rather his body language and direct response indicated his strong intention to provide explanation of certain parts of the recited text. He did not have preferences for the things that needed elaboration. Aside from topics explained in the *Jalalayn*, his elaboration also included aspects commonly accessible in daily life and was illustrative.

In the following, I provide examples of his reflections on the subject text he conveyed to students during his *tafsir 'amm* classes I observed, in which Ustaz B created a distance between his performance and the linguistic and synoptic explanations provided in the *Jalalayn* text, finding a way to put the related verses into a context established by himself rather than directly by the text.

The first example is his reflection on the verse (25) of *Surat al-Nisa'* [4], as translated above, on marrying female slaves. Here, Ustaz B explained that the coming of Islam abolished many types of marriage which were common practice among pre-Islamic societies, one being polyandry. In pre-Islamic times, women were not restricted to one sexual partner, so when a woman gave birth the father was identified based on physical resemblance to one of her sexual partners. Ustaz B described this kind of marriage practice as "like the practice of animals (*seperti binatang*)" and this reflection encouraged him to expand this digression to wider reflection on the verse and distinguishing qualities of humans. He spoke in more detail about the elevation of humans over animals through the coming of Islam, using a mode of deliberation similar to folk logic by reflecting on the human physique, in which the brain

is at the top of the body, as shown in Illustration 9.5. Below is my version of a rough illustration he made on the board explaining the differences between humans and cattle:

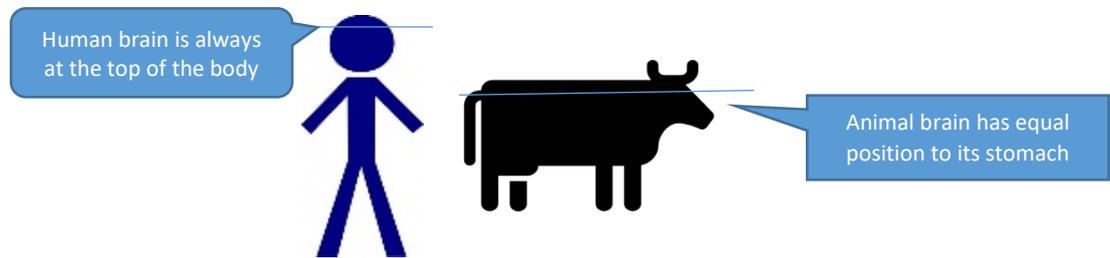


Illustration 9.5.: Human and cattle in comparison. The re-modification is mine based on an illustration made by Ustaz B on the board

Using the above illustration, he explained that humans are honoured and positioned over all the creatures due to their intelligence. Positioning of the human brain at the top of the body signifies that humans are advised to think of more urgent problems than their stomachs. In this regard, he explained that when humans prioritise “matters of the stomach”, they downgrade themselves to be physically like cattle. He then referred to verse 179 of *Surat al-An‘am* (the heights) which compares the behaviour of some humans to cattle.

His elaboration on human privilege based on position of the brain brought him to reflect on intellect as God’s gift to humans that makes humans most perfect of all the creatures. Ustaz B continued by explaining that humans were also given God’s spirit as God breathed into him, referring to *Surat al-Hijr* [15] (the rocky tract) verse 29: “When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him”.

When Ustaz B moved from the literal text of the *Jalalayn* to figurative and symbolic excursions he was exercising an interpretative strategy characteristic of sufism. It is therefore not surprising that explicitly sufi material was included in his pedagogical range. Continuing the theme of God’s privileging of humans over non-human creatures, he symbolically

characterised humans as a form of mirror in which God wants to see Himself through His creation. In this way, the human has mercy and other Godly attributes which are properly attributed to God. Here, he quoted the Great Shaykh (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*) Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 1240), a Sufi mystic, as follows: “Thus Allah is your mirror in which you see yourself, and you are His mirror in which He sees His names” (Ibn ‘Arabi, n.d., p. 62).

Ustaz B explained that humans, as represented by the perfect man (*al-insan al-kamil*), are mirrors in which God’s attributes are reflected to the perfect man. As God has mercy and grace, humans are advised to spread their mercy and grace over the world and act in a godly way. He strongly advised students that such qualities of God’s attributes should be implemented on a daily basis. It is important to note how far he has travelled from the literal text of the *Jalalayn*. His elaboration was high in ethical and moral teachings of Islam, but was enabled rather than constrained by the *Jalalayn*.

In other *tafsir ‘amm* classes I observed, I also noticed Ustaz B’s preference to enhance his elaborations of the subject text through his own illustrations. An example is his *tafsir*-elaboration of verses 151-153 from *Surat Ali ‘Imran* [3], which focusses on the Battle of Uhud, the translation of which is as follows (Ali, 1946, pp. 161-162):

***Surat Ali ‘Imran* [3] verses 151-153**

- Verse 151 Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, for that they joined companions with God, for which He had sent no authority: their abode will be the Fire: and evil is the home of the wrong-doers!
- Verse 152 God did indeed fulfill His promise to you when ye with His permission were about to annihilate your enemy, —until ye flinched and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed it after He brought you in sight (of the Booty) which ye covet. Among you are some that hanker after this world and some that desire the Hereafter. Then did He divert you from your foes in order to test you. But He forgave you: for God is full of grace to those who believe.
- Verse 153 Behold! Ye were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at any one, and the Apostle in your rear was calling you back. There did God give you one distress after another by way of requital, to teach you

in the Battle of Uhud, as shown in Illustration 9.6. Ustaz B utilised the board to help create a shared imagination among students on the battle narrated in the Qur'an and commented upon in the *Jalalayn*. In presenting his illustration on the board, Ustaz B identified the position of the Meccan troops with the traditional Jolly Roger flag of piracy with the skull and crossbones symbol pictured in the uncoloured triangle-shaped flag (top left of the Illustration 9.6).

