Two Sides of the Same Coin: Modernity and Tradition in Islamic Education in Indonesia

RONALD A. LUKENS-BULL
University of North Florida

This article explores one way in which the Classical Islamic community in Java, Indonesia, seeks to negotiate modernization and globalization through the interface of an Islamic boarding school (pesantren) and higher education. This negotiation requires imagining and (re)inventing both modernity and tradition. By examining how the leadership of a particular pesantren for university students engages these processes in their curricular goals and practices, this article expands theoretical considerations of education in translocal processes such as Islamization and globalization.

Clifford Geertz, when writing about the Javanese pesantren (J., I.: Islamic boarding schools) and their headmasters (J., I.: kyai) 40 years ago, predicted that they would be crushed by modernity:

Only through the creation of a school at once as religiously satisfying to the villager as the pesantren, and as instrumentally functional to the growth of the "new Indonesia" as the state-run secular schools can the kijaji [kyai] as the teacher of such a school, become a man once more competent to stand guard "over the crucial junctures of synapses of relationship which connect the local system with the larger whole"... Failing this the kijaji's days as a dominant force in pious Javanese villages are numbered, and the role of Islam in shaping the direction of political evolution in Indonesia is likely to be marginal at best. [1960b:249]

Geertz was not optimistic about the ability of kyai to be cultural brokers between Indonesia and "modernity" (1960b:249). Others also predicted the decline of pesantren with the advent of modern education (Abdullah 1987; Peacock 1978:66). This article shows that not only have some kyai contradicted these expectations, but that what they are engaging in is not mere brokerage. They are not just translating "modernity" to Indonesia, they are first imagining a modernity that needs to be reworked and then they are (re)inventing an Indonesian Islamic modernity.

It is a mainstay in anthropology to suggest that tradition is imagined and invented. I wish to add that it is also (re)invented. By (re)invention, I mean the ongoing process by which tradition is invented and reinvented to meet new social needs and challenges. A number of theorists have argued that tradition and how it is imagined and (re)invented are inherently political processes (Briggs 1996; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983;
I would add that modernity is also subject to being imagined and (re)invented and that such processes are also inherently political (Appadurai 1996:3; Freidman 1992:365; Giddens 1990). I take the reflexivity that Anthony Giddens (1990) sees as central to modernity and combine it with Habermas’s insistence that modernity must “create its normativity out of itself” (1987:7). I add to this basic orientation Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) notion that modernity is not a monolithic whole, but is unevenly experienced, and Jonathan Friedman’s (1992) observation that globalization is ultimately experienced and reinterpreted locally. I therefore conclude that modernity is imagined and (re)invented in local, national, and transnational contexts. Further, the (re)invention of modernity necessitates the reexamination of tradition. The imagining and (re)invention of tradition and the imagining and (re)invention of modernity are two sides of the same coin.

Education is widely recognized as an important part of how a society engages modernization and globalization (Demerath 1999; Li 1999; Wood 1976:49). Here, I explore some of the ways in which the Indonesian Classicalist Muslim community has used education to appropriate the materials of modernity and subsequently (re)invent them. The leaders of this community have created an educational system to address the educational needs of a modernizing society and, at the same time, to guard against the perceived moral decay that comes with modernization and globalization. I draw upon Eleanor Leacock’s (1976) observation that how modernity is imagined shapes how educational systems engage and negotiate it.

After describing the general pattern of pesantren education in Indonesia, this article examines the case of Pesantren Mahasiswa Al-Hikam, established especially for college students with the aim of ensuring that graduates are experts in a number of secular fields but also have a solid religious background. Al-Hikam is an independent pesantren in East Java that recruits students from area colleges. The students there study university subjects by day and religious subjects in the early morning, evenings, and weekends. I use this case material to illustrate my arguments about the imagining and (re)inventing of tradition and modernity.

Ethnographic Background

Indonesia is the world’s largest Islamic country, although it is not an Islamic state. Throughout the Republic of Indonesia’s existence (since 1945), the ongoing question for the Islamic community has been how to create a strong, pious, and faithful Islamic society in the context of a modernizing, globalizing, and secular state (Abdullah 1996:65; Boland 1971:15–34; Horikoshi 1975:60; Noer 1978:12). Through developing a hybrid educational system in pesantren, kyai have outwardly supported the national development policies while striving to firmly establish Islamic values as the foundation for public life in Indonesia (Lukens-Bull 1997).
Variants of Islam in Indonesia

There are two major variants of Sunni Islam in Indonesia, which I will refer to here as Classicalist and Reformist. Classicalists are typified by their use of classical Islamic texts and their affiliation with pesantren and the organization Nahdatul Ulama (NU; A.: Renaissance of Islamic Scholars). Reformists, who are affiliated with the organization Muhammadiya, seek to reform Indonesian Islam so that it draws primarily on scriptural sources (Peacock 1978). The Classicalists are slightly more numerous than the Reformists.

The Classicalist variant is centered around pesantren, and their heads or kyai are hence the leaders of this religious community. The terms “pesantren world” (I.: dunia pesantren) and “pesantren people” (I.: orang pesantren) are preferred by most members to the exonym “traditionalist santri,” a designation made popular by Clifford Geertz (1960a). When used in the pesantren community, the term “santri” refers to a student in a pesantren, or pe-santri-an, the santri place. The pesantren community practices and maintains Classical Islam, which Zamakhshyari Dhofier sees as

still strongly bound up with established Islamic ideas created by scholars, jurists, doctors, and Sufis during the early centuries of Islamic theological and legal development, sectarian conflicts, and the rise of Sufi movements and brotherhoods in the thirteenth century. This is not to say, however, that contemporary traditional Islam in Java remains fixed in the molds created for it by the ulama (Muslim leaders) of the formative centuries. [1999:xix]

The theologies, considered opinions, legal theories and findings, and mystical theories of Classical Islam are found in texts called kitab kuning (A.-I. hybrid: classical texts; lit. yellow books). The pesantren community holds them to be of high importance in determining how to live as good Muslims in a globalizing and modernizing world. These texts are critical components of pesantren curricula.

