

# Islam Nusantara

*Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture*



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## Islam Nusantara – The Conceptual Vocabulary of Indonesian Diversity

*Saskia Schäfer*

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## Saudi Arabia and Indonesian Networks: On Islamic and Muslim Scholars

*Sumanto Al Qurtuby*

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## Salafisme di Papua, Indonesia: Studi Tentang Kelompok Salafi-Wahhabi Ja'far Umar Thalib di Kota Jayapura dan Kabupaten Keerom

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## Penafsiran Politik Kolonel Bakri Syahid Dalam “Al-Huda: Tafsir Qur'an Basa Jawi”

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## الإسلام في إندونيسيا : بين الأصالة والانحراف

*Nasrullah Jasam*

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## Book Review

## Bungai Rampai Indonesia (dan Islam) Masa Kini

*Wahyu Susilo*

Fakultas Islam Nusantara  
Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Indonesia

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# مہمان نواز ملک



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*Sumanto Al Qurtuby*

## **Saudi Arabia and Indonesian Networks: On Islamic and Muslim Scholars**

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### **Abstract**

**T**his article studies Saudi Arabia-trained Indonesian Islamic scholars, both past and present. It also discusses Saudi Arabia's Indonesian scholars specializing on non-Islamic studies. Since past centuries, Muslims on the Malay-Indonesian archipelago have journeyed to the Arabian Peninsula, especially Hijaz, either for pilgrimage or learning. This legacy continues nowadays. While many alumni of Saudi Arabia's Islamic educational institutions—formal and informal—have contributed significantly to the development of Islamic and Muslim cultures and education in Indonesia, some chose to stay, teach, and pass away in Makkah. The study shows that, unlike popular beliefs and opinions, Saudi Arabia-trained Indonesian Islamic scholars vary in terms of religious orientations, political affiliations, social networks, and academic backgrounds. For example, some scholars tend to be ultraconservative and militant, while others are inclined to be progressive and moderate. While the presence of Indonesian Islamic scholars has declined significantly in Saudi Arabia since the last four decades, new tiny Indonesian Muslim scholars specializing in non-Islamic studies began to emerge and teach in some universities in the Kingdom. This article, among others, aims at examining the plurality, complexity, and shifting dynamics of Saudi Arabia's Indonesian Islamic and Muslim scholars as well as their major roles and contributions in the spread and development of Indonesia's Islam and society.

**Keywords:** Islam, Muslim, travel, Islamic education, Islamic scholar, migration, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia.

## Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji ulama-ulama Islam Indonesia yang dididik di Arab Saudi, baik dahulu maupun sekarang. Dibahas pula para ulama Indonesia Arab Saudi yang mengkhususkan diri pada studi non-Islamic Studies (kajian Islam). Sejak berabad-abad yang lalu, umat Islam di kepulauan Melayu-Indonesia telah melakukan perjalanan ke Jazirah Arab, terutama Hijaz, baik untuk melakukan ibadah haji ataupun menuntut ilmu. Tradisi ini berlanjut hingga saat ini. Sementara banyak alumni lembaga pendidikan Islam Arab Saudi – formal maupun informal – telah memberikan kontribusi signifikan terhadap pengembangan budaya dan pendidikan Islam dan Muslim di Indonesia, namun beberapa memilih untuk tinggal, mengajar, dan meninggal di Mekah. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa, tidak seperti kepercayaan dan opini populer, ulama Islam Indonesia yang dididik di Arab Saudi bervariasi dalam hal orientasi agama, afiliasi politik, jaringan sosial, dan latar belakang akademis. Misalnya, beberapa sarjana cenderung ultra-konservatif dan militan, sementara yang lain cenderung progresif dan moderat. Sementara kehadiran sarjana Islam Indonesia telah menurun secara signifikan di Arab Saudi sejak empat dekade terakhir, sarjana-sarjana Muslim Indonesia baru yang berspesialisasi dalam bidang non-kajian Islam mulai muncul dan mengajar di beberapa universitas di Kerajaan Saudi. Artikel ini antara lain bertujuan untuk mengkaji pluralitas, kompleksitas, dan dinamika pergeseran sarjana Islam dan Muslim Indonesia di Arab Saudi serta peran dan kontribusi utama mereka dalam penyebaran dan perkembangan Islam dan masyarakat Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** Islam, Muslim, Perjalanan, Pendidikan Islam, sarjana Islam, Migrasi, Indonesia, Arab Saudi

## ملخص

يقوم هذا المقال بدراسة العلماء الإندونيسيين الذين تلقوا تعليمهم في المملكة العربية السعودية، قديما وحديثا. كما يسلط المقال أيضا بتسليط الضوء على المثقفين الإندونيسيين الذين تخصصوا في مجال الدراسات الغير إسلامية. ف منذ القرون الماضية، كان هناك عدد من مسلمي الأرخبيل الملايوي الإندونيسي الذين رحلوا الى الحجاز، سواء لغرض أداء فريضة الحج أو للمجاورة طلبا للعلم الشريف. وقد أصبح هذا الأمر عادة متوارثة لدى الشعوب الإسلامية الإندونيسية وقائمة حتى الوقت الحاضر. كما أن هناك كثير من الإندونيسيين الخريجين من المؤسسات التعليمية السعودية—سواء كانت حكومية أو غير حكومية—قد لعبوا دورا مهما في تنمية الثقافة الإسلامية وتربية المسلمين الإندونيسيين في الوطن الأم. لكن بعض هؤلاء اختاروا البقاء والمجاورة في مكة والمدينة للدراسة أو التدريس أو حتى الوفاة في تلك الأراضي المقدسة. وقد تدل هذه الدراسة على أن العلماء والمثقفين المسلمين الإندونيسيين الذين تلقوا تعليمهم في المملكة العربية السعودية متنوعين في الاتجاه الفكري الديني والانتماء السياسي والشبكة الاجتماعية وأيضا في الخلفية التعليمية والأكاديمية. فمثلا، يوجد هناك بعض العلماء الإندونيسيين المتخرجين من السعودية وهو ذو النزعة الفكرية الإسلامية المتطرفة والمحافظة، بينما يوجد هناك أيضا البعض الآخر ذو النزعة الفكرية الإسلامية الوسطية والتقدمية. وفي الجانب الآخر، فإن عدد العلماء أو المثقفين



المسلمين الإندونيسيين في المملكة قد انخفض بشكل ملحوظ منذ أربعة العقود المتأخرة، كما أنه ظهر عدد من المثقفين المسلمين الإندونيسيين في المملكة ذوي التخصصات العامة غير الدراسات الإسلامية. وكان هؤلاء أساتذة في بعض الجامعات السعودية. فهذا المقال أيضا يهدف الى دراسة الوجوه التعددية والتعقيدية و ديناميات تحول اتجاهات العلماء والمثقفين المسلمين الإندونيسيين بالمملكة العربية السعودية وكذلك تحول انتماءاتهم ودورهم الأساسي في نشر الفكر الإسلامي في المجتمع الإندونيسي بشكل عام.

**الكلمات الأساسية:** الإسلام، المسلم، الرحلة، التعليم الإسلامي، المثقف المسلم، الهجرة، إندونيسيا، المملكة العربية السعودية.

### Introduction: Focus of the Study and Scholarship Shortcomings

Saudi Arabia, in addition to Egypt, has long attracted Indonesian Muslim societies. While Indonesian Muslims travelling to Egypt to learn Islamic sciences started, more or less, at the end of nineteenth century or early twentieth century<sup>1</sup>, they made journeys to Saudi Arabia<sup>2</sup> long before that period. In fact, history has noted that Indonesian Muslims have long voyaged to the Arabian Peninsula, particularly Hijaz, either to perform hajj pilgrimage in Makkah, visit the Prophet Muhammad's shrine in Madinah, or pursue Islamic knowledge in the Haramain, before the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, despite the long history of Indonesian Muslims' visits to the Arabian Peninsula for pursuing Islamic knowledge, with few notable exceptions, there is limited scholarly writing and literature in English on Saudi Arabian-Indonesian intellectual networks, the academic contributions of Indonesian Muslim scholars in the Peninsula, and the social roles of these educational travellers in both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Previous studies generally focus on three main themes. The first theme is concerned about the enormous influences of Makkah-trained Islamic scholars in the past centuries that contributed to the shape of Islamic teachings, discourses, and Muslim practices in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.<sup>4</sup>

1 Mona Abaza, "Cultural Exchange and Muslim Education: Indonesian Students in Cairo," PhD dissertation, University of Bielefeld, 1990; William R. Roff, "Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920s," *Indonesia* No. 9 (1970), p. 73-87.

2 The term "Saudi Arabia" used in this article refers to both the contemporary Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Hijaz in the past. Hijaz officially became part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 when the ruler (King Ibn Saud) unified the whole area of the Arabian Peninsula from the east (Ahsa or Hassa), middle (Najd), and west (Hijaz).

3 Azyumardi Azra, *The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1992. Abd Rachman, *The Pesantren Architects and their Socio-Religious Teachings (1850-1950)*, PhD dissertation, The University of California at Los Angeles, 1997; Basri, *Indonesian Ulama in the Haramayn and the Transmission of Reformist Islam in Indonesia (1800-1900)*, PhD dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1997. A more recent study on this issue, see Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Saudi Arabia and Indonesian Networks: Migration, Education and Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris & Bloomsbury, 2019).

4 Azra, "The Transmission"; Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu, HI: University

The noted historian Azyumardi Azra, for instance, examined the transmission of Islamic reformation to Indonesia by investigating intellectual networks of the Middle Eastern and the Indonesian-Malay ulama in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries arguing that, among other things, the Haramain-trained Indonesian religious scholars had contributed to the shape of particular Islamic discourses and religious practices in the archipelago.<sup>5</sup> Following Azra's fine study, Basri investigates Indonesian ulama in the Haramain and the transmission of reformist Islam in Indonesia from 1800 to 1990<sup>6</sup>, while Rachman examines the contributions of Makkah-trained Indonesian Islamic scholars (Javanese: *kia*is) to the establishment of Java's oldest and respected Islamic boarding schools (known "pesantren") during the 1850s to 1950s.<sup>7</sup>

The second theme is about the role of Saudi-trained Indonesian Muslim students and scholars in introducing and spreading the so-called Salafi *da'wa* movement and some forms of puritanical and reformist Islam in Indonesia.<sup>8</sup> In recent years, particularly after the downfall of dictatorial Indonesian President Suharto in 1998, the country has witnessed the appearance of young men wearing long beards (*lihya*), Arab-style flowing robes (*jalabiyya* or thawab in Saudi), turbans (*imama*), and trousers right to their ankles (*isbal*). Not only men, today's Indonesia has witnessed women wearing *abaya*-type black cloaks (a robe-like dress), along with *niqab* (i.e., a cloth that covers the face as part of the sartorial hijab). Identifying themselves as Salafis, these particular Muslim groups, according to Hasan, are inclined to stand distinctly apart from societies around them. At first, the "Salafi movement" adopted a stance of apolitical quietism, but in recent years the Salafis have introduced a new trend in Islamic activism in the country.<sup>9</sup>

The third theme deals with Indonesian male menial labor and domestic female workers living and working on harsh informal economic sectors in Saudi Arabia. The literature usually discusses such issues as transnational connection of migration, domestication of labourers, gendered work, the workers' economic contributions for their families, exploitations of workers, among others.<sup>10</sup> More specifically research and scholarship typically discusses

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of Hawaii Press, 2004); Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); Rachman, "The Pesantren Architect"; Basri, "Indonesian Ulama".