Presentation of this flag is absent from the *Jalalayn* text, nor does the flag come from the prophet's seventh century Arabia. Rather, the meaning of this flag is socially interpreted by participants in this environment to symbolise wrongdoing. Attachment of this flag to the group in the picture helped students create a shared imagination of how the battle happened, especially in distinguishing the positions of the two different groups. This example shows how *tafsir* pedagogy in this milieu is not necessarily restricted to elaboration of what the *Jalalayn* contains *per se* as a teacher is able to draw on a wide vocabulary of symbolic resources. Furthermore, the *tafsir 'amm* subject provides an opportunity for teachers to reflect on and produce interpretations based on a wide range of symbolic possibilities.

9.5. Conclusion

This chapter explored *Jalalayn* pedagogical practices in the modern environment, in which the roles of participants are formally determined by a bureaucratic model of education that resembles the model of the secular education system. Both students and teachers are accountable to the learning goals at the core of this system and classroom styles display a pedagogical interaction that is, in comparison with what was observed in the traditional setting of Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 (especially see Chapter 7), more egalitarian. The classroom interaction fosters a relatively open dialogue between teachers and learners.

Persis education opens its educational offerings to a wide variety of pedagogical approaches to the Qur'an. The institution hires qualified teachers who bring their own

orientations and pedagogical styles. I encountered two models (i.e. Ustaz A and Ustaz B) that are both acceptable to the Persis educational milieu, one favouring a strict textual orientation and the other opening the Qur'an and the *tafsir* textbook to a wide variety of techniques and methods of interpretation. Ustaz A more actively focused on transmitting language skills and the linguistic and synoptic explanation found in the textbook. He positioned himself as transmitter of contents of the *Jalalayn* (and its gloss, which he carried during the class). Meanwhile, Ustaz B built a dialogic communication to engage the attention of students. In doing so, he produced more reflections on the just-recited text with illustrative pictures or allegorical interpretations. Thus, he facilitated a broader, more diverse way to interpret the text under study.

These two different orientations to the classroom *Jalalayn*-based pedagogy reflect, in one educational environment, two elements of a process that is fundamental in the development of Indonesian Islamic education. As noted in an earlier chapter, Steenbrink (1986) pointed out that use of Arabic texts (*kitab*) like the *Jalalayn* for pedagogical practices in non-Arabic speaking countries like Indonesia led to development of a pedagogy focused on textual skills, and that this was challenged with the development of modern institutions as pedagogical understandings focussed more on textbook styles with less memorisation and textual focus. From my observations of how the *Jalalayn* is used for pedagogical practices in Pesantren Persis No. 99, Persis seems a porous educational environment in which these two different orientations are acceptable in the study of *tafsir*.

Chapter 10 : *Jalalayn* performances in the *kitab*-reading competition

10.1. Introduction

This chapter engages with a new context for study and performance of *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, namely, competition. In previous chapters, I described activities taking place in traditional and modern Islamic learning institutions. In contrast, the setting under consideration here is a product of recent developments in Indonesia's public Islamic sphere.

The overall argument presented concerns an issue central to understanding *tafsir* pedagogy in Indonesia, and that is educational inequality. As explained in Chapter 4, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, in collaboration with supporters of traditional education, is taking steps to equalise the *pesantren* institution with the non-religious education system and is being encouraged to rectify certain historical inequalities between these systems. The *kitab*-reading competition facilitates achieving this goal by institutionalising this educational practice in a homogenous way, in contrast to wide regional variation which is a feature of traditional *kitab*-based education. The goal is achieved by placing the skills of such learning, previously existing only in *pesantrens*, onto a national stage. *Kitab* learning skills are emerging from environments far from the public eye. Through the *kitab*-reading competition, traditional pedagogical practices are given a place at the centre of national activity.

A secondary argument developed in this chapter refers back to Chapter 6, where I contend that development of self-confidence was a key constitutive value in the *kitab*-reading competition environment. I connect that value here with the key structure of the competition: subjecting participants to an ordeal. Participants in a *Jalalayn*-reading competition endure two phases of an ordeal, corresponding to the phases of all *tafsir*-

pedagogy discussed in this thesis. The first is a phase of reading aloud concentrating on correct vocalisation and translation which tests contestant capability in textual skills. The second is the elaboration phase, in which the contestant's dialogue with judges requires an appropriate response in a short period of time. This tests a contestant's capability in producing an interpretation or reflection of the just-recited text. These phases are ordeals that students must endure. In situations where participants are uncertain or ignorant of the correct response, they may deal with the situation by producing speculative readings and elaborations, which are opportunities to display self-confidence. They are also required to avoid something that is completely natural for them, and that is the use of regional language which is strictly forbidden in the competition. Linguistic lapses of this kind are one of the most common mistakes made by students.

Through these ordeals, students get the opportunity to speak in socially appropriate ways through participation in the competition where they are arranged to perform in public, presenting their verbal skills in reading and interpreting the *kitab* as a source of Islamic authority. This pressure to show competency in verbal responses is, interestingly, lacking in both fields of common *Jalalayn* pedagogy (i.e. *majelis* and classroom). In the competition, students are scheduled to show their skills and learning on a stage, as if the whole nation were watching.

10.2. A *kitab*-reading competition in Ciamis, West Java: a description

In May 2017, I attended a *kitab*-reading competition at the regency level conducted in Ciamis, the capital city of Ciamis Regency, located in the south-eastern part of West Java province. Ciamis shares a provincial border with Central Java. The tournament was conducted over a period of three days in the Ciamis Islamic Centre (IC) complex. This is a complex of buildings mainly used for Islamic activities. The largest building functions as a multipurpose hall for religious events and other purposes. For example, a wedding ceremony

had been held the day before the competition. Committee members had to rush to complete preparation of the venue until after midnight of the evening before the competition.

