

**Of Mysterious Whispers and Biodiesel: The Entanglement of Religion and Everyday  
Environmental Practices in Indonesia**

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**Abstract**

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This dissertation examines the entanglement of religion, ecology, science, and everyday political economy in the making of new socio-environmental practices. It shows how the practices are driven by various forces, including religious power (mysterious whisper), global and national environmental discourse, a local search for economic benefit, and national identity. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2014-2017 in several places in Indonesia (mainly in a traditional Islamic institution named Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Lamongan, East Java), this dissertation shows that socio-environmental practices have created multiple subjectivities among the members of the Pesantren. They displayed various positionalities, such as being idealistic, pragmatic, or both during tree plantation, waste management, participating in a green school, and, most recently, involvement in alternative energy programs, including the production of biodiesel fuel (Kemiri Sunan/Reutealis Trisperma/Candlenut) and the development of an incineration plant. Such subjectivities and positionalities in turn shape the characteristics of their socio-environmental practices.

This dissertation aims to destabilize the bifurcation of religion and secularism, modernity and tradition, and science and occultism. The members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat have shown that their involvement in their socio-environmental practices is informed and influenced by the entanglement of religious ideologies and neoliberal calculative reason, traditional values and modern visions, as well as scientific development and occultism. Furthermore, this dissertation argues that Indonesian Muslims are trying to religionize neoliberalism, traditionalize modernity, and mysticize science in unusual, awkward, and complicated ways. The entanglement of all forces and practices become the everyday life of the members of the Pesantren in producing alternative modernity.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction: Entanglement and Multiplicity

On March 21, 2017, Surya Paloh, the leader of National Democrat Party (Nasdem) visited Pesantren<sup>1</sup> Sunan Drajat to give a keynote speech on the graduation day of the students (*santri*<sup>2</sup>) at the Pesantren. Before the speech, Kyai<sup>3</sup> Ghofur, the leader of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, gave a welcoming speech to introduce Paloh to the Pesantren members and the audience (the parents of the graduating class). Thousands of people gathered in the soccer field inside the Pesantren to see one of the most influential people in Indonesia today.<sup>4</sup> They were excited because Paloh, who was well-known as a media tycoon at Metro TV, brought crews with him for the event, making the attendees proud of their presence being aired by the media.

Kyai Ghofur opened his introductory speech by welcoming Paloh to Lamongan. He briefly introduced the history of Pesantren Sunan Drajat and described what the Pesantren has to offer to society. He then promoted the advantage of the Pesantren to produce “everything” (*semuanya*): the dolomite, mineral water, salt, and currently, Kemiri Sunan (biodiesel). I sensed that Kyai Ghofur aimed to tell the entire story of Pesantren Sunan Drajat to his special guest that day, but he did not have the time to do so.

Paloh used his speech to respond to Kyai Ghofur’s welcome speech. He admired the achievement of the Pesantren, saying that he had to learn from Kyai Ghofur how to balance

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<sup>1</sup> Pesantren is a traditional Islamic institution/school (Azra, et.al., 2007; Bush, 2009; Geertz, 1960; Hefner, 2011; Lukens-Bull, 2010). Pesantren is like a monastery where many people study religious subjects.

<sup>2</sup> I use the words santri, follower, and student interchangeably because they have the same meaning.

<sup>3</sup> Kyai means traditional religious teacher (Jones, 1984) or Islamic scholar (Dhofier, 2011) or someone who owns and leads Pesantren.

<sup>4</sup> Paloh is the major supporter of President Joko Widodo. Paloh, Megawati (the former president), and Wiranto (retired general under Suharto’s regime) are among some powerful figures behind the President. Many Indonesians call them as the “puppeteers” (*dalang*), the real president, or more powerful than the president since many of the government policies are directed by these people. Meanwhile Widodo is just seen as the “puppet” (*wayang*).

spiritual and material work. He agreed that Indonesians need such combination if they want to be successful. Paloh is not the only national figure to visit this Pesantren. All Indonesian presidents since Abdurrahman Wahid, except Joko Widodo (the current president), have visited. In addition to observing the daily activity of the Pesantren as an academic, economic, and environmental institution,<sup>5</sup> these people requested “spiritual advice” (*nasehat spiritual*) from the Kyai.

Since the country of Indonesia came into existence, the Pesantren has been a famous place for political leaders seeking for advice. The Pesantren has become a sociocultural magnet that attracts many parties looking for social support and opportunities, materially and spiritually. Some villagers come to visit the Pesantren to learn or listen to Kyai Ghofur’s morning teaching (i.e., sermon). Many people searching for opportunities have received benefits from Pesantren Sunan Drajat. They have built food stalls (*warung*), laundry, a barber shop, a tailor, and a café. They also ask Kyai Ghofur for personal help. Every morning, except Friday, people from the village near the Pesantren and outside (some of them come from outside the Lamongan region) visit Kyai Ghofur’s house inside the Pesantren. Some of them ask for mental healing, while others ask for a cure for (physical) diseases. The Pesantren is the place where what Kyai Ghofur called “everything” is entangled.

There are about 30,000 Pesantrens in Indonesia, which consist of traditional (*salafi*), modern (*khalafi*), or a combination of traditional and modern (alternative modern). Pesantren Sunan Drajat fits the third category. Most Pesantrens are affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Islamic civil society organization in the world, which claims to have about 90 million followers. Pesantren Sunan Drajat hosts at least 12,000 santri (followers/students). They study religious subjects like the Qur’an, Hadith, Arabic, occult science, as well as secular subjects,

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<sup>5</sup> I will elaborate this contemporary development in Pesantren which no longer exists as religious-educational institution, but also an economic, environmental, and a political one.

including math, chemistry, physics, and computer science. Some santri do not study but work for the Pesantren. They work to build new classrooms, gardens, gates, and operate some business units owned by the Pesantren, such as a salt factory, a publisher, a canteen, Mengkudu Sunan (Noni/alternative medicine), a cooperative (Koperasi), and currently, the Kemiri Sunan (biodiesel) project.

**Figure 1**



Indonesia

Figure 2



Paciran, Lamongan, East Java

While Kyai Ghofur claims that this Pesantren has been established as long ago as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it disappeared for about 500 years. In 1977, Kyai Ghofur, the descendant of Sunan Drajat (a member of the Nine Saints of Java, who Islamicized Java around the 15<sup>th</sup> century), re-established the Pesantren. The re-establishment of Pesantren Sunan Drajat cannot be separated from a concatenation of traditional Islamic ideologies, both colonial and postcolonial (New Order) politics, economic developmentalism, and the spirit of nationalism. The entanglement of all these forces driven by the early Pesantren Sunan Drajat negotiated its traditional identity with modernity. Today, with the political change of the Reformasi (democratization), the Pesantren has re-negotiated its identity with new sociocultural forces, such as globalization, neoliberalism, and climate change. With this change, Pesantren Sunan Drajat transformed itself from a solely religious, academic, and economic institution, but also one that is environmentally focused. The latter transformation will be the main focus of this dissertation.

Kyai Ghofur is a central figure in this Pesantren. He is the supreme leader, the preacher, the manager, the business person, and the healer. His followers call him a “multi-talented Kyai” (Kyai *serba bisa*). He is the one who directs the Pesantren to become an alternative modern institution. He is also the one who has transformed the Pesantren from a purely religious institution to the academic, economic, scientific, and environmental institution it is today. Most recently, he has led the Pesantren to green areas within Lamongan through the planting of trees. For his dedication, President Yudhoyono awarded him Kalpataru, the highest environmental prize in Indonesia. Since 2006, he has pushed the Pesantren to develop an alternative energy project, Kemiri Sunan (biodiesel) following a global and national search for alternative energy sources. Following Kyai Ghofur, the members of the Pesantren cultivate themselves into multi-talented persons. Many people in the Pesantren are students (*santri*), teachers, and staff of the Pesantren’s business units. They do these multi-tasking roles as a way of dealing with everyday religious, economic, academic, and environmental forces. This sort of self-cultivation method signals the emergence of multiple roles, subjectivities, and positionalities among the Pesantren members.

This dissertation discusses the entanglement of religion, ecology, science, and everyday political economy in the making of a socio-environmental movement in Pesantren Sunan Drajat. Furthermore, it discusses how such entanglement creates multiple subjectivities and positionalities among its members. Although it has been known for its religious academic role for centuries, the Pesantren’s contemporary engagement with environmental issues invites us to discuss the way the Pesantren members attempt to religionize neoliberalism, traditionalize modernity, and mysticize science. In the last decade, this Pesantren has been involved in several environmental programs, ranging from the small-scale effort of planting trees, cleaning the

village, managing waste, to producing alternative energy sources (biodiesel/Kemiri Sunan), and initiating the erection of an incineration plant. All these efforts continue previous work that have debated or challenged the bifurcation of religion and secularism (Asad, 2003; Fernando, 2014; Mahmood, 2009), tradition and modernity (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993; Lukens-Bull, 2001), and even modern science and occultism (De La Cadena, 2015; Doostdar, 2018).

The notion of entanglement and multiplicity underpin the story of the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat dealing with contemporary socio-environmental issues in Indonesia. In discussing the notion of entanglement,<sup>6</sup> I draw on the work of Barad (2007), who argued that meaning and matter “cannot be dissociated” (p. 3). Bringing quantum physics into the discussion, Barad redefines the relationship between space, time, and matter. The law of quantum mechanics is not singular since there are many interpretations of it. For Barad, the world is made by the entanglements of many things, including human and non-human, scientific and political practices, and therefore, it is always dynamic. Barad is not interested in making analogies between particles and people, or between nature and culture, but the practices and the meaning-making of such entities (p. 24). To make meaning, she said that “we must understand in an integral way the roles of human and non-human, material and discursive, and natural and cultural factors in scientific and other practices” (p. 25).

I adopt her concept to analyze the way the Pesantren members are involved with contemporary socio-environmental projects. I argue that these projects are made possible by the engagement of the Pesantren members with everyday political-economic activities, science, and occult practices. I put the occult here as a material entity, like other concrete materials that play an active role in the making of the environment, especially the biodiesel project, following Barad

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<sup>6</sup> Entanglement is akin to the notion of “relatedness” coined by Carsten (2000), which is currently developed by Govindrajan (2018) in her work on relatedness between human and nonhumans in India.

and other new materialist scholars who have argued elsewhere that everything is always material. The entanglement of political-economic forces with modern science and occult practices become the everyday life of the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat in producing alternative modernity.

I employ the notion of multiplicity from Deleuze and Guattari (1988), who argued that “multiplicities are rhizomatic...there is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object...” (p. 8). There are two types of multiplicity discussed by these philosophers: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative multiplicity is always numerical and logical, including particles, magnitude, and distance. The other type of multiplicity is subjective and intensive, including human mood, emotion, and affect. These cannot be counted. Human mood, self, or subjectivity is not unitary, but flexible and multiple (Turkle, 1997). The human subject is immersed in small and big events every day (Stewart, 2017: 194). It is expressed differently among human beings and continuously evolves to make a new form of subjectivity. This complex form of subjectivity is equated by Haraway (1991) as a “split and contradictory self” (p. 193). Following Deleuze and Guattari, and Haraway, in this dissertation, I examine how socio-environmental issues generate multiple subjectivities among the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, and, at the same time, investigate how multiple subjectivities (often contradictorily and awkwardly) are shaped by various forces (visible and invisible), of which the members of Pesantren encounter in their everyday life.

### **The Landscape of “Traditional-Modern-Nationalist” Indonesian Islam**

Indonesian Islam as a subject of study is first and extensively written by Dutch orientalist, Snouck Hurgronje. He described Islam in Indonesia as devoted to worshipping God in peace (Benda, 1958, p. 341). This view works against fear mongers that was widely circulated among Dutch policymakers, who saw Islam and its followers as fanatics, rebellious, and aimed to re-establish a caliphate. Nonetheless, he was concerned that there was a small political branch

of Islam that might shake the Dutch colonial regime. To prevent such a threat, the Dutch government must introduce Muslims to Dutch culture and modern civilization, though, at the same time, allow them to preserve their customs (*adat*) (pp. 343-344). According to Hurgronje (in Benda, 1958), allowing *adat* and Islam to be intertwined assisted the perpetuation of Dutch colonial policy. This ambiguous recommendation, I argue, paved the way for the emergence of the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, the Muhammadiyah (a modern Islamic institution) and the Nahdlatul Ulama (traditionally Islamic),<sup>7</sup> the umbrella organizations of many Pesantrens, including Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

In 1912, five years after the departure of Hurgronje from Indonesia, the first modern Islamic organization, the Muhammadiyah, was established by Kyai Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta. Muhammadiyah literally means the follower of Muhammad and aims to reform Islamic teachings and practices that were influenced by local superstitions. At the same time, Kyai Dahlan attempted to empower the poor by providing them an education. Muhammadiyah's ideology follows Muhammad Abduh, an Egyptian Muslim reformist, who discussed the possibility of opening new interpretation or independent interpretations of contemporary problems not based on religious texts (*ijtihad*). Muhammadiyah grew significantly. The Javanese middle class was interested in joining Muhammadiyah (Nakamura, 2012). Muhammadiyah's modern character, which was not considered a threat to the Dutch, enabled it to form several branches in Java, Sumatera, and Sulawesi. Another Islamic organization, the Thawalib (Permi), however, was under suppression due to its political activity (Noer, 1963, p. 122).

During this time, Sarekat Dagang Islam (later called Sarekat Islam) was founded by Samanhudi. As another modern Islamic organization, Sarekat Islam was initially a commercial

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<sup>7</sup> Sarekat Islam was also a modern Islamic organization. However, it has no longer existed today.

organization and transformed itself into a modern nationalist organization (Effendy, 2007, p. 160). Unlike Muhammadiyah, which focused its early activity of empowering the poor through education, Sarekat Islam focused on the economy. It emerged as a response to Chinese Indonesian economic domination, which caused a sharp increase in inequality between indigenous Indonesians and the Chinese (Chandra, 2002).

After this organization gained power and popularity, it gradually pushed its political agenda to support Indonesian independence. Sarekat Islam is the first organization that became the center of the country's national awakening (Effendy, 2007). Unfortunately, this organization failed to promote its agenda due to an ideological split within it. One faction aimed to keep Islam as ideology, another faction preferred Marxism. After the 1930s, gradually, Sarekat Islam lost its popularity and power, and disappeared from the landscape of Indonesian Islamic movement. Nevertheless, it still inspires the Islamic economic nationalist movement of today through the Pesantrens' economic forum (I will elaborate on this in Chapter 5).

Fourteen years later, another influential Islamic organization, named Nahdlatul Ulama, established in Surabaya. According to Van Bruinessen (1994), modern Islamic organizations, like Muhammadiyah and Sarekat Islam, were the primary threat to Islamic traditionalists. These modern organizations attempted to erase or forbid traditional Islamic practices, such as the "ritual to remember the dead" (*tahlilan*), "visiting the grave regularly to ask for advice" (*ziarah*), and "occult practices" (Islamic mysticism), saying that these practices do not have a theological basis in the Islamic texts. Although international forces, such as the downfall of Islamic caliph system and the internationalization of Wahhabism (a fundamentalist branch of Islam) played significant roles in the rise of this new traditionalist organization, the local and traditional Islamic forces still played more dominant roles (pp. 13-31). As a response, the leading ulama

(Muslim scholars), Kyais (Javanese term for Muslim scholars), gathered in Surabaya and established Nahdlatul Ulama. This organization aimed to defend such traditional practices. According to the pioneers, there was no conflict between Islam and *tahlilan*, *ziarah*, and occultism.

These organizations are often seen as the representation of Indonesian Islam since both emerge from entirely different Islamic traditions. I do not have any intention to exclude some other organizations that exist in the country, including Al-Irsyad, Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, Persatuan Islam (Persis), Hidayatullah, and Al-Washliyah. For the purposes of this dissertation, in this introductory section, I focus mainly Nahdlatul Ulama (Pesantren communities) and a bit on Muhammadiyah, as both represent the modern and traditional version of Indonesian Islam, which later becomes central to my analysis. Then, I will show, however, that there is no separation between traditional and modern Islam.

The independence of the country from Dutch colonialism shaped the landscape of Indonesian Islam. Although both Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama get involved in ideological conflict, they were united in the country's fight for independence. During the 1940s and 1950s, Indonesian Islamic organizations played dominant roles in the establishment of Indonesia as a new nation-state. Muslim intellectuals, such as Ki Bagus Hadikusuma of Muhammadiyah, Kyai Wahid Hasyim of Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammad Natsir, and Agus Salim became the steam behind the early Indonesian nationalism. These religious intellectuals collaborated with other western educated scholars (nationalists) like Sukarno, Sjahrir, and Muhammad Hatta (who were also Muslims) to design Indonesia's national ideology. However, at the same time, these intellectuals were also engaged in an ideological confrontation regarding whether Islam or nationalism would be the country's final ideology.

The Committee to Investigate Preparations for Independence debated the country's constitutional preamble. The first draft said that "Believe in one God, and people were obliged to carry out Islamic law" (Elson, 2009, p. 112). This draft was rejected by the nationalists and non-Muslims, who complained that it did not represent all Indonesians because it limited the freedom of people practicing different religions (p. 112). The representative of Muslims, including Hadikusumo and Hasyim, together with other members of the committee, removed several words of the preamble to become, "Believe in one God." This negotiation created a new Indonesia, an ambiguous Indonesia, that accommodated both religious and secular ideologies<sup>8</sup> that have both Islamic and nationalist characteristics. This ambiguous identity later shaped the national development of the country.

As noted, the Muslims intellectuals themselves did not agree with a single face of Indonesian ideology. They often disagreed about Islamic interpretation and practice. In regard to the preamble, for example, some of them argued that sharia should be clearly stated in it since Muslims were the majority of the population, while others thought that without mentioning sharia, the preamble had actually represented Islamic values in it, such as the belief in God, which already accommodated Muslim interests. This interpretation of Islam has been described by Geertz (1968), who noted that "In Indonesia Islam has taken many forms" (p. 12). Some Indonesian Muslims promote sharia (especially in the case of Darul Islam during early Indonesian independence) (Van Nieuwenhuijze, 1950), which later identified as political Islam (Baswedan, 2004; Fealy, 2008; Ramage, 2002), while some others strived for economic Islam (Brenner, 1998; Geertz, 1956; Rudnyckyj, 2009, 2010), liberal Islam (Hooker, 2004), modernist

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<sup>8</sup> Indonesia is not a theocratic state like Saudi Arabia or Iran. Although it puts religion as an important element to its ideology, it never declares itself as a pure religious state.

Islam (Cone, 2002; Madjid, 2008), and currently, environmental Islam (Arnez, 2014; Gade, 2012;).

Sukarno's (Old Order, 1945-1967) and Suharto's (New Order, 1967-1998) regime left no room for political Islam to grow. However, during Sukarno's Guided Democracy era, the government allied with Nahdlatul Ulama. There was a symbiotic mutualism between these two entities, where the government asked for support from the followers of Nahdlatul Ulama, and vice versa. In Sukarno's regime, some political figures who affiliated with modernist Islam (Masjumi)<sup>9</sup> were arrested for their political maneuverings, and later, the organization was banned. However, during Suharto's regime, the situation was reversed. The government provided modernist Islam space to flourish and, at the same time, repressed the traditional one.<sup>10</sup>

The New Order regime supported the development of science and technology and backed the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals' (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia/ICMI) efforts to modernize the country through strengthening the relationship between Islam, the government, and national development projects (Hefner, 1993), the one thing that Nahdlatul Ulama could not provide. Reading such a situation, Nahdlatul Ulama members decided to return to their "origin" (*Khittah*) to focus on the social and religious agendas through the 27<sup>th</sup> Nahdlatul Ulama National Congress (Muktamar in Situbondo) in 1984.

*Khittah* enabled Nahdlatul Ulama to reorient its vision and mission as a civil society organization. It focused on empowering Pesantrens as their primary role. It was under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid, the grandson of Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari (the founder of the organization), Nahdlatul Ulama made the *Khittah* decision. The Nahdlatul Ulama members

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<sup>9</sup> Many Muhammadiyah followers affiliated with this organization.

<sup>10</sup> Although Bush (2009) said that the New Order government did not support and did not repress Nahdlatul Ulama, my interlocutors, the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, for example, noted that Suharto's regime repressed the Pesantren members through panopticing the everyday life of the members.

positioned themselves out of the regime and out of any political affiliation. However, according to Bush (2009), this decision was strategic for these organizations since they can play flexible politics, they could focus on the social and religious agendas while at the same time was being critical of the government policies. They kept out of formal politics but still engaged in informal politics (p. 103). This position, in turn, enabled Pesantren communities, the traditional Muslims, to maximize their work in the grassroots, and, at the same time, pushed the Pesantrens to survive. Surprisingly, the Pesantrens began modernizing their curriculum to include modern sciences like math and geography (Dhofier, 2011) and establish economic units to support their daily activities (Azra and Afrianty, 2005, p. 13). At this point, the Pesantrens transformed themselves to traditional-modern institutions.

Unfortunately, due to limited resources, they could not do much but focus on and continue the traditional programs that they had before.<sup>11,12</sup> There was less innovation compared to other modernist Muslims, like the ICMI, which enjoyed privilege under the New Order regime. Under the leadership of Habibie, Minister of Research and Technology, and also a modernist Muslim, the ICMI became an active organization and a think-tank of the New Order regime. Suharto facilitated Habibie to build strategic industries, including Krakatau Steel, Penataran Angkatan Laut (Navy Shipyard), and the Industri Pesawat Terbang Nasional (Indonesian Aerospace) to fulfill his ambition to build modern Indonesia. He recruited modernist Muslims from the best universities to work in the industries. Sidel (1998) called this ambition, “hi-tech economic nationalism” (Sidel, 1998, p. 172). Unfortunately, following the downfall of

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<sup>11</sup> The decline of Nahdlatul Ulama was also caused by the New Order’s centralization policy. The government did not give much space for local institutions, like Pesantrens, to manage local resources and deliver services at the local level. Consequently, during 1980s, the enrollment of the Pesantrens was on decline (Jones, 1984: 12).

<sup>12</sup> However, there were few Pesantrens that could build mutual relationship with the regime such as Pesantren Sunan Drajat. Kyai Ghofur for example became a spiritual adviser of Suharto. On the other hand, Suharto gave him access to some resources.

Suharto's despotic regime in 1998, the Reformasi (Reformation), these industries faced economic hardships that led them into decline.

The Reformasi changed the landscape of Indonesian Islam, especially Nahdlatul Ulama, or Pesantren communities. During this period, the Pesantrens began to enjoy the freedom to manage local resources for the benefit of their members and develop innovative systems for themselves. They became very confident in combining traditional and modern education systems (they teach occult and modern science at the same time).<sup>13</sup> The members of Nahdlatul Ulama even formed a modern political party, although they still commit to keeping the *Khittah*. Some Nahdlatul Ulama political parties during the early Reformasi were known as the National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa), People's Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Umat), and Ummah Awakening Party (Partai Nahdlatul Ummah), and later, established the National Ulama Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Nasional Ulama), where Kyai Ghofur currently sits as an advisor. The members of Nahdlatul Ulama also continued to focus on economic development, an effort that they had initiated since the New Order regime. Today, with the freedom of managing their natural resources, many Pesantrens have built some business units to finance their daily expenses and empower the local people. They have adopted modern management styles and become a center of community development "for the application of modern technology as well as for the preservation of the environment" (Azra and Afrianty, 2005, p. 13). Pesantrens have even combined spiritual and neoliberal ideologies to achieve their goals. Pesantren Sunan Drajat is one of them.

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<sup>13</sup> Azra and Afrianty (2005) argue that Muhammadiyah also establish Pesantrens, which means that it combines its modern education system with traditional pedagogical style.

## **A Narrative of Environmentalism**

The emergence of environmentalism or environmental movement/justice in Indonesia is inseparable from the history of the country itself. Peluso, et al. (2008) noted that after gaining independence, Indonesians formed Barisan Tani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasant Front/BTI),<sup>14</sup> an organization that affiliated with Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party/PKI) to promote land reform. They responded to the Basic Agrarian Law passed in 1960, which provided opportunities for the local people to own land. The leaders of BTI and PKI then mobilized people to occupy private lands (McVey, 2006). This effort was blocked by Suharto, who was a lieutenant colonel at the time, who then seized power from Sukarno. After the downfall of Sukarno's Old Order, Suharto's New Order banned the PKI and other organizations affiliated with it, including the BTI (Peluso et al., 2008, p. 381).

The New Order regime, which is often seen as pragmatic and pro-capitalist, gave more opportunities for national, as well as foreign capital. During the New Order, land areas and natural resources were dominated and managed by the centralized state power. Seventy percent of the land was regarded as national land, fully controlled by the government (Peluso et al., 2008, p. 382), and no spaces were left for local people and indigenous communities to manage their resources (Okamoto, 2001). At the same time, the government activated what James Ferguson (1990) called an "anti-politics machine" to depoliticize local communities through establishing the Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasant's Harmony Association/HKTI) (Peluso et al., 2008). This organization was managed under Golongan Karya, a government political party, whose leaders were military officers, and successfully silenced the grassroots from monitoring and criticizing the government's agrarian policy. The government closed all

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<sup>14</sup> BTI was very active in empowering local peasants to use new agricultural tools and techniques, to raise productivity, and fight against pests (Aspinall, 2004: 67).

political channels that potentially challenge its authority. Pesantren communities, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah, for example, were not allowed to watch and evaluate the government's performance since they were consistently intimidated the army (Aspinall, 2004, p. 72).

In the 1980s, however, an underground student movement emerged, advocating land rights (Peluso et al., 2008) and promoted environmental justice (Lowe, 2006). This growing concern on the local people's right over natural resources was in line with international conservation agendas that addressed issues like environmental sustainability and protection. During the time, there was also a nexus between local, national, and global environmental interests, which drove the emergence of the first progressive environmental non-government organization, the Wahana Lingkungan Hidup (The Indonesian Forum for the Environment/Walhi). The New Order government, especially the Ministry of Environment (the MoE), led by Emil Salim, helped with the establishment of Walhi. The MoE and Walhi stood for the local and national interests that had been marginalized by the global capitalist practices of the time (Peluso et al., 2008, p. 384). According to Peluso et al. (2008), the only issue that the government allowed the grassroots to discuss and address critique without being considered as subversive was environment (land rights).

In the 1990s, environmental non-government organizations (NGOs) like Walhi and later, the Jaringan Advokasi Tambang (Mining Advocacy Network/JATAM), collaborated with local communities in Sumatera, Sulawesi, and Papua (outer Java) to contest their rights over natural resources from which large corporations and the central government evicted them. In these areas, the NGOs advocated the rights of the communities, arguing that the communities could manage their resources sustainably. At the same time, these NGOs fight against a corporation that caused

forest fires in Sumatera in 1998 (Okamoto, 2001, p. 17), and critiqued the government's plan to build a hydro-electric plant in Lore Lindu, Central Sulawesi (Tuong, 2009, p. 7).

Reformasi opens a new form of environmentalism in Indonesia. It provides an opportunity for the NGOs, which during the New Order regime worked underground, to be more visible in advocating local people and indigenous rights over land and natural resources. It also opens an opportunity for religious institutions to get involved in natural resource management. The existing NGOs, such as Walhi, welcomes the involvement of religious-based institutions in environmental advocacy, arguing that religious leaders can fight against environmental destructions (Reuter, 2015, p. 1223). However, the involvement of these religious institutions is challenged by the fact their environmental agendas often overlap with their economic agendas. If in the previous era, environmental justice became the central issue; today, it is both justice and economic opportunities.

The involvement of religious NGOs such as Pesantrens in environmental issues mainly centered in theological, ecological, and economic factors. In describing the relationship between religion and environmental issue, a Muslim philosopher, Syed Hossen Nasr (2009), demonstrates that religion starts with a critique. It critiques contemporary industrial practice that causes human-environment imbalance. He argues that secular science, modern industry, and capitalism that advocate domination over nature lead to the destruction of the environment. Therefore, there is a call for Muslims to take care of nature, such as is mentioned in the Qur'an, Hadith, and Sufi works. Echoing Nasr, contemporary scholars like Richard Foltz (2000), Ibrahim Ozdemir (2003), Alie Yafie, and Anna Gade examine how environmental religious texts have inspired Muslims to develop Islamic environmentalism. Since this dissertation is about Indonesia, I will describe the work that fit the Indonesia case, such as from Yafie and Gade.

In his book, *Merintis Fikih Lingkungan Hidup (Introducing Environmental Jurisprudence)*, Yafie (2006), a Nahdlatul Ulama scholar, discusses how religious texts can provide Indonesian Muslims guidance for solving environmental problems. In this book, he starts with a critique of the effects of the capitalist economic system. According to him, industrial capitalism or economic growth is identical to high social and environmental cost. Such growth does not only produce pollution but also human-made disaster. Later Yafie calls his readers to go back to Qur'an and Hadith to solve the problem. Yafie's book focuses more on the moral aspect of Islamic environmentalism. Although he does not provide any practical aspects for environmentalism, Yafie's book is widely read by many Pesantren members in Indonesia. Before I conducted my observation in the Pesantren, many colleagues from Nahdlatul Ulama and Pesantrens recommended that I read this book to learn the theological basis of the Pesantren's ecological practice.

Gade's (2015) work fills the gap that was absent from Yafie's book. She shows that since the 2000s, there has been an effort to make "*fatwa*" (non-binding legal opinions) on the environment. In 2012, for example, Nahdlatul Ulama, the umbrella organization of Pesantrens, issued *fatwa* on illegal logging, forest burning, non-environmentally friendly mining, and prohibiting additives to foods (p. 165). Gade shows that this ecological focus goes hand-in-hand with economic concerns. Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Ulama Council/MUI), for example, released fatwa on non-environmentally friendly mining to make sure that the mining activity did not create severe impacts on the environment.

There are several points that are addressed by this fatwa including, first, a human being is a vice-regent, a steward who has the responsibility to take care of nature; second, nature, such as minerals, are a gift from God, which can be used for the benefit of human beings as long as it is

for the common good; and third, the use of human beings must be intended to protect the balance and sustainability of the environment and to avoid destruction. According to Gade (2015), this *fatwa* shows the intertwinement between ecology and economy in Islamic environmentalism.

In Indonesia, many Pesantrens promote environmental sustainability while look for economic benefit. Pesantren Darul Muttaqin in Bogor, for example, has planted teak (*Jati/Tectona grandis*) trees inside of its Pesantren with a hope that in the future the members of the Pesantren can gain fresh air and make the Pesantren greener, and at the same time look for revenue from selling the teak timber. Another Pesantren named, Al-Imdad and Darul Ulum in Bantul, Yogyakarta, developed a biogas digester to reduce the energy consumption from kerosene. They convert the manure (from human and animals) to become energy to cook daily food of the Pesantren members. Similarly, Pesantren Sunan Drajat, the main field site of this dissertation, has planted Noni and Kemiri Sunan. The Pesantren members argued that the trees are suitable for greening Lamongan region since the canopy of the tree is big, and the Noni fruit can be used to produce alternative medicine, which later can be sold to the market, while the Kemiri Sunan can be used to produce alternative energy.

The leader of the Pesantren, Kyai Ghofur, utilized Qur'an, Hadith, and mainly Islamic occultism to engage their followers (*santri*) in the Pesantren environmentalism, which makes this Pesantren is different from others in the country. In his daily teaching, Kyai Ghofur mainly engages the mysterious whisper of Sunan Drajat, a member of the Nine Saints who Islamicized Java around the 15<sup>th</sup> century to develop Kemiri Sunan (candlenut/biodiesel), an alternative energy project. He used the whisper (and other spiritual entities) both as a political-economic and psychological forces to mobilize people to make alternative energy successfully. Kemiri Sunan is the main feature of the Pesantren's engagement with a contemporary form of environmentalism,

which deals with global-national demands on alternative energy and local search for economic opportunities. Kyai Ghofur and other Pesantren members see the nexus of global and local needs on alternative energy opens the opportunity for them to get involved in both promoting religious environmentalism and searching for economic benefit.

Reuter (2015) mentions that this Indonesian religious environmentalism is not a specific case. Such kind of environmentalism also goes global. In 2013, for example, Muslims around the world gathered in Dubai to discuss the relationship between theology, ecology, and even the economy. This event aimed to invite global engagement of Muslim communities to address contemporary environmental issues. In 2015, the talks moved forward to cover environmental actions, focusing on the impact of climate change through an event called the Islamic Climate Change Symposium. This symposium was attended by Muslim leaders from all over the world. Representatives from Catholics, Christians, Hindus, and Jews also joined the symposium. This event pushed a more local agenda in each Muslim country to focus on creating alternative energy and community preparedness<sup>15</sup>.

### **Entangled Forces, Multiple Subjectivities**

The conceptual approach that I employ in this dissertation explores the convergence of entanglement and multiplicity in socio-environmental practice. It examines the entanglement of religion, environment, science, and everyday political economy (all of these are forces), and show how those forces above produce a new form of environmentalism in Indonesia such as the making of alternative energy and the greening of the environment. Rather than describing the entanglement of the multiple forces that create the environment as a given, I examine processes

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<sup>15</sup> For detail information about the symposium and declaration, see <http://www.ifees.org.uk/declaration/islamic-climate-change-syposium/>

that produce such practice, which engage in contradictory and unexpected ways. Although they are sometimes contradictory, they are “indivisible” and “uncuttable” (Barad, 2007, p. 3).

The various forces above not only create a new form of environmentalism (structure) but also generate multiple subjectivities (agency) of the participants who engage in it. These two entities are also inseparable. In regards to human subjectivities, I examine how my interlocutors are dwelling multiple social positions in doing socio-environmental actions. Daniel Dennett (1991) argues that our consciousness is like “multiple drafts.” For him, the self can experience or create many things at the same time. These multiple drafts or subjectivities are applicable not only in individual but also social body. My interlocutors have various subjectivities when they discuss waste management, a part of Pesantren’s socio-environmental programs, and energy nationalism.

Abundance of scholars have written about socio-environmental practice (among others, Brosius et al., 1998; Dove, 2006; Li, 2007; Lowe, 2006; Ostrom, 1990; Peluso, 1992; Ribot, 2001). Few scholars have covered the relationship between socio-environmental practice and multiple subjectivities (Acciaoli, 2006; Agrawal, 2005; Davidov, 2013; Singh, 2013); however, less attention has been given to the emergence of multiple subjectivities in religious environmentalism. Some works have portrayed religious environmentalism and subjectivity (Darlington, 2012; Gade, 2015; forthcoming; Sharma et al., 1999; Tomalin, 2004), yet, overlook the multiplicity of such subjectivity and the entangled forces that create the subjectivity. This dissertation aims to show that socio-environmental movement is shaped by religious ideology, everyday political economy, nationalist sentiment, scientific discourse, and daily environmental problems that create and are created by multiple subjects with multiple subjectivities. In addition, this dissertation captures the entangled efforts of Indonesians in making alternative or religious

modernity, creating religious neoliberal bodies and souls, promoting alternative modern project named Kemiri Sunan, and deconstructing the bifurcation of science and occult.

This dissertation has two arguments: First, entangled various forces have pushed the emergence of religious environmental practice. This practice produces and is produced by multiple subjectivities. Second, the subjects of religious environmentalism—with all their subjectivities—aim to get involved, join, or engage with scientific and neoliberal modernities. This dissertation shows that engagement of religion with scientific and neoliberal modernities not only blurs the lines between religion and secularism, tradition and modernity, science and occultism but also ties them in very unusual ways. Furthermore, this dissertation argues that religion and neoliberalism, tradition and modernity, science and the occult are always entangled. Although they have multiple forms (or existence), they are inseparable.

I acquired some ideas from existing studies that have problematized the separation between religion and secularism (Asad, 1999; 2003; Bowen, 2009; Fernando, 2014; Mahmood, 2009). This dissertation also borrows from discussions that examine religion, modernity, and neoliberalism (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997; Ong, 2006; Rudnyckij, 2010). I situate religion and religious practice adopts neoliberal principles and embrace modernity (or promote alternative modernity) to produce religious neoliberal bodies/souls that are pious, idealist, and generous on the one hand, but efficient, productive, and pragmatic on the other hand. I especially follow Comaroff and Comaroff's (1993) argument that modernity is not singular. It has various faces. They position tradition as part of modernity. Thus, modernity is a sort of “imaginary construction” (p. xiv), which enables tradition to exist within it.

There is always a possibility of rerouting modernity and contextualizing it according to specific socio-political interests. I attempt to push their argument forward by saying that tradition

does not always become a fuel of modernity, be part of modernity, or simply subordinate to modernity. I propose that tradition and modernity (the exotic, mystical, progress, science, and rationality) are always intertwined and always in the making and producing new things. By doing so, we can avoid the bifurcation of the West and the East, saying the first as the proponent of modernity while the latter as the proponent of tradition. Deconstructing this binary will make our future discussion meaningful.

To explain my argument better, I turn to Marisol De La Cadena's (2015) piece. In his work in Cuzco, Peru, with indigenous (Quechua) people, she observed how the Quechua often engage with non-human actors, especially when they deal with everyday economy and politics. Her work mainly portrays Nazario, a local shaman who worked for a tourist agency. The everyday politics and economy of Nazario and his Quechua fellows relied heavily on their relationship with the earthbeing, Ausangate. The Quechua believe that Ausangate is a sacred mountain and a source of life. It is like Jesus for Indigenous Christians, De La Cadena said (2015, p. 26). She also had an opportunity to observe Aurelio, an anthropologist (faculty member) working at the Universidad San Antonio Abad del Cusco, who later became a shaman (he became shaman after learning from Nazario's father, Mariano). This entangled position attracted many people, including politicians, dancers, filmmakers, tourists, business people, and New Age healers to follow Aurelio's path. De La Cadena then argues that the story of the Quechua (and outsiders) opens the possibility to look at the entangled worlds where human and non-humans have always interacted in very complicated ways. Moreover, she invites anthropology to better capture this tradition-modernity intertwinement.

Another work that aims to bridge the gap between the two realms (tradition-modernity and science-superstition) is presented by Alireza Doostdar (2018). Doostdar studied the Iranian

urban middle class who dealt with spirit possession. While many parties, the elite, the intellectuals, and the government, critique the practice, because of its unscientific position, Doostdar argues that the way the healers (Cosmic Mystics) work engage rational and scientific approaches. The Cosmic Mystic practitioners for example use scientific concept, model, and method in their healing practice, namely “psymentology” or “defensive radiation” that aimed to remove the “virus” (bad spirit) from the body (p. 5).

Building on the work of these scholars, I describe how the socio-environmental movement and practice in Indonesia becomes a religious, occult, scientific, neoliberal, political-economic, and an alternative modern project. This practice is like an assemblage of multiple elements. It is the practice where ethics, politics, and aesthetics are fused together in the daily lives of Indonesian Muslims. I investigate the process of how Islam (and nationalism—since it is part of Islamic discourse in Indonesia) shapes the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat’s subjectivities: the way they think, talk, discuss, and take environmental actions (Chapter 5).

At the Pesantren Sunan Drajat, there is a concise belief that the occult and modernity go hand-in-hand (Chapter 6). The emergence of the Pesantren, the development of some programs, the making of educational curriculum, the establishment of economic business units, and currently the Pesantren’s environmental programs like tree plantings, cleaning village environment, and bioenergy production are made possible by the engagement of the “mysterious whisper” that Kyai Ghofur receives from Sunan Drajat (his ancestor). In addition, to finance the development of the Pesantren buildings, pay staff salaries, and provide food for santris (students), the Pesantren relies on the money and other forms of gratitude that Kyai Ghofur receives from his ability to cure diseases and illnesses using his traditional-magical skills as a religious healer. Ning Betty, Kyai Ghofur’s daughter, who manages several business units, told

me that the majority of the Pesantren's income comes from such healing practices, in addition to other business units. Many people whom Kyai Ghofur has cured have paid (gratified) him with various things, ranging from goods (money, cement, stones, car, and sand) to services (loyalty of the clients, political access to government officials, business network, and business agreements).

The making of "everything" (*semuanya*) in Pesantren Sunan Drajat shows how the occult intervenes the material world through "the power of suggestion" (*kekuatan sugesti*). "The power of suggestion" is the most visible thing that my ethnographic data can show to explain the role of the occult in the real life since it is almost impossible to fully grasp what my interlocutors believe, think, and perceive about the occult. "The power of suggestion" is a sort of metaphor or imagination that help us to see the materialization of the occult's existence and its impact to the daily life of the Pesantren members. According to Doostdar (2018), this sort of imagination is the way anthropologists "move on" from the old debate or effort to rationalize superstition. Following Kapferer (2002), he invites us to treat the occult as "imaginative irruptions" (p. 22), rather than a merely irrational entity. I agree with him, though I still see the possibility of using reason (not only imagination) to understand the occult's work by seeing the material effect it creates in real life (Chapter 4). Therefore, the occult or its representation and "the power of suggestion" exist as an entangled entity; it is both a metaphor (imagination) and a matter (materiality) that can impact real life.

Moreover, in this Pesantren, religious ethics and neoliberal reason intertwine and produce religious neoliberal bodies/souls. These members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat cultivate themselves to become environmental subjects, and follow both religious and neoliberal calculation of benefit in doing environmental actions. Although they aim to join the global and national religious environmental movement that always mandate them to protect nature, they often find themselves

in a complex situation where they have to negotiate their everyday political-economic (pragmatic) interests. This kind of ecology-economy tension exists in the Pesantren Sunan Drajat and in turn push the members to always find win-win solution which therefore shape the members of the Pesantren's subjectivities, and the face of religious environmentalism in Indonesia.

### **Field Site and Methodology**

I decided to conduct my research in Pesantren Sunan Drajat, after receiving advice from Pak Yusuf, the Head of Lembaga Penanggulangan Bencana dan Iklim of Nahdlatul Ulama (Disaster mitigation and Climate Council/LPBI-NU) in Jakarta, who said that this Pesantren was unique. "It is the only Pesantren that attempted to produce an ambitious alternative energy project namely Kemiri Sunan, and there was an occult element in such production," he convinced me. I had encountered this occult narrative before since I am an Indonesian and I was raised in a sociocultural tradition where many people (not all) tend to believe the occult exists around us, and sometimes gets involved in the creation of our social life, but I had not had any direct experience to see, talk, and interact with such supernatural entities.

In the Pesantren tradition, nevertheless, the members believe that the spiritual entities are active participants in the making of the world. This view differs from the Muslim orthodox believe, however, who believe that superstition is forbidden in Islam. I do not have any intention to get involved in the politics of promoting one particular tradition over another. Rather, my intention here is to show the emergence of a new "discursive tradition" (Asad, 2009), such as religious environmental movement in Pesantren Sunan Drajat, within Islam has shaped the way Muslims think, perceive, deal, and act toward the contemporary world.

I had a chance to visit this Pesantren three times in 2014, 2015, and 2017 to conduct ethnographic research. In my first visit, I had encountered how powerful the occult's position

was in the Pesantren. My interlocutors told me that the Pesantren develops its programs (education, economy, and currently ecology) based on the guidance of the occult. During my second visit, I began to specifically observe the connection between the occult and the making of religious environmentalism in the Pesantren. I was both confused, yet excited. I wanted to know more, thus, I conducted another field visit in 2017. I spent much time grasping what the occult was, what evidence showed its existence, how it intervened and impacted real life, and especially, how it intervened the Kemiri Sunan project.

I also had the opportunity to visit other places that were involved in the alternative energy project, like Agrindo, a private company that joined Pesantren Sunan Drajat in the development of Kemiri Sunan into biodiesel. I also visited Nahdlatul Ulama, the umbrella organization of Pesantrens in Indonesia, especially, the office of the LPBI in Jakarta, the Institute Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology/ITS), whose researchers were part of the Kemiri Sunan project, and Balai Penelitian Tanaman Industri dan Penyegar (Indonesia Center for Estate Crops Research and Development/Balitri), a government agency that also developed the Kemiri Sunan project and had a conflict of interest with the Pesantren.

As an ethnographer, I find myself with mixed viewpoints, as I am both an insider and an outsider in this research. This ambiguity makes my presence in the field a bit complicated. I agree with Kirin Narayan (1993), who said that an anthropologist must have “many strands of identification available” (p. 673), therefore, it is impossible to have one authentic identity that categorizes whether someone can be a native or traditional anthropologist. Although I am an Indonesian, I see myself as not having an authentic identity to label myself a native anthropologist, who studies my own people. I do, however, have the privilege to gain access to talk to my interlocutors from Pesantren Sunan Drajat. I find myself familiar with some daily

practices and activities that the Pesantren members do in their life so I could easily immerse with them. In Narayan's language, this is called "intimate affinity" (p. 671). They were so supportive and friendly to share their views on particular information that I requested. Some of my interlocutors even voluntarily "offer themselves" (*menawarkan diri*) and their time to be interviewed by me.