5 Azra, "The Transmission" and "The Origins".

6 Basri, "Indonesian Ulama."

7 Rachman, "The Architect Pesantren".

8 Noorhaidi Hasan, "Saudi Expansion, the Salafi Campaign and Arabised Islam in Indonesia." In Madawi Al-Rasheed (ed.), *Transnational Connection and the Arab Gulf*, p. 263-281, (London: Routledge, 2005); Anthony Bubalo, Sarah Phillips, and Samina Yasmeen, *Talib or Taliban? Indonesian Students in Pakistan and Yemen* (Australia: The Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2011); cf. Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

9 Hasan, "Saudi Expansion," p. 263-81.

10 Rachel Silvey, "Mobilizing Piety: Gendered Morality and Indonesian-Saudi Transnational Migration," *Mobilities* 2: 2 (2007), p. 219-229; "Transnational Domestication: State Power and Indonesian Migrant Women in Saudi Arabia," *Political Geography* 23 (2004a), p. 245-264; "Transnational Migration and the Gender Politics of Scale: Indonesian Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 25: 2 (2004b), p. 141-155; "Consuming Transnational Family: Indonesian Domestic Migrant Workers to Saudi Arabia," *Global Networks* 6:1 (2006), p. 23-40; Rashid Amjad, "Philippines and Indonesia: on the Way to a Migration Transition," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 5: 2-3 (1996), p. 339-366; Aris Ananta, at. al., "The Impact of Economic Crisis on International Migration: the Case of Indonesia," *Asia Pacific Migration Journal* 7: 2-3 (1998), p. 313-338; R. Tirtosudarmo, *Indonesian Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia* (Mimeo, Leiden, the Netherlands: International Institute for Asian Studies, 2000); Stephen Castles and Mark Miller, *The Age of Migration* (London: MacMillan, 1998); Mark Johnson, "Diasporic Dreams, Middle Class Moralities, and Migrant Domestic Workers among Muslim Filipinos in Saudi

female housemaids in relation to issues of hard working / living conditions, human rights violation, sexual assault, non-payment of wages, overwork, or their roles in supporting their family expenses and economies in the country of origin.<sup>11</sup>

Given the overwhelming influx of and issues on Indonesian women migrants abroad, it is hence not surprising if some researchers and scholars of Indonesia have put more emphasis on the study of domestic female workers than of educational-intellectual migrant groups. Until recently, Indonesian Muslim educational travellers such as teachers, scholars, researchers, and students are a largely unreported and under-researched diaspora in Arab and the Middle East, despite the fact that this group has played a major role in shaping the country's Islamic education, cultures, and public discourses. Likewise, some Islamic and Muslim scholars have contributed to Saudi Arabia's education. A narrow emphasis on "unskilled" menial labourers and domestic female workers hence neglects the vitality of Saudi Arabia (or the Arab Middle East more generally) as a strategic target for realizing Islamic educational dreams, religious purposes, entrepreneurial ambitions, and middle-class aspirations.

Unlike most previous and existing studies, this article sketches the history and contemporary development of Saudi Arabian-Indonesian intellectual networks. More specifically, the article highlights trends in the shifting phenomena and the changing nature of the Indonesian educational travellers and scholars in Saudi Arabia in recent decades by focusing on both Islamic scholars and teachers as well as those specializing on non-Islamic studies. This article shows that, first, Saudi Arabia-trained Indonesian Islamic scholars<sup>12</sup> vary enormously in terms of religious orientations, political affiliations, social networks, and academic backgrounds. Secondly, whereas the presence of Indonesian Islamic scholars in Saudi Arabia has declined significantly since the last four decades, new tiny Indonesian Muslim scholars specializing in the field of non-Islamic studies began to emerge and teach in some universities in the Kingdom. This article, among others, aims at examining the diversity, complexity, and changing dynamics of Saudi Arabia's Indonesian Islamic and Muslim scholars as well as their major roles and contributions in the spread and development of Indonesia's Islam and society.

The bottom line of—and among the reasons behind—this article, among others, is to provide a balanced picture and analysis on Indonesian transnational migrants and educational travellers in Saudi Arabia in order to comprehend the variety and density of

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Arabia," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 11: 3-4 (2010), p. 1-22.

11 History has noted that the migration of Indonesian women from rural areas to urban regions in the country to work as domestic servants has taken place since European colonialism. However, only since the 1970s have Indonesian women migrated overseas in large numbers to find jobs in urban households. More specifically, the migration of female domestic workers in Saudi Arabia began in the 1980s following the agreement between the Indonesian government (the Ministry of Labour) and the Saudi Kingdom. With the globalization of Indonesian women's migration, migrant women's rights, morals and protection have emerged as focal points of national public debate and national activity. See Silvey, "*Consuming Transnational Family*". As a result, the number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) emphasizing women's issues and migrants' rights have grown significantly since the 1990s. See N. Abdul Rahman, "Shaping the Migrant Institution: the Agency of Indonesian Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore", in L. Parker (ed.) *The Agency of Women in Asia* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2004).

12 This article defines the phrase of "Saudi Arabia-trained Indonesian Islamic scholars" as both those having been trained in the kingdom and Saudi educational institutions in Indonesia such as LIPIA (the Institute for the Study of Islamic Science and Arabic Language).

these groups and their activities, practices, motives, and networks. The article will, hence, complement and fill the gap on the scholarship on Indonesians in Saudi Arabia. This article is based on existing literature and field research that includes interviews and conversations with Indonesian scholars, in addition to analysis, understanding, and interpretation of multiple socio-historical/-political/-cultural events and facts in both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.

### **The Idea of Rihla and Saudi–Indonesian Contact**

Why do Muslims, including Indonesian Muslims, travel from place to place to seek knowledge and pursue sciences?

One of the main reasons is perhaps because Islam encourages Muslims to make a journey in search of knowledge, which is called *rihla*. Islam recognizes at least four types of journey, namely *hajj* (pilgrimage), *hijra* (i.e., migration to other lands for religious, economic, and political reasons), *ziyara* (i.e., visits to shrines and sacred sites), and *rihla* (i.e., travel for learning or educational travel). Islam highly values the notion of *rihla* or *thalab al-ilm* (“pursuing knowledge”). Several verses of the Qur’an and Hadith have endorsed *rihla*; thereby, the teaching-learning process (*ta’allum*) through both formal and informal schooling, historically and traditionally, has become a Muslim habit and culture.<sup>13</sup> This is among the rationales of why many Muslims, from past to present, were keen to establish a variety of learning centers and educational institutions as a means of knowledge transformation and distribution.<sup>14</sup> It is significant to underscore that Islam considers *rihla* and *ta’allum* as not only seeking knowledge and wisdom per se but also seeking God’s rewards (*makafiyat*) that could guarantee the seekers enter Paradise after their death. The concepts of *rihla* and *ta’allum*, hence, are linked with the idea of *tabarrukan* (seeking blessings from God) and *rida* (Allah compliance).<sup>15</sup>

The idea of *rihla* has also long driven Indonesian Muslims to travel. It is thus not surprising if they made journies for learning and in search of knowledge, not only from region to region in the archipelago but also to other countries since past centuries. Until now, many Muslims have travelled across borders for *thalab al-ilm*. Santri (students of *pondok pesantren*, Java’s Islamic boarding school), for example, have travelled to other regions in the archipelago, looking for a fine *pesantren* and *kiai* (Islamic scholar and cleric) to learn Islam and Islamic sciences. As for foreign countries, one of the favourite destinations to pursue Islamic knowledge is Saudi Arabia. Other Muslim-majority countries that have attracted Indonesian Muslims to study Islamic sciences include Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, Malaysia, Sudan, and Tunisia, among others. Other Indonesian Muslims study Islam in western academic institutions, especially the United States, Australia, Canada, and countries in western Europe.

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13 Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Role of Imagination* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1990); Mona Abaza, *Islamic Education, Perceptions, and Exchanges: Indonesian Students in Cairo* (Paris: Archipel, 1994); Alex Norman, “Spiritual Tourism: Religion and Spirituality in Contemporary Travel,” BA thesis, University of Sydney, 2004.

14 Dale F. Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

15 Roff, “Indonesian”; Abaza, “Islamic Education”.



Even though Indonesian Muslims have long travelled to—and many stayed in—the Arabian Peninsula, there is no exact number or official statistics concerning Indonesians in Saudi Arabia. However, according to Sa’adullah Affandy of the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh, more than a million Indonesians currently live in Saudi Arabia,<sup>16</sup> not to mention hundreds of thousands of hajj and umrah pilgrims who annually travel to the sacred places of Makkah and Madinah. Indonesians who live in present-day Saudi Arabia are the product of a long-established contact between people of the two regions, taking place more intensively in particular since the European colonial times. Due to this lengthy contact, it is not surprising that in contemporary Makkah, there is a district called *Kampung Jawah*<sup>17</sup> (“Javanese Village”), signifying the long presence of Malay-Indonesians in Arabia.<sup>18</sup>

As mentioned earlier, contacts between Arabia, northern (Hijaz) and southern parts (Yemen), and Malay-Indonesian archipelago are ancient, long before European colonials landed in the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>19</sup> This “tradition” is continued nowadays, albeit for different reasons and purposes. Historically, Arabs, particularly Arab-Hadramis in southern Arabia, who travelled to Indonesia did so mainly for trade, living, or Islamic da’wah. By contrast, Indonesians who voyaged to Arabia, especially Hijaz, were driven by their eagerness to perform the hajj pilgrimage, conduct religious activities in Makkah and Madinah, and learn Islamic knowledge and sciences in the birthplace of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of facing many difficulties (for instances, uneasy sea transport, disease attacks, lengthy voyage, limited food, and so forth), the number of Indonesian hajj pilgrims in the past centuries were significant and tremendous. Between 1850 and 1860, there were about 1,600 hajj pilgrims, about 2,600 – 4,600 in the 1870s, and in the 1880s, more than 15 percent of all pilgrims to Makkah were from the Indonesian archipelago. Due to a large number of Indonesian pilgrims, it is not surprising that there were many Indonesians residing in Makkah since past centuries. Although accurate figures on Indonesians in Makkah are hard to find at that time, Christian Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), a Dutch scholar of Oriental cultures and languages and Advisor on Native Affairs to the colonial government of the Netherlands East Indies, estimated about 8,000–10,000 Indonesians stayed there in the late nineteenth century. Later on, Snouck Hurgronje stayed in Makkah for a while (under a “pseudonym” Abdul Ghaffar) aiming at studying activities of Indonesians in the city

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16 Interview with Sa’adullah Affandy, December 31, 2020.