I arrived at Ciamis one day before the event. On the first morning of the event, I stood by the main entrance of the IC multipurpose hall to attend the opening ceremony. A huge crowd had already gathered in the IC area. They were mostly teenagers from senior and junior high schools wearing school uniforms. I cannot precisely estimate how many there were, but a committee member told me that student attendance at the opening ceremony was likely to reach about four thousand. So many people wanted to attend the opening ceremony that many were left standing outside the hall.



Figure 10.1.: An enthusiastic crowd attended the opening ceremony of the *kitab*-reading competition.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 1 May 2017, Ciamis.

Spectators and contestants enjoyed live Islamic music performances while waiting for the ceremony to start. At the scheduled start time, committee members were negotiating with the government beurocracy to enable Mrs Khofifah Parawansa, the current Minister of Social

Affairs of Indonesia, to attend the ceremony. At the time she was on a formal visit to Ciamis. The ceremony started while the committee remained hopeful that the Minister would attend. The Regent of Ciamis formally opened the event. In his speech, he relayed the Minister's message that she was sorry for not attending the event due to time constraints.

The opening ceremony took about three hours and was completed before lunch. After a lunch break, people moved to the venues for the events of the competition. The judges and committee gathered at a different place for a meeting where they received relevant information and ensured unification of perspectives among judges. At the time I was sitting cross-legged in the secretariat room next to the meeting room and a committee member invited me to observe the meeting. I entered the meeting room where all attendants (i.e. the judges) sat cross-legged on the carpet listening to the presentation. Proceedings of the meeting were conducted mostly in Sundanese, which made the atmosphere relaxed and intimate. After the briefing was complete, the judges then entered the secretariat room one by one to collect *kitab*s to be used in the competition.

The *kitab*-reading competition took place in the rooms located on the ground floor of the pilgrimage dormitory, the building that mainly functions as temporary accommodation for those about to leave for pilgrimage. The venue is called *majelis*, connotating the concept of a learning space for Islamic pedagogy as found in the traditional environment. Each venue physically looked like a classroom with chairs and table. A competition stage, known as competition desk (*meja musabaqah*) or reading pulpit (*minbar qiraat*), was placed to face the audience with a banner behind stuck on a big window displaying the name of the competition, location and date of event. The organiser placed three lights on the stage (red, yellow and green) to function as the timer during performances. Three desks for judges to work from directly faced the competition stage. Meanwhile, a desk for the Master of Ceremonies (MC) and his secretary was placed at the right side between the judges and

competition stages. A transit spot (*kursi mutola'ah*) was located behind the judge desks. This physical arrangement took up half the room area in total, while chairs for waiting contestants were placed in remaining half of the room area which was closer to the door. Spectators who wanted to watch the event stood around the entry door.

Similar to the Qur'anic recitation tournament (the *Musabaqah tilawat al-Quran*, or MTQ), the *kitab*-reading competition is divided into branches (*cabang-cabang*) consisting of various subjects in Islamic studies. In the sixth *kitab*-reading competition at the Ciamis regency level, the organiser held eleven branches of tournament. They were Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Arabic grammar (*nahw*), Islamic ethics (*akhlaq*), history of Islam (*tarikh*), Qur'an interpretation (*tafsir*), Qur'anic sciences (*'ulum al-tafsir*), prophetic sayings (*hadith*), sciences of prophetic sayings (*'ulum al-hadith*), principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), Arabic rhetoric (*balaghah*) and Islamic theology (*tauhid*).

Each branch of the *kitab*-reading competition is commonly divided into three levels, i.e. basic (*ula*), intermediate (*wustha*) and advanced (*'ulya*). Each branch has three judges assisted by two committee members. Division of the *kitab* competition into this hierarchy (i.e. basic, intermediate and advanced) has an effect on conduct of the competition. Some *kitab*s require advanced learning and therefore do not involve competitions at the basic level, only at intermediate and advanced levels. For this reason, the subjects of *tafsir* and *'ulum al-tafsir* do not include a basic level competition.

Along with the main branches mentioned above, there are additional branches of Islamic musical performance (*marawis*), chanting of versified grammar text known as the *Alfiyah* (*exibisi Alfiyah* or *tatalu Alfiyah*) and cooking boiled rice (*nasi liwet*). The latter is a display of culinary skills customarily practiced in the *pesantren*.

The *exibisi Alfiyah* provides insight regarding the atmosphere and intention of the competition in general. A committee member stated that the branch of *exibisi Alfiyah*

constitutes a new branch of competition that presents a unique musical performance of the rhyming text of the *Alfiyah*, a book on Arabic grammar authored by Ibn Malik in the thirteenth century. This is a fun learning practice that has become a common practice among traditional students as a strategy for memorising *kitab*s such as the *Alfiyah*. The *exibisi Alfiyah* is locally known as '*tatalu*' (Indonesian, '*bertalu-talu*') which refers to the rhymed sounds created by hitting household items together, for example, a pan and its lid, bottles, pieces of bamboo, plastic buckets, water containers, bath scoops and other similar things. Some common equipment students use to hit the household items are metal spoons and bamboo sticks. Students usually performed this in pairs during breaks from classes. This is a fun activity that refreshes students, while assisting them to memorise the text. That it is included in the competition indicates an intention to showcase *pesantren* culture.

According to competition guidelines (Panitia MQK Ke-VI Kab. Ciamis 2017), the committee applies the same criteria of assessment to all branches, covering four areas: fluency (*fasahat al-qira'at*), correctness (*sihhat al-qira'at*), comprehension (*fahm al-ma'ani*) and memorisation of source *kitab*s.