The Reformist branch of Indonesian Islam, Muhammadiya, has established Islamic schools modeled after the pesantren, but none of these are recognized as true pesantren by Classicalists. Hence, in the usage of pesantren people, contemporary Reformists can never be true santri, although Geertz (1960a) labels them “modernist santri.” Muhammadiya takes a position that the basis of Islamic Law (A.: shariah) is the Qur’an, Hadith (the sayings and actions attributed to the Prophet), and personal interpretation. They thereby reject historical developments in Islam and classical Islamic scholarship.

The relationship between pesantren tradition and general Javanese tradition is complex. For example, the ritual meal called slametan has been declared by some scholars (Geertz 1960a) as animistic in nature and by others (Woodward 1988) as part of pan-Islamic practices of ritual feasting. Another Javanese tradition, grave visitation, is endorsed by most kyai although Reformists decry it as a non-Islamic practice. Other
aspects of Javanese tradition such as shadow puppet theater are seen as useful in communicating about the faith. Indeed, they were used by the saints who brought Islam to the region. On the other hand, pesantren people often flout other dimensions of Javanese tradition, such as the painstaking etiquette common to the nobility.

**Basic Pesantren Education**

Prior to the 20th century, pesantren were the only formal education institutions found in Java and in most of what is now Indonesia. They taught an almost exclusively religious curriculum to a mix of students including future religious leaders, court poets (Florida 1995), and members of the ruling class (Adas 1979, Pemberton 1994:48–49). First the Dutch, then the Nationalists, and later the Republic of Indonesia promoted an educational system focused on science, math, and other “secular” subjects (Anderson 1990:132, 243). In response to the demand for this type of education, as early as the 1930s many pesantren added government-recognized curricula. Starting in the 1970s, these new curricula became an important part of the pesantren community’s strategy for negotiating modernity. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore the curricula and methods of these schools. However, they have shaped both the daily round as well as a general sense of what kind of education a pesantren should provide (Dhofier 1999; Lukens-Bull 1997). It is common for parents to seek schools that give their children the necessary skills and knowledge to do well in the modern job market and the moral and religious training to be good Muslims and upstanding citizens.

Pesantren exist for children and youth of all ages and at all stages of education—primary, secondary, and tertiary. Although there are pesantren for both males and females, they are generally segregated. Today, 20 to 25 percent of Indonesia’s primary and secondary school children are educated in pesantren-based schools. In some areas, such as Aceh, this number may be as high as 40 percent (Zamakhsyari Dhofier, personal communication, May 1995). In 1982, there were approximately 4,000 pesantren in Indonesia, 1800 of which were found in East Java (Ghofir et al. 1982:ii). In 2000, researchers at the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (National Islamic Institute or IAIN) in Semarang estimated there were about 9,000 pesantren throughout the country (Abdurrahman Mas’ud, personal communication, August 2000). Estimates still hold that over 40 percent of all pesantren are found in East Java. Although centered in East Java, this educational movement has established pesantren throughout the archipelago. Although Al-Hikam, the pesantren considered here, is an important example from the homeland, so to speak, of the pesantren community, its leaders are just one voice in national discourses about the future of pesantren education and the nation.

It is common for pesantren to engage modernity by opening government curricula schools at the junior high and high school levels (Lukens-Bull 1997). Contemporary pesantren at this level aspire to deliver both
the pre-20th-century pesantren curriculum and the newer government curriculum with the hope of graduating alumni who have the religious knowledge and morality of a religious leader as well as the basic education needed to pursue further education at the college level.

The curriculum found in contemporary pesantren can be divided into four basic areas: religious education (J.: ngaji), character development (I.: pengalaman; lit. experience), vocational skills training (I.: ketrampilan), and general education (I.: sekolah). Religious education involves studying texts, which includes the Qur’an, Hadith, and the classical texts that include commentaries on scripture, expositions on mysticism (A.: tasawuf, tariqa), morality (A.: akhlaq), and pedagogy, as well as texts on jurisprudence (A.: fiqh), doctrine (A.: aqida, usul ad-din), Arabic grammar (A.: nahw, sarof, balagha), and prayers and invocations (A.: dua, wirid, mu-jarrabat) (van Bruinessen 1990:229).

There are two main forms\textsuperscript{6} of pedagogy in pesantren religious education: wetonan (J.) and sorogan (J.). Wetonon is the more common form and involves the group study of a text, which could be the Qur’an, a Hadith collection, or a classical text. The students sit on the floor, each with their own copy of the text. The teacher reads a sentence or two of the Arabic text and then reads a formal Javanese translation (J., I.: makna), which the students transcribe verbatim into their copies of the text. In some contemporary pesantren, the teacher adds an Indonesian interpretation of the passage. Sorogan involves the individual study between student and teacher. The students bring a text to their teachers and read it in front of them to be corrected (Dhofier 1980:20).

An additional, even central, component of pesantren religious education is Islamic Mysticism or Sufism. Key texts\textsuperscript{7} are studied and mystical practices, such as dikir (A.: chanting religious formulae; lit. remembrance of God) are integrated into daily activities. Sufism as practiced in pesantren insists on a mysticism subject to normative Islam and distinguishes intellectual, emotional, and organizational components of Sufism (Dhofier 1999:137,158). Related practices are special intercessory prayers called istighosa, repetitive chants, communal meals to invoke blessing, and grave visitation.