My interlocutors and I shared similar, but not all, cultural backgrounds, which make myself somehow like a familiar person among them. We usually talked about education. We compared education system in Java and elsewhere (mainly Sulawesi—my place of origin, and Seattle—my area of study). I offered my perspective as a graduate student to undergraduate students and lecturer in the Pesantren with a hope that we can formulate a better education system for the Pesantren in the future. I also offered myself to teach Basic English in the Pesantren with the hope that some students will be more interested in learning global languages. Some Pesantren members asked me to conduct monitoring and evaluation on the Pesantren's Junior Education System. Initially, I accepted the offer, but then, declined because I found myself incapable of doing it. My interlocutors and I also shared knowledge on environmental practices such as planting trees and managing waste. I learned many things from them such as how to get attached to trees emotionally (eco-mysticism), and how to differentiate between valuable and non-valuable waste (eco-pragmatism), the things that will appear later in the following chapters.

On the other hand, I must admit that there were many things that I cannot grasp or fully understand from my involvement with my interlocutors. This "partial connection" (Strathern, 2004) in turn limits my ability to comprehend the sociocultural world of my interlocutors fully. There were so many parts of Pesantren Sunan Drajat that I could not capture or missed to

observe. Even if I narrow down my research focus to Pesantren environmentalism, I still have not been able to comprehend every single part/actor/entity/situation that got involved in such practice. Maybe, this is what is meant by Derrida's (1976) presence of absence, or Geertz's (1973) turtle all the way down—we will never reach the very foundation of reality, although we have tried our best. The complete picture is always absent. Therefore, what I can offer here in this dissertation is a partial picture of the contemporary Pesantren world, which I draw from my subjective viewpoint.

Another reason I chose this place because it is located in Lamongan's strategic economic spot. Since President Yudhoyono's era (2004-2014), this region had been designed as part of the Master Plan Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development (Masterplan Percepatan dan Perluasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Indonesia/MP3EI) started in 2011. Lamongan joins Java corridor focusing on the development of national industry and service provision including transportation and shipping industry. Currently, Lamongan has been transformed to be a maritime industrial area (Kawasan Industri Maritim/KIM). Three villages become the target of KIM project, including Kemantren, Tunggul, and Sidokelar. Kyai Ghofur and Pesantren Sunan Drajat play essential roles in the development of the first two villages as new industrial areas. In Kemantren, Kyai Ghofur becomes a mediator between local villagers and a company named PT Lamongan Shorebase. In Tunggul he initiates a collaboration between Pesantren Sunan Drajat and Agrindo (using a new name: Tri Ratna Diesel) to assemble ship parts that employ the santri of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, especially those who are enrolled in Pesantren's vocational program, "Shipbuilding Engineering" (*Teknik Perkapalan*). The collaboration between these two parties, the Pesantren and Agrindo, follows their existing collaboration in the Kemiri Sunan (alternative energy) project.

I choose to employ the notions of entanglement and multiplicity because they both stand as the theoretical bone of this dissertation and as a methodological approach. Since the first time I conducted fieldwork, my interlocutors kept mentioning and referring to the entanglement of the seen and the unseen, and constantly convincing me that such entanglement was always present. At the same time, they informed me about the multiple jobs, responsibilities, positions, and subjectivities the Pesantren members have (A person can be a teacher, santri, worker, cleaner, and healer at the same time. Even Kyai Ghofur can have multiple perspectives on treating nature/environment). It is they who shaped my view on religious environmentalism, on the entanglement of “everything” in the Pesantren, and on how the Pesantren members have multiple perspectives and subjectivities.

During the first days of my fieldwork, for example, I encountered some contradictory and strange events that inspired me to think about entanglement and multiplicity directly. First, they told me that Kyai Ghofur could feel the sentience of the tree and the leaves, so he forbids his santris to cut trees and leaves without his consent. Kyai Ghofur’s attachment to nature, however, contradicts with his opposition to the environmental activists who protest the establishment of a mining company in Central Java (Chapter 3). Second, I heard that some santris discussing the amulet (*raja**h*-superstition) and computer processors, like Intel Core and AMD (hi-tech devices) to find the similarity between them. Some other santris discussed the occult entities that existed inside the Pesantren, while, at the same time, they talked about how to hack the national government website.<sup>16</sup> Most importantly, many people (teacher, santri, worker) discussed the intervention or the activation of the occult into the Kemiri Sunan project.

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<sup>16</sup> When I was there in 2017, they talked about a santri who had just successfully hacked the government official website. Due to such action, the government sent police officers to visit the Pesantren and investigate the case.

I felt anxious (I had visited several Pesantrens before, but never encountered such kind of anxiety). I thought it was just a psychological problem that happened as an adaptation process in a new environment. But then my interlocutors told me that I might be “spiritually tested.” They also said to me that guests were usually tested by being an object of panopticon by all Pesantren members. They wanted to know whether or not I was conducting ethnographic fieldwork (doing something positive for Pesantren) or doing something negative (espionage of foreign countries or something like that). If I had any bad intentions, they said, I would fail the test, and the anxiety would force me to leave the Pesantren, but if I had good intentions, the anxiety would dissipate, and I would stay. I then asked myself, how could these visible-invisible entities be present in the everyday discussion and action of the Pesantren members.

All these experiences taught me that there are many things in the world that are strange and often contradictory. They also taught me to consider that human reason is a powerful tool to understand what is happening in the world; however, it can only do so partially. We need other tools to capture another “part” of the world. If logic and other experimental methods or models are well enough in helping us understand the visible side of the world, perhaps we should consider employing another, that is imagination, the one that is advocated by Doostdar (2018), Kapferer (2002), and Mittermaier (2010) to comprehend the invisible part of it.<sup>17</sup> Mittermaier (2010) said that imagination has a sort of ability “to generate ideas that cannot be expressed in any other form” (p. 17). In a similar tone, Doostdar (2018) suggested, imagination can “connect and transgress different forms of reasoning and diverse registers of meaning” (p. 14). This

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<sup>17</sup> I would like to mention Paul Stoler’s (1987; 1989) works here. His works are important because they provide theoretical basis for contemporary anthropologists of imagination to better understand the role of the invisible actors. In “*The taste of ethnographic things: The sense in anthropology*”, especially he invites anthropologists to “open their senses to the worlds of their others” (p. 7) and “taste” such worlds (p. 29).

dissertation is, therefore, a kind of entangled work of reason and imagination, produced by my Pesantren interlocutors and me to fathom our strange and contradictory world.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Sunan Drajat, Pesantren, and Alternative Modernity**

For anthropologists and scholars of humanities, religious modernity has offered a new analytic space for debating the progressive and the conservative play of religion (Asad, 2003; Mahmood, 2009; Taylor, 2007) and its ability to generate social movements. However, the novel assessments of what these scholars have brought out should not be taken at face value, as they often romanticize the role of modernity and developmentalism as more advanced than religion. Still, their fragmented and partial reviews pave new ways to understand and articulate contemporary religious practices that produce new positionalities, subjectivities, as well as paradoxes. Today, within Indonesian traditional Muslim communities, called Pesantren, I have encountered new practices, movements, techniques, struggles, and innovations in religious institutions that are intertwined with and counteract some forms of developmentalist and modernist ideologies.

In this chapter, I elaborate the arena, the Pesantren Sunan Drajat, where new religious modernity is playing out and practiced by Indonesian Muslims. I show how this arena becomes a palimpsestic field marked by multiple interests and politics. While the Indonesian state, as well other secular actors, have promoted modernist and developmentalist agendas, their efforts have been overshadowed by an alternative religious tradition and practice working outside of (often in support and opposition, at the same time) these secular agendas. By focusing on the Pesantren movement, religious institutions have found a new existence as an alternative to secular modernity, on the one hand, and as the emergence of religious modernity, on the other.

The Pesantren has transformed into a new institution that goes beyond its traditional role as an educational institution. This transformation and emergent form of alternative modernity has constituted a key feature of today's Indonesian society. The type of arena that has enabled the entanglement of multiple interests and politics in producing alternative modernity in contemporary Indonesia is the topic that this chapter aims to describe. This chapter narrates the history of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat and explains how the contemporary state's economic and political (including counterterrorism) issues have encouraged the Pesantren to get involved and change their traditional role. The chapter briefly discusses the way Pesantren Sunan Drajat modernizes the concept of "jihad" to legitimize their economic, political, scientific, and current environmental agendas.

### **Sunan Drajat of Paciran**

What follows is a historical background of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat. Pesantren Sunan Drajat is located in the Paciran, Lamongan region of East Java. Officially, the Pesantren was established in 1977, but Kyai Ghofur claims that it has been there since the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>18</sup>, when Sunan Drajat, a member of the Nine Saints who Islamicized Java in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, came to the region and built a place to teach Islamic knowledge. The history of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat is inseparable from the story of Sunan Drajat<sup>19</sup>. There are different versions of the story of this saint: Indonesian government, Indonesian academics, Sunan Drajat's descendants, and local villagers all have their own versions. I tried to combine all the versions in this chapter to avoid what Trouillot (1995) called "the act of silencing" where the story is often written by the

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<sup>18</sup> According to Soebardi in Dhofier (2011), Pesantren has established since 12<sup>th</sup> century and it has become "ujung tombak peradaban nusantara" (a spearhead of Nusantara civilization).

<sup>19</sup> Sunan Drajat was known as Raden Qosim. Sunan is a title given to those who were considered the most respected Islamic priests in 15<sup>th</sup> century Java. Before they are considered as Sunan, they used their original names.

dominant parties, the winners only (usually the government of the elites) and neglects the less powerful ones (the ordinary people, Javanese).

It has been reported that Sunan Ampel, the oldest among the Nine Saints and father of Sunan Drajat, who lived in Surabaya, the capital city of East Java, mandated that his son spread Islam to the west side of East Java. Sunan Ampel was believed to be the first person who established a Pesantren in the archipelago (Research Team of the History of Sunan Drajat, 1999, p. 19). With approximately 3,000 santri, he taught his son about Islam and how to be a good person. After acquiring enough Islamic knowledge of his own, Sunan Drajat was sent by Sunan Ampel to Paciran, upon the request of Mbah Mayang Madu, the leader of the Banjarnayar Village. In another version of this tale, it is said that Sunan Drajat's boat was accidentally tipped over in his journey to the west. Thus, he decided to stay in Paciran. As far as I know, some historical sources on Sunan Drajat's arrival in Paciran (Research Team of the History of Sunan Drajat, 1999; Muzakki et al., 2017) do not try to bridge these two different versions of events. When questioning the interlocutors about the versions, they told the story of Sunan Drajat as a combination of both, where he sent by Sunan Ampel, and then, his boat accidentally sank near the north Banjarnayar Village, where Mbah Mayang Madu and villagers lived.

This research follows Haraway's notion of "situatedness," where knowledge is seen as partial, dynamic, evolved, and continuously shifting. Rather than searching for "objectivity," Haraway invites us to understand such objectivity from diverse dimensions of perspectives. Instead of contrasting both versions, the interlocutors preferred to combine them. This situatedness is their perspective, which is different from other historians of Sunan Drajat. To better understand how this "situatedness" is employed in reading Indonesian history, it is worth reading Sears' (2013) "situated testimonies." Sears portrays Indonesian history through the lens

of literary works. She argued that Indonesian history leaves some loopholes that mainstream historians fail to address, and literary works may fulfill those holes as eyewitnesses of the times. The interlocutors may want to fill the gaps that historians of Sunan Drajat did not do before. Although they are not eyewitnesses of the arrival of Sunan Drajat to Paciran, their accounts are built on an oral history that they inherited from eyewitnesses, their ancestors (Sunyoto, 2012).

Since Sunan Drajat stayed in Paciran, he then taught Islam to the villagers, and then, built a house as his residence, a teaching place, and a small mosque, known as a *mushalla*. During his time there, Sunan Drajat was reported to conduct a specific ritual called “attaining spiritual enlightenment” (*riyadhah*). Sunyoto (2012) showed that the Demak Manuscript (*Babad Demak*) noted that Sunan Drajat spent at least three months in meditation, without eating or drinking. This *riyadhah* is the way he maintained and lifted his “spiritual level” (*maqam*). Once he gained a large number of followers, he moved to the south side of Banjarnegara, which later, became known as Drajat Village. When he arrived in this new land, which was primarily forest, he needed at least three years to settle in. According to Tim Peneliti dan Penyusun Sejarah Sunan Drajat (1998), Sunan Drajat had to deal with non-human spirits (locally known as *gendruwo*) that had occupied the forest for a long time. Eventually, he built a house and mosque there, where he taught Islam until his death.

Spirits play a significant role in the emergence, the activity, and the current religious environmental practices of Pesantren Sunan Drajat. I spent some time with the interlocutors to understand who the spirits were and what roles they played in the daily lives of the members of the Pesantren. Pak Dahlan, an old teacher at the Pesantren Sunan Drajat, explained that every place has a “resident” (*penghuni*) that lives around human beings. When Sunan Drajat opened the forest, he first had to move the spirits to other places. According to some versions, such as

the one that was shown on TRANS TV, an Indonesian entertainment television station, or the villagers to whom I spoke, Sunan Drajat fought with the spirits. After the spirits were conquered, he then continued his teaching and attracted more followers.

Tim Peneliti dan Penyusun Sejarah Sunan Drajat (1998) noted that Sunan Drajat had “pure/occult” science (*ilmu sejati/ma’rifat*), another name for mystical knowledge. This sort of science was gained from Sunan Gunung Jati in West Java. Sunan Drajat was mentioned as the only student of Sunan Gunung Jati that qualified for mastering “pure/occult science.” With this science, he then qualified to be a saint (*wali*).

Pak Ikhsan, a descendant of Sunan Drajat and a respected person in the village, reported to me that in addition to mastering mystical knowledge, Sunan Drajat also mastered some skills: he became an irrigation practitioner, a fishermen’s manager, and a batik teacher. “He taught the irrigation system to villagers. He managed the fishermen...he also taught the villagers how to make batik...but it [batik] has already gone (*punah*) now”, Pak Ikhsan described. As a descendant of Sunan Drajat<sup>20</sup>, Pak Ikhsan claimed that Sunan Drajat, become a role model for today’s Muslims in Paciran. His religious (Islamic mysticism) and practical knowledge have become a primary source of inspiration for his descendants and villagers, including Kyai Ghofur, the leader of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat today, who is the central figure of this religious, environmental movement and is the focus of this research.

Through an investigation of the historical figure of Sunan Drajat, some disagreement about his personal identity was revealed, which is relevant to how Muslims in Paciran argue and debate about the saint and his legacy to better understand how the contemporary efforts of

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<sup>20</sup> Pak Ikhsan also wrote a book about Sunan Drajat, titled “Sunan Drajat: Dalam Sejarah dan Warisan Ajarannya,” (2014) based on the knowledge he gained from his ancestors and independent historical research. In that book, his family tree places him in the 14th generation of Sunan Drajat. This book is available for purchase at the Museum of Sunan Drajat, Paciran.

Pesantren Sunan Drajat combine both Islamic mysticism and secular or modern science in its programs. This debate begins with Pak Ikhsan, Pak Dahlan, and Kyai Ghofur. These people believe that Sunan Drajat is the same as Raden Qosim. All material evidence, such as historical and genealogical sources support their point of view. However, some villagers (including the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat) cast doubt on who the real Sunan Drajat is.

Pak Sakti<sup>21</sup> claimed that the real Sunan was not Raden Qosim or Drajat, but Mbah Mayang Madu<sup>22</sup>. He explained that such claims were based upon current investigations of his team, named the “grave pilgrimage team” (*Tim ziarah kubur*). This team worked voluntarily to find true information about the real Sunan through spiritual investigation. When Pak Sakti was asked what was meant by the spiritual method, he answered that the method was pretty much the same as used in academia except that the interlocutors were different. In a spiritual investigation, the interlocutors are the spirit, non-human entities. As he explained, “The team works to find the true information about the past...Pak Tik<sup>23</sup> interviews the spirit...he talks to [the late] Mbah Mayang Madu...Mbah Mayang Madu told him that he was the real Sunan, not Raden Qosim.” He recommended me to discuss this method with Pak Tik. I tried one time to meet and talk with Pak Tik about his ability to interview Mbah Mayang Madu. Unfortunately, Pak Tik did not give me the answer, and rather, he spoke about his family life, who needed money. I assumed that he aimed to exchange information with cash. I tried several times to get the information about Mbah Mayang Madu, but again he rejected my request, maybe because I did not respond to his implicit request.

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<sup>21</sup> Pseudonym

<sup>22</sup> Mayang Madu is the father in law of Raden Qosim.

<sup>23</sup> Pseudonym

Kyai Ghofur's nephew, Pak Syahrul, further explained that any method could be used to construct the history of the real Sunan, even spiritual investigation. However, Pak Syahrul said that the method should be based on proof or fact. "At the end, we will see the proof...if the proof (historical, genealogical, and archaeological evidence) does not support the spiritual data, it should not be accepted," he said. He often referred to Sunyoto's work (2012). Through his book, *Atlas Walisongo* (2012), Sunyoto convincingly proved that the Nine Saints existed, including Sunan Drajat, Sunyoto also used a spiritual investigation method to support his material findings.

This type of conversation among the members of the Pesantren (not only in Pesantren Sunan Drajat) about who the real figure of Sunan Drajat is reveals an unresolved epistemological and methodological problem of our time. Postmodern, post-colonial, and decolonial scholars have taught us that the grand narrative, or the single truth, is dead, and they invite us to see multiple truths from multiple perspectives. However, this effort is not enough. This chapter argues that we must offer something more radical than that.

The fact that local people use spiritual (non-material) methods in investigating historical events-- such as the case of Sunan Drajat-- should not be neglected if we aim to build democratic academic debate. This local and perennial method of inquiry in non-Western societies still play significant roles in the search for knowledge. Therefore, we must consider the contribution of this alternative methodology into academia. By combining spiritual and material methodologies, we can see the complexity of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat's contemporary social practices. In the following chapters, this study elaborates on how such spiritual and material entities are entangled in the religious environmental programs of the Pesantren.

The idea of combining this method comes from the leader of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Kyai Ghofur, who combines both spiritual and empirical knowledge and methods in managing

the Pesantren. Kyai Ghofur believes in science as the way to understanding the world. Although he does not have a modern academic background, his knowledge in economy, management, and agriculture is exceptional. Many santris, as well as villagers, have reported that his success in managing the Pesantren's many business units and agricultural programs is proof of his modern managerial ability. In the Pesantren, he often advises and inspires the santris to learn modern science. Under his advice, the Pesantren has adopted a modern secular curriculum with the hope that the santris absorb a wide array of knowledge to serve their community (place of origin). Kyai Ghofur also uses his spiritual knowledge and Islamic mysticism to lead the Pesantren. Santris and villagers believe that Kyai Ghofur has the ability to talk with the spirits. People, such as Pak Machsun, Pak Sargono, Huda, and Min have explained how Kyai Ghofur often received a "spiritual whisper" (*bisikan gaib*) from Sunan Drajat (undocumented personal communication, year). It is Sunan Drajat's spirit that often assists Kyai Ghofur to do his work.

In the Pesantren world, there is a belief that a person never dies. The body decays, but his/her spirit stays alive in the spiritual realm. The spiritual world is the other side of our physical world. Therefore, the soul moves from the material to the spiritual world. We cannot see him/her, but s/he can see us.

Nevertheless, we can still communicate with him/her. However, not all of us can interact with them; only some who have the ability, including Kyai Ghofur, may. Kyai Ghofur often mentions that Sunan Drajat is a source of inspiration for himself, for all Pesantren members, and many Muslims in Java. Sunan Drajat regularly visits Kyai Ghofur's body. According to Hasan, a senior santri, visiting the body of Kyai Ghofur is the way Sunan Drajat communicates to him. Sunan Drajat's spirit whispers and becomes a compass by which Kyai Ghofur and the Pesantren community conduct their daily activities. Before making plans or programs, Kyai often consults

with the spirit of Sunan Drajat. This sort of tradition can be found in many Pesantrens in Indonesia, however, primarily in Java.

To better understand how Kyai Ghofur and the Pesantren embody the figure of Sunan Drajat, I will display some of the words or advice from the saint that are popular in the Pesantren:

*Wenhono teken marang wong kang wuto* (Give a stick to those who are blind).

*Wenhono payung marang wong kang wudanan* (Give an umbrella to those who get wet in the rain).

*Wenhono busono marang wong kang wudo* (Give some cloth to those who are naked).

*Wenhono mangan marang wong kang luwe* (Give some food to those who are starving).

These words cannot be translated literally, but it is put in context here. For example, the first sentence says, “blind.” Blind does not necessarily mean those who physically cannot see, but it includes those whose hearts are “closed” (*tertutup*), and they cannot know the truth. Therefore, it is our task to provide them guidance to see the truth. The “umbrella” in the second sentence does not refer to an umbrella per se, but it means protection for those who are suffering. The “cloth” means etiquette for those who have not learned it. Etiquette is an essential aspect of living in Javanese society. If someone does not have etiquette, s/he will not be considered fully human. In the third sentence, the word “starving” means poverty. Thus, our task, according to Sunan Drajat, is to eradicate poverty and/or empower the poor to help themselves out of their poverty.

The last sentence has a special meaning. The sentence implies that Sunan Drajat was a rich person and could help other people, i.e., the poor in the village. According to Pak Syahrul, Sunan Drajat was like a “rich” Brahman in Islamic Javanese society; a preacher who had a high status because of his knowledge and power (including money). He could not help other people if

he did not have anything to give or offer. Research Team of the History of Sunan Drajat (1999) noted that during the time of Sunan Drajat, the saints were from the upper class of society. With the wealth they had, they could gain a high quality of knowledge and help the poor with their money and resources. This character is what Kyai Ghofur wants to replicate. He wants to become a rich person. By becoming so, he can help many people in his region. “Kyai must be rich so that he can help others and help the religion of Allah,” he taught his santris.

Sunan Drajat is his role model, as the saint helped the villagers with his money. So then does (and must) Kyai Ghofur. This accumulation of capital (not only money, but other forms of power in general, such as charisma, magic, and political influence), is an important goal for Kyai Ghofur and the Pesantren. This motive becomes one of the main drivers behind the current involvement of the Pesantren in economic, political, and environmental sectors.

**Figure 3**



The main gate of Pesantren of Sunan Drajat, Paciran, Lamongan, East Java. Those with uniform are santris of Pesantren Sunan Drajat. They are welcoming Surya Paloh, a national political figure from Jakarta. Photo was taken by Ulil Amri.

As a member of the upper class, where did Sunan Drajat get his wealth? Some sources say that he may have received land from the King of Demak.<sup>24</sup> His property was known as “free of tax land” (*tanah perdikan*) (Research Team of the History of Sunan Drajat, 1999; Tim Peneliti dan Penyusun Sejarah Sunan Drajat, 1998; Ikhsan, 2014); however, there is no information regarding how the land was explicitly used by Sunan Drajat. The interlocutors, especially Pak Hasbullah, said that Sunan Drajat was widely known for his expertise in business and agriculture. Thus, he might have made a living through these activities. Perhaps, after getting land from the King of Demak, he then managed the land for commercial agricultural purposes to earn money. This sort of expertise is also being replicated by Kyai Ghofur today, who does not only preach but is also a businessman. Like Sunan Drajat, who likely got his land from the King of Demak, Kyai Ghofur receives his capital from the King of the New Order, Suharto. Suharto gave him a mountain near the Pesantren area, which is being used today for mining activities, such as dolomite and phosphate-- two sectors that provide a significant contribution to the development of Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

Both figures had/have a close relationship with those in power. This relationship works mutually. For example, the King provides economic resources for the preachers, while the preachers offer advice for the King. In many cases, the preachers also give spiritual support for the King to perpetuate his power and protect him from enemies. This work is what Kyai Ghofur has done for the New Order regime. He is one of the closest spiritual advisors of Suharto. The advisors work like astrologers, who employ some astrological formulations to inform the King about what they should do and not do to run the kingdom and manage uncertainties. Kyai Ghofur had a particular task under this regime. In addition to giving spiritual advice, as an astrologer, he

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<sup>24</sup> Demak Kingdom is regarded as the first Islamic kingdom in Java.

also worked as part of Suharto's "prayer staff" (*tukang doa*). Kyai Ghofur prayed to God to always protect Suharto, his regime, and his family.

Many scholars argue that Suharto and Islam (especially Nahdlatul Ulama, or Pesantren communities) did not always have a good relationship. In fact, some of his spiritual advisors were from this traditional Islamic community. One of the most respected preachers named Habib Ali Al-Habsyi or known as Ali Kwitang. Habib Ali was an Arab descendant and spiritual advisor to Suharto. He was the one who developed Suharto's family piety (Abaza, 2004, p. 175). Kyai Ghofur was another preacher who had close relationship with the New Order leader. The close relationship between these figures (the preacher and the King/President) also includes their families. Kyai Ghofur, for example, has a close relationship with Prabowo Subianto, the ex-son in law of Suharto, who is today well-known as the leader of Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Great Indonesia Movement/Gerindra) Party. In this party, Kyai Ghofur sits as a spiritual advisor, both for the party and for Prabowo personally. Like Suharto, Kyai Ghofur also gains economic and political support from Prabowo. These resources are, in turn, utilized for the benefit of the Pesantren and its members.

### **The Rebirth of the Pesantren**

Kyai Ghofur briefly recounted a story about when he and his followers rebuilt the Pesantren in 1977 (Personal conversation, 2017). Kyai Ghofur said that Pesantren Sunan Drajat was established during the 15<sup>th</sup> century by Sunan Drajat, and then, it was in "lethargy" (*mati suri*) for several centuries. "The Pesantren area was a place where the criminals, gamblers, and prostitutes-- the groups that in Javanese society were identified as without morals-- existed before 1977," he recalled. Kyai Ghofur began to rebuild the Pesantren after completing his studies in several pesantren in Java, such as Denanyar, Pasuruan, Sarang, and Lirboyo, where he

acquired his Islamic knowledge, Arabic language, “inner power” (*ilmu kanuragan*) or occult power, Indonesian self-defense (*pencak silat*), and “traditional medical knowledge” (*suwuk*).

Santris and villagers appointed Kyai Ghofur as the successor to Sunan Drajat because he possesses all the characteristics of Sunan Drajat, such as mastering Islamic knowledge, having inner power (Anderson, 1990), wealth, the ability to run a business (agribusiness and others), and cure sick people. Although some descendants of Sunan Drajat lived in the village, Kyai Ghofur is regarded as the one who inherited the whole character of the saint. Pak Dahlan taught that such things could not be inherited from parents. What Kyai Ghofur had was a gift from God for his arduous work and study. Sunan Drajat also received his power due to his work and study. Pak Dahlan noted that Kyai Ghofur’s case was interesting because the power and the charisma disappeared for about 600 years after the death of Sunan Drajat, and reappeared again through Kyai Ghofur. Pak Dahlan argued that Kyai Ghofur got all of these powers because “his individual ritual was so strong” (*tirakatnya kuat sekali*). He was said to do special fasting, called, “whitening” (*mutih*), which means not to eat or drink anything except white rice or water for a certain amount of time, usually 40 days. Moreover, Kyai Ghofur also meditated in sacred places, such as near a grave. This ritual is like what Sunan Drajat did in the past to gain spiritual power.

With such knowledge, many people today visit Kyai Ghofur to cure their medical issues and solve their spiritual problems. With the absence of the state’s protection at the local level, it is common to see people looking for alternative ways to protect themselves (O’Neill, 2010). It is common in Javanese villages for people to go to religious leaders or influential figures to look for protection. Religious leaders, especially in Pesantrens, were known to not only have religious knowledge but have also mastered self-defense, have “occult power,” and traditional medical knowledge, thus, they can provide protection for those who want it. This sort of patron-client

relationship has existed in Southeast Asia since the Javanese culture came into existence. Karl Jackson and Pye (1978) described that in an Indonesian context, a patron has a God-given high status that is used to “lead, educate, and care for the material and spiritual needs of a large group of clients” (p. 35). Sunan Drajat was also regarded as a patron for his followers/clients. With the spiritual knowledge he had, Sunan Drajat often helped his followers and provided them with protection. Today, Kyai Ghofur provides such things for his followers as well. Every morning and afternoon (except Friday), he meets approximately 30 to 40 people. Especially during the weekend, there are about 50 to 60 people that come to his house to ask for spiritual advice, spiritual protection, and spiritual healing, depending on their problems.

Kyai Ghofur began his spiritual practice long before the rebirth of Pesantren Sunan Drajat. He initially taught young people in Banjarnygar self-defense (*pencak silat*). Kyai Ghofur believed that self-defense could attract people to come to his place and gradually learn about Islam. When many people joined his group, Kyai Ghofur then named the group, “*Gabungan Silat Pemuda Islam*” (GASPI). GASPI then became an embryo of the rebirth of Pesantren Sunan Drajat. With his GASPI friends and followers, Kyai Ghofur began his mission to continue the teaching of Sunan Drajat by reestablishing the Pesantren. According to a story from the interlocutors, Kyai Ghofur also began curing villagers who suffered spirit possession and mental illness at that time, and it is reported that he successfully cured them. Since then, the villagers of Banjarnygar had known him for his ability not only to teach Islam and self-defense but also to heal sickness.

As has been mentioned, Sunan Drajat was known as a preacher, a businessman, and a healer, and Kyai Ghofur has replicated and combined these roles in today’s context. As a preacher, Kyai Ghofur teaches Islam to his followers. As a leader of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, he

leads santris and helps the poor by providing them an opportunity to study, or he gives them work. According to Chandra, a senior santri, Kyai Ghofur has never rejected any person who wanted to study in the Pesantren. He had this principle since the rebirth of the Pesantren. Rejecting a new student, or a santri, is taboo for Kyai Ghofur because the person will bring God's blessing (*barakah*) to the Pesantren. Rejecting a student means rejecting *barakah*. "There is a lot of poor santris here, and Kyai does not reject them...Kyai never rejected the poor," Chandra said.

Nowadays, rejecting students is quite common in the Indonesian educational system. Since the beginning of the Post New Order period, schools are no longer fully controlled by the central government, hence, the schools are free to modify their management system, including increasing school fees and improving curriculum. In the Post New Order era, Indonesia is experiencing a shift in the socio-economic system, from the highly regulated to a deregulated one. Some scholars see this phenomenon as the neoliberalization of the country's education system (Mappiasse, 2014; Rosser, 2016). This new system has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage includes the autonomy of schools to design and improve their curriculum, while the disadvantage is that the school is forced to finance the school's programs. To get money, for example, some schools require new applicants to pay various amounts of fees before being accepted as a student. For the poor, paying such fees are prohibitive. Therefore, schools tend to accept affluent students, whose parents agree to pay the fees.

Pesantren often becomes the last option for parents who cannot pay various expensive fees. Many santris in Pesantren Sunan Drajat do not even pay operational fees, and they are still allowed to continue their study. Some poor students are exempt from paying any school fees at all. It is not only the poor that Kyai Ghofur (or Pesantren Sunan Drajat) helps but also the

children who were expelled from other schools. Several of these children were then accepted for study in Pesantren Sunan Drajat. Zaki, another senior santri, joked that the Pesantren is a place of two kinds of children: the poor and the expelled. “If parents cannot teach their children, then they send them to the Pesantren,” he explained. The more the Pesantren accepts new santris, the more the Pesantren works hard to finance the santris and the entire operational costs of the Pesantren’s activity. This sort of financial need then leads Kyai Ghofur to shift Pesantren Sunan Drajat’s orientation from a purely religious school to a socio-economic oriented institution.

Pesantren Sunan Drajat owns several companies in the salt, fertilizer, mineral water, dolomite and phosphate mining, noni fruit, and other businesses. These multiple business units are established to support the Pesantren’s operational costs, including the santris’ expenses, teachers’ salaries, and building operations. With a growing number of santris registered in Pesantren Sunan Drajat, which is now approaching 12,000, Kyai Ghofur has expanded the Pesantren’s socio-economic programs to include an environmental-economic project called, “candlenut” (*Kemiri Sunan*), with the hope that the latter product can bring large profits to the Pesantren, and at the same time, solve the country’s environmental and energy problems. The profit will be used for expanding the area of Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

Kyai Ghofur’s ambition is to expand the area of the Pesantren to the south, reaching the grave of Sunan Drajat so that the Pesantren can accept more and more santris in the future, to make it bigger and more modern, and so he will have more money and power. According to Agus, a security guard of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Kyai Ghofur got a “mysterious whisper” (*bisikan gaib*) from Sunan Drajat that advised him to build Pesantren until it reached the saint’s grave in the south. Through this expansion project, Kyai Ghofur believes that he will be able to

provide the poor with education so that they will lift their economic conditions. This process is called empowerment (*pemberdayaan*).

However, since this sort of environment takes place in a religious setting, it has a new meaning and practice. The poor who are assisted by Pesantren Sunan Drajat is asked to pray regularly for the Pesantren. In the Islamic tradition, including in the Pesantren, the prayer of the poor is regarded as powerful because it is “easily accepted and answered by God” (*mudah diijabah oleh Tuhan*). Thus, asking the poor to pray for the Pesantren means asking God to assist the development of the Pesantren quickly. Empowering the poor in Pesantren Sunan Drajat’s context means engaging the poor in the spiritual activity. Following Rudnycky’s (2010) notion of spiritual economies, where he portrays the use of religious programs to enhance corporate (Krakatau Steel) success, here in Pesantren Sunan Drajat, the prayer functions to support the development of the Pesantren.

There is a similarity between these two examples of spiritual economies (ESQ training<sup>25</sup> at Krakatau Steel and empowering the poor at Pesantren Sunan Drajat). Both have neoliberal (material) and religious (spiritual) motives behind their programs that aim to boost the companies’ profits and achieve spiritual enlightenment. On many occasions, the interlocutors spoke of the development of the Pesantren as a combination of both “the world” (*dunia*) and the afterlife (*akhirat*). They said that focusing on just one dimension would end up with an imbalance. Similarly, Rudnycky addresses the orientation of Krakatau Steel toward the afterlife as another goal in addition to profit.

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<sup>25</sup> ESQ is an abbreviation of Emotional-Spiritual Quotient training. The purpose of the training is leadership and character building. The vision of the training is to lead society toward a “golden civilization.” Rudnycky sees it as a neoliberal way of creating productive bodies/individuals that in turn contribute to the country’s (Indonesia) economic growth.

Kyai Ghofur often mentions that he wants his santris to balance the world and the afterlife. He even divides two types of success: success in the world and the afterlife. “You must be successful in your life in this world and the afterlife,” he said. For him, success in the world means being “useful to other people” (*bermanfaat buat orang lain*), while success in the afterlife means “entering paradise” (*masuk surga*). To do so, he urged his santris to use their “brain” or “reason” (*otak/akal/aql*). Kyai Ghofur is often heard reciting the Qur’an “*afalaa ta’qilun*’ (Use your brain!), the Qur’an repeats the verse 56 times [sic].”<sup>26</sup> The brain becomes an important metaphor here. Kyai Ghofur uses this metaphor to show that the Pesantren tradition is not a static, irrational, conservative, and old (like many Indonesians think), but is instead, dynamic, rational, progressive, and modern. Pesantren Sunan Drajat is one of the few Pesantrens in Indonesia that has transformed itself to become a modern institution by opening vocational schools where santris can build skills in multimedia and fashion, as well as electrical, naval, and computer engineering. With the current alternative energy project, namely, Kemiri Sunan (candlenut/Reutealis Trisperma/biodiesel), Pesantren Sunan Drajat has the ambition to become the first innovative and modern Pesantren that will produce a great alternative energy source in the country.

### **Religious Economic Developmentalism**

In 2011, just two years before the end of his regime, President Yudhoyono’s administration launched a new economic plan, The Masterplan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia’s Economic Development (Masterplan Percepatan dan Perluasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Indonesia/MP3EI). MP3EI aims to accelerate the economic development of the country

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<sup>26</sup> The Qur’an mentions “*aql*” 49 times, while it mentions “*afalaa ta’qilun*” 13 times.

to become a developed nation by 2025. Indonesia set up its economic growth of 6.4% to 7.5% between 2011-2014, and 8.0% to- 9.0% between 2015-2025.

One of the essential parts of MP3EI is the economic corridor. The government divides the corridor into six areas, based on the potential and advantages of the country's geographic regions. These are Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara-Bali, and Papua-Moluccas. The Java corridor is specially designed as a driver for national industry and service provisions, which focuses on food, drink, textiles, transportation, and the shipping industry. Lamongan is one of the regions that are included in this masterplan as it has transformed itself to become a maritime industrial area (*Kawasan Industri Maritim/KIM*).

In Lamongan, KIM includes two sub-districts: Brondong and Paciran (the latter is the area where Pesantren Sunan Drajat is located). Since 2011, the government has provided 200 hectares of 4000 available hectares to build the shipping industry in these two sub-districts. Lamongan is strategic for the shipping industry because of its geographical location to the North Coast of Java and has a relatively large coastal area connected to Surabaya, the capital city of East Java, which is the second largest city in Indonesia. Since the economy has been growing steadily in the country, Surabaya ports are no longer able to accommodate the growing demands of new marine and shipping development in the city. Therefore, Lamongan has become an alternative.

Paciran is building new ports, adding more docks and shipyards, to enable the sub-districts to grow their economy. The new ports, docks, and shipyards facilitate ships, support offshore exploration, serving vessels, repair broken ships, and, at the same time, function as additional ports. Two blocks have become a target of KIM, including the Kemantren and Sidokelar villages. Along these two blocks, two large companies are now operating, Lamongan

Integrated Shorebase (LIS) and the Lamongan Marine Industry. Since 2014, KIM has expanded its target to include another village in Paciran, namely, Tunggul, which hosts a new shipping company, Tri Ratna Diesel Indonesia (TRD), where the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat get involved in its operation.

LIS and TRD are worth mentioning here. LIS operates in Kemantren Village and has built shore-based services, a gateway port, and a hub port. The existence of the company has brought significant changes to the village. In Kemantren today, the villagers have enjoyed the new social facilities, such as sports and religious centers. Many villagers have become the “new rich” (*orang kaya baru*) because they received money from selling land to the LIS company. Some of the villagers also work for the company. The area that used to be drought-prone has now become clean and popular, especially after they rebuilt the Maulana Ishaq mosque and renovated his<sup>27</sup> graveyard. The villagers voluntarily donated (from the money they gained from selling land) to reconstruct these two religious sites. The multiplying effect of the LIS operation in the village has indirectly boosted the local economy. The mosque and the graveyard, in turn, bring economic benefit to the villagers.

At least 500 people visit Kemantren Village every day to make a small pilgrimage to Maulana Ishaq’s graveyard and to enjoy the magnificent sunset. Some local villagers have used this opportunity to build small cafés and shops to sell their homemade products, and even provide massage services to the visitors. Kyai Ghofur plays a vital role in the transformation of Kemantren as a mediator of land acquisition negotiations between the villagers and LIS.

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<sup>27</sup> Maulana Ishaq is the sibling of Sunan Giri, another member of the Nine Saints of Java. His graveyard is regarded as a sacred site by Javanese Muslims. Most people who visit Sunan Drajat’s grave will also visit Syekh Maulana Ishaq’s graveyard in Kemantren after visiting Sunan Drajat’s.

TRD builds ships in Tunggul Village, Paciran. This company is a sister company of Agrindo, a major supplier of agricultural machines in Indonesia, that is now collaborating with Pesantren Sunan Drajat in developing biodiesel fuel made of candlenut. TRD has committed to empowering the local people through providing job internships for santris of Sunan Drajat's Vocational School (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/SMK), where they can apply the knowledge of shipbuilding that they have learned in the Pesantren, as well as prepare themselves to improve their skills before entering the job market.

In an area of 4.2 hectares, TRD assembles ship parts that have been produced in Surabaya. Since 2015, the company has built several patrol ships for the Indonesian army. Each boat is sold for more than 20 billion rupiahs. The company assists the santris in acquiring a "welding" (*las*) certificate. If someone holds this certificate, s/he can apply for jobs worldwide. All santris interns are required to spend at least six months to one year doing their internship. Getting the certificate is the main dream of the santris of SMK Sunan Drajat. Most want to work in Japan. The main reason is that the salary is much higher there than in Indonesia. Pesantren Sunan Drajat then supported that by initiating an open Japanese language program for santris, in addition to Arabic and English.

The implementation of MP3EI in 2011 has shown a positive impact all over the country. Although recently (2014-2016) economic growth has been a bit slow during President Jokowi's administration. However, the regional Lamongan statistical data shows economic indicators, such as agriculture, mineral, transportation (including warehouses), and construction, remain stable. Transportation and warehouses have grown significantly since 2011, from 6.07% to 8.66% in 2016 (Biro Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Lamongan, 2017). Not only does the government receive benefits from this growth in the form of taxes, but the local people get benefits from

working in the construction sites, ports, and warehouses. The trickle-down effect of economic growth then reaches all levels of society from the top to the bottom.

Moreover, as noted, Pesantren Sunan Drajat's members also receive benefits of the implementation of MP3EI in Lamongan, especially because of the presence of the LIS and the TRD, which provide internships and potential job opportunities for the santri of the Pesantren. Since the Pesantren facilitates the establishment of both companies in the region, they most likely to receive shares from the companies' revenues.

Pesantren Sunan Drajat has several business units that also get benefits from and are encouraged by the MP3EI plan. These are food and alternative energy. One of the business units that has just been established after the MP3EI implementation is Garam Samudra (salt). The Ministry of Marine and Fisheries has funded the production of sea salt in Pesantren Sunan Drajat in collaboration with Hang Tuah University in Surabaya since 2010. Today, this unit produces at least two tons of sea salt per day. According to Ning Betty, the daughter of Kyai Ghofur, who leads this unit (and also several other Pesantren's business units), the capacity of the production machine cannot meet the demand of the local market that requires 10 tons per day. This growing demand for salt is just one example of products that are in high demand from the local markets.

Furthermore, Pesantren Sunan Drajat is still developing Kemiri Sunan (alternative candlenut energy), and it takes a lot of time to launch the product to the market. Nevertheless, if this project is successful, the Pesantren will gain many benefits from it. The MP3EI plan encourages the production of alternative energies since it can contribute to meeting the country's energy demands in the future (Ministry of National Development Planning and National Development Planning Agency, n.d). Today, Indonesia can only produce 11% of alternative energy sources, and the country has been targeted to increase the alternative energy supply by

23% by 2025 (Firmansyah, 2018). Producing alternative energy will be a great investment opportunity for Pesantren.

**Figure 4**



Two patrol ships have been assembled by santri of Sunan Drajat in the TRD shipyard, Paciran, Lamongan. Photo was taken by Ulil Amri.

With the MP3EI plan, this chapter argues that Indonesia has consistently continued the New Order development style, where economic growth is believed continue a trickle-down effect: the growth is not only progress but also has a significant impact on public welfare (Maqin and Sidharta, 2017). Although it was initially intended to bring benefits to the middle class, it has now reached the lower levels (Crouch, 1988). President Yudhoyono's administration, for example, has used the MP3EI program to achieve the country's 2025 target of economic growth to bring prosperity to all Indonesian people. Even today's president, Joko Widodo, still emphasizes this economic strategy, though he does not use MP3EI terms (Warburton, 2018). Although this paradigm has been criticized for its hidden purpose to benefit the rich and bring

more affluence to them (Foster and Clark, 2009, p. 10; Harvey, 2014, p. 17), many policymakers still employ the paradigm, believing that it will generate economic development for the entire population.

The perpetuation of economic developmentalist ideology, a belief in economic progress in Indonesia, encompasses a grand narrative of nationalist ideology that has always existed in the country. As a post-colonial nation, Indonesia believes in the miracle of modernity that can bring the country to future prosperity. The concept of development has become a sort of faith (Ferguson, 1999) for Indonesia, through which it hopes to boost economic growth. While perhaps a utopian vision, it has attracted many Indonesians to get involved. Especially during the era of Suharto, Indonesia launched a contradictory economic nationalist project based on liberal economic policies. This project turned out rapid economic growth for the country. During that time, the New Order regime enjoyed a close relationship with foreign capital (Vu, 2007, p. 46), where the government had successfully attracted direct foreign investment. Indonesia then was closer to a Western liberal economy than Pancasila, its national ideology, during the first phase of the regime.

Nevertheless, later, as Vu (2007) argues, the government changed its position. The regime started to restrict foreign capital and gave more opportunity to local entrepreneurs to flourish (Robison, 2009). The foreign capital restriction is the strategy of the New Order regime to maintain political support from its domestic side by relying on domestic capital received some criticism and mass demonstrations. At the same time, however, the regime carried out systematic repressive techniques to block the protests. Therefore, during the latest phase of the New Order, politics was excluded from the public realm and focused only on economic development. For

Ferguson (1990), it was like an anti-politics machine, where the government tends to reject the appearance of politics from everyday developmental practice.

Since development became a sole focus, the government saw technology as one of the most important keys to achieve progress. A prominent minister of Suharto, Habibie, urged Indonesians to import Western technology to improve Indonesia's economy. This technology is believed to bring prosperity (such as increasing living standards) for all Indonesians (Rudnyckyj, 2010). Rudnyckyj noted that during the New Order, technological development dominated the state's national agenda. For example, the national aircraft project became the national flagship. However, this sort of material development was preferred by the government led Indonesians to lose emotional connection to another development: moral development. This study argues that today's religious economic developmentalism, the one that takes place in Pesantren Sunan Drajat, emerges as a new practice, where Indonesians seek a new formation to balance the material and the moral side of development. The involvement of Pesantren members and non-government actors in the implementation of this ideology should further be read as the neoliberalization of religious institutions and, at the same time, the religionization of secular norms. Rudnyckyj (2010) called this unique process as both "developing faith" and "faith in development."

