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The cinematic Santri : Youth culture, tradition and technology in Muslim Indonesia

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THE CINEMATIC SANTRI

Youth Culture, Tradition and Technology in Muslim Indonesia

Ahmad Nuril Huda

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Ahmad Nuril Huda

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THE CINEMATIC SANTRI

Youth Culture, Tradition and Technology in Muslim Indonesia

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List of Abbreviations

FLP	:	Forum Lingkar Pena ('The Pen's Circle Forum').
FPI	:	Front Pembela Islam ('Islam Defenders Front')
HTI	:	Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia ('The Indonesian HIzbut Tahrir')
IAIN	:	Institute Agama Islam Negeri ('The Sate Islamic College')
ICMI	:	Ikatan Cendikiawan Muslim Indonesia ('Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals')
JIL	:	Jaringan Islam Liberal ('The Islam Liberal Network')
LakpesdamNU	:	Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia ('NU's Institute of Research and Human Resource Development')
Lekra	:	Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat ('Institute of People's Culture')
Lesbumi	:	Lembaga Seniman dan Budayawan Muslim Indonesia ('Institute for Indonesian Muslim Artists and Cultural Activists')
LKiS	:	Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial, ('The Institute of Islamic and Social Studies')
LSDP	:	Liburan Sastra di Pesantren ('Literary Training Camp in Pesantren')
LSF	:	Lembaga Sensor Film ('National Film Censorship Board')
LP3ES	:	Lembaga Pengkajian, Pendidikan dan Pengetahuan Ekonomi dan Sosial ('Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information')

MANIPOL-USDEK	:	'The Political Manifesto of the 1945 Constitution – Indonesian socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy and Indonesian Autonomy'
NASAKOM	:	Nasionalisme, Agama dan Komunisme ('Nationalism, Religion and Communism')
NU	:	Nahdatul Ulama ('The Renaissance of Ulama')
OSPK	:	Organisasi santri Pesantren Kidang ('The Santri Association of Kidang Pesantren')
P3M	:	Pusat Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat ('The Indonesian society for the Development of Pesantren and Society')
PBNU	:	Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama ('The Central Board of NU')
PKI	:	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PKB	:	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa ('Nation Awakening Party')
PKS	:	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera ('Justice and Prosperous Party')
PMII	:	Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia ('Association of Indonesian Muslim Students')
SMA	:	Sekolah Menengah Atas ('Senior High School')
SMP	:	Sekolah Menengah Pertama ('Junior High School')
SFCG	:	Search for Common Ground
UIN	:	Universitas Islam Negeri ('The State Islamic University')

Note on Transliteration

I use Brill's simplified form to transliterate Arabic names and words. Yet, when it comes to the Arabic words that have been adopted as Indonesian language, I refer to the national standard of Indonesian spelling system, and, when necessary, only give a simplified form of their Arabic origin at their first appearance in the dissertation. In writing the other local words, whether they are Indonesian, Javanese or Sundanese language, I usually retain the diacritics.

Abstract

The Cinematic Santri explores the rise and course over the last ten years of cinematic practices among a younger generation of NU associates (*Nahdlatul Ulama*), the largest traditionalist Muslim group in Indonesia and elsewhere. Theoretically, this dissertation draws on anthropological theories of discursive tradition and the ethics of and in everyday life, combined with an analysis of visual and material culture, in order to describe and analyse how young NU people have creatively adapted to, and successfully dealt with 'modern' film-making technologies and practices. Fieldwork for this research project took place during a one year stay at the Jakarta NU headquarters, and in an NU-affiliated *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in West Java. Here the author followed the *pesantren* students (*santri*) as they conducted film screenings and film discussions, when they watched popular films in a commercial cinema theater and created their own short films. He shows that the rise of cinematic practices is both a symptom of NU life, i.e, a result of changes in multiple sectors of the socio-political life of the NU community, especially among these young santri, and an approved method for them in dealing with problems of contemporary life. Their uptake of cinema in turn becomes an ethical practice that may help preserve pesantren traditions in a secular age of digital technologies.

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Introduction

"I have long yearned for a handy-cam", said Rian to his friends, Huda and Syahid, as they gathered in an abandoned storage room behind their dormitory. Rian's hands firmly held a newly purchased handy-cam his mother just delivered as his birthday present. Rian, Huda, and Syahid were pupils of *pesantrén* Al-Hakim, a Javanese traditional Islamic boarding school in Yogyakarta; and the storage room was their regular hiding place where they were used to spending their off-study hours for smoking cigarettes and sharing each other's private and secret stories. In his pesantren where owning a radio is deemed illegal, Rian had to keep his handy-cam out of sight of the pesantren's teachers (the *kyai*). "But what will you do with it?" asked Huda after a while, indicating his unfamiliarity with the video-making technology. "I want to continue my late father's business of making wedding videos", answered Rian optimistically.

Rian however, (still) did not know how to operate a handy-cam. Out of curiosity, he randomly pushed a button on his handy-cam, until it suddenly buzzed like a bee. "Hey, it can sound?!" Rian almost exclaimed. He continued pushing the other buttons. "It sounds! It comes in! It comes out!" Rian was very excited. "What is this?" Huda asked Rian again, referring to a small object that looks like a mini-sized cassette, which he found in the handy-cam's box. "Put that here, here!" told Rian, pointing at a small opening in the handy-cam in which he thought the cassette should be placed.

After the cassette was put inside, Rian directed his handy-cam to Syahid's face. His nervous lips quickly turned into big smiles as he now was able to screen his friend's face through a viewfinder of the handy-cam. Seconds later, he turned the camera's lens to a little hole on a wall behind his back. Through this hole, Rian was used to taking a furtive glance at their *kyai*'s daughter. Knowing what Rian was recording, Syahid took a deep breath and yelled, "Hey... Rian, that's sinful!". Rian made a swing movement with his hands, and turned the camera lens into Syahid, and then into Huda, before

> trying to make a video of his own face. "I can't see my face" Rian grumbled, passing the handy-cam to Syahid who then helped him to videotape his face. As the camera lens now faced onto him, Rian pulled his cigarette and smoked it gently, and no sooner did he blow the smoke into the air than he said, almost shouting, in a Javanese-accent English, "My name is Bond, James Bond!". When doing that, he mimicked the Bond's typical gesture of pointing a pistol to a left side of his chest, and both of Rian's eyes and lips were all smiles. (3 Prayers 3 Loves, Minutes, 20: 36).

***

The above story is an excerpt from *3 Doa 3 Cinta* ('3 Prayers 3 Loves', Dir. Nurman Hakim, 2008), a coming of age film describing three pesantren pupils (called *santri*), who, suffering from painful losses of their beloved ones, managed to grapple with their everyday-life difficulties by using the pesantren's Islamic teachings as their ethical guidance. The film, released in 2008, is the first Indonesian commercial film to be directed by a *santri* filmmaker, and the first film to vividly portray a character of a *santri* with a strong desire for a film-making technology and film-making practice.[1]

The film is a reflection of the rise of what I call "the cinematic *santri*". It refers to a growing number of a younger generation of *santri,* both males and females, who have strong desire, energy, and creativity in organizing various forms of cinematic practices, such as film-making, film screening, and film workshops, in order to articulate their cultural, political and ideological differences. They emerged in post-*Reformasi* Indonesia, which was an intense period following the fall of the dictator Suharto in 1998. The political imperatives of the first decade of *Reformasi* have opened up new freedom and channels for media practices, public engagement, economic mobility, and cultural plurality (see Sen and Hill 2007).[2] This dissertation is aimed at studying the backgrounds, processes, and meanings of the *santri*'s ordinary and everyday uptakes of cinema to shape and comment upon what it means to be a *santri* at the intersection of today's technological, political, social and cultural circumstances.

While this dissertation treats the cinematic *santri* as a real person, it also invokes seeing him or her as "a figure of modernity" (Barker and Linquist et al 2009). While the two, real-life persona and symbolic figure, are interrelated, they are conceptually different. A figure of modernity is a real person who "stands out against the ground of everyday lives" and "encapsulates a modern ethos" (Barker et al 2014: 1). It operates as a

1) Being funded by the Ford Foundation, and catering to global audiences of international film festivals, the film was commercially screened in the country's major cinema chains, in addition to its sold DVDs.

2) The novelty of events happening in the first decade of the post-Suharto period however, should be seen in a critical way. For many of these events are a mere continuation of events originating from the few years before the end of the Suharto era (Heryanto 2014: 6). This is evidenced by the fact that the central government in Jakarta is still strongly dominated by a small circle of political elites, and not to mention the prevailing domination of anti-comunist discourse.

symbol that embodies "the historical process and "structure of feelings" of a particular time and place of a society" (Ibid: 3l, emphasis original). In other words, it is a category of "subject positions" that analytically symbolizes larger-scale processes of a sociocultural transformation that emerges at one particular historical moment (Barker and Lindquist et al 2009: 37).

In this way, the use of a figure is different from the sociological concept of "social type", because it is not invoked as an instrument for classifying an individual's roles in a society, but rather, it emphasizes the symbolic work an individual performs in a society (Barker et al 2014: 3). This in turn means that to invoke the cinematic *santri* as a modern figure draws attention to the symbolic agency that (young) groups of *santri* struggle with in defining themselves against broader processes of sociocultural transformation. These processes include religious changes, economic differences, and political conflicts, that happen in and around their society.

The advantage of recognizing the cinematic *santri* as a figure is that it allows me to draw together the field of cultural production, competition between different Muslim actors and groups and various understandings of Islam, and the particular political and historical moment, which somehow are articulated through this figure. Also, it creates a productive entry into a range of dispersed social, political, historical and religious processes, with regard to the rise of cinematic practices among the *santri* Muslims in post-Suharto Indonesia.

Most commonly, the term *santri* refers to the pesantren's pupils. Yet, it may also be used to designate devout Muslims who practice and obey the essential teachings and rituals of Islam (Geertz 1976 [1960]: 127). Here, my use of it loosely refers to both of them. This is because many, if not most, members of santri communities were once a *religious* pupil in pesantren. Those who have graduated from the pesantren, when "returning" into society, would mostly be tasked to give religious services and learning in their communities. A collection of these pesantren graduates will have in turn formed a larger community of santri that are linked through cultural, spiritual and intellectual networks. In other words, the pesantren's pupils are to a great extent an embryonic santri community.

The term 'santri', however, is never a monolithic term, but represents various Muslim groups and individuals who often vie with each other for public attention and political influence. Their variety ranges from traditionalist, to modernist, and to Islamist, among many other groups – the scope of these terms are defined below. To limit the focus of this dissertation, my use of the term santri strictly refers to traditional Muslim groups who are affiliated, both structurally and culturally, with *Nahdlatul Ulama* ('The Renaissance of *Ulama*', well known as NU), the biggest traditionalist Muslim organization in Indonesia that has strong roots in (traditionalist) pesantren.[3]

3) Likewise, because pesantren is as varied as the concept of santri itself, my use of the term refers to those who belong to traditional categories, from which the NU-santri are generally

In other cases, I will clearly state, for example, "the non-NU santri".

The excerpt of *3 Doa 3 Cinta* quoted at the beginning of the chapter refers to a number of themes that are central to my dissertation. In particular, it stages a new development in the historically-vexed relations between Islam, santri and film in Indonesia. Santri are both marginal and marginalized when it comes to the country's film industry. In the New Order era (1966-98), cinematic representation of the Muslim santri (and of Islam in general) was not only subject to the regime's desire to control and delimit political expressions of Islam (see Barker 2011), but it also was, and has continued to the present day, to be mainly dominated by filmmakers affiliated with the non-NU-santri groups. More importantly, less familiar with visual than textual tradition, many of the santri still regard film technology and cinema-going practices as taboo, and often associate themselves, and are associated by others, as conservative, rural and backward Muslims. Yet, the release and narrative of *3 Doa 3 Cinta* are an exception, and therefore cast a new direction in the relationship between pesantren people and cinema.