17 The word “Jawah” does not really mean “Java Island”. It refers to Malay-Indonesian archipelago, and the term “al-Jawi” at the time refers to people from this area, including the Pattani of Southern Thailand. However, “Kampung Jawah” in Makkah is mostly inhabited by people from Indonesia’s various ethnic groups such Javanese, Sumatrans, Madurese, Makasarese, Sundanese, Betawians, and many others.

18 This article, however, does not investigate the origins, history, and recent development of this “Kampung Jawah” and its inhabitants, but rather, discusses a specific group of Indonesian teachers, scholars, and students who lived (or living) sporadically across the Kingdom, including in the *Kampung Jawah*.

19 See, for instance, Azra, “*The Transmission*”; Ulrike Freitag and William G. Clarence-Smith (eds.), *Hadrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s* (Leiden, New York, and Koln: Brill, 1997).

20 Douwes, Dick and Nico Kaptein. 1997. *Indonesia dan Haji* (“Indonesia and Hajj”). Jakarta: INIS. Ho, Engseng. 2006. *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*. California, CA: University of California Press. Van den Berg, L.W.C. 1989. *Hadramaut dan Koloni Arab di Nusantara* [“Hadramaut and Arab Colony in Indonesia”]. Jakarta: Indonesian Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies. Jacobson, Frode. 2009. *Hadrami Arabs in Present-day Indonesia*. London: Routledge. Laffan, Michael. 2011. *The Makings of Indonesian Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Peters, F.E. 1994a. *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Makkah and the Holy Places*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

and making a report to the Dutch colonial rule about their activities, especially religious-political activities that might jeopardize the existence of the Dutch government in the East Indies.<sup>21</sup> The sending of Hurgronje to Makkah was mainly because of the occurrence of a number of rebellions in Java, Sumatra and other places in the archipelago, led by kiai (religious clerics) and “haji” (returning pilgrims).<sup>22</sup>

The pilgrims who stayed in Makkah in turn created small Indonesian enclaves and helped to shape the “*Kampung Jawah*” in this city, as mentioned previously. Located in the district of Shamiah or Shi’ib Ali, the *Kampung Jawah* became one of Islamic training or learning centers, as well as a temporary residence for new Malay-Indonesians arrived in Makkah. Although people from Arabia and Indonesia had travelled long before European colonial times, their travel intensity to these regions took place after the discovery of steamship technology and the openness of Suez Canal in 1869 that made people of the two areas easy to travel by a sea route.

Contacts between Arabia and Indonesia took place not only through informal ways but also formal or official ones. In late 1920s, for example, a small group of Islamic scholars (ulama) affiliated to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia’s largest Muslim social organization, named Komite Hijaz (Hijaz Committee), visited Saudi Arabia to meet and give a letter of request from NU to King Ibn Saud (1875–1953). The Committee was concerned about some issues related to hajj and other socio-religious situations in Makkah and Madinah following the shifting political regime in Saudi Arabia. Led by renowned and respected ulama KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah (1888–1971), the committee requested of the King the following: (1) the implementation of four madhhab (a school of Islamic jurisprudence) within Sunni tradition, namely Maliki, Shafi’i, Hanafi, and Hanbali for Muslims in Hijaz; (2) the maintenance of Islamic historical sites; and (3) the announcement to the Muslim world about the cost for hajj pilgrimage, among others.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, in 1967, Saudi Arabia helped to set up and develop the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII—Indonesian Council for Islamic Propagation). DDII was initiated and founded by a leading Islamist figure, Muhammad Natsir (1908–1993), and other former leaders of Masyumi, an Islamist political party banned by President Sukarno in 1960. Due to Natsir’s personal closeness and relationships with elite members of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the DDII enjoyed the financial and cultural support for the development of Islamic da’wa activities such as the establishment of mosques, the founding of madrasah, the training of preachers, the distribution of free copies of the Qur’an and other Salafi-related Islamic books, and so forth.<sup>24</sup> All of these activities and publications in turn helped to contribute to the spread of Islamic resurgence and the growth of Islamist groupings in Indonesia that reached its peak following Suharto’s collapse in 1998.

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21 Christian Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Later Part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Daily Life, Customs and Learning. The Moslems of the East Indian Archipelago* (transl. Johan Monahan) (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

22 During the Banten Revolt of 1888, for instance, there were numerous haji that initiated and led the uprising against the Dutch including Haji Wasith, Haji Abdurrahman, Haji Akib, Haji Harist, Haji Arsyad Thawil, Haji Isma’il, and Haji Arsyad Qashir, many of whom were linked to Tariqat Qadiriyyah-Naqsabandiyah. See Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants’ Revolt of Banten in 1888: Its Conditions, Course, and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia* (Netherlands: Brill, 1966).

23 On the five points requested by the Hijaz Committee to King Ibn Saud see: <http://www.nu.or.id/post/read/39479/komite-hijaz>.

24 Hasan, “Saudi Expansion”, p. 267-8.



Diederich divides the contacts between Arabia and Indonesia into two main phases.<sup>25</sup> The first stage, which continued until the Second World War (WWII), was typified by the predominance of religious contacts, and the second phase (after WWII) was marked by the increased migration of menial labourers seeking employment and “unskilled” jobs. Unlike Diederich’s observation, however, I have noticed that the first phase of contact was not only marked by religion but also intellectualism. This is to say that, as depicted below, the reasons for Indonesians who travelled or migrated to Arabia in the first stage were not only for performing religious-spiritual activities such as hajj but also for learning Islamic knowledge and for studying Islamic sciences. After completing hajj rituals, learning, and studying multiple Islamic sciences, some Indonesians preferred to stay in Makkah or Madinah (known as *mukimin*) becoming teachers and scholars who run *halaqah* (“study circles”) for pilgrims and building *rubat* (Islamic boarding schools). Secondly, as for the second stage, Indonesians who travelled or migrated to Saudi in the aftermath of WWII were not only seeking unskilled work but were also looking for professional, skilled jobs, as well as studying various sciences and pursuing degrees in multiple disciplines.

However, it should be noted, during the first stage, most, if not all, Indonesians learned and studied Islamic sciences at multiple formal and informal learning institutions (madrasah, halaqah, *rubat*, and mosques) in Makkah in particular. In the second phase, however, there were three types or groups of Indonesians travelling or migrating to Saudi, not to mention hajj / umrah pilgrims. First, Indonesians who sought “unskilled” jobs (i.e., menial workers) as well as skilled occupations (professional expatriates) working in oil industries, construction companies, hotels, or hospitals. Second, Indonesians who studied Islamic sciences did so in multiple Islamic learning centers: madrasah, mosques, institutes, colleges, and universities. This new trend, for sure, differs from the previous one where Indonesian Muslims learned Islam at informal educational sites, particularly at Makkah’s Haram Mosque and Madinah’s Nabawi Mosque, or madrasah (Islamic schools).

Since 1980s and 1990s, however, Indonesian students, all through scholarships provided by the Kingdom (but more recently, the scholarship scheme has changed slightly, no longer providing full scholarships), learned Islamic studies at universities and colleges, most notably Umm al-Qura University (Makkah), Islamic University (Madinah), and Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University (Riyadh), among others. Of these three universities, Islamic University of Madinah has been the largest host for Indonesian Muslim students pursuing multiple degrees in Islamic sciences and disciplines such as Islamic Law, Hadith exegesis, and *da’wa* (“missiology”), among others. At present, there are more than 800 Indonesian students at the Islamic University of Madinah. The third group of Indonesians is students who study secular sciences and engineering, mostly at graduate levels (Master and PhD). These types of students mostly study at King Saud University (Riyadh), King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals (Dhahran), and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (Thuwal).

It is imperative to note that these educational travellers and intellectual migrants are only a small portion of Indonesians in Saudi Arabia. The largest one, especially since the late 1970s / early 1980s, are labour migrants. Since the 1980s, there has been a new wave of

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25 Mathias Diederich, “Indonesians in Saudi Arabia: Religious and Economic Connection.” In Madawi Al-Rasheed (ed.), *Transnational Connection and the Arab Gulf*, p. 128-146 (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

Indonesian migrants in Saudi Arabia typified by in search of employment and “unskilled” jobs. The early 1980s was the period where Indonesia started to “export” menial workers and housemaids to the Kingdom as resulting from agreements between the two countries.<sup>26</sup> Sudomo, a former Minister of Manpower in the Suharto government, was a key figure and a decision maker about the notion of sending these labour migrants. Since then, the positive image of Indonesia in Saudi Arabia began to change and wane. Due to the influx of this new migrant group, “unskilled” female and male labourers have dominated public issues of Indonesian migrants in this Kingdom, while Muslim teachers, scholars, and students have disappeared from the news.

### **On Indonesian Islamic Scholars and Teachers**

As noted earlier, Indonesians initially travelled to Makkah mainly for hajj pilgrimage as one of Islam’s main pillars and an important religious compulsion. After performing the hajj, the majority of Indonesians returned to their country. However, a small minority chose to stay in Makkah for several reasons. The first reason was to look for jobs in order to get some money to purchase things or provisions for their trip back to their homes in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago or to pay their debts. Many pilgrims in the past ran out their money and supplies because the journey to Makkah took a long time. To earn some money, some of them worked in date plantations or small shops, while others assisted pilgrims. Some pilgrims even became slaves because they were not able to pay their debts.<sup>27</sup> Since recent decades, a great number of pilgrims, after finishing their pilgrimage rituals, deliberately chose to stay in Makkah because they wanted to live (or died) and work there or other places in the Kingdom such as Jeddah, a crowded business city near Makkah, as shopkeepers, bus drivers and other occupations.