In addition to religious education and character development, many pesantren have curricula designed to teach their students the skills and knowledge to find employment after they graduate. General education usually includes one of two basic government-recognized curricula, one mostly secular and the other with a greater emphasis on religious training.\textsuperscript{8} Pesantren may have neither, either, or both types of schools within their grounds. Skills training includes welding, automotive mechanics, furniture carpentry, sewing, computers, shopkeeping and other vocational skills. How exactly pesantren at this level accommodate these areas in their curriculum is part of how they negotiate modernization and globalization (Lukens-Bull 1997).
In Indonesian discourse, how a pesantren engages these areas leads to one of three labels: *salaf* (A.: traditional), *khalaf* (A.: modern), and *terpadu* (I.: mixed). Salaf pesantren have only religious education and character development. Khalaf pesantren are characterized by religious education conducted exclusively in Indonesian, and by the importance placed on general education and skills training. The less an institution emphasizes religious education and character development, the less likely it is to be considered a true pesantren. The most traditional pesantren tend to limit the innovations used in the teaching of this curriculum. Most pesantren today are labeled “mixed” because they engage some combination of all four types of curriculum. Even so, there is considerable variation within this category (Lukens-Bull 1997).

**Pesantren and College Students**

Tertiary education is seen as the vanguard of Indonesian modernization and globalization. Hence, many pesantren leaders see the need to engage this relatively new educational arena so as to continue to shape the moral and religious values and practices of Indonesia’s future leadership. They do this in a number of ways. The first is to hold religious lessons on campus. This is a fairly common activity engaged by a wide variety of Islamic groups. However, the general sense is that this fails to mold the students’ characters and only imparts superficial religious knowledge. The second is to establish colleges in pesantren. This is relatively rare with only two or three extant examples. The third is also very rare, and that is to establish pesantren on college campuses. The fourth is to allow college students to live at regular pesantren. However, these pesantren are not exclusive to college students nor does the pesantren staff monitor their college course work or seek to integrate it with the pesantren education in any way. The fifth option is to establish religious colleges with no pesantren features, such as the government-run IAIN (Steenbrink 1974). I explore here a sixth option, which is to establish autonomous pesantren exclusively for college students.

**Research Setting and Methods**

This article is based on research conducted in the college town of Malang. With over 30 institutions of higher education, Malang is a hotbed of “modernization.” Since my first visit in 1992, Malang has seen many changes. The trappings of global popular culture (international fast food chains, shopping malls, discotheques, American films, and Internet access) have become well ensconced in the physical and psychological landscape of the town. If Malang is not yet part of global society and commercialism, many of its inhabitants are desperately trying to make it so. It is populated with university students who act as if the imitation of “America” is the best way to become successful. For these reasons, pesantren have sought to serve university students. Here I focus
on the most established and well known pesantren for university students in 1995, Pesantren Mahasiswa Al-Hikam.

**Reasons for Selecting the Research Location**

Malang is the prime location for this research because it is the crossroads of two different educational paths. On the one hand, East Java is the recognized center of the Indonesian pesantren movement; many prominent leaders of the Islamic community, both Classicalists and Reformists, come from East Java. On the other hand, Malang, the second largest city in East Java with 750,000 inhabitants (Kantor Statistik Propinsi Jawa Timur 1993), is second only to Yogyakarta in Central Java as a center of higher education with both regional and national appeal.

In 1995, there were five pesantren serving college students in Malang. One was a traditional pesantren that serves primarily IAIN students who feel that their degree programs are not giving them the skills needed to adequately read and interact with classical texts. Another was a traditional pesantren that allowed college students to attend amongst its other santri. It allowed them to leave for their studies but neither monitored their college performance, nor sought to integrate the two learning experiences in any meaningful way. A third was, in 1995, only a plan to establish a pesantren on the campus of Universitas Islam, Malang. The fourth was a women’s pesantren in some respects similar to Al-Hikam. However, this pesantren did not specifically target students who lacked prior pesantren training. The fifth, Al-Hikam, took a unique approach by admitting only those students who had no previous pesantren education and monitoring both their university education and their pesantren education. To the best of my knowledge there was no comparable pesantren anywhere in Indonesia in 1995. There were some schools in Yogyakarta that claimed to be pesantren for college students, but in East Java, these were generally evaluated as not being “real pesantren” because the key elements of studying classical texts and character development were missing.

**Reasons for Selecting Al-Hikam**

Neither Al-Hikam’s small size (60 students in 1995, 125 in 2000) nor its short history (founded in 1992) should lead us to assume that it is unimportant. First, the leadership of Al-Hikam addresses the whole nation in their educational vision. Second, in Indonesia as elsewhere in the Islamic world (Spratt and Wagner 1986:90), it is nearly impossible to separate an Islamic school from its head teacher and vice versa. Hence, in large part because of its headmaster, Hasyim Muzadi, Al-Hikam is seen by many Indonesian Muslims as representing an innovative and forward-thinking approach to shaping the future of the nation. Hasyim Muzadi’s personal educational history enables him to offer an education that balances religious tradition and modern needs. He has studied at Gontor, the
archetypal modern pesantren, at universities, and at traditional pesantren. Further, during the Ramadan 1416 Anno Hijra (1996 Common Era), he was inducted as a khalifa (A.: authorized representative) for a popular Sufi order. Because of his particular training and vision, Hasyim Muzadi was elected to be Abdurrahman Wahid’s successor as the general chairman of Nahdatul Ulama, when the latter was elected President of Indonesia. Prior to assuming the chairmanship of NU on a national level, Hasyim was the East Java regional chair of NU. Because of Hasyim Muzadi’s current position, Al-Hikam’s popularity will grow, both as an institution and as a model for similar institutions.