While posing in front of his handy-cam as James Bond, one of the youth's icons of the global cultural flow, Rian speaks to us about the santri's aspirational desires, imaginations and identities that are mediated by and through film technologies. Furthermore, the presence of Rian a video-maker in the film, a reflection of the santri director's cinematic desires, show the will and willingness of the santri to intervene in the film arena - from the very interior of the pesantren areas to their ordinary, everyday lives. On top of that, four years after the release of *3 Doa 3 Cinta*, just as I begun conducting this fieldwork, a new generation of santri were emerging across different NU communities in Indonesia who simultaneously turned to cinematic practices as part of, to borrow Cinar's (2005) and Bayat's (2010) words, their "ordinary practice of everyday life". This new situation has in turn left us with a number of questions concerning the relationships between social and political change, popular youth culture, global circuits, and technological advances, which have become interwoven as the backgrounds for this emerging cinematic santri figure.

The take up of cinematic practices by santri, however, has always involved complications. This is because, firstly, the production of religious knowledge and social structures in pesantren society has for centuries been dominated by the old generation of santri (aged above sixty), solidly on the basis of their knowledge and interpretation of traditional texts of Islam. Secondly, most of the cinematic santri are generally of young people (aged below 40), who are not only more tech-savvy than the older santri, but also expect to be at the forefront of cultural development and innovation. Thirdly, the fundamental aspect of film images is that they are "vivid and indelible" (Daston and Galison 1992: 8) and thus they may evoke an excess of meaning and influences

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learn their religious knowledge. Thus, I often use the term "pesantren people", or the NUers, to loosely refer to the traditionalist NU-santri groups.

that are hard to control (by liable authority of a society). It is largely because of the combination of these factors that an embrace of cinematic practices is often seen by the older santri, to borrow Syahid's word I mentioned above, as "sinful". That is to say that cinematic practices may appear to them as frightening, because of the ability of these practices to threaten, for example, the pesantren's century-old and male-dominated tradition of textual authority and social structure. Thus, as it will become clear later, many of the cinematic practices by the young santri were struggling to gain support from, and frequently spurred by tension against the older 'elite' generation of santri. The introduction of film practices into santri communities, thus, prompts an inquiry into how it has affected the socio-cultural conditions of pesantren as an institution of Islamic learning, or in other words: the rise of cinematic santri is a question about continuity and change.

To live as a santri, nevertheless, is to live in a particular historical and sociocultural context. They ceaselessly think and rethink the ordinary practices and interpretations which structure their religious beliefs and lives in view of the shifting currents of their political, social and technological considerations (Marranci 2008; George 2010; Schielke 2010). As the film excerpt shows, the pesantren's strict rules over the use of technological devices did not discourage Rian from owning a handy-cam, and from pursuing his dream of becoming a film-maker. While Rian has his own reason for his cinematic desire, the pesantren people I have worked with throughout my research have narrated their engagement with cinema differently. The narrative of their cinematic engagement includes an insistence of using film as a means of *dakwah* (*dåwa),* an intervention in public debates about the 'right' representation of Islam vis-à-vis the non-NU-santri groups, a concern to preserve pesantren traditions against the "irresistible changes" in and surrounding the pesantren world, and an agentive Muslim subject to live in and be part of the 'secularizing', modern societies and spheres.[4] This way, the take up of cinematic practices by santri is more than "a shallow commercialization of Islam" (Fealy and White 2008), and involves the cultivation of ethical and political sensibilities, behaviors and modes of reasoning for living as a Muslim santri, that are honed and embedded in the pesantren's century-old (everyday-life practices and interpretations of) Islamic tradition. An uptake of cinema by the santri, thus, can be read as a negotiation over tradition, agency, and subjectivity, with regard to the quest of becoming a modern subject.

This dissertation explores the dynamic interactions and relationship between religious tradition, sociocultural changes, and image-making technologies and practices; and the ways in which Islam is daily 'lived' (Marsden 2005) among pious Muslims in pesantren Indonesia against the heterogeneity of human's modern desires

4) Indeed, in recent years, the Indonesian public space, as many scholars have hinted (Fealy and White 2008), has increasingly showed its religious faces. Yet, my use of the term 'secular' here refers to Taylor's use of 'A Secular Age': that is, in every society, signs and symbols of secularity are now irresistibly and inescapably arising (2007).

and the complexity of experience and anxieties of the ordinary lives. I focus on the connection between religious discourse used by the santri for justifying their cinematic practices, the individuals who have played (and continue to play) a key role in the rise of cinematic santri, the social life of film technologies among the pesantren people, and the sociocultural changes that become the backgrounds for the santri's engagement with cinematic practices. I show throughout this dissertation how santri have expressed and negotiated their desire, imagination, and identity of being young and modern, at the intersection of religious beliefs, pesantren history and identity, political and social marginalization, and the enchanting power of the materiality of image-making technologies. I argue, what is central to this process of negotiation between Islam and cinema among the santri, is the role of Islamic tradition as 'a modality of change' (Waldman 1989), one with which the santri are able to "get a grip on the modern world" and feel "at home in modernity" (Marshall Berman as cited in Chakrabarty 1999: 109).

This thesis begins with a discussion of the key conceptual frameworks. Firstly, I discuss how the rise of cinematic santri figure is largely linked to the emerging visibility of Islam in Indonesian public life where different Muslim groups compete with each other for political and religious influence. I then proceed to discuss how cinematic practices as a form of popular youth culture has become a rich site for young santri to express what they consider as Islam in their everyday life. Here, I address how the everyday practices of Islam are crucial to our understanding and conceptualization of "Islam as a matter of human fact in history" (Ahmed 2015: 5). In the last section, I link the notion of "everyday Islam" (Marsden 2005) to the centrality of (rethinking) "Islamic tradition" (Asad 1986) for understanding the complexity of the santri's mundane and modern desires toward image-making technologies and practices. I demonstrate the significance of recognizing the heterogeneity of ways in which santri live their religious traditions according to the diversity of experience and complexity of everyday life.

Islamic film, public sphere, and the politics of Muslim identity

The rise of cinematic santri is largely linked to the popularity of 'Islamic cinema', or 'films that breathe Islam' (*film yang bernafaskan Islam*), which have emerged since the first decade of the 2000s in Indonesia (see Hoesterey and Clark 2012; Huda 2012; van Heeren 2012; Sasono 2013; Heryanto 2014; Izharuddin 2015). Historically, Islamic-themed film took its first appearance in Indonesian cinema by the 1950s and it had been continually produced during the New Order period. Yet, it was the 2008 release of *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (Verses of Love, Dir. Hanung Bramantyo) that marks the contemporary rise of Islam in the realm of Indonesian cinema. It is a film of a polygamous love story involving young, middle-class and cosmopolitan Indonesian Muslim students of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, that was watched by the then new record audience of 3.7 million.

As one of the symbols of modernity, the cinema's peculiar character is to create an imaginary world for its audiences (Plate 2008: 1). Following Plate's argument, films about Islam may not only present Islam in cinema, but also penetrate the daily lives of Muslim audiences and invite them to participate in public debates on issues provoked by a film. Crucially, in a setting where intervention of the state is significant over mediated expressions of religion in public spaces, the types of religious imaginaries provoked by the film and the ways they are debated in the public domain, become more complicated and dynamic (Abu-Lughod 2005).

Indonesia is the case in point. Soon after the success of *Ayat Ayat Cinta*, the realm of Indonesian cinema has witnessed the popularity of Islamic themed films, which competed to promote different representation of Islam and target different groups of potential Muslim audiences. This situation is heightened by the rise of street protests, Internet-based debates, state-backed intervention, and intellectual discussions on what a true Islamic film should look like. In its turn, Islamic cinema becomes a battle ground (Heryanto 2014), where different groups of Muslims and state-political figures run for establishing their influences in society - be they religious, political or commercial, especially in regard to representing the 'true Islam' through screen culture. The notion of public becomes crucial here.

The contours of post-Suharto Indonesia's public sphere are marked by the emerging visibility of Islam. Currently, symbols, languages, and discourses of Islam are increasingly jostled into, and widely circulated across public spaces through a collection of sights, sounds, textures and scents.[5] Islam does not only appear as a lucrative element for commercial TV programs, radio broadcasts, popular novels, music, self-help books, cinema, food, clothing and lifestyles, but it also becomes a popular idiom through which the state, religious authorities, and lay people compete to define public morality, market economy, political authority, and lawmaking policies.

While this situation is a result of various factors, it is crucial to hint at the 1980's increase of new Muslim middle classes across Indonesian urban societies (Hefner 2000). Economically, their growth owed to the New Order's strong progress in economy during the 1980s and 1990s (Robinson 1996), and was in parallel with the rise of Asian new riches elsewhere (Robinson and Goodman 1996). Yet, politically, their characteristics in public were designated by the New Order's strict policies on expressions of political Islam, forcing them to cultivate their piety through education, popular media and other cultural practices. As the ban of political expressions of Islam was lifted following the transitional years of the Reform era, which was coincidentally marked by the explosive growth of audio-visual media industry and popular culture practices (Sen and Hill 2007), they become new collective Muslim actors who bring forward a novel form of Islamization (Heryanto 2008: 14). That is, an attempt to blend symbols of Islamic piety with materials and spaces of modernity. Unlike the middle class in a Western liberal

5) Such phenomenon also happens in other Muslim majority countries, such as Turkey (Göle 2002) and Egypt (Hirschkind 2001).

society (Robinson and Goodman 1996: 3), these new wealthy Muslims are inclined to religious dispositions (Barendregt 2006: 174), linking their Islamic piety with global practice of market and media consumption (Rakhmani 2016: 2), and exhibiting it in public spaces (Schimdt 2014: 25). The exponents of this new Muslim force, however, are identifiable, despite varying aspirations and political ideologies, within almost every group of Muslims in Indonesia, all of which are competing with each other in regard to their public expressions of Islam.

The increasing presence of Islam in Indonesian public yields an apparent reflection of Habermas' notion of public sphere (Habermas 1989). It refers to a specific domain in an eighteenth-century European society for the formation of public opinion that is cultivated through rational and critical debates. Within this domain, ideas are not legitimated by formal institutions of religious and political authorities but by rationality, and participation in it is principally equally open to all citizens. However, secular as it appears, Habermas' approach to the public sphere postulates the incompatibility of religion and modernity, as it suggests either to see the displacement of religion in the public sphere as an intrinsic character of modernity, or to regard the presence of religion in public as a sign of backwardness (Meyer and Moors 2006: 6). This has in turn encouraged scholars working on different trajectories, especially in Muslim societies, to propose the significance of investigating the presence of religion, especially Islam, in public sphere (see Eickelman and Anderson 1999; Hefner 2000; Hirschkind 2001; Göle 2002; and Salvatore 2007). In their investigations, most of them have similarly shown the rich and productive relationship between Islam and media in transforming the public sphere.