### **Pesantren and Counterterrorism**

Being located in Lamongan region, Pesantren Sunan Drajat is sometimes labeled as a supporter of terrorism, since Lamongan is the hometown of Amrozi, one of the Bali bombers who used a minivan to blow up a Bali night club in 2002, killing 202 people. Being labeled as supporters of terrorism is a disaster for Indonesians. Their life has been a nightmare since they are under constant surveillance by the police. Hasan, a senior santri, who was also a member of

Pesantren Sunan Drajat's public relations team, reported that Kyai Ghofur could not get a visa to visit Australia because he was from Lamongan.

Moreover, this region is designated as a dangerous zone since the Bali bombing. Kyai Ghofur protested this event. He often said that he and Pesantren Sunan Drajat opposed terrorism or other forms of religious radicalism. He argued that his teaching and what teachers do in Pesantren Sunan Drajat is entirely peaceful and free from radical ideologies. "Do not make Islam radical, but make it peaceful," Kyai Ghofur often says during his morning teachings. Islamic terrorism is Kyai Ghofur's main concern recently. He wants to deconstruct such negative labels that have been imposed by outsiders to the Pesantren.

Since the downfall of Suharto in 1998, Indonesia's authoritarian leader who led the country for 32 years, Indonesia has entered a new era, called the "Reformation" (Reformasi). This new era has changed the political face of Indonesia from authoritarianism to a more democratic system. Reformasi has brought freedom of the press and expression for the whole Indonesian citizenry. However, this ideal is not without barriers. Indonesians use this freedom to set up new political projects, as well as to reestablish old agendas that were banned by Suharto's regime. In this Post-Suharto era, Islamists have reestablished their main political agendas, such as implementing conservative Islamic law. According to Hefner (2005), Reformasi has instead taken advantage of the Islamists that jeopardize democratic freedom.

Although the number of followers of this group is small compared with other moderate Islamic groups, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, they are relatively successful in achieving public attention.<sup>28</sup> The political elites especially have opened opportunities for

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<sup>28</sup> Some of these groups are the Islamic Community Forum (Forum Umat Islam/FUI) and Islamic Defender Front (Front Pembela Islam/FPI). According to Buehler (2016), these groups are linked or sympathetic to Darul Islam, a political Islamic organization that rebelled in the 1950s and 1960s, and tried to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia.

Islamists<sup>29</sup> to indirectly participate in the political arena nationally and locally (Buehler, 2016). On the other hand, the Islamists have been diligently lobbying the elites to accommodate their aspirations. They have relatively successfully convinced the elites that they could promote the elites as “true Muslims” in front of the voters, especially during elections. What is surprising is that, before participating in peaceful lobbying, the Islamist groups conducted confrontational activities to attract the attention of the elites. Buehler (2016) notes that such confrontations even included bomb attacks (p. 157).

Since Reformasi, the face of the Indonesian Islamic political movement is identified with radicalism, intolerance, and terrorism. Today, when people talk about the Pesantren (especially the one located in Lamongan), they often associate it with Amrozi, as if the institution represents the actions of one person. It is disappointing when a place built centuries ago is well established for its devotion to peace and harmony is suddenly conflated with one evil person’s deeds and is identified with terrorism. The interlocutors shared their stories of how their Pesantren and region have been labeled sympathetic to terrorism and how they work to combat such a label.

Ali, a senior santri, shared his story. He opened the conversation by asking, “Did you follow the news?”. No, was the response. “Oh, you missed what was just happening in Lamongan this week.” He went on to say that,

The officers are busy right now...four people got arrested in Brondong village (Paciran)...Two days ago another four people were shot dead by the officers...For me it is weird...they are probably bandits, but the officers said that they are terrorists...Here in Lamongan, we often see police doing patrol because this is Amrozi’s hometown...police officers do this kind of activity because there are still many terrorists out there who are hiding...the terrorist suspects come from various backgrounds. Some of them are traders, fishers. Many “intelligents” (*intel*) are patrolling around.

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<sup>29</sup>According to Sayyid (2015), “Islamism is a discourse that attempts to center Islam within the political order”. Islamists are those who aim to create society based on Islamic principles.

Santris, teachers, and even villagers know that they were being surveilled by outsiders (government and even foreign governments). They witnessed how intelligence officers (locally known as *intel*) often come and go to their Pesantren. This kind of panoptic experience has been embodied since Soekarno's era, who employed the concept of Guided Democracy (Democracy Terpimpin), where the government suspected Islamic political movement had collusion with Darul Islam<sup>30</sup> to promote Islamic state. Masyumi party was the one that refused Guided Democracy that being surveilled by the government. If Islam was the political enemy of Sukarno, who was seen to support communism, it was communism that became the target of surveillance. According to Van Bruinessen (2002), some Masyumi leaders patronized Suharto and then joined the Golongan Karya (Golkar) party, the political party of the government.

To maintain its power, the government established a "Village Advisory Body" (*Bintara Pembina Desa/Babinsa*) to monitor the social and political life of Indonesian people from the central to the local level.<sup>31</sup> However, gradually the government did panoptinize not only the communists but also the Islamists (including both Masyumi and NU followers). Kyai Ghofur often mentioned that his father, also a member of NU, used to be beaten by Babinsa officers because he strongly opposed the Suharto government's presence in Lamongan. Babinsa collaborated with Golkar, to make sure that the government controlled the people and the stability of a territory where the Babinsa worked. If in Suharto's era, the life of the Lamongan people were monitored by Babinsa, in the Post-Suharto's period, the Lamongan people felt that international communities also watched them.

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<sup>30</sup> Some scholars found a relationship between today's forms of jihadism with Darul Islam (Fealy, 2004; Temby, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> During the New Order regime, Babinsa was the lowest level of intelligence officers responsible for monitoring and surveilling the village.

Pak Dahlan recounted his experience of what has occurred in Pesantren Sunan Drajat since the Post New Order, especially after the Bali bombing in 2002. Pak Dahlan stated that intelligence officers have intensely monitored Lamongan. Many of them worked in an “Anti-Terror Special Detachment” (*Detasemen Khusus Anti-Terror/Densus*). Not only did Indonesian intel worked to monitor potential threats of terrorism in Lamongan, but also foreign ones. In 2007, for example, Pak Dahlan said that there was an Australian graduate student whom he and other Pesantren members believed to be foreign intel who tried to collect information about Pesantren Sunan Drajat’s involvement in terrorism. According to Pak Dahlan, this person conducted research that was quite similar to mine, where he gathered information about the Pesantren, Kyai Ghofur’s activities, education, and religious activities inside the Pesantren, and also the political ties of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat with certain political parties. When I heard this, I worried that Pesantren members, including Pak Dahlan, might think that I was another intelligence officer sent by a foreign agency to continue the Australian graduate student’s work. My status as a graduate student from an American university especially attracted the attention of Pesantren members. During my first days of fieldwork, for example, I was always accompanied by senior santris whenever I went inside and outside the Pesantren. Pak Hasbullah even stated that a Pesantren security officer (*kafa*) must accompany me wherever I wanted to go. It happened for about one week, and then, I was free to go anywhere inside of the Pesantren. Rather than monitor my activity, Kyai Ghofur urged me to observe all of the Pesantren’s business units and projects, including the most prestigious ones, such as the Mengkudu and Kemiri Sunan, to make sure that the Pesantren did not become involved in any terrorist activity.

I recall the first moment above when I was surveilled by security officers as a counter-panopticon (surveilled subjects surveilling the surveillants). Although I was not part of the

surveillants' agenda, I could feel how real the Pesantren members conducted the counter-panopticon. The people of Lamongan have been surveilled for about four decades since Suharto's regime. During the New Order, the government used several surveillance channels to discipline and maintain the security of the country, such as Sistem Keamanan Lingkungan (Environment Security System/Siskamling) (Barker, 1998) and Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban (Domestic Surveillance and Control/Komkabtib) (Emmerson, 1983).

What was awkward was that, at the same time, these people both embodied and employed such panoptic system. For example, in Pesantren Sunan Drajat, the members installed "closed-circuit security cameras" (CCTV) in several areas of the Pesantren. These cameras monitored visitors' activities inside the Pesantren. Two cameras that I was very familiar with were the ones located at the main gate of the Pesantren and inside the guest room of the house of Kyai Ghofur. According to Hasan, the cameras were just recently installed since the Pesantren has now more than 12,000 santri with visitors (family of the santri or friends) who come and go every day. He thought that it was just the time to use cutting edge technology to secure the Pesantren from unintended actions better.

I call the second moment, when Kyai Ghofur urged me to see the Pesantren's business units and projects, a counternarrative. In this postmodern age, we witness the emergence of alternative narratives from local people, who are often seen as the owners of the small stories. According to Lyotard (in Giroux et al., 2013), the metanarratives or grand narratives have collapsed in the postmodern age. The universal claim of truth has been deconstructed. The mask of the metanarratives that hide and exclude the narrative of others have been uncovered. In today's postmodern age, people celebrate the plurality of narratives. Giroux et al., call the collapse of the metanarratives as the collapse of the official narratives as well. In this new space,

Kyai Ghofur challenges the dominant narratives that label Pesantren and Lamongan as the birthplace of religious radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia by showing Pesantren's everyday social practices. By pointing me toward Mengkudu and Kemiri Sunan project, Kyai Ghofur invites his guests (not only me) to experience the making of alternative modernity inside of Pesantren territory that was far from religious radicalism. He associated such alternative modernity with contemporary jihad.

### **Jihad and Alternative Modernity**

One morning while teaching, Kyai Ghofur said that jihad is essential. It was not “jihad with violence” (*jihad dengan kekerasan*) that he urged his santri to do, but “educational jihad” (*jihad Pendidikan*).<sup>32</sup> According to Kyai Ghofur, educational jihad is peaceful and modern because Islam teaches peace and progress. Here, education becomes a new form of jihad that Kyai Ghofur and Pesantren Sunan Drajat promote nowadays. I realize that my presence as an ethnographer, a graduate student from the US university, and a “possible” intel might affect the way he described, performed his role as Pesantren leader, and most importantly, the topic he chose to teach the santri, and discuss with me at that time: jihad.

The topic of jihad has become a hot topic today since the 9/11 terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001. The US and its allies then committed to fighting terrorism worldwide. Megawati (the daughter of Sukarno) was president at that time and showed her commitment to combat terrorism after her visit to meet President George W. Bush in 2003. Since then, the Indonesia-US relationship has become closer (Murphy, 2010, p. 371). The US supported Indonesia's efforts by providing \$50 million to the establishment of a new framework and institutions on counterterrorism. A special detachment called, “Special Detachment 88”

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<sup>32</sup> In his book, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java*, Lukens-Bull (2005) shows that “peaceful struggle through preaching and education” is considered as jihad.

(Densus 88) was established by the government of Indonesia and personnel were trained by the US and Australian governments. The government of Indonesia also focus on countering radicalism.

This soft approach targeted Pesantrens, where the radical ideologies flourished. Since then, the image of Pesantren is often associated with Islamic radicalism or even terrorism. What Kyai Ghofur wanted to do is to recover the image of Pesantren that has been destroyed by Islamists. He chooses to focus on the other meaning of jihad, not as violent jihad, but as a peaceful one. In Islam, educational or peaceful jihad is acknowledged as greater jihad whereas war or armed struggle (or sometimes called violent) is the lesser. Doing greater jihad means being open-minded to change and adopt new ideas from other people and culture. How jihad and (alternative) modernity intertwined?

Pesantren members believed that the Nine Saints, including Sunan Drajat, have enlightened the land of Java through the teaching of Islam. It is often narrated by Kyais and the santris that before the arrival of Islam, the land of Java was in the dark ages. They claimed that Islam had brought enlightenment to the Javanese. Since then, they tend to associate Islam with modernity. This knowledge seems to be contradicted in some Western thought that often sees Islam is incompatible with modernity (Huntington, 1996; Lewis, 2002). However, Lukens-Bull (1997) counters this critique by saying that Pesantren tradition offers an alternative form of modernity that combines piety and progress. Following Giddens' word (2010) that modernity is like a juggernaut and that no one can stop its movement except by accepting it, I argue that the members of the Pesantren in Java are doing alternative modernity: a type of modernity different from that which is at work in other places, including the Western world. They want progress

politically and economically, but “their ultimate concern is still with salvation and the hereafter” (Lukens-Bull, 1997, p. 9).

Kyai Ghofur teaches his santri all knowledge that is beneficial for many people and helps them to the right path according to Islamic standards. “If the knowledge is not useful to solve people’s problems, it means that it is not beneficial,” he argued. “There are people who have gained a doctoral degree but cannot do anything. He just got the degree, but his knowledge does not bring any benefit to society,” he continued. Therefore, in every teaching, speech, or even conversation, Kyai Ghofur often emphasizes the importance of “practice” (*praktek*). “Many people know the theory, but they cannot make a change because they do not know how to apply the theory,” he explained. One day, as narrated by a santri, an ex-thief came to the Pesantren to meet Kyai Ghofur to ask for repentance.<sup>33</sup> The ex-thief shared his story that he was trained to be a thief: he learned the theory and the practice. From this story, Kyai Ghofur thinks that if the thief has a training to be a thief, the santri must have more sophisticated training than the thief. In Pesantren Sunan Drajat, santri are taught to master both theory and practice, and this is the reason why the Pesantren opens vocational schools for the santri. In these schools, santri have time to practice more than learning the theory.

Kyai Ghofur gave me “the practice” advice when I first met him in his house. He asked me about my activity. When I replied that I was doing my doctoral study in anthropology, he questioned my decision to learn theory in a longer period. For him, “our age” (*umur kita*) must be dedicated to bringing something real for the society where we live in. “Learning too much theory is not useful,” he said. Even when I asked his permission to leave the Pesantren in my last day of fieldwork, he kept advising me to focus on practice, not theory.

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<sup>33</sup> It is common in Indonesia, that someone who has done bad deeds visit Kyais to ask their advice how to repent.

Pesantren Sunan Drajat's education system adopts both "traditional" (*salafi*) and "modern" (*khalafi*) styles. The salafi system provides religious education and character building, whereas khalafi system teaches religious and general education, including skills training (Lukens-Bull 2001, p. 355). The traditional system enables santri to learn Islamic subjects such as Arabic language, Qur'an, Hadith, and classical books (such as *Ihya Ulumuddin* and *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra*)<sup>34</sup> written by Islamic scholars. The modern system, on the other hand, provides santri with current subjects similar to secular schools such as math, physics, chemistry, biology, computer science, and accounting. Kyai Ghofur is proud of the adoption of the second system. In front of his guests and santri parents during school graduation in 2017, for instance, he said that Pesantren Sunan Drajat is the only Pesantren which has all vocational school concentration, "from the sea to the mountain, we have them all here in this Pesantren," he convinced. Pesantren Sunan Drajat owns preschool, schools, and college (Institute Sunan Drajat/INSUD, which is soon to become a university). The Pesantren's vocational school (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/SMK), has at least 13 concentrations including agribusiness, accounting, multimedia, nautical ship boat, fishing boat engineering, marketing, architectural engineering, fashion design, electrical engineering, automotive, computer, mechanical engineering, and motorbike.

Pesantren Sunan Drajat sees that societal reform is its primary goal where educated santri later will bring positive change to their society. Kyai Ghofur dreamed that someday the head of Indonesian Army Force or the head of Indonesian National Police is an alumnus of Pesantren Sunan Drajat. If possible, Kyai Ghofur wanted his santri to be a president of the country. These are all dreams of Kyai Ghofur that can only be realized through educational jihad.

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<sup>34</sup> I will especially elaborate *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* in the following chapter since it plays significant role in the making of alternative energy.

The more santris the Pesantren teaches the bigger the chance to realize the dream. Nevertheless, the Pesantren must have innovative programs to attract new applicants.

It is not easy to do so. In Indonesia, Pesantren are regarded as the second-class education system, lower than secular schools. Generally, people see secular schools as far more competitive than Pesantren because secular schools can provide students with skills needed in today's job market. More importantly, the number of Pesantren is fewer than secular schools nationally, in fact Pesantren emerged a long time before the secular schools were established in Indonesia. In 2016-2017, the number of secular schools (preschool to senior high school) is approximately 302,097 (Ministry of Education 2017) whereas the number of Pesantren (*diniyah*/preschool to *alimah*/high school) is about 28,961 (Ministry of Religion 2017 in Suwendi, 2017). In addition, there is a public assumption in Indonesia that Pesantren is an outdated system, which will never be competitive with secular schools.

Pesantren Sunan Drajat aims to prove that this assumption is wrong. It chooses to incorporate the secular curriculum into its system, and make the Pesantren as competitive as the secular schools. Asad (2003) calls such a system as "modern hybrid" (p.182). I was surprised when I heard Kyai Ghofur mention in the morning that the Pesantren should intensively teach English to the santris. He even said that English was more important than Arabic and Indonesian today. He wanted his Pesantren to go global, so he urged his santris to learn English seriously. It is not only Pesantren Sunan Drajat that has combined its educational system with the secular one. There are some other examples. Typically, Pesantrens teach secular subjects in the morning and classical Islamic books in the evening. This type of hybrid<sup>35</sup> Pesantren (the one that has

modernized its education system and curriculum) is growing quite significantly. In 2012, the number of hybrid Pesantren was reported approximately 5,044 across the nation.

In *Salafi* Pesantren, however, there still exists the view of seeing that Pesantren's identity is in its original form, and it should not be changed. This type of Pesantren still follows Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari's<sup>36</sup> fatwa (legal opinion) saying that all things must be rejected if they belong to the unbelievers. In today's context, this fatwa resonates with the current situation where the *salafi* supporters argue that the modern system must also be rejected. *Salafi* Pesantren still maintains its traditional characteristics, such as teaching religious subjects. Kyai Ghofur's father, Mbah Martokan, was a *salafi* supporter (follower of Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari). He maintained the *salafi* tradition of Pesantren Sunan Drajat during his life. Kyai Ghofur did not want to challenge his father. As a supporter of the hybrid system, Kyai Ghofur started modernizing his Pesantren after his father passed away.

Some scholars of Islamic studies often associate Islamic modernity in Indonesia with Muhammadiyah, the oldest Islamic faith-based organization, which has emphasized its mission in education, health, and orphanages (Fuad, 2002; Nakamura, 2012). In contrast to Nahdlatul Ulama, which is identical to Pesantren, Muhammadiyah uses regular schools to run its mission to educate people. Therefore, Nahdlatul Ulama and its Pesantren are often associated with traditionalism, whereas Muhammadiyah and its schools are associated with modernism (Geertz; Federspiel). Nevertheless, I argue that this bifurcation is unstable since many Pesantrens also employ modern education system. In Lara Deeb's (2006) term, piety is inseparable from modernity. There is no clear boundary between the two. Although scholars argue that the use of reason and the open interpretation of Qur'an characterize Islamic modernity, whereas the Islamic

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<sup>36</sup> Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari is the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, an organization in which all pesantren affiliate

tradition was seen to be closing the door of new interpretation and oppose the free use of reason, I do not see this argument applicable to Pesantren. The Pesantren system is an open system, which always adapts and adopts new things to make productive santris bring change to their hometown. Pesantren Sunan Drajat uniquely combines the tradition and new elements (new skills and training) to equip its santris with enough knowledge and skills before they go back to their society.

I remember when I talked to worker santris<sup>37</sup> on their daily activities in Pesantren. They told me that they went to morning teaching first, and then worked for the Pesantren. Sometimes they work from the morning to the late evening, especially if the Pesantren was erecting a new building. Through working in the Pesantren they learn new skills every day from mixing the cement with the stone and sand to managing a business unit. These kinds of practical and managerial skills that they learn for years will be beneficial for them later when they decide to do their work independently. According to Pak Khozin, Pesantren Sunan Drajat has had at least ten branches that spread all over the country. The former worker santris established all of the branches. “Many worker santris are successful because they got all experience, from studying to practicing in the Pesantren,” Pak Khozin said. The bigger the number of Pesantren Sunan Drajat branches, the bigger the number of santris of the Pesantren in the country, and the bigger the chance for the Pesantren to do its societal reform. Quantity matters for the Pesantren. This kind of quantity is an advantage for the continuation of the Pesantren’s educational jihad in the future.

The modernization of the education system in Pesantren Sunan Drajat is followed by the modernization of the Pesantren’s functions economically, politically, and environmentally.

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<sup>37</sup> “Worker santri” (*santri karyawan*) is different from regular santri. This type of santri do not pursue academic degree. They just learn Islamic knowledge, Arabic, and classical books. Most of their time are spent on working in Pesantren including erecting building, running the canteens, and other Pesantren businesses.

Pesantren Sunan Drajat today promotes entrepreneurship and business skills as key components of piety. Ning Betty, Kyai Ghofur's daughter, is the leading figure of the Pesantren's economic modernization where she brings modern concepts and practices of entrepreneurship (such as from Peter Drucker and Jeffry Timmons) into Pesantren Sunan Drajat. Politically, the Pesantren has been actively involved in the emergence of Gerindra Party, a party that is led by Prabowo Subianto. Kyai Ghofur argues that being involved in political activity will bring prosperity for Pesantren in the long run. Prabowo has special position in Pesantren Sunan Drajat. Kyai Ghofur put his picture together with Prabowo in the wall of his guest room. In Indonesia, if someone's picture is put in the guest room, it means the person has important position for the house owner.

Although Prabowo has become an honored person in Pesantren Sunan Drajat, his position remains controversial for Indonesian people. Some people see him as a part of the New Order regime, who tortured and killed activists during Suharto's era, especially in 1998. He had been accused of human rights abuse in East Timor around 1978-1979. However, some other Indonesians see him not guilty for those cases above since he was not in the top military position during the time. He was a Special Force Commander in 1998. The torture command was from his superior, named Wiranto, who at that time was the Commander of the Indonesian National Armed Forces. In Pesantren communities (not only Pesantren Sunan Drajat), especially, Prabowo has a good reputation since he often worked with Pesantren communities during his time in the army. Many people said that Prabowo often consulted his strategic plans with Kyais. Once upon a time, Prabowo visited Pesantren Sunan Drajat. In front of the santri and teachers, he stated that he always asked Kyai's advice before he and his soldiers went to a special military operation. After his retirement, Prabowo establishes the Gerindra Party, where many of its

members are from Pesantren communities. Kyai Ghofur's nephew, also a member of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, is one of an elected legislative member of the Gerindra Party in Lamongan.

Asad (1999) reminds us that the political role of religion in modern society can be positive as long as it enters the public sphere where rational debates are maintained to establish civility. The presence of the modern political system where executive and legislative bodies exist has facilitated such rational activities. The involvement of Pesantren Sunan Drajat into such rational activities can be seen as active engagement of religious institution into politics. In Indonesia, many Pesantrens are affiliated with political parties. Although they do not state their political affiliation clearly, santri, staff, and villagers know that the Pesantrens have strong political affiliation with certain political parties.

The affiliation does not have to be with Islamic political parties. Pesantren Sunan Drajat's case shows that the affiliation can be with national or secular political parties as well. How then is the involvement of Pesantren Sunan Drajat in the Gerindra Party seen as jihad? If we look at the history of Nahdlatul Ulama, the umbrella of all traditional Pesantrens in Indonesia, the institution used to have a political party in Sukarno's era to promote its idea. Creating democratic politics such as civil society (*masyarakat madani*) is a sort of political jihad for Nahdlatul Ulama members since its birth (Aspinall, 2004; Bush 2009; Pohl, 2006). Therefore, the political activity of Pesantrens is not something new. Pesantren Sunan Drajat aims to get involved in the country's democratic politics, through Gerindra Party, both with their ideological and practical motives. Besides aiming to get possible benefits from their political activities, such as gaining more power and opportunities, Pesantren Sunan Drajat also aims to get involved in the making of civil society.

There several political parties that have tried to attract Pesantren Sunan Drajat. During my fieldwork, I saw the leader of Nasional Demokrat (National Democrats/Nasdem) Party, Surya Paloh, visit the Pesantren. Several months before that, another political party leader, named Hary Tanoesoedibyo (Persatuan Indonesia—United Indonesia Party) also visited the Pesantren. From what I observe, Gerindra is the one which gained more attention because it is led by Prabowo Subianto, with whom Kyai Ghofur has a close relationship. Gerindra's platform promotes the "people's economy" (*Ekonomi kerakyatan*), an economic paradigm that aims to strengthen Indonesian people's rights over their natural resources.

Many argue that this platform is a kind of ultranationalist ideal since this party rejects the domination of "foreigners" (*orang asing*) in managing Indonesia's natural resources. For Gerindra, the country's resources must be owned and managed by Indonesians. Gerindra also promotes "strong leadership" (*kepemimpinan yang kuat*) (Gerindra Party, n.d, p. 12), a characteristic that has been weakened by liberal democracy, as a key to successfully managing the country. This party sees liberal democracy has hampered the ability of Indonesians to manage their natural resources, and furthermore, to achieve its national goal. Both economic, as well as leadership visions, bring Gerindra and Pesantren Sunan Drajat together. I remember when I joined morning teaching, Kyai Ghofur said that the president of Indonesia should be like Sukarno and Suharto. They have strong leadership so that they know how to "manage the state" (*Notonegoro—Javanese/menata negara—Indonesian*). Kyai Ghofur seems to see these two characters exist in Prabowo's personality.

In addition to those, both Pesantren Sunan Drajat and Gerindra see the importance of science and technology. In the manifesto of the Gerindra Party, it is mentioned that it advocates alternative energy that involves small medium enterprise (*usaha menengah/UKM*) (n.d, p. 48-

49). Pesantren Sunan Drajat, on the other hand, looks forward a political support that can advocate its program such as Kemiri Sunan. Therefore, both institutions (including both leaders) have similar interests that unite them in many ways. I argue that such similarity of interests, especially in science and technology, between both institutions, in turn, leads the Pesantren to work on developing Kemiri Sunan confidently.

## **Conclusion**

Pesantren Sunan Drajat is the arena where alternative modernity exists. It is the place where various forces produce various practices, positionalities, subjectivities, and paradoxes. As I have shown above the history of the Pesantren and its geographical location is constantly produced and reproduced by human and non-human forces including the villagers, the Pesantren members, the economy of the region, the national politics, and the international perception about Lamongan. All these actors also create contemporary involvement of the Pesantren in promoting mixed-education system (modern and traditional), in establishing economic institution, and currently in environmental actions.

As an alternative modern institution, Pesantren Sunan Drajat redefines the notion of jihad to legitimize its educational, economic, and environmental practices. The redefinition of jihad together with these practices furthermore enable the Pesantren to change the negative image of Pesantrens (and Lamongan region as the hotbed of terrorism) that has been associated with religious extremism. These efforts involve religious as well as historical interpretation. Kyai Ghofur, the leader of the Pesantren, for instance, uses Qur'anic verses on the importance of using "reason" (*akal*-Indonesian/*aql*-Arabic) and at the same time reactivate the legacy of Sunan Drajat (a member of the Nine Saints) to teach his followers (*santris*) and other people to bring greater good to society and solve current socio-environmental problems.

The environmental practices, greening the environment like planting trees, cleaning village, and producing alternative energy through Kemiri Sunan (candlenut), and potentially to erect incineration plant are some of the new ways of the Pesantren members are doing alternative modernity. These efforts neither aimed to deconstruct the existing modernity nor desired to promote religious fundamentalism. Instead, from what I have observed, the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat advocates a third way where religion (or religiosity) and secularism are always intertwined and co-constitutive.

## CHAPTER 3

### Becoming Religious-Neoliberal

It has been argued that religious organizations can play a significant role in mitigating environmental problems as religions are considered capable of mobilizing the public where science and politics have failed (Bhagwat et al., 2010; Veldman et al., 2013). Since 1986, the Alliance of Religions (ARC), an interfaith organization, has focused its programs on the religious capacity to tackle environmental problems all over the world. Today, more and more organizations have followed and extended the actions taken by ARC. These organizations have taken small (sounding the alarm of environmental degradations, combating deforestation, and planting trees) and large scale (providing alternative energy sources and divestment from fossil fuels) environmental actions. During fieldwork for Pesantren Sunan Drajat, a traditional Islamic educational institution, I witnessed how the members of this organization have begun some of these actions, collaborating with various institutions (state and industrial), such as greening (planting trees and medicinal plants) the Pesantren, the village, and the region of Lamongan, East Java, promoting small scale energy efficiency inside and outside the Pesantren area, working toward alternative energy sources, and finding effective waste management systems to become an Eco-Pesantren (green Pesantren)<sup>38</sup>.

These efforts exemplify an engagement of religion-- religious organizations-- in the mitigation of environmental problems (Arnez, 2014; Gade, 2015; Gottlieb, 2007). This study argues that all participants (the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat) are practicing “religious

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<sup>38</sup> Pesantren is the oldest religious institution in Indonesia, with more than 90 million members spread across the country. According to the Ministry of Environment (2009), there are about 90 Eco-Pesantrens in Indonesia as of 2009.

neoliberal eco-governmentality practice,”<sup>39</sup> where religious environmental ethics guides environmental actions and, at the same time, are overshadowed by neoliberal calculative reason. This new governmentality aims to produce what Luke (1999) and Agrawal (2005) called, active “environmental subjects,” where actors have multiple responsibilities, create various calculations, and negotiate various benefits and incentives with their environmental activities.

This chapter elaborates the notion of religious neoliberal eco-governmentality. It further introduces the involvement of the Pesantren in the contemporary environmental movement. It discusses how the members of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat have become religious neoliberal actors while greening the school/institution, planting trees, promoting energy efficiency, and managing waste. It focuses on how Pesantren Sunan Drajat’s environmental actions employ spiritual and neoliberal technologies of government, engaging all stakeholders in the Pesantren, and creating multiple subjectivities in the daily life of the members.

### **Religious Neoliberal Eco-Governmentality**

Governmentality is a type of social conduct. The term was introduced by Michel Foucault, who defined it as the “conduct of conduct,” or “governing the self” (Foucault 2000, p. 340-342). He observed the techniques and forms of knowledge used primarily by government bodies or institutions to address certain problems and offer certain strategies (Lemke, 2007, p. 44). Lemke argued that Foucault’s concept of governmentality has been used, refined, and extended to critically analyze the political technologies and governmental rationalities in today’s society (2007, p. 45). While Foucault used the scale of governmentality solely to analyze the

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<sup>39</sup> I borrow Hackworth’s (2012) term “religious neoliberalism” that means religious organization coalesce with market to produce new social practices. In Indonesia, this coalition works in the religious environmental practice as well.

national and domestic character of governmentality, scholars have extended the scale of governmentality to other geographic and ideological scales.

Current study of governmentality has been focused on the role of neoliberalism (market) in contemporary society which imposes a governmental discipline to create new subjectivities who are regarded as independent and economically rational (Dean, 2010; Harvey, 2007; Joseph, 2012). In this neoliberal governmentality, the market collaborates with state agencies and produces complex technologies of power to regulate bodies of individuals. According to neoliberal governmentality, various social concerns, such as health, education, economy, demography, and the current environment should be managed under market logic. While the state can intervene if necessary, it is for the sake of the market.

Presently, one particular area that becomes a playing field of neoliberal governmentality is the environment (conservation). Scholars in this field pay close attention to this contemporary practice. In their study of how green governmentality works to inculcate bodies of individuals to discipline and regulate their own lives, these scholars investigate diverse paradigms, practices, and actions that advocate conservation. For example, Luke (1999) argued that green governmentality is intended to create environmental subjects. In a similar tone, Agrawal (2005) observed that the goals of green governmentality are to discipline people to achieve conservation. The way the market works in green governmentality, incentives (economic benefit, access to market, credit, or funds to labor) are used to generate local participation.

Scholars have observed the effects of this green governmentality. On the one hand, they see conservation benefits the state and, to some extent, corporations, and often marginalizes local communities in terms of access to certain natural resources (Peluso and Watts, 2001; Escobar, 1998). On the other hand, they see that it can engage local people and accommodate their

interests and aspirations (Agrawal, 2005; Coombe, 2007). However, there is a third perspective that complicates these two tendencies of green governmentality, such as the one argued by Li (2007), in which governmentality practice may engage all stakeholders from the state apparatus to local villagers, but it often ends with strange and peculiar impacts (p. 3), where some participants claim that the project is successfully reaching its goals, while others are disappointed with it. The impacts of green governmentality enable the coexistence of multiple subjectivities. This analysis is useful for understanding contemporary environmental actions in Indonesia.

Few works have been done on the connections between governmentality, neoliberalism, and religious (mainly Islamic) environmentalism. Foucault reminds his readers that there is another form of governmentality that does not only discipline bodies but souls as well (Foucault, 2007, p. 122). The effect of this spiritual governmentality is exceptional and “will endure and subsist for a very long time” (p. 167). Scholars have drawn attention to the link between eco-governmentality and neoliberalism (Fletcher, 2010; Joseph, 2012; Lloro-Bidart, 2017). Moreover, some studies focus on how religion (Islam) or religious texts have inspired environmental actions (Foltz, 2003; Gade, 2012; Islam, 2012; Khalid, 2002) and on Islam and neoliberalism (Rudnykyj, 2010; Salehin, 2016). Unfortunately, governmentality, neoliberalism, and religious environmentalism are not connected into a single conceptual framework.

The convergence of these topics, religious neoliberal eco-governmentality, may pave the way for exploring the complexity of contemporary environmental movements or actions. This paper argues that religious neoliberal eco-governmentality enables the assemblages of various forces and formations that produce complex or multiple subjectivities. By doing so, this chapter may shed light on similar works that show the interconnection between the religious and the

secular (or liberal) as they combine to create the social world (Bangstad, 2009; Habermas, 2008; Marsden, 2005; Soares and Otayek, 2007).

### **Pesantren and the Environmental Movement**

Pesantren Sunan Drajat is located in Paciran, Lamongan region, East Java. Kyai Ghofur claimed that Pesantren Sunan Drajat is the only traditional religious institution that inherited the legacy of the Nine Saints (Wali Songo/Sunan Songo). The history of Pesantren Sunan Drajat is inseparable from the story of Sunan Drajat.<sup>40</sup> Today, the majority of the Paciran population identify as Muslim. Islam has become the identity of the population of this region.

Lamongan's strategic position, located on the north coast of Java, is central in today's Indonesian Reformasi (a political movement to dethrone Suharto's authoritarian regime) as it is in one of several new economic corridors, namely, The Masterplan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development (Masterplan Percepatan dan Perluasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Indonesia/MP3EI). The MP3EI aims to accelerate the economic development of the country to become a developed country by 2025. During President Yudhoyono's term as well, Indonesia began its commitment to promoting green practices and sustainability by being the first signatory to pledge to reduce greenhouse gases voluntarily.

The Reformasi has created opportunities for local people and institutions to participate in the national development, and Pesantren Sunan Drajat has emerged as a critical player that gets involved in both MP3EI and green practices. For example, since 2008, the name of Pesantren Sunan Drajat has become an essential part of the public discussion for its effort in producing alternative energy, called Kemiri Sunan (Reutealis Trisperma/candlenut) (Yakub, 2012; Kompas, 2008). Kemiri Sunan has become inextricably linked to Pesantren Sunan Drajat's environmental

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<sup>40</sup> Sunan Drajat was known as Raden Qosim. Sunan is a title given to those who were considered the most respected Islamic priests in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Java. Before they were considered Sunan, they used their original names.

action. Pesantren Sunan Drajat is also known for its Mengkudu (Noni) project, through which Kyai Ghofur's name has been lifted up nationally. This project helped him achieve the Kalpataru, the highest environmental prize in Indonesia, in 2006. Nahdlatul Ulama,<sup>41</sup> the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, along with officials in Jakarta, with which many Pesantrens are affiliated, often promote Pesantren Sunan Drajat as a major player in today's religious environmental movement (Niam, 2015).

Pesantren Sunan Drajat is similar to other Pesantrens in Indonesia. It is an Islamic educational institution that teaches Islamic subjects, such as, the Qur'an, Hadith, Tauhid, Fiqh, Arabic, and Tarikh, and general subjects like Math, Art, English, Biology, and Pancasila Ideology. The Pesantren also teaches extracurricular activities, including dakwah (oratory) and entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, Pesantren Sunan Drajat is distinct from other Pesantrens as it has an environmental focus. Today, this Pesantren commits to environmental actions through greening the school, village, and region, planting trees, and creating alternative energy sources. There are also other Eco-Pesantrens in Indonesia that focus their activity on environmental issues, such as Pesantren Darul Muttaqin, Bogor, Pesantren Al Ittifaq, Bandung, Pesantren Al Imdad, Bantul, and Pesantren Darunnajah, Jakarta.

Pesantren's environmental movement is slightly different from the secular one. While the seculars serve the interests of all marginalized people, religious movements tend to serve their followers. Pak Imam, the leader of Lembaga Pengembangan Pertanian Nahdlatul Ulama (NU's Agricultural Council/LPPNU) and Pak Avianto, the leader of Lembaga Penanggulangan Bencana dan Perubahan Iklim (NU's Disaster Mitigation and Climate Change Council/LPBI) in Jakarta reported to me that the reason their organizations advocate for their members in many

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<sup>41</sup> Nahdlatul Ulama is the largest Islamic civil society organization in Indonesia and the world (Tyndale, 2003; Fox, 2004).

rural areas of Indonesia is because they have been excluded by many government development and environmental programs, especially during Suharto's regime, including managing their natural resources. Today, during the Reformasi era, the LPPNU advocates for the rights of its members to enjoy the resources, while, at the same time, urges them to protect the overuse of resources. However, the LPPNU and LPBI cannot avoid the tension that is revealed in the contradictions between economic and ecological motives within their environmental agendas, movements, and activities. This situation is also occurring in many Pesantren communities.

For example, Ridwan's study (2010) showed that illegal logging in Bojonegoro, Central Java, involved religious figures (Kyais). Some of the logs have been used for religious purposes, such as building mosques. This is a dilemma for Pesantren communities because they know that logging is forbidden in Islam as it destroys nature. Yet, people need the resource to live their lives. The Kyai argued that if he had not taken the logs, he would have got nothing (*gak kebagian*). For erecting the mosques, the Kyais mobilized the santris (the followers or the students of Pesantren) and villagers to retrieve wood trees from the forest.

The tension between ideological and pragmatic motives of natural resource management is a classic problem. Scholars promote sustainable resource mechanisms to solve the problem, where stakeholders combine both motives of managing resources through conservation (Ostrom, 1990; Berkes et al., 2000; Agrawal, 2001; Holling, 2001). However, in reality, natural resource management works in a very complicated way, can be unpredictable, chaotic, and contradictory (Swyngedouw, 2007, p. 19), similar to what Pesantren Sunan Drajat has done recently. It promotes religious environmentalism on the one hand but encouraging its members to secure their economic rights on the other.

This chapter argues that this complex and peculiar religious environmental practice is shaped by religious neoliberal eco-governmentality, where piety and prosperity are uniquely intertwined. This practice then generates multiple subjectivities. By combining piety and prosperity, the emergence of religious environmentalism is apparent. These elements are the backbone of the religious environmental movement in Indonesia.

### **The Cultivation of Religious Neoliberal Environmental Ethics and Aesthetics**

During my ethnographic fieldwork, I had a chance to teach at SMP 2 Paciran, at the Pesantren Sunan Drajat. One morning before the beginning of the class, I sat with some students and asked them about their thoughts on how to protect nature. One of them reacted to my question, saying that a student basically should not throw waste anywhere, plant trees, take care of all plants, and keep classrooms or their school. Another student reemphasized the importance of keeping the school environment clean. The other students identified the alternative energy project (Kemiri Sunan) developed by Pesantren Sunan Drajat. When I spoke to teachers and senior santris, they often mentioned that the economic aspect of conservation must be considered. Even Kyai Ghofur, the supreme leader of the Pesantren, often mentioned the importance of the economy for the Pesantren. For him, environmental programs must bring economic benefits for the Pesantren Sunan Drajat. To understand how the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat come up with these mixed ideas (making their Pesantren green and the members of Pesantren prosperous economically), it is necessary to understand how environmental ethics is produced in their daily life.

Every week, the school raised the santris' awareness about environmental issues in the classroom. The santris are taught a subject entitled, "Environmental Education" (*Pendidikan Lingkungan hidup/PLH*). All students from the first to the third-grade study environmental

education for 40 minutes per week. The subject materials vary, ranging from preventing pollution, reforestation, waste management, making compost, climate change, and alternative energy (such as biogas and bioethanol). Through this, some santri come to know one of the famous products of the Pesantren, noni (*Mengkudu*). Rizki, a student, shared with me a story he recently witnessed how the Pesantren used the noni to produce alternative medicine. Pesantren Sunan Drajat extracts the fruit, which is believed to have curative properties for several diseases and sells it to the market. Rizki also talked a bit about Kemiri Sunan, another type of tree planted by the members of the Pesantren, and how it has ecological and economic value, where the Pesantren will receive great benefit later after it is commercialized.

Moreover, the school used the PLH curriculum to show students movies related to current environmental issues. Rizki told me that he watched a film about climate change in his PLH class. The film gave him a new insight into what the earth will be like in several decades ahead. Watching a movie is an effective method of teaching students. In this era of multimedia, thanks to the Reformasi, which has brought many social, political, and educational changes in the country, students can now learn new things from various sources, including the internet. Since the television/computer screen is a recent technology in SMP 2 Paciran, students enjoy learning things through this method. Some santri even learn environmental issues directly from the internet through Google, YouTube, and other channels, without referring to the PLH curriculum. Huda, a senior santri, told me that he learned techniques for planting trees from the internet. He practiced what he learned from the internet in his daily activity as a coordinator of environmental programs in the Pesantren such as techniques of “cutting” (*stek*) and “transferring plants” (*memindahkan tanaman*), using a small plastic bag. Huda is one of the lucky santri. He was

once a junior santri in the Pesantren. Due to his dedication to Kyai Ghofur and Pesantren, after finishing his bachelor degree, he was appointed as a teacher in the Pesantren.

Kyai Ghofur's role is significant in the production of religious neoliberal environmental ethics in this Pesantren. Nevertheless, he is a product of the large neoliberal religious eco-governmentality. After having discussions with many people (experts, journalists, and general guests of Pesantren), he decided to make Pesantren an economically and ecologically oriented institution. Along with putting himself amid religious neoliberal eco-governmentality, he attracts other people to get involved. Afiff (a santri) and his friends repeatedly mentioned they often hear Kyai's teaching, urging them to keep Pesantren clean. The direct interaction between Kyai and a junior santri regularly occurs during the Friday morning "teaching" (*pengajian*), while with senior santri, it happens every morning as Kyai reads the "classical book" (*kitab kuning*).<sup>42</sup> This teaching method is called, "classical" (*bandongan*) (Jones, 1983). In the *bandongan* method, each paragraph of the book is read and followed with an explanation of the meaning by Kyai, who often contextualizes the meaning with the daily situation of the Pesantren. This Friday morning teaching is the moment where many santris come to know environmental ethics.

Naim, a junior santri, for example, told me that Kyai mandated santri during the teaching to not throw waste anywhere and not cut down trees. If they are caught cutting down the trees, they will be punished by cleaning the Pesantren area and to paying a fine to the environmental team of the Pesantren. Huda, a senior santri, told me that Kyai Ghofur also discussed Kemiri Sunan during morning Islamic teaching. He further explained that Kyai connected *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* (a book on esoteric spirituality written by Ahmad Al-Buni and is used in the

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<sup>42</sup> The difference between junior and senior santri is not fixed. I created these two categories for my research. The first category is those who are students under the age of eighteen (Ibtidaiyah, Tsanawiyah, Aliyah), whereas, the senior santri are above that age (university students and staff).

morning teaching) with Kemiri Sunan, saying that the plant has spiritual significance. Huda explained that, in that teaching, “Kyai says he got a spiritual whisper saying that Kemiri Sunan is important for the future of Pesantren. It is a future source of energy.” I have heard many times the members of the Pesantren talk about this plant and glorify its ecological and economic significance for the Pesantren.

While Kyai’s teaching and PLH curriculum have become the spiritual and ethical reference for greening the Pesantren, the internet also plays a pivotal role as a practical (and aesthetic) reference for the santri. The combination of ethical and aesthetic references in the construction of environmental subjects makes the religious neoliberal eco-governmentality practice in the Pesantren run smoothly. The aesthetic reference especially provides a new avenue for the Pesantren members to easily internalize surrounding environmental messages. In the SMP 2 Paciran, for example, besides planting trees, the Pesantren environmental team beautifies the school with environmental pictures and wise words. In front of almost all classrooms, the team hangs the pictures and sayings. These kinds of work become mnemonic devices for people in the school to act green. At the same time, they also become artwork that students, teachers, and visitors enjoy seeing in many areas of the school. When I was there, I enjoyed watching an artist santri working on a big mural artwork. This kind of work also exemplifies the self-moral education of protecting nature. This artwork does not only educate the santris, but visitors as well.