In 1994–95, Al-Hikam housed its 60 santri in a complex consisting of two two-story buildings and a mosque. Students at Al-Hikam are enrolled in any one of the several colleges and universities in Malang. Students may major in any nonreligious field, which by definition excludes students at IAIN, which offers only religiously oriented majors. Demographically and sociologically the students do not differ significantly from other college students. Their majors include English, law, economics, business, accounting, political science, and agronomy. In addition to their university studies, which the pesantren staff monitors, the santri have a regular routine of standard pesantren education. Some have specific hopes and dreams, but most are eager to find gainful employment or to successfully launch their own businesses. Much like my own college students in the United States, the students at Al-Hikam expressed a great deal of uncertainty about their future plans. They come from both NU and Muhammadiya backgrounds. The only real common denominator is that they do not have a pesantren training before entering. And because of the goals of the institution, this is an entry requirement. Students have a number of reasons for attending and living at Al-Hikam while attending college. The most common include: to absorb the baraka (A.: blessing, but with an existential quality) of the headmaster, to learn more about their religion and the correct ways to practice it, to have an inexpensive place to live, and to have access to additional educational opportunities, specifically learning Arabic and English.

Specific Methodologies

As part of a larger study on pesantren, I made approximately 30 visits to Al-Hikam during 1994–95. In 1997 and 2000, I also made brief visits. The visits ranged in length from several hours to several days. During these visits, I conducted participant observation of religious lessons, dorm life, prayers, and mystical practices. I also conducted interviews with students and staff on a number of topics. By mutual agreement, my research was predicated on an hour of informal English conversation practice during each visit. This arose from my initial conversation with the school leadership, who wanted to know what the institution would receive in return for my being allowed to conduct the research. This was not a formal teaching role and my relationship with the students, who
were on the average only six to ten years younger than I, was characterized by late night conversations over coffee and snacks.

Research was conducted primarily in Indonesian without the use of translators, as I possess near-native fluency. When translating difficult passages, I cross-checked my understanding with native speakers of Indonesian, if not with the respondents themselves. I conducted five interviews with the headmaster, Hasyim Muzadi, which were characterized by a high degree of formality suitable to someone of his relative rank and position. Because he had a very busy public speaking schedule, I would sometimes become part of his entourage so that I could interview him as we traveled. I conducted six interviews with his assistant, Nafik, and four with other functionaries, all of which were collegial in nature. I also conducted a dozen interviews with students, four of which were group interviews. One student interview and one teacher interview were conducted in English at their request and preference. Data analysis was conducted by hand-coding notes and interview transcripts to discover thematic patterns.

**Imagining Modernity in Order to Redefine It**

Before the leadership at Al-Hikam and other Indonesian Muslims can engage in the (re)invention of modernity and tradition, they must imagine a modernity in need of revamping. They also need to imagine a tradition that is able to fit with and temper modernity. By imagining, I mean having a particular understanding of the thing and the ability to see it somehow transformed. The imaginings and (re)inventions considered here are firstly part of pesantren discourse. However, because of the importance of kyai and pesantren to the majority of Indonesian Muslims, these imaginings quickly become part of public discourse.

**Imagining Modernity as Dangerous**

In the act of imagining and (re)inventing modernity, pesantren people first imagine it as potentially dangerous. In this regard, many pesantren people associate the processes of modernization and globalization with the loss of traditional values. One teacher at Al-Hikam lamented that Indonesia had lost its own value system:

Indonesia once had established values, as can be seen in the successful establishment of the Republic of Indonesia. These values were the values of 1945. However in the 1980s these values began to be lost and are now completely lost. The problem is that these days, young people want to be like the United States or Japan as quickly as possible. But, they often forget that Japan has held on to its values tenaciously. The Qur'an can guarantee life in the future, the Qur'an can take us back to the values of 1945.

The "values of 1945" are debated in Indonesian discourse, but many in the pesantren world hold them to be uniquely Islamic. They point to the
Jakarta Charter, which became the preamble of the Constitution. The original version required all Muslims to uphold Islamic law. Further, the establishment of the republic and the War for Independence are typically described in pesantren circles as being based on the pesantren values of self-sufficiency, self-sacrifice, and healthy distrust of any ruler, particularly a non-Muslim.

American films and television are central components in a dangerous modernity. In the early 1990s, the United States required Indonesia to import American films and television shows in order to continue to export textiles to the U.S. (Barber 1995:91). Repeatedly I heard concerns from pesantren people about the American movie industry's purported intention of destroying Islam and corrupting the values of Islamic societies such as Indonesia. Many were concerned with the portrayal of scantily clad women (having bare shoulders and knees). Such concerns persist even though Appadurai asserts that "the United States is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes" (1996:31). I have heard other pesantren people express concerns with what they see as the deliberate imitation of the values portrayed in the television show, Beverly Hills, 90210, and other American programs, by blue-jean wearing, disco-attending, alcohol-drinking youths. These concerns show how pesantren people imagine a modernity that is threatening and in need of (re)invention.

How the leadership of Al-Hikam is imagining modernity is further seen in the basic mission of the school. Al-Hikam was designed to mold modern scholars who also have strong religious values. Al-Hikam also seeks to create a balance between general education and religious education for university students. However, most of Al-Hikam's curriculum is religious; the general education comes from the students' university studies. There is a clear sense that science, as part of modernity, lacks the moral imperatives to guide society. Modernity is at best amoral. Many of the trappings of globalization, especially global popular culture, are seen as promoting a blind, self-interested consumerism that threatens to unhinge society.

**Imagining Modernity as Malleable**

In addition to seeing modernity as potentially threatening, imagining modernity also involves conceptualizing modernity as something that can be (re)invented. One basic way pesantren people imagine a co-optable modernity is found in an oft-quoted Arabic principle that says that one should continue old ways that are good and adopt new ways that are better. This phrase empowers pesantren people to (re)invent modernity. Nafik, Hasyim Muzadi's assistant, said modernity is not the external trappings, but is rather a "frame of thinking," an opinion shared by Robert Bellah, who pointed out that modernity should be seen not "as a form of political or economic system, but as a spiritual phenomena or a
kind of mentality” (1968:39). This is precisely the component of modernity with which pesantren people are most concerned. They want the technology and the benefits of political and economic modernism discussed above; however, with respect to the mentality of modernism, they wish to define an Islamic modernity.