The second reason was to study or learn Islamic sciences and at the same time perform religious rituals at Haram Mosque (Makkah) and Nabawi Mosque (Madinah), two most sacred places for Muslims. Muslims believed that performing worship and conducting any religious activities in these two sites, unlike in other places, would be granted by God hundreds of thousands of rewards that could guarantee their entrance into Paradise after their death. The desire for both learning Islam and performing rituals drove some Indonesian Muslims to stay longer in the Haramain. While some stayed months or years before returning to their home country, others lived forever until deceased in Makkah. The type of religious and intellectual nature of contact between Indonesia and Arabia was obvious at least until WWII. This is among the reasons why, in the past, there were a great deal of Indonesian Islamic scholars and teachers in Haramain whose legacy can still be witnessed nowadays.<sup>28</sup>

As for Indonesian Islamic scholars and teachers in Saudi Arabia, there is a big difference between past and present. While in the past there was a great deal of Indonesian Muslim teachers and Islamic scholars who taught in Makkah and Madinah and wrote numerous

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26 Yon Machmudi, “Muslim Intellectual or Housmaids? The Saudi Perceptions of the Indonesian Domestic Workers,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 05: 02 (2011), p. 225-247.

27 See Hurgronje, “Mekka”.

28 Abdul Adzim Irsad, *Ulama Nusantara: Kiprah Ulama Nusantara di Tanah Suci Makkah* (Malang: Unisma Press, 2015); Amirul Ulum, *Ulama-Ulama Aswaja Nusantara yang Berpengaruh di Negeri Hijaz* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Musi, 2015).

books (in Arabic or Malay) on Islamic knowledge and sciences, at present it is almost hard to find Indonesian Islamic teachers and scholars in the Kingdom. In addition, whereas in the past centuries, most, if not all, Indonesian teachers and scholars in Arabia focused on Islamic studies, nowadays there are increasing numbers of Indonesian teachers and scholars who teach and write about secular sciences such as math, chemistry, physics, engineering, computer science, aerospace, social sciences, among others. In the past centuries, Indonesian Muslim teachers and scholars taught at non-university formal educational institutions (e.g., madrasah) and informal centers for Islamic learning (e.g., *halaqah* and *rubat*), whereas in the modern era, they teach at colleges and universities across the Kingdom.

Let me briefly highlight some Indonesian Islamic teachers and scholars in Saudi Arabia. Some studies have noted that in the past centuries, there were a great deal of renowned and respected Indonesian teachers and Islamic scholars, who lived and died in Makkah. They played an enormous role as both teachers and scholars in contributing to the development of Islamic education and discourses in Arabia and beyond. Moreover, Indonesian graduates of Makkah's Islamic schools and learning centers who chose to return to their home country of Indonesia also played a vast role in the process of Islamization as well as in the creation and development of Islamic education, social organization, and Muslim civilization in the country. Further, these scholars and teachers contributed to the founding of *pesantren* that later played a gigantic role in the transformation of Islamic knowledge and the spread of Islamic culture.

Among Arabia-trained renowned Indonesian Islamic scholars and teachers were KH Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, KH Ahmad Dahlan, KH Faqih Maskumambang, KH Baidhawi bin Abdul Aziz, KH Wahab Chasbullah, KH Ridwan Mujahid, KH Ma'shum bin Ahmad, among many others. Many of these eminent ulama were involved in the establishment of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Muslim social organization, on January 31, 1926. Their profound legacies and heritages in teaching students, developing Islamic educational institutions, and producing religious discourses and scholarships can still be witnessed in modern Indonesia, Arabia, and beyond. This is among many reasons why during the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, Malay-Indonesian teachers and scholars had received great esteem from Arabs and other ethnicities in the Haramain.

Furthermore, notable Indonesian ulama in the Haramain included the following: Nuruddin al-Raniri, Shamsuddin al-Sumatrani, Abdurrahman al-Sinkili, Arshad al-Banjari, Yusuf al-Makassari, Muhyi Waliyullah Pamijahan, and KH Ahmad Mutamakkin, all of whom lived between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Historian Azyumardi Azra has studied the contributions of these ulama and their roles in the creation of intellectual networks between Arabia and Malay-Indonesian archipelago.<sup>29</sup> The following nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the "golden age" of Indonesian Islamic scholars and teachers in the Haramain. These included the following prominent names: Imam Nawawi al-Bantani, Akhmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi, Kiai Mahfudz al-Turmusi, Kiai Abdul Hamid al-Qudsi, Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani, Muhammad Uhid bin Idris al-Bughuri, Abdullah Dardum al-Fadani, Abdul Ghani al-Bimawi, Asy'ari bin Abdurrahman al-Baweani, Ahmad Nakhrawi al-Banyumasi, Muhammad Zainuddin al-Baweani, Muhammad bin Umar al-

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29 Azra, "The Transmission."

Sumbawi, Sayyid Muhsin bin Ali al-Hasani al-Palimbani, Abdul Fattah Rowah, Abdul Qodir bin Abdul Muttolib al-Mandili, Baqir bin Muhammad Nur al-Jukjawi, Abdullah Muhaimin al-Lasemi, Junaid al-Batawi, and many others.<sup>30</sup>

Their students were not only from the Malay-Indonesian archipelago but also from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. Their constructive role and contributions in teaching Islamic knowledge and sciences, as well as in writing academic works on Islam that have been used in some academic circles across the Arab regions, South and Southeast Asia, had formerly helped to create a positive image in Arabia about the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. This picture contrasts with contemporary era in which Indonesians in general in Saudi are portrayed as a “coolie class” or “unskilled labourers.” Due to limited space, I will only highlight the backgrounds, activities, and contributions of the most famous and influential figures from those noted teachers and scholars.

Imam Nawawi bin Umar al-Bantani (1813–1897) was perhaps the most admired of Indonesia’s scholars who had achieved the highest clerical career in Makkah and Madinah. The name “Nawawi” refers to the great ulama in the Medieval Islam, Abu Zakaria Muhyiddin Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi (known Imam Nawawi, d. 1277) from Nawa, Syria, an influential Shafiite jurist and Hadith scholar. Imam Nawawi authored numerous lengthy works on Hadith, theology, biography, and jurisprudence. Kiai Umar, the father of Imam Nawawi al-Bantani, admired Imam Nawawi and promised to name his son “Nawawi”. Born in Tanara of Serang, Banten, in West Java, Imam Nawawi arrived at Makkah in 1828 and soon stayed at Kampung Jawah, a popular district for Malay-Indonesian pilgrims and students. In Makkah, Imam Nawawi studied Islam with both Arab and Indonesian ulama. Among Nawawi’s Indonesian Islamic teachers were Junaid al-Batawi, Mahmud bin Kanaan al-Palembani, Abdush Shamad bin Abdulrahman, and Yusuf bin Arshad al-Banjari. As for non-Indonesian teachers who taught Imam Nawawi at Haram Mosque, they included Shaikh Ahmad al-Nakhrawi al-Makki, Shaikh Ahmad al-Dimyathi, Shaikh Hasbullah, Shaikh Zaini Dahlan, Shaikh Abdul Hamid Daghastani, Shaikh Muhammad Khatib Hanbali, among others.

After years of studies on various Islamic disciplines and subjects under the guidance and mentorship of both respected Arab and Indonesian ulama in Makkah, Imam Nawawi taught Islamic sciences first at the Kampung Jawah and later at the Haram Mosque (Masjid al-Haram) upon the agreement of a group of ulama and teachers under the direction of Shaikh Ainur Rafiq. Imam Nawawi’s students, it should be noted, were not only from Malay-Indonesian archipelago but also from other parts of the world, many of whom became great scholars, teachers, preachers, and other professions. Some notable Indonesian students of Imam Nawawi included the following notable names: Zainuddin bin Badawi, Abdul Ghani bin Shubuh, Mahfudz al-Turmusi, Asy’ari al-Baweani, Abdul Karim al-Bantani, Jum’an bin Ma’mun al-Tangerangi, Abdul Hamid al-Qudsi, Hasyim Asy’ari, Arsyad Thawil al-Bantani, Khalil Bangkalan, Umar bin Harun Rembang, among many others. Furthermore, Imam Nawawi’s Arab students who later taught at the Haram Mosque included Sayyid Ali bin Ali al-Habsyi, Shaikh Abdul Satar al-Dahlawi, Shaikh Abdus Satar bin Abdul Wahhab al-Shadiqi al-Makki, and so forth.

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30 Al Qurtuby, “Saudi Arabia”; Basri, “Indonesian Ulama”; Rachman, “The Pesantren Architects”.



At the time, his students called Imam Nawawi “*Imam al-Manthuq wa al-Mafhum*”, namely an imam or a teacher who comprehends Islamic knowledge and understands ways of teaching the knowledge. Due to his masterful expertise, Imam Nawawi was granted multiple religious titles by Arab ulama, such as “Sayyid al-Ulama al-Hijaz” (The Lord of Hijaz Ulama), “Alim al-Hijaz” (the Scholar of Hijaz), “Imam Ulama al-Haramain” (the Leader of Ulama of Haramain), “Hukama al-Mutaakhirin” (the Last Jurist or Judge), or Shaikh al-Hijaz (the Shaikh<sup>31</sup> of Hijaz). Moreover, Imam Nawawi was appointed as a mufti of the Grand Mosque of al-Haram and earned the highest religious authority in Makkah.<sup>32</sup> Not only teaching at the Haram Mosque, Imam Nawawi was also invited by Shaikh Ibrahim al-Baijuri, the grand mufti of Egypt, to give a religious lecture at the mosque of Al-Azhar. Because of Nawawi’s great contributions in teaching Islamic knowledge the Haram Mosque, Shaikh Abdallah Abdulrahman al-Moalimi in his *A’lam al-Makkiyyin* included him as one of the distinguished teachers and scholars in Makkah’s history.<sup>33</sup>

Imam Nawawi was not only a great teacher but also a truly productive scholar and a prolific writer who, according to Egyptian Islamic scholar Shaikh Umar Abd al-Jabbar, wrote more than 100 books and publications in Arabic on various subjects (Hadith, tafsir or Qur’anic Exegesis, Islamic Law, theology, Islamic history, Arabic grammar, literature, and so forth). Many of his works have been widely used in traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) across Indonesia and beyond, in addition to Makkah, where he ran a *halaqah* (a circle for learning and studying Islam). When I was in pesantren in Central Java, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I also studied Imam Nawawi’s books. Imam Nawawi’s monumental work on Qur’anic exegesis is known *Tafsir al-Munir* (2 vols., written in 1866), was examined—and then recognized—by a group of ulama in Egypt and Makkah. In the Islamic Law (fiqh), Imam Nawawi wrote several books including *Fath al-Qarib*, *Kasyifat al-Saja*, *Nihayat al-Zain*, *Sullam al-Munajat*, *Uqud al-Lujain*, *al-Aqdu al-Samin*, *Mirqath al-Shu’ud al-Tashdiq*, among others. His books on theology (‘aqidah) and morality (akhlaq) included *Bahjat al-Wasa’il*, *Fath al-Majid*, *Tijan al-Durari*, *al-Najah al-Jadidah*, *Salalim al-Fudhala*, *Nashaih al-Ibad*, and so forth. In history, Imam Nawawi wrote *Targhib al-Mustaqim*, *al-Ibriz al-Dani*, *Madarij al-Shu’ud*, and *Fath al-Shamad*.