Eickelman and Anderson (1999), for example, have argued that the proliferation and easy accessibility of new media technologies in Muslim societies have triggered the emergence of a new public, in which new Muslim actors with no conventional training of Islam emerged to create alternative sites of learning about and speaking for Islam, cultivate public virtues and civil society, and stage new imaginaries of self-fashioned Muslim subjects in the globalizing and modernizing world. In this public, Islam is used as "a way of envisioning alternative political realities and, increasingly, in acting on both global and local stages, thus re-configuring established boundaries of civil and social life" (Salvatore and Eickelman 2004: xii).

When Warner (2002: 62) writes that "a public is the social space created by the reflexive *circulation* of discourse" (emphasis mine), and as far as the word "circulation" implies a plurality of space and agency involving in the public, he is implicitly saying that the public is a stronghold of political difference. That is, the public is an arena in which people of different identities and interests will compete with each other over presenting their ideas as "the common good" (Eickelman and Salvatore 2002: 94), or in the word of Meyer and Moors (2006: 12), as "the public". Yet, because the public is an egalitarian domain which allows everyone to participate, the position of those who succeed to present themselves as the public, is never stable and uninterrupted. Rather,

other groups of identities will continue to make a challenge to the public, by taking up a position of, for example, a "sub-public", a "counter-public", or an "alternative public", while at the same time continuing working to become the public (see Warner 2002). This means, the public sphere is never a bounded entity, but an ongoing process of construction, negotiation, and competition (Meyer and Moors 2006: Ibid); the public, in other words, is plural and dynamic.

The presentation of Islamic discourses and practices in Indonesian public, although most of what is discussed in it ironically concerns 'private moralities' (Brenner 2011), has always been highly contested among Muslim groups of different political identities and ideological interests. As in since the start of the 20th century, the traditionalist and the modernist Muslims, such as NU and Muhammadiyah respectively, both organizations of which generally uphold a moderate interpretation of Islam, have been the significant players. Yet, at the turn of the 21st century, religious life in Muslim Indonesia is moving toward a 'conservative turn' (van Bruinessen 2014). It refers to a situation where tolerant, peaceful and open faces of Islam are diminishing in public spaces, and 'overturned' by the rising popularity of radical and violent groups of Islam, such as FPI (Islam Defenders Front), and Islamist political projects, such as PKS (Prosperous Justice Party) (see also Feillard 2010 and Hefner 2012). Present day Islam in Indonesia, in short, is highly contested among many different groups of political and ideological identities and interests.

However, in the last two decades or so, 'public Islam' (Salvatore and Eickelman 2004) in Indonesia (and in many other Southeast Asian Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Singapore) has been intensified by the emergence of 'online public' (Slama and Barendregt 2018), that is, a public that is built through online discourse and activism. Central in it, is the current popularity of Internet and social media spaces among different young and not so young Muslim actors in the region, who use the online spaces to strategically express and contest their Islamic practices, socialities, and ideologies. These Muslim actors upload (and share) Facebook statues, Twitter posts, and Instagram photos to strengthen their ideological positions, while at the same time ridiculing and censuring those of the other groups. The online activities of these Muslims should not be seen as separated from, but an extension of their offline contexts, which in turn makes the online public both part of these Muslims' everyday lives, and a highly contested arena between Muslims of different identities and ideological interests (see also Lim 2005; Ali 2011; Hew 2018).

Taking into consideration the above notions of Muslim public, this dissertation recognizes the significance of looking at the cinematic santri as an actor in the battle arena over the interpretation of "how to be a good Muslim" (Kloos 2012) in contemporary Indonesian *publics*, which do not only work in offline spaces but also consists of online activities. These theoretical approaches have in turn called for an exploration on how cinematic practices as a form of popular culture may become a rich site for the young santri people to express what they count as (an interpretation of)

Islam in their everyday life practices. Now, I will shift my discussion to the relationship between Islam, popular youth culture, and the notion of the everyday.

Islam, popular youth culture, and the significance of the everyday

The use of film technology and other cinematic practices for enhancing political differences is prevalent among my santri interlocutors and "the Bond image" with which I open this dissertation is a good example of it. Because of this, to demonstrate the ways by which the santri come to cinematic practices, it is necessary to understand the notion of popular culture and how it relates to daily expression of what is Islam and what being a Muslim should be among santri believers. Before delving deeper into this account, however, I need to first designate what I mean by referring to Islam as popular culture.

The term popular culture, however popular it is, is not easy to define, especially because of the complex meanings of its constituent concepts (see Storey 2001). In general, popular culture is designated to "refer to the products and effects of the mass communications industries" (Davey and Seal, as cited in Richter 2011: 165). But since the word 'popular' is succinctly related to 'the people', 'the ordinary', 'the mass-mediated', and 'the commercial' (Williams 2005 [1976]), popular culture is widely associated as a cultural practice subordinate to the one that is dominant in society. Despite that, it is misleading to underestimate the significance of popular culture practices for political differences, because category of the "popular" of a culture is always a question about, and a result of power relations, between what belongs to the 'elite' culture and the culture of the 'periphery' (Hall 2016 [1981]: 234). In this regard, popular culture is not just the imposed culture, but it becomes "a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate group, and the forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups" (Storey 2001: 11). Based on these perspectives, I regard popular culture as a political means of symbolic communication through popular media practices by which people identify themselves vis-à-vis the others.

As an effective means for political difference, popular culture is a potential hotbed for popular expressions of Islam in public spaces. To explain this argument, I will draw on the concept of 'popular Islam' (Gafney 1992). Since the early periods of Islam, there has existed a category of religious piety that belongs to the laity that is often opposed to the category of "official Islam" defined by a small number of the Muslim elites (Ibid). In Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries, popular Islam is broadly inspired by Sufi tradition and is adapted to local cultures and conditions (Geertz 1960; Woodward 1989; Voll 2007). Yet, Weintraub (2011) argues that popular Islam may also take the form that is "more urban", "more cosmopolitan", and "more mass mediated". In other words, popular Islam can be referred to as the daily understanding, interpretation, articulation, and practice of what count as Islam by a large number of ordinary Muslims

(rural peasants and urban masses, Sufi and non-Sufi) in everyday life circumstances.[6] In this dissertation, nevertheless, I extend the notion of popular Islam to include, the daily expressions of Islam that are mediated through popular culture practices (Albanese 1996), and linked to global youth culture and lifestyles.[7]

In Indonesia, while Islam has always been expressed in many different ways, it is in the realm of popular culture and youth lifestyle that expressions of Islamic piety in daily lives have increasingly found their mainstream channels (Weintraub 2011). More and more young Indonesian Muslims have started to express their faith through various forms of popular culture practices, such as, by consuming 'Islamized' forms of the latest fashion style (Jones 2010), mobile technology (Barendregt 2009), hangouts in public spaces (Schmidt 2012) and cinema going (Heryanto 2014), marking the significant role of Muslim youth in today's processes and features of 'Islamization' in Indonesia. In order to understand how young people can be related to popular Islam, the category of "Muslim youth" needs to be clarified here.

According to Herrera and Bayat (2009: 6), "youth" is never a matter of age per se, but consists of a series of dispositions in which individuals cultivate their consciousness of being young, by participating in manifold forms of youth practices, cultures and activism that fit within their "generational consciousness" (p. 8). Seen this way, not all young people are capable of claiming their "youth stage" (p. 7), unless they participate in, and have access to education, leisure activities, political movements, and other social practices around which the norms of youth consciousness are forged and constructed in society. Having this in mind, popular Islam illuminates the ways in which young people claim their agencies and identities of "being young and being Muslim" (Herrrera and Bayat 2009) through their participation in 'Islamized' global youth culture and life styles.

As popular Islam is close to consumption practices, it is often underestimated as a shallow commodification of Islam, or a way of consuming Islam for banal and outward appearances of the faith. Many scholars of Indonesian cinema, for example, have often criticized the current rise of Islamic cinema through the lens of "religion-that-sells" strategy (Kusuma 2008; see also, Imanjaya 2009; van Heeren 2009; and Imanda 2012). While this can be true, the marriage of Islam with commodity, including film, should not be seen as black and white, but as part of one's efforts and struggles to interpret, and

6) It is, however, a mistake to contradict popular Islam with official Islam, or to regard the latter as the authoritative and the former as the deviant forms of Islam. This is because Islam as a lived religion is never simply about a congeries of rituals and practices prescribed by the normative texts, but also about transformation, adaptation, and coherence of that rituals and practices within particularly social and historical contexts. Islam, in this regard, belong to both the elite and ordinary Muslims, and is constitutive of *not* only orthodoxy, but also beyond orthodoxy (further discussed below).

7) This phenomenon is also occurring in other Muslim-majority/minority countries (see Weintraub 2011; Khabeer 2016; and Herding 2017).

live their interpretation of Islam, according to "the vast-fields and pluralities of one's life circumstances" (George 2010: 4).

The santri turn to cinema is a result of numerous factors. Rian's dream of becoming a filmmaker in *3 Doa 3 Cinta*, which is partly driven by his memory of his late father's business in making a wedding video, is only one example of how a santri becomes interested in cinematic practices. As the subsequent chapters of this dissertation show, some of the santri I worked with turned to cinematic practices because of their civic aspirations towards the politics of representation of Islam in the country's screen culture. The others tended to assign their cinematic practices with a bevy of personal desires and collective inquiries about how to practice Islam in daily lives and amid social change. Using the words of Fealy and White (2008: 2), an act of commodifying Islam is never a single thread of reality but always contingent upon various driving factors, such as spiritual, economic, political, cultural, ethical, and technological. Our task, thus, is not to regard popular Islam as a homogeneous entity, but to consider the plurality of ways in which Islam as a lived religion has fashioned and been contextualized into the daily lives of believers at the intersection of personal desires, collective identities, politics of difference and authority, technological advances and global cultural flows.

But how is the 'everydayness' of popular Islam critical to our understanding and conceptualization of Islam as part of life? The notion of 'the everyday' thus needs to be clarified. Lefebvre (1971 [1986]) has called for the significance of never taking the everyday life for granted, and to see it instead as a socially constructed space within which all aspects of human's historical phenomena can occur and find their concrete forms.[8] In the words of Anthropologist Veena Das (2012: 7), the ordinary practices of everyday lives are the realm in which "the eventful" is carried out into the life of the ordinary people. This way, the everyday becomes a political domain in which ordinary people (all human beings are basically ordinary people) shape, articulate, and give meaning their life experiences.

In relation to the political significance of the everyday, Islam as 'it is practiced' finds its extensive manifestations among the Muslim believers in the realm of the everyday lives. Here, the film excerpt from *3 Doa 3 Cinta* with which I opened this Introduction is worth revealing again. Rian's excitement and his 'James Bond' aspiration toward film camera, Syahid's concern about its misuse, Huda's ignorance about its function, and their hiding of the camera from the pesantren authorities, all of these different reactions and attitudes toward film-making technologies are telling that it is not just about Muslims. Rather, it is about things that are connected to an everyday that is larger than Islam and is inflected in the lives of Muslim santri. Their attitudes, in other words, are strongly related to their varying social backgrounds and the kinds of everyday

8) He writes, "Yet people are born, live and die. They live well or ill; but they live in everyday life, where they make or fail to make a living either in the wider sense of surviving or not surviving, or just surviving or living their lives to the full. It is everyday life that they rejoice and suffer; here and now" (Lefebvre 1971 [1968]: 21).

difficulties, struggles, and experiences that the three different santri are facing in their lives. Thus, it is not surprising that in later parts of the film, both Huda and Syahid were seen to have secretively used the camera to record their own aspirational objects. Moral ambiguities and negotiations are just part of the art of how to live our everyday lives.