By shifting the definition of modernity to “a frame of thinking,” the leadership at Al-Hikam, and other pesantren leaders, have placed it in the same realm as religion and hence they are able to insert certain values and morals in their conceptualization of modernity. These values include Islamic brotherhood (A.: Ahwuya Islamiya), selflessness (I.: keikhlasan), simplicity in living (I.: kesederhanaan), and self-sufficiency (I.: kemandirian). Also included is a concern for social justice and serving the needs of the poor. Taken together these values define a modernity quite different from that generally practiced in the West. Perhaps this can avoid or overcome the tendency, identified by Mitchell (1976), for educational systems in developing countries to both create new hierarchies and to reify old ones that serve the interests of national and transnational elites.

How Students at Al-Hikam Imagine Modernity

Students at Al-Hikam generally reiterated the vision and goals of their teachers. Specifically, they stated that all too often modernization is confused with Westernization. One economics student said,

In my opinion, modernization is really a process by which we can raise our standard of living and to raise to raise the prosperity of the people and the nation. However, many Indonesians understand modernization only in terms of Westernization. For a simple example, reading, the desire to read in Indonesia is not widespread. But discotheques are very popular which are really Westernization. People misinterpret what is true modernization. What is taken to be modernization is really Westernization, when in fact Westernization is a separate process.

An engineering student offered an explanation of this confusion: “Western nations are seen as prosperous. Perhaps people think that in order to be as advanced and prosperous as these nations, we need to imitate them in as many ways as possible.” Another student commented that Westernization and modernization are somewhat linked but that the cultural dimension (he gave discos and blue jeans as examples), enters Indonesia much more quickly than the technologies.

The students frequently asserted that there needs to be a holistic approach to development. There was a range of opinions of how to accomplish this. One student held up Malaysia, Japan, and Iraq as good examples of developing but maintaining cultural integrity. It was also felt that Islamic education was an essential component of reinforcing economic development by traditional religious values. Further, the students debated the place of mysticism in modernity. Some stated that mysticism
had to be abandoned in order for Islamic countries to modernize—a Reformist position—but most disagreed and fell in line with the school leadership on the importance of mysticism in the modern world. A business student argued, “In order for Indonesia to develop technologically, we must leave mysticism behind. Mysticism is not progressive, but static.” Another student countered, “We do not have to leave mysticism behind. However, Islam must be able to adapt to changing times.”

(Re)Inventing Tradition and Modernity for College Students

Al-Hikam and its limited number of counterparts represent a new strategy for pesantren. The curriculum differs from traditional pesantren, and yet it must be perceived as “traditional” in some sense or the institution would not be considered a proper pesantren. “Tradition,” as understood in pesantren, centers around the study of classical texts, the practice of Sufism, and a number of ritual activities including special intercessory prayers, chanting religious formulae, and ritual meals. The defining feature is the teaching of classical texts. Traditional pesantren education involves the reading and interpretation of these Arabic texts. At Al-Hikam, where the students were just beginning to study Arabic, it was not yet possible for students to read and study these texts, but Indonesian translations are read and studied. In order to understand how tradition and modernity were (re)invented in the educational activities at Al-Hikam, it is useful to examine these issues in each area of instruction.

English and Arabic Instruction

On entering the school compound, one sees a sign requesting all visitors to speak either English or Arabic. The hope is to create an environment in which students can learn these important languages. The model used is from the archetypal modern pesantren, Gontor (see Castles 1966; Steenbrink 1974), which has a strong “English or Arabic only” policy in which a network of spies, enforcement officers, and student courts prevent the use of Indonesian, Javanese, and other regional dialects. In 1994–95, the leadership at Al-Hikam recognized that they were still far from this goal.

The focus on English and Arabic instruction was one way in which the leadership of Al-Hikam was constructing modernity and tradition. English was viewed as the language of modernity and globalization; without it one cannot escape a peripheral position in the world economic and political order. Arabic was viewed as the language of a worldwide confessional community and was hence seen as a way of connecting Java, and more widely Indonesia, to the rest of the Islamic world.

The students spent two hours a week studying English in the pesantren’s modern language laboratory. The English program was supplemented by the presence of an English-education major from a local
teacher's training college, who was recruited by Hasyim Muzadi to live at Al-Hikam so that the students were able to practice their English. English is imagined as a key to international diplomacy and commerce; educating students in both English and Islam will create Indonesian diplomats and international businessmen who are grounded in traditional pesantren morality. In general, English instruction at the university level is either not offered or is judged by students as an ineffective way of learning English. Throughout Indonesia there are hosts of small English language programs that are seen as the most effective way of learning the language. Al-Hikam students evaluated the English program at Al-Hikam as a viable alternative to the private programs.

The teaching of Arabic includes basic grammar, pronunciation, and calligraphy and is reinforced through much of the religious curriculum. Arabic is imagined as a link to traditional Islam through the ability to read the Qur'an, Hadith, and the classical texts. It is also imagined as a link to the broader Islamic community and pan-Islamism.

Regarding the significance placed on Arabic by Al-Hikam students, I recorded in my notes, I brought over some Nally's Cheese Balls I had bought at Hero's. The first question was whether this was an American snack. After being told that it was, the next question was whether it was halal [A.: allowed, in this case in the Islamic dietary laws]. I pointed out that one of the languages in which the ingredients were printed was Arabic and they concluded that it then must be halal. I suggested that they just read the Arabic ingredients list and that they would know. One fellow offered that an ustadh [teacher] would be able to do that but that they would not.

Here, Arabic is made synonymous with Islam: Arabic labeling means that it is allowable. Although given the existence of Arabic-speaking Christians, it is logically possible to have a snack with Arabic labeling that is, in fact, not halal.