Regarding the criterion of fluency, judges assess how contestants pronounce Arabic words with proper intonation when performing a reading aloud. They also assess how contestants control the speed of their reading (*sur'ah tabi'iyah*). The second criterion, correctness (*sihhat al-qira'at*), is commonly judged more closely, as judges frequently ask for clarification of why a contestant decided to create certain forms of individual words (morphology/*binyah sarfiyah*) and sentence structure (*tarakib nahwiyah*). Judges may also request an explanation of how some chosen words function in the sentences (*'alamat al-i'rab*) the contestants created. These criteria reflect the importance placed on reading Arabic texts with correct attention to morphology and grammar in the *pesantren* system. Regardless

of the branch, it is inevitable that the *kitab*-reading competition closely connects to this pedagogical value and competency.

The third criterion, comprehension (*fahm al-ma'ani*), involves judges requesting an oral interpretation after a contestant finishes presenting an oral translation. Here, contestants are requested to provide a summary of what the text is about. In this question-answer competition component, judges occasionally asked contestants to provide an interpretation that responds to current issues. The fourth criterion connects to verbal skills in reciting requested source texts (*matn*) and poems (*nazm*) from memory before the judges. As indicated in the sections to follow, judges frequently ask participants to display such competency. Having a good memory of related source texts and poems is important in this contest.

As late afternoon approached, contestants and judges were ready in their respective rooms. I attended the competition room for the branch of Qur'an interpretation. The competition began with the MC announcing contest rules and a reminder that contestants are required to use Indonesian language during their twelve-minute reading performance, especially in presenting their verbal skills in translation and *tafsir* elaboration. This requirement brings a new dimension to the exercise of skills in this contest. The *ngalogat* tradition I described in previous chapters consists of speech and note-taking activity in a regional language (Sundanese). For many contestants, the obligation to use Indonesian language for presenting oral translation and elaboration was challenging because they had experienced most *kitab*-learning in regional languages, i.e. Sundanese or Javanese.

The MC checked the presence of contestants by calling their names one by one. The *Jalalayn* reading contest I observed had seven participants, male and female, participating at the same venue but competing for a different trophy. Males and females compete in alternate turns. When a contestant's name and contestant number are called out, the MC

immediately announces the verses of the Qur'an to be recited before the audience. The MC had been advised in advance to not announce the municipalities from which the contestants originated. As a committee member explained, this knowledge could influence the neutrality of the judges.

Except for the first contestant, the MC usually called two contestants together at a time. The contestant called first was asked to proceed to the competition stage. Meanwhile, the contestant called second was directed to go to the MC desk to get the *maqra* (an envelope containing a note specifying the verse they will be asked to read). This contestant then moved to the transit spot, where they had ten minutes to prepare. As this second contestant prepares in the transit spot, the first-called is contesting (see Figure 10.2).



Figure 10.2.: A female contestant performing reading of *Tafsis al-Jalalayn*.

Photo: Ervan Nurtawab, 1 May 2017, in Ciamis.

At first, the schedule was not strictly observed, for management of performances struggled with timing issues involving proper use of the lights on the contestant's table. Being granted too much time, contestants continued beyond their allotted verses as if there

were no way of cutting the off at the end of the assigned verses. Nevertheless, the contest continued until the time of evening prayer and the MC suggested that the competition for the advanced level start the following morning. Contestants and judges agreed then left the room for evening break time. The procedures described above continued for the three days of the tournament.

The tournament is conducted in a lively and energised atmosphere. At the end of the culinary competition, the organiser presented the food cooked for participants. I was at the venue when a committee member kindly invited me to join the lunch party. Participants of this event had tried to cook to the best of their abilities, and as a result, many people thought what they had cooked seemed to be more luxurious than traditional student food. As the first lady of the Ciamis Regency noted, there should have been limitations built into the culinary competition to better represent the real life of students living in the *pesantren*.

The tournament ended in a flurry of activity. As the time of late afternoon prayer approached, there were still many Islamic musical performances waiting to compete. Therefore, the organiser rushed to ensure all performances were conducted before late evening approached, wanting to formally close the tournament directly after all competitions were finished. Some committee members rushed into the main hall to prepare things and assure participants and spectators that the Regent was available to attend the closing ceremony. This ceremony was successfully conducted after midnight. All contestants mingled in a festive atmosphere celebrating their achievements in a group gathering and taking pictures together.

10.3. From the *pesantren* to the public stage

In this section, I return to the issue of inequality. The traditional *pesantren*, the oldest Islamic form of education, has been left behind by more recent developments in pedagogy. Modernised Islamic schools have undergone significant development and are widely

considered to be capable of providing more opportunities for graduates to gain a satisfying career. Therefore, those who decide to fully study *kitab*s under traditional *pesantrens* face obstacles. They are left behind because, for one reason, their expertise is not formally recognised by the state.

As described in Chapter 3, the Ministry of Religious Affairs in its early formative period commenced to implement a convergence project which encouraged traditional *pesantrens* to embrace modernisation by developing *madrasah*, a type of Islamic school that accommodates general subjects. Under this project, the *pesantrens* were advised to run pedagogical practices in classrooms with a structured curriculum and teach general (secular) subjects as the major part of the curriculum, with Islamic subjects forming a smaller portion. The Ministry itself did not intervene formally in the traditional system, which remained under authority of kin groups of their leaders.

Some traditional *pesantrens* embraced this modernisation project, but the majority maintained traditional learning styles. Graduates of traditional *pesantrens* began to experience educational inequality as they were unable to obtain access to higher formal education and apply for vacancies in governmental bodies. They were regarded as having no recognised qualifications. Against that background, the *pesantren* sector has since tried to achieve educational equality and this sets the context for interpreting the public *kitab*-reading competition. The competition addresses educational inequality by making a publically visible spectacle of the symbols of traditional Islamic learning. Not surprisingly, the competition has received wide acceptance in Muslim-majority provinces. For example, all branches of the Ministry at regional levels in West Java regularly run this event with the best performers participating at the national level. Through this format, styles of traditional Islamic learning find viable expression on the public stage, outside the traditional gathering halls where they are witnessed only by students and staff.