In anthropology, Muslims cannot be reduced to their religion, not only because Islam can never exist unless through interpretations, but also because being Muslim is necessarily about "being a human being" (Marranci 2008). This means, being Muslim is not simply about engaging in pious acts, such as doing daily prayers, fasting and the pilgrimage to Mecca, but more about making choices on how and to what extent Islam should play a role in one's everyday life situations (Masquelier 2010; Schielke 2010). Hence, Muslims may participate in the ordinary practices of everyday lives, such as playing soccer (Schielke 2009), going to the cinema (Larkin 2008), daily chatting (Marsden 2005), and practice of grieving (Samuels 2012), while at the same time using these mundane practices as a site where they perform their Islamic moral values, and are subject to Islamic moral judgments (Marsden 2005). The everyday Islam, in other words, is not simply about "what is Islam", but also about "how and what does it mean to be a Muslim" in particular social and historical contexts.

That being said, an investigation into the everyday practices of Islam, thus, is constituted as an effort to revisit our academic inquiries that Muslims are studied not for their exception in comparison with other human beings, but for the ways they have variously "articulated" Islamic tradition along with the concerns, difficulties, and experiences of the everyday situations (Marsden and Retsikas 2013: 1). A brief discussion on the concept of Islamic tradition, and how it has affected my approaches to study the cinematic santri is outlined below.

Islamic tradition, modernity and image-making technologies

During my fieldwork, I came to recognize the centrality of Islamic tradition in the santri's engagement with image-making technologies and cinematic practices. Among the santri, modernity is perceived and experienced as technological progress. As the Bond image in *3 Doa 3 Cinta* encapsulates, film, Internet and mobile phone technologies are often objectified by the santri to hook up with modernity, i.e. to create an image of 'being modern' while at the same time disassociating themselves with their stereotype of 'being backward'. While the perceived dangers of the secular and modern association of these technologies often triggered a sense of anxiety among the conservative majority of santri communities, the cinematic santri are able to translate their cinematic engagements in terms of Islam, in particular by making specific references to notions of Islamic tradition. This way, film-related technologies and practices can be seen as a rich site for the santri to continually negotiate and articulate their particular voices of being modern and being stick to Islamic tradition. This dissertation, therefore, is partly aimed at revisiting the centuries old, but still widespread dichotomy between tradition and

modernity, in which Islam is seen as incompatible with the modern world (see Warraq 1995; Lewis 2002).[9] And in doing so, I specifically follow the steps of scholars who argue that there is modernity in Islamic tradition (Masud, Salvatore and van Bruinessen 2009), and that one of the best ways to prove it is by starting from re-conceptualizing our definition of tradition (Salvatore 2009).

The anthropology of Islam has long been concerned with an effort to conceptualize Islam as a tradition of meanings, established upon the translations of Islamic texts "within particular social contexts and through particular cultural understandings" (Bowen 2014: 6; see also Geertz 1968; El Zein 1977; Gellner 1981; and Gilsenan 1982). Yet, it is Asad's groundbreaking idea to see Islam as "a discursive tradition" (1986) that has become a major turning point. Drawing his concept from Foucault and MacIntyre, Asad frames Islamic tradition as the specific ways in which Muslims refer to, interpret, and debate their interpretation about the sacred texts of Islam across different contexts of time and space, in order to form a categorization of correct doctrine and practices (1986: 14). Seen this way, tradition for Asad is not inimical to rationality and argumentation, thus it is compatible with modernity.[10]

Strengthened by the publication of his later works on religion and the secular (1993 and 2003), Asad's intervention has inspired a later generation of anthropologists to study Islam through the notions of tradition, ethics and piety, in juxtaposition with secular and liberal powers (Schielke 2010). While these innovative studies are far from being unified, most of them tend to focus on connections between pious activities and the cultivation of ethical Muslim self-hood (Mahmood 2005; Deeb 2006; Hirschkind 2006). More recently, and in response to such a tendency, some anthropologists began to shift their attentions to the ways in which Islam is lived among the ordinary Muslims (Osella and Soares 2010; Marsden and Retsikas 2013). From their works, we learn how ordinary Muslims in Northern Pakistan (Marsden 2005); or young Muslims in Egypt (Schielke 2009), or Muslim entrepreneurs in Indonesia (Rudnyckyj 2009), or ordinary Muslim villagers in Aceh (Kloos 2013), have in different ways cultivated another kind of ethical self-improvement, one that goes beyond pious activities, through the complexity, struggles, failures and ambivalence of the ordinary practices of their everyday lives.

The potential of Asad's approach, however, are not yet exhausted (Anjum 2017). In this regard, I join those who, for one reason or the other, are critical of Asad's desire

9) The question about the compatibility between Islam and modernity has particularly gained new currencies in recent public debates, following the rise of terrorist attacks by a group of Muslim radicals, misleadingly attributed to Muslims in general (see Asfaruddin 2015; Rashid 2016; and Culver 2017).

10) Asad (1986) writes that any Islamic tradition consists of "argument and conflict over the form and significance of practices", and "the variety of traditional Islamic practices in different times, places, and populations indicates the different Islamic reasonings that different social and historical conditions can or cannot sustain" (p. 14). Thus, "...although Islamic traditions are not homogeneous, they aspire to coherence... (p. 16).

towards orthodoxy (Lukens-Bull 1999; Marranci 2008; Schielke 2010; Ahmed 2015). Asad writes, "Orthodoxy is crucial to all Islamic tradition. But... orthodoxy is not a mere body of opinion... (it is) a relation of power" (1986: 15). Implicit in his argument is that orthodoxy that is existent in Muslim societies, seen from an anthropological way of understanding, is not simply theological but political, because its construction is dependent upon the exercise of power to claim over correct practices and to replace incorrect ones. The consequence of this approach is that the assumed hierarchy between proper and popular religion, between the 'great' and 'little' tradition, becomes irrelevant and dissolved, because what is proper and popular, and little and great about religion is similarly a result of relations of power, a construction in and by society (see Schielke and Debecvec 2007). Although his approach to orthodoxy is fruitful, nevertheless, I choose to explore its extended meanings. That is, as long as orthodoxy is a political category, I argue, there should be more than one orthodoxy that co-exists in Islam, and that, by extension, orthodoxy must not be the only 'theory of truth' that has long-been operative in Islamic tradition.

The problem in Asad's discursive tradition is that he exclusively assigns his concept of authority towards the prescription of exclusive truth - "a practice is Islamic because it is authorized by the discursive Islamic tradition" (Asad 1986: 15). In light of this problem, the late historian, Shahab Ahmed pointed out that the authority that is operative in Islam is not only "*prescriptive*", but also "*explorative*" (2015: 282, italics original). That is, while the prescriptive authority gives to its proponent "a license to prescribe", the exploratory authority grants its bearer "a license to explore (by) himself" a range of possible ways and meanings of being Muslim (Ibid.). Muslim philosophers and Sufi saints, for example, "arrogate to themselves the highest epistemological authority to interpret the God's words", yet at the same time they do not prescribe "a single correct truth of Islam on the basis of their authority" (Ibid.: 283).

Indeed, as Ahmed further argues, texts of Islamic revelation, ones that become the authoritative source of truth in Islamic society, are by all means heterogeneous. There is the Text of Revelation, that is the Qur'an, which is in constant dialogue with the so-called *Pre*-text of Revelation, referring to the Unseen Reality upon which the truth of the first text revelation is ontologically contingent and continuously present. The *pre*-text is the metanarative of Islamic truth that continues to exist beyond the revelatory event of the Qur'an to Muhammad, manifest in the forms of philosophical projects, Sufi tradition, literary, art, music, paintings, and other works that are produced through Muslim's direct/indirect engagements with the Unseen Reality only in, via and without the first text. And the last text is the so-called *Con*-text of Revelation. It refers to a collective body of discourses and practices of being Muslims that are the product and outcome of Muslim's previous hermeneutical engagements with Islamic Revelation in all their variety and contradiction. It is "the full historical vocabulary of Islam at any given moment" (Ahmed 2015: 357), with which the hermeneutical engagement with the Text and the *Pre*-text become possible.

Considering the veritable category of Islamic revelatory texts, I contend to follow Ahmed's argument that Islamic discursive tradition should not be exclusively referred to as the production of orthodoxy, but also beyond orthodoxy, i.e. the ways in which Muslims explore possibilities of meanings over living the concerns and anxieties of the everyday mundane practices in terms of (various revelatory texts of) Islam. By broadening Islamic tradition beyond orthodoxy, I also mean that the struggle, ambivalence and complexity of living Islam through the ordinary practices of everyday lives are not only the experience of ordinary Muslims, but also of the elite, pious Muslims, such as the *ulama* (*'ulamā*). In other words, to expand Islamic discursive tradition beyond orthodoxy, is to redirect our anthropological study of Islam into the ways in which religious texts, discourses and practices are commingled with the politics of the everyday lives among both the ordinary and elite Muslims, and both the practicing and non-practicing Muslims.[11]

My aim is therefore to revisit the binaries prevailing in our studies of Muslim societies between a tendency of associating orthodoxy with elite/pious Muslims and non-orthodoxy with ordinary/non pious Muslims. The cinematic santri will show that those who even consider themselves as pious and 'elite' Muslims, such as the santri, do not simply aspire to perfectionist ideas of pious life, but they also account for pragmatic sensibilities of living Islam in accordance to the richness and complexity of everyday life desires and circumstances (Schielke 2010). In this regard, the cinematic santri is an attempt to recognize that the santri and the everyday life of Muslim (even those in pesantren) are just as ordinary and multi-faceted as anyone else's. This recognition, while it is of no surprise, is crucial. For only a rigid, narrow, prejudicial and therefore inaccurate understanding of what it means to be a santri would stand in the way of such recognition.

To conclude this section, this dissertation is concerned with the projects of exploratory discourses among santri with regard to the meaningful of film-related technologies and practices in term of Islamic teachings and moral values. The cinematic santri are serious about performing their faith according to the dynamic of orthodoxy. However, they are often willing, upon their turn to cinematic practices, to cross boundaries that are set by their authorities with regard to the facts that taboos of film technology and that fears of images are still widespread among members of the santri communities. Their desires to cinematic practices, more importantly, are not always related to piety and self-discipline, but some time to freedom, public recognition, imagination of wider worlds, and not seldom to anxiety and frustration about their everyday live situations. The cinematic santri, in other words, illuminates the heterogeneity of ways in which the santri live and claim their religious traditions according to the diversity of experience and complexity of everyday life.

11) It echoes Bowen's (2012: 7) argument that in order to think about Islam, we must take seriously the relationship between religious thinking and social frameworks at its widest and most intimate sense.

In the next section I explore some of the characteristics of the santri communities.

A brief overview of the santri communities

In the past, santri was narrowly used to describe students of pesantren. Yet it was after the publication of Geertz's *The Religion of Java* (1960), which thickly describes the cultural and religious lives of Javanese practicing Muslims, that the term santri started to gain a broader meaning as a social category (Ricklefs 2006).[12] Within his category of santri, Geertz draws sharp distinction between the traditionalist and the modernist groups. Defining the latter as 'puristic' Muslims who use the Qur'an and *Hadis* (*Ḥadīṯ*) for religious guidance, he describes the traditionalists as 'syncretic' Muslims (1960: 153) who, at their extreme pole, are the least Islamic among the santri, and are the closest to *abangan* (p. 160), a variant of non-practicing Javanese Muslims, "fairly indifferent' to Islamic doctrines but "fascinated with ritual detail" (p. 127). This traditionalist-modernist split, Geertz claims, has primarily cut across the cultural, social and political lives of Muslim communities in Indonesia.