Religious Education at Al-Hikam

The headmaster, Hasyim Muzadi, said that he founded Al-Hikam to meet the needs of nonreligion majors whose knowledge and practice of Islam was lacking. The goal was to target students with strong religious sentiments but who have yet to receive solid religious training. This group of students was seen as particularly susceptible to fundamentalism and Hasyim Muzadi expressed his desire to prevent the growth of fundamentalism among college students. Fundamentalism imagines the relationship between tradition and modernity as antagonistic (Lawrence 1989). Hasyim Muzadi's position of balancing traditional religiosity and secular knowledge offered an alternative model for an Islamic modernity.

The religious education at Al-Hikam included the following subjects: Arabic, Qur'anic literacy, and the cultural history of Islam as well as
Qur’anic interpretation (A.: *tafsir*); jurisprudence (A.: *fiqh*), Hadith, and the methodologies for each of these. The lessons were based on classical texts, so while they did not study classical texts, the students learned their content. By using translations, the leadership was (re)inventing tradition. Traditional pesantren education is centered on the study of classical texts; schools that no longer teach these texts are no longer considered real pesantren. Al-Hikam was walking a thin line between keeping the traditional focus on these texts and meeting the skill level of students whose earlier education was largely modern and secular.

In general, the teaching methods at Al-Hikam were more like those found at a university than at more traditional pesantren. In classrooms complete with chairs, a teacher’s desk and a blackboard, the students studied various topics mostly in a lecture format because they did not know the languages needed to study the classical texts using traditional methods.

In an effort to use more traditional methods, twice each week Hasyim Muzadi taught his students directly in *wetonan* instruction: The students carried a copy of the Qur’an and wrote notes in the margins as Hasyim Muzadi read the Arabic and explained it in Indonesian. Nafik said that their eventual goal was to have the students transcribe the same translation and interpretation in their copy of the text, in Indonesian. Javanese could not be used because many of the students did not come from Java. In the goals for this part of the curriculum, we see clearly the tandem (re)invention of tradition and modernity. The goal of standardizing what is transcribed is a return to traditional pesantren pedagogy. The use of the national language in this traditional pedagogy shows that it has been (re)invented. The very desire to use the traditional pedagogy imagines a modernity that needs to be grounded in tradition.

Once a week, the students and teachers conducted an intercessory prayer session, the form of which is based on the teachings of the Qadiri-yah wa Naqsyabandiyah Sufi Brotherhood and may last several hours. This began with the recitation of the Al-Fatiha, the first book of the Qur’an. It was followed by the chanting of various religious formulae. According to several students, this practice establishes not only a sense of dependence on Allah, but a connection and spiritual responsibility to both Hasyim Muzadi and to their parents. Hasyim Muzadi said that these prayer sessions also taught the students concentration, which he argued they needed in order to live moral and pious lives while pursuing secular careers.

**Character Development**

Molding the characters of young people is key to (re)inventing an Islamic modernity for Indonesia. A cofounder of Al-Hikam asserted that the school was created because
we were not satisfied with those who are playing key roles in Indonesian society now. We wish to change that, but how? By replacing the actors, but with whom? College students will be those most likely to get those roles. College students are also more likely to understand and accept our concepts.... [Abdurrahman Wahid, then Chair of NU] wants the same thing, to change the social and political structure by releasing himself from the construction with the hope that once he is released from the construction, it will collapse on its own. This is called unscrewing. But, we cannot tell the general public that he is unscrewing society. We are taking the system apart slowly. We are preparing replacements slowly. Because of that the students at Al-Hikam are from all disciplines.

Al-Hikam sought to shape the values and morals at use in the Indonesian government and hence (re)invent an Indonesian Islamic modernity by shaping the values and morals of future scholars and bureaucrats.

Hasyim Muzadi said that universities excel at imparting knowledge, but they fail at character development. It is then likely that many college students will become “scientists” without character. Al-Hikam was trying to shape the basic thought patterns so that students would become both scholars and religious experts. Therefore, the focus of the religious studies at the pesantren was not on religious knowledge per se, but on developing a religious lifestyle.

Key to creating an atmosphere conducive to learning morals is the relationship between student and teacher. Hasyim Muzadi said that it is important that students do not feel that they have paid for their education. Therefore, the cost of attending Al-Hikam was kept artificially low, so that a “father-son” relationship could develop between the Hasyim Muzadi and his santri. He said that because of this feeling of a father-son relationship, it was possible to teach the santri and guide them in character building. At universities, this was not possible. There, according to Hasyim Muzadi, the students feel that they have paid their bill and the faculty feel that they have discharged their duty by teaching; teacher and student have no further obligations to each other.

(Re)inventing Tradition in Character Development

When I asked Hasyim Muzadi if there was a wider agenda for Al-Hikam and its graduates, he replied that his hope was that alumni would be pillars of faith and morality in their own professions and in this way, the pesantren will have an influence. Further, he said, Al-Hikam graduates should not be dependent on others, nor afraid to work for themselves. For example, he noted that agribusiness students should go out and work in their own fields, rather than working in a government agricultural affairs office. He concluded that Indonesia will not be able to succeed if people cannot stand on their own feet (mandiri).

Mandiri or kemandirian (self-sufficiency) is a(n) (re)invented traditional value of pesantren. There are two ways in which it is (re)invented. First, it is a traditional value of pesantren that now is focused upon by
pesantren leaders as a modern value underlying entrepreneurialism; this is one means of encouraging parents to send their children to pesantren. Second, the practices intended to teach this value are invented traditions; what once were necessary components of rural life are now considered traditions.

The essential idea underlying this value is seen in a common joke I heard in other pesantren. I was told repeatedly, in the presence of very young santri (six to seven years of age), that mandiri was an abbreviation for mandi sendiri (bathe on your own). Although this joke was inevitably met with great hilarity, it communicated quite clearly, both to the young santri (who may still be bathed by older siblings) and to the foreign researcher, that taking care of oneself is an important value.