In brief, Imam Nawawi was a legendary figure whose teachings, knowledge, and charisma have inspired many Indonesian Muslims, especially *Nahdliyin* (members of Nahdlatul Ulama). After years of teaching, lecturing, and services for the development of Islam, Imam Nawawi died in 1879 and was buried at Ma’la, Makkah, close to the graveyards of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (a medieval Shafi’ite Sunni scholar of Islam and a Hadith expert, d. 1449) and Asma’ bint Abu Bakar (d. 692), one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

Another noted Indonesian scholar and a respected teacher in Makkah was Kiai Muhammad Mahfud bin Abdullah al-Turmusi (known, Shaikh Mahfud al-Turmusi, 1868–1920). Born in Termas in the regency of Pacitan, East Java, Shaikh Mahfud was the son of

31 In the Arab world, the word “shaikh” has multiple meanings including cleric, scholar, wise old men, and the like. In the Arab society, the word “shaikh” has been used as a call or title for a highest political leader (such as in the United Arab Emirates), a respected religious scholar, or a tribal chief.

32 Ulum, “*Ulama-Ulama Aswaja*”, p. 51; Machmudi, “*Muslim Intellectuals*”, p. 229-30.

33 Abdallah Abdulrahman Al-Moalimi, *A’lam al-Makkiyyin*, 832-1399 H., 2 Vols (London, U.K.: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2000).

Kiai Abdullah bin Abdul Manan, a Muslim cleric and a leader of Pesantren Termas. It was Mahfud's father who took Shaikh Mahfud to Makkah for hajj when he was six years old and introduced him to respected Indonesian ulama residing in the Kampung Jawah such as Imam Nawawi al-Bantani and Ahmad Nahrawi al-Banyumasi, both of whom were Kiai Abdullah's teachers. After completing hajj, Kiai Abdullah and Shaikh Mahfud went home. But later, when he was 30 in 1897, Shaikh Mahfud, accompanied by his younger brother, Kiai Dimyathi, returned to Makkah (and eventually died there) to continue learning Islamic sciences with several notable scholars at the Haram Mosque including Shaikh Abu Bakar Shatha, Shaikh Abu Bakar al-Sham, Sayyid Hussein bin Muhammad bin Hussein al-Habshi, Shaikh Muhammad al-Sarbini, Sayyid Muhammad Amin bin Ahmad Ridwan al-Madani, among others.

Although Shaikh Mahfud learned and studied various subjects of Islamic sciences, he was most renowned for his expertise in the Hadith scholarship and Islamic law. Like Imam Nawawi al-Bantani described earlier, Shaikh Mahfud al-Turmusi also taught at the Haram Mosque, and his students were not only from the Malay-Indonesian archipelago but also from other regions. Some of his notable non-Indonesian students included Shaikh Habibullah al-Shinqithi, Shaikh Umar Hamdan al-Mahrusi, Shaikh Ahmad Abdullah al-Shami, Qadhi Yahya Aman al-Makki, Shaikh Abdullah Hamid al-Makki, and Shaikh Sa'dullah al-Maimani (a mufti of Bombay). Shaikh Mahfud wrote several books including commentaries of some works on Shafi'i jurisprudence such as *al-Minhaj*, *Fath al-Wahhab*, and *al-Iqna*. Some of his commentary works were later known as *Hashiyat al-Turmusi*, and written in several volumes. His other publications included *al-Fawa'id al-Turmusiyah fi Asma al-Qira'ah al-'Asriyah* (Qur'anic reading skills), *Manhaj al-Nazhar fi al-Manzumat Ahl al-Athar* (methodology of Hadith), and *al-Siqayah al-Mardiyah fi Asma fi al-Kutub al-Fiqhiyah Ashab li al-Shafi'iyah* (the encyclopaedia of Shafi'i jurisprudence school).

In a commentary on the legacy of Shaikh Mahfud al-Turmusi, KH Maimun Zubair (1928-2019) said that he was "*Shaikh al-mashayikh al-alam wa qudwah al-anam min al-ulama al-barizin fi al-qorni al-rabi 'ashar*" ("the professor of professors and a role model for people in the fourteenth century of Hijri").<sup>34</sup> KH Maimun Zubair was one of key leading religious figures who has been a main channel for Indonesian students to study at Makkah's Islamic learning centers, especially at the Ma'had Sayyid Muhammad Alawi al-Maliki al-Makki.

Another outstanding scholar who deserves to be mentioned in this article was Ahmad Khatib bin Abdul Latif al-Minangkabawi (1860–1916). Born among the Minangkabau people of West Sumatra and dying in Ma'la, Makkah, Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi (known Shaikh Khatib Minangkabau), like Imam Nawawi Banten and Shaikh Mahfud Termas, was a celebrated teacher and a prolific author. For many years, after studying at Makkah under the mentorship of Arab and Indonesian ulama, he taught at the Haram Mosque (as well as becoming an imam of the mosque there) and had many students from different parts of the world. Shaikh Khatib's Indonesian students in particular had played a gigantic role in transforming Islamic knowledge into Indonesian settings and in developing Muslim education and organization in the archipelago.

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<sup>34</sup> Uloom, "*Ulama-Ulama Aswaja*", p. 85-6; see also Irsad, "*Ulama Nusantara*"; Rachman, "*The Pesantren Architects*".



Some of Shaikh Khatib's notable students who later played a tremendous role in their societies included Abdul Karim Amrullah (Haji Rasul), Shaikh Muhammad Jamil Jambek, Shaikh Sulaiman al-Rasuli, Shaikh Muhammad Jamil Jaho, Shaikh Abbas Qadhi Ladang Lawas, Shaikh Abbas Abdullah Padang, Shaikh Khatib Ali, Shaikh Hasan Maksum, and so forth. The founders of Nahdlatul Ulama (KH Hasyim Asy'ari, 1875–1947) and of Muhammadiyah (KH Ahmad Dahlan or KH Muhammad Darwis, 1868–1923) were also the students of Shaikh Ahmad Khatib Minangkabau. Unlike Imam Nawawi Banten and Shaikh Mahfud Termas, Shaikh Khatib Minangkabau was an expert in multiple subjects and disciplines including astronomy, inheritance, math, geometry, history, besides Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Islamic legal theory (*ushul fiqh*), and theology. Shaikh Khatib wrote at least 49 books (in Arabic and Malay) on these subjects, including *Raudat al-Hussab fi A'mal Ilm al-Hissab*, *al-Jawahir al-Naqiyah fi al-A'mali al-Jaibiyah*, *Hasyiyat Nafahat ala Syarh al-Waraqatuh*, among many others.

Shaikh Muhammad Yasin bin Isa al-Fadani (born and died in Makkah, 1916–1990; hereafter Shaikh Yasin) was another Makkah's eminent teacher and Islamic scholar of Indonesian origins, whom anthropologist Martin van Bruinessen called “Begawan [Maestro] Sumatra,”<sup>35</sup> referring to the ancestral root of Shaikh Yasin, namely Padang of Sumatra island. Like other Indonesian ulama at Makkah at the time, Shaikh Yasin also learned under the guidance of Arab and non-Arab ulama, including Indonesians, such as Shaikh Mahfud Termas (East Java), Shaikh Abdullah Uhid Bogor (West Java), Shaikh Mahmud bin Uqid Padang (Sumatra), Sayyid Muhsin al-Musawa (Sumatra), among others. Some sources said that Shaikh Yasin studied Islam at Makkah with hundreds of Muslim scholars (*ulama* and *fuqaha*) from many regions: Hijaz, Yaman, Egypt, India, Syria, Thailand (Pattani), among many others; it is hence not surprising that later he became a noted scholar of Islam whose intellectual works are able to shine many students from different parts of the world.

Shaikh Yasin wrote some 97 books (some said a hundred), all of which used an excellent, systematic classical Arabic (*fushah*), on multiple disciplines and themes, particularly Hadith, Arabic grammar / linguistic, Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Islamic Legal Theory (*ushul fiqh*), and astronomy (*falak*). Many of Shaikh Yasin's works have been widely used as references in many Indonesian pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), Islamic schools, and universities, including Al-Azhar University (Egypt) and Umm al-Qura (Makkah). Because of Shaikh Yasin's exhaustive knowledge and his masterpiece on Hadith, many Islamic scholars granted him a prestigious respected title “*Al-Musnid al-Dunya*” (the expert or scholar of sanad—the chain of narration of Hadith—in the world). A well-known Hadith scholar Sayyid Abdul Aziz al-Ghumari also said that Shaikh Yasin was the “pride of Haramain ulama”. Shaikh Yasin's important academic works include *al-Dar al-Mandlud Syarah Sunan Abu Dawud* (20 volumes), *Fath al-A'llam Syarah Bulugh al-Maram* (4 volumes) (both on Hadith), *Bughyah al-Musytaq Syarah Luma' Ab al-Ishaq* (2 volumes), *Hasyiyah ala Asybah wa al-Naza'ir fi al-Furu' al-Fiqhiyyah li al-Suyuthi* (both on *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh*), among others. Although a Shafi'ite scholar, Shaikh Yasin was also acknowledged in non-Shafi'i schools of thoughts such as Hanafi, Maliki, and Hanbali.

As a teacher, Shaikh Yasin taught at the Haram Mosque (particularly at the *Bab [Gate] Ibrahim* and *Bab al-Shafa*), Madrasah Dar al-Ulum, and his places at Misfalah and Utaibiyah.

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35 Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, dan Tarekat* (Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing, 2015).

Since his specialty was mostly on Hadith, Shaikh Yasin taught many Hadith books within the Sunni tradition, including *Shahih Bukhari*, *Shahih Muslim*, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, *Sunan Al-Tirmidzi*, *Sunan Ibn Majjah*, *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, among others. Shaikh Yasin's students were not only from the Malay-Indonesian archipelago but also from other areas of the "Muslim world", many of whom became respected ulama in their countries, and functioned as an "intellectual channel" between their home countries and Hijaz / Arabia.