10.4. Competition as an ordeal

As previously noted, the public display created in the *kitab*-reading competition establishes what I call an ‘ordeal situation’. In this ordeal situation, contestants are compelled under pressure to show their acquired skills and competencies on the knowledge of the *kitab*. Students welcome the opportunity. Participation in the *kitab*-reading competition is a source of high self-esteem and a great opportunity for selected students to receive recognition of individual capability. Furthermore, educational institutions where the contestants study gain prestige and reputations as credible institutions.

My focus in this section is on speculative responses of students in which they creatively negotiate situations for which they are not fully prepared. A speculative reading takes place when a contestant attempts to smoothly pass through a difficult part of the text. Students also speculate on elaboration, providing interpretations without proper knowledge of the passage and its references. I also refer to linguistic lapses, meaning a contestant’s switch to regional language, which is strictly against the rules. As noted, the *kitab*-reading competition is part of a national standardisation policy and, as such, the use of the standard Indonesian language is compulsory. The reality is that many contestants are accustomed to a traditional *kitab*-practice in a regional language (i.e. Sundanese).

10.4.1. Speculative reading

In Indonesian *pesantrens*, the ability to perform a reading of *kitab*s in front of an audience in *majelis*, classrooms and mosques constitutes a prestigious achievement. In both the traditional and modern educational environment, acquisition of such an ability usually creates a hope among people around them that with this developed skill they will be interested in becoming a distinguished preacher in the future. In Indonesian Muslim societies, a successful preacher is one who can support their speech with verbal skills in making a

direct quotation from Qur'anic verses and hadith as well as Arabic sources that are *acceptable* to the audience. The *kitab* competition tests these competencies by ordeal.

Contestants seek to pass through the reading part of the ordeal smoothly. They anxiously read through the text while waiting in the transit spot, trying to identify Arabic words in the ten minutes given for preparation. It needs to be remembered that the *Jalalayn* is not a vocalised text and students must make decisions about variant readings on the spot. My observations revealed that when contestants encounter a difficult part of the text to read some attempt to find their own strategy for progressing by: (1) forcing themselves to read the text loudly or (2) skipping it. Both choices are potentially detected and are subject to requests for further clarification by the judges.

As for the first strategy, i.e. forcing oneself to read the text loudly, I provide an example of how a contestant tried his best to present a successful reading performance. This contestant found some parts of the text difficult to read, failing to resolve the vocalisations during the ten-minute preparation. Faced with evaluation by the three judges, he forced himself to read it despite making many mistakes in both vocalisation and translation. The judges would immediately perceive this and subject the contestant to an ordeal by asking the student for justification of their reading.

A judge asked for further clarification of a *Jalalayn* passage that the participant had recited in a confused way as follows: *wa-fī qirā'ah a an bi-hamzat al-tawbīkh*. Correct translation of the passage would be, “and in one variant Qur'anic reading the two letters *hamzah* [mean] ‘the act of reproaching’”. The contestant, despite lack of understanding, was desperate to provide a translation and mistakenly decided that *hamzah* in the excerpt was a reference to Imam Hamzah (d. 773). Imam Hamzah was a well-known Qur'anic reciter from the eighth century whose work is referred to in the *Jalalayn*. This was a speculative reading as the word *hamzah* in this passage referred to the Arabic letter *hamzah*, not the person. The

judge then asked for clarification about this variant reading of *hamzah*, to which the contestant had no answer. In the dialogue that continued, the judge stated how this part of the *Jalalayn* text is correctly read and translated.

The second strategy for progressing through a difficult text in the recitation phase is to skip unfamiliar words. I observed a contestant skip difficult parts of the text, meaning that her reading performance lacked some parts of the *Jalalayn*. She concentrated on getting through parts of the *Jalalayn* text she was able to read but skipped the rest. When the session for presenting the translation came, she completed the ordeal by concentrating on the easier parts of the text, which were the ones she had been able to recite. Her translation, as a result, was very general in meaning. Nevertheless, she successfully conveyed a clear meaning to the audience. In this case, her loud reading presentation ran smoothly, and the judges did not ask her why she left out some parts of the *Jalalayn* text.

10.4.2. Linguistic lapse

During my observations, I witnessed a talk delivered by the MC in the opening session of the *tafsir* branch of the competition. The MC reminded contestants to prepare themselves with a proper level of fluency in the Indonesian standard language as those who were victorious at this level would represent the regency to compete at the provincial and, if they won again, at national level. Students who did not use Indonesian could not progress in this way. Yet, when under pressure from judges, not all students were able to comply with this rule. The MC gave an example of a contestant who was asked to give a translation of *Surat al-Baqarah* (the Heifer). The contestant answered it as “*sapi perempuan* (literally means, the woman cow)” instead of “*sapi betina* (the heifer)”. Word choice did not do damage to translation of the reference, from this perspective it was correct. But the student’s use of Indonesian was nevertheless poor. In Indonesian, the word ‘*perempuan*’ is the correct a reference to a woman/lady and is not used to refer to an animal.

Language standardisation in the competition has striking effects. The *Jalalayn* is a printed book to aid the study of the Qur'an. But in pedagogy and study of the book, oral communication is immensely important. Not surprisingly, most students experience this oral communication in a local language shared by teacher and student. From this perspective, the rule requiring the use of Indonesian language during the contest results is a challenge for many competitors. The rule requires a departure from established usage. The *pesantren* institutions that maintain communication in a regional language for pedagogical practices therefore need to find a strategy for effectively developing student competency in Indonesian. There has been no state intervention up to the present time to require a change to the way the *pesantrens* run education in the national language. But, the *kitab*-reading competition is having the effect of requiring greater attention to Indonesian.

