

Religious Structures

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In the centre of Tebu Ireng, Indonesia's most famous Islamic boarding school, is a mosque-graveyard complex which includes the grave of Hashim Ashari, the founder of Tebu Ireng who is remembered and revered as both a Sufi master and an Indonesian national hero. Around this physical and spiritual centre, a number of new spaces (schools, a telecommunications office, computer labs, and banks) have emerged. It is argued here that the very landscape of Tebu Ireng spatializes the kinds of relationships that the school's leaders argue that Muslims should have with the State, secular science, and the global market place.

In East Java, the sacred geography of a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) serves as a model for how faith and modernity should be ordered in the lives of Indonesian Muslims. Pesantren Tebu Ireng has been for many Indonesian traditionalist Muslims a model for how to engage modernization through education. In addition to being a popular boarding school for students from throughout Indonesia, it is also a popular pilgrimage destination (over 2000 pilgrims each month). As an institution that has undergone a transformation from being a traditional centre of Islamic learning, famous for training *ulama*, to a religious boarding school primarily for junior high and high school students, Tebu Ireng's landscape reflects a tension between maintaining tradition and modernizing.

A balanced centre

The mosque and the *mahkam* (graveyard) at the centre of Tebu Ireng form the most sacred space. The landscape proudly proclaims that both normative piety (as exemplified by the mosque) and mysticism (as exemplified by the graveyard and the activities which take place there) must be part of modern life and Indonesian statehood, and it demands that they be placed firmly at the centre.

The Sacred Geography of an Indonesian Islamic Modernity

The Tebu Ireng mosque is of the distinctive Javanese three-tiered pagoda roof style. The three tiers are said to symbolize *Sharia*, *Tariqah*, and *Hakikat* (Law, Mysticism, and Truth). At the entrance to this mosque stands a large drum (*beduq*) used to call the faithful to prayer. Local lore holds that when Hashim Ashari built this mosque he said that, as long as it stood, students (*santri*) would find knowledge and *baraka* (blessing/power) at Tebu Ireng. Because of the special nature of the mosque, some people have been antagonistic towards the building of additional mosques for the *pesantren*'s use.

In addition to communal worship, the mosque is used for the teaching of classical Islamic texts (*ngaji*) including those of al-Ghazali. Besides regular lessons on these texts, some of the leaders hold special sessions during school breaks and the Ramadan. These special sessions are open to pilgrims and regular students alike and start after *salat isyak*, the last prayers of the day, and continue for several hours, sometimes until midnight.

To the west of the mosque is the graveyard of Hashim Ashari and his family members. Sacred geography places this graveyard between the believers and Mecca when they pray. Because the dead are buried facing toward Mecca, the placement of the graveyard suggests that the great *kyai* (*ulama*) buried there are still leading the community in prayer. In Java, this pattern is rare for most *pesantren* leaders, but is common for great saints including the Walisonggo (the legendary nine saints who brought Islam to Java). The graveyard is an important source of *baraka* as it can linger in the body and is transmitted to the area around the tomb. Pilgrims will take a copy of the Qur'an that has been at the graves, absorbing *baraka*, and leave a replacement copy.

The mosque-graveyard complex forms the physical and symbolic centre of the *pesantren*. This complex is, then, representative of traditional Javanese Islamic piety. It reflects three dimensions of piety: *Shariah*, scholarship, and mysticism. It clearly demonstrates that these three dimensions must be balanced; that one cannot exist without the other. The leaders of Tebu Ireng reject the idea that that it is possible to transcend *Shariah* by mystical practice and therefore no longer be required to up-

hold it. They also reject the claim that Sufism must be abandoned in order for Muslims to modernize. Finally, classical scholarship must continue to be an integral part of Muslim intellectual life.

Secular, modern space

All of Tebu Ireng proper is *wakaf* (land dedicated to religious purposes). By incorporating profane spaces within the sacred complex, the landscape of Tebu Ireng is declaring what the relationship should be between Islam and modernity. With Islam as central, Muslims may engage in all aspects of modernity including education, medicine, banking, and marketing. At Tebu Ireng, these activities are located in spaces within the orbit of the *pesantren*, depicting that such secular activities are acceptable when kept within the range of balanced Islamic practice. Surrounding the mosque-graveyard complex on three sides are student dormitories where students sleep, study for school, receive some *ngaji* lessons, and study for *ngaji*. Southeast of the mosque are the library and the fully computerized *pesantren* office. The library at Tebu Ireng subscribes to a wide range of magazines and newspapers, which the students are encouraged to read in order to develop a broad worldview. This is in sharp contrast to traditional *pesantren*, which forbid any outside reading material. The library is well used and includes an historical archive that holds the *kitab* and journals of Hashim Ashari (in Arabic) as well as copies of every research project conducted on Tebu Ireng. Another reflection of this greater openness to outside material is a television in an open-air courtyard which students are allowed to watch on Thursday nights after *tahlilan* (prayers for the dead) at the graves. Just inside the gate are interest-charging banks. These banks serve a number of functions including wire transfers and savings and loans for students, faculty, and neighbours. The presence of interest-charging banks inside a *pesantren* is a controversial move toward what some consider the dangerous side of modernity.