Shaikh Yasin's notable Indonesian students included KH Ahmad Damhuri (Banten), KH Abdul Hamid (Jakarta), KH Maimun Zubair (Rembang), KH Ahmad Sahal Mahfudh (Pati), KH Ahmad Muhajirin (Bekasi), KH Syafii Hadzami (Jakarta), KH Ahmad Muthahar (Demak), KH Zayadi Muhajir, Tuan Guru M. Zaini Abdul-Ghani (Kalimantan), among many others. Moreover, non-Indonesian prominent students of Shaikh Yasin that later became celebrated Muslim figures in the world included, among others, Sayyid Umar bin Muhammad al-Yamani, Prof. Dr. Ali Al-Shobuni, Dr. M. Hasan al-Dimasyqi, Shaikh Ismail Zain al-Yamani, Prof. Dr. Ali Jum'ah, Shaikh Hasan Qathirji, Prof. Dr. Umar Hashim, Shaikh Ramzi Sa'ad al-Din al-Shami, and Sayyid Muhammad Alawi al-Maliki.

It is imperative to note that Shaikh Yasin not only taught students and wrote scholarly works but also pioneered the founding of Makkah's Indonesian schools and women's education. As depicted earlier in this article, Shaikh Yasin was among the founders of Madrasah Dar al-Ulum in 1934, the first Indonesian school at Makkah, which became an educational base for Malay-Indonesian students in Hijaz. Shaikh Yasin not only participated in the building of this school but also was actively involved in fundraising, teaching, and later serving as a principal of this school. Shaikh Yasin, moreover, also founded (1) Ma'had al-Muallimat al-Ahliyat, a non-formal Islamic boarding school, and (2) Madrasah Ibtidaiyah li al-Banat al-Ahliyah, a special school for female students located at Shami'ah, Makkah. Shaikh Yasin affirmed that schooling for women is an obligation in Islam, arguing that since a woman has responsibility to teach her children then she needs to be educated. How can a woman educate her children if she never gets education? This was the primary question behind Shaikh Yasin's support for female education.

The founding for this female school in 1957 was driven by the enthusiasm of girls and women who informally learned Islam with Shaikh Yasin in his house. Interestingly, Shaikh Yasin's wife, Nyai Aminah, also established a learning center for women, named Jam'iyyah Khairiyah. This name was dedicated or attributed to the wife of Kiai Abdullah Muhaimin Lasem (b. 1890), namely Khairiyah Hasyim, the daughter of KH Hasyim Asy'ari (1875 – 1947), who was the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama and the grandfather of the late Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid.<sup>36</sup> In 1942, Khairiyah Hasyim initiated and established a female school, named Madrasah Khuttab al-Banat, which might be the first female school in Arabia.<sup>37</sup> In 1955, this school was transformed into a government school by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### **Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Teachers and Scholars**

The death of Shaikh Yasin in 1990 was a deep grief for Indonesians and non-Indonesians alike, not only those who live in Saudi Arabia but also some other countries. Many Muslims

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<sup>36</sup> <https://fahmialinh.wordpress.com/2016/01/03/kh-a-muhaimin-bin-abdul-aziz-lasem/>

<sup>37</sup> Ulum, "Ulama-Ulama Aswaja"; Irsad, "Ulama Nusantara".

mourned and felt the tremendous loss of this respected teacher and prolific author. Since then, there is almost no Indonesian who has taught Islamic sciences in Makkah, Madinah, or other areas of Saudi Arabia. Some Indonesian teachers teach only at the Indonesian schools in Makkah (Sekolah Indonesia Makkah), Jeddah (Sekolah Indonesia Jeddah), or Riyadh (Sekolah Indonesia Riyadh). These schools run from elementary to junior and senior high schools, designed particularly for children of Saudi Arabia's Indonesian expatriates. These schools, unlike Makkah's past Indonesian schools described earlier, follow Indonesian state schools' curricula, not specifying on studying Islamic knowledge and sciences, albeit there are some local (Saudi) components in the curriculum system. Although at first the schools were initiated and founded by Indonesian individuals residing in Saudi Arabia, later the schools were transformed and administered under the Indonesian Embassy in the Kingdom.

Moreover, some informants<sup>38</sup> said that two Indonesians currently teach Islamic sciences in Makkah and Madinah, namely Ustadah Soraya, who teaches at Taibah University (Madinah), and Dr. Ahmad Fahmi, who teaches at Madrasah Shaulatiyah (Makkah). Founded in 2003 with some 7,000 students enrolled in the university, Taibah University now has more than 60,000 students (both male and female). The university has some 22 colleges focusing not only on Islamic studies but also sciences, engineering, medicine, arts and social sciences. Madrasah Shaulatiyah, as described earlier, is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century-founded school that emphasizes Islamic studies. Some informants said that Ustadah Soraya, a female teacher from Sumatra, is a strict follower of Salafism who practices a puritanical form of Islam and rejects any religious innovation (*bid'ah*) and local traditions and cultures for the pristine and pureness of Islamic belief and teachings. In addition to teaching at the Taibah University, Ustadah Soraya also preaches at the Nabawi Mosque of Madinah for Indonesian hajj/umrah pilgrims. Besides Haram Mosque in Makkah, the Nabawi Mosque in Madinah is also considered to be a special place for Muslims and is dubbed the second holiest site in Islam. In the Nabawi Mosque area, the Prophet Muhammad and some of his close companions were buried; accordingly, it is not surprising if many Indonesian pilgrims traditionally visit Madinah after or before hajj and umrah in Makkah. In each sermon, Ustadah Soraya always requests the Indonesian pilgrims not to pray and recite any religious prayers and recitations at the Prophet Muhammad graveyard since she considers it to be *haram* (unlawful) and *shirk*<sup>39</sup> in Islam that could "contaminate" Islamic doctrines.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike Ustadah Soraya, Ahmad Fahmi, a native of Lombok in Nusa Tenggara Barat, is quite moderate and "flexible" in understanding, implementing, preaching, and teaching Islam for Muslim communities. A follower of Shafi'ite school, Fahmi is also a chairman of Makkah branch of Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) and the chairman of the Saudi branch of Nahdlatul Ulama. Having been trained in Saudi, Sudan, and England, Fahmi specializes in the study of Islamic philosophy. Another teacher at the Nabawi Mosque is Firanda Andirja (known Ustad Firanda), a doctorate student in

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38 Focus Group Discussion with a group of Indonesian students in Madinah, January 2017.

39 *Shirk* in Arabic literally means ascribing or the establishment of "partners" placed beside God. In Islam, it refers to the sin of practicing idolatry or polytheism, namely the deification of worship of anyone or anything other than the singular God (i.e. Allah).

40 Conversations with Rusydi Sukri, a Madinah resident of Indonesian origins, Madinah, 14 March, 2016.

Theology (Aqidah) at the Islamic University of Madinah.<sup>41</sup> Like Ustadah Soraya, Ustad Firanda is also an austere follower of Wahhabism-Salafism who teaches (or preaches more precisely) at the Nabawi Mosque for Indonesian hajj/umrah pilgrims. An active resource person of “Rodja Radio”, a Salafi radio channel in Bogor of West Java, Ustad Firanda is able to give a sermon at the Nabawi Mosque due to his close relation with his teacher at the Islamic University of Madinah, namely Shaikh Abdur Razak bin Abdul Muhsin al-Abbad, a Saudi senior ulama and a permanent teacher at the Nabawi Mosque. Ustadz Firanda also invited Shaikh Abdur Razak to visit Indonesia and give lectures and sermons at several locales including in the Istiqlal Grand Mosque in Jakarta.

Apart from the lack of Islamic studies teachers, there are several Indonesian professors and scientists—both Muslim and non-Muslim—specializing in sciences, engineering, marketing, business, or social sciences who currently teach (or used to teach but moved later on) at several Saudi universities. They are, among others, Bambang Trigunarsyah, Oki Muraza, Prasetyo Edi, Khairul Saleh, Yose Kadrin, Sumanto Al Qurtuby, I Putu Danu Raharja, Anton Satria Prabuwono, Muhammad Imam Akimaya, Ali Rinaldi, Setiyadi Umar, and Farid Fadlilah, among others.

Before moving to RMIT University, Australia, Bambang Trigunarsyah was an Associate Professor affiliated with the Department of Construction Engineering and Management at the King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals (KFUPM) in the city of Dhahran, Ash Sharqiyah (Eastern Province). A graduate of Colorado School of Mines in the United States in Engineering (Civil), Bambang Trigunarsyah obtained his PhD from the University of Melbourne, Australia, in Engineering Project Management, with a thesis “Implementing Constructability Improvement into the Indonesian Construction Industry”. Before joining KFUPM, he was Associate Professor in the School of Civil Engineering and Built Management at the Queensland University of Technology, Australia, and was Head of the Civil Engineering Department at the University of Indonesia. A former Senior Project Engineer at the Kondur Petroleum S.A., Bambang’s main research foci are in the following areas: construction management and economic, constructability and operability of infrastructure project, knowledge management in project-based organization, post-disaster reconstruction project management, project and program governance, infrastructure project delivery, and infrastructure asset management. At KFUPM, Bambang taught several courses for graduate students including Construction Engineering, Construction Estimating, Project Management, among others. An active researcher and productive scholar, Bambang has conducted numerous research projects and published (as author and co-author) many academic articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings in his field of expertise.<sup>42</sup> Bambang said that his move to Saudi Arabia was due to a number of reasons, including the eagerness to expand his geographic areas of research related to the Kingdom’s oil and non-oil industries and the opportunity to visit Makkah and Madinah on a regular basis as the holy cities of Islam.<sup>43</sup>

Prasetyo Edi (born in 1960 in Purwodadi of Central Java) was another Indonesian teacher and engineer in Saudi Arabia. Edi had been a faculty member in the Department of

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41 See more about him in his official website at <https://www.firanda.com/>

42 See more Trigunarsyah’s profile in the following link: <http://faculty.kfupm.edu.sa/cem/bambangts/>

43 Conversations with Bambang Trigunarsyah, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.



Aerospace Engineering at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) specializing in the studies of aircraft design, aerodynamics, and helicopter. After completing his undergraduate studies at the Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Edi continued his Master's and doctorate studies in Cranfield University, United Kingdom, in Aerospace Vehicle Design. Before joining KFUPM, he taught at the Emirate Aviation College (Dubai, United Arab Emirates) and Universiti Malaya (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). Prior to teaching in academia, he had been working for many years (1986–2003) as an engineer at the P.T. Dirgantara Indonesia (Indonesian Aerospace), an Indonesian government-own aerospace firm. Edi taught numerous courses including Flight Dynamics, Aerodynamics, Aerospace Engineering Design, Fundamentals of Helicopters, Flight Traffic Control and Safety, among others. In addition to teaching, he has published numerous works in academic journals in his field.<sup>44</sup>