I observed that, despite their best efforts to comply with the rule, many students lapsed into Sundanese. This frequently happened when a contestant was being required to give a quick explanation. In the example below, a judge asked a contestant to provide justification for her answer. In response she recited a poem in Arabic she had memorised as part of her grammatical study. She then intended to provide the recited poem with Indonesian translation. Struggling with the difficulty of expressing something in Indonesian that she would usually express in Sundanese, she lapsed into Sundanese in last words of this excerpt (*the mim dies*):

- J: Question number one, please explain why [the word] *uli*, when the letter *wawu* follows the 'u' vocalization (*dammah*), is not extended for two vowel counts?
- C: Because [the 'moon' definite article] *alif lam qomariah* makes it *idafat* [joined].
- J: [the judge did not comment on this answer, but jumped to another question] Then [the phrase] *idha hakamtum bayna*, what is this pronunciation called?
- C: *Ikhfa syafawi* [transformation of *ba* to *mim*] because a *mim-sakinah* is placed before the letter *ba*.
- J: Please give us a justification.
- C: [chants the poem] **fa-al-awwal al-ikhfa' 'inda al-ba', mīman bi-ghunnah ma'a al-ikhfa'**, umm, the *mim dies*. [She stops here, realising she has lapsed into Sundanese while trying to translate the chanted poem].

The poem she quoted comes from a popular work in the field of *tajwid* (guideline to the correct pronunciation of the Qur'an), entitled *Tuhfat al-atfal wa-al-ghilman fi tajwid al-Qur'an* (the gift for children and young men in guiding to the correct Qur'anic pronunciation) authored by Sulayman al-Jamzuri (d. 1783).

10.4.3. Speculative elaboration

The second part of the ordeal is conducted as an opportunity for judges to confirm a contestant's comprehension of the recited and translated Arabic texts. All contestants are given the same period of time to provide a summary of what the recited verse and its *Jalalalyn* text are about. The judges then request elaboration on specific related issues. The format of the contest is designed to put contestants in a difficult situation in which they are required to think fast in responding to questions from the judges. Nervousness is inevitable, and this adds to the spectacle of the event. In addition to their position on the stage, exposed to public attention, other restrictions, such as use of language and strict time allocation, also place them under pressure. These conditions contribute to contestants' resort to 'speculative elaborations', which are more based on guesswork rather than informed thinking.

The following dialogue shows how a competitor responded to an ordeal situation with a speculative response. This dialogue occurred soon after the contestant translated Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 221, translated by Ali (1946, p. 87) as follows:

<p>(Wa-lā tankihū al-mushrikāt ḥattá yu'minna wa-la-amah mu'minah khayr min mushrikah wa-law a'jabatkum, wa-lā tunkihū al-mushrikin ḥattá yu'minū wa-la-'abd mu'min khayr min mushrik wa-law a'jabakum....)</p>	<p>Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), until they believe: A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you, nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe: a man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he allures you</p>
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One of the judges then asked questions about the verse. Initially, the contestant successfully provided a convincing answer, but as the dialogue continued the contestant withered under the ordeal:

- J: Ok, there is a command at the top of the verse *wa-lā-tankihū* [don't marry], while below it is another command *wa-lā-tunkihū* [nor marry (your girls)]. To whom are both commands addressed?
- C: The first one *wa-lā-tankihū*, refers to the chapter on marriage, men are forbidden to marry polytheist women. [The second] *wa-lā-tunkihū*, on the other hand, is *bina' muta'addi* [intransitive], *thulathi mazid* chapter one, section one [one additional letter in a three-lettered word].³⁵ So, [this command is addressed to] those men who have authority to marry a female relative to a man. They are forbidden to marry off their relative to a polytheist man.
- J: One hundred [percent correct]!
[The audience show approval by applauding. Then, the judge continues with a more detailed question]
If we relate [this verse] to the current situation, with either Muslims or Non-Muslims, people sometimes accuse others of being polytheistic. In this regard, is there a limitation prohibiting Muslims from marrying such a polytheist?
- C: So, in Islam, male Muslims are actually allowed to marry polytheist or unbelieving women because men serve as leaders [*imam*]. So, there is a possibility that a man might be able to guide his wives to the Islamic faith. Meanwhile, female Muslims are not allowed to marry unbelievers because they are positioned as sub-ordinate, so they must follow their leaders. Although there has been a commitment between them, men might have more freedom to go back to their original beliefs.
- J: Let me be more specific. The man is Muslim and so is the woman. But, let us say that the Muslim woman likes to wear a talisman, or to visit a [sacred] grave [for the purpose of making a supplication]?
- C: It is forbidden [to marry her] because this woman can be considered a polytheist, because she does polytheistic things.
- J: Hi guys [amused, the judge turned his body to face the audience], do all of you agree?
[The audience is amused, realising the confusion in her response while appreciating her attempt to keep responding in the ordeal situation].

Audience amusement stemmed from the confused interpretation provided by the contestant: according to this contestant, a Muslim man is allowed to marry a non-Muslim woman, but is not allowed to marry a Muslim woman who shows polytheistic practices, such as using amulets and visiting graves. Most Muslims in Indonesia consider such marriages

³⁵ Styles in presenting such a structure of explanation, in my identification, refer to an anonymous work entitled *Matn bina' al-af'al* (a basic work to the verbs formation).

permissible. After all, such practices are popular in Indonesia.³⁶ The conversation shown above reveals the difficulty faced by contestants when placed in the ordeal situation. The pressure forced the contestant to commit to a speculative answer that, had she had more time to prepare an answer, she might not have produced.