Foucault (2007) writes that it is not only bodies that are governed but also souls. He argues that governing the souls means “to conduct someone... in the specifically spiritual sense of the government of souls” (Foucault, 2007, p. 167). Obviously, the santri obey Kyai’s mandate and advice. Since the birth of the Pesantren, around the 15th century, the tradition of obeying

Kyai already existed. In many cases, obedience is not limited to Pesantren territory but also applies to larger social borders, such as the village, region, or province as a Pesantren may have thousands of alumni scattered around the country. Obeying Kyai is believed to bring a “blessing” (*barakah*) (Dhofier, 2011, p. 111-112) and political power.<sup>43</sup> If someone gets Kyai’s blessing, s/he is likely to receive the blessing of God as well (Elefson, 2008, p. 2). For those who receive a blessing from Kyai, they are believed to be successful in their life and will continue to be into the hereafter. Geertz (1968) noted that blessing often linked to plenty, material prosperity, and physical wellbeing.

To some extent, this is applicable in Pesantren today. Those who obey Kyai get important and strategic positions in the Pesantren, such as teacher, administrator, and even project leader. Nonetheless, several Pesantren members reported that it was not material and physical prosperity they pursue, but real happiness, high quality of knowledge and wisdom, and things that cannot be materially valued.

Yet, many Pesantren members admit that immaterial rewards will likely bring material benefits to them. When santri obey the mandate of the Kyai to throw away waste, plant trees, and clean the environment regularly, he will receive both the blessing of the Kyai and material benefit; double rewards. These kinds of calculations of spiritual and material benefits have been embodied in the Pesantrens’ daily lives and part of Islamic teaching in general. Pak Dahlan, a senior teacher, explained that Islam teaches that God will compensate good deeds in both this world and the hereafter. He also said that Islam sees working for the world as equally important as for the hereafter. These calculations of benefits further connect Islam and neoliberal

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<sup>43</sup> Although Pesantren is not a political institution, Kyai, the leader of the Pesantren, has significant political power and influence (Franklin, 2014).

calculative reason (Mittermaier, 2018; Rudnycky, 2010; Hefner, 1998) and assert that both values are like two sides of the same coin.

## **Adiwiyata**

The adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 and its implementation in 2005, triggered the birth of new environmental programs in many countries. As one of the countries that ratified the Protocol in 2004 (Jotzo, 2005), Indonesia, through a collaboration between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Education, launched Adiwiyata. As a state program, Adiwiyata encourages educational institutions, schools, and universities to be green. Adiwiyata is an annual national competition to choose the greenest schools in the country. This program gives incentives to the winning schools, such as a trophy and a certificate.

**Figure 5**



SMP 2 Paciran. Sekolah Adiwiyata (Adiwiyata school). Bersih (Clean), Hijau (Green), Nyaman (Comfort), Rindang (Shady), Asri (Beautiful). Photo was taken by Ulil Amri.

Most importantly, the winners will be listed as prestigious schools. Currently, the program attracts more and more school participants. In 2011, for example, there were about 1,000 schools (most of them are secular) that had been awarded Adiwiyata by the government. Adiwiyata has currently attracted Pesantren Sunan Drajat to participate. The Pesantren aim is to clinch the trophy, get the certificate, and gain national recognition as an Eco-Pesantren and receive the economic benefits of that prestige.

Eco-Pesantren and the Adiwiyata program have become the subject of discussion over the last several years, which invites Indonesian Muslims to think, evaluate, and describe their engagement with the environment. Part of the debate over such programs is protecting nature and producing an ecological form of piety (Szerszynski, 1997). Nahdlatul Ulama, as the umbrella organization of Pesantrens (including Pesantren Sunan Drajat) in Indonesia, is touched with a moral call and have begun to socialize and mobilize Pesantrens. Pak Ali Yusuf, an environmental activist who works at LPBI reported to me that many Pesantrens have participated in this program and then recommended a visit to Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

During the fieldwork at the Pesantren, I witnessed the members of the Pesantren planting various trees and flowers, including noni (*Mengkudu/morinda citrifolia*), sapodilla (*sawo/manilkara zapota*), breadfruit (*sukun/artocarpus altilis*), longan (*kelengkeng/dimocarpus longan*), areca nut (*pinang/areca catechu*), and candlenut (*Kemiri Sunan/reutealis trisperma*). My attention went to the three main trees that I also found in other areas of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Mengkudu (noni), sawo (sapodilla), and Kemiri Sunan (candlenut). These trees dominate open spaces inside the Pesantren. My encounter with Afiff (santri), Huda (senior santri), and Bu Soudah (teacher) describes multiple subjectivities in the Adiwiyata program.

Afiff, in his teens, claimed that his involvement in the program was purely environmental. He loves plants, trees, and nature. "I've loved nature since I was a kid," he explained. He thought that he could contribute to green his Pesantren through planting trees. His parents were the ones who nurtured his environmental values as they often taught him to take care of the environment wherever he went. Afiff's idealistic position was also constructed through Kyai Ghofur's teachings and PLH curriculum. Afiff cleans the school and waters the plants regularly. Although he is a new member of the team, he claims that he had been involved in environmental activities long before he joined the Pesantren. Afiff hopes that more and more santri will join the environmental movement in the Pesantren so that it becomes greener in the future.

Afiff's statement is different from another santri, Hafiz, whose stance is more pragmatic. Hafiz believes that his involvement in Adiwiyata will be beneficial for his future career. He wants his experience with the Adiwiyata team will equip him with the skills needed for applying to jobs in the future. He also hopes that his involvement in Adiwiyata is like an investment, an opportunity to grow money, that would give him indirect economic benefit in the long term. When I asked him why he joined the program, he said that it was because of his friends, including Afiff. While he still has more years to finish his studies, he already has something in mind about what he wants to do in the future. Hafiz's pragmatic and Afiff's idealistic involvement in the Adiwiyata team shows that santri have various and ambiguous motives and goals in this environmental program.

After discussions with the santri, I spoke to Bu Saodah, a teacher and the coordinator of the Adiwiyata program at the Pesantren. Bu Soudah stated that the school aimed to join the global wave of environmental movement and to illustrate how Islamic schools (Muslims) can

contribute to that global wave. If the school becomes green, then school members will receive environmental benefits, including the fresh air (reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere) and the fruit of the trees. Bu Saodah's stance is both idealistic and pragmatic. The principal of the school has recently appointed her because of her passion and experience in greening her village, Banyubang. In early 2017, her village was awarded the Green and Clean prize by a local non-governmental organization (NGO). Since then, Banyubang has been widely known as a modern corn garden in Indonesia. Many people, including business people and government officials, visited the village. Bu Saodah argued that if many visitors come to her village, they will bring economic benefits to the villagers. With both personal and social experiences in greening her village, Bu Soudah is optimistic about transforming her school, SMP 2 Paciran.

As an Adiwiyata manager, Bu Soudah began her job by engaging teachers and students.<sup>44</sup> She first asked teachers to plant one tree and water it every day. The teachers so far have planted various plants at the school, however, Bu Soudah has planted the main trees. She also mobilizes students to plant trees and water them regularly around the school. Bu Saoda believes that the main trees planted around the school and Pesantren would bring economic benefit for the Pesantren members later. She optimistically sees that the school will be like her village, and that, after winning the prize, become an ecological pilgrimage site, with many people from other regions or provinces visiting and learning how to replicate the village.

Here, Bu Soudah illustrates how the Pesantren becomes a commodity: a tourist destination. The commodification of the Pesantren is apparent in the Adiwiyata program. The Pesantren will become not only an object but also an activity and experience (Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994: 649), which, in turn, can be a center of profit for the Pesantren. Once it

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<sup>44</sup> Students of SMP 2 Paciran are also santri of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat. They study and live in the Pesantren's dormitories.

becomes a commodity, a tourist destination, it will generate money, and the members of Pesantren can collectively enjoy it.

### **Tree Plantation**

On June 12, 2006, Kyai Ghofur, the leader of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, was awarded the Kalpataru by President Yudhoyono as “the best adviser of cleanliness and environment” (*Pembina Bidang Kebersihan dan Lingkungan*) (Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup, 2006). Kalpataru is the highest environmental award given by the government to an Indonesian citizen. Kyai Ghofur got this award because of his involvement in noni plantation in the Lamongan region, East Java, since 2001.

Kyai Ghofur, his santris, and villagers worked together to cultivate and then commodify noni. Noni is acknowledged as an alternative medicine, which contains vitamin A, C, B, selenium, iron, terpenoid, and serotonin (Adriani et al., 2017). Pesantren members claim that the benefits of the product are, among others, it can cure high blood pressure, kidney disease, gastroenteritis, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. The product is sold in many places in the country. Not only the members of Pesantren receive benefits from selling the product, but also the villagers and traders. During my fieldwork, I spent some time with the santris of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, in which I visited some places in Lamongan and other regions. I saw noni trees that stood mainly on the road that connects Paciran and Lamongan City. I found the vast majority of noni in Banjarwati Village, where santris and villagers cultivated it in front of their homes.

Pak Sargono, Kyai Ghofur’s assistant, stated that the cultivation program was initially set-up by the local government of Lamongan, but it did not work. When Kyai got involved in the program in 2001, it was successfully followed by the villagers. In the same year, Kyai Ghofur

also established the Agrobusiness Pesantren's Communication Forum (*Forum Komunikasi Pesantren Agrobisnis*). The focus of the forum is to green the environment and, at the same time, boost the local economy through the cultivation program.

The involvement of religious leaders in the government's socio-economic and environmental programs is not new. During Suharto's New Order regime, religious leaders, such as Kyai of Pesantrens, were asked to get involved in promoting the government family planning policy (Shiffman, 2004), and now, in reducing the effects of climate change (Amri, 2013). The reason the government sees the position of religious leaders as important for the grassroots villagers is because the leaders can act as what Tania Li has described as, "trustees" (*wali masyarakat*) (2007, p. 4), those who aim to enhance people's "capacity for action, and direct it" (p. 5).

Kyai Ghofur represents the trustee figure in the plantation program in the Lamongan region. Initially, he attracted santri to get involved in the program. After the program was successful, he then attracted villagers (farmers, as well as fishers). The program helped the fishermen economically, especially during the challenging times of fishing when the wind was too strong to fish and during the full moon<sup>45</sup> and provided them with an alternative livelihood. According to Kyai Ghofur, the program even became an alternative for the fishermen who suffered from the fuel price hikes in Indonesia that decreased the fishermen's income. Kyai Ghofur claimed that, in addition to education, the economy is another primary focus of the Pesantren. He said, "Pesantren must develop its economy so that it can help people outside the Pesantren, the villagers." There were about 40 hectares of land in Lamongan that had been used to cultivate noni. Huda, the senior santri, claimed that this cultivation program has made the

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<sup>45</sup> The catch is usually decreased during the full moon.

region greener and empowered the people economically. The participation of santris and villagers in the noni cultivation shows that the role of Kyai in attracting people is significant (Humaidi, 2010).

In 2011, Kyai Ghofur mandated his santris (and invited villagers) to cultivate the candlenut tree. Candlenut can produce biofuel/biodiesel and store carbon. According to Pak Sargono, Kyai Ghofur mandated him, the santris, and invited villagers to plant candlenut after being convinced that the tree has both religious, environmental, and economic significance.<sup>46</sup> He also said that the candlenut would become the future of Pesantren and Indonesia. Sargono said, “We initially planted candlenut in the east side of Sunan Drajat’s grave, and in the south side of Madrasah Aliyah...if this project is successful, Pesantren Sunan Drajat will become rich.” When researching there, the trees were about 15 meters high and had an abundance of branches and leaves like the sapodillas. Mustaghfirin, a santri worker, shared his excitement with the candlenut project from the planting to the promotion phase:

I got involved in the candlenut cultivation in 2011...the seeds, that were put into a plastic bag then were given fertilizer (goat manure)...after they have grass, then we moved them to Sunan Drajat Grave area, and Pesantren...the cultivation took about eight months...many villagers came to take the seeds [and planted them in their village] because they know the trees will benefit them economically...the candlenut contains oil [biofuel], and its shell is good for cosmetics...Kyai promotes the candlenut everywhere...it is said that the candlenut will make this country rich in the future...I saw a car in Jombang region used candlenut oil. It put a label on the car saying, “this car uses biodiesel of Sunan’s candlenut” (*mobil ini menggunakan biodiesel Kemiri Sunan*) ...after that the candlenut then was shown on a national TV [Trans TV].

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<sup>46</sup> When I discussed the spiritual and cultural significance of candlenut with my interlocutors, they mainly talked about the property of the tree and the nut: the tree is huge, has many leaves that can absorb carbon dioxide, and its root can store large amount of water; the nut contains oil that can produce biodiesel (Hollilah, et al., 2015).

**Figure 6**



Kemiri Sunan (Candlenut) trees inside the Pesantren. Photo was taken by Ulil Amri.

Today, santris try to cultivate something else in the Pesantren area: teak and palm date. Huda admitted that the Pesantren area is not green yet, so it needs more trees to cultivate. “We need more oxygen here, so we plant more trees,” he claimed. He then noted that the Pesantren’s goal is not only to cultivate trees but also receive some economic benefit from the trees. As Huda noted, “The price of a teak tree is high...Pesantren will get “much benefit” (*banyak untung*) from it.”

Pak Sargono, Huda, and Mustaghfirin’s statements above illustrate religious neoliberal environmentalism. They show an effort to green the environment by planting various types of trees with the hope that their effort will also bring an economic return. Although they hope the Pesantren will receive many benefits from the action, they also believe that they will get an

indirect benefit from it. Here we can see the intertwining between Islam and neoliberalism. Mittermaier (2013) observed how some Islamic works have been gradually neoliberalized (p. 275). Atia (2013) calls this process ‘pious neoliberal practice,’ where Islamic practices line up with neoliberal economic rationality and productivity (p. xvii). This transformation utilizes natural resources as a playing field where the members of the Pesantren, as well as local people (both santris and villagers<sup>47</sup>), get involved in producing new environmental subjects. As Mustaghfirin showed, in the Pesantren Sunan Drajat, these programs have been gradually reaching large numbers of villagers. Buresh (2002) and Pohl (2006) explained that Pesantren’s economic programs work through assisting local people in developing their economy by training them and providing them with various skills to get work with the hope that later they will also support other people to become new subjects.

### **Energy Efficiency**

In Pesantren tradition, when the leader said: “*sawwu sufufakum*”<sup>48</sup> (straightening the rows), the followers (santris or *jama’ah*) replied: “*sami’na wa atho’na*”<sup>49</sup> (we listen, and we follow). The example of the tradition exists mainly in “prayer” (*shalat*), but currently applies in Pesantren’s environmental movement as well. If in the prayer, the *jama’ah* is not allowed to make improvements, but follows exactly the instruction of the leader, here in the environmental actions, the followers (santris) are even encouraged to do so. Here, in this section I will show that there are some low-level improvements made by the santris such as “reducing the use of electricity” movement (*gerakan hemat listrik*) to support Pesantren’s effort to achieve its energy efficiency target.

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<sup>47</sup> Villagers include the parents and large family of santris, who live around the Pesantren’s area.

<sup>48</sup> These Arabic words taken from Hadith, the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad, narrated by Bukhari

<sup>49</sup> Qur’an 2:285.

Zaki, a senior santri who is also a head of one dormitory, initiated “reducing the use of electricity” movement using both moral and economic techniques. This movement is still small scale and started in his room or office<sup>50</sup>. Since I stayed there during my fieldwork in the Pesantren, I observed more than 30 people visit the room every day for many purposes. Some of them were parents of the junior santris who consulted the problems of their children with Zaki. Some others were junior santris, who lived in the dorm, and who used the computer and the printer for school assignments, and others were senior santris who were free to use the computer and printer. What captured my attention was the techniques used to manage the use of electronic devices in the dormitory. First, Zaki put stickers on a computer CPU and the table underneath which said, “turn off the computer and other electronic devices [fan, phone charging] when they are not in use” (*matikan komputer dan alat elektronik lain apabila tidak digunakan*). Second, he charged the user some amount of money using a computer and printer. Some santris obeyed the stickers’ advice. Some others utilized these electronic devices efficiently to cut cost and save money.

Santris go through a process of learning how to care for the environment through which their concern and responsibility are cultivated. The elementary santris for instance learn how to care for the environment. They simply follow what Kyai, teachers, and senior santris mandate them to do. When they become junior santris, they are given a chance to be creative. Santris at this level are those who do several things like initiating and joining the “reducing the use of electricity” movement above. The senior santris are those who are more critical and more aware of their responsibility toward the environment.

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<sup>50</sup> In this Pesantren, a dormitory office is also a senior santri’s (bed)room, the head of the dormitory.

The energy efficiency movement contributes to the effort of Pesantren in accumulating capital. When I asked why he initiated this program, Zaki answered that this is to save the electric consumption of the Pesantren. Although this movement does not contribute to increasing the income of Pesantren Sunan Drajat directly like what some of its business units<sup>51</sup> do, its action to promote efficiency and thrift has still assisted the Pesantren's effort of capital accumulation. In his seminal work, Weber (2001) mentions that some dimensions of work ethic such as hard work and thrift can contribute to commercial success. On the one hand, hard work increases production, and on the other hand, thrift can avoid unnecessary spending. Both are the vital driving force of capitalism. Pesantren Sunan Drajat utilizes both ways to support the further development of itself.

### **Waste Management**

The members of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat sometimes acted pragmatically, sometimes idealistically, and other times, act idealistically and pragmatically regarding waste. These actions are multiple sorts of subjectivities created by religious neoliberal eco-governmentality. Pak Khozin was in his mid-50s and was known as Kyai Ghofur's assistant. Every morning and evening he accompanied Kyai to check the Pesantren, the santris, and the business units. Pak Khozin was often involved in the Pesantren's waste management and tree plantation programs. Pesantren's trash is the biggest among the other households in the village. Pak Khozin usually appears in Kyai Ghofur's house. I met him in this house and had a chat. Our conversation was primarily about Pesantren's trash. He often saw me with Pesantren's waste management team where we collected trash from one dormitory to another in the early morning and late afternoon. Pak Khozin dreamed that someday Pesantren would have a modern waste system as the

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<sup>51</sup> Some of the most profitable business units owned by Pesantren Sunan Drajat are Aidrat (mineral water), canteen, minimarket, noni, and salt factory.

Pesantren produce at least five tons of waste per day. The amount will likely be more significant in the future as Pak Khozin predicted that the numbers of santri would keep growing.

Pesantren's trash has become the main problem in the village in the last five years. According to village officials, the waste had flooded and polluted the village tributary. Nobody is brave enough to critique the Pesantren due to Kyai Ghofur's power. Internal discussion within the Pesantren then decided that the waste would use a landfill system where the trash would be thrown into the Pesantren's owned mountain (ex-mining site) and land near the beach, which was also owned by the Pesantren. When I was there, Pesantren was still working on finding the most efficient solution to solve the problem, including negotiating the establishment of a waste incineration system.

I was surprised by the decision made by the Pesantren to send the trash to the mountain and the beach. They decided to choose these places since the tributary was not considered a place to dump waste. This decision brings me to Pak Khozin. I asked how the Pesantren made the decision, and what his opinion was about it. I had expected that he answered that the Pesantren chose those places because they were the cheapest ones, but Pak Khozin came up with a different response:

Kyai wanted us to throw the trash in the mountain and the beach. What is decided by Kyai is the best for the Pesantren and its members. He usually thinks several years ahead of us. We need to follow him.

Later I found out that what he meant by "following the Kyai." Kyai Ghofur aims to dispose all the trash and bring the existing conditions back. Although it seems to be impossible to do reclamation of the tributary shortly, this decision pushes the direction of environmental actions in the Pesantren to self-correct its past actions. In Islam, God mandated human beings to create balance on earth. Earth is created for the benefit of the human being. It is humanity's

responsibility to take advantage of it, but at the same time, to protect it (Khalid, 2002). For this reason, reclamation is understood as an environmental action that will advocate the importance of maintaining the balance between the use and the protection of nature. Although this action resonates to my progressive environmental activist colleagues, this action seemed problematic for them. Although the action aims to protect the environment, it does not solve the problem since it has more pragmatic calculation rather than idealistic.

Rasyid,<sup>52</sup> in his mid-30s, is an environmental NGO activist, and also a follower of NU. He reported that the current waste management system used by the Pesantren does not solve the problem, but instead creates problem. “It is just a pragmatic way of solving problem...and it is just a temporary solution,” he said. Rasyid’s statement is echoed by Rahman in a more positive light, who said that the action can bring economic benefit for Pesantren since at least per month the trash can contribute about ten million rupiahs (\$650) if it is managed properly. The trash provides a benefit to both the Pesantren and santris, who collect and dump the whole waste in the mountains and the beach every day. “This is the positive thing from collecting trash,” he continued. For Rahman, trash is money, as long as people can manage it. “It is not only Pesantren and santris can make money from the trash, the villagers can also do so.”

During fieldwork, I usually saw some housewives collected some “valuable” trash such as can, bottle, glass, and unused metals. Rahman said that this is a kind of “*kesempatan*” (opportunity) that people should utilize. After following him collecting trash and filtering some valuable trash, he brought me to a local trash collector where he put the trash and negotiated the price of the valuable trash and then got the money. Most of the money went to the Pesantren, and a small portion of it went to his pocket. What Rahman was trying to show here is that there is an

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<sup>52</sup> Pseudonym.

importance of economic advantage of the trash that some people in the Pesantren and the village consider to gain.

Although Pak Khozin and Rahman share their thoughts on the importance of waste management as part of environmental action in the Pesantren, they differ in seeing and understanding the action. Each performs a different modality of agency in responding to it. Rahman sees the action as providing an economic opportunity for the members of Pesantren and villagers to accumulate capital while Pak Khozin thinks the action is an idealistic effort of the Pesantren. To Pak Khozin, this is the best solution for the environmental (waste) problem that the Pesantren faces today, which is starting from the basic ecological idea: protecting nature. If there is an economic benefit of the action, that is the positive side effect of it, not the primary goal.

Pak Khozin believes that the idea of reclamation comes from Kyai, and that is the ideal way of solving the Pesantren's waste problem. Thus, following Kyai's idea means following Islamic environmental values since Kyai is believed to always refer to Islamic values in doing his work. For Pak Khozin, Islamic value must be put first. Other aspects must be put afterward. Pak Khozin believes that Islam puts nature in a high position as the Qur'an mentions the word nature or environment frequently. Many Pesantren members, including Pak Khozin, believe that if the Qur'an mentions something many times, it is important.

Both Pak Khozin and Rahman's accounts represent multiple subjectivities (Clifford, 1983) of Pesantren members in doing environmental action. On the one hand, Pak Khozin's idealistic perspective refers to transcendental Islamic value, while, on the other hand, Rahman's position follows a more pragmatic motive. It should be noted that these two contradictory perspectives on environmental actions are not the whole feature of environmental action in

Sunan Drajat. Another perspective shows how environmental subjectivity in the Pesantren Sunan Drajat is much more complicated.

Pak Syahrul, a close relative of Kyai Ghofur, who knows environmental programs and actions in the Pesantren, shared his idea on how to solve the waste problem with me. Like Pak Khozin, he mentioned that Islamic transcendental value mandated human beings to take care of nature. “You should read Alie Yafie’s book! He talked about how the Qur’an and Hadith see nature. It is clear that both sources urged us to protect nature,” he advised me. To him, waste represents human greed. Such greed must be burned. “To burn the waste, we need technology, like an incinerator so later we can make money,” he continued. Syahrul clarified that waste is a product of human consumption. People like to consume more than they need, which then creates more and more waste. Therefore, it is greed that should be combated or burned (in his word) because that is the most efficient way to make the waste disappear. Burning is the main strength of incinerator, a new waste managing technology, that was recently being discussed by the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat. Through this technology, the Pesantren can make money from the waste. The incinerator will burn any waste and convert it into profit directly.

Pak Syahrul statement stands on both the idealistic and the pragmatic sides of the Pesantren’s environmental action. Although the action is based on Qur’anic teaching, it ends up with pragmatic neoliberal calculation of profit. Many progressive environmental activists (including Rasyid) see the impossibility of having these two subjectivities together. They tend to view the idealistic and the pragmatic as separated and disconnected realms. However, Pak Syahrul’s statement indicated that there is no clear separation between the idealistic (religion) and the pragmatic (economy).

In Pesantren Sunan Drajat (as well as in other places), it is often taught that both religious and economic realms are important. The Pesantren teaches its santri that those who are successful are those who can combine their success in both this world (economy) and the hereafter (religion). Therefore, it is possible to have multiple subjectivities in the environmental action. The religious neoliberal eco-governmentality that is at work in the Pesantren has created complex environmental subjects who connect themselves with Islamic environmental values and pragmatic neoliberal reason. These sorts of subjectivities indicate how fluid and complicated religious environmental movement at the local level is.

This movement, that has involved Pak Khozin, Rahman, and Pak Syahrul, pushes us, ethnographers (or social scientists in general), to think about the future possibility of seeing and understanding the emergence of environmental movements that are not just idealistic and productive (or pragmatic) since the movements create opportunities for local people to get involved and empower themselves. This action reveals the fact that there are different ways of seeing contemporary environmental movement: one is grounded in idealistic (or religious) tradition, another in pragmatic (economic) calculative reason, and a third is grounded in both idealistic-pragmatic positions. This complex movement should be seen as a constructive project that enables the emergence of new achievements, negotiations, and aspirations, which aim to halt environmental problems though they might employ different strategies and tactics.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that religious environmentalism and neoliberal calculative reason are intertwined and have produced, a new form of environmentalism. Drawing on an ethnographic work from Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Lamongan, Indonesia, I showed how the Pesantrens utilizes Islamic environmental values and economic calculations to discipline,

control, and construct environmental subjects to take care of nature and get benefit from it. What distinguishes Pesantren's environmental actions from other actions lies in the use of the eco-governmentality practice. This perspective explains the workings of religious and secular norms (Islam and neoliberalism) to create new subjectivities in very complicated ways, which in turn gives a new understanding of contemporary involvement of local (religious) communities dealing with environmental issues.

Looking at the way the Pesantren materializes its actions through greening the school/institution, planting trees, promoting energy efficiency, and managing waste, I discussed how Islamic environmental norms and economic rationalities—where piety and prosperity are uniquely tailored together—becomes important features of contemporary environmental practice in Indonesia today. Here, the members of Pesantren aim to improve their environmental spirituality and at the same time accumulate economic benefit from their environmental actions. Furthermore, I argue that contemporary environmental practices cannot be simply reduced into two categories: idealistic (religious) or pragmatic (secular/neoliberal). As I have shown in the chapter, they are idealistic and pragmatic at the same time. They produce complicated practices which enable the emergence of new tactics, strategies, and calculations in dealing with current environmental problems.

What can the understanding of religious neoliberal eco-governmentality practice offer the social science (socio-environmental movement) field? The answer is not straightforward. Li (2007) mentions that governmentality practice may be intended to focus on a specific goal, which, however, in reality, ends up with peculiar results. What if Li's notion is taken seriously that we should pay attention to the peculiar effect of the governmentality? The Eco-Pesantren project in Lamongan offers two main peculiar features. First, it offers a new understanding of the

entanglement of the religious and the secular/neoliberal in the creation of the social world. There is no clear boundary between the two when we look at its practice. Second, it opens up a new recognition that contemporary environmental movement has created new (fluid and multiple) subjectivities in which people may act idealistically and pragmatically at the same time.

## CHAPTER 4

### **The Making, Unmaking, and Remaking of Kemiri Sunan as Alternative Modern Energy**

“The Kyai got a mysterious whisper that mandated him to develop Kemiri Sunan (Candlenut/Reutealis Trisperma) ...It is biodiesel, and it can produce alternative energy...It will become the future of Pesantren and Indonesia”, said Barik, a senior santri. Many members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat believe and are proud of this. They mentioned and amplified Barik’s statement during my fieldwork. They believed that the product was like magic, an ultimate solution for Indonesia’s energy needs and brings benefit to the Pesantren. Since 2006, Kemiri Sunan has become an ambitious project of the Pesantren Sunan Drajat. After the failure of the Jarak Pagar (*Jatropha Curcas*) and Minyak Indonesia Bersatu (Blue Energy/Banyugeni) projects, the Pesantren aims to produce alternative energy.

Pesantren Sunan Drajat is a key site in the country’s continuous effort of becoming an energy independent nation and participating in the global search for alternative energies considering the effect of climate change and global warming, as well as the local economic search for opportunities and identities. This religious, educational, economic, and currently, environmental institution, with more than 12,000 santris (students/followers), collaborates with Agrindo, a private company, to conduct research to produce bioenergy products. They have planted hectares of Kemiri Sunan trees all over Java and Nusa Tenggara. Nevertheless, the domestication of Kemiri Sunan has become controversial following the collapse of its predecessors (Jarak Pagar and Minyak Indonesia Bersatu). Indonesians begin to see it as another hype, a failed crop since it has not shown any progress. There has also been tension between the government and the private companies (including Pesantren Sunan Drajat) regarding property

rights issues and authority, which makes the effort of producing alternative energy slow. This tension, the claims of property rights, and scientific authority over Kemiri Sunan, as well as less progress in the development of the project, are among the many reasons that hamper the development of this alternative energy product thus far.

This paper invites us to think about the dreams and dramas behind the ambition of Indonesia to create alternative energy that focuses on the hopes of Indonesians to become an energy independent nation, as well as the incidents that hamper those efforts. Beginning with Jarak Pagar, the crop was known as one of the most popular biodiesels in Indonesia in the 2000s. It was largely promoted by academics, researchers, the government, and the private sector (Simandjuntak et al., 2011). The popularity of the crop followed its popularity globally. Many people around the world then planted this endemic species of Latin America. Moreover, in addition to the enthusiasm of large companies, but small farmers also shared that enthusiasm. African, Asian, as well as Latin American farmers, grew the crop because they believed that they would receive economic benefits in both the short and long run.

Research findings convinced them that the crop contained high pure biodiesel, which was about 30% to 35% of refined oil per mass unit of seed (Singh et al., 2014, p. 358). The findings also noted that the crop could survive on dry land, meaning that it was drought resistant and could potentially restore degraded land. Another claimed a benefit was that Jarak Pagar did not compete with other food crops (Afiff, 2014), which was suitable for the low-income populations in the third world.

Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, got involved in the first establishment of a “Desa Mandiri Energi” (Energy Independent Village) in Grobogan, Central Java, where Jarak Pagar became the main crop for the villagers/farmers. In Mozambique, the

government promoted the crop to attract people's interest in planting it (Slingerland & Schut, 2014). Similarly, in Nicaragua since 1990, the government established the first large-scale Jarak Pagar plantation, sponsored by the Austrian government. Moreover, several European research institutions led the study of Jarak Pagar, including, the Wageningen University, Leuven University, University of Groningen, and the FACT Foundation, based at the Eindhoven University of Technology, Netherlands (Afiff, 2014).

Due to several factors, ranging from economics, politics, to policies, the crop collapsed within several years. Economically, the price of the crop yield was lower than expectations. Rather than gaining benefits, the farmers lost money. The crop was only ready for experimentation, but the government of Indonesia politically introduced the crop for commercialization (Fatimah, 2015), which, in turn, complicated the policy implementation of the biofuel/biodiesel program at the local level. Most importantly, the oil yield was not as high as it was promoted to be, as it contained less than 20% per mass unit of seed, which did not meet the expectations of many promoters. Gradually, farmers switched the crop for others. Grobogan, which was once an "independent energy village," has now lost its popularity.

Bioenergy development has ranged from the scientifically led enterprises of research universities and governments to scams and scandals, led by some of these same institutions. During the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as well, there was another effort to develop a national energy project named, Minyak Indonesia Bersatu (Blue Energy/Banyugeni), made of seawater. This project was led by Joko Suprpto, who worked for Indonesia's privately-based Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta. Suprpto convinced President Yudhoyono that the project could be successful. Yudhoyono appreciated the effort and invited Suprpto to his palace and allowed Suprpto to present his work at the Conference of Parties 13 in Bali in 2007.

Later, this project was identified as a scam as it is impossible to convert seawater to energy using current technologies.

Kemiri Sunan exemplifies a continuous dream, hope, drama, and despair around the (un/re) making of alternative modern energy in Indonesia. I argue that these phenomena are influenced by a combination of various social, cultural, structural, and material forces, such as global awareness on environmental change, the search of local economic opportunities, the politics of identity, speculative enterprise, the battle over scientific authority and property rights, occultism, and energy fetishism. The notion of alternative modern energy converges multiple subjectivities and positionalities brought by the forces above. This notion overlaps with what has been called “social energy” and “energy fetishism.” This alternative modern project inspires Indonesians to participate in an endless effort to produce alternative energy and deal with future uncertainty. In this chapter, I define the notion of alternative modern energy, briefly describing the development of alternative energy in Indonesia from Jarak Pagar, Minyak Indonesia Bersatu (Blue Energy/Banyugeni), to Kemiri Sunan, and finally, describing in detail how Kemiri Sunan is made, unmade, and remade by various actors, forces, and interests, both locally and globally.

### **Alternative Modern Energy**

The notion of alternative modern energy aims to respond to the widely circulated arguments of William Mazzarella (2017), who argues that social energy can produce a revolutionary end. By reworking Durkheim’s (1995[1912]) idea of “collective effervescence,” he sees contemporary social phenomenon as a product of human collectivity. In Mazzarella’s work, politics, economy, social movement, or even revolution are seen as a representation of our collective personhood. It is “the combination of self-immanence and self-otherness,” he said (p. 60). His work helps us to better understand how contemporary social projects, including the

(un/re) making of alternative energy, is built from a collective energy. Unfortunately, his concept only partially captures the dynamics of such collectivity. It does not consider how a social phenomenon may produce complicated tendencies. Global warming and climate change, identity politics, and local economic opportunities, for example, create the dream or hope, and, at the same time, brings drama or anxiety in the creation of alternative energy.

The discussion of energy creation in anthropology can be dated back to the Leslie White era. As one of the founding fathers of ecological anthropology, White (1943) argued that energy exists in every object, be it a star, a molecule, or an atom. Even civilizations are perceived as forms of energy (p. 335). White provided a basis for preceding generations of anthropologists to study the materiality and the discourse of energy. In a recent discussion of the fossil fuel energy crisis, Boyer (2014), posits that we should locate energy as power within a larger social structure, ranging from infrastructure, political regulation, and social aspirations. Boyer coined the term “energopower,” which is derived from Foucault’s notion of biopower, arguing that our society today is governed by the logic of biopower/biosecurity.

Using energopower as an extension of biopower, it enables us to comprehend “the dynamics of political forces across different scales” (Boyer, 2014, p. 326) that push the emergence of energy (un/re) making as contemporary social discourse. Boyer defines energopower as “a genealogy of modern power that rethinks political power through the twin analytics of electricity and fuel” (p. 325). This article sheds light on this chapter by analyzing how political forces exist in different realms. Alternative modern energy also includes political forces, but pays special attention to the various forces, not only the political, but also religious ideologies.

My attention to alternative modern energy builds on earlier perspectives on alternative modernity. Scholars have long debated the plural forms of modernity, which arise from and connect with various ideas, forces, and sensibilities (Knauft, 2002; Taylor, 1992; Asad, 2003). Knauft especially argues that study on modernity has long focused on the collaboration of those entities above, with special focus on political economy, regional history, and local cultural diversity (pp. 24-25). I share a similar concern with these scholars, though from a slightly different perspective. I portray the emergence of alternative modern energy in a more complex way. Throughout my ethnographic presentation, I show how my interlocutors (the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat) do not only deal with various forces and sensibilities but also deal with various forms of ontologies and epistemologies.

The concept of alternative modern energy emerges from my effort to break down the gap between the idea and practice, as well as between the materiality and the immateriality of an energy form. This concept then aims to reconcile ontological and epistemological bifurcation by uncovering the daily social practice of the subjects of my ethnographic inquiry, who perceive energy as both a material and a magical (occult) entity. Therefore, alternative modern energy does not exclude occult from social life. It considers the role of the occult in an era of uncertainty brought by the Reformasi (the downfall of Suharto), the climate change regime, and the dynamics of the local political economy.

According to Comaroff and Comaroff (2002), the occult exists within social disorder and disruption.<sup>53</sup> In this age of uncertainty, many people use the occult politically, economically (Pedersen, 2011; Wilford & George, 2005, p. 10), and scientifically (Dootsdaar, 2018). The involvement of the occult (or spirit) in public life signifies the complicated relationship between

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<sup>53</sup> Many people say that the end of New Order is the beginning of a New Disorder. Climate change is another disorder. Thus, I am proposing that we now live in an era of multi-disorder.

religion, economy, and science in today's Indonesia. Following the downfall of Suharto's authoritarian regime, the country was bombarded with the emergence of conservative or orthodox forms of Islam (Hefner, 2000), as well as neoliberal forms of policies, causing the decline in the popularity of nationalist economic ideologies. While some Pesantrens-- as the representation of unorthodox Islam-- are in a power decline, some other Pesantrens, including Pesantren Sunan Drajat, sees this social change as an opportunity to gain more power. If during Suharto's era, occult practices were invisible in the public realm, today they have become more visible.

Alternative modern energy considers the role of the occult in the production of knowledge (or the making of a technoscientific product called bioenergy, Kemiri Sunan). The involvement of spirits in the making of the material world has become an object of investigation of contemporary scholars (Bubandt, 2014, 2019; DeCastro, 2007). In contrast to these scholars, who position the occult as political actors and serve political functions, alternative modern energy focuses on how people use the occult's cultural significance<sup>54</sup> as a vehicle to achieve political economic ends. In reality, I argue, it is not the occult who conducts political action, but human beings. The Pesantren members recruit and activate the occult into the psychological and political-economic games that they play. Pesantren members did not refer to alternative modernity. I referred to this concept after observing the way they continuously connect the "mysterious whisper" (the occult) to their neoliberal and scientific project, the Kemiri Sunan, which they believe will bring prosperity for them and their country.

Pesantren members directly connect their work, such as developing bioenergy, with modernity, but position their work as a different (alternative) modern project, as there is a

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<sup>54</sup> Many Indonesians maintain their relationship with spirits as part of their daily lives (Bubandt, 2017: 16).

“savage” (Mazzarella, 2017) element in such modernity. They recruit the spirit in this work to play a cultural game. This game enables them to build their own version of modernity based on their historical enchanted past, and, at the same time, to activate the psychological significance of the occult to deal with the uncertainty, vulnerability, drama, dreams, and hope that modernity may bring to their future. Dove (2008) shows how people incorporate supernatural entities and rely on them due to the vulnerability of the people, brought about by Mt. Merapi’s regular eruptions in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The activation of the spirit in this region is socio-culturally driven by the absence of the government’s protection and the lack of public policy regarding disaster mitigation in the region.

Alternative modern energy positions Kemiri Sunan as identical with the occult. They are inseparable. They are like what Tsing (2000) called “conjuring” in her work on economy of appearances in Indonesia’s Bre-X gold mining hype. Furthermore, they show peculiar symbols, meanings, and practices through their mysterious and hyperbolic appearance. Kemiri Sunan is like Jarak Pagar (or Minyak Indonesia Bersatu, or even Bre-X gold), which performs drama and plays with a speculative enterprise. Nevertheless, the alternative modern economy offers a different analytical stance from the economy of appearances. Rather than seeing an object (Kemiri Sunan) experience the rise and fall of popularity, alternative modern energy sees the extraordinary life of the object. While it temporarily failed, it did not entirely disappear; rather, it reincarnates.

Throughout this chapter, I will show how an object of alternative energy, as a representation of alternative modern economic commodity, remakes itself. This object of (or effort of) producing alternative energy will always exist, following the existence of global and national demand on alternative energy, identity politics, the search of local economic

opportunities, the battle over scientific authority and property rights, scientific occultism, and energy fetishism.

The notion of energy fetishism is worth mentioning here to understand how energy is not only commodified but is also signified as a material discursive entity. Although it is not a well-established school of thought within the social sciences and humanities, the work of Hornborg (2013), Nader (2010), Strauss, Rupp, and Love (2013), and Richardson and Weszkalnys (2014) demonstrate a close attention to contemporary energy fetishism from an anthropological perspective. This notion borrows Marx' idea of commodity fetishism. In *Capital* (1887), Marx explains that the mysterious value of the commodity whose use and exchange value are created by labor disappears when capitalism injects the product with monetary value. Hornborg (2013) employs this concept to explain the relationship between commodity and energy. He argues that energy has been fetishized like a commodity or a valuable object that has monetary value, in general. He then explains that technological progress plays a vital role in the accumulation of capital through accelerating growth or productivity.

Kemiri Sunan is not produced (or furthermore fetishized) solely because of its environmental value, but primarily because of its economic significance. Strauss, Rupp, and Love (2013) extend Hornborg's view of energy. According to them, the production, distribution, and consumption of energy do not always follow economic logic or efficiency, but rather people's preferences "among [the] technical, economic, and cultural" (p. 10). Following this idea, I argue that Kemiri Sunan exists in multiple realms at the same time. People see it as multiple entities: technical, economic, and cultural. Richardson and Weszkalnys (2014) invite us to see how energy is fetishized culturally because of its potentialities. While these scholars focus on specific goals, such as economic, cultural, or future potential, alternative modern energy

combines all these modalities and sees Kemiri Sunan as always being fetishized as a material discursive entity (always economic, cultural, and potential).

### **From Jarak Pagar to Kemiri Sunan**

The search for alternative energy does not exist in a vacuum. Global and national demand on alternative energy have increased following the global and national awareness of the adverse effects of climate change. Hence, there is a strong effort in Indonesia to become an energy independent nation. Several parties, including the national government, national and international non-government organizations (NGOs/INGOs), and investors see the opportunity to get involved in this clean energy business (Krijtenburg & Evers, 2014; Tjeuw, 2017). Alternative energy, which then spreads over the world, appears as a promising option, as it has not been seen to having any negative impacts (or low impacts compared with fossil fuels) on the environment.

Indonesia is one of the countries that ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2004 where the government through the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, as well as the National Energy Council, committed to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emission by 26% by 2020. At that time, President Yudhoyono enacted two Presidential Decrees, one, a National Action Plan for Reducing GHG Emission (61/2011) and the other, Conducting National GHG Inventory (71/2011). These two decrees provided legal guidelines for some ministries to work together to achieve such an ambitious target. In addition, these decrees became a reference for community and private sectors to get involved.

Indonesia is one of the world's top eight emitters of GHG (World Resource Institute, 2017). Without considering land use change and forestry, the energy sector is the major culprit over other sectors. For example, in 2000, Indonesia's energy sector contributed to at least 50.68% of its total GHG emission where industries, construction, and transportation were the

three dominant contributors of total emissions (United Nations Climate Change Conference, 2017). To deal with this, the government proposed two action plans: energy efficiency and renewable energy. However, the development of alternative energy sources has been relatively slow in Indonesia. In 2013, the renewable energy sector contributed only 8% of the total energy produced by the country, which was dominated by fossil fuel (39%), coal (30%), and natural gas (22%) (Dewan Energi Nasional, 2014). The renewable energy consists of geothermal, biomass, biofuel, hydro, and solar. Biodiesel, especially, counts for about 0.4% of the total 8% of the renewable energy supply thus far.

Nevertheless, the government of Indonesia is still optimistic for its projection that in 2020, the contribution of renewable energy will be approximately 18%. If this target can be achieved, the government will be more optimistic about achieving its long-term goal, in which renewable energy will become the main energy supply for the country, with the total supply of 31% by 2050, far surpassing fossil fuel, which is projected to decrease to approximately 17%. The National Energy Council (Dewan Energi Nasional/DEN) (2014) expects that renewable energy will be the biggest contributor to the country's energy by 2050. Specific to biodiesel, DEN's energy outlook in 2016 showed that the demand for biodiesel would grow at least 5.6% every year.<sup>55</sup> For example, in 2015, the demand was about 1.9 million tons of oil equivalent (TOE). In 2025, the demand will reach 5.7 million TOE and 12.8 million TOE in 2050. The demand will grow significantly to reach about 5.6% to 6.4% per year if the ideal scenarios are achieved, that is, gross domestic product (GDP) increases significantly as well.

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<sup>55</sup> According to a business as usual scenario.

## ***Jarak Pagar***

One of the most popular biodiesel-produced crops has been Jarak Pagar. It was regarded as a crop that was drought and disease tolerant, a high-yielding species, and did not compete with other food crops, (Tjeuw, 2017). This made it attractive to the market and beginning in the 1990s, created both an alternative energy boom and hype (Achten et al., 2010; Vel, 2014). Some people claimed that the yield could reach 12 t ha<sup>-1</sup> (Achte et al., 2014). Some countries, such as Mozambique, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Brazil, China, Malaysia, and, especially, Indonesia, were interested in producing biofuel made of Jarak Pagar. The government, academics, and investors collaborated to make the project happen. The media especially assisted in amplifying the prospects of the crop.