A firm believer of Islam, Edi is not only an aerospace engineer but also a devout Muslim who practices fundamental Islamic teachings and actively attends religious sermons and gatherings. A regular visitor of Makkah and Madinah, Edi expressed his pride and happiness in Saudi. For him, there are several reasons for his pleasure of living in Saudi Arabia. First, in the Kingdom, unlike in the West or his country of origins Indonesia, there are no sites for *maksiat*, namely religiously sanctioned wrongdoing or unlawful activities such as night clubs, prostitutions, gambling centers, or shops selling alcohol, among many others. Second, Saudi Arabia is a home to halal foods; accordingly, he is not afraid of, say, mistakenly eating Islam-banned foods or meats such as pork or any meats whose slaughtering process and technique are not in accordance with Islamic law. The third factor is religious tourism, which is to say that, by living in Saudi, a Muslim can easily visit Haram Mosque, Nabawi Mosque, and many historic Islamic sacred sites. He believes that worship and prayers conducted in the two holy mosques will be rewarded by God with thousands of *pahala* (rewards) that guarantee the worshipers into Paradise after their death. Another factor for choosing Saudi as a place for pursuing an academic career is about safety or security for him and his family.<sup>45</sup>

Another non-Islamic studies specialist teacher and scholar of Indonesian origins in Saudi Arabia is Anton Satria Prabuwono, Associate Professor in the Department of Information Technology, Faculty of Computing and Information Technology Rabigh (FCITR), King Abdulaziz University (KAU). At KAU, Prabuwono teaches such courses as Multimedia Technologies, Web System and Technologies, and Computer Architecture, among others. Prior to joining KAU, he was teaching at the National Chiao Tung University (Taiwan), The National University of Malaysia (UKM—Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia), and Technical University of Malaysia at Melaka (UTeM). Having been trained in Indonesia, London, and Malaysia, Prabuwono was also a visiting professor at Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences (Germany) and Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology. A receiver of a Best Author Award from UTeM, his research interests focus on machine vision, intelligent robotics, and autonomous systems. Prabuwono is not only a fine teacher who received an Excellent Service Award from UKM but also a prolific author who has produced extensive publications (5 books and over 170 papers in book chapters, journals,

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<sup>44</sup> See more on his profile here: <http://www.kfupm.edu.sa/departments/ae/SitePages/en/ContentDetailsPage.aspx?CUSTOMID=72&LinkID=LinkV18>

<sup>45</sup> Conversation with Prasetyo Edi, June 2018.

and conference proceedings).<sup>46</sup> Another computer science expert of Indonesian origins is I Putu Danu Raharja, who is on the faculty member in the Department of Information and Computer Science, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals. A graduate of Bandung Institute of Technology (Indonesia) and Coventry University (England), Putu has been teaching at KFUPM for about 20 years.

Other scholars and teachers who deserve to be mentioned here are Oki Muraza and Farid Fadlilah, both chemical engineers. While the former is affiliated with the Department of Chemical Engineering and Center of Research Excellence in Nano Technology (CENT) at KFUPM, the latter is a faculty member in the Department of Chemical Engineering, Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University (Riyadh). A graduate of Institut Teknologi Bandung (Bandung Technological University) in West Java, Oki obtained his master from Technische Universiteit Delft (TU Delft) and his doctorate in Chemical Engineering from Technische Universiteit Eindhoven (TU Eindhoven) with a thesis *Nanostructured Catalytic Films for Multiphase Microstructured Reactors*. Prior to joining KFUPM, Oki held several visiting positions at a number of research and academic institutes such as the following: Japan Petroleum Institute at Hokkaido University, the Laboratory of Industrial Chemistry at Abo Akademi Finland, and the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi, where he conducted research in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, the United States, on nanoporous materials, zeolite-based catalysts / absorbents, for hydrocarbon processing. A native of Sumatra, Oki has received numerous awards from Dutch Institute for Catalyst Research, The Dow Chemical Company, and UNESCO, among many others. A productive researcher and a prolific writer who has produced many academic articles, Oki's main research interests focus on structured catalysts and structured reactors.<sup>47</sup>

Of all Saudi universities, KFUPM seems to be the largest university in the Kingdom that hosts Indonesian scholars and teachers. In addition to some Indonesian scholars and teachers mentioned above, KFUPM also hires other Indonesians such as Khairul Saleh, a faculty member in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics,<sup>48</sup> Yose Kadrin in the Department of City and Regional Planning, Muhammad Imam Akimaya at KFUPM Business School, and Sumanto Al Qurtuby in the Department of Global & Social Studies. While Khairul is a Netherlands-trained mathematician, Yose is Swiss-educated airport developmental engineer. Despite having different specialties and research interests, both of them, who are from Sumatra Island, share common reasons with regard to pursuing their academic careers in the Kingdom arguing that Saudi is a comfortable, safe, and secure place for both living and work. Khairul, moreover, said that Saudi also a fine place to raise his children and conduct more research.

Fluent in German, Yose in particular is much more passionate about Saudi than Khairul, who is also an award-winning badminton athlete. A native of Padang, West Sumatra, Yose said that he dreamt for a long time, particularly since he was in Switzerland (both for studying and working), of how to find the best ways for entering and living in Saudi Arabia. Finally, he found working at a Saudi university would be the best channel for entrance to the Kingdom. Fortunately, KFUPM opened a position that Yose thought fit

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46 See more his bio at <https://sites.google.com/a/eu4m.eu/dr-anton-satria-prabuwono/>

47 See Oki's short profile at <http://faculty.kfupm.edu.sa/CHE/omuraza/>

48 See Khairul Saleh's profile at <http://faculty.kfupm.edu.sa/MATH/khairul/research.htm>



into his qualification, expertise, and specialty. He then applied for a faculty position in the Department of City and Regional Planning at KFUPM. When he finally got an offer for the position, he was very excited and thankful to God for listening to his prayers and wishes. There is a strong reason for his excitement. Saudi, for Yose, is not only as an Islamic country *per se* but also a “sacred geography” in part because Makkah and Madinah are located in the modern Saudi territory.

Yose argued that Saudi is the world’s most Islamic Muslim-majority whose government rules and policies as well as societal behaviours and attitudes follow exactly Islamic rules, doctrines, and teachings.<sup>49</sup> Although Egypt, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and many Arab countries have shared in a common with regard to Arab cultures, traditions, and identities, Saudi Arabia, according to Yose, is distinctive and exceptional. Compared to other Arab countries or Muslim-majority nations, he explained, Saudi is the most religious and faithful. “Look at Bahrain, Saudi’s neighbours. Bahrain completely differs from Saudi in ways of appreciating and implementing Islamic norms and teachings,” Yose affirms. Unlike other Muslim-majority countries, much less Western societies, he said, there are no places in Saudi Arabia, which offer or sell Islam-sanctioned unlawful stuff such as alcohol, drugs, pork and other haram meats, and so forth. Yose is very happy since there are no such places in Saudi Arabia.

In addition, Yose, who wears *jalabiyya* (Arab-style flowing robes) in everyday life, is not afraid of eating any meat in Saudi since the slaughtering process of animals is in accordance with Islamic law. Another indicator of “Islamic Saudi”, for him, is gender segregation. Schools and universities in Saudi are gender-based. Most Saudi universities have separate female and male colleges. Princess Nora University in Riyadh is one of the only female universities in the Kingdom.

“When I was in Switzerland, non-Muslims were very friendly. Even though they knew I am a Muslim, they respected my faith and me. This is why they understood when I left the office during certain times for prayer or when I was fasting during Ramadan. However, I felt my inner heart was in conflict or tension living in a country where Islam has not become the norm in the society.”<sup>50</sup>

A faithful Muslim and an active member of religious sermons and gatherings, Yose is typical of a contemporary Salafi, who strictly embrace Islamic norms and teachings and follows paths or traditions of the pious ancestors or early generations of Islam (*salaf al-salih*).

### **Saudi Arabia–Trained Islamic Scholars and Teachers in Indonesia**

As discussed previously, although some Indonesian scholars and teachers chose to teach and dedicate their academic work in Saudi Arabia, the great majority of Indonesians who received academic training from Saudi Arabia’s educational institutions and centers of learning return to their home country becoming teachers, scholars, preachers, activists, entrepreneurs, and other professions. While the majority of Indonesians studied (or are

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49 Conversations with Yose Kadrin, April, 2016.

50 Conversations with Yose Kadrin, April, 2016.

studying) Islamic sciences, some, especially at graduate levels, studied (or are studying) non-Islamic sciences such as computer sciences, petroleum studies, chemistry, engineering, among others.<sup>51</sup> This article, however, focuses only on Indonesians – alumni – who studied Islamic sciences in Saudi academic institutions, either in Saudi Arabia or Indonesia such as LIPIA—the Institute for the Study of Islamic Sciences and Arabic Language, a branch of Riyadh-based Al Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University.<sup>52</sup> As well, this study will emphasize Islamic studies scholars and teachers.

It is important to highlight that Indonesian graduates of Islamic studies vary. Some alumni are very conservative and militant whereas others are moderate and progressive. In the past centuries, the great majority of the alumni, as described previously, followed Shafi'i madhab while in the contemporary era many have embraced the Hanbali madhab. Although not always the case, those who adhere to the Hanbali madhab (the official madhab of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) are generally alumni of the Al Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University or the Islamic University of Madinah whereas alumni of *rubat* (pesantren) Sayyid Muhammad Alawi al-Maliki in Makkah (now headed by Sayyid Ahmad) generally do not follow Hanbali school of thought.

As well, in past centuries, many alumni established pesantren and other traditional institutions of Islamic learning across the archipelago, whereas in the modern era some graduates built modern Islamic schools, centers for Islamic propagation, or even television channels, while others continue to found traditional pesantren. Still, in the past centuries, many studied multiple Islamic sciences from various schools of thought and followed a particular Sufi order (tariqa). However, in the modern era, it is almost difficult to find graduates of Saudi's higher educational institutions who practice or become a member of a Sufi order.

In the past centuries, the “returnees” mostly built pesantren and similar institutions or joined tariqa networks. Later on, many of the alumni established Nahdlatul Ulama in 1926. It is, hence, not surprising if we find that founders of pesantren in the past centuries were graduates of the Haramain. To some extent, this tradition continues to persist until now. However, recent alumni tend to be multifaceted in their roles and contributions to Indonesian Islam and society. In fact, some alumni chose to be active in political parties, firms, civil society associations, nongovernmental organizations, and so forth. Still, some alumni initiated the founding of higher educational institutions, Islamic centers, or modern madrasah. It is not unusual to find recent alumni having such professions as politician, activist, entrepreneur and so on.

Moreover, some contemporary alumni become adherents of strict and militant forms of Islam who have played a major role in radicalizing Indonesian Muslim society. They include, but are not limited to, the following figures: Ja'far Umar Talib, Muhammad Rizieq

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51 See Sumanto Al Qurtuby, “Islam, Travel and Learning: A Case Study of Indonesian Muslim Student Diasporas in Saudi Arabia,” *Journeys: An International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing* 21: 2 (2020), p. 42-66.