10.5. Conclusion

Through the *kitab* competition, *kitab* practices have become publicly accessible in contemporary Indonesia. The competition is set up to promote self-confidence as its core value. The ordeal scenario is a way to test and develop self-confidence. On the competition stage, contestant skills in reciting and elaboration are tested before an audience. The competitive atmosphere and probing by judges provide pressure that may hinder a contestant from properly showing their acquired skills and competencies, and that is, in my opinion, the rationale of why this event is conducted. The speculative responses and linguistic lapses are all part of student efforts to overcome the ordeal. Students are given an opportunity to contest from a young age, displaying their skilful knowledge of the *kitab* in front of an audience.

To fully appreciate the effects of the competition and the importance it has in redressing educational inequality, it is necessary to reflect on its flow-on effect. During my time interacting with people at the competition, I learnt that the opportunity to contest on the competition stage is considered a great opportunity for selected students to boost their self-confidence in public speaking. The idea of promoting *kitab* practices as public display has encouraged students to do their best in recognition of their individual capability. This was

³⁶ The majority of Indonesian Muslims argue against the permissibility of interfaith marriage (Aini, 2008). This verse is the basis for that prohibition although another verse of the fifth chapter, i.e. *Surat al-Ma'idah* verse 5, literally makes it possible for a Muslim man to marry a woman from the People of the Book (*Ahl al-kitab*). As for intrafaith marriage, the balance of authority has it that there is no prohibition that prevents a Muslim man from marrying a Muslim woman who might engage in these practices.

not evident in my observations of *Jalalayn* pedagogy in *majelis* and classroom. The public stage is a challenge for students that reveals traditional *kitab*-based skills to wider audiences.

Chapter 11 : Conclusion

The ‘master conclusion’ that I draw from the preceding chapters is that *Jalalayn* pedagogy has an important duality to it. The first element of this duality is the sameness of this text, even as it is embraced across borders. The actual text of the *Jalalayn* does not change in the diverse contexts in which it is used: traditionalists as well as (some) modernists consider it to be valued content for proper reproduction of Muslim subjects. In other words, the *Jalalayn* (and other *kitab*) are the constituent materials of Islamic education. But the other side of this duality is the amazing diversity of pedagogical treatments of this unchanging text. These treatments reveal the fragmented and diversified field of Indonesian Islam.

Why is it important to pay attention to this diversity? Because the pedagogical treatments are shaped by the institutional logics of contrasting segments. My practice-based approach has revealed how the study of pedagogies reveals differing norms on social difference, Islamic contest, individual subjectivities, social and economic change and historical remembrance. For example: pedagogy in Pesantren al-Salafiyah No. 1 speaks of a strictly hierarchical society seeking to preserve itself against foes that threaten it; the modernist pedagogy struggles to retain *tafsir* as a subject while its broader pedagogy aims to produce Muslims equipped for careers in contemporary Indonesia; and the competition is part of a greater process by which the competencies and skills of traditional Islamic learning are emerging in public, claiming relevance on a public stage that has for so long ignored them.

This points to the deficiency of textual-based studies of textual tradition. By reading editions of the *Jalalayn*, one does not encounter the social and political meanings described

above. *Tafsir* is a critical field of Islamic activity, and derives its authority from books like the *Jalalayn* and of course the Qur'an. But the important meanings of *tafsir* for researchers do not come from the books, but from the practices and institutional logics in which they are given meanings. The frames for studying *tafsir* are more important for understanding Indonesian Islam than the books themselves.

In the remainder of this conclusion, I move to a less general level, and state the five most significant perspectives on Indonesian Islamic diversity that emerged during this research.

11.1. Educational inequality

Kitab-based learning has undergone inequality as a result of modernisation of Islamic education in Indonesia since the early twentieth century. The coming of Islamic modernism to Indonesia led to development of classroom styles for the study of Islam, which placed priority on effective and efficient learning within structured curricula. As a result, core aspects of traditional Islamic learning were considered no longer appropriate, one being the use of *kitab*s as learning texts. In modern environments, textbooks that support prescribed curriculums are valued and this has diminished the importance of *kitab*s as sources of Islamic authority. With regard to learning styles, the traditional format of *kitab*-based learning, i.e. *bandongan*, was not easily incorporated into the modern system. Modern Islamic educators, supporting styles similar to those of the state (non-religious) education system, considered this learning style was ineffective and inefficient. As a result, graduates from traditional institutions lack the qualifications needed to compete in the contemporary job market.

This inequality is not solely a matter of differing pedagogical styles, for it reflects rivalling Islamic currents. Modernist education environments were established by organisations with a preference for reformist ideology, which opposed certain schools of Islamic legal and scholarly thought. The *Jalalayn* is an interesting case study in this regard.

It is an icon of traditionalist Islam, but at the same time has a higher level of acceptance in modern environments than many other *kitab*.

During fieldwork I observed that the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, was making an effort to equalise *kitab*-based learning in the public educational system. By obtaining formal recognition for their study, students of *kitab*-based learning in the *pesantren* become more suitably qualified for vocational work after graduation. Indonesian government efforts to equalise *kitab*-based education include the recognition of *kitab*-based learning and its equivalence project.

11.2. Status and pedagogical styles

The second finding that sheds new light on current Islamic practice in Indonesia is the strong connection between status and pedagogical styles. In the traditional environment, students and staff respect a hierarchy at the top of which sits the *kyai* (Sunda. *ajengan*). This hierarchy requires students to pay respect to the *kyai* and this status is the basis for student evaluation of the teacher's performance. This hierarchy is manifest in deportment towards the teacher, but also in how the physical properties and fixtures of the *pesantren* are used.

In *bandongan* teaching, the *kyai* takes total control of gathering structure and flow, and it would be unthinkable for students to seek dialogue with the *kyai* during it. Students evaluate his messages as wisdom that is valuable guidance towards the right path, not as something to be critiqued or subject to discussion. That is the frame within which his messages are to be interpreted. This convention requires students to pay full attention and restrain themselves throughout the lesson. In Mama's *bandongan*, I observed students understanding Mama as a wise old man, similar to those who had been his teachers and their teachers before them, passing on the wisdom of Islamic learning to themselves, the successor generation. This understanding of the pedagogical situation can be traced to the way Mama has adopted the word '*salaf*' for his *pesantren*'s name, i.e. al-Salafiyah. It also legitimises

the value of being linked with a genealogy of transmission and blessings to be received from that through study.