To the west of the main complex are the compounds for the 'secular' junior high and high schools called Sekolah Mengengah Pertama (SMP; First Middle School) and Sekolah Mengengah Atas (SMA; Upper Middle School), respectively. Outside the high school, a large sign proudly boasts that the school has biology, mathematics, and computer laboratories. Further west is the Madrasah Aliyah compound and the campus of Institut KeAgaman Hashim Ashari (IKAHA), which was originally established as Universitas Hashim Ashari (UNHASA) in the 1970s.

Tebu Ireng's involvement in state projects is partially demonstrated by its educational evolution. Next to the schools is a helicopter landing area, said to be used for visiting government dignitaries. The presence of such a facility, whether regularly used or not, makes a statement about the relation-

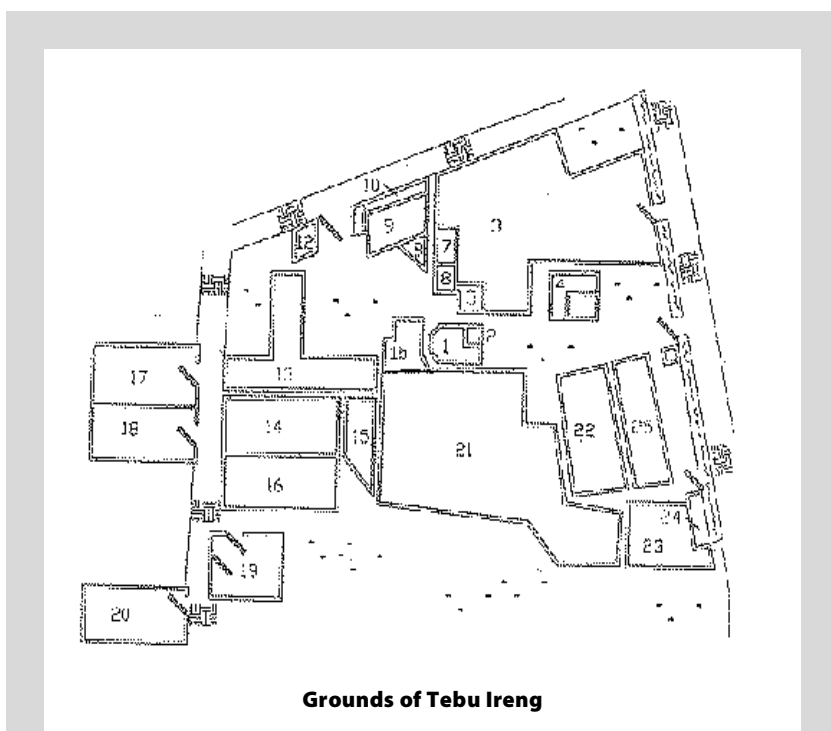
ship between the *ummat* (Islamic community) and the government, as does its placement at the edge of the complex. Good relations with the government are critical but not central.

Between the schools and the mosque-graveyard complex is the general kitchen. By May 1995, all students ate here, a change that reflects aspects of modernity. In traditional *pesantren*, students cooked for themselves, or in cooperative groups; this was seen as part of the training in *kemandirian* (self-sufficiency). However, since students are no longer cooking for themselves, this part of the traditional training in *kemandirian* has been lost. Moreover, since general education has reduced the amount of time for religious education, Tebu Ireng and many other *pesantren* have sought to regain this time by preparing food for the students.

Across the road from the north gate is a new *losmen* (small simple inn). Although the building and the land are owned by Yusuf Hashim's daughter, the establishment is staffed by Tebu Ireng *santri*. This five-room inn is designed for those visitors to the *pondok* who want a more quiet and comfortable environment than the crowded free guestrooms in the *pesantren*. The inn reflects a change in *pesantren* clientele. Many who stay there are fairly wealthy parents from Jakarta, Surabaya, and other urban centres. It also reflects a trend in which the family of *kyai* run businesses that cater to the needs of *santri* and their parents. However, detractors argue that any such support services should be run by the *pesantren*'s neighbours, thus contributing to the economic development of the village.

This brief treatment of the sacred geography of Tebu Ireng, a *pesantren* in East Java, has shown how a summary of the landscape provides a model for reality. The pilgrim enters the *pesantren*, all of which is *wakaf*, and immediately sees a bank, a telecommunications office, and a library. He proceeds past student housing to the mosque-graveyard complex and performs a number of rituals there. As he leaves, he passes through the back gate and encounters government curricula schools and a helicopter-landing pad for government visitors. As he moves through this landscape, he sees a model for how a Muslim should live in the modern world. This model requires traditional piety and mysticism, as an important part of Islamic practice that includes both religious and non-religious scholarship, and good relationships with the existing government, even if it is non-Muslim. ◆

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| 1. Mosque | 13. Tsanawiyah building |
| 1b. Graveyard | 14. Cafeteria |
| 2. Student Affairs Office | 15. Courtyard |
| 3. The <i>kyai</i> 's house | 16. Girls' <i>pondok</i> |
| 4. Small store and Bank Rakyat Indonesia | 17. Junior high school |
| 5. Overnight guest room | 18. Senior high school |
| 6. Security office | 19. Aliyah building |
| 7. Staff dining room | 20. IKAHA |
| 8. Stage (with TV) | 21. Dormitory |
| 9. MAK dormitory | 22. Volleyball court |
| 10. General bathing room | 23. Classrooms |
| 11. The former house of Kyai Wahid | 24. NU-SUMMA bank |
| 12. Skills centre | 25. Pesantren office and library |