According to Afiff (2014), in Indonesia, Jarak Pagar was first popularized by the academics at the Bandung Institute of Technology (Institut Teknologi Bandung/ITB), such as Tatang Soerawijaya, Robert Manurung, Alhilal Hamdi, and Kusmayanto Kadiman, who initiated biofuel programs and policies. These academics were also involved in lobbying parliament and executive government bodies to support the project successfully. These academics played a pivotal role in persuading the government to adopt Jarak Pagar (p. 1692). Historically, Jarak Pagar is not an endemic species of Indonesia, but Central America. It has been in the country since the Colonial Era, brought by the Portuguese and Dutch (Widjaja, 2018). Afiff (2014) also noted that Jarak Pagar was not used by Indonesians for a long time and was regarded as a wild plant.

Nevertheless, this plant is often interchangeably identified as Jarak Kepyar by the local people. Jarak Kepyar (*Ricinus communis*) and Jarak Pagar come from the same family, *Euphorbiaceae* (Jongschaap et al. 2007 as cited in Widjaja, 2018). Jarak Kepyar was more

popular than Jarak Pagar as it produced a lubricating oil and traditional medicines (p. 29). Because of its economic significance, Jarak Kepyar was traded during the colonial regime and was exported to foreign countries. There was no record showing where the plant being exported during this time, except to Japanese markets (Kurosawa, 1993, p. 36 in Widjaja, 2018). During this time, the plant was domesticated only in Java, and it was regarded as a significant commodity of the island (Carey, 1986, p. 126).

During the Japanese time, especially, the Japanese military administration instructed local people to plant Jarak Kepyar as an alternative fuel to support its military operations during World War II. It was reported that there were about 1200 hectares of agricultural land planted with Jarak Kepyar in 1944. The military administration mobilized local people to plant Jarak Kepyar and gave them various incentives, including cigarettes, soap, and matches. They were mandated to plant at least 25 Jarak Kepyar plants in front of their homes (Widjaja, 2018, p. 30-34). Unfortunately, this effort failed due to low yields (Danquah, 2005, p. 80-81).

The popularity of Jarak Kepyar instead of Jarak Pagar during this period explains why Jarak Pagar was not as promising as many people believe it is today. If Jarak Kepyar is more popular than Jarak Pagar, there is no reason to develop the latter plant. However, researchers from ITB convincingly showed in their research that Jarak Pagar was promising. For example, in 2001, Soerawijaya of ITB presented his research on Jarak Pagar in front of Indonesian government officials, academics, business people, and journalists, which attracted these people to the alternative energy issue. In the following year (2002), Surawijaya formed the Indonesia Biodiesel Forum (IBF). In 2004, the New Energy and Industrial Development Organization of Japan funded the testing of Jarak Pagar, which also popularized Jarak Pagar in Indonesia.

Beginning in 2004, interest in the Jarak Pagar project grew significantly in Indonesia. More and more institutions—government, non-government, international bodies, companies—got involved in developing a large-scale project (Afiff, 2014). The government set a national biofuel development blueprint to ensure that Jarak Pagar became a priority for future alternative energy options and targeted 10% percent of the national energy consumption to be replaced by biofuels by 2010 (Widjaja, 2014). The growing interest in Jarak Pagar was also influenced by the increase of global crude oil prices, which affected the domestic price of fossil fuels. Indonesians expected an alternative to fossil fuel, which raised a nationalist sentiment in having a national energy source (Afiff, 2014, p. 1692).

The research, presentation, and government reports on Jarak Pagar attracted many investors. The potential yield of the plant ranged from 0.5 t ha<sup>-1</sup> to 12 t ha<sup>-1</sup> (Openshaw, 2000 as cited in Tjeuw, 2017). The role of the media was also influential in creating a positive image of Jarak Pagar as future alternative energy. The government, for example, planned to finance the Jarak Pagar project with \$1.1 billion in 2007 to subsidize biofuel infrastructure, plantation improvement, research and development, and training (Tjeuw, 2017, p. 4). According to Afiff (2014), Robert Manurung led the Center for Biotechnology in Bandung that promoted Jarak Pagar and the multi-actor initiative that engaged the government, private sector, and academics. He also invited other civil society organizations to get involved in this project, including the Indonesia Farmer Association, Nahdlatul Ulama, and the Bogor Agricultural Institute (p. 1693). Manurung's active involvement in Jarak Pagar was inspired by his collaboration with Erik Heeres of the University of Groningen.

Their work focused on maximizing Jarak Pagar's value, which contributed to the further development of the biorefinery concept, where biomass is converted into efficient bioenergy or

biofuel. Manurung's work successfully convinced President Yudhoyono's government (Yuliar et al., 2008). Yudhoyono's government was known as a proponent of biofuel since the first period of his administration, which faced an increase in the price of fossil fuel. Yudhoyono decided to cut the subsidies of fuel and allocated the budget to search for alternative energy. Manurung's work appealed to Yudhoyono, who mandated his staff to consolidate the government's commitment to alternative energy projects. During the first period of his presidency, Yudhoyono's government launched the Losari Concept, which was partly aimed to develop biofuel. The government set out to meet a goal of 10% biofuel use by 2010 (Widjaja, 2018, p. 47).

Jarak Pagar was the main focus of the government's alternative energy project. Yudhoyono furthermore introduced Desa Mandiri Energi, which empowered local people to plant Jarak Pagar and produce biofuel. The DEM was also designed to integrate a government-industry-local cooperative (*koperasi*). While the government provided land for cultivation, the industry provided capital, and local cooperatives provided labor. Besides producing alternative energy, the DEM was also intended to boost the local economy. Unfortunately, the DEM did not work well. The productivity of the crop was less than expected. Afiff (2014) noted that it was partly because there was a lack of government support for the local farmers. Widjaja (2018) and Tjeuw (2017) observed that the failure was due to the absence of a viable market and insufficient technology to produce the Jarak Pagar biofuel. Meanwhile, Vel (2014) argued that Jarak Pagar was hype since the beginning. Amir (2004) called it a "lighthouse project" (*proyek mercusuar*).

It was the brokers,<sup>56</sup> who amplified the yield potential of Jarak Pagar to the government and venture capital investors. The evidence showed that the yield would only vary from  $<5 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$

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<sup>56</sup> These brokers are engineers and entrepreneurs.

to 2 t ha<sup>-1</sup> (Edrisi et al., 2015). The farmers, the main actors, who were involved in the planting and harvesting of Jarak Pagar discovered daily the lack of government support for the planting program, as well as the low response of the market. These factors caused the failure of the Jarak Pagar project (Afiff, 2014; Widjaja, 2018; Tjeuw, 2017; Vel, 2014). Jarak Pagar went from boom to bust in nearly one night.

### ***Minyak Indonesia Bersatu (Banyugeni)***

At about the same time, Minyak Indonesia Bersatu emerged as another ambitious project for alternative energy in Indonesia. Unlike Jarak Pagar, which was popular globally and was developed through serious scientific research projects, Minyak Indonesia Bersatu was a national project initiated by Joko Suprpto, a self-proclaimed researcher. This project was a real scam. Minyak Indonesia Bersatu was a name given by President Yudhoyono who supported the work of Suprpto. This minyak was locally known as “Banyugeni” (blue energy) in Indonesia. Suprpto claimed that he could create alternative energy made of water through separating atomic hydrogen (H) from molecular hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) using a catalysator. According to him, any type of water can be converted into energy, however, seawater is better because it does not compete with human’s need for pure water.

Suprpto started his own investigation in 2001 in his home in Nganjuk, East Java. He conducted independent research using his own money and admitted that he sold his belongings to fund this project. In 2007, he invited his neighbors, journalists, military officers, and academics to view his findings. An academic from Yogyakarta, named Toriq, was interested in this project and asked Suprpto to go to Yogyakarta to talk to some researchers at Gadjah Mada University (UGM) and ask them for financial support. The researchers from UGM rejected Suprpto’s proposal saying that the project was unscientific. According to a researcher named Sudiartono

from the Center for Energy Studies, UGM, Suprpto's blue energy was against the laws of conservation of energy.

However, Suprpto and Toriq did not give up. They approached the Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta (UMY) to support the project. In front of UMY staff and researchers, Suprpto presented his proposal and promised to build a power plant that would produce at least 3-megawatts of energy. Surprisingly, UMY accepted the proposal and gave him 1 billion rupiahs for further development of the project. Part of the decision was because Suprpto used scientific occultism to convince the UMY researchers. He presented Qur'an 38:27, saying everything on earth has benefits for humanity. As a religious educational university, UMY researchers were interested in the occult side of the project. In echoing Suprpto, the rector of the university, Khoiruddin Bashori, even gave a statement to support the project by saying that there are some other Qur'anic verses that support Suprpto's work, such as QS 52:6 on the possibility of having fired seawater, QS 21:30 on water as a source of life, and QS 81:6 on how seawater can be heated (Kedaulatan Rakyat, 2008).

UMY was proud of this project. It argued that the project would help the government to save the budget from fuel subsidies, which was about 56 trillion rupiahs, and furthermore, would become a source of national pride. Some researchers from UMY, such as Purwanto, Bledug Kusuma Prasadja, Tony Haryadi, Lilik Utari, and Nike Triwahyuningsih, who mentioned that this project should be popularized, and would be patented with the new name, "Banyugeni." Banyugeni had several variants, including "*minyak tanah*" (hydro kerosene), "*minyak solar diesel*" (hydro diesel), "*bensin*" (hydro premium), and "*bahan bakar jet*" (hydro avtur). A UMY staff member, named Ma'ruf, explained that the most crucial aspect of Banyugeni was the price. It would be cheaper than any other products. At that time, it was estimated that the price of

Banyugeni was 3000 rupiah per liter. This was cheaper than the price of Minyak Solar (Diesel), which was about 5000 rupiah per liter. Besides, Banyugeni did not cause engine corrosion and was claimed to have low emissions (Kedaulatan Rakyat, 2008). Unfortunately, how much CO<sub>2</sub> would be released into the atmosphere was not considered.

In addition to approaching universities, Suprpto also tried to contact government bodies. He was lucky to have a chance to promote his project to President Yudhoyono through his assistants, Heru Lelono and Iswahyudi. Similar to Jarak Pagar, the role of brokers in this project was significant. Lelono was a “special staff” (*staf khusus*) member of Yudhoyono’s, while Iswahyudi was an engineer and entrepreneur. These people were the ones who convinced President Yudhoyono to support the Banyugeni project. Finally, Yudhoyono agreed to support the project. He even launched Banyugeni in his home, where it was showcased during the Climate Change Conference in Bali in 2007. President Yudhoyono also supported the project by allocating approximately 10 billion rupiahs to it. He believed that it would become a gift from Indonesia to the world. Yudhoyono was obsessed with awards and titles (Fealy, 2015).

With an alternative energy project, he wanted Indonesia to be recognized by the world so that his name would be known as well. Although was able to achieve the United Nations’ Global Champion Trophy for Disaster Risk Reduction (Fealy, 2015: 50) for his significant role in mitigating the impact of multiple disasters (tsunami, earthquake, and flood) in Indonesia, he was not successful in mitigating the global energy crises and failed to give that gift to the world.

The project ended in mid-2008 after Suprpto’s failure to show scientific evidence and economic benefit of his Banyugeni to the public. When journalists interviewed Suprpto, asking about the transparency of the development of his project after being funded by the government, he would not provide any specific answers. He only said that the project was ongoing and not yet

ready to be published. President Yudhoyono then asked Suprpto to present his work during “Hari Kebangkitan Nasional” (the National Awakening Day). Suprpto then mysteriously disappeared, and his disappearance became a national scandal. Instead of raising the name of Indonesia, the scandal ended with embarrassing Indonesia’s and Yudhoyono’s image. President Yudhoyono was forced to explain the project that embarrassed the country as it had been exhibited at the Bali Climate Change Conference. Suprpto’s family did not know where he went. Police officers were then mobilized to find him.

At the same time, the UMY team decided to unpack the power plant built by Suprpto to investigate the progress of the project. The team found nothing except some cables under a cemented box. The team then concluded that Suprpto committed fraud. Both President Yudhoyono and UMY claimed that they were victims of Suprpto’s scam. The dream of producing 5000 barrels of Banyugeni per day failed, and Suprpto’s scientific occult journey ended him in jail for three years.

The failure of Jarak Pagar and Minyak Indonesia Bersatu shows the vulnerability of speculative enterprise and the high expectations for alternative energy in Indonesia. Although Jarak Pagar was supported by cutting edge research activities and laboratory experiments, it failed to anticipate the real economic conditions, causing farmers to lose profit as the price of seeds were underestimated (Tjeuw, 2017). Minyak Indonesia Bersatu is even more dramatic. The government could easily have rejected financing the scam after knowing that it was almost impossible to turn water into oil using the simple technology developed by Joko Suprpto, however, the government put its trust and hope into this mysterious person, claiming to be an engineer, using fake research, and who relied on occultism to influence potential investors.

The failure of Jarak Pagar due to speculative enterprise and Minyak Indonesia Bersatu due fraud pushed the government to step back from its involvement in incentivizing similar projects. Consequently, some new initiatives have emerged that employ alternative ways to develop their project without financial support from the government. For example, Pesantren Sunan Drajat, a local religious institution, has begun an initiative to produce biodiesel. The absence of economic capital from the government has been replaced by occult capital (scientific occult)<sup>57</sup> in the development of alternative energy, Kemiri Sunan. The capital that this occult provides replaces the absence of incentives that the government provided to cultivate similar projects. Here, the occult plays a pivotal role in the emergence and existence of Kemiri Sunan, a commodity that the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat are now working on.

### ***Kemiri Sunan***

As noted, Kemiri Sunan is not an endemic species of Indonesia (International Union for Conservation and Nature, 2017; Herman et al., 2013). This crop is originally from the Philippines<sup>58</sup> and has spread throughout Southeast Asian, including Indonesia. The first time I saw kemiri was when I visited Pesantren Sunan Drajat in 2014. I was surprised to know that it was known as an alternative energy source by the members of Pesantren. It was in the guest room of Kyai Ghofur that the Kemiri Sunan was nicely displayed. The members of the Pesantren put the shells, kernels, and the product of Kemiri Sunan (biodiesel) in a basket, to show guests that it was a product of Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

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<sup>57</sup> I call this scientific occultism because Kyai Ghofur combines science and occultism in his work, including Kemiri Sunan. I will briefly elaborate on this notion in this chapter, but for a detailed explanation, please see Chapter 6.

<sup>58</sup> The International Union for Conservation of Nature (2017) shows that Kemiri Sunan's country of origin is the Philippines.

**Figure 7**



Kemiri Sunan/candlenut (*Reutealis Trisperma*) product. Ripe Kemiri Sunan (brown, in the basket, in the middle), the Kemiri Sunan kernels (white, right jar on the left), and the Kemiri Sunan oil or biodiesel (dark yellow, left jar). Photo was taken by Ulil Amri.

Kemiri Sunan in Indonesia<sup>59</sup> consists of two types: edible and non-edible. The edible kemiri (*kemiri/Aleurites trisperma*) is known as a food spice. It is usually used for thickening food. Some people in Indonesia use kemiri for making food oilier without using oils (vegetable or canola oils). Indonesians are more familiar with the first type of kemiri than the second one. Some popular Indonesian foods that are known to use kemiri include *soto* (traditional food composed of vegetables, meat, and broth) and *rendang* (Indonesian beef curry).

The other type of kemiri is the non-edible (*Kemiri Sunan/Reutealis trisperma*), which can produce biofuel or biodiesel. Indonesians are not familiar with this since they rarely use it in

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<sup>59</sup> In English, it is called candlenut, and in Latin, it is named *Reutealis Trisperma*.

their daily life. Historical sources mention that Chinese traders first used the non-edible kemiri during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in West Java. Traders then exported the Kemiri Sunan tree to their home country (Herman et al., 2013). The early character of the tree was timber species. For example, the wood was used for making furniture, matches, and utensils. According to Stuppy et al. (1999), the oil of the seed was used to produce soap, which was especially consumed by sailors in the Philippines.

In 2006, Pak Hendra and Bu Tanti<sup>60</sup>, members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat's agribusiness unit, were looking for an alternative energy crop. First, they planted Jarak Pagar in Sumedang, West Java. After realizing that the Jarak Pagar oil yield was below expectations and might not meet public expectations of future alternative energy, they decided to find another crop. While Jarak Pagar was not yet publicly regarded as a failed project, Pak Hendra and Bu Tanti believed that it would not be a promising project. They had determined that the cost of harvesting the Jarak Pagar seed was higher than the price of Jarak Pagar biodiesel. During the time, they discovered another crop similar to Jarak Pagar, named Jarak Bandung. According to the local people, it had a higher oil yield than Jarak Pagar and might be profitable.

Pak Hendra and Bu Tanti brought the crop to a laboratory owned by Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (Indonesian Institute of Science/LIPI) in Bogor. The result was positive. Jarak Bandung contained a higher amount of biodiesel than Jarak Pagar. Both Pak Hendra and Bu Tanti reported their findings to Kyai Ghofur. It was Kyai Ghofur who changed the name of Jarak Bandung into Kemiri Sunan. None of these people are engineers or researchers. Like Joko Suprpto, Bu Tanti and Pak Hendra identified themselves as autodidactic. The main difference between them is that Bu Tanti and Pak Hendra collaborated with researchers from LIPI and ITS,

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<sup>60</sup> Pseudonym.

and the researchers from these institutions accepted Kemiri Sunan as a future alternative energy. Some other names involved in this project are Harry Wiriadinata from LIPI and Didik Prasetyoko from ITS.

I had a chance to speak to Pak Didik (ITS) about Kemiri Sunan in his office. He echoed what was mentioned by Bu Tanti, that Pesantren Sunan Drajat engaged ITS in the development of Kemiri Sunan. The research was conducted in both the Agrindo factory and an ITS laboratory for several months. At ITS mainly, the researchers investigated how the hot-pressing method could produce a significant amount of biodiesel: 50-52 wt%. They further found that a high quality of biodiesel can be produced without purification (Holillah et al., 2014). The research, led by Pak Didik, then sent the results to the Deutsches Institut fur Normung (German Institute for Standardization/DIN) to gain international recognition. Thus, Kemiri Sunan biodiesel was admitted by an international institution and gained an international standard. According to Bu Tanti, Pesantren Sunan Drajat cannot work on this by itself because it is not a research institution. It needs university and professional research institutions to assist its effort.

Unlike the Jarak Pagar project, in which researchers became active lobbyists to the government, here in the Kemiri Sunan project, the researchers like Wiriadinata and Prasetyoko were passive. It was Kyai Ghofur, Bu Tanti, and Pak Hendra who actively approached the government. In 2008, Pak Hendra and Bu Tanti approached the Ministry of Agriculture to collaborate in planting Kemiri Sunan in several areas of Java. Since Kemiri Sunan was not a priority for the Ministry, and, at the same time, the government of Indonesia was still focused on the Jarak Pagar project, the Ministry did not provide much support for the development of this crop.

During the same year, the Pesantren Sunan Drajat team planted a large amount of Kemiri Sunan, especially, in the barren lands of Sumedang, West Java. This first plantation phase was also intended to “green” (*menghijaukan*) some areas in Indonesia. The Pesantren did this to assist the government’s “reforestation” (*reboisasi*) project and, at the same time, lobby for (or find a possibility to do so in the future) collaboration with the government on Kemiri Sunan. This collaboration worked well, however, Balitri aimed to monopolize Kemiri Sunan without engaging Pesantren Sunan Drajat. Both parties engaged in “cold war” over Kemiri Sunan, which rose the crop’s popularity in the country. Government officials<sup>61</sup>, artists, academics, and students visited the Pesantren to see the Kemiri Sunan. They also visited Pesantren Sunan Drajat to collect information about the plant that might be cultivated in their places of origins, or joined to some events related to the Pesantrens’ Kemiri Sunan project. For example, a famous Indonesian country music singer, Iwan Fals, visited the Pesantren to join a planting ceremony of the first Kemiri Sunan tree in the Pesantren. During the ceremony he gave a speech:

I hope the trees that we have planted today will give benefit to us and can protect the environment in the future, so that Indonesia can be saved from the threat of environmental degradation...the signs [of the degradation] are already there, and we have to do this tree plantation movement to save the environment...later, when this [Kemiri Sunan] tree is growing, hopefully, the santris can get many benefits from it.

Here, Fals amplified two things that the Pesantren members usually talk about: ecology and economy. Like two sides of a coin, he mentioned that Kemiri Sunan will protect the environment and, at the same time, the members of Pesantren can take advantage of it. Fals joined the Pesantren’s efforts to popularize the importance of ecology-economy rhetoric. What was more important in Fals’ visit was that the Pesantren members used that moment to increase the popularity of Kemiri Sunan nationally. For example, the Pesantren’s public relations unit

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<sup>61</sup> There were not from the Ministry of Agriculture (Balitri).

invited the national and local media to cover the event. They hoped that increasing the popularity of Kemiri Sunan would open the government to support the project. Unfortunately, this coverage was not successful in making national headlines, and thus, failed to get the government's attention.

Nevertheless, the effort of Pesantren members to work on the Kemiri Sunan project continues. Since 2010, Kyai Ghofur has used another strategy. He often mentions that he receives a "mysterious whisper" (*bisikan gaib*) that mandates him to work on this crop. Pesantren members believe that if the Saint is given a "whisper" (*bisikan*), he must act on it, which, in this case, is Kemiri Sunan project. He has brought such occult capital into the Kemiri Sunan project for two purposes: First, to ask the spiritual entity, the Saint (Sunan Drajat), who is believed to have the ability to manipulate the material world, to assist the Pesantren's Kemiri Sunan project, and second, more importantly, to use the power of the occult to psychologically attract people to invest their time, energy, and money to support the project.

In addition to using the occult, Kyai Ghofur asked his staff, such as Bu Tanti and Pak Hendra to conduct scientific research. He wants to ensure that both the occult and the scientific efforts go hand-in-hand in the development of Kemiri Sunan. I call this phenomenon, scientific occultism. Without discussing the existence of the occult in detail, its material effect on the daily life of the members of Pesantren is considered. The next section will focus on discussing the making, unmaking, and remaking of Kemiri Sunan as an alternative energy source in Indonesia.

### **Hope: The Making**

When I conducted my first fieldwork in Pesantren Sunan Drajat in 2014, I heard my interlocutors speak confidently about Kemiri Sunan. They took me for a walk around the Pesantren to see what the Kemiri Sunan tree looked like. They showed me the place where the

kemiri was first domesticated. I had several chances to talk with the Pesantren members, ranging from the top officials to the santris, or the ordinary members. They were all optimistic that the project would be successful. At that the time, my impression was that the majority of Pesantren members saw Kemiri Sunan as a promising project of which they could be proud. They saw it as a symbol of hope, from which many people, not only the Pesantren members, but also villagers (even non-human actors like nature) could benefit.

Pak Hasbullah was the first person that I met at the Pesantren. He introduced me to this “magic tree” (*pohon gaib*). I asked him why it was called *pohon gaib*. He just smiled and did not answer. Instead, he brought me to the second floor of Kyai Ghofur’s house, which was also a place for Pesantren guests to stay during their visit to the Pesantren, and he introduced me to the Kemiri Sunan products, such as biodiesel oil, soap fertilizer, and briquettes. In that room, there were Barik, Chandra, and Pak Hasbullah himself. He introduced me to these two senior santris, and they spoke to me about the Kemiri Sunan project, which had popularized the name of the Pesantren. Barik shared his excitement as one the first cohorts who was asked to join the first planting of Kemiri Sunan in the Pesantren area.

Environmental concern cannot be separated from Pesantren activity. This [the members of] Pesantren has planted Noni and now Kemiri Sunan, where santris were excited to get involved in this project. There were about four of us who first joined this project...Kemiri Sunan harvest is fast; it takes about seven years to produce fruit, and the kernels can be extracted into biodiesel. In this Pesantren, it is even faster, five years. The Kemiri Sunan leaf is quite wide and flat, which enables it to absorb carbon effectively, and can mitigate global warming. If you have many Kemiri Sunan trees, you will have water since the tree brings water and makes the surrounding land wet. Kemiri Sunan is “beneficial” (*membawa kemaslahatan*) for the Pesantren and many people. This is our future.

Barik is one of several senior santris who can speak eloquently about Kemiri Sunan. I was surprised by his knowledge about the Kemiri Sunan leaf, which can effectively absorb carbon. I have visited several Pesantrens in Indonesia, and only a few santris were aware of

global warming or climate change. Barik knew it quite well, although, he did not elaborate on the connection between the two since the project was new for him. He was involved in a similar project prior to this one (Noni), which was also significant and influential and popularized the name of Pesantren Sunan Drajat. This project enabled Kyai Ghofur to win the Kalpataru, the highest environmental prize in Indonesia.

Barik was amazed by Kemiri Sunan's potential as an alternative energy source and beneficial for the country. He often mentioned that Kemiri Sunan was "the future" (*masa depan*) energy that will substitute fossil fuels, echoing Kyai Ghofur, who often spoke about Kemiri Sunan as the future. In one teaching, for example, I heard Kyai Ghofur say that, in the future, the Pesantren must take the lead by "giving help to people" (*memberi bantuan pada orang lain*), and that Kemiri Sunan is "the future of the Pesantren" (*masa depan Pesantren*). The members of the Pesantren also see hope in Kemiri Sunan. They believe that Kemiri Sunan will help them, help other people, and also help the country, especially in this age of uncertainty (Reformasi).

Many people in the Pesantren discussed the uncertainty brought by the Reformasi Era. This era has brought significant changes to the country. Pesantren Sunan Drajat once enjoyed the support of Suharto's New Order Regime. Kyai Ghofur, the supreme leader of the Pesantren, worked as a spiritual advisor for Suharto. The relationship between the two figures was mutual. Suharto asked for advice from Kyai Ghofur and then provided economic assistance in return for that advice. The development of Pesantren Sunan Drajat was supported by Kyai Ghofur's close relationship with the New Order Regime. At the beginning of the Reformasi Era, or the downfall of Suharto, the Pesantren did not receive many benefits. It needed to find out a way to support its financial needs so as to maintain its development. In the middle of such economic uncertainty, Pesantren Sunan Drajat was looking for new opportunities and new hope. The members of the

Pesantren began the establishment of some business units. Moreover, the new political change turned out to be new opportunity. After the downfall of Suharto, the Pesantren ended its dependency on the authoritarian regime and began its independence.

Today, Pesantren Sunan Drajat has created business units, including mineral water, salt, mining, and fertilizer. Recently, the Pesantren has aimed to expand its business wing to cover strategic marketing through alternative energy: Kemiri Sunan. The story of alternative energy is a story of hope. It contains both altruistic and pragmatic goals. The Pesantren members see the hope for the global environmental movement that demands alternative solutions to fossil fuels to sustain the earth. This altruistic vision is purely an environmental commitment of the Pesantren to join the movement. Chandra, another senior santri, argued that Pesantren Sunan Drajat is an Islamic institution that considers contemporary global issues, including environmental degradation. “The Pesantren aims to do both small (planting trees) and big things (Kemiri Sunan) to sustain the environment (*melestarikan lingkungan*),” he maintained.

The pragmatic function of creating alternative energy is that the members of Pesantren see Kemiri Sunan as potentially bringing economic and political benefits to them. Economically, Pak Hasbullah informed me that many people will receive benefits from Kemiri Sunan, the Pesantren members, as well as the villagers. He told me that currently Kemiri Sunan is planted in several places in Lamongan, Majalengka, and Nusa Tenggara, and has already increased the local people’s income. He also said that the Pesantren members imagine that this project will help finance the development of Pesantren Sunan Drajat buildings, which are currently over capacity.

Politically, Kemiri Sunan is believed to help build a positive image of Pesantren Sunan Drajat (and other traditional Muslim communities), which have often been maligned by

presumptions of terrorism and radicalism. The Pesantren members believed that these two threats are the result of the intense penetration of orthodox Islam (or transnational Islam) to Indonesia after the Reformasi Era. With strong support from petrodollar countries like Saudi Arabia (Carnegie, 2017), the orthodox teaching of Islam has become more popular in the country. The Pesantren or other traditional Islamic communities are the most impacted by such penetration because it creates a negative image of the Pesantren and Islam. Pesantren are often labeled as “terrorist nests” (*sarang teroris*). As a response to this identity threat, Pesantren communities combat such penetration in several ways. Some create counterterrorist programs; some others take more moderate actions. Pesantren Sunan Drajat chooses the latter. By focusing on education, economics, and currently, environmental activities, it aims to build a positive image of the Pesantren gradually. My conversation with Pak Syahrul on this matter shows how the Kemiri Sunan project is used as a political identity weapon to build a positive image of the Pesantren and Islam.

Pak Syahrul, a senior teacher, told me that there are some issues faced by Pesantren communities today, such as poverty and terrorism. The response of the Pesantren to these issues is to build their economy. Pak Syahrul believes that the economy can help to solve both problems. Commodifying Kemiri Sunan<sup>62</sup> is seen a powerful way to boost the Pesantren economy, while, at the same time, it can create a positive image of the Pesantren (and Islam), showing that the Pesantren is an “advanced” institution (*lembaga yang berpikiran maju*). As he said,

Nowadays, the threat of religious radicalism is getting serious because of the emergence of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia that aims to establish a global Islamic caliphate through uniting all Muslims in the world... Indonesian Islamic identity is strongly attached to

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<sup>62</sup> Lately, Pesantren members talk about erecting giant incinerators that will convert waste to energy. This project will bring more economic benefit for them.

Islamic traditionalism, rooted in the teaching of the Nine Saints (Wali Songo), not puritanism such as the one that is promoted by Hizbut Tahrir.

This political identity issue partially drives the emergence of Kemiri Sunan.

As an alternative energy, Kemiri Sunan is seen as promising for Pak Syahrul. He consistently believes it is a new hope, at least, for Pesantren members. Like other members, he also sees it as magical, a crop that can open many positive possibilities in the future. “Kemiri Sunan is better than Jarak Pagar as it contains a higher amount of biodiesel,” he argued. It is through Pak Syahrul that I can see the interconnection of many forces here in the making of alternative energy. As he says, “Kemiri Sunan is about religion, ecology, economy, and national pride.” Unlike Jarak Pagar and Minyak Indonesia Bersatu, which were fully supported by the government, Kemiri Sunan does not have government incentives. During my fieldwork, I witnessed that Pesantren approach some government officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Forestry to see if the project could get any government support. Nevertheless, according to Pak Syahrul, the Pesantren remains confident in its ability to conduct business without the government’s involvement.

As mentioned above, the absence of government support does not stop the efforts of Pesantren Sunan Drajat to develop Kemiri Sunan. Moreover, such government absence enables the Pesantren to activate the role of the occult in the project. Kyai Ghofur often mentions that he receives mysterious whispers (*bisikan gaib*) from the spirit of Sunan Drajat, telling him that Kemiri Sunan will bring prosperity for many people. As a descendant of the Saint, Kyai Ghofur capitalizes on this privilege to achieve his goals of developing alternative energy. He activates this occult entity to convince the public and gain broader support for his Kemiri Sunan project, as many people, especially the followers of Nadhlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization in the country, respect the Saint. He also capitalizes on his current position as the Head of Forum

Komunikasi Pesantren Berbasis Agribisnis (Agribusiness Communication Forum for the Pesantren), and the winner of the Kalpataru, to gain greater support. With all this capital, he assembles all social energy within and without his Pesantren, engaging the members of the Pesantren, local villagers, and investors to help develop the Kemiri Sunan project.

**Figure 8**



Kemiri Sunan (shell, kernel, and cracker) in Agrindo. Photo was taken by Ulil Amri

Recently, the development of Kemiri Sunan also involves Agrindo, a private agricultural company based in Gresik, the neighboring region of Lamongan. The involvement of the owner (Pak Budi) of this company was also related to occultism. Many sources inside the Pesantren have said that Pak Budi used to suffer from heart disease. Kyai Ghofur, who is also known for his ability to cure disease (religious healer), was invited to assist Pak Budi. The combination of both biomedical and alternative spiritual treatment hastened Pak Budi's healing. Since then, both have become close friends and are collaborating in the development of Kemiri Sunan.

Utilizing occult capital to attract investors (economic capital) to the Kemiri Sunan project is not new for Kyai Ghofur. He has (and continues to) cured many people, from high ranking government officials to ordinary villagers. People trust him and his ability. For those who have been cured by him, they are grateful to Kyai Ghofur and Pesantren Sunan Drajat and have helped the Pesantren's development of the project by donating money and financing the construction of Pesantren buildings. Pak Budi himself has invested in Lamongan by building shipyards partly used by Pesantren Sunan Drajat, along with helping the development of Kemiri Sunan.

While Kyai Ghofur has engaged occultism in the Kemiri Sunan project and gained financial support from Pak Budi (Agrindo), he is disappointed with the government's decision not to support the project. He maintains hope that someday the government will back him. Whenever government officials (middle rank) visit the Pesantren, he tries to convince them that the Kemiri Sunan project will benefit the government, as well as be a gift to Indonesia. Without their support, he has begun to doubt the government's commitment to the future of the country.

However, the government sees the Kemiri Sunan project from a different perspective. When I talked to some government officials from the Ministry of Agriculture in Jakarta and Sukabumi, they argued that it was not about the government's commitment. The Ministry has

developed its own version Kemiri Sunan, which is different from Pesantren Sunan Drajat's. Through the Industrial Plantation and Refresher Research Body (Badan Penelitian Tanaman Industri dan Penyegar/Balittri), the Ministry of Agriculture has modified the original version of Kemiri Sunan, and they claim it contains more biodiesel (*rendemen*) than the original. Like the Pesantren members, the government officials also see it as a new hope for the country.

Pak De<sup>63</sup>, a researcher of the Balittri, explained that this crop would become "Indonesia's pride in the future" (*kebanggaan Indonesia di masa depan*). "Therefore, we have to be fast to prepare the future...this country needs Kemiri Sunan as future energy...," he continued. This type of kemiri was once called Kemiri Minyak to signify the difference between the government's and the Pesantren's kemiri; however, the government's Kemiri Minyak was not as popular, thus, they returned to using the name Kemiri Sunan.

Both Pesantren members and Balittri officials re-employ the same rhetoric of Jarak Pagar and Minyak Indonesia Bersatu, saying that Kemiri Sunan is a new hope, a national future energy, and even a magical tree (*pohon gaib*) (Susanto, 2014). However, the tensions between the government and the Pesantren (plus Agrindo) show the complexity of creating alternative modern energy in Indonesia. Although they both work on Kemiri Sunan, they compete with one another. This competition, in turn, brought this project into despair.

### **Despair: The Unmaking**

I did my final fieldwork in Pesantren Sunan Drajat in 2017. During the fieldwork, some teachers, santris, and villagers whispered to me that they have begun to doubt the Kemiri Sunan project. I was surprised. Within three years, I could see a clear difference between the two periods. Although some major figures within the Pesantren remained optimistic about the Kemiri

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<sup>63</sup> Pseudonym.

Sunan project, some others saw that the project “got stuck” (*jalan ditempat*). Huda, another senior santri who was involved in the first planting of Kemiri Sunan, for example, told me that many people have become frustrated with the zero progress of Kemiri Sunan. He also mentioned that Kyai Ghofur was a bit disappointed with the project as well. The government’s maneuver causes his disappointment toward Kemiri Sunan.

According to Huda, the Pesantren was the first to develop Kemiri Sunan as an alternative energy project. He argued that the government does not have any interest in this project. However, the government suddenly claimed that it owned Kemiri Sunan. This maneuver brought frustration to the members of the Pesantren. Bu Tanti, a member of the Kemiri Sunan project, shared her frustration with me at Kyai Ghofur’s house. She said that the government aimed to kill the Pesantren’s project. She continued:

We have researched Kemiri Sunan since 2006, we had all data about Kemiri Sunan, we know the spots where Kemiri Sunan are planted, and suddenly the government claimed that it owns Kemiri Sunan. They never conducted any research... We have planted Kemiri Sunan in Garut and Majalengka, but some people, I guess they were local government officials, they cut off the trees and want to destroy our Kemiri Sunan plantation area.

Since the government made this claim, the members of the Pesantren believe that the government does not want to see the Pesantren involved in the making of alternative energy. In fact, the members of Pesantren, as Bu Tanti told me, wanted to contribute to the country through this project. She goes on:

This project is not for the benefit of Pesantren only, but also villagers in many places, not only in Java but also the outer islands of Indonesia...we provide jobs for local people, we give them a 70% share, and we only get 30% of the revenue...this is not enough actually, 30% percent is just for covering our capital investment (*balik modal*)...Instead of giving support, the government claims Kemiri Sunan is their own finding, which makes the effort of Pesantren Sunan Drajat seem like nothing.

Although the government claimed property rights over Kemiri Sunan, there has been no significant progress. According to Bu Tanti, this project “got stuck” because the government (Balittri) is incompetent in the development of Kemiri Sunan research because the Balittri does not have research competency in the field of alternative energy. “Balittri is known for plant research, not energy,” she said. “If we want to be professional, the job should be given to those who are competent,” she continued. Bu Tanti is now affiliated with Agrindo, a company that focuses its business on agricultural equipment. She sees Pesantren Sunan Drajat and Agrindo as a good fit.

When I confronted Pak De, as a representative of the government, with the Pesantren complaints, he stated that this is a national project which must be developed by the national government. Pak De then stated, “We [the government] are ready to do the research and cultivate Kemiri Sunan...we already have our equipment here [in the back of the office].” Pak De, for example, told me that there was no dispute, battle, or fight. “It was not fight. We should work together to build Indonesia,” he stated. However, he agreed that there was tension between the two parties on who should get the credit for discovering Kemiri Sunan.

The contestation over Kemiri Sunan that engaged the government and Pesantren Sunan Drajat is not only about property rights, but also about scientific authority. Both aim to prove they are more authoritative than the other. Pesantren Sunan Drajat claims that it has done many things, such as naming, planting, and documenting Kemiri Sunan all over Indonesia. The Pesantren has even collaborated with the Surabaya Institute of Technology (Institut Teknologi Surabaya/ITS) to test the quality of Kemiri Sunan biodiesel. Bu Tanti told me that the Pesantren-

ITS team has published its work in an international journal<sup>64</sup> on Kemiri Sunan. Bu Tanti has also argued that the effort that was made by Pesantren was more “advanced” (*maju*) than the government’s.

The way Bu Tanti employed the notion of progress resonated with other Pesantren members who have argued that the Pesantren is a unique institution (I call this alternative modern), which combines both tradition and modernity in a very complicated way. By mentioning tradition, the members show that the Pesantren still plays its original role as a religious educational institution. By attaching the Pesantren to modernity, the members aim to show that Pesantrens can get involved in scientific research. I argue that such involvement is incommensurable with other forms of modern scientific research in the country, or even the world, as the Pesantren have their own scientific research style.

However, this unique involvement is often not considered fully scientific by non-Pesantrens and mainstream scientific communities, including the government’s scientific institutions like the Balittri. There is a tendency from established scientific institutions to devalue scientific contributions from an alternative modern institution like a Pesantren. Pesantrens are not seen as pure research institutions that regularly conduct research using rigid scientific procedures. While the Pesantren claims that its research is scientific or follows scientific procedures, and engages with professional research institutions like ITS, its research is still regarded as not entirely scientific. Bu Tanti shared her experience when the Pesantren Sunan Drajat team presented Kemiri Sunan in front of government officials. She said that the officials

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<sup>64</sup> The title of the journal, “Hollilah, Prasetyoko, Oetami, Santosa, Zein, Bahruji, & Juwari, (2015) (The potential of Reutealis Trisperma seed as a new non-edible source of biodiesel production). *Biomass Conversion and Biorefinery*, 5(4), 347-353.”

underestimated its finding. “They did not give positive response. Rather, they underestimate our research”, she convinced me.

This image of being not fully scientific is further complicated by a tendency to engage economic speculation in the project. As mentioned by Tsing (2000), an extractive commodity, or in this case, a crop commodity, must follow the logic of speculative enterprise, meaning that “profit must be imagined before it can be extracted” (p. 118). In the case of Kemiri Sunan, the speculation arose once Jarak Pagar failed. The Kemiri Sunan team, led by Bu Tanti and Pak Hendra, discovered that the crop contained a higher oil yield than Jarak Pagar. Since then, the team amplified the potential of the crop to attract investors. Agrindo joined the team, which made the amplification larger. Following Tsing’s analysis, this amplification is a sort of scale-making project that takes place both locally and globally. It produces exaggeration and fantasy, rather than reality.

Why has Kemiri Sunan followed the trajectory of Jarak Pagar and Minyak Indonesia Bersatu? Why does it still choose to engage in speculative enterprise, knowing the failure of such previous projects? Since capitalism often presents at every moment and time to flourish, and Kemiri Sunan needs to grow, they need each other. Therefore, the making of Kemiri Sunan is the making of capitalism. Although this form of capitalism is working through the logic of efficiency—it always aims to accumulate capital as fast as it can—it neglects the long process needed to make Kemiri Sunan an efficient biodiesel product. This process requires time and money to conduct research, to invest, to plant crops, to establish supporting technologies, and to create a market. What has been done to date is still far from such an ideal. Pesantren Sunan Drajat and Agrindo do not seem to have enough power to create Kemiri Sunan as an efficient product. Pak Hasbullah once commented that to be efficient or competitive, the price of Kemiri

Sunan oil must be cheaper than the current biodiesel oil in the market. “We need to make it cheaper. This is the main problem with the project today... this is more difficult today because the production cost seems higher than the biodiesel price in the market,” he noted.

In early 2017, Pesantren Sunan Drajat tried to be more realistic and slow down its ambition. Many Pesantren members were not happy with this situation as their dream and hope turned into despair. Nevertheless, the Pesantren began to work on another alternative modern energy project: erecting a waste incineration plant. Unlike Kemiri Sunan, with this incineration project, the Pesantren members did not get involved in building the product. They just purchased and managed the plant. When I was there, I joined members of the Pesantren to meet the distributor of the plant. They mainly discussed the investment value and the possibility of erecting the plant in a mountain area owned by the Pesantren. Kemiri Sunan was seen as a small project compared to this one, which made the members of the Pesantren excited to work on it in the future.

Similar to the Pesantren, Agrindo also tried to be realistic. During my interview with Pak Budi, the owner of Agrindo, on Kemiri Sunan, he seemed to have other plans. He told me this “Kemiri Sunan is one of my “games” (*mainan*)...I have other businesses to run. If this [Kemiri Sunan] ‘does not work’ (*mentok*), I will focus on others,” he said.

After seeing this sign of despair and pessimism of Kemiri Sunan, I asked several members of the Pesantren about the work of the occult, or the whisper of the Saint, Sunan Drajat. I asked them why the mysterious whisper (which supposed to be providing them with the right direction) guided them to this desperate result. Gus Iwan (son-in-law of Kyai Ghofur) gave an interesting answer. He said that while the occult (or the mysterious whisper) was powerful and had a powerful influence on life, the whisper followed the laws of nature. He explained,

The mysterious whisper is like science, there is a process [verification and falsification]...if you work hard, then you get good results...Kyai Ghofur made a 'strong effort spiritually' (*tirakat*), which is why he can cure people... science is similar, it is a 'strong effort materially' (*ikhtiar*)..If you do have *ikhtiar* you will possibly create [or produce] something. If you don't, then you fail.

Gus Iwan's explanation provides the possibility of analyzing the unmaking of Kemiri Sunan and, furthermore, opens the possibility to materialize occultism (I will elaborate on this topic in Chapter 6).

According to Gus Iwan, the despair of the Kemiri Sunan project is due to the lack of scientific patience, or *ikhtiar*.<sup>65</sup> Although the occult, the mysterious whisper from Sunan Drajat, said that Kemiri Sunan would be the future of the Pesantren and Indonesia, it would end up in despair if the members of Pesantren did not do the necessary hard work. His view echoes many views inside the Pesantren, that there is a lack of *ikhtiar*. However, this lack of *ikhtiar* is complicated by the way the government officials, such as the Ministry of Agriculture or the Balittri, have downplayed the efforts of the Pesantren members. Therefore, *ikhtiar* here should not be seen as a singular effort by the Pesantren, but all stakeholders, including the government. The absence of one component will affect the function of the whole system.

### **Future: The Remaking**

At the end of my fieldwork in 2017, Bu Siti Nurbaya, the Minister of Forestry and Environment, visited Pesantren Sunan Drajat to meet with Kyai Ghofur, Bu Tanti, Pak Budi, Gus Iwan, Gus Aan (son of Kyai Ghofur), Ning Betty (daughter of Kyai Ghofur), and Bu Siti Nurbaya (minister). They sat down together in the guest room on the second floor of Kyai Ghofur's home. I captured their conversation. They discussed the future of Kemiri Sunan (among other things). Bu Tanti began the conversation by saying that the Pesantren needs

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<sup>65</sup> Ikhtiar needs patience. Someone cannot expect to gain instant results by doing instant work. This activity requires a long process.

support from the government as the project has not shown any progress. Bu Siti Nurbaya seemed familiar with Kemiri Sunan and listened carefully to the Pesantren team's aspirations for it. After each person spoke, Bu Siti asked her assistant to write down the expectations and said that she would try to help. There was no specific commitment made during the meeting, but the way Bu Siti Nurbaya, as Minister of Forestry and Environment, talked to and responded to the aspirations of the members of the Pesantren, showed a positive sign that their dream may yet be realized. I saw the smile of Kyai Ghofur and Bu Tanti flourishing after the meeting. The Pesantren may not collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture (Balittri), but they may work with the Ministry of Forestry. Kemiri Sunan seems to have a new life ahead.