Geertz's description of santri, however, has received severe criticism from local and foreign scholars. Dhofier (2011 [1982]), in particular, criticized Geertz's likening the traditionalists' Islam with *the* Islam of *abangan*, by pointing the significance of classical texts of Islam among the traditionalists for justifying their religious practices, and the learning methods by which transmission of Islamic knowledge was carried out across generations of santri in traditional pesantren. Woodward (1999: 2 and 2011: 57-8) also writes that Geertz's study of Islam, built on Weberian thesis of religion and rationality, did not only fail to recognize the mystical dimensions of Javanese Islam as Islamic, but also unable to observe the centrality of Islam in local Indonesian culture (see also Pranowo 2009 [1991]). Other scholars, such as Barton (2002), Hefner (2000), and Kersten (2015), have pointed out the fluidity of the traditionalist-modernist dichotomy of santri. These critics argue that the term santri is not a fixed category, but one that is continuously made across different historical moments in Indonesia, and as such is always contextualized in terms of the circumstances that gave rise to them.

The central backbone of santri communities is the pesantren. It is a compound of buildings where the young santri live to learn and practice Islamic doctrines, ethics, and rituals. The number of students in each pesantren varies from one to another, the biggest of which could accommodate more than two thousand. In the past, pesantren were mostly established in rural villages, mainly offering traditional system of Islamic education, and largely catering to students of low-class economic backgrounds, who could not afford a more expensive education offered by both Western-inspired secular and modern-Islamic schools mostly located in urban centers.

12) According to Ricklefs (2006), by then, these practicing Muslims named themselves *'wong putihan'*, lit. the white people, but were "mistakenly" called by Geertz as santri (quotation marks are mine).

Today's pesantren, however, are found in both urban and rural areas, open for male and female students, combining the teaching of classical Islamic texts with varying degrees of general education, and attended by students of various economic and social backgrounds. The young santri may live in their pesantren until they have reached the age of marriage, but most commonly, they would leave when they completed their high school degree, either for pursuing their college studies, or returning to their homes. While the santri who have finished their studies may work in various sectors, formal and informal, many of them are commonly assigned in religious offices, and not seldom tasked with giving religious services and learning in their communities. Subsequently, collections of these pesantren graduates will have formed a larger community of santri that is linked through cultural, spiritual and intellectual bonds.

Each pesantren is led by a *kyai*, a religious male scholar required to serve as a living model of the pious Islamic life in his own pesantren. According to the pesantren culture, the *kyai* holds an absolute authority, and expects total obedience from their santri, an obedience that may extend beyond the santri's times at pesantren. In many cases, the *kyai* is often seen as "a little king", in the sense that his leadership can be bequeathed to his male descendants or relatives, signifying to a certain extent domination of patriarchal culture in pesantren and in the santri communities at large. Other examples of the pesantren patriarchal culture include the implementation of gender-segregation system. The patriarchal culture in pesantren, however, should not necessarily be seen as originating from the Islamic teachings, but as a marriage between Islamic values and Javanese and other local cultures in Indonesia (Srimulyani 2006). At present, though, a few pesantren in Indonesia are led by a *Nyai*, the female equivalent of *kyai*, breaking down the dominant power and authority of the pesantren's male leadership (Ibid).

As a learning institution, the main activity in pesantren is the transmission of Islamic knowledge. Its main curriculum is the teaching of *kitab kuning* (lit. yellow book), loosely defined as the classical Arabic-scripted texts of Islam (van Bruinessen 1990). The 'classical' here does not refer to "original texts of Islam of the Meccan and Medinan communities", but to authoritative texts of the earlier generation of Muslim scholars from "the medieval period of Islamic history, specifically from the twelfth to seventeenth centuries C.E. in which being Muslim and being Sufi were nearly synonymous" (Lukens-Bull 2005: 15).[13] The learning methods in pesantren are structured upon a combination of time-discipline, self-patience and a strong reliance on the *kyai*'s reading of the *kitab kuning*. This signifies the salience of these classical texts of Islam both as the fundamental source of their religious knowledge, and the genealogical link of their religious tradition to the authoritative form of Islam of the

13) The number of the *kitab kuning* taught in pesantren varies, but can be classified as follows: Islamic jurisprudence and its principles, doctrine of Islam, traditional Arabic grammar, hadith collections, Qur'anic exegesis, mysticism and morality, collections of prayers, invocations, and Islamic magic, and texts in praise of the prophets and saints (Dhofier 1982; van Bruinessen: 1990).

earlier generation of Muslim scholars. Thus, despite many of today's pesantren having added a secular curriculum to their educational system for reasons of modernization (Hefner 2009: Phol 2009), the centrality of *kitab kuning* remains profound among the pesantren people as a source of Islamic rituals and identities. It is due to the santri's stickiness to tradition that I persist to call them traditionalist Muslims.

Nearly all traditionalist pesantren are closely tied, either culturally or politically, to *Nahdlatul Ulama*. It is a mass-Muslim organization, established in 1926 by a number of *kyai* in East Java pesantren, largely in response to an earlier establishment of similar organizations among modernist groups, such as Muhammadiyah and Al-Irsyad in 1912. Yet, despite the strong roots of pesantren in NU, nearly all pesantren are structurally independent from NU, partly due to the high authority of each *kyai* before his pesantren members and local communities. At the same time, as a religious community with so many interests, NU refuses any form of domination over the claim and production of religious truth in society. This is a situation that is a characteristics of Islam in general. In fact, not only is it usual among the NU people to have different opinions over religious, social, even political issues, but they also consist of various factions ranging from conservative, moderate, and to 'hybrid' forms of neo-modernist, post-traditionalist and liberal Islam.

In regard to political inclinations, the relation between NU and the Indonesian state has fluctuated across history. However, it is safe to say that the pesantren and NU people are generally loyal supporters of democratic values and nationalistic ideas (Feillard 1997), and that their political behavior in public domain is parallel to 'their renown rivalry with Muhammadiyah', that is, the rivalry that had started since at least early 20th century over the 'right' interpretation of Islam in public spaces (Bush 2009). Nevertheless, the arrival of Islamic transnational movements in the last few decades in Indonesia, which marks the "conservative turn" of Islam (van Bruinessen 2014) in the country, has challenged the traditional domination of NU and the modernist Mumammadiyah in Indonesian Muslim public sphere. The most notable examples of these movements include the Islamist political party, *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* ('Prosperous Justice Party, PKS), which are the Indonesian versions of Ikhwanul Muslimin; along with the increasing public presence of the Indonesian Hizbut Tahrir, the Salafi movement, and the Wahhabi-associated vigilante Muslim band, Islam Defender Front (FPI) in the last two decades or so. Consistent with the variety of Muslim groups in Indonesia, the kind of pesantren also varies, ranging from the traditionalist, modernist, Islamist, and Salafi pesantren (Hasan 2008; van Bruinessen 2008; Wahid 2014), all of which become the training ground for the next generation of their respective 'santri' Muslim communities.

I will now discuss my fieldwork among the santri communities, and the methods that I have used for collecting the data of this project.

Doing fieldwork in santri communities

Doing fieldwork is grounded in both the idea of 'the field' (Gupta and Ferguson 2007) and the subjective experience of the fieldworker (Watson 1999: 4). In this section, I explore how the idea of the "field" in my ethnography emerged across different stages of my fieldwork. I will reflect on how the idea of this research initially emerged, how I selected and framed my field, and how my own personal identities have influenced my fieldwork experiences.

How it all began

I was born and raised in a conservative santri family. My father, a strict believer, and an imam of a small mosque in a rural village located in the southern tip of Lampung, sent all his children to either modern *madrasah* (Islamic school) or traditional pesantren. He refused to have a TV in his house, and never allowed his children to watch a mobile film-screening regularly held in the village's square.[14] He would scold me and my siblings each time he found us watching a TV show at our neighbor's house, let alone watching film. For him, not only did TV and film imply foreign influences upon our study in school, but they were also at odds with the prohibition of drawing animate creatures in Islam.[15] My siblings and I, however, repeatedly broke his TV/film disciplinary rules as we kept leaving our house for watching Drunken Fist, our favorite Cantonese action TV series broadcasted every Wednesday evening.

Yet, there was a moment of ambiguity that caught me in a deep state of ambivalence. I vividly remember, every evening after the *isya* (*ʾišā*) prayer during the early 1990s, when the crisis between Iraq and the Western allies escalated into the Gulf war (Ashton 1995), and by then I was still in the third grade of *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (Islamic primary school), my father would force me and all members of his family to come with him to our neighbor's house for watching *Dunia Dalam Berita* (The World on The News). It was the state-owned TV station's news program, starting at every 9p.m., which during the Gulf War, broadcasted a live report of the unfolding war. In my father's eyes, the war was about the 'heroically Islamic patriotism' of Saddam Hussein against the 'devilish brutality' of the US and its Western allies. For him, following the war's updates from TV was an expression of his emotional solidarity with his 'Muslim brothers' in the imagined desert of Iraq. At the time, however, I was too innocent to understand the "grown-up world" (De Saint-Exupery 1995) of politics and I found news shows too boring in general. I wanted to ask my father what was it about Saddam Hussein and the news about him, exempt from being a moral issue?

14) In between early 1980s and late 1990s, an open-air screening called *layar tancep* (literally meaning 'screen struck in the ground') was a common phenomenon in rural Indonesia, mostly screening cheap-production films of action and comedy genre.

15) I still vividly remember that a number of Islamic texts on this prohibition were inscribed by my father at several parts of our house, readable to anyone who entered our house's living room.

Growing up with this experience, I have always had in my head a series of questions, concerning, for example, what was really at stake when my father was prohibiting us from watching TV and mobile film-screenings, but at the same time forcing us to watch a living image of his Iraqi Muslim hero on a TV? Why did particular Muslims like my father become very sensitive about TV/film images at one particular time, and not in different conditions? And what made my father different from many other Muslim parents in my village and elsewhere who comfortably let their children watch TV and go to the mobile film screening? It is this background and these questions that came after this, which have largely encouraged me to do ethnographic research on cinematic practices of the pesantren people. In the following section, I describe the methods by which I have selected the locations, structured the phases of research, and collected the data of my fieldwork.

Fieldwork sites and strategies

My fieldwork for this research, lasting 12 months in total, was carried out in three rounds. In August 2011, when my project was still in the proposal-writing stage, I conducted some preliminary fieldwork in Jakarta. In this phase, coinciding with *Ramadan*, a privileged month in which Muslims are encouraged to focus on their social, moral and pious discipline through fasting and Ramadan prayers (Möller 2007; Schielke 2009), my focus was to investigate how Muslims negotiate their religious activities with the secular characters of, for instance, going to a cinema theater. Through focusing on this, I did a lot of hanging out in shopping malls where cinema theaters in Jakarta were mostly located, and in the mosques where Muslims gathered for breaking their fast and performing *taraweh* (*tarawīh*, a complimentary prayer performed during the Ramadan nights), not to mention watching religious programs on local TV stations.