In 19th-century pesantren, and many contemporary traditional pesantren, self-sufficiency manifested itself in the students taking care of their basic needs such as laundry, cleaning the compound, and cooking either for themselves or in small cooperative groups. These practices, along with simple housing, were artifacts of rural life in the colonial period. As pesantren adopt government curricula or, in the case of Al-Hikam, allow students to leave to attend lectures, the total instructional hours exceed the available hours. To regain this time, many pesantren employ a cafeteria system. At Al-Hikam, Hasyim Muzadi’s wife cooked for the students. Nostalgia and a real sense that these self-care activities shaped the students’ characters transformed what was once a necessity into a tradition. Even though students were not totally self-sufficient, teachers emphasized that the students must undertake some self-care. Hence, as an active curriculum decision, students did their own washing, ironing, and housekeeping in order to learn self-sufficiency. Another way Al-Hikam trained students in self-sufficiency was keeping a fish pond in which the students grew some of their own food. In addition to growing their own food while at the school, this was intended to give them a skill that they could use to be self-employed or to supplement other incomes once they completed their education.

As an another example of the (re)invention of tradition, consider Al-Hikam’s physical setting. The simplicity of the physical grounds was, in the 19th century, an artifact of rural life. Simple grounds are now viewed as part of the ascetic training that builds character. However, the rooms at Al-Hikam were much more comfortable than those at a traditional pesantren. Yet because they were much more simple than those in a college dormitory or other options available to university students, the Al-Hikam leaders claimed to be teaching the traditional value of simple living to the students.

Mystical Training in the Creation of a New Modernity

A further example of the (re)invention of modernity and tradition was manifest in the visitation of Shaikh Abdurrahman, a seventh-generation descendant of Sunan Kalijaga\textsuperscript{11} and Shaikh of the Qadiriyyah wa...
Naqsyabandiyah Sufi Brotherhood. This visitation was the final event of two weeks of special training for the students at Al-Hikam. For the previous two weeks, each day at midafternoon prayers the students had chanted Arabic formulae in order to “remember Allah” and to achieve mystical states. These formulae are passed from master to student; many Sufi brotherhoods have proprietary formulae. Every Wednesday night, the Al-Hikam students performed special intercessory prayers for themselves, the pesantren, and their families lasting several hours. The form they used was based on the teachings and practices of the Qadiriyah wa Naqsyabandiyah Brotherhood.

The visit of Shaikh Addurrahman was important because it represented the meeting of tradition, in the person of the Shaikh, who was playing the archetypal role of a Sufi saint, and modernity, in the persons of the college students who wanted to become lawyers, economists, government workers, and businessmen. The students were excited at the prospect of this event and took steps to assure my attendance.

When I arrived with a video camera, I was admonished to ask permission before taping, because Shaikh Abdurrahman had such strong spiritual power that if I did not ask permission, his image would not show on the video tape. This warning clearly established a relationship between tradition and modernity; traditional mysticism can undo the science and technology of videography. And, if mysticism can undo the technology of modernity, it can also reduce the moral and psychological damage done by modernity.

Like many Islamic holy men in Java, Shaikh Abdurrahman was attributed with a number of mystical abilities. For many of the men he had personal messages based on esoteric knowledge. At the request to the women present (village women and the wives of the instructors—but mostly village women), he prayed over water, so that they might take it home and heal the ill. Near the end of his visit, I was told to go forward and greet him. I borrowed a skull cap so that my head was properly covered and, following the example of the other men, I crept forward, keeping my head lower than his the whole time, and took his hand and kissed it. Unlike his responses to others present, the Shaikh told me sit up properly and abandon my almost painful position of supplication. He then touched me alternately on the shoulder and the head (symbolic of a parent-child relationship) and led the congregation in Al-Fatiha on my behalf. Finally, he led the congregation in reading the proprietary formulae of the Qadiriyah wa Naqsyabandiyah Order. At the end of the event, copies of Qadiriyah wa Naqsyabandiyah’s proprietary formulae were distributed as were posters depicting Shaikh Abdurrahman’s genealogy.

After the event was over the santri—university students all—were nearly ecstatic, especially over my interchange with the Shaikh. They said that they would have loved to have been touched on the head by him, but that even Hasyim Muzadi, the director of Al-Hikam, had only been taken by the hand. I had received a great honor, they said, and
would have much baraka. Further, the skull cap that I had borrowed was full of baraka because Shaikh Abdurrahman had touched it. The students maintained that if I wore the cap to my dissertation defense, I would surely pass. Thus, they deftly connected university educational practices with mystical ones, and thereby imagined tradition and modernity as intertwinned, a position requiring both to be (re)invented. When the owner of the skull cap objected to my keeping the cap, the students also demonstrated how communal living reinforced traditional values, reassuring me that they would talk to him about being ikhlas (J.: selfless, sincere).

The interesting feature of this event was its location at a pesantren designed for nonreligion majors. The graduates of this pesantren were individuals preparing to become intellectuals and technocrats. However, their religious training in the pesantren included the teachings and practices of a Sufi Brotherhood. The event was deliberately planned so that modernity and tradition could be (re)invented. Here, the (re)invention involved imagining a tradition that could transform modernity. As a mindset, modernity was simultaneously being shaped among the santri by engaging in what Hasyim Muzadi called "concentration practice." As one santri expressed it, Sufi rituals provided an anchor against an unsteady soul and psychological problems common to university students and others living a modern life.