Bu Siti Nurbaya's visit to Pesantren Sunan Drajat was made possible by two things: the lobby of the Pesantren's team and Bu Tanti's personal connection with Bu Siti Nurbaya. The lobby of the Pesantren's government relations team was also supported by Gus Iwan, a cadre of the National Democrat Party (Partai Nasdem), a political party with which Bu Siti Nurbaya is affiliated. In addition to Gus Iwan, Bu Tanti had also had connections to Bu Siti Nurbaya. She told me that Bu Siti Nurbaya invited her to attend the Conference of Parties (COP) 22 in Marrakech, Morocco, where Bu Tanti presented the Kemiri Sunan project in the Indonesian Pavilion at the COP. On one hand, it was an introduction to Kemiri Sunan to the world and, on the other hand, it was an opportunity to promote the product.

Kemiri Sunan is like Bu Tanti's personal identity; wherever she goes, she always promotes the product. Bu Tanti approached Bu Siti Nurbaya to support Kemiri Sunan. Bu Siti Nurbaya's visit to Pesantren Sunan Drajat has clearly shown her there is support for the product. Through this visit, the members regained their confidence. Although the Ministry of Agriculture

(Balittri) still will not support them, the support from the Ministry of Forestry, or at least the Minister of Forestry, has become a kind of last resort.

Several days after the meeting, Bu Tanti invited me to visit Agrindo and showed me the progress of Kemiri Sunan seed planting before being sent to Nusa Tenggara for further planting phases.<sup>66</sup> She also shared her concerns about the latest challenges in the development of the alternative energy project. Her main concern was the black campaign of Pesantren Sunan Drajat-Agrindo competitors, which according to her, have collaborated with some government officials (the Minister of Agriculture), to ensure the Pesantren's project fails. While she may be the one most hurt if the Kemiri Sunan project fails or when being attacked by competitors (this project means a great deal to her), nevertheless, she remains optimistic that the project will eventually do well. She further told me the good news that Pertamina has offered the team several billion rupiahs to buy Kemiri Sunan trees. Pertamina is one of the largest state enterprises that focus its business on oil and gas and has currently begun the search for alternative energy sources. Since Pertamina has already targeted Kemiri Sunan, the Pesantren members are more optimistic about the future of their work.

This new life of Kemiri Sunan reminds me of Kopytoff's (1988) commoditization, where Kemiri Sunan is no longer just a "thing," but has become "a certain kind of thing" (p. 64). Kemiri Sunan was once "almost" out of the commodity pathway, and now it is in the pathway again. Kemiri Sunan is in the process of being remade: it has created a new path. Why has Kemiri Sunan become "a certain kind of thing?" Is this due to its new status of "commodity" within the economic system? Is it always the economy that determines the value of a thing? I

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<sup>66</sup> It was before the visit of Bu Siti Nurbaya to Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

argue that Kemiri Sunan exists in multiple realms (natural and cultural), thus, it always has a value, or always becomes “a certain kind of thing” in relation to other things.

Kemiri Sunan has complex and multiple properties that enable it to exist in various realms. In the natural realm, Kemiri Sunan is valuable for insects, especially bees, and the environment. Its cultural significance for human beings lies primarily in its economic (both as use and exchange values) and material values. Kemiri Sunan exists initially as a commodity, and then becomes a materially discursive entity (Barad, 2010). Moreover, it is not solely human beings that give Kemiri Sunan its economic and material discursive values,<sup>67</sup> but all entities (humans, non-humans, discourse, political and economic systems, orders, and practices), in which Latour (2005) beautifully describes as a network or DeLanda defines as an assemblage. For me, their notions of network and assemblage exist as cultural conditions that create the values of Kemiri Sunan with all of its complexities. It is all of these actors (Pertamina, Pesantren Sunan Drajat, and Agrindo) and forces (politics of identity, the global and national demands on alternative energy) that remake and revalue Kemiri Sunan today. The project is ongoing, however, I will not evaluate whether the project will ultimately be successful, as I am more interested in the process of remaking Kemiri Sunan as a future alternative energy source.

During my visit to Agrindo with Haqi, a senior santri of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Bu Tanti accompanied us to walk around Agrindo and see the development of the Kemiri Sunan. She was excited that Kemiri Sunan has found a new life since Bu Siti’s visit to Pesantren Sunan Drajat and the discussion about the future of Kemiri Sunan. Haqi and I observed that other

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<sup>67</sup> DeLanda (2006) criticizes the Marxist anthropomorphic conception that views “value” based on human perspective. DeLanda advocates that non-humans can also be a source of “value.” DeLanda argues that there is no separation between matter and value (human mind and entity outside): they both exist together. DeLanda further explains that entities come into being because of their concrete assemblages. These assemblages are made of unique entities that have their own historical trajectories and values.

people were also excited in working and developing Kemiri Sunan to produce high quality of biodiesel oil. They were not yet satisfied with the previous quality of the biodiesel oil. Although without any chemical or laboratory work, the raw candlenut oil can power a diesel generator, they kept pushing the limits to produce better Kemiri Sunan. Haqi and I were amazed by how Kemiri Sunan fits into biodiesel generator and did what Barad calls, “conjoint action,” which produces energy.

Bennett (2010) argues that conjoint actions produce multiplied consequences, and, in turn, produce its own public life, affecting others, and producing similar kinds of other conjoint actions. Haqi told me that he imagined how the Kemiri Sunan’s biodiesel oil conjoins with the generator to produce the energy used for Agrindo to electrify its factory machines. The equipment then conjoins with the farm’s soil, water, and paddy seeds to produce rice (the main staple food for Indonesians). After seeing the development of Kemiri Sunan in Agrindo, Haqi mimicked Bu Tanti’s explanation to me on our way back to the Pesantren:

Kemiri Sunan is really “amazing” (*luar biasa*), that is why it is called “magic tree” (*pohon gaib*) because anything from it can be utilized, right?!...producing fertilizer, soap, cosmetic products...I believe that people in Agrindo do this hard work because they believe it is amazing, right?!...It has oil too [*minyak Kemiri Sunan*].

I was surprised by Haqi’s comment during our visit to Agrindo. To me, his comment showed his fascination with Kemiri Sunan, similar to Bu Tanti’s. Although he was one of several santri who knew of the Kemiri Sunan planting project in the Pesantren area, he did not know that Kemiri Sunan had so many potential advantages. Richardson and Weszkalnys (2014) note that how energy is being fetishized is not merely because of its economic significance, but because of its potentialities. Here Haqi sees Kemiri Sunan’s significance, not solely its economic value (he does not even mention this), but its material-discursive potentials to create something

else in the future—soap, cosmetics, and fertilizer—something that is useful for him. After becoming aware of Kemiri Sunan’s advantages, he valued it even more. Haqi was further amazed by the many people engaged in and excited about the remaking of Kemiri Sunan.

Kemiri Sunan is both similar to and different from Jarak Pagar. While they both provide alternative energy, they have different social lives. The life of Jarak Pagar ended when people knew it was just hype (Afiff, 2014; Vel, 2014), whereas, the life of Kemiri Sunan continues. Nonetheless, the life of Kemiri Sunan is a continuation of Jarak Pagar, as a dreamed alternative energy source, which harkens back to Mazzarella’s notion of social energy. The remaking or the rebirth of Kemiri Sunan is a sort of reactivation of collective effervescence. Indonesians, including the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, have shown that they come together with the same thought and feeling to achieve the same goal. Their strong effort to not give up has remade Kemiri Sunan, even though there is no guarantee that this project will ultimately be successful. It depends on all of the social, cultural, structural, and material forces noted.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have shown that Indonesians have a serious ambition, which Mazzarella (2017) calls “social energy/power” to produce alternative energy. They have been involved in what I call the making, unmaking, and remaking of Kemiri Sunan as a current alternative energy source. Such efforts are made possible by the entanglement of various social, cultural, structural, and material forces, such as global awareness of climate change, the search for local economic opportunity, the politics of identity, the battle over property rights and scientific authority, occultism, and energy fetishism. These forces are the main drivers behind the emergence of Jarak Pagar and Minyak Indonesia Bersatu (Blue energy/Banyugeni), other alternative energy projects conducted before Kemiri Sunan.

Jarak Pagar was the first alternative energy project in the country and elsewhere. Due to several factors, ranging from the lack of government support and technology to the absence of a viable market, Jarak Pagar failed. The failure of Jarak Pagar pushed the emergence of another ill-conceived project, Banyugeni, which also failed. However, there is a significant difference between these two projects. Jarak Pagar was a serious scientific effort that involved well-known universities and research institutes (with well-known researchers) and attracted professional business people, whereas, Banyugeni was a scam initiated by a self-proclaimed scientist and was inspired mainly by occultism. My attention focuses on a current alternative energy effort in producing Kemiri Sunan, which is driven by both scientific inquiry and occultism. This unusual collusion represents the complexity of the alternative energy process in Indonesia.

My ethnographic fieldwork data shows that the making of Kemiri Sunan is taking place during an age of uncertainty, and has inspired Indonesians to negotiate their politics of identity, to search for economic opportunity, to get involved in battles over property rights and authority, and fetishize energy, which, in turn, enables the activation of the occult. Each of these forces have created dreams, hopes, drama, and despair in the Kemiri Sunan project. The politics of identity behind Kemiri Sunan enable the creation of a positive image of Islam (which has been recently labeled a religion of violence) to the world. The Kemiri Sunan project gives hope to local people, especially the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, to gain economic benefit from the project in the long run. On the other hand, this project creates tension between the Pesantren and the government over property rights and scientific authority. Each institution claims to have property rights over the crop, and furthermore, claims the scientific authority of Kemiri Sunan research. In turn, this tension hampers the development of Kemiri Sunan, which led the project into despair. Recently, however, there is an effort to remake Kemiri Sunan in Indonesia, as it is

still seen as the crop of their future. Thus, they have begun to rebuild their hope and craft their dream.

The theoretical approach I used in this chapter builds on contemporary efforts to deconstruct the bifurcation of materiality and immateriality, idea and practice, and science and occult. During my fieldwork, I encountered the fact that my interlocutors, the members of Pesantren, through Kemiri Sunan, did combine the material and the spiritual entities in the making of Kemiri Sunan. I call this kind of social practice as alternative modern work, in which energy crops, like Kemiri Sunan (biodiesel), are seen by my interlocutors as both material and magical entities. Since my interlocutors dream their country to be an energy independent nation, they do whatever they can do to create Kemiri Sunan biodiesel, despite its trials and previous failures.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Energy Nationalism, Economic Independence, and Indonesian Modernity**

In 2015, Pertamina, Indonesia's state enterprise oil company, chose "energy independence" (*kemandirian energi*) as the central theme for its 58th anniversary. This company created an advertisement that appeared on national television, showing Punakawans discussing contemporary issues of energy in Indonesia. While pointing to a picture of construction in the middle of the ocean, Gareng asked Petruk, "What is that?" Petruk responded, "That is an oil refinery. It is a place to process fossil energy. Later, we transform it into electricity that is needed by industry and our life." Gareng asked another question while looking at a ship that brought in some tanks, "What about this?" Petruk responded, "It is the natural gas that we use later in our kitchen to cook food...with a spirit of developing renewable energy, we will be achieving energy independence for a better life."

The Punakawan are classical Javanese puppets, created by Sunan Kalijaga (a member of the Nine Saints of Java) that many people in Indonesia like to watch. The story of the Punakawan is a story of morality and humanity. In recent years, the puppeteers often improve the story and contextualize it into the daily lives of Indonesians. The theme of energy independence reveals a strong narrative of the relationship between energy independence and an Indonesia imagine. Here, we are invited to see how energy independence represents a new Indonesian nationalism and modernity. Energy has never been included in Indonesia's history, but today, this advertisement shows us that energy independence has become a national goal.

In this chapter, I will discuss the rise of the new nationalism in Indonesia, namely, energy nationalism. I argue that energy is a new form of nationalism in Indonesia, following the political (Kahin, 2003; Noer, 1963; Laffan, 2003), economic (Siddique & Suryadinata, 1982), and

technological nationalism (Amir, 2005). Energy nationalism emerged after the Reformasi, the fall of Suharto's regime in 1998. The rise of energy nationalism is inseparable from the Indonesian economic discourse. The discussion of this chapter emerges from my conversation with my interlocutors in several places in Indonesia, which mainly took place in Pesantren Sunan Drajat. I argue that the Pesantren is one of the places where we can see how energy nationalism has arisen in the country. I will show that this new nationalism is engrained in some environmental projects developed by the Pesantren (and some other institutions), including developing biodiesel (candlenut/Kemiri Sunan), a biogas (cow manure) digester, and an incineration plant. I will pay special attention to the relationship between energy (*kemandirian energi*) and economic independence (*kemandirian ekonomi*).

### **(Re)Theorizing Nationalism**

Benedict Anderson is acknowledged to be one of the most influential scholars of nationalism. His *Imagined Communities* (1983) has become a powerful reference for the study of nations and nationalism. In the book, Anderson argues that the idea of nation, or the nation-state, emerged in Europe and spread all over the world through print capitalism. Newspapers played a significant role in creating the future collective imagination of its readers, and also created the basis for the emergence of the nation-state. In Anderson's view, nationalism is a construct of the West. This view offers a universal or global history of nationalism and rejects the Marxian analysis of class, arguing that nationalism is a future project that unites people beyond their socio-historical identities, such as class, race, or even religion.

However, Anderson's theory gained much criticism from postcolonial scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Gyan Prakash, and Homi Bhabha. Chatterjee (1993), who argued that nationalism is not universal and is not the property of the West. He asked a very critical question: "If nationalism in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain

‘modular’ forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they left to imagine?’” (p. 216). He then argued that before the West imagined the future collective entity called nation, many places around the world had already experienced nationalism. Chatterjee does not blame Anderson alone for this universal claim, as many scholars tend to identify nationalism with political movements.

Echoing and modifying Chatterjee, Prakash (1999) developed the idea that nation is a hybrid concept that brings together the past and the future. By using the example of his country, India, he shows that India’s nationalism is created by “a culturally rooted moral community with a rational will to industrialize and achieve technological mastery” (p. 199). This combination of both cultural (past) and industrial (future) characteristics shows India’s nationalism and modernity are different from western ones. Nonetheless, Prakash admits that the specific character of this nation cannot be separated from any modern state established elsewhere. The making of Indian modernity, for example, is a part of India’s negotiation with other kinds of modernity. Here, Indian science plays a pivotal role and functions as a power to inspire Indian nationalism. He also discusses Nehru’s and Gandhi’s (the elites or intellectuals) roles in shaping the country’s engagement with science, technology, nationalism, and modernity.

The idea of negotiating the colonial past and postcolonial present (and future), has been discussed earlier by Bhabha (1990). He pointed out that a nation combines both characteristics, yet, at the same time, contests them. Furthermore, he argues that nation is a sort of ambivalent project that always has productive and complicated positions, “as a force of subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing as much as producing, creating, forcing, guiding” (p. 3). By doing so, he aims to destabilize the idea of a nation, as, to him, a nation is like a language, discourse, or sign that must be continuously revised and interrogated. Moreover, he calls nation a

“system of cultural signification,” meaning that the nation emerges from a complex and hybrid social life. Besides, he invites us to see nation as a narration in which all voices, from the center to the periphery, the elite, and the ordinary people, can participate.

The views of Chatterjee, Prakash, and Bhabha are useful for our understanding of the way people imagine nationalism today. Chatterjee’s work helps to excavate the root of Indonesian nationalism that already existed before the arrival of the Dutch (Noer, 1963; Laffan, 2003), and Prakash’s ideas paved the avenue for analysis of Indonesia’s legacy and future dream that created the energy nationalism of today, which, according to Bhabha, has engaged various actors ranging from the elite (the government officials) to the ordinary people (members of Pesantren), with all their complicated interests. All these forces (actors, legacies, dreams, and interests) have played an active role in cultivating the Indonesian nationalist imagination. However, these scholars overlook the role of everyday political economy and religious ideologies in the making of nationalism<sup>68</sup>. During my fieldwork, I witnessed how everyday political economic factors and religious imagination played pivotal roles in shaping the energy nationalism in today’s Indonesia. Therefore, this chapter is intended to fill this void.

### **Indonesian Nationalism**

In this section, I describe three waves of Indonesian nationalism, namely, political, economic, and energy nationalism. Political nationalism, the first wave, discusses how Indonesians gained their independence. Here, I show how the independence movement was driven by religious sentiment, where religious leaders studied in the Middle East and brought their knowledge and anti-colonial ideas home, then mobilized the Indonesian people to fight against the Dutch. The second wave of nationalism took place during Suharto’s New Order,

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<sup>68</sup> For understanding an everyday making of nationalism, see Perez’s (2018) work “Materializing the Nation in Everyday Life: On Symbols and Objects in the Palestinian Refugee Diaspora”.

where Indonesians focused on building a strong economic nation. During this period, the country also attempted to build a technological nation through the aircraft industry. The last wave of nationalism began during Yudhoyono's administration and continues today. Yudhoyono strongly advocated the production of alternative energy for the entire country. He encouraged not only government bodies but also non-government actors to be dynamically involved in creating an energy independent Indonesia.

### **Political Nationalism:**

Indonesia during Sukarno's era (Old Order) is often seen as the birth of political nationalism. Sukarno is acknowledged to be the man behind the country's independence. In Indonesia, he is called "the proclamer" (*sang proklamator*), who proclaimed Indonesian independence from the Dutch. For his achievement, he was then appointed as the first president of Indonesia. Kahin (2003) noted that it was Dutch colonialism that mainly revived the political consciousness of Indonesians to be an independent nation. Under Dutch colonialism, some socio-cultural conditions created such consciousness, including religion, education, language, and economy.

According to Kahin, Islam was a symbol of anti-colonialism. It was a counter-force of the Christian penetration from the Portuguese and the Dutch. Many Indonesians who studied abroad went home, educated other Indonesians, and began the independence movement. According to Laffan (2003), some Indonesians went to the Middle East to study religion. When they returned, they brought religious knowledge about war (*jihad*) against colonialism and fought for independence.

Additionally, religion and the Indonesian language, that were rooted in Malay (Bahasa Melayu), became a cultural bond in which to establish a new national identity. At that time,

people all over the country used Bahasa Melayu to communicate and spread the idea of revolution. At the same time, there was a revolutionary economic movement initiated by Sarekat Islam and Muhammadiyah, which challenged the colonial economic system that was dominated by the Dutch and the Chinese. This movement gradually contributed to a change in the entire political structure of the country. Kahin further argued that Sukarno was the representation of all these socio-cultural conditions. He was the symbol of political nationalism.

During this first wave of nationalism, Indonesians focused on the transition of power from the Dutch to Indonesians. Many assets owned by the Dutch, such as companies, factories, and buildings, were nationalized. Following this reorganization of resources, there emerged an internal political contest among Indonesians, who competed over political positions and economic resources. Weinstein (2007) called this phenomenon internal disunity (p. 29) in a newly independent nation, where there existed political groups among civil, military, and socio-religious entities. Nevertheless, Indonesians were still united in their neocolonialism. Yet, there were some fears of cultural invasion from outside that could threaten the country's national identity (p. 30). Thus, during Sukarno's time, political nationalism was promoted to protect the nation from external threats. In 1962, to symbolize the country's political nationalism, Indonesia built a "national monument" (*monumen nasional/Monas*), which, according to McGregor (2003), was built to unify as well as promote Indonesian national identity.

### **Techno-Economic Nationalism:**

Suharto's era (New Order) is often described as having the ambition to establish economic nationalism. During the first years of his presidency, there was a growing concern among Indonesians to prioritize indigenous (*pribumi*) economy. Suharto's era is also known for having "greater demands to improve the economic status of indigenous Indonesians" (Siddique

and Suryadinata, 1982, p. 674). Some development policies, such as the “small investment credit” (*kredit investasi kecil*) and the “permanent work capital credit” (*kredit modal kerja permanen*) gave financial assistance to indigenous Indonesians (non-foreign citizens and Orientals, including Arabs and Chinese descendants). These programs aimed to strengthen “*pribumi* entrepreneurship” (p. 677). However, at the same time, Suharto’s New Order also introduced liberal economic policies that opened foreign direct investment to build the country’s economy. The result was astonishing. The growth of Indonesia’s economy from 1974-1982 was high, especially during the oil boom years, reaching 8% per year (Liddle, 1991).

During this period, Indonesia also experienced what Amir (2005) called technological nationalism, which means “technology which is discursively and materially affected by nationalist ideology” (p. 284). He argues that the birth of the New Order gave rise to the birth of technological development in Indonesia. It was Suharto’s ambition to build Indonesia into a technological independent nation so that the country would be equal to other developed countries. As Amir observed, since 1976, Indonesia began to make its “debut in the world of high-tech development” (p. 283) through the establishment of the National Aircraft Industry (*Industri Pesawat Terbang National/IPTN*) (today, it is known as *Dirgantara Indonesia/DI*), which focused on the aerospace project.

The project was led by Habibie, an engineer who gained his doctorate in Germany, and who, at that time, was appointed as the Minister of Research and Technology. According to Amir, Habibie not only built an aviation industry, but he also expanded the context of national development, which included “capital, power, and nationalist ideology” (p. 286). Technological nationalism successfully gained people’s support despite many critics from opponents of the project. IPTN successfully produced N250 aircraft by August 10, 1995, which was then known

as the National Technology Awakening Day. Amir mentioned that this awakening day symbolized a moment in which the country awoke from its long sleep (p. 290).

In addition to building aircraft, the New Order also built national automobiles. Following the success of the N250 aircraft, in 1996, the government of Indonesia launched a national automobile, named the Timor. The government of Indonesia collaborated with Korean auto manufacturer, KIA, and named the project KIA-Timor. Suharto himself facilitated the project by enacting a presidential decree to lower the tax for the sale of the product. This generated criticism from other factories. Many Indonesians also doubted the national impact of this project, as the automobile was assembled in Korea, not Indonesia. Moreover, as it was not made solely by Indonesians, the revenue from the product did not go entirely to Indonesians. Two years after the launch of the product, Suharto's regime fell, which led the country to a new phase, the Reformasi (Reformation).

### **Energy Nationalism:**

During the Reformasi era, especially during President Yudhoyono's administration, Indonesia for the first time seriously discussed energy independence. In 2007, the government enacted Law No. 30/2007 regarding energy security and sustainable development. Given the fact that Indonesia has been a net importer of oil since the Reformasi era, which consumes approximately 191 million tons of oil per year, and, at the same time, being a large CO<sub>2</sub> emitter as a result of forest degradation and deforestation (Resosudarmo, et al., 2012), there is a need to reform the way the country secures its future energy demands that is both ecologically and economically sustainable. Presidential Decree No. 5/2006 mandates the country to diversify its energy sources so that it will no longer be dependent on fossil fuel. The decree highlights, among others, the need to decrease fossil fuel consumption by at least 20%, increase the consumption of

natural gas by more than 30%, and biofuel by more than 5% by 2025. In 2006, Yudhoyono established the National Energy Council (Dewan Energi Nasional/DEN).

In the second term of President Yudhoyono's administration, the government worked hard to find new energy sources. The government urged that energy diversification should become a "national movement" (*gerakan nasional*). This movement used national rhetoric, such as "energy independence" (*kemandirian energi*) and "energy security" (*kedaulatan energi*). On many occasions, Indonesians—government officials, business people, as well as non-governmental groups—discussed energy independence. Some of them still interpret independence as the nationalization of all assets. During Yudhoyono's presidency, for example, there were two significant issues related to asset nationalization, "Mahakam Block" (Blok Mahakam), an oil exploration site in East Kalimantan, and Freeport, a gold mining company operating in Papua. Many Indonesians pushed the government to increase its bargaining position toward foreign companies. They believed that Indonesia was not yet independent because the asset shares were still largely owned by foreign companies. Many Indonesians argued that the country always failed to hold all company shares. They also realized that foreign companies only exploited their natural resources without providing reasonable benefits for the country and its citizens. This sort of nationalism is similar to the first wave mentioned above, where Indonesians attempt to nationalize some Dutch assets for the benefit of Indonesians.

Today, the government, business people, and non-governmental groups further push the implementation of "energy independence" and "energy security." The new wave of nationalism in energy sectors focuses on producing alternative energy sources based on available local resources. I argue that in this new wave of nationalism, there are more civil society groups (villages, communities, or local institutions) getting involved in creating energy sources. The

new energy sources being produced are varied; however, the majority are small-scale production that are intended to fit the energy needs of particular groups.

In many places, especially in Java, people have initiated small-scale energy technologies, such as biofuel and biogas made of cow manure in Bantul, Yogyakarta, a hydropower plant in Banjarnegara, Central Java, and biogas made of human manure in Bandung, West Java. In fact, recently, a young child, named Naufal Raziq (15-year-old), from Aceh, made national headlines due to his invention of new alternative energy from the ambarella tree (*kedondong*) (Billy, 2017). In 2011 and 2014, I had an opportunity to visit the Bantul region of Yogyakarta, where I saw how local institutions initiated the discovery of alternative energy sources for themselves. Moreover, some places I observed were developing alternative energy sources.

The first was Pesantren Darul Ulum, which collaborated with the Qaryah Thayyibah Forum in the Potorono Village in Bantul, Yogyakarta. This Pesantren built a biogas digester of cow manure. The methane produced by the digester was utilized for substituting oil and gas (locally known as *elpiji*). According to people in the village, the quality of the biogas was far better than the *elpiji*. The other location I visited was Pesantren Al-Imdad, which also built its own biogas digester. According to Kyai Habib, the leader of the Pesantren, the energy from the digester was then used for cooking. The digester functioned as storage for “santris” (*followers/students*) excrement, which is converted to methane. This Pesantren had recently expanded its area following the growing enrollment of new *santris*. Therefore, Kyai Habib told me, his Pesantren built two digesters, one in the male and the other was in the female dormitories. The last place I visited was Pesantren Sunan Drajat, the main field site of my research. In this Pesantren, I observed the effort of the Pesantren members to produce alternative

energy made of candlenut (Kemiri Sunan), and it erected the first incineration plant in the country.

### **Pesantren, Nahdlatul Ulama, Civil Society, and Energy Nationalism**

The Pesantren and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)—literally, the revival of Islamic scholars—are inseparable. Both are like two sides of a coin. The Pesantren is part of the NU and is the main basis of the NU. Without the Pesantren, the NU is nothing. The Pesantren is the place where NU cadres are educated. The NU was established in 1926 and aimed to protect the traditional Islamic way of life, and later cultivated Indonesian nationalism. It was founded by Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari of Tebuireng, who was also known as a national hero of Indonesian independence. Since its inception, the NU has become an essential part of Indonesian Islam (Bush, 2009). The NU is also regarded as the largest Islamic civil society organization in the country, and perhaps the world, which claims to have about 70 million members.

The Pesantren has a unique cultural feature. Noor et al., (2008) notes that the Pesantren is an original form of Islamic education in Indonesia. Some scholars see the similarity between a Pesantren and Mandala, a Hindu-Buddhist center for religious teaching in Southeast Asia. The uniqueness of the Pesantren is in its socio-political roles in public life. In addition to its role as an educational institution that produces traditional Islamic preachers, Noor et al., (2008) describes the active political role of Pesantrens during colonial times in the fighting against colonial regimes. The Kyais, leaders of the Pesantrens, often released a fatwa<sup>69</sup> of jihad to fight against the Dutch (non-Muslims) who attempted to occupy (Indonesia) Muslim territories. Those who joined the jihad were the santris of the Pesantrens.

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<sup>69</sup> Legal opinion made by Islamic religious leader.

It is important to discuss the Pesantren's and the NU's political role concerning Indonesian nationalism. According to Bush (2009), the establishment of the NU was partly driven by a desire to build nationalism (p. 36). Nevertheless, she highlights the fact that the NU, or Pesantrens in general, were not political organizations. Pesantrens were critical toward the Dutch, but the NU, as the umbrella organization of many Pesantrens, did not show clear opposition to Dutch colonialism (p. 40). The NU transformed to a political party during Sukarno's era, where it successfully won the third position in the general election in 1955. However, in 1979, the NU went back to its "origin" (*khittah*) as a traditional educational organization that focuses on religious affairs, rather than "the politics of practice" (*politik praktis*).

Since then, the NU became a prominent government critic. It positioned itself as a proponent of civil society, a non-governmental organization that promoted democracy, freedom, and justice, aspects that were absent during Suharto's New Order. During the time, the NU was critical toward the Pancasila (the five principles), the sole foundation of the state. According to Van Bruinessen (1990), during the 1978 "National Assembly" (Musyawarah Nasional), the NU opposed the obligatory Pancasila indoctrination courses, which made it an enemy of the state.

Under the leadership of Kyai Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), who was also the grandson of Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, the NU pushed its agenda further to provide social and moral control over the regime. Hikam (1994) observed that the NU with "*khittah*" is an example of true civil society, where Pesantrens or NU become independent social institutions that can provide checks and balances to the state. However, while being critical to the state and Pancasila, during this time, it was the NU, the first mass organization, that agreed to change Islam to Pancasila as its sole foundation. This flexibility was characteristic of the NU since its inception. In the NU, every

organizational decision is dynamically decided by elected Kyais. These Kyais use “Islamic jurisprudence” (*fiqh*) and “the principles of Islamic jurisprudence” (*ushul fiqh*) in making decisions. One example of the decisions is its protection of Indonesian nationalism, where the Kyais decided that “avoiding danger is more important than doing small good things” (Chalik, 2011).

When Suharto (New Order) was in power from 1966 to 1998, Wahid had successfully pulled the NU back to the Pesantren and focused on its civil society agenda. However, after the downfall of Suharto’s regime, the NU and Pesantrens began to become involved in state politics again. With its new role as a civil society organization and an important political player (some NU members established political parties, and Wahid was one of them), the NU was involved in political activities, such as defending the country from new threats like imperialism, economic liberalism, and the current international Islamism (pan-Islamism/*Khilafah*)<sup>70</sup>.

During the Reformasi, there were at least three NU Congresses (Muktamar) that mention imperialism and economic liberalism as threats to Indonesian nationalism. During the 31<sup>st</sup> NU Congress in Solo (2004), for example, NU members agreed that imperialism and economic liberalism brought negative impact to humanity. Both ideologies have enabled some countries to colonize and exploit others. During the 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress in Makassar (2010), the NU focused on criticizing economic liberalism. NU members discussed how the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) introduced liberal economic agendas in Indonesia by promoting deregulation and a free market. For NU members, these agendas gave opportunities for foreign investors to exploit Indonesia’s economy and left the local Indonesians (the small-scale economic actors, local people, villagers, the poor) behind. The 33<sup>rd</sup> NU Congress

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<sup>70</sup> This is the first time NU sees a threat from within Islamic communities.

in Jombang (2015) focused on how to combat economic liberalism. At this time, NU members decided to empower local people and advocate an Indonesian national economic system. Some recommendations from the Congress urged NU members to open economic access for NU followers toward local natural resources, social economic opportunities, technologies, and public services; improving NU human resources; creating jobs; and boosting non-agricultural economic activities.

The NU and Pesantrens are not only critical to external imperialism and colonialism. Currently, NU members are fighting against Hizbut Tahrir (HT), an Islamic civil society organization that promotes pan-Islamism. In Indonesia, the NU has actively supported the government to ban the activity of HT. NU members argued that the ideology of pan-Islamism is not compatible with Indonesia's ideology of Pancasila (the five principles). For NU members, Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia/NKRI) is final and cannot be changed. When I conducted my fieldwork in Indonesia in 2017, I witnessed how NU and Pesantren members were actively collaborating to protect the Pesantren from any possible infiltration of HT ideology. Essentially, HT grows in universities where most students are from the urban middle class. HT is not quite successful in attracting rural students as the majority of them are already affiliated with the NU.

My discussion with Pak Syahrul, a senior teacher at Pesantren Sunan Drajat, often touched upon the issue of pan-Islamism, radicalism, and nationalism. For example, Pak Syahrul said that the NU cannot be separated from the NKRI since the NU supports and protects the NKRI from dangerous ideologies. He said "(Kyai) Mbah Hasyim (Asy'ari) [the founder of NU] thought that Islam and Indonesia were inseparable, and Pancasila was already Islamic." This statement implies that the NU founding father already mandated his followers always to protect

and guard NKRI and Pancasila. During my fieldwork, the anti-NKRI movement was a serious issue in Indonesia, such that NU headquarters initiated a “National Meeting of Ulama of Nusantara” (Silaturahmi Alim Ulama Nusantara), which was held in Pesantren Al-Anwar, Sarang, Central Java, in March 2017.

About 99 Kyais from all over the country were invited to attend. These 99 Kyais were acknowledged as “special Kyai” (Kyai Khos). They were the top of the thousands of Kyais in Indonesia. Kyai Ghofur of Pesantren Sunan Drajat was one of those invited. The meeting produced five recommendations, and the first and main was the “NU always guides Pancasila and NKRI, and NU’s existence is inseparable from the existence of NKRI itself.”

Nevertheless, the interpretation of “guides” (*mengawal*) here is not singular. Each Kyai has his own interpretation, thus, each Kyai will implement the recommendations differently. Kyai Ghofur, who is known as an entrepreneur Kyai, for example, has committed to build and strengthen NKRI’s economic sectors through establishing several business units that empower local people. One of his ambitions is to fight against colonialism in economic sectors. In his morning teaching, Kyai Ghofur said that Aqua (mineral water owned by Danone) was a form of colonialism. He further argued, “the revenue of Aqua is taken by foreigners (*orang asing*), not Indonesians.” Another day, he mentioned,

Importing products from overseas are doubtful” (*syubhat*)... To solve the problem is through making Indonesian products... For example, making Aidrat (Pesantren Sunan Drajat’s mineral water) ... It is easy to know Indonesian products’ “safety” (*halal*).

This was one of the reasons he built Aidrat. He wanted his santri (followers/students) to consume Aidrat, so the revenue would return to the Pesantren, the santri, and the local people who work there. At the same time, Kyai Ghofur ordered a fatwa, forbidding his santri to drink Aqua, since Aqua does not provide any direct benefits for the Pesantren and Indonesia. To attract

the santri to move from Aqua to Aidrat, the Pesantren promoted free Aidrat inside the Pesantren area.

After talking about the *halal* status of Aidrat, Kyai Ghofur then mentioned the danger of foreigners (or Indonesians that act like foreigners) and foreign countries. He was afraid that the revenue from Indonesia's natural resources would flow out of the country. I found it interesting that Kyai Ghofur linked the *halal* product and capital flight with leadership. Here, I argue that Kyai Ghofur's concern goes beyond religion, but touches politics, the economy, and nationalism. During my fieldwork, Indonesia was influenced by a tense Jakarta election (the capital of Indonesia) campaign. The campaign was tense because one candidate, Basuki Purnama (who is a Chinese-Indonesian and Christian), was a controversial figure. He was the acting governor of Jakarta, having replaced the prior governor, Joko Widodo, who was elected as the Indonesian President in 2014.

Purnama was controversial because of his non-populist policies (some of them were his plan to legalize prostitution in Jakarta, total support for foreign investment, and the development of mega malls, in which the poor in those communities would be displaced) during his term as acting governor. Many Muslims especially criticized Purnama's policies because they were regarded as anti-Islamic. These Muslims argued that voting for a Muslim as governor is compulsory for Indonesia's future since Jakarta is a miniature of Indonesia. Suddenly, religion became an important issue.

Kyai Ghofur did not clearly show his support, but from what he said during his teachings, he seemed to endorse a Muslim governor for Jakarta. Since Persada TV aired his teaching, a television station owned by Pesantren Sunan Drajat, his support mattered for his santri and alumni who lived in Jakarta and became a sort of guidance for them. Like many Muslims, Kyai

Ghofur's positioned himself as a supporter of the Muslim governor. On the other hand, many Christians supported a Christian governor<sup>71</sup>. Purnama gained the majority support of Jakarta's Christian and Chinese voters during the election, though he lost to Anis Baswedan, who then became Jakarta's governor.

In Indonesia, a rumor was widely spread that Purnama was backed up by the "Nine Dragons" (*Sembilan Naga*). This term refers to nine prominent Chinese businessmen who own about 90% of Indonesia's natural resources. These "dragons" provided financial support to Purnama. They wanted Purnama to be elected the Jakarta governor so that, in the future, he could help them do business. Indonesians believe that these dragons brought more economic harm than benefit for the country. Their nationalism was questioned as they did not really live in Indonesia, but took money from the country and invested it overseas. The Nine Dragons are seen more like foreigners than Indonesians.

For example, during Purnama's governance, the dragons pushed the government to build "Reclamation Island" (Pulau Reklamasi), a multi-million-dollar project on the northern coast of Jakarta. The public questioned this Reklamasi project because it mostly benefited the elite and displaced the poor. The project also violated Law 27/2007 on the Spatial Plan. This phenomenon reminds people of the tension between Indonesian "Pribumi" (indigenous/nationalist) and the "Non-Pribumi" (Chinese/foreigners/non-nationalist) of the past.

During colonial times, the Chinese community was economically influential. Rush (1991) states that the Chinese community, such as merchants and traders, were the wealthiest entrepreneurs in Java. They dominated the banks that provided loans for many people, not only

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<sup>71</sup> Since the Indonesian constitution accommodates religious ideologies, preferences to vote on a leader based on religious affiliation is guaranteed by the constitution (Basic Law/28J/1), which mentions that every person is mandated to respect another's rights. This law gives protection for anyone to elect a leader from their own religious background.

Pribumi but also the Dutch. Although the Dutch was the master of the colony, they allowed the Chinese to take control of the economy (Van Hogendorp, 1800 and Furnivall, 1944 as cited in Kemasang, 1985, p. 72). This mutual relationship was broken after the 1880's rural depression when the Dutch observed that the Chinese were racketeering, cheating, and committing usury. The Dutch stigmatized the Chinese, saying they were dangerous to the economy of the colony (later known as Sinophobia). Similarly, the Javanese locals saw the Chinese as the leading cause of poverty and social threat (Rush, 1991, p. 23). However, the Chinese's social position remained in the middle as a "buffer."

To Purdey (2006), this position shows a distinct characteristic of the Chinese, both ethnically and economically. For the elite, the Chinese existed as a "scapegoat." For the indigenous (Pribumi), the Chinese were a target of frustration, especially in a time of economic crisis (p. 26). The peak of this frustration was after the downfall of Suharto (New Order) in 1998 due to the Asian financial crisis of 1997. People accused the Chinese-Indonesians as being the main actors behind the crisis. Some Chinese-Indonesia became victims of the social riot in 1998.

The downfall of Suharto, known as the Reformasi of 1998, however, brought significant changes. The Reformasi transformed the country into a more democratic nation. In this new era, the Chinese-Indonesian identity was reborn. Chinese-Indonesians have enjoyed the freedom to express their identity and participate in the political and economic life of the country. Purnama's emergence as a popular politician—despite his loss during the governor election—is a clear example of the change<sup>72</sup>. Indonesians tried hard to erase the dichotomy between Pribumi (indigenous) and Non-Pribumi (Chinese/foreigners) and build new relationships. Rather than making a binary Pribumi-Non-Pribumi, Indonesians blend it into one Pribumi. The Chinese are

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<sup>72</sup> During Suharto's era, Chinese-Indonesians were afraid of being politicians.

now called Pribumi since they were born, live, interact, and work in Indonesia. What I saw during my fieldwork was that all communities try to be united under Indonesian nationalism. Kyai Ghofur himself got involved in deconstructing the colonial legacy in his daily activities.

Nonetheless, Kyai Ghofur's position toward Chinese-Indonesian is still complicated and ambiguous. On the one hand, he is critical of the threat from foreigners (the non-nationalists, who are often identified as Chinese-Indonesians) to the country. Kyai Ghofur aimed to show his political position and supported Muslim leaders because he may have seen a threat from the non-nationalists (who are also non-Muslim) to his country. He could not support the idea of Indonesia being run by people like the Nine Dragons. On the other hand, Kyai Ghofur built an economic alliance with Pak Budi, the owner of Agrindo and Tri Ratna Diesel, an Indonesian-Chinese. Pesantren Sunan Drajat collaborates with these Chinese-Indonesian-owned companies to develop Kemiri Sunan, as well as the shipping industry in Lamongan. Kyai Ghofur also welcomed a Chinese-Indonesian politician, named Hary Tanoë, the leader of the "Partai Persatuan Indonesia" (Indonesian Unity Party/Perindo) when he wished to speak in front of 12,000 santri. Despite many protests from conservative Islamic groups, Kyai Ghofur and Pesantren Sunan Drajat did not change their mission to erase the Pribumi-Non-Pribumi dichotomy.

The NU, as the umbrella organization of many Pesantrens, has had a good relationship with Chinese-Indonesian communities since the New Order. The relationship is even better since the Reformasi. Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur, the fourth president of Indonesia, who was also the leader of the NU from 1984-1998, and the grandson of the NU founder, is the one who made that relationship possible. Due to his close relationship with the Chinese community and his continuous advocacy of Chinese rights, Gus Dur is called Bapak Tionghoa (Father of Chinese-Indonesian) (Soebagjo, 2008). When he was in power, from 1999 to 2001, Gus Dur revoked

Presidential Instruction No.14/1967 on Chinese Identity that denigrated the Chinese-Indonesian communities.

Saying that Indonesian or Pesantren products are better than foreign products, preferring *halal* products than *haram* (forbidden), voting Pribumi and Muslim for future Indonesian leaders, criticizing people who are assumed non-nationalist, yet, collaborating with them complicate Kyai Ghofur's (as well as Pesantren Sunan Drajat's) position. This ambiguous position, in turn, stimulates a new discussion of the intertwinement of religion, economy, and nationalism in contemporary Indonesia and pushes us to think more about the awkward transformation of the Pesantren in the current Reformasi and globalization era. Along with embracing or joining the neoliberal market regime, the Pesantren joined the economic nationalist movement that aims to protect the domestic market from foreign (or non-nationalist) economic invasion.

Therefore, as noted in Chapter 3, Pesantren members are becoming religious neoliberal subjects through the use of religious and neoliberal ethics to gain economic ends. By becoming religious neoliberals, as previously defined, the Pesantren can show its nationalist commitment. These ambiguous and complex positionalities also illustrate that Pesantren members are playing what I call, "multiple subjectivities," where they change their subjectivities according to the real situation they face. Multiple subjectivities enable them to act idealistically in one moment, pragmatically in another, and both idealistically and pragmatically in some other moments. Here, I argue that Kyai Ghofur and other Pesantren Sunan Drajat members tend to take an idealistic-pragmatic position when showing their nationalist commitment.

The members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat's commitment to nationalism can be seen through their everyday engagement with energy projects, such as the Kemiri Sunan and the incineration plant. They believe that cultivating energy nationalism can help them to become an

independent economic country<sup>73</sup>. This form of nationalism is different from the old one. The old nationalism tends to build a strong sense of “sovereignty of the people and the right of all peoples to determine their own destinies... Native elites fought to overthrow foreign imperial and colonial administrations” (Smith, 1998, p. 1). Here, the contemporary form of nationalism emerges from the daily activities of Pesantren members that aim to build a strong economy, which engages the elite and ordinary members of the Pesantren, using both idealistic and pragmatic paths. With energy independence, they believe they will become an independent economic country. If the economy is strong, the country will not be colonized by others.

During my conversation with Hasan, a senior santri of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, who is also a member of the public relations unit, he shared his thoughts about energy-making in the Pesantren. For him, Kemiri Sunan is a symbol of nationalism since it is an original product of Indonesia. While it is originally from the Philippines (as noted in Chapter 4), the members of Pesantren, like Hasan, believe that Kemiri Sunan was planted, grown, cultivated, and furthermore, transformed to an energy source by Indonesians, and therefore, is a product of Indonesia. Pak Hasbullah echoed Hasan by saying that many foreigners aimed to buy Kemiri Sunan, yet, they were rejected by the Pesantren because the project of energy-making was not yet complete. He said,

They wanted to take over the Kemiri Sunan by buying it... They do not want to see us making “progress” (*maju*). If they wanted to give money to facilitate the development of Kemiri, that is okay; if not, we reject it,

Pak Hasbullah claimed that the Pesantren does not want Kemiri Sunan to be hijacked by other countries. The Pesantren welcomes other countries to invest in the project if it helps develop

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<sup>73</sup> Jay Hakes (2008) elaborates the relationship between energy independence and economic growth. He argues that if a country's energy depends on other countries, it will face economic risks (crisis).

Kemiri Sunan as an Indonesian project. This illustrates Pak Hasbullah's use of pragmatic<sup>74</sup> nationalist rhetoric. He shows how energy nationalism opens the possibility of collaborating with external or foreign actors in the project of Kemiri Sunan, as long as it benefits Indonesia.