I also used this occasion to talk to a few local academic figures, librarians, and cultural activists in the field of Indonesian cinema, in order to gather information with regard to my research, which at the meantime was set to mainly focus on Islamic films in mainstream Indonesian cinema. In particular, I met with Tommy Widianto Taslim, a cultural producer cum film activist who founded *filmpejalar.com* (film student), an online-based forum for local student filmmakers and film communities. During our talk in his office at the Jakarta Institute of Arts (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta), *Mas* Tommy informed me of a group of (female) santri in a pesantren in West Java, namely pesantren Kidang, who had produced a feature film. Based on his information, I went to Kidang right after leaving his office, to talk to Aisyah and Taufik, the Kidang santri who have played key roles in the pesantren's film production. Considering their warm welcome to my interest in doing research about the cinematic programs and activities of their pesantren, when returning to The Netherlands, I was strongly motivated to include "film and the pesantren people" as one of the (possible) foci of my research.

Based on the potential of cinematic practices of pesantren people to be the subject of my research, I conducted the second round of my fieldwork, from January to July

2012, in a "site" that is not only central to santri communities, but also one from which I could identify and follow the linkage and spread of cinematic practices by and across the santri communities, "a multi-sited ethnography" (see Marcus 1995; Hannerz 2007). That site was the headquarters of PBNU (the central board of *Nahdlatul Ulama*) in Keramat Raya, Jakarta.

In Jakarta, I spent most of my time hanging out[16] in the office of NU-Online, an NU-affiliated online media center, located in the fifth floor of the PBNU building, partly because the cinematic santri I mostly work with when in Jakarta, Sahal, was by then working in NU-Online. Yet, the most fundamental reason was because the living room of the news office has been a favorite hang-out and drop-by place for many other young santri who worked in, or just paid a regular visit to the PBNU building. It is mostly through my hanging out in the office of NU that I was able to meet the NU people, collect information, and follow the development of cinematic-related activities held by the santri in Jakarta and in other regions. Also through my fieldwork encounters with the santri I met in the NU building, I became connected with, directly or indirectly, to other cinematic santri working in various localities, such as a santri writer's community (*Matapena*) in Yogyakarta, and santri filmmakers in a few traditional pesantren in central and East Java, sites that I also visit and observe during my fieldwork.

In February 2012, I paid a short visit to Kidang pesantren. Since then I frequently returned to the pesantren, mostly for a longer period of time, ranging from one week to three weeks, depending on the potential events for my fieldwork that happened in Kidang, Jakarta or other places. While I was in Kidang, I stayed in one of the lodgings assigned to senior santri, i.e. those who have become *ustadz pengabdian* ('*ustadz* on service'). In terms of facilities, their rooms are the same as the other santri's rooms: thin carpet, small cupboard, and shared with other occupants. Yet, living with the senior santri allowed me to have direct access to information that was often circulated only among the pesantren's teachers, while at the same time I was still freely able to talk to the students. During my stay in Kidang, I tried to follow the santri's disciplines and habits, such as waking up at 4a.m. for the collective *subuh* (*ṣubḥ*) prayer, sitting-in on some of their classes, playing sport with the santri during free time, joining the Qur'anic lessons at the mosque, and having my meals from the pesantren's modest kitchen, eating along with the students. My observations, conversations, audio recordings, photographs, and field notes were organized in between these activities.

In general, my own santri background and network helped me "to establish myself in the community" (Monaghan and Just 2000), in a relatively easy way, either when in the NU headquarters, in Kidang, or elsewhere. Most of the time, I was warmly encouraged to join in and, often, be part of the cinematic-related practices organized

16) I started my hangouts in the office of NU-Online, by joining the santri who were used to sitting at the office's veranda, talking over random topics, while sipping their cups of coffee, and smoking their cigarettes.

by the santri. In Kidang, the santri even called me *ustadz* (*ustāḍ,* a teacher, here, in a religious sense of meaning), possibly to show a certain level of their respect to my own santri background.[17] Yet, aside from doing fieldwork in the santri communities, I also researched professional filmmakers who have played a crucial role to the current rise of Islamic cinema in Indonesia. When doing it however, I repeatedly found myself deeply troubled by my lack of confidence to step into the style of sociability of these filmmakers, to the point that I realized that it would be hard for me to build a deeply engaging fieldwork relationship with them within a short span of time. Since doing fieldwork is "an art of the possible" (Hannerz 2010: 77), such lack of access eventually led me to decide to fully focus on doing research on "film and the pesantren people", a field in which I felt more easily related and accepted.

Thus, the third round of my fieldwork, from March to August 2013, was mainly carried out in Kidang pesantren, with less travel to the headquarters of NU in Jakarta. I have to admit that the previous fieldwork in Kidang, where I lived with the santri inside the pesantren, was physically and emotionally exhausting, since it was 'ethically' difficult for me to have a break from the pesantren's busy routines. Because of this experience, I decided this time to not to stay in the santri's lodging. Instead I rented a room in a villager's house near the pesantren. As I have been known among the Kidang members through my previous fieldwork, living outside Kidang did not trouble the construction of my relationship with the Kidang people. In fact, from a range of perspectives, it allowed me to create a closer and more open communication with a few of the students who often visited my rental room. Occasionally, their visits opened up new insights into their behavior, as I encountered them talking about and doing things they did not (or were not allowed to) normally do in front of me when we were in the pesantren area.

Hanging-out and having informal conversations were my main strategies for data collection. While the santri who engage in cinematic practices are mostly young people, I tried to talk with santri of different backgrounds, age, gender, occupation, and social class. I rarely formally interviewed the santri, but when I did it, it mostly was with the female santri groups in Kidang as I had little freedom to hang out with them, due to the pesantren's gender segregation rules.[18]

I would also conduct semi-structured interviews during the later stages of my fieldwork, often either to confirm or enrich the data I had. I used tape recorder, camera and diary to record my data, and I always did the recording with the consent from the concerned. Yet, especially for an event that was open for public, such as workshop or seminar, I mostly recorded it without asking a permission. I usually wrote down my data on site, or immediately upon my return to my room. However, a few of the ethnographic materials of this thesis comes from my fieldwork experience that is unwritten. For when

17) I will discuss my own Islamic education later.

18) As I will show later, my interview with the santriwati was always conducted under the gaze of Kidang's authorities, both in literal and metaphorical senses.

in the field, I was not always able to write all of my fieldwork experiences in view of the fact that I often lose the sense of what really matters to my research (Agar, as cited in Okely 2008: 56). Still, a few of those unwritten experiences last vividly long in my memory, and upon reflection, I find out their significance to my project.[19]

Online spaces were also part of my fieldwork. Most of the cinematic santri are Internet savvy. They write blogs, post video on You Tube, and photos on Instagram, and are active on especially Facebook and Twitter, just like many other young (and not so young) people in Indonesia.[20] I followed their Facebook statuses, Twitter posts, and read writings on their blogs as sources of my research data. Online and offline worlds are better understood as two interrelated spaces (Lim 2005), and one's activities on the Internet are an extension of their social interactions in the offline realities, and vice versa.

Likewise, I did a library research in Sinematek film library, the National Library, and the National Archives in Jakarta, where I watched a number of Islamic-themed films that are part of the history of Indonesian cinema, and read a selection of archives, film posters, newspapers and magazines. I also consulted the rich collection about Indonesian history held by the (since moved) KITLV library in Leiden, where I especially look into published *fatwa* (*fatwā,* legally-religious opinion) of Indonesian *ulama* and religious institutions, as well as other historical information and knowledge related to Islamic films. My aim was to prepare myself with the historical accounts of Indonesian Muslims' engagement with cinematic practices and their representation in Indonesian cinema.

In the course of my fieldwork, I also felt the need to compare situations in Kidang pesantren with those in other pesantren that have similar interests in film practices. To this end I went to pesantren Darunnajah in Jakarta and pesantren Gontor in East Java, both of which are regarded as modern pesantren. My visit to these pesantren was especially important as it gave me a sense about the extent to which, despite similarly being modern, the Kidang pesantren is more attached to the teachings of classical texts of Islam, an ethical disposition that, as I will show in the dissertation, significantly has shaped the cinematic discourses and practices of the Kidang people.

In terms of language, most of the people I worked with used the formal Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*) for our communication. The santri of Kidang, because

19) The role of memory in relation to field notes has long been discussed in anthropology. In his article "*I am a Fieldnote*", Jackson (1990) writes that for anthropologists, memory is another kind of field note. This is because while field notes are created by ethnographers as 'evidence', these written materials are only a trigger. When interpreting their field notes, and writing them down into a coherent narrative, anthropologists also draw on the total experience of their fieldwork, most of it are not written, but stored up in their bodies, memories, and all senses (Okely 1994: 21).

20) Social media has become hugely popular in Indonesia. Report has it that about 80 million out of 250 million people, mostly aged under 35, are active social media users, with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram topping the rank (Loras 2016). They use social media for various purposes, such as social communication, political activities, religious expressions, and economic transaction.

of the pesantren's language rules, would talk to each other in a mix of English, Arabic, and Sundanese languages. But when they talked to me, or when I was present among them, the santri would quickly change their language into Indonesian. Occasionally however, especially when they did not want me to be included in their talks, the santri would switch their language either into Arabic or mostly Sundanese. I frequently found this situation a bit awkward, because when they were doing that, both my Arabic proficiency and my father's Sundanese roots could still help me understand what they tried to conceal. I had never confronted them about it, though, especially for reasons that I will discuss below.

Insiderness and reflexivity

My relation with the subjects of my research to a certain extent, is a relation of an insider. This is because, culturally, I am a santri. Not only because of the fact that my parents, grandparents, and great grandparents were santri of strong NU affiliation, but also because I spent most of my education in both modern Islamic boarding schools and in traditional pesantren.

My insider status as a santri, however, has not always smoothed my fieldwork experiences. In fact, I was often confronted with, for example, questions about "what makes a site a field in anthropology" (Gupta and Ferguson 2007: 31). If the pesantren culture in which I have lived and experienced long before I started my doctoral research cannot be legitimized as "a field", as many anthropologists would argue, then to what extent and by what ways I am authorized to use that knowledge for my research? At the same time, because of my personal santri background, the pesantren people I worked with often assumed that I have known everything about their culture, believes and everyday live practices, giving them a tendency to provide less detailed information. Likewise, my familiarity with, and my previous knowledge about the pesantren culture often, unconsciously, led me to take for granted, and feel an attachment too strong with many aspects of what I had encountered during fieldwork; a situation of "homeblindness" (Eriksen 2015 [1995]: 41) that made it quite difficult for me to avoid biases and remain objective.

Paradoxically, being a santri does not necessarily mean that my santri interlocutors will turn a blind eye to my "outsider-ness". In fact, there were times that I was always an outsider to the santri, and that the borders between my insider-ness and outsider-ness was easily penetrable and quick to change. On one evening, for example, three santri and one assistant teacher paid a visit to my rental house, for watching a video of badminton matches from my laptop. While watching the video, we chatted about some random topics, until at one point, one of the santri begun to gossip about one of the Kidang authorities. The assistant teacher who was among us was initially taking part in the gossip. Yet, when realizing that the santri's talk was one step too far, he quickly reminded the santri to not talk about secrets of pesantren in front of a "*lain urang Kidang*" (a non-Kidang person), i.e. me as an outsider researcher.

Similarly, my affiliation with a Dutch university, while at many times advantageous to my fieldwork experiences, could be a trigger for interrogation among my santri interlocutors (as well as among my other Indonesian people in general), as they would like to check me whether or not living in the Netherlands had compromised "the purity of my santri-ness". Obviously, there was an expectation among the santri that I should act and think like the santri generally. Failing to answer their expectations could trigger a critical reaction from the santri, thus risking the relationship that I have built so carefully with my informants. My gender as a male fieldworker influenced my otherness among the female santri of Kidang, since the pesantren's gender segregation rule denied any male access to private spaces of the female areas of Kidang pesantren. Of course, the gender segregation rule still allowed me to talk to them in more public spaces or outside the pesantren premises, but it would not let me hang out with them as free as that I did with the male santri.