Through the educational activities at Al-Hikam, Hasyim Muzadi and his staff were proactively moving to ensure that classical Islam rather than fundamentalism was the basis of the Indonesian Islamic negotiation of modernity. Muslim scripturalists, sometimes referred to as fundamentalists, reject historical commentary on religious issues—that is, they reject the classical texts in favor of the personal reading of the Qur'an and Hadith. Pesantren people use classical texts as a source of religious authority and thus are not scripturalists. Indeed, Hasyim Muzadi stated that the historical interpretations of great scholars tempered and thereby prevented extremism. As an example of this antitremist position, in June 2000, in response to the activities of an Islamic extremist group that had escalated Christian-Muslim violence in Maluku, Hasyim Muzadi stated that he was ready, pending governmental permission, to send an NU security group to Maluku to defend the Christians. This highlights the fact that although pesantren people struggle with how to be both religious and modern, it is foolhardy to consider them fundamentalists. As Bruce Lawrence suggests,

Islamic fundamentalists are not the only Muslims who wrestle with the dilemma of being both religious and modern. They must be painstakingly differentiated from other Muslim activists, whether Sunni or Shi'i. [1989:10]

In 1995, Al-Hikam had yet to graduate any students, so it was not possible ascertain whether or not they had met their goals. Five years later, only a few students had graduated and by Nafik's admission, the students had not met the hopes of Al-Hikam's leadership. Nafik attributed
this to inadequacies in students' college education that hindered them from taking the kinds of positions that had been hoped for them. As for students' religiosity, Nafik expressed optimism about the outcomes of their religious training at the pesantren.¹²

Discussion

In contrast to earlier scholars' expectations (Abdullah 1987; Geertz 1960b; Peacock 1978:66) and cases from other Islamic countries (Lynch et al. 1992; Mater 1996), pesantren in Java have created a hybrid system of education combining religious instruction and scientific and technical training. In most pesantren, this involves offering government curricula at the primary, secondary, and occasionally tertiary levels. At Al-Hikam and a growing number of similar institutions, the combination is accomplished by monitoring outside college education and complementing it with a traditional religious education. This article has explored a number of issues around imagining and (re)inventing modernity and tradition in this educational context. A key issue is the notion that imagining and (re)inventing modernity is necessarily linked to imagining and (re)inventing tradition. Imagining modernity and tradition is the first step in the (re)invention of both. By imagining, I have meant the conceptualization of modernity and tradition in ways that allow and even demand that both be transformed.

In the case of modernity, before it can be redeemed—in this case made Islamic—it must first be found in need of redemption. That is, modernity must be found un-Islamic or at least potentially dangerous to Islam. It then must be found redeemable. These are acts of imagination. There are certainly other ways to imagine modernity and even other Islamic ways to imagine it. Some see modernity as dangerous but essentially unredeemable, and hence seek to ensconce themselves in the bastions of "tradition." In the case presented here, we have seen how modernity is constructed as a potential threat to Islamic morality and thus in need of revamping.

In order to construct an Islamic modernity, Islamic tradition must be imagined as compatible with modernity. This implies an active reworking of the concepts involved. Things that are truly compatible do not need to be proclaimed as such. The act of proclaiming tradition and modernity as compatible is an act of imagination in which the two are seen as working together when they could just as easily be imagined as inextricably opposed.

Once modernity and tradition have been so imagined, they are susceptible to being (re)invented. The educational efforts of Al-Hikam represent one way of (re)inventing modernity and tradition. By complementing an outside secular college education with religious training rooted in Sufi and more general pesantren traditions, Al-Hikam seeks to (re)invent a distinctly Islamic modernity for Indonesia. This modernity will be led, it is hoped, by leaders who are both skilled technicians in
their respective fields as well as devout and knowledgeable Muslims. To create a modernity that is fully Islamic, the leadership of Al-Hikam aims to take the future political, social, and economic leaders of Indonesian society, and provide a grounding for them in Islamic tradition. This very goal requires imagining a tradition that is compatible with a modernizing and globalizing society. To achieve this goal, dimensions of pesantren tradition must be modified and (re)invented.

As life in rural Java changed and pesantren changed to meet new educational goals, certain 19th-century practices became idealized and made into traditions. In order to teach traditional values, which have been imagined as crucial to a moral modernity, the practices by which these values are taught have been (re)invented. In this way, in Classicalist Islamic education in Indonesia, the imagining and (re)invention of tradition and the imagining and (re)invention of modernity are two sides of the same coin.

Ronald A. Lukens-Bull is an assistant professor of anthropology in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice at the University of North Florida, Jacksonville (rlukens@unf.edu).

Notes

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1. Arabic (A.), Indonesian (I.), and Javanese (J.) words will be marked as such and are spelled according to the official Indonesian conventions set in 1972.

2. Other than a few well-known self-proclaimed Shiites, all Muslims in Indonesia are Sunni.

3. Although these variants are more commonly referred to as Traditionalists and Modernists, I do not use these terms because they do not accurately reflect the distinctions between the two variants.

4. Neither Classicalists nor Reformists consider *kitab kuning* to be scripture (divinely inspired text).

5. Although some of the original founders of Muhammadiya had pesantren backgrounds, this is not true of the current leadership or general membership.

6. It is beyond the scope of this article to detail the variations on these main forms in the Javanese pesantren (Dhofer 1999; Lukens-Bull 1997) and elsewhere in the Islamic world (Spratt and Wagner 1986; Wagner 1982).

7. Texts by Al-Ghazali and Al-Junaidi are the primary sources on mysticism.

8. These are the *Sistem Negeri* and the *Sistem Madrasah*, respectively.
9. The term *salaf* means traditional, but the meaning of tradition is hotly debated in the Islamic world. Some define *salaf* as pertaining to the traditions of the Prophet and the Companions and hence call for a return to Islam based on Qur'an and Hadith. In Indonesian discourse it is more common to define *salaf* in terms of Classical Islam, as it is defined here.

10. The Arabic phrase, transliterated in Indonesian, is "Al Muhafazahah Bil Qadimis Shalim, Wal Akhadzu Bil Jadidil Ashalh."

11. The most famous of the *Walisongo*, the founding saints of Islam in the Malay archipelago.

12. Most pesantren, including Al-Hikam, are not proactive in keeping contact information on alumni and only have information on those who have remained in contact. Studying the outcomes of students who have chosen to stay in contact with their teachers thus would provide a skewed perspective at best.

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