When I was in another Pesantren, namely Al-Imdad, I encountered similar rhetoric with different positionality (more idealistic) where Kyai and santri proud of having their own alternative energy technology: biogas digester. Although the digester was small and simple, they were proud of having that technology built by Indonesians. The collaboration made the biogas installation in this Pesantren of the Pesantren Al-Imdad and Gadjah Mada University. When I asked Kyai Habib, the leader of this Pesantren about the technology, he said, "the technology is simple, and cannot be compared with other ...we are going to build one more. This is useful for us because we make it for our own needs. We are proud because we make it ourselves...this is Indonesian technology." The santri in this Pesantren used the gas to cook food and boil water every day. The santri said, "This is helpful. We do not need to buy more gas...we have it here now". He did not talk about nationalism directly. But his expression on having such simple technology explains how useful the biogas for him and his Pesantren so they do not have to buy conventional gas (*elpiji*). Here, energy nationalism does not only refer to produce alternative energy but also to reduce the use of conventional energy.

Following the government's national program called, "Gerakan 10 persen" (10 percent movement),<sup>75</sup> launched in 2017 to save domestic energy (or to reduce domestic energy consumption), producing alternative energy and reducing the use of conventional energy has become part of the daily energy nationalism practice inside Pesantren Sunan Drajat. This

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<sup>74</sup> This pragmatism is a strategic maneuver of the Pesantren members.

<sup>75</sup> Through the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the government encourages people to join "Gerakan Nasional Hemat energi" (National Movement on Energy Saving) by reducing the use of electricity by 10%.

program aimed to invite the active participation of the citizenry to show their nationalistic commitment to their country. Joining this movement meant loving the country. Thus, the santri of the Pesantren work on reducing the use of electricity. Unfortunately, this movement did not reach all Pesantren members, only those in the several dormitories inside Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

Nevertheless, Pesantren Sunan Drajat still contributes to the country's energy nationalism program through another plan. They attempted to build the first incineration plant (*Insinerator*) in the country. When I asked Pak Hasbullah about his feelings about this plant, he said it would be another source of pride for the Pesantren, in addition to Kemiri Sunan, as this plant will be the first in Indonesia. The project was intended to be built in Bali Province, but due to political reasons, it was canceled. The Pesantren did not initiate this technology. A local distributor of German technology offered it to Pesantren Sunan Drajat. The distributor saw the commitment of the Pesantren to alternative energy-making and approached the Pesantren to build the technology in Lamongan. Therefore, while the plant is not built or created by Pesantren Sunan Drajat, it will provide great benefit to the Pesantren and the country, as it will become one of the largest plants that can generate electricity from burning waste.

What is interesting here is that the Pesantren members no longer consider the historical origins of the technology (they do not consider whether it is created by Indonesians or Pesantren members), but see the technology's future impact on the country's energy and economic independence. Their national commitment relies on the future rather than the past. Again, here we see the pragmatic-idealistic position of the Pesantren members toward the energy-making process.

### **Pesantren Sunan Drajat and “Energy Independence” (*kemandirian energi*)**

One afternoon, Pak Hasbullah called me. He asked me to come to Kyai Ghofur’s house as soon as possible. This time he wanted me to meet Pak Yuris, a government official based in Jakarta, who dedicated his time to assist Pesantren Sunan Drajat’s agricultural programs. We talked about Kemiri Sunan, its prospects, and its problems. One thing that he wanted me to highlight was the potential of Kemiri Sunan as a symbol of energy independence. According to him, if Kemiri Sunan could provide energy for the Pesantren, then it would create economic independence for the Pesantren as well. Energy independence and economic independence are two sides of a coin in Pesantren Sunan Drajat. There is an economic drive behind this alternative energy project.

When I asked Pak Yuris why being independent is important, he said that Pesantren members, such as the teachers and staff, need to have a better life. “Nobody will help them except themselves...so this [project] is for Pesantren members...the teacher will be able to have a “good motorbike” (*sepeda motor baru*)... and [Pesantren] will not “ask for” (*minta-minta*) money from outsiders...if the Pesantren has a program, it can finance itself.” His comment indicates Indonesian nationalism and the spirit of economic independence. He talked discussed that nationalism provided hope for Indonesians (including the Pesantren members) to have a better life if they were able to manage themselves and their own resources. Other people do not provide this opportunity, but themselves. They have to struggle for themselves to create the life they want to have. Therefore, the story of creating alternative energy is a story about the struggle to have a better economic (being prosperous) and political (being able to manage own destiny) life.

The nationalist rhetoric of being prosperous and being able to manage one's own destiny reminds me of Sukarno's (the first president of Indonesia) words, saying that Indonesia must "stand on its own feet" or be self-reliant (*berdiri di atas kaki sendiri/Berdikari*) (Abdullah, 2009), which is currently reproduced by Prabowo Subianto, the leader of the Gerindra Party, who, as mentioned in Chapter 2, has a close connection with Pesantren Sunan Drajat and Kyai Ghofur. Kyai Ghofur himself often mentions in his teaching that Gerindra is an acronym for "Gerakan Sunan Giri and Sunan Drajat" (Sunan Giri and Sunan Drajat's movement/Gerindra). On many occasions, Subianto often conveys this nationalist rhetoric to his supporters and convinces them that Indonesian people must be self-reliant to be prosperous. Subianto's political stance influences Kyai Ghofur and Pesantren Sunan Drajat's members. With this rhetoric, the Pesantren members aim to invite other Pesantrens also to be self-reliant.

The Pesantren is often assisted by outside donors,<sup>76</sup> be they government bodies, private organizations, or persons. This phenomenon has created a somewhat negative image of Pesantrens, as they are dependent on donors, and maybe more negative when there is a lack of transparency and accountability to their donors (Afifuddin & Nabiha, 2010, p. 1120). Hence, the establishment of business units as a possible solution. Having a core business unit that brings in large amounts of revenue, such as Kemiri Sunan, will help Pesantrens like Sunan Drajat to become independent institutions, as Pak Yuris imagines.

During my time at Pesantren Sunan Drajat, however, I did not see Pesantren members use "candlenut oil" (*minyak Kemiri Sunan*) as a source of energy to electrify the Pesantren's buildings or other facilities. They still used energy provided by the government. They were still waiting for the development of Kemiri Sunan. They continuously reminded me that the project

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<sup>76</sup> To some extent, I will say dependency. In many cases the operational cost of Pesantren is bigger than its revenue. Therefore, it is dependent on donors.

was still ongoing, and more importantly, they retained the dream of having such alternative energy moving forward so that, in the future, Kemiri Sunan would bring them a new source of energy to run the Pesantren, giving them hope for the economic benefits that will bring prosperity to all Pesantren members.

**Figure 9**



Translation: Kemiri Sunan oil is created and found by santris of Pesantren Sunan Drajat for Indonesia. Photo was taken by Ulil Amri

The Pesantren Sunan Drajat members dream and imagine being a real independent country with country-made energy. When I was in the field, I often heard from many people, young and old, literate and illiterate, male and female, from western to eastern parts of the country, who mentioned that Indonesia “is not independent yet” (*belum merdeka*). For them, while Indonesia gained its independence more than 70 years ago, its people have not felt the sense of being independent. Many people talked about neocolonialism through the presence of multinational companies that threaten the country’s economic sovereignty. My interlocutors at

Pesantren Sunan Drajat, for example, often told me that many countries still want to colonize Indonesia, and they suggested that upon the completion of my study in the US, I return to Indonesia to protect the country through developing its economy and contribute to the country's unfinished nationalist project.

As an Indonesian, I could not separate myself from my interlocutors' subjectivity. Their everyday political economic hopes and dreams shaped my perspective and the way I developed my dissertation. I had no intention to focus on nationalism when I designed my research; however, after being in the field, the rhetoric of nationalism produced by my interlocutors spontaneously changed the route of my research. They guided me to pay special attention to their effort in making Indonesia an independent energy country. What struck me was that the effort did not end with Kemiri Sunan alone. Although Kemiri Sunan is a national project that was originally started by the Pesantren Sunan Drajat, this Pesantren also discussed the possibility of building another new alternative energy through the waste incineration plant.

I was at the Pesantren Sunan Drajat when people talked about the plant. I remember it was late afternoon, Pak Hasbullah asked me to accompany him to meet a big business person, named Pak Michelin, and his wife at Kyai Ghofur's house. He hoped that I could use English to speak to Pak Michelin's wife. When I arrived, several people were sitting on the couches. Some of them were Pesantren economic team members, Pesantren guests (liaison officers connected to the Pesantren and Pak Michelin), Pak Hasbullah, Ning Betty, and Gus Aan.

Not long after, Kyai Ghofur joined us. Pak Hasbullah gave me a thin book that contained Pak Michelin's company profile and its products. One of them was an incineration plant. He asked me to read the book and provide comments on it. I was surprised to read the book and thought about a discussion I had earlier with the santris (the cleaning service team) on the

Pesantren's garbage disposal. After reading the book (most of the pages were pictures), I commented that "the incineration plant is cool!". Pak Hasbullah and other people were waiting for me to say something else, but I remained silent. Kyai Ghofur said, "He [me] is still learning theory and has not practiced yet," which implied that I did not know what was going to happen in the Pesantren with the plant. Not long after that, Pak Michelin arrived. Pak Hasbullah introduced us all to Pak Michelin and his wife. Kyai Ghofur then asked to leave the meeting early and mandated Gus Aan and Ning Betty to discuss the possibility of building the incinerator in the Pesantren area.

Pak Michelin presented his powerpoint slides to us. He explained that the plant included cutting-edge technology made in Germany. The incinerator could burn any waste. After being burned, the waste was then transformed into electric energy. Pak Michelin claimed that the burning process itself had zero emissions. He also said that this technology was better than the US landfill technology. The technology commonly found in the US still emitted greenhouse gases, he continued. Pak Michelin further explained that it was no necessary to separate the waste and recycle since the incinerator could burn everything; the incinerator could process even chemical waste. The incinerator needed at least 1,000 tons of waste every day to make it efficient. With that amount of waste, the Pesantren could generate about 15 megawatts of electricity per day. The Pesantren could electrify all the Pesantren's buildings, including the homes and offices in the Lamongan region. More importantly, the Pesantren would get huge amount of revenue by selling electricity to others<sup>77</sup>. Pesantren Sunan Drajat would get a return on their investment in about 10 to 15 years.

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<sup>77</sup> The discussion about the waste incineration plant signifies a serious effort of Pesantren Sunan Drajat in making alternative energy disregarding the neoliberal logic behind its action. The members of Pesantren can make the argument that any effort made by Pesantren, as long as it is *halal* (permissible by Islamic law), is intended to serve *ummat*, or the nation. The revenue from any business unit of the Pesantren is used for expanding or developing the

The logic of investment and revenue is the logic of capitalism. It accumulates capital to create a market, and vice versa, without limit or end. The members of the Pesantren saw that they could gain a considerable amount of revenue through the incineration plant. The plant could enhance national pride since it will store or host waste from other big provinces, such as Central and West Java<sup>78</sup>. However, the technology was costly (about 18 trillion rupiahs, money the Pesantren did not have). Moreover, the Pesantren would need to provide approximately 2.5 hectares of land for the incineration plant, which would take a huge amount of land owned by the Pesantren. Yet, some people attending the presentation were still optimistic about erecting the plant.

**Figure 10**



Incineration plant presentation in Pesantren Sunan Drajat. Photo was taken by Ulil

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Pesantren so that it can host more santri to learn Islam. The revenue also goes to pay the staff. The bigger the Pesantren, the more it can provide local people with jobs, which, in turn, helps the nation to boost the local and national economy.

<sup>78</sup> Pesantren Sunan Drajat itself is located in East Java.

I saw that the members of the Pesantren were thinking about the investment value of the incinerator, but their main concern was the location. Actually, Pesantren Sunan Drajat had already designated an area for the plant. It would not be easy to build the plant as the approval from many parties that may be impacted was necessary. The building would affect many sectors, including social, cultural, and environmental. Thus, this new project must get public and government approval. The government and the villagers around the Pesantren might approve, but it was unlikely certain NGOs would (Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat/LSM).

Environmental NGOs are very vocal in Indonesia today. Since the Reformasi era, NGOs have been given more power to support and advocate for local people's rights. Under the decentralization policy, environmental NGOs, for example, have been actively helping poor and powerless people all over the country (Peluso et al., 2008). This active role of NGOs follows global trends, where NGO activists provide support for those whose rights are violated by the regime (Antlov et al., 2005). Environmental NGOs especially pay attention to issues of environmental degradation, such as air, water, and land pollution, as well as the destruction of natural resources (p. 4).

One concern during the meeting between Pesantren Sunan Drajat's team and Pak Michelin was the environmental NGOs that could potentially criticize and stop the incinerator project. Based on previous experience, the Pesantren was criticized by the local environmental NGO for its waste management practice because it allowed "toxic waste" (*bahan berbahaya dan beracun/B3*) to be dumped in the mountains<sup>79</sup>. Moreover, I heard a rumor that Pesantren Sunan Drajat had not yet gained a permit to manage the toxic waste, but it stored a large amount of

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<sup>79</sup> This mountain is owned by Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

waste from big companies in Surabaya and Gresik. Therefore, to smooth the installation of the incineration plant, the Pesantren aimed to conduct a visibility study to gain such approvals.

Gus Aan, Ning Betty, Pak Hasbullah, and other members of the Pesantren discussed the approvals and saw the possibility of collaborating with local universities. Pak Michelin proposed an idea that the incinerator should be built as environmentally friendly as possible, perhaps through making it a future ecotourism site. He showed the incinerator ecotour model in his presentation slides. According to him, ecotourism could potentially mitigate public criticism. The Pesantren members nodded and agreed with this idea.

Still, the incineration plant is not without other problems. In Germany, the technology has been criticized for its “gaseous components of the hazardous waste that have the tricky characteristics of recombining in the form of toxic furan polymers and dioxin” (Ludwig & Schmid, 2007).<sup>80</sup> Friends of Earth, for example, accused the country’s waste professionals (engineers) of taking advantage of nature. The growing number of incineration plants make Germany one of the top ranking importers of waste in the world. Pak Michelin bought the license from a German company to sell the product in Indonesia and Malaysia. Initially, the project was intended to be built in Bali, but due to local political change, Pak Michelin stopped it.

If Pesantren Sunan Drajat successfully builds the incinerator, it will be the first plant in the country that has this kind of cutting-edge technology for waste management, and, at the same time, it will also be the first plant in the country to produce toxic gases. Thus, this German technology does not only produce local scale risk, but exports risk to other countries. Ulrich Beck (1992) argues that modern technology creates “social hazards” (p. 13), where globalization has enabled the expansion of risk from local to global territory. When I was there, nobody from

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<sup>80</sup> See <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/germany-s-booming-incineration-industry-burning-the-world-s-waste-a-467239.html>

the Pesantren asked Pak Michelin about the potential environmental risk. They were simply focused on the cost and potential revenue of the technology. They neglected the potential risk embedded in the plant because they focused too much on the energy independence project.

The members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat seemed to be serious about building and using this technology, thus, they began to find ways to seek government support. During the visit of a national political figure, Surya Paloh, who is part of the “first circle” (*ring satu*) of President Jokowi<sup>81</sup>, Gus Aan and Gus Iwan discussed the possibility of getting support from the national government for this project. Paloh gave advice that was similar to the idea proposed by Pak Michelin, that the Pesantren should consider environmental NGOs/LSM. According to Paloh, the LSM was the main enemy of the government today. It never wanted to support government programs, preferring, instead that they fail. He complained that “Today, the LSM often puts pressure on the government... they ‘threaten’ (*bikin takut*) the government.” Paloh shows the awkward progress of Indonesian democracy today, where LSMs play a significant role, yet, at the same time, are seen as the main barriers for the government, for the local people, for the national development program, and the future of Indonesian nationalism. Currently, Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Pak Michelin, and Pak Paloh share similar concerns about LSMs practice in the country.

When I joined Kyai Ghofur’s morning teaching, I often heard him complaining about LSM activities. He said that LSMs should not oppose any project, be it from the government or business entities if it brings benefits to the local people and Indonesians in general. He then told a story where a youth organization under the NU, the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII/*Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia*), protested Pesantren Sunan Drajat’s mining

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<sup>81</sup> Pseudonym.

trucks in Gresik, the region in which the trucks always pass to reach Surabaya. Kyai Ghofur was angry because he knew that the NU youth, who are also santri (from other Pesantrens), conducted the protest.

During my fieldwork, there was a controversy about the construction of a new cement factory in Rembang, Central Java (Kendeng Mountain). The LSM, supported by local communities, rejected the factory's activity because it was a Karst region, which contains underground rivers that are important for agricultural activities. Kyai Ghofur's position was clear. He supported the factory because it would bring benefit to the local people in the region and would boost the national economy through tax and revenue shares. He criticized the LSM for their counterproductive actions and reminded the PMII not to get involved with the opposition movement. Eventually, the opposition won the battle after President Widodo (current president of Indonesia) halted the factory's construction.

Kyai Ghofur criticized the LSM because, in many cases, LSM does not act on behalf of the local people or Indonesian people in general, but themselves. He accused them of bringing a foreign and anti-nationalist agenda. He also accused the LSM activists of often seeking money from the companies or business they criticize. This view was amplified by Pak Hasbullah, who told me that one time, he was approached by LSM after criticizing the Pesantren Sunan Drajat's business units causing environmental problems. He told me that the LSM activists asked him for money to stop the critique. Both Pesantren Sunan Drajat and LSM are part of Indonesia's civil society organization. Ideally, they would work together to build a strong civil society. Unfortunately, since they occupy different positionality in society, they tend to oppose each other. The Pesantren accuses LSM as being anti-nationalist, and the LSM accuse the Pesantren of neglecting environmental impacts from their business units.

## **Pesantren and “Economic Independence” (*kemandirian ekonomi*)**

In mid-March 2017, I was invited by Ning Betty to join her at the Pesantren Tebuireng, Jombang, one of the most influential Pesantrens in Indonesia.<sup>82</sup> She told me that there was going to be a launch of a national economic program, the Indonesian Pesantren Empowerment Foundation (Yayasan Penguatan Pondok Pesantren Indonesia/YP3I). We met in front of her house early in the morning; we did not want to miss the launch that would begin that morning, so we decided to leave Lamongan as early as possible. I didn't sleep that night because I didn't want to miss the opportunity to visit the most influential Pesantren in Indonesia for the last five decades because of its historic role in Indonesian independence. I wanted to see the Pesantren where Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari used to teach his santri about Indonesian nationalism. I also wanted to see the Pesantren that had produced the three big names in Indonesian history: Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari (founder of NU), Kyai Wahid Hasyim (the first Minister of Religion in Sukarno's era), and Kyai Abdurrahman Wahid (the fourth president of Indonesia).

Ning Betty replaced Kyai Ghofur, who could not attend the launch. She usually represented her father for economic events held outside Pesantren Sunan Drajat. She is the representative of the Pesantren's economic program. We drove about one hour to reach Tuban, a region between Lamongan and Jombang. In Tuban, we stopped at Pesantren Langitan, another historic Pesantren, where a young Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari studied. At this Pesantren, we picked up Ning Qur, the wife of Kyai Abdullah Munif, one of the leaders of Pesantren Langitan, and continued the trip to Jombang. Ning Betty and Ning Qur are active members of YP3I.

The women of the Pesantrens are very active recently. They do not want to be left behind the men in building the Pesantren and contributing to the country. When I talked to them, they

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<sup>82</sup> Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of the Pesantren, as well as the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, started fighting against colonialism in this place.

argued that they had a more significant role than men or Kyais in the Pesantren because they were responsible in the kitchen (the busiest place inside Pesantrens), and currently, the business units of Pesantren. During our trip to Jombang, Ning Betty and Ning Qur discussed the Pesantren condition that needed to be empowered economically. Ning Betty shared her story, saying that she was very busy recently due to two activities: studying and managing the Pesantren's business units. Ning Betty is doing her Ph.D. in Islamic economics at the University of Airlangga, Surabaya, the capital city of East Java. At the same time, she also manages the Pesantren's cooperative (*koperasi*), canteens, and some other business units within Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

We arrived at Pesantren Tebuireng at 9:00 am, before the launch and we joined the crowd. Many stalls were located in front of the Pesantren Tebuireng auditorium and were opened by participants to show the Pesantren's products, such as food, handicrafts, books, and clothes. I split from Ning Betty and Ning Qur since they joined the women participants of the launch. I decided to sit in the back of the Pesantren's auditorium. There were about 500 people inside the auditorium. Some of the national figures who usually appeared on television were there, including Marzuki Ali (former Chairman of National Legislative Assembly), Kyai Solahuddin Wahid (the younger brother of Gus Dur, the leader of Pesantren Tebuireng Jombang), Muliaman Hadad (Chairman of Financial Services Authority of Indonesia/OJK), and Heppy Trenggono (Chairman of Indonesia Islamic Business Forum). Most of the participants were from various provinces (*propinsi*) and regions (*kabupaten*) in Indonesia.

The launch opened with a reading from the Qur'an and its translation. This ritual is common in any Islamic events in the country with a purpose that God will bless the events. Then, Pak Marzuki gave an introductory speech, mentioning the importance of establishing the YP3I. According to him, it was time to build synergy among Indonesian Pesantrens since

Pesantrens are the “frontline” (*garda terdepan*) of the national development. He clearly used the nationalist rhetoric that Indonesian national development was largely influenced by the Muslims’ (*ummat*) economic development. He continued:

The potential that the *ummat* have are in production, distribution, and consumption...unfortunately, we do not “dominate” (*menguasai*) the production and the distribution sectors...the *ummat* are just consumers...YP3I arises as a “spear” (*ujung tombak*) for building the *ummat*’s economy.

Pak Marzuki was once the Chairman of the National Legislative Assembly, but was not re-elected after 2014. He then decided to return to his prior activity as a businessperson. Currently, he is concerned about the national economy that he believes is no longer managed by Indonesians, thus, he, with other national figures, established YP3I. Many Indonesians, such as those who attended the launch, believed that Indonesia’s independence was just a *de jure* (legal) status that the country gained in 1945. In reality, it is not yet *de facto* (factual) independent. The national resources were still owned and managed by foreigners (*orang asing*). Empowering Pesantrens became the main theme of the launch. The participants believed that the national economy must be owned and managed by Indonesians.

Gus Solah, the next speaker, mentioned that the Pesantrens’ economy could not be separated from Indonesian economy since Islam and Indonesia were inseparable. He then presented the fact that in Indonesia currently there were about 30,000 Pesantrens with more than four million santris. The majority of them were located in Java. Gus Solah used the example of Pesantren Sidogiri, the oldest Pesantren in Indonesia, that he saw had focused on economic development. This Pesantren has been widely known to have the largest Islamic microfinance institution (*Baitul Mal Wa Tamwil/BMT*) in Indonesia. According to Fealy and White (2008), Pesantren Sidogiri provided “interest free finance” to the poor, which helps them get out of the poverty trap at the local level.

When I talked to Ning Betty about the possibility of replicating Pesantren Sidogiri's program at Pesantren Sunan Drajat, she told me that Pesantren Sunan Drajat has a BMT, but it has not fully operated like an actual BMTs. Nevertheless, Ning Betty committed to developing Pesantren Sunan Drajat's business units so that they could boost the local economy and help the poor. She paid particular attention to the role of the Pesantren's mini market (Koperasi) to support YP3I programs by buying and selling daily products. It is expected that in the long run, each Pesantren would have its own products, which could then be distributed to other Pesantrens, so that they could create what they called, inter-Pesantren trade. If this long-term goal is achieved, the Pesantren members believe that they would dominate the country's economy. Similar to what Pak Marzuki mentioned in his speech, "YP3I would replace the domination of Indomaret and Alfamart."<sup>83</sup> The YP3I dream is that Pesantrens would have similar kinds of "marts" in the future, whose products are mainly supplied, distributed, and consumed by Indonesians.

Pak Heppy, the speaker after Gus Solah, highlighted two potential problems that YP3I would face in the future: price and quality. Since the program was just initiated, they believed that the price of the YP3I products would be higher than other similar products sold by Indomaret and Alfamart. They also believed that the quality of products may not be as good as other products already entered the market. To anticipate this, Pak Heppy reminded YP3I members that they have to have ideology (a belief, value, and commitment). With ideology, the members prioritize buying the YP3I products over others. By buying the YP3I products, the members would indirectly support the development of YP3I and Pesantrens since the revenue would go to Pesantren members. Pak Heppy then explained:

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<sup>83</sup> These two stores are like Seven Eleven and Circle K in the U.S. These marts are owned by Chinese-Indonesians, and dominate Indonesia's retail market.

The most important thing in this program is ideology. We need ideology to make this program bigger....do not ask for the quality of the YP3I products because we are still starting to produce them... Gradually, the products will be better and can be competitive with others in the market.

Ideology was often mentioned during the launch and YP3I was glorified as the symbol of the revival of Indonesian national economy. To better understand this contemporary Indonesian economic nationalist movement, it is necessary to understand the intertwinement of Islam-ness (*ke-Islaman*) and Indonesia-ness (*ke-Indonesiaan*). Gus Solah reminded the launch participants that it was the *ulama* (Islamic clerics) or *syuhada* (jihadists) that made Indonesian independence possible. The spirit of jihad was embodied in the blood of the *syuhada* who risked their lives to fight against colonialism. This rhetoric goes back to Indonesian pre-independence days.

Scholars have long argued that Indonesian independence and nationalism are inseparable. They are driven by Islamic belief, the active role of *ulama*, and Muslim activists (Noer, 1963; Azra, et al., 2007; Hefner, 2005; Abdullah, 2009; Laffan, 2003)<sup>84</sup>. The studies of Noer (1963) and Laffan (2003) especially help us to better understand how the *ulama* and Muslim activists fought against colonialism and shaped Indonesian nationalism today. In the introductory chapter of his dissertation titled *The Rise and Development of the Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia during the Dutch Colonial Period (1900-1942)*, Noer (1963) states that “nationalism in Indonesia started with Muslim nationalism” (p. 6). He argues that Indonesian Islam was identical to nationalism. Noer focuses his investigation on how Muslims formed Sarekat Islam (a prominent political party in the 1910s) and Muhammadiyah (the first modern Muslim organization in the country) as socio-political vehicles to fight against Dutch colonialism.

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<sup>84</sup> Some others argue that it was the contribution of the secular and well-educated Indonesians (Elson, 2010; Leifer, 2002; Toer, 1996a; 1996b; 1996c; 1996d).

Islam and Islamic organizations during the colonial period were seen as a “particular danger” to the Dutch. The Dutch were particularly concerned with the ulama, the *syuhada*, and religious teachers. They were afraid of the political role of these people since they had the power to mobilize villagers to conduct jihad against the colonizers. The Dutch were also afraid that these people would copy the revolt of Prince Diponegoro and Haji Wasid from the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Java. To prevent future revolt, the Dutch government exiled some ulama and even discouraged Muslims to do hajj pilgrimages to Mecca. The Dutch prevented Muslims from going to Mecca because Mecca was considered a place where Muslims around the world gathered, discussed politics, and planned independence movements.

Laffan (2003) echoes and then provides examples of Noer’s work. Laffan shows that both the traditionalist and modern Muslims fought against the Dutch after they returned from Mecca. Syekh Yusuf Al-Makassari, for example, a traditional Sufi (Muslim ascetic), collaborated with Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa in Banten to fight against the Dutch after studying Mecca. Meanwhile, Haji Agus Salim, a modern and educated Muslim, founded the Jong Sumatran Bond (The Association of Young Sumatrans), where he actively organized local people to fight against the Dutch. In Mecca, he met Syekh Khatib Minangkabawi, whom later influenced his thought and a commitment to Islamic nationalism. Later, Salim met Tjokroaminoto, leader of Sarekat Islam (another figure of Islamic nationalism), and began to advocate the idea of Indonesia’s independence. Salim and Tjokroaminoto spread the idea of “championing the rights of Muslims and the role of Islam in (the future and independent) state” (Laffan, 2003, p. 189), which is known as the seed of Islamic nationalism today.

Unfortunately, both Noer and Laffan do not elaborate on the economic factors behind the resistance of Indonesian Muslim to the Dutch in detail. They did connect it to the economy, such

as describing the way Sarekat Islam emerged and competed with Chinese traders in Java, and the exploitation of the Indonesian economy for the advantage of the colonial country, but did not use it as a major factor driving Islamic nationalism, the force that now inspires YP3I or the Pesantrens' economic independence.

YP3I's vision to revive the Indonesian economy is mainly driven by everyday economic factors. Pak Heppy, the leader of YP3I, mentioned that Pesantrens have been marginalized in Indonesia. During the colonial days, Pesantrens and ulama fought against the Dutch, but after becoming independent, their role was devalued and marginalized. They are not really included in the country's economic development programs. Today, especially, the Pesantren is used for only gathering voters. Therefore, YP3I's mission is to restore the Pesantren's and ulama's involvement in national economic programs and provide more opportunities for Pesantren members to become economic actors who produce goods and provide services.

Since this is a new organization, they have not really explored all the potential opportunities that the Pesantrens could offer, sell, or put in the market. Nonetheless, during the meeting, many Kyais<sup>85</sup>, Nyais<sup>86</sup>, and Nings<sup>87</sup>, including Ning Betty, had an opportunity to promote her Pesantren's products, such as Aidrat (mineral water) and Garam Samudra (salt). She would love to talk about Kemiri Sunan, but it was not the right time as all the participants in the YP3I event were focused on brainstorming, networking, and planning how to develop their programs in the future.

During the brainstorming and planning sessions, the YP3I participants talked about the comparative advantage that enabled each Pesantren to sell their products. For example, they

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<sup>85</sup> Male, leader of Pesantren.

<sup>86</sup> Nyai means the wife of Kyai.

<sup>87</sup> Ning means the daughter of Kyai and Nyai.

discussed the “the nine basic needs” (*Sembilan bahan pokok*), including rice, vegetable oil, meat, eggs, milk, salt, corn, sugar, and kerosene (*minyak tanah*). Most Pesantrens had each or some of these items ready for sale to others. There were only two Pesantrens, Sunan Drajat and Riyadhul Jannah (led by Kyai Mahfud), that had advanced products. Pesantren Riyadhul Jannah is well known for its “greenlife” (organic rice and vegetable) products. However, during the meeting, Kyai Mahfud offered his Pesantren’s new product, a mobile phone. Meanwhile, Ning Betty planned to offer Kemiri Sunan.

While economic independence became the main theme of the meeting, participants also touched on the energy independence issue. Hadad, the Chairman of OJK, mentioned that YP3I must focus on energy independence. He supported the role of Pesantrens in producing alternative energy. He said that today is the era in which Indonesians must be energy independent. However, he also said that some obstacles might hamper the efforts, such as bad political situations and infrastructure. “Pesantren must become “subject” (*subyek*) in this energy project... so far, Pesantren have only become the “object” (*obyek*),” he convinced the audience.

## **Conclusion**

Indonesians’ efforts to become an energy independent nation is a new phenomenon. However, the spirit of being so has been there since the early days of the country’s independence, where *ulama*, *syuhada*, and activists discussed politics, the economy, and religion. In those early days, the *ulama* brought Islamic ideology to produce nationalist sentiment and mobilized the masses to fight against the colonial regime. Today, however, many Indonesians think that they have not yet achieved independence since their assets (natural resources) do not benefit them, rather they benefit foreigners. Therefore, they have reactivated the nationalist rhetoric and mixed it with Islamic ideology and everyday political-economic aspirations to

mobilize the masses to gain economic independency. As I have shown, many Indonesians realized that they must become an energy independent country, first, before being an economically independent one.

Based on my fieldwork, which took place primarily at the Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Lamongan, I have witnessed serious efforts of the Pesantren members to get involved in the energy nationalist project by producing alternative energy through Kemiri Sunan and an incineration plant. I have also extended my observations to include other Pesantrens, such as Al-Imdad and Darul Ulum, which have built alternative energy installations, to show that Pesantren Sunan Drajat is not the only civil society organization that has joined this “nationalist movement” (*gerakan nasional*). These three cases are just a few examples of thousands of efforts across Indonesia to make their country an energy independent nation. What is different from this new nationalism is that, not only is there government participation, but also non-government organizations, including ordinary citizens.

Nevertheless, this new form of nationalism is complicated. On the one hand, nationalist rhetoric, such as “self-reliance” (*berdikari*) and “anti-foreigners” (*anti-asing*), are often used by Indonesians, as are beliefs, such as buying Indonesian products for Indonesian benefits and foreigners taking resources from Indonesian land, leaving nothing for Indonesians (especially the poor). On the other hand, they welcome foreigners (foreign investment) in the country, as long as they benefit Indonesia or serve Indonesian interests in the long run, such as the case of the incineration plant. It is even more complicated when many Indonesians claim that non-nationalist citizens, like the Chinese-Indonesians, often cause more harm than benefit to the country, yet, at the same time, collaborate with them in developing a nationalist project like Kemiri Sunan.

## CHAPTER 6

### The Entanglement of Modern and Occult Science

When I was in Nahdlatul Ulama headquarters in Jakarta in 2014, Pak Ali, Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama's Disaster Mitigation and Climate Change Council (Lembaga Penanggulangan Bencana dan Perubahan Iklim/LPBI-NU), suggested that I visit Pesantren Sunan Drajat and warned me that I might encounter the occult, mystical, or magical<sup>88</sup> experiences there. I had anticipated his concern as I often heard that many Kyais in my hometown, Sulawesi, also mastered the occult science. Nonetheless, I was not aware that the occult had anything to do with Pesantren Sunan Drajat's alternative energy project, Kemiri Sunan, until I visited there for the first time in Summer 2014.

The santris of Pesantren Sunan Drajat believed that Kyai Ghofur received a whisper that mandated him to develop Kemiri Sunan. In Chapter 4, I elaborated on the (un/re) making of Kemiri Sunan. Here, I elaborate on the occult origin of Kemiri Sunan, and I argue that the spiritual (occult) and the material are intertwined. So too do the occult and modern science; they are like two sides of a coin. The argument of this chapter is built upon Latour's (2012), *We Have Never Been Modern*, in which the separation between nature and culture never exists, as well as De La Cadena's (2015) *Earthbeings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*, which states that our world is an entanglement of the spiritual and material, which are never entirely separated, and finally, Doostdar's (2018), *Iranian Metaphysics: Explorations in Science, Islam, and the Uncanny*, which illustrates that science and superstition exist in our world and shapes our political life and imagination. Here, I will push their arguments further to say that the occult and

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<sup>88</sup> I will use the word "occult", "mysticism", "superstition", "uncanny", "unseen", and "magic" interchangeably.

modern science are like an “awkward meshwork”; they are entangled, indivisible, uncuttable, and coexist in our world. Dusek (1999) argued that modern science we know today was once called magic, or part of magic. According to him, during the Renaissance, “scientific and technological operations” were part of “natural magic” (p. 115). Unfortunately, he only focuses on the historical entanglement of those two traditions, yet, does not touch the contemporary entanglement of the two. In this chapter, I will depict how the two traditions are entangled in very complicated ways in the Pesantren Sunan Drajat.

### **Magic, Science, and the Myth of Separation**

Magic is perceived to decline at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Henry, 2008; Thomas, 1991) when academic institutions removed magic from academic discussion and inquiry. Gradually, magic was separated from science. Henry (2008) observed that during the time of the scientific revolution (16<sup>th</sup> century), the “educated elite” began to conduct boundary work to separate some aspects of natural knowledge, based on what was legitimate, valid, and useful, from what was not. What is surprising is that some educated elites rejected the socio-historic origin of science, which stemmed from magic (Henry 2008, p. 7), while they, in fact, coexisted (Tambiah, 1990 p. 21). Thomas (1991) especially considers the separation of the Protestant church from the medieval practices of occultism and astrology.

The separation of the church from occult practices was followed by the emergence of enlightenment and rationalism in Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which promoted the scientific revolution in some areas of society, including astronomy, medicine, physics, and mathematics. For Thomas (1991), this is the triumph of mechanical philosophy, where the concept of matter replaced spirit, and the concept of science replaced magic to explain natural phenomena. In dealing with social-economic problems, new sciences also emerged which later became known as economics, social science, and psychology, which replaced occultism, magic, and superstition

in explaining problems like poverty and misfortune. These new sciences offered both a new belief that there are sociological causes (or natural causes) for everything in the world. The Enlightenment movement, pushed by both the church and rationalist thinkers, gradually overthrew the existence of magic from social life. Weber's (2004) famous words, "the disenchantment of the world," (p. 13) illustrate how institutions (i.e., churches and schools) and thinkers (intellectuals) at that time attacked magic, occultism, astrology, and other similar practices due to their obstruction of the rationalization of economic life (Walsham, 2008; Thomas, 1991).

Kuhn (1970) and Popper (2004), for example, attacked astrology as "unscientific" and accused it of being a "pseudo-science" because it was not supported by traditional research and scientific methodology. Kuhn, especially, showed how astrology had "many predictions that categorically failed," and concluded that it "was not a science" at all, but "a craft" (p. 8). These two thinkers compared astrology with astronomy and argued that the latter was scientific because it had clear research tradition and methodology through "observation," "measurement" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 9), and "falsification" (Popper, 2002). According to these thinkers, astrology's failed predictions did not push astrologists to conduct research or scientific inquiry like astronomers did. There was a time when astronomers failed, however, they conducted further examination and re-examination. This is what makes astronomy different from astrology. Therefore, it qualifies as a science. However, it is difficult to separate between the early astronomers and astrologers, as many practiced both (i.e., Kepler, Brahe, Tycho) (Kuhn, 1970, p. 9). Even Newton was regarded as the one who believed in the occult and science at the same time (Henry, 2008). For example, Newton believed that the occult existed behind gravity. According to Henry (2008), what Newton meant by the occult was "the causes," the general laws of nature.

Before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, both traditions were still united, and scholars of that age practiced both astrology and astronomy. What happened in Christian Europe, I argue, also occurred in the Islamic world (Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia) during that time. Muslim thinkers also dealt with the occult. The difference between the two worlds, the Christian European of the west and the Islamic east, was that in the latter, the occult and science went hand-in-hand without separation<sup>89</sup> until today<sup>90</sup>. There were some tensions between the two, yet, in general, science did not reject or denigrate the existence of the occult. The Islamic world had been filled with scientists and scientific work since the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Famous thinkers, such as Al-Khawarizmi (algebra), Alfarabi (philosopher), and Avicenna (medicine) never separated science and the occult. The entangled tradition between science and the occult in Islam includes all aspects of life.

Even in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Europe experienced the Reformation and the Enlightenment, people in the East, especially the Muslim world, did not experience tension between religion and science. The Muslim world produced great names, such as Al-Rudani, Ahmed Celebi, and Hasan Celebi. Like Newton in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the western world, Al-Rudani was a scientist, yet also a person who dealt with the occult. El-Rouayheb (2015) illustrates how Rudani's life was well-known for its theological and scientific work. According to him, some scholars at that time described Al-Rudani as follow:

His knowledge of hadith and *ushul* (theology) is unequaled by anyone we have met... In the philosophical sciences—logic, physics, and metaphysics—he was the teacher whose knowledge could not be acquired through natural means. And he was proficient in the sciences of mathematics: Euclid, astronomy, geometry, Almagest, calculus, algebra, arithmetic, cartography, harmony, and geodesy. His knowledge of these fields was unique, other scholars knowing only the

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<sup>89</sup> In Europe, there was a clear separation between religion and the state, science, and politics since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, whereas, in other parts of the world, in predominantly Muslim countries, these categories are never separated.

<sup>90</sup> Although Doostdar (2018) shows that in Iran there is a tendency for the elites (intellectuals) to separate Islam with occultism, many Iranians still see the entanglement of the two realms.

preliminaries of these sciences rather than the advanced issues... In the occult sciences such as divination, magic squares, numerology, and alchemy he was skilled to the utmost (Al-Muhibbi, 1699, as cited in El-Rouayheb, 2015, pp. 165-166).

Notably, some scholars argue that during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Islamic world began to decline in scientific achievement (Saliba, 1994; Esposito, 1998). There are some explanations for this. Huff (1993) and Saliba (1994) observed that the decline of Islamic intellectual history began during the 12<sup>th</sup> century and reached its peak during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The decline of scientific development is related to political power. According to Esposito (1998), the decline of the 12<sup>th</sup> century was attributed to the downfall of the Abbasid power in Baghdad in 1258. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, some other political powers were fading into a period of decline, such as in Mughal, Safavid, and Ottoman. These political powers were devastated by various internal and external problems, including political disintegration, economic losses, and economic competition with European powers (p.25-34).

In addition, Abel (n.d.), as cited in Huff (1993), observed that the decline of Islamic science also related to the emergence of Islamic mysticism (Sufism), which showed intolerance toward the natural sciences (p. 60-61). There was a belief within Sufi communities that life was short, thus, it was not a necessary to study the sciences. If Muslims must learn science, the preferred one was astronomy. Astronomy was preferred for all Muslims to find their way to Mecca for correct prayer (Schimmel, 1975). Islamic jurisprudence and the hadith did not sufficiently help Muslims to know God. The Sufis saw themselves and their knowledge and practice as superior to other Islamic sciences (Lumbard, 2004: 52). Many Muslim scholars have accused Al-Ghazali (Muslim jurist, theologian, and mystic, born in 1058 and died in 1111) of being the prominent thinker behind the decline of scientific development in Islam. His work, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, deconstructed philosophical and scientific inquiries, though

later, many argued that his work combined Islamic mysticism and rationalism (science) (Lumbard, 2004: 57).

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic mysticism grew significantly in other parts of the eastern world and left scientific development behind. It should be noted, however, that while many Muslims preferred Islamic mysticism, the development of natural sciences within the Muslim world did not entirely end. Azra (2004) noted that the period between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was considered to be the most dynamic period in the socio-intellectual history of Islam, especially in Southeast Asia (Indonesia and Malaysia), where the transmission of reformism within Islam produced a unique feature in discourse. It is important to note that reformism here primarily refers to the spiritual sciences, such as found in the Qur'an and the Hadith, which Azra called "Islamic sciences" (p. 2). The period illustrates the transmission of Islamic knowledge from Mecca-Medina to Southeast Asia, engaged in both the hadith and *tariqah* (mystical brotherhood) (p. 3). Azra's work reveals the preference of Muslims of that time to develop occult sciences over natural sciences. According to Azra, Islamic sciences were identical with the occult and mystical sciences. This identity became part of Islamic intellectual history in Indonesia, up until today, and remains in the Pesantren.

However, the glory of Islamic mysticism did not last long. After Mecca was occupied by Wahhabism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (an ultra-conservative Islamic sect that promotes Islamic purification and bans Islamic mysticism) by an alliance of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab with Muhammad ibn Saud, Sufi communities were scattered all over the world. Therefore, the transmission of "Islamic sciences" from Mecca and Medina to Indonesia was becoming more dynamic and complicated, and combined mysticism and puritanism. Both transmitted religious as well as political missions behind the "Islamic sciences." Saudi Arabian puritanism, for

example, exported its anti-colonial consciousness to Indonesian Muslims who traveled to Arabia for pilgrimage. They then returned to Indonesia and began the fight against colonialism. Mecca became the meeting point of Indonesian Muslims to acquire political inspiration.

The Pesantren is regarded as a place where Islamic sciences, such as mysticism or occultism, can maintain their existence and grow, hosting Sufi practices (Howell, 2001). Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Nine Saints taught or introduced Islam in Java. Their teaching was more like Islamic mysticism, which gained many followers, including Pesantren members today. The Nine Saints also taught people the basic principles of Islamic law (*Syariah*), which was entirely different from Wahhabi's school of thought.<sup>91</sup> The combination of both Islamic law and mysticism—similar to the “Islamic sciences” of Azra above—became the main features of today's Pesantren curriculum.

Some scholars predicted that the Pesantrens would disappear from Indonesian society due to the 20<sup>th</sup> century modernity that has overrun Indonesia (Geertz, 1960; Soedjatmoko, 1965). In contrast, Howell (2001) argued that the Pesantrens and Sufi communities gained new vitality with modernity. The main reason behind this is that these groups have successfully transformed themselves, especially after the downfall of Suharto. Howell notes that the Pesantrens and Sufi communities have reunited and re-strengthened the entanglement between the occult and the scientific dimension of Islam, which had been disjointed for centuries. Through Sufi practices, Muslims are “reconciling mystical experience with the sciences” (Thoyibi, 1996, as cited in Howell, 2001).

Howell (2001) provided an example of the combination of Islamic mysticism and science through Kadirun Yahya's life. As a professor of physics and a Sufi practitioner, Yahya gained

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<sup>91</sup> The Pesantren or the traditionalist Muslims teach moderate and often flexible kind of Islamic law that adopts and tolerate local cultures and traditions. Wahhabism on the other hand Wahhabism teaches a strict version of Islam.

much attention from Indonesian politicians and academics for his ability to combine both traditions. In 1961, he established the University of Panca Budi, the only university in the world that taught metaphysics (Van Bruinessen, 2007). Yahya was known for his claim of synthesizing Sufism, science, and technology, and using physics and mathematical concepts to explain his work.