Obviously, my struggles over positioning myself during fieldwork are by no means unique. Most fieldworkers, whether doing ethnography at home or at foreign societies, are commonly challenged by the difficulties to maintain the insider-outsider boundaries (see for example, Halstead 2001; Berreman 2007 [1972]; Powell 2017). In fact, solving these problems is one of the main tasks of a fieldworker. The 1970s and 1980s reflexive trend in anthropology has provided an insight into the ways in which ethnographers could learn and enrich their knowledge about the societies they studied through a reflection of their identities and their constitutive positions as fieldworkers in relation to their fieldworks and informants (see Robben and Sluka 2007).

In my experience, I found out that a crucial step to solve my fieldwork struggles is by acknowledging and fully accepting the multiple dimensions of my identities when doing fieldwork: such as an Indonesian, a male fieldworker, a traditional santri, a PhD student in a secular and liberal university, and a friend to some of the santri I work with. It was only after I acknowledged and accepted different dimensions of my identities (as well as the identities of my informants), that I was able to "step outside myself" (Watson 1999: 4), helping me to see myself and my studied society from distant, open-minded, critical but emphatic perspectives. How the santri reacted to my identities is beyond my control, but once I came to terms with my identities, I have more self-confidence and courage to take the risks that may appear from the different roles that I played out when doing fieldwork, while simultaneously I became more aware and respectful of the different identities of my research subjects. In short, accepting my identities helped me realize what Dutch anthropologist Léon Buskens (2015) has reminded us about the variety of our statuses, and the importance of being aware of our changing statues in relation to our research informants when doing fieldwork.

Still, to protect the identity of the people I worked with, I have rendered anonymous almost all their names, except those who are public figures. For the same reason, I do not rightly name the pesantren in which I mainly conducted my research, despite it would be easily recognizable through my description of the pesantren here and elsewhere.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters and is divided into two parts. Part One, consisting of the first two chapters, discusses the topography and the infrastructure of the rise and spread of cinematic fever, or a contagious passion and interest among the santri with regard to cinema. Part Two, the case study, focuses on various dimensions of cinematic practices in the everyday lives of members of Kidang pesantren in West Java.

Chapter One introduces the fields of cultural production in which the cinematic santri work and compete against. It explores the socio-historical backgrounds of the rise of cinematic santri among the NU people, the ranges of style and discourse of their cinematic activities, and their positioning among their santri communities and against the 'other' Muslim filmmakers. I show how the santri in the NU headquarters and beyond have characterized their cinematic practices through an identification with NU-pesantren tradition in order to be recognized among each other, while at the same time have used the similar strategy to position themselves in the country's cinematic battle of Islam vis-à-vis the modernist and Islamist Muslim groups. I argue, while the rise of cinematic fever among the santri is produced through changes and continuities in multiple sectors of the social, political and technological life of the NU community, it is a contest over the question for legitimate authority to speak for, and on behalf of, the assumedly 'right' interpretation of Islam, especially through film media, that has been central to the santri's cinematic discourses.

Chapter Two explores the ways in which, against the lack of cinematic infrastructure in the provision of santri communities, the santri have developed an alternative form of infrastructure for facilitating mobile their cinematic practices, such as a mobile cinema practice, writers' communities, DIY film-making projects, and an online infrastructure. By focusing on the poetic dimension of infrastructure, or one that is operated beyond its technical function, I find out that the use and development of these alternative cinematic infrastructures by the pesantren people is largely facilitated by "a sense of cinematic solidarity". That is, a collective emotion among the cinematic santri to help and support each other for the mobility and development of their cinematic projects, the connection of which is shaped on the ground of their common identification with the tradition of NU and pesantren. However, looking at infrastructure as both bridge and barrier, I also argue that, as long as networks of pesantren tradition have enabled the young santri to render their cinematic practices mobile, the very similar networks have the potentials to limit the mobility of the santri's cinematic practices within their communities.

In Chapter Three to Chapter Six, I shift my focus to discuss a range of cinematic practices in the everyday lives of the Kidang santri. Chapter Three starts by looking at the ways the Kidang people have paved the roads of cinematic practices into the very interior of their pesantren's areas and ordinary lives. I focus on the pesantren's narratives about changes, the agentive role of its cinematic santri figures, and their habitual acts

of citing classical texts of Islam (assumed to be originated from the *kitab kuning*) in order to authorize their engagement with either the pesantren's changes, in general, or cinematic practices in particular. I show how film-making has become an ethical practice among the santri, as ideas about the (re)production of the pesantren's (textual) tradition are intimately tied to their collective capabilities and desires to engage with cinematic technologies and practices, hence becoming traditional santri in a modern and globalizing world.

Chapter Four explores the ways in which practices of film screening and cinema going are desired, regulated, and negotiated in, and by santri of, Kidang pesantren. A santri trip to a cinema theater can be experienced as transgressing the pesantren's authorized boundaries, and a santri being seen in a public space such as a cinema theatre can be associated with sinful behavior. In this chapter, I focus on the production of the authorized and non-authorized spaces in Kidang, secular tensions that come along with cinema going practices among the santri, and the cultural and subjective ways by which the santri have dealt with these tensions. I give ample attention to the ways structures of authority are constructed and distributed among the Kidang members. I show that to the extent that Kidang's production of space has been lied out on the basis of the pesantren's structure of authority: it is the very same authority that has 'authoritatively' enabled the santri to leave the pesantren's ground for going to such a secular space as cinema theater. Interestingly, their capacity to do so is cultivated through their time spend in Kidang, and is passed on, as if tradition, from generation to generation. Here, tradition continues to play a role in the ways the santri deal with worries and tensions arising from a cinema going experience.

In Chapter Five, I turn my attention to the materiality of film and other new media technologies that relate to it, such as mobile phone and the Internet, and the ways they have been objectified by members of the Kidang pesantren for fashioning their personal and collective identities, and their social and political distinctions. This chapter shows how the engagement with these technologies, along with the visual and communicative possibilities offered by them, has generated anxiety among the older members of Kidang pesantren, and have often disrupted the pesantren's social order and construction of authority. In contrast to it however, many of the younger generation of santri come to the materiality of film technologies for their aspirational desires toward Western ideas of modernity, despite modernity that comes with it is seen by the Kidang people as destructive to santri's piety and morality. Because of this, the santri developed particular discourse on how to master these technologies, and to use them according to their own tastes and needs, or to phrase it with their own rhetoric: "being santri 'and' modern, not just being santri 'but' modern".

In Chapter Six I explore the ways in which images of the pesantren are produced by the films of Kidang santri. Here, taking a cue from Mitchell (2005) who argues that the act of showing and seeing in "never purely visual", I attend to the various

ways in which the decision to film and not to film certain realities and materialities of the pesantren world are highly shaped by manifold desires and intentionalities. In particular, I examine the development of santri's film-making knowledge, relations of power and moral virtues that structure the everyday life practices of Islam in Kidang pesantren as an institution of learning, and politics of representation of the pesantren world in Indonesian film history. I argue, the efficacy of images do not only take place on the surface of screen, but it also unfolds in the ways they are emotionally, technically, religiously, and politically rendered significant in the contexts of how the Kidang people understand and give meanings their life words. In the last part of this chapter, however, I broaden my argument by examining the extent to which film can be served as a means to express a sort of Muslim femininity in a place that is strongly dominated by patriarchal culture, considering the fact that the majority of Kidang members who are engaged in film-making practices are (not) coincidentally women.

Chapter 1

Cinematic Fever

Introduction

On 12th April 2012, two weeks after the National Film-making Day (30th March) a large banner was hooked up in front of the main building of the central board of NU in central Jakarta, to announce that a film celebration was held inside the NU building, and by the NU administration. The celebration was opened by As'ad Said Ali, one of the NU's vice general chairmen, and it took the form of a film discussion. The discussion focuses on examining how to reclaim the position of locally-produced films against the influx of Hollywood, Chinese, and Indian film imports. Invited to speak during the discussion were a representative of the Indonesian government (the directorate of film of the ministry of tourism and creative economy), a film critic, and an NU-affiliated independent filmmaker. Before the discussion started, Gus Mus, a kyai and a cultural producer who by then was *Wakil Rois Am* of NU *Syuriah* (vice president general of NU's executive administration body) delivered his keynote speech. Importantly, upon concluding his speech, Gus Mus made an NU-typical joke that triggered laughter among the audience. His joke was, "*If it were not in the era of Gus Mus as the vice president general of NU, I could not imagine that such a film discussion as that we now had here would be organized in the main building of NU. I could not imagine it would take place in the era of Kyai Bisri Syansuri*".[1]

Significantly, cinematic activities of this sort are not the first to be organized among

1) He is one of the founding fathers of NU who was active as an NU leader until 1970s.

the NU members, and Gus Mus, who is a prolific poet, was possibly using hyperbolic language when making his joke. This is because, back in the 1960s, some of the NU leaders had actually been active in the country's film arena through Lesbumi – a cultural wing of NU, established in 1962. Lesbumi was founded to counter the influence of the left-leaning Lekra, the cultural wing of the long-disbanded Indonesian communist party. This means, while the film discussion can be read symbolically as a public statement on NU's "return" to the country's film arena, Gus Mus rhetorical joke bears implicit witness to the ongoing changes on the part of the NU communities and their surrounding worlds, especially ones that have allowed for their current (re)emerging cinematic practices.

Based on these premises, this chapter aims to explore the ways in which the NU people want and are able to (re)turn to the film arena, within the contexts of post-Suharto Indonesia. In particular, it addresses the questions of "What makes the NU people (re)turn to the film arena, and what does it mean for them to do so?", "Why it happened now and how?", "What are their discourses about film? And how do their films differ from the others?".

To answer these questions, I follow Bourdieu (1993), who locates the relationship between a cultural work and its producer within "the space of positions and the space of the position-taking" (p. 30), or the field of cultural production. For Bourdieu, the value of a cultural work is not decided solely by its producer, but is relationally embedded in a set of specific circumstances and relations of power, upon which both the cultural work and the producer are forced to adjust, yet in which they are at the same time enabled to defend and improve their positions vis-à-vis other agents having involved in the field (see Little 2011). This is because, while the producer does not work in "a vacuum", but in "a concrete social relation defined by a set of objective social relations" (Johnson 1993: 6), the meaning of a cultural work is not inevitable. Rather, a cultural work is "*made* to have a meaning", that is, through "signifying practices" (Myers 2007: 7, emphasis original), i.e. the institutions and discourses that establish the meanings of a cultural work, as well as the social relations within which the practices of meaning-making occur.

In line with Bourdieu's notion of 'the field', this chapter is an attempt to examine the field of cultural production of the cinematic practices of the santri. In this regard, I will address my attention to the following aspects. First, the main figure of the santri's cinematic practices. Second, the historical backgrounds and socio-political landscapes significant to the santri's cinematic uptakes. Third, the cultural discourse and social agents by which the values of santri's cinematic practices are classified, and against which they are distinguished.