When a senior student replaced the *kyai*, who was ill, for a few lessons, I witnessed an entirely different pedagogical scenario. The senior student was known to the students because he normally took the role of *pasantren* coordinator. During the *bandongan*, this senior student was under pressure to find appropriate ways of delivering the lesson to his junior colleagues. This situation revealed the critical role of status in pedagogy in this environment, for the student succeeded by using entirely different teaching strategies, and the way he used the physical properties of the teaching environment also differed. His embodied performance reflected his junior place in the institution's hierarchy.

Status is also highly relevant to the contrasting values of pedagogy I observed. Completion is a valued goal for students learning the *Jalalayn* in the *bandongan* setting. Under the guidance of their teacher, students work through the entire book. This goal is linked to status, for the goal is not just to complete, but to do so under the guidance of a noted *kyai* who connects the student to a genealogy of learning. But in the classroom style, where bureaucratisation of education is apparent, pedagogy is geared towards enabling the student to succeed in examinations that correspond to explicit learning goals. Furthermore, students do not respect teachers as revered chains in scholarly genealogies, but as qualified instructors who are engaged to assist them to achieve learning goals. The school hires qualified educators who are able to apply for similar positions in other educational institutions. Free from the rigid hierarchy of the traditional *pasantren*, students are able to engage in dialogue with their teachers during teaching interactions that are egalitarian.

11.3. Confidence in competition

A third finding concerns the promotion of *kitab* practices as publicly accessible through the *kitab*-reading competition. Participation in the *kitab*-reading competition is

considered a great opportunity for selected students to improve their self-confidence in public speaking. This exhibition of *kitab* practice to public audience positions students in a situation that requires them to display their individual capability. I did not observe individual displays of this kind in other forms of *Jalalayn* pedagogy.

On the competition stage, contestants display their individual skills in knowledge of the *kitab*. The competition structure is designed to subject competitors to ordeals as they are required to respond to challenges while under pressure, and the skills and character involved in overcoming challenges are an important rationale behind the event. Participants receive an opportunity to test their reading and elaboration skills in front of judges and spectators.

11.4. Performance and successful pedagogy

The fourth finding concerns the question of what exactly successful *tafsir* pedagogy consists of. The performance style of Mama was not representative of *tafsir* pedagogy encountered in other settings. The three other teachers I observed had to make an effort to ensure their performance was successful. They had to work to be accepted by students and displayed contrasting skills in doing so. The contrast between the skills they used for success shed light on the differing pedagogies of contrasting environments. While teaching as the replacement for the *kyai*, Mang Asep utilised skills in chanting he had developed during experiences as a student of other teachers in West Java. He turned to pedagogical skills with a deep history in West Java. In so doing, he aimed for students to see him not just as a ‘replacement *kyai*’, but as a competent teacher. With the same goal, he took on the role of motivator, departing from the *Jalalayn* text to encourage the students in their journey through learning and life.

In the modern environment, the school hires qualified educators who bring their own orientations to teaching practice. The two teachers I observed in this environment had adapted to a more egalitarian teaching environment, significantly less hierarchical than that

of the traditional environment. The Persis environment was open to a number of approaches to *tafsir* pedagogy. I observed one teacher who focussed closely on textual skills, while another conveyed meanings of verses of the Qur'an and textbook (i.e. the *Jalalayn*) through a broad range of analogies and metaphors. This range includes interpretation of the text under study based on figurative perspectives in Sufism. It is worth noting that this is not the Islamic current normally connected with Persis, but seems to be a product of the egalitarian, dialogical teaching interaction of the modern environment. Persis education shows the character of a poriferous educational institution capable of accommodating these two different orientations as acceptable Islamic pedagogy in *tafsir* learning.

11.5. Pedagogy and public sphere

The fifth finding concerns the ways in which *tafsir* pedagogy facilitates the expression of rivalry between differing Islamic currents in West Java, as observed in Mama's *bandongan Jalalayn*. Mama revealed a dialogical public sphere when his *bandongan* performance emphasised interpretations strongly favouring the doctrine of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-al-Jama'ah*. He clearly preferred the doctrine of this group as the correct articulation of belief in God, the Deity and His relation to the created. At the same time, he positioned himself as protector of the legacy of Islamic learning from problems and threats in the form of Wahhabi and Shi'ite interpretations of the verses under discussion. Mama's 'confrontation' with these two groups should be understood against the background of disputes currently unfolding within Indonesia which characterise the contemporary realities of Islamic discourse in Indonesian public spheres. A traditional setting for Islamic pedagogy in the *bandongan* style has become a site for conflictual expression of opposition to the voices of other Islamic currents in West Java and Indonesia.

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Legislation

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Interviews:

Interview with Dr. Ahmad Tholabi Kharlie on 4 June 2017, the member of the LPTQ of Banten.

Interview with Dr. Suwendi, the officer in the Ministry of the Religious Affairs, on 9 May 2017 in Jakarta.

Interview with Ustaz Iqbal Santoso on 6 February 2017 in Garut.

Interview with Ustaz Aceng Zakaria on 13 November and 1 December 2015 in Garut.

Interview with Ustaz Ujang Juanda on 1 February 2017 in Garut.

Interview with Ustaz Romli on 11 February 2017 in Bandung.

Interview with Ustaz Beni Hamzah on 31 January 2017 in Garut.

Interview with Ustaz Irwan Noviansyah on 15 November 2015 in Garut.

Interview with Aa Haji (Ajengan Lilip Abdul Kholiq) on 18 December 2015 in Sukabumi.