Van Bruinessen (2007) elaborates Yahya's concept of infinity when he explains how God's power can become metaphysical technology for human beings. According to Yahya, infinity symbolizes the uniqueness of God. However, there is a distance between human beings and God. Communication with God needs infinite speed and/or time ( $s=v.t$  where  $s$  is infinite,  $v$  is speed, and  $t$  is time) (p. 239). Among human beings, only the prophets can reach God quickly since they possess distinctive qualities given by God. These qualities are formed through the prophets' regular communication with God. For ordinary human beings, to reach God, it is necessary to connect with the prophets. This connection is called a "medium" (*wasila*), and *tariqah* is the path to that connection to the prophets through "masters" (*gurus*). Yahya is the 35<sup>th</sup> Master of the *Tariqah*, Naqshbandi (p. 240).

God is believed to send energy from His words (*kalimatullah*). This energy is metaphorically described as the 'electric energy' carried by a cable to power a lamp (Van Bruinessen, 2007, p. 240). This energy can destroy anything negative (or, as in the case of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, can create anything) in this world. Van Bruinessen gives two examples of how Yahya used infinite energy to change the natural world. First, when the Galunggung volcano in West Java was about to erupt. Military officers contacted him to prevent the eruption. By using a helicopter, they approached the volcano, and Yahya threw some pebbles that had been injected with *kalimatullah* into the crater. As a result, the volcano ended its activity (p.

240). Second, during the time of the communist revolt in Malaysia, an army officer asked for Yahya's help to combat the communists. Again, using a helicopter, Yahya poured down water with *kalimatullah* in a circle in the forest where many communists were hiding. Those who tried to cross the circle met instant death (p. 241).

I found a similar combination exists in Pesantren Sunan Drajat, where Kyai Ghofur teaches his santris to learn both the occult and modern science. For example, in the morning, he teaches Al-Ghazali's, *Ihya Ulumuddin* (The Revival of Religious Science) and Al-Buni's, *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* (The Sun of Great Knowledge).<sup>92</sup> He has taught these subjects since the beginning of the Pesantren in 1977. When I was visiting the Pesantren, the santris told me that *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* was a special book that offered many benefits. In the book, I came to see the connection between modern science and the occult through the existence of the Kemiri Sunan project. This book is only taught in the Pesantren today because it requires special religious effort to master it.

### **Al-Buni's *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra***

Ahmad bin Ali Al-Buni lived in Egypt between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* contains the secrets of the spiritual world and is also considered to be a manual for esoteric knowledge. Gardiner (2014) described it as,

a lengthy, talisman-laden, quasi-encyclopaedic work on the occult sciences that is replete with texts on alchemy, astrology, geomancy, the science of letters, and other topics that could be gathered under the broad heading of 'occult sciences' (p. 6).

Since it is a science of occult, the author warned his readers that his book is forbidden for those who are not "clean" or "pure" (*suci/thahir*). Clean or pure here means that the readers or learners

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<sup>92</sup> I will just focus on the *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* here since this is directly related to the project that Pesantren Sunan Drajat develops.

must clean or purify their hearts from any worldly pragmatic interests. Al-Buni mentioned clearly in the book that he was not willing to “bless” those without a pure and clean heart.

As a special book, it is believed to provide some practical benefits for readers. According to Witkam (2007), *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* can become “medical recipes for all sorts of purposes and occasions” (p. 185). Al-Buni opens the book by explaining the secret of letters, in this case, Arabic or Qur’anic letters. He then explains the secret of the universe, including the secret of the cosmological spheres. He elaborates the 99 names of God (*asmaul husna*), which have magical power. Later, he explains the secrets of Qur’anic chapters, such as Al-Fatihah, Al-Waqi’ah, Al-Insyirah, and Al-Kahfi. At the end of the book, Al-Buni discusses the existence of the genie (*jinn*) quite comprehensively, explaining clearly how we—human beings—coexist with them in daily life.

When I was reading the book, the most challenging part was the cosmological spheres. This topic taught readers how the moon and stars have a direct influence on our life. Kyai Ghofur, for example, explained that,

God-given destiny can be understood through the movements of the moon and stars...not all people can master this, and it is very difficult, only the saints (*wali*) know it since they have pure heart so that they can get “mysterious whisper” (*bisikan gaib*) from God...through their “miracle” (*karomah*) the saints can predict future...this kind of ability was inherited from Sayyidina Ali.<sup>93</sup>”

Gardiner (2014) argues that *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* was influenced by Hellenistic astrological knowledge (pre-Islamic thought). Gardiner, however, specifies that Hellenistic influence on Al-Buni’s work is implicit rather than explicit. Such zodiacal features entered the Muslim world from around the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries during the Abbasid period, when the caliph

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<sup>93</sup> Sayyidina Ali bin Abi Thalib is Prophet Muhammad’s cousin and son in law—after marriage to Fatimah. Sayyidina Ali is regarded as the one who inherited the mystical teachings of the prophet during his life. Some sources mention that Al-Buni is a Shia follower (the follower of Sayyidina Ali).

led the translation movement of knowledge from the outside of the Arab-Islam world (p. 66). Gardiner notes that some modern scholars accused Al-Buni of practicing the “Islamicization of magic” on those with whom he disagreed. For Gardiner, Al-Buni’s work should be seen as a special work that recognizes “the role of God in the continuous making of the world” (p. 218).

For me, Al-Buni’s work is similar to other Muslim scholarly works, which intend to Islamicize other modern forms of current knowledge.<sup>94</sup> Similar to modern science popular today, in Al-Buni’s era, astrology was very popular, and some scholars were known for their mixed expertise as a physicist and astrologer. In fact, in many places, the occult and the sciences remain entangled even today. At that time, astrology was acknowledged to have significant sociocultural values, such as curing diseases and assisting in the expansion of imperial power. Therefore, I argue that the popularity of astrology attracted Al-Buni to Islamicize it.

By saying Islamicization here, I mean it as a process of Islamizing a particular form of knowledge that admits the role of God in any physical, natural, and sociocultural phenomena. God is positioned “as the ultimate truth” (Hassim and Rossidy, 2000, p. 22) and the primary source of all knowledge. Furthermore, Islamicizing astrology means admitting the engagement of God in the cosmological spheres, as a *prima causa*, the first cause of everything, that regulates the moon and the stars, which have further influence over life. Therefore, through *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra*, Al-Buni invites us to understand the invisible role of God in regulating the universe, including human beings. He then provides a practical use of the book by understanding God’s role, His divine names, and the Qur’an.

When I attended the teaching of the book by Kyai Ghofur, I learned how God’s names and Qur’anic verses can be practically used by the members of the Pesantrens for various

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<sup>94</sup> See the works of Naquib Al-Attas (1993) and Ismail Al-Faruqi (1982) for further understanding of the Islamicization of knowledge.

purposes. Al-Fatihah, for example, is useful for self-protection and “As-Salam” (the name of God that means the ultimate provider of peace and security), is beneficial for curing physical and psychological diseases. I also learned that the book provided guidelines to create amulets (*rajab*) to protect against black magic, evil, and violence. All of these materials are intended to defend ourselves only, not to attack other people. As has been mentioned, Al-Buni does not expect his work to be used for pragmatic purposes, but self-protection. So too does Kyai Ghofur, who taught us that the book was solely for positive purposes, such as curing illnesses and diseases.

The amulets were not solely based on the Qur’an and God’s names. One of the greatest amulets mentioned in *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* is the “Seal of Solomon” (Khatam Sulaiman). Solomon is one of the prophets who had greatest power. He was believed to be the richest among the others and the one who could lead non-human beings, including animals and genies. The seal consists of eight symbols. While not completely clear how the symbol has power, it is said that putting together the eight symbols helps us achieve our goals and protect us from enemies. Goals include being successful in life and achieving honor in society. This is the most favored amulet for the santris of Pesantren Sunan Drajat. In Ma’had Aly, the dorm where I stayed, for example, the santris drew a large Seal of Solomon on the room’s wall. Some santris even wrote the seal inside his cap (*peci*). I saw them writing the seal after attending the teaching of *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra*. However, the seal is nothing without the injection of occult energy. There are various ways to do so. Some santris told me that it can be injected with Qur’anic chapters or verses. Some others argued that the seal can also be filled with God’s names.

Figure 11



Khatam Sulaiman

God's names contain power that must be activated, and *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* is the manual on how to do so. The manual is called the *Abjadun* method. We use *Abjadun* to determine how many times we must mention the name of God to activate His power. For example, when we need to activate "As-Salam" (the ultimate provider of peace and security), according to *Abjadun*, the word consists of four Arabic letters, Alif, Sin, Lam, and Mim, which in total give 131 points. These points are the number of times that we must mention "As-Salam" to activate its power.

In Pesantren Sunan Drajat, the teaching of *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* was restricted for senior santris. Only those who reached the age of 18-19 years old or have enrolled in college could attend the teaching. The reason behind this is that *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* is a difficult book. Someone must be physically, psychologically, and spiritually mature enough to grasp the content of the book. Nevertheless, since the Pesantren broadcasts the teaching every day, except Friday, the teaching can be accessed by outsiders, or even the underage, who might not meet the criteria. I used to think that if the teaching was misused by anyone that would wish to gain pragmatic benefit from it, they could easily do so. However, Kyai Ghofur anticipated this. In one of his morning teachings, he said that the person whose aim was to acquire pragmatic benefit

from the book would gain nothing. He referred to the case of those local people who tried to use the book to win the lottery; these people did not win.

Still, when I spoke to Pak Dahlan, another person who knows and practices this sort of occultism in the Pesantren, he told me that many people who used the book for pragmatic purposes might get what they wanted. However, they must be warned that their wishes or requests, while fulfilled, were not given by God, but the devil. They would get benefit in this life but would suffer in the afterlife. Pak Dahlan continued his explanation that the devil is smart because God allowed them to be so. They have inhabited this world for millions of years, thus, they know how to trick human beings into neglecting God's mandate (religious law). Being close to God is the only way to conquer the devil, Pak Dahlan continued. Therefore, we must be very careful in the study and practice of *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra*.

The alliance with the devil is the main reason that orthodox Sunni Muslims ban the teaching of *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra*. Since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Ibnu Qoyyim Al-Jauziyah, a very well-known Islamic scholar, stood out as a spokesperson against Islamic mysticism, which was later followed by Muslims all over the world. Ibnu Qoyyim attacked Muslim astrologers who claimed to have the ability to reveal the secrets of God, noting that, in most cases, they end up failing (Livingston, 1971, p. 101). Believing astrology means believing in the devil since the devil can only create the illusion, not the truth. The rejection of Islamic mysticism has grown, especially since the Wahhabi sect ruled Saudi Arabia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In Indonesia, *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* is synonymous with the Pesantren. There is no educational institution today that teaches this book except the Pesantren. Van Bruinessen (1990) admitted, however, that while the book is widely taught in the Pesantren, it is not part of the formal curriculum. Many Pesantrens no longer teach this book to their santri as they do not see

the direct material benefit of it. Following the modernization of the Pesantrens, santris were no longer required to study the book. In contrast to these Pesantrens, Pesantren Sunan Drajat, is partly a modern and partly a traditional educational institution, thus, it still requires its santris to study the book. Moreover, as noted, the leader of the Pesantren, Kyai Ghofur, teaches the *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* himself every morning after teaching the *Ihya Ulumuddin*. The *Ihya Ulumuddin* is acknowledged as the most popular text of “Islamic mysticism” (*tasawwuf*) in the country (Van Bruinessen, 1990, p. 253) that is about the purification of heart and the ways to approach God. Kyai Ghofur teaches the *Ihya Ulumuddin* for one hour, followed by thirty minutes of the *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra*. The combination of *Ihya Ulumuddin* and *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* is perfect, as the first book teaches about the purification of the heart before a student studies the spiritual world.

Kyai Ghofur allows Persada TV, owned by the Pesantren Sunan Drajat, to broadcast his teachings of the *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* to a large audience, not only in Lamongan, but other areas of East and Central Java. Kyai Ghofur does not keep this book secret. He engages it with large audiences to provide lessons from the book. For him, knowledge must be disseminated to as many people as possible. Video clips can be seen on YouTube as well, as the Pesantren Sunan Drajat also uploads Ghofur’s teachings on this popular video-sharing website. While some other Pesantrens teach the *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* secretly,<sup>95</sup> Pesantren Sunan Drajat does it publicly.

The way Pesantren Sunan Drajat broadcasts *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* cannot be separated from the intention of Kyai Ghofur to occupy contemporary space and time with a

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<sup>95</sup> Many Pesantrens teach it secretly because they know the power and the impact of the book. If this book is taught publicly, the Pesantren communities are afraid that people will misuse the book for their own personal and pragmatic purposes.

knowledge that is almost extinctual (or forbidden) in today's Islamic world. More and more Pesantrens have transformed themselves into modern institutions and taught their santris modern curriculum, such as math, physics, and computer science. The way Kyai Ghofur popularizes *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* should be seen not as an effort to fight against modernity or modern science, rather, it is a kind of revival of an unpopular Islamic tradition and combine it with modern popular forms of knowledge and science.

### **The Entanglement of Physical and Metaphysical Spheres**

In Islamic tradition, the universe does not consist solely as a material or physical entity but is also a metaphysical one. Kyai Ghofur often mentions in his *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* teaching that there is a strong connection between the physical and metaphysical world. Praying and mentioning the names of God are some of the ways of connecting the two worlds. To help us better understand this, Kyai Ghofur often uses the example of radio or television to explain the connection between the two worlds. He illustrates that both radio and television can display an image or produce sound because it receives signals from stations. Similar to this, prayer is a sort of antenna that captures the signal—God's signal—from the metaphysical world station. According to Kyai Ghofur, sometimes we receive a bad image/sound; "It is because our mind and heart have not focused (*khusyuk*) on God's signal," he said. To get a clear image/sound, we must focus and have a strong belief (*niat*) and sincerity (*ikhlas*) in our prayer.

Kyai Ghofur typically uses such metaphorical examples in teaching his santris. The use of the metaphor to explain the content of *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* reveals a complex intertwinement of Islamic occultism and scientific modernity. The metaphor of television, signal, and antenna open the opportunity (space and time) for the metaphysical entities to occupy the physical/material realm. Morris (2000) called this the return of the occult "in the guise of transparency" (p. 470). Kyai Ghofur has brought the occult back and reenacts its significance,

which had nearly disappeared for almost seven centuries. The material and the spiritual are no longer separated, but coexist like two sides of a coin. Kyai Ghofur shows that both are entangled in the everyday life of Indonesian Muslims.

Comaroff and Comaroff (1993) argued that the return of the occult indicates the spread of new religious movements all over the world. This condition is enabled by the fusion of the modern and traditional and the possible and impossible, where capitalism (both as an age and a hope/messiah) becomes the main actor. Capitalism, or its current trend, neoliberalism, has enabled the occult to get involved in the production of value (p. 19). At the same time, the fusion (modernity and tradition) has enabled the other (the occult), which has been suppressed by the superego (modern science), to return and to exist as “an alternative modernity” (p. 20). Kyai Ghofur takes this opportunity to entangle both the occult and modern science in both the discursive realm and in the empirical-material world to promote a new form of modernity.

I witnessed the emergence of this new modernity in Pesantren Sunan Drajat, where people combined the occult and modern science together. The occult is an important element in this new modernity since it has the capacity to transform our lives. In Pesantren Sunan Drajat, I learned from several people that the occult has the capacity to influence, change, intervene, create, and contribute to real life. Pak Dahlan provided an example of such intervention.<sup>96</sup> He told me a story of when he was asked by his relative, Luthfi,<sup>97</sup> to use his occult power based on the *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra*, to help Luthfi in passing his graduate thesis exam. Luthfi was afraid of being examined (or butchered)<sup>98</sup> by his senior professor. Therefore, he asked Pak Dahlan’s help to smooth the exam, and most importantly, to make the senior professor calm.

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<sup>96</sup> For Sunni Muslim orthodox, the influence of the occult is a manipulative power, not a real one.

<sup>97</sup> Pseudonym.

<sup>98</sup> In Indonesia, examiners are known as the ones who will “butcher” (*membantai*) the examinee. Senior professors are usually referred to as “the butcher” (*pembantai*) or “the killer” (*pembunuh*).

According to Pak Dahlan, it was not easy to do, but Pak Dahlan was willing to do so because he wanted to help Luthfi. It was the first time Pak Dahlan used his occult power to target a professor. Pak Dahlan usually targeted ordinary people who were easily manipulated. He told me that he focused on verbalizing some Qur’anic verses and other rituals for about three days. At the end of his story, Pak Dahlan convinced me that he was successful, as Luthfi smoothly passed his exam without being “killed” (*dibunuh/bantai*) by the professor.

The capacity of the occult in making a change was further exemplified by Kyai Ghofur when he changed the landscape of Banjarwati Village through the Pesantren. Some santris and teachers told me that his occult knowledge, such as the occult guidance from Sunan Drajat, enabled him to transform the Pesantren from a small traditional institution to a large, modern, and productive institution. Under Kyai Ghofur’s leadership, Pesantren Sunan Drajat has now become one of the largest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, known for its business and entrepreneurial characteristics. Pesantren Sunan Drajat combines occult and modern science. It teaches santris how to master occult science by studying and practicing the *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra*, and, at the same time, equips them with knowledge in the modern sciences, training them to become skilled workers in computers, engineering, and shipment technologies (*teknologi perkapalan*).

Kyai Ghofur also gets involved in changing the Paciran sub-district as important religious and economic sites. As discussed in Chapter 2, Kemantren Village hosts two important sites: the grave of Syekh Maulana Ishaq and the Lamongan Shorebase. The grave was once a small religious site where few people visited. Today, with Kyai Ghofur’s involvement, the grave has been beautifully renovated and brings thousands of visitors daily to enjoy the coastal view while visiting the grave. The Lamongan Shorebase, on the other hand, is a hub port and a support

facility for the Indonesian oil and gas industry. Kyai Ghofur played an important role in establishing this base in the Kemantren Village, Paciran sub-district, where he became a social advisor on the project. Here I argue that both the grave and the shorebase represent the coexistence of the occult and modern institutions in Paciran.

The main contribution of the occult that I learned during my fieldwork is the creation of Kemiri Sunan, an alternative energy made from candlenut (*Reutealis Trisperma*). This project began when Kyai Ghofur received an occult mandate (a “mysterious whisper”) (*bisikan gaib*) from Sunan Drajat that guided him to work on alternative energy. His contribution to the development of this project is significant. Here, he has become the main icon of the Kemiri Sunan project. Still, according to Kyai Ghofur, the devil can manipulate people. The devil often tries to act as Sunan Drajat to deceive people. To know who the real Sunan Drajat (a member of the Nine Saints who Islamicized Java around the 15<sup>th</sup> century) is, one must understand the occult sciences. Many people in the Pesantren, such as santris, teachers, and even villagers believe that Kyai Ghofur knows Sunan Drajat, as he is often given guidance from him. Therefore, people believe that Kyai Ghofur and his Pesantren are always guided and protected by Sunan Drajat.

It is important to see how Islamic occultism has been revived and dwells in modernity today. In Indonesia, occultism has always influenced the daily life of society. Bubandt’s (2006) study in North Maluku illustrates that occultism plays a role in Indonesian politics, where political figures use sorcery to defeat their enemies. This practice described by Bubandt is an example of black occultism. In contrast, in the Islamic tradition, especially in the Pesantren, the defeat or attack of people is prohibited (*haram*). Rather than producing negative effects, Islamic occultism aims to produce positive effects, such as the ones that Kyai Ghofur and Pesantren Sunan Drajat practice. In another study, Bubandt (2014) showed how Islamic occultism produces

positive effects on society. For example, he observed one Pesantren in Java, led by Kyai Muzakkin, using one thousand spirits to fight against corruption (p. 130).

Corruption is an extraordinary social problem in a country, and thus, needs extraordinary action. Bubandt noted that, because of corruption, “the body of the nation [Indonesia] is ill” (p. 27). Schwartz (1999) argues that corruption in Indonesia has its root in the ancient cultural tradition (ancient kingdoms), while Robertson-Snape (1999) observed that political and economic conditions also allow the flourishing of corruption in a country where extensive government intervention opens the possibility of bureaucratic corruption, as was the case of Suharto’s government. Some modern institutions have been established to combat corruption, including the Badan Pengawas Kegiatan Aparatur Negara (Council of State’s Apparatus Monitoring Activity/BAPEKAN) and the Tim Pemberantasan Korupsi (Corruption Eradication Team/TPK), both during Suharto’s regime, as well as the Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (Corruption Eradication Committee/KPK), after Reformation era. The latter exists today. Given the fact that the KPK cannot fully eradicate all corruption in Indonesia, Kyai Muzakkin sent spirits to support the KPK’s actions in 2009 (Bubandt, 2014). Whether or not this use of the occult is successful or not is largely immaterial for the purposes of this study; however, its use to combat corruption and support the establishment of democracy and transparency in the country is quite interesting, as is its use to successfully create an alternative energy source, such as Kemiri Sunan.

Similar to the story of Kyai Muzakkin by Bubandt, Kyai Ghofur and Pesantren Sunan Drajat’s involvement in the search for alternative energy in Indonesia supports the country’s efforts to become an independent energy nation in the future. As noted, the country’s efforts have so far failed to produce an alternative energy source (i.e., Jarak Pagar) due to political and

economic barriers. Therefore, the involvement of the Pesantren, especially Islamic occultism, in this national search for alternative energy, is an interesting phenomenon for us to understand how occult power aims to influence a modern state's national agenda.

Here, I discuss the notion of “occult power;” this power is always material.<sup>99</sup> Although Pesantren people often mention the metaphysical actors that occupy metaphysical spheres (and have special metaphysical power) and contribute significantly in the making of Kemiri Sunan, they see the existence of those actors as always material. While they cannot be seen, we can detect them through our affective senses. Kyai Ghofur states that we can only see them through our “eyes’ heart” (*mata hati*). In Schaefer’s (2015) term, “eyes’ heart” may be translated as “religious affect,” the capacity of feeling the power of the other. The agentic capacity of these actors has affected and energized the ambitious programs of the Pesantren to produce alternative energy, such as Kemiri Sunan. Rather than focusing on their existence (what their essence or substance looks like), it is more pertinent to focus on the effect produced by these actors in our lives, or the material entities they collaboratively produce with us.

Kyai Ghofur himself was not interested in talking about the existence, the essence, or the substance of the occult (or metaphysical actors). He often repeated this both in his teachings and conversations with santris. He said that the best way to understand occult power is to see it as “the power of suggestion” (*kekuatan sugesti*). The power of suggestion (*kekuatan sugesti*) here exists in the “mind” (*pikiran*) and has a real impact on our lives. There is a strong connection between *kekuatan sugesti* and our real lives. If we aim to understand something abstract, we end up with another abstract thing, which can go on endlessly. This is similar to Geertz’s (1973)

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<sup>99</sup> I would like to make it clear here that I do not have any intention to dichotomize the spiritual and the material. This is a problematic legacy of modern epistemology. To me, the spirit, the occult, the whisper, the Kemiri Sunan, and other things are all material.

discussion of “meaning,” which cannot be fully understood, as it is like a “turtle all the way down.” There are so many layers of meaning, that it is difficult to find the very foundation of reality. Therefore, if we aim to understand occult power, which is unreal according to reason (and cannot be fully understood by reason), it is helpful to imagine it as an entity which can affect others (or produce material effect). Here, Kyai Ghofur invites us to understand the occult, not by focusing on its abstract form but imagining its real effects (actions and associations with other things).

Many people at Pesantren Sunan Drajat told me that if I wanted to see the effect of occult power, I could ask Kyai Ghofur’s patients how the Kyai treated them. I had an opportunity to speak with one of them. One afternoon, I sat down in front of Kyai Ghofur’s house with some patients who were waiting to meet the Kyai. I was very interested in speaking with young people. I approached one of them and asked why they came to the Kyai. One of them, named Hardi,<sup>100</sup> answered that he hoped to ask Kyai Ghofur’s advice and prayer so that he could successfully complete his undergraduate degree. He believed that Kyai Ghofur could help him spiritually to finish his degree. Here, “the advice” and “the prayer” are *kekuatan sugesti*. Kyai Ghofur give *kekuatan sugesti* to people who came to him and asked for help. His *kekuatan sugesti* seemed to work out for those who believed in him, such as Hardi and his colleagues. These people visited Kyai Ghofur to ask for his advice and prayer because they had learned from other people’s testimonies that Kyai Ghofur’s *kekuatan sugesti* had real effect.

Thus, to me, Kyai Ghofur’s *kekuatan sugesti* (or the occult power) is actually a power of hope and optimism given to young people who may have lost hope and interest in their future academic goals. Furthermore, this power of optimism is injected to the Indonesian state, which is

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<sup>100</sup> Pseudonym.

working hard to become an energy independent nation. In relation to the Kemiri Sunan project, Pesantren Sunan Drajat actively constructs the country's future through engagement across time and space. The story of Kemiri Sunan is, therefore, a story of social hope, where the occult power functions as a positive energy that keeps social hope alive. As a positive energy, hope can be seen as a "positive affect" (Hemmings, 2005, p. 558). I argue that all of these entities (affect, hope, and optimism) exist in the realm of the occult. Although they are not real, they are material—occult material. They exist mainly to guide us on our journey that often loses direction.

**"Mysterious Whisper" (*Bisikan Gaib*), Kemiri Sunan's Bioenergy: an Awkward Meshwork**

Seeing the occult's real effect in our real lives reminds me of Ingold's (2011) meshwork.

A meshwork is like "a trail of movement of growth" or "interwoven lines," where there is no boundary between one thing and another. Ingold explained that what he means by this is,

The trail winds through or amidst like the roof of a plant or a stream between its banks. Each such trail is but one strand in a tissue of trails that together comprise the texture of the lifeworld. This texture is what I mean when I speak of organisms being constituted within a relational field. It is a field not of interconnected points but of interwoven lines; not a network but a meshwork (Ingold, 2011, pp. 69-70).

Kemiri Sunan is an example of this meshwork (later called, awkward meshwork), which emerges as an entity comprised of many forces and formations, including the occult and modern science.

In this section, I attempt to show the trail of movement of growth where the "mysterious whisper" (*bisikan gaib*) moves to become modern Kemiri Sunan's bioenergy.

Before discussing that trail of movement, clarification must be given that the transformation of the mysterious whisper to Kemiri Sunan is not like the evolutionary process that Ingold often sees in his meshwork. I do not aim to treat Kemiri Sunan as a product of evolutionary transformation from the whisper to a bioenergy, where the latter is often seen as

more complex than the previous. Rather, I see both the whisper and bioenergy as webs of movement, where both are mutually related and coexist. Webs of movement means that the latter does not end or stop the previous existence (the emergence of Kemiri Sunan does not make the mysterious whisper disappear). Therefore, I will call this movement an “awkward meshwork.”

During my first visit to Pesantren Sunan Drajat in 2014, Barik told me that, “Kyai received a mysterious whisper, telling him that Kemiri Sunan would become the future of Pesantren and Indonesia.” At that time, we were discussing Kemiri Sunan on the second floor of Kyai Ghofur’s house where I stayed as a guest. Pak Hasbullah and Chandra were also involved in the discussion. When Barik spoke of the mysterious whisper, Pak Hasbullah nodded, verifying their shared belief. At first, my response was not to inquire further about who was doing the whispering, when it happened, and or other 5W1H—who, what, when, where, why, and how—questions I learned from my journalist training during my undergraduate study. Rather, my thought was to ask a very specific question: “How would the whisper of Kemiri Sunan affect the future of both the Pesantren and Indonesia?”

Barik and other santris and teachers of Pesantren Sunan Drajat believe that Kyai Ghofur often received mysterious whispers from God through Sunan Drajat spirit. Through this whisper, Kyai Ghofur could see the future. In the Pesantren tradition, communicating with the spirit<sup>101</sup> can be done by those who have “magical power” (*karomah*), especially a wali (saint), and are respected. According to the Pesantren tradition, the spirits can assist human beings in achieving their goals—including seeing the future—as long as they pray and ask the spirits to help them by talking to God. This process is called “*tawassul*”—praying to God through a mediator (spirit). People in the Pesantren believe these spirits are pious figures who have left their body, but have

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<sup>101</sup> The spirits here are not devils or genies, but pious people who have died, such as the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, and saints, including Sunan Drajat.

not died. They exist and can hear our prayers and hopes, and are always willing to help us approach God.

In contrast to our popular belief that human beings cannot see the future, people in the Pesantren argue that this is entirely possible. Although the future is mysterious, God opens the possibility for some people to view it. It is God's will to whom He gives such privilege. I call this privilege occult technology. The to see the future using occult technology, according to Pesantren tradition, is like modern meteorological technology, such as weather satellites and Doppler radar used to predict the weather. Despite the many variables that can alter the weather (meteorologists call it the butterfly effect), the weather is often accurately forecasted.<sup>102</sup> The better the computer technology and scientific equations and observations, the more accurate the weather prediction. Occult technology works with similar logic. The better the quality of someone's prayer (*ibadah*), the closer s/he is to God, the more likely s/he will predict the future. Thus, while many variables affect the future, it is often predicted easily with occult technology.

There is a popular story in Indonesia about Gus Dur's (or Kyai Abdurrahman Wahid, the fourth president of Indonesia, who is also the grandson of Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama) ability to see into the future. Many people believe that he had *karomah*. When he was alive, Gus Dur predicted six things that have occurred. This story is well documented by the Tribunnews (Prasetyo, 2017),<sup>103</sup> a member of Kompas Group, the largest media company in Indonesia. According to this media, as narrated by Kyai Mustofa Zuhad, a Nahdlatul Ulama leader, Gus Dur predicted that Suharto, the second president of Indonesia, would step down from his presidency in 1998. Second, as narrated by Luhut Panjaitan, who is the Coordinating Minister

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<sup>102</sup> The meteorological technology can only predict short term weather (less than a week). More than this the prediction tends to be less accurate due to many variables in the land, sea, and air that can alter the weather.

<sup>103</sup> See <http://jateng.tribunnews.com/2017/12/19/7-ramalan-gus-dur-6-terbukti-tinggal-satu-ramalan-tentang-ahok?page=all>

of Maritime Affairs under Joko Widodo's administration, Gus Dur predicted that he himself would become the third president of Indonesia. "I got a whisper that I would become a president," said Luhut mimicking Gus Dur. Gus Dur told Luhut this a few months before he was elected. Third, before he died, Gus Dur predicted that Kyai Said Aqil Siradj would become a chairman for Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Islamic organization in the country. This is also true. According to Kyai Said's story, Gus Dur told him not to run in Nahdlatul Ulama's election in Solo 2005 because he was not mature enough yet. Gus Dur then said that Kyai Said would be elected after he reached the age of 55. At that time, Kyai Said still ran, but was not get elected. Later, during the 31<sup>st</sup> Nahdlatul Ulama election, Kyai Said was elected (and he was 55 years old).

Gus Dur also predicted that General Sutarman would become the Chief of National Police. "Pak Tarman later will become Kapolda (Chief of Provincial Police), then Kapolda Metro (Chief of Capital City Police in Jakarta), and later, become Kapolri (Chief of National Police)," Gus Dur said. This also became true. Moreover, Gus Dur said in a forum in Central Java that if Jokowi did an excellent job as Solo City Major, he would become president. Today, Joko Widodo is the seventh president of Indonesia. Finally, Gus Dur predicted Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (also known as Ahok) would become a governor, though he failed during a governor election in Bangka Belitung. During the time I conducted my fieldwork in Lamongan, Purnama was the governor of Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, substituting Joko Widodo, who became president.

Gus Dur is not only popular as former Indonesian president. More importantly for Pesantren communities, he is acknowledged as a saint (*wali*). His sainthood is more popular than the Nine Saints who Islamicized Java in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. He was a complete *wali* because he was

a Kyai, a leader of Nahdlatul Ulama, and president of Indonesia. Since his death in 2009, at least 2000 people visit his grave every day. These people do *tawassul* to supplicate before God through Gus Dur because he is believed to be a *wali*.

Moreover, not only Muslims claim Gus Dur's sainthood. A well-known national Catholic priest, Benny Susetyo, also provided testimony about Gus Dur's ability to predict the future. According to Susetyo, two days before the 2004 tsunami hit Aceh, Gus Dur was very anxious, and could not sleep. He told Susetyo that he had bad dream and believed that something bad was going to happen, but did not know where and when.<sup>104</sup> Gus Dur's ability to predict the future is often associated with the mysterious whisper that he received from the metaphysical world. Before making decisions, Gus Dur often communicated with a spirit who people believe was Kyai Hasyim, Gus Dur's grandfather who was also a founder of Nahdlatul Ulama.

Many people have the ability to make predictions like Gus Dur in Indonesia, but are not portrayed in the media. Pak Dahlan told me that in "villages" (*kampung-kampung*) there are many *walis*. Their "spiritual power" (*kesaktian*) is even greater than Gus Dur's. However, they do not appear in public because they focus on praying to God. In Pesantren Sunan Drajat, I never heard the santri refer to the sainthood of Kyai Ghofur, yet, many santri believe that Kyai Ghofur can predict the future. There are several stories that I collected from the field, including his ability to see the future development of Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Kemantren Village, and currently, Kemiri Sunan.

Since Kyai Ghofur received the mysterious whisper about Kemiri Sunan as the future of Indonesia, there seems to be a considerable effort by the Pesantren members to work on Kemiri Sunan. I argue that the prediction made by Kyai Ghofur, based on the mysterious whisper he

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<sup>104</sup> See <http://www.nu.or.id/post/read/84229/peristiwa-tsunami-bikin-romo-benny-akui-kewalian-gus-dur->

received from Sunan Drajat is an example of “the power of suggestion” (*kekuatan sugesti*), which motivated the entire Pesantren to create Kemiri Sunan as alternative energy source. “The power of suggestion” (*kekuatan sugesti*) is a sort of affect: a pre-subjective force that guides human reason, emotion, and intuition. According to Blackman (2010), this force “transforms bodies in their becomings” (p. 173) and has the ability to spread ideas, traditions, and practices to the public, which, in turn, becomes habit, fashion, or style. Here, we can see the interplay between the psychological and sociological. “The power of suggestion” exists as an immaterial or incorporeal process that manifests into material and corporeal effects that entangle the psyche and matter, the individual and society.

Since the “power of suggestion” in the creation of Kemiri Sunan exists as an awkward meshwork, it interweaves various lines, ideas, traditions, forces, ambitions, hopes, desires, dreams, imaginations, social backgrounds, institutions, capitals, media amplification, and individual and social interests. In turn, these vital entities bring vital contributions to the development of Kemiri Sunan. I observed that “the power of suggestion” was more visible to when it manifests itself in the public realm. For example, when the Kemiri Sunan plantation was launched in 2009, it engaged with government officials and artists to amplify the project of the Pesantren. The moment the officials and artists came to Pesantren Sunan Drajat expanded the scale of Kemiri Sunan from a small local-based project to a national one.

From the launch, artists, such as Iwan Fals, and government officials from the Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises, got involved in planting and supporting the Kemiri Sunan project. These top officials and artists visited the Pesantren and showed their support with direct engagement. The local, as well as national media, covered that as a new hope for the country’s

energy future. Although it did not occupy media headlines, Kemiri Sunan's consistent appearance in the national media gained its public attention.

The appearance of "the power of suggestion" in Pesantren Sunan Drajat reactivates the individual and social power of developing alternative energy in Indonesia. This public appearance of "the power of suggestion" exemplifies the reactivation of *mana* in contemporary society (Mazzarella, 2017). In his book, *The Mana of Mass Society*, Mazzarella reexamines Durkheim's notion of *mana*, which roughly means, "spiritual force or efficacy" (p. 1), and discusses how *mana*, powerfully creates our world by blending the real and the virtual, the individual and the social (or the physical and metaphysical). *Mana* is akin to social energy, emerges from an individual and social desire, which then drives something to happen. According to Mazzarella, this social energy is similar to ordinary affect, something both abstract and concrete, impersonal but intimate, running through things and around us (p. 10). The social events around us, such as the Arab Spring in the Middle East, the Occupy Movement, and Black Lives Matter, or the attempt to slow climate change are all examples how *mana*, as force or vital energy, turns into powerful social forms. Like affect, *mana* plays a major role in the public realm. The appearance of "the power of suggestion" will continue to form and create Kemiri Sunan's vitality in the future, which may end up with bigger or smaller energy, depending on the dynamics of the vital materialisms (or forces) that surround it.

## **Conclusion**

Modern and occult sciences are inseparable. The physical and metaphysical spheres are intertwined in an "awkward meshwork" to affect the daily lives of the members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat. The intertwinement between these two elements shows that the separation of modern science from occultism does not occur in the Islamic world, especially in Pesantren communities, as Muslims continue to maintain the existence of these two elements and their

significant impacts. We can see the intertwinement between the two through the teaching of *Syamsul Maarif Al-Kubra* (occult science), along with math, physics, chemistry, accounting, and biology (modern science) in the Pesantren Sunan Drajat. We can also see such intertwinement in the Pesantren's alternative energy project, where it was initially inspired by the mysterious whisper of Sunan Drajat. In turn, this project (among others) has positioned the Pesantren as one that actively promotes religious environmentalism in Indonesia. The creation of such alternative energy (biodiesel) is impossible without the engagement of the occult.

The occult here can be described as either the supernatural entity or the positive energy (which I call "the power of suggestion," or affective power, or *mana*). Anthropologists and scholars of humanities in general often divide human perspective into two categories, *emic* and *etic*, to illustrate the difference between locals' and outsiders' point of view. If we follow their advice, we might put the supernatural entity into the *emic*, while the power of suggestion, into the *etic*. However, these categories are not stable. Kyai Ghofur, for example, interchangeably defines the occult as both the supernatural entity and the power of suggestion. He usually mentions the latter to outsiders to assist their understanding of the nature of the occult and its role in the everyday lives of the Pesantren members.

## CHAPTER 7

### Epilogue: An Invitation

This dissertation demonstrates how entanglements of religious, economic, and environmental factors have motivated members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat (and Indonesian Muslims, more broadly) to engage in socio-environmental activities. The emerging environmental movement continues to both shape and be shaped by several dispositions: (1) the altruistic, religious desire to protect nature from further destruction; (2) the pragmatic impulse to seek profit or economic benefits; and (3) a combination of both. These entanglements characterize contemporary socio-environmental works in Indonesia.

In this dissertation, entanglement describes not systems or situations but rather the practices or interactions among various forces, formations, and subjectivities that precipitate a particular event. This understanding illuminates how socio-environmental practices are always-becoming and always in the making. At Pesantren Sunan Drajat, a diverse group of people study science and the occult, work as healers and in business, and make profits and conserve wealth. It is a place where “everything” is entangled. There, individuals position themselves as both religious, neoliberal subjects and proponents of an alternative modernity, integrating religious norms with neoliberal rationale.

While other works on socio-environmental practices focus on particular aspects of their genesis, this dissertation presents a holistic analysis of the unique material, cultural, and political conditions that have contributed to the practices in Indonesia. In institutions like Pesantren Sunan Drajat, religious norms and virtues play as large a role as other factors, such as nationalism or political economy. This dissertation thus examines how these forces encourage religious

environmentalism in the Pesantren, specifically looking at its tree-planting program, waste management practices, an alternative energy project, and the recent development of an incineration plant.

This dissertation also considers the influential role of the occult in the Pesantren's socio-environmental practices. Recent scholarship illuminates how non-human actors participate in the making of social life (Kapferer; Bubandt, De La Cadena, Doostdar advocate). Similarly, I approach the occult as a central characteristic of everyday life at the Pesantren. Pesantren members, like Kyai Ghofur, employ their knowledge of and beliefs in the occult to prompt social and material change. For example, Kyai Ghofur established his relationship with Pak Budi, the owner of a private shipyard, by offering spiritual medicine; the Pesantren later established a vocational program in ship construction in collaboration with Pak Budi's company, Agrindo. In this entanglement between the occult and material-environmental practices, individuals like Kyai Ghofur rely on shared understandings of the occult to invite, attract, and mobilize people to join and invest in such projects.

Furthermore, this dissertation studies the plurality of positionalities within the Pesantren. Members of Pesantren Sunan Drajat make extensive efforts to produce and provide "everything" (*semuanya*), from goods to services: from dolomite, mineral water, fertilizer, and biodiesel to primary, secondary, and college education. These broad responsibilities have engendered among its members multiple and sometimes contradictory positionalities. The Pesantren's production of mineral water packaging, for instance, blocks trees' water supply and conflicts with its mission to be a green school. Its mining activities undermine its alternative energy endeavors. Neither conservationist nor pragmatist, the Pesantren's socio-environmental practices remain plural and ideologically ambiguous.

This multiplicity, I argue, is unstable. It grows, appears, disappears, and reappears. It depends on its immediate context. In the Kemiri Sunan case, this multiplicity arose from an entanglement of global and national demands for alternative energy, issues of political identity, local economic agendas, nationalism, and shared beliefs in the occult. Between 2014 and 2017, the Pesantren members became excited, disillusioned, then hopeful about the Kemiri Sunan project. Initially excited about an alternative energy project, they later expressed frustration regarding the government's neglect and possible expropriation of Kemiri Sunan. Though relations have since improved, they will continue to evolve with developments in environmental discourse, changes in global fossil fuel prices, the emergence of other alternative energy sources, and the sustained hope of actors involved in the Kemiri Sunan project.

This dissertation aims to capture the dynamic entanglement of all orders, systems, or forces that shape contemporary socio-environmental practices in Indonesia. In *Emergent Ecologies*, Kirksey (2015) discusses how human and non-human forces can both interrupt and bring hope to socio-cultural orders. Dynamic entities like fungi, plants, and animals will move to find existential opportunities, Kirksey explains, and can thus change existing socio-cultural orders, systems, and practices. To complicate Kirksey's unidirectional scheme, I argue for the potential of orders, systems, and practices to create new forms and entities. That is, I posit that existing orders can both enable new entities to emerge and eliminate others. For example, the Kemiri Sunan project may be realized within a particular configuration of socio-cultural orders, systems, and practices; it may be terminated within another.

This study contributes to the anthropological study of religion, the environment, and political economy. It further problematizes the epistemological separation between religion and secularism, science and occultism (modern science and occult science), and tradition and

modernity. It argues that, in the everyday of Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia, these realms are always entangled and intertwined. This dissertation also addresses the literature gap on the mutually constitutive relationships among political economy elements and religious ideologies and practices. Contemporary scholarship primarily focuses on interactions between religion and the state or religion and the environment (Asad, 2003; Mahmood, 2009; Bowen, 2009; Fernando, 2014; Foltz, 2003; Ozdemir, 2003; Gade, 2012; Nasr, 2009). However, these studies observe the role of religious norms in shaping contemporary environmental discourse and practice, giving little attention to how environmental realities shape religion.

Moreover, the dissertation engages with recent discussions on the ontological turn, or what scholars describe as a new “new materialism.” Drawing from De La Cadena (2015) and De Castro’s (2007) works on how religious or spiritual entities participate in the making of social life, this dissertation has examined the role of these invisible entities in an Indonesian alternative energy initiative. At the risk of promoting what Bennett (2010) (calls “old vitalism” or “soul vitalism,”) I have intended to illustrate how local people engage with the occult in the making of everyday social life. Ultimately, I hope this dissertation makes local socio-environmental practices more intelligible to a broader audience, challenging previous dismissals of the locals’ lived and emotional experiences as irrational or unscientific.

My study equally values science and the human imagination to better understand the Pesantren members’ simultaneous belief in the occult and pursuit of advanced alternative energy projects. Like De La Cadena, Mittermaier, and Doostdar, I contest the primacy of science over the occult, magic, and spirituality and begin exploring an anthropology of imagination. By highlighting entanglements between reason and imagination, I aspire to turn our attention toward

the awkward and unusual. If reason helps us best make sense of observable daily life, then imagination best helps us understand what exists above and beyond our senses.

When Kyai Ghofur and other Pesantren members described the mysterious, unfathomable whisper and its invisible, mystical whisperer, I could not comprehend either concept. Then, they explained “*kekuatan sugesti*”—the power of suggestion. It was only once I began imagining the whisperer as someone like Kyai Ghofur that I began to understand. I pictured an elderly man wearing a turban or cap (*kopiah*), slowly articulating positive and motivating advice. The Pesantren members and I participated in an enlightening (albeit awkward) exchange: as they strove to rationalize the whispering figure, I attempted to understand the whisperer using my imagination.

In *Dream, Imagination, and Existence*, Foucault (1986) invites us to not only see the entity—or in this case, the whisperer—but also the world in which it exists. He asks us to understand imagination not as content but as potential. As Mittermaier (2010) notes, Foucault’s provocation prompts “an erasure of the sharp line between subject and object, between absence and presence,” and the “signifier and signified become one.” Rather, they become entangled. Therefore, I would like to invite this dissertation’s readers not only to use their reason to consider socio-environmental practices in Indonesia but also (and especially) to use their imagination to understand how Pesantren Sunat Drajat’s members build and inhabit their mysterious social world.

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