Also, it is imperative here to clarify that many of my arguments in this chapter draw on the concept of 'cinematic fever', which I adopted from Doreen Lee's (2016) '*pemuda* fever' (*pemuda* meaning 'youth'). Drawing from Derrida's 'Archive Fever', Lee uses it to describe "a contagious feeling of political belonging and identification" among the *Reformasi* generation (2016: 11). This refers to the young activists central in bringing

down the New Order era, who continue to document, preserve and (re)produce their *Reformasi* stories as part of their civic participation in the national history and politics. Here, I want to link these young activists to the "cinematic fever" of the young santri I worked with, and who had their own kind of "fever". Although they are quite different groups of people, they share some common grounds. These are being youthful and being Indonesian at a particular historical and political juncture, i.e. the post-Suharto era. My use of the term "cinematic fever" refers to an emphasis on the contagious energy and passion that the santri have invested in the campaigns for the significance of cinema for articulating their political and ideological differences.

I divide this chapter into three parts. I start with an exploration of the figure of the cinematic santri in order to foreground the sociopolitical and historical backgrounds that are significant to the rise of cinematic fever among the NU people. Then, I attend to the characteristics of the santri's cinematic activism, by exploring its ideal discourse, its position vis-à-vis the country's more established filmmakers and before the eye of the NU elites, its mode of operation, and its strategic linkage to the 1960s NU's cinematic tradition. In the last part of the chapter, I discuss the competition between the NU's film discourse of Islamic film with the ones that are produced by other groups of Muslim filmmakers, especially the modernist and the Islamist groups. Finally, I make two key arguments. These are that, firstly, the rise of the modern figure of cinematic santri is produced through changes and continuities in multiple sectors of the social, political, and technological life of the NU community; and that secondly, a contest over the question for legitimate authority to speak for, and on behalf of, the assumedly 'right' interpretation of Islam in Indonesia through visual film media has been central to their cinematic discourses.

The cinematic santri figure

In an attempt to identify the key figures of Indonesian modernity, Barker and Lindquist et al (2009) have defined a figure as a category of "subject positions that embody, manifest, and to some degree, comment upon a particular historical moment in the complex articulation of large-scale processes that are not always easy to grasp in concrete terms" (p. 37). This figure is best understood as a symbol that functions as a semiotic sign of a particular social formation at a given historical moment (Barker et al 2014). What is significant in their approach is that it describes the figure as a historical agent, one that only appears against specific particular backgrounds (see also Introduction of this dissertation). In line with their approach, I look at the cinematic santri as a figure of modernity, in order to help us understand the extent to which its emergence is set against a larger-scale transformation that has taken place within and surrounding the NU-santri society.

In doing so, I will focus on Sahal's story throughout this chapter. He is my primary santri interlocutor whose cinematic activities in the NU headquarters proved to be

standing out in and as significant for the spread and intensification of the cinematic fever across the santri-NU communities. In particular, I will use his cinematic creative practices, experiences and struggles as an entry point from which our understanding of the emergence of cinematic santri can be further developed.

Sahal's case

A self-professed film-enthusiast, Sahal was born in 1979 in a santri family in a vibrant and dense village near the town of Cirebon, West Java. Sahal went to 'general' (secular) public schools, *madrasah* and pesantren.[2] Later in 2000, he attended a bachelor's program at a *Syariah* Faculty of IAIN Yogyakarta (*Institut Agama Islam Negeri*, State Institute of Islamic Studies), during which time he was also active in LKiS (*Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial,* 'The Institute of Islamic and Social Studies'). In late 2006, he moved to work at the NU headquarters in Jakarta where his involvement started with the central *LakpesdamNU* (*Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia*, 'NU's Institute of Research and Human Resource Development').[3] When I first met him in early 2012, he was working for *NU-Online*, NU's online media center.

Sahal has no academic background in film-making, and he doesn't know how to make films. Yet, over the course of my fieldwork, I saw him organizing various forms of cinematic activities within the provision of the NU communities, either in the NU headquarters in Jakarta or wherever it is. Examples of his cinematic activities range from holding film screenings, film seminars and discussion, and to film competition and (trainings in) film-making. He also created an 'alternative'' network of film exhibitions for an NU audience. For this end, he approached several NU senior cultural producers to ask their patronage, and built communication with his fellow santri at other centers of the NU community who shared a similar passion and activism in film. He also benefited from the prevalence of *NU-Online* and he used his personal social-media accounts to reach out as wide as possible to have an impact with his cinematic activism. In short, Sahal is one of the many santri in the NU headquarters and beyond who is knowledgeable of the potential of the film medium in conveying messages and influencing society, as well as one to have invested his energy in the spread of cinematic fever amongst the santri across different centers of NU communities.

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2) Unlike *madrasa* of the classical Middle-East Islam (Makdisi 1970), the Indonesian *madrasah* is not a higher learning institution, but a 'basic' school that consists of elementary, primary and high grades, and that has instruction and grading system on general and Islamic subjects, of which the latter received less attention than the former. By this, the Indonesian *madrasah* also differs from *madrasah* in Thailand and *madrasa* in Yaman and South Asian countries, all of which are more of an Indonesian equivalent to the pesantren (see Messick 1993; Noor 2008; Lukens-Bull 2010). Willing to the local distinction of each institution, I decide to maintain the Indonesian name *madrasah*, instead of *madrasa,* when referring to it.

3) Information regarding his biography can be retrieved from his blog, http://www.sahhala.wordpress.com (last accessed, 19 September 2015).

Sahal seems to have had an interest in films since a young age. This is particularly evidenced by his childhood memory, which he often shared with me and others, about him going to open-air film screenings which were regularly held near his village. However, his cinematic 'activism' has only begun recently. As he told me, by early 2008, he used to hang out with his fellow santri at an Islamic University of Jakarta, where they discussed the significance of screening a *film Islam* ('Islamic film') for an NU-pesantren audience within the "framework" of the country's film-making day, which is annually celebrated on the 30th day of March.[4] Although, the screening plan was not realized, this idea became an intermittent topic of discussions between Sahal and his fellow santri, who regularly hang out in the "guest room" of his NU-Online office. This place was a favorite hang-out and drop-by place among santri who visited the PBNU building.

Three years later, Sahal was finally able to realize his cinematic plans, as he established Lintang Sanga, a mobile cinema practice through which he organized film screenings and discussions in small towns and pesantren throughout Java. While it was only a short-lived venture, he continued traveling from one pesantren to another, not only playing films, but also organizing film-making workshops. His negotiation skills and wide networks with many of the NU-santri people have enabled his cinematic programs to be relatively well-received among the NU people at large and have allowed him to collaborate with many other santri who have the same interest in film. In 2016, working with an NU-affiliated independent filmmaker, Sahal received some film funding from the Indonesian Ministry of Religion for producing *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren* (A Pesantren's Way of Proselyting Islam), a documentary film genre of the intellectual and cultural lives of santri in pesantren. The film was later screened through his NU-pesantren networks, not only in Indonesia but also internationally. As such, Sahal is an important figure in the emerging popularity of cinematic practices among the NUers.

My purpose for focusing on Sahal as an example of the figure of the cinematic santri is because of his biographical accounts and cinematic activities provide insightful openings into how the modern figure of cinematic santri has emerged. Firstly, his young age, educational background, and participation in relevant organizations, all show the extent to which the emerging figure of cinematic santri is a result of socio-cultural and political changes that have occurred within the larger NU-pesantren community. Secondly, the year when his passion in cinematic activism first started, i.e. 2008, was the same year the highly-celebrated Islamic film *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (Verses of Love) was released by a non-NU santri producer. This indicates that the emergence of our figure is strongly connected to the country's contemporary developments of both Islam and

4) I borrow the term "framework" from van Heeren (2012) who uses it to refer to a New Order's practice of "framing films in a specific context" (p. 96) in order to reconstruct the state's historical narratives and political ideology. The country's film-making day celebration is an apparent example of such New Order's framing-film practices, and the cinematic santri are not totally unaware about it. Yet, instead of leaving it out, they use it for their own cinematic agendas, as this chapter will show later.

a range of mediated *dakwah* movements. It refers to the emerging popularity of new media technologies among various groups of Muslim communities for (a battle of) both propagating and speaking for Islam. This means, the turn to cinematic practices by the santri has much to do with the strategical positioning of NU vis-à-vis other groups of Muslims in public domains, especially through cinematic discourses and practices.

Thirdly, Sahal's cinematic activism, which was only started in 2008, bring into minds the popularity of '*indie*' (independent) film movement in the post-Suharto era. That is, the rise of young film activists who started to produce their own films with 'do it yourself" spirit (van Heeren 2012: 2), in order to voice "the concerns of their generation" (Paramaditha 2015: 3). The santri and the *indie* film activists are similarly young and living in post-Suharto Indonesia and thus the link between them is worthy of being explored. In addition to that, Sahal's frequent visits to cinema for watching (mostly secular, Western) films, a routine he had been doing since his childhood through his mobile-cinema experiences, also reminds us that the emerging field of cultural production of a santri's cinematic practices is not separated from the other secular and Western film circuits.

Finally, Sahal's close contacts with Lesbumi, an NU-cultural wing by which NU was able to produce a feature film in the 1960s, speaks to the significance of NU's (assumed) cinematic tradition for the rise of our cinematic figure.

I will now explore the most relevant of these insights in the following sections. I start from the positioning of NU in view of the other Muslim groups for political influences in public domains.

Religious rivalry

One of the strongest narratives in the study of Islam in Indonesia suggests the significance of a 'traditionalist-modernist' divide as an analytic tool to explain the political and cultural expressions of the NU people in public spheres (Geertz 1960; Bowen 1993; Hefner 2000; Bush 2009; Burhani 2015). This divide was triggered by a religious conflict between the traditionalist and modernist groups. The traditionalists are loyal adherents to the schools of *ulama* of the classical era of Islam (*taklid*, or *taqlīd*), and observe culturally-contextualized practices of Islamic rituals. The modernist Muslims, who began to emerge in what is now Indonesia by early twentieth century, are widely known for their strict reference to the Qur'an and *Hadis,* and for their advocacy for 'purifying' Islam from local customs.[5] They reject the traditionalists' practice of *taklid*, and regard the culturally-contextualized practices of Islamic rituals as *bidah* (*bid'a*), or unacceptable innovation. This religious conflict became a serious threat for the traditionalist groups when the modernists, such as Muhammadiyah and Al-Irsyad, established an organizational form of Islam in 1912, and used it as an institutional means

5) By this, thus, some scholars have dubbed the latter as classicalist, and the latter as reformist (Lukens-Bull 2005).

for the spread of their understandings and practices of Islam. In response to this, the traditionalist Muslims created an organization of their own right, namely *Nahdlatul Ulama* in 1926, largely served to preserve "their beliefs and religious expressions" (Bush 2002: 346). The birth of NU, in other words, is a result of religious rivalry between the traditionalist and modernist groups (see also van Bruinessen 1994 and 1996; Feillard 1994; and Fealy 1996).

Further discussions about NU's rivalry with the modernist Muslims, however, have seen several moments of rapprochement between the two groups (Feillard 1997), exemplified by NU's involvement in Masyumi (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslim). It is an Islamic political party active during the Sukarno era that was dominated by the modernist groups. This in turn has invited some scholars to move beyond the modernist-traditionalist rivalry discourse when discussing Islam in Indonesia (Barton 1994; van Bruinessen 1994; Fealy 1996; Effendy 1998). Nevertheless, Robin Bush's research on NU's civil society movement in post-Suharto Indonesia shows that this rivalry is still relevant amongst the younger generations of NU (2009 [2002]). Bush describes that the eventual split of NU with Masyumi in 1952, triggered by the traditionalists' severe disappointment at the attitudes of modernist factions of the party toward the NU *ulama*. The event was so traumatic for the NU people that their memories about it are passed from generation to generation. Because of