52 In 1980, Saudi Arabia built Jakarta-based Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Bahasa Arab (LIPIA—Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies, formerly Lembaga Pengajaran Bahasa Arab or LPBA—Institute for Arabic Teaching), which offers Bachelor degrees in Islamic Studies and Arabic language. For many years, best alumni of LIPIA have had a chance to continue their study and pursue degrees at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. At present, Saudi Arabia has built LIPIA in some other cities in Indonesia.

Syihab, Hidayat Nur Wahid, Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas, Khalid Basalamah, Firanda Andirja, Reza Basalamah, Najih Maimun Zubair, Abdullah Taslim, Abdullah Zaen, Ali Musri Semjan Putra, Abu Yahya Badrussalam, Muhamamd Arifin bin Badri, Abdullah Saleh Ali Hadrami, Muhamamd Abduh Tuasikal, Erwandi Tarmizi, Armen Halim Naro, Abu Ubaidah Yusuf, Ahmad Ridwan, Khalid Syamhudi, Musyaffa Addiriny, Abu Zubair al-Hawaary, Abu Hudzaifah al-Atsary, Anas Burhanuddin, Ashim Musthafa, Zainal Abidin Syamsuddin, Muhammad Wasitho, Fachruddin Nu'man, and Khalid Syamhudi, among many others.

Even though they have embraced strict forms of Islam, they vary in terms of the implementation of “Salafi-ness” or “Islamist-ness” in everyday life in which some are stricter, more radical, more militant, or more conservative than others. They are also far from being a monolithic group since each has different teachers and schools (intellectual roots), agenda (political or non-political), purposes or objectives, or strategies and tactics. For example, some conservatives tend to be political while others are apolitical (avoid the involvement in political practices, focusing only in da'wa movement or social morality). Still, some have agreed to and endorsed the use of physical violence, including terrorism, while others tend to circumvent such violent means, albeit committing forms of verbal and indirect violence. Accordingly, it is not uncommon to find the disagreement and conflict among them.

Equally important, moreover, although not as many as the conservative and radical group, there is a great deal of the graduates who embrace moderate, tolerant, liberal, and progressive forms of Islam which is in sharp contrast with the names mentioned previously. Unlike figures depicted above, this group in many ways are advocates of interfaith and intra-religious tolerance, civic pluralism, local traditions and cultures, nationalism and patriotism, citizenship culture, democracy, individual and societal rights, women's rights and feminism, among many others. This group is also against any intolerant, anti-pluralist, extremist, and terrorist acts in the society. They, furthermore, disagree with the idea of an Islamic state and the formal implementation of *Perda Shariat* since it will potentially bring tensions and conflict in the society. They are also defenders of Indonesian state ideology (*Pancasila*) and constitution (*UUD 1945*).

Certainly, there are multiple factors and rationales for choosing to be moderate and progressive, ranging from socio-political and pragmatic choices to the adoption of particular forms of religious understandings and interpretations of Islam. Other graduates were influenced by *Nahdlatul Ulama's* visions and practices as well as the thought of the late President KH Abdurrahman Wahid, a champion of moderate and progressive Islam. Still, other alumni were shaped by social surroundings such as institutions where they work (*pesantren*, schools, or social organizations) or community / society where they live. Moreover, other alumni became moderate figures because they wanted to secure Indonesia from the religious bigots.

Similar to conservative and radical groups, the moderate and progressive group also vary regarding their views, thoughts, specialties, interpretations, and understandings about Islam and societal issues. They include the following names: Said Aqil Siradj, Ahsin Sakho Muhammad, the late Ali Mustafa Ya'qub, Satria Effendi, Masyhuri Naim, Hanif Ismail, Ahmad Fahmi, Abdur Rozaq Pamekasan, Said Jauhari Jember, Muslih Abdul Karim,

Asrorun Ni'am Sholeh, Muhammadun, Maghfur Usman Cepu, Kiai Mahfudz Lombok, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, Abdul Adzim Irshad, Sayyid Aqil Al Munawar, Kiai Sirojan Wates, Kiai Rasyim Jogjakarta, Kiai Bakrun, Wawan Gunawan, among many others.

What is important to underscore here is that the alumni are truly diverse; thereby, it is misleading to state that Saudi Arabia-trained Indonesian Islamic scholars are a collection of people having similar professions, objectives, agenda, religious orientations, political affiliations, social networks, and academic backgrounds.

### **The Shifting Nature of Educational Travel and the Plurality of Saudi-Trained Alumni:**

#### **Concluding Remarks**

A few conclusions can be drawn as follows. Although religion has traditionally been the strongest motivation for Indonesian scholars and teachers—past and present—in Saudi Arabia, religion for sure is not the only factor and motivations, particularly for contemporary Indonesians taught (or teaching) in the Kingdom. In the past centuries, especially before Indonesia gained independence in 1945, Indonesian scholars and teachers who dedicated their life and academic career in Hijaz or the Haramain were primarily driven by religious motives, namely Muslim obligation to learn (Islamic) knowledge and then teach or share it to other people.

Since they saw teaching-learning process and the search of knowledge (*thalab al-ilm*) as a God's mandate in Islam, they did it with *ikhlas* (literally means “purity”, “sincere”, or “refining”) without getting any payment or salaries from students or any people. To fulfil their living expenses, they mostly brought supplies (money and others) from their home country Indonesia or entrusted someone to bring them during hajj sessions, or worked as a hajj guide or other jobs.

Furthermore, most Indonesians teachers and scholars in the past centuries were mostly from a middle-class background and religious families. Since travelling to Saudi at the time was hard, dangerous, and costly, it is almost impossible for “ordinary Muslims” to voyage to Arabia. They believed that God would “pay” them and reciprocate their sacrifice in teaching-learning activities. What they expected was a *ridha* Allah.

In contrast with the past Islamic scholars and teachers, Saudi Arabia's contemporary Indonesian scholars, teachers and scientists are motivated by combination between religious-spiritual-emotional motives (e.g. easy access to Makkah and Madinah, the chance to visit many sacred historic Islamic sites, no “haram” places and foods, and so forth) and secular-rational-intellectual reasons such as, among others, (1) good salaries and benefits, (2) no income taxes, (3) low teaching load, (4) more funds for research, (5) a secure place to live, (6) and family comfort, among many others.

This is to say that religious, economic, and intellectual motives have been common for contemporary Indonesian scholars in Saudi Arabia. The mixture of religious-secular factors is clearly expressed by modern Indonesian scholars, teachers, researchers, and scientists as well as professional expatriates who work in various companies or industries across the Kingdom.

It is true that Saudi Arabia is a best place for devout Muslims since it is in this Kingdom where Makkah and Madinah are located, but this does not mean that religion and spirituality are the only reasons for driving contemporary Indonesian academic and professional expats in the Kingdom. In brief, there is a changing nature of Indonesian intellectual / educational travellers in Saudi Arabia from past to present. Apart from the shift and differences, however, it is crucial to acknowledge that both past and present scholars have shared the same view, namely they considered (and consider) Saudi Arabia as a source of learning, knowledge, spirituality, and religious wisdoms.

Like Indonesian scholars and teachers in Saudi Arabia, the “returnees” are also multi-layered, far from being the monolith. While some alumni established Islamic centers, schools, or higher educational institutions, others joined political parties and social or civil society organizations. Some graduates became preachers, teachers, politicians, activists, businessmen, journalists, bureaucrats, and many others. Due to limited space, I cannot explain their roles and contributions in this article.<sup>53</sup> As discussed previously, students and graduates of Saudi Arabia-trained Indonesians, like those of non-Saudi educational institutions, are deeply plural in terms of motivations, professions, reasons for study, objectives, religious affiliations, Islamic orientation, family backgrounds and so forth. It is, hence, a misleading conclusion to overgeneralize them. Apart from the differences and disagreement, Saudi Arabia-trained Indonesian Islamic and Muslim scholars have made significant contributions and played a major role—for good or bad—to Indonesian Islam, education, culture, society, and nation.[]

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53 See more in Al Qurtuby, “*Saudi Arabia and Indonesian Networks*”.



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## Author Guideline

**I**slam Nusantara Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture facilitates publication of article and book review on study of Islam, Muslim culture, social and politics in Southeast Asia (Nusantara) and beyond. It is published twice a year and written in Indonesia, English and Arabic. It aims to present academic insight of social and cultural complexity of Muslim world in Southeast Asia under the frame of dialectic between Islam and local culture or cultural realities.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in various disciplines in the Islamic studies, humanities and social sciences. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers.

### **Papers submitted for publication must conform to the following guidelines:**

1. Papers must be typed in one-half spaced on A4-paper size;
2. Papers' length is about 8,000-10,000 words;
3. All submission must include a 200-300 word abstract;
4. Full name(s) of the author(s) must be stated, along with his/her/their institution and complete e-mail address;
5. All submission should be in Microsoft Word, RTF, or WordPerfect document file format;
6. Arabic words should be transliterated according to the style of 'Islam Nusantara Studies';
7. Bibliographical reference must be noted in footnote and bibliography according to 'Islam Nusantara Studies' style.ain.

### Examples of footnote style:

<sup>1</sup>Ryan Sugiarto, *Psikologi Raos: Saintifikasi Kawruh Jiwa Ki Ageng Suryomentaram*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Ifada, 2015), p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Nur Syam, *Tarekat Petani: Fenomena Tarekat Syattariyah Lokal*, (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2013), p. 164.

<sup>3</sup>Syam, *Tarekat Petani*, p. 173.

<sup>4</sup>Ubaidillah Achmad dan Yuliyatun Tajuddin, *Suluk Kiai Cebolek Dalam Konflik Keberagamaan dan Kearifan Lokal*, (Jakarta: Prenada, 2014), p. 140.

<sup>5</sup>Nur Syam, *Tarekat Petani*, p. 99.

<sup>6</sup>M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, vol. 14 (Bandung: Lentera Hati, 2013), p. 167.

<sup>7</sup>Deny Hamdani, "Cultural System of Cirebonese People: Tradition of Maulidan in the Kanoman Kraton," *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (January-June 2012): p.12.

<sup>8</sup>Hamdani, "Cultural System of Cirebonese People," p. 14.

<sup>9</sup>Deny Hamdani, "Raison d'être of Islam Nusantara," *The Jakarta Post*, 06 Agustus 2015, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Azyumardi Azra, "Islam di "Negeri Bawah Angin" dalam Masa Perdagangan," *Studia Islamika* 3, no. 2 (1996): h. 191-221, review buku Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

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Please include, at the beginning of the review:

1. Author, Title, Place, Publisher, Date, number of pages, ISBN E.g., Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. Sixth edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 308 + ix pp. ISBN: 0-226-81627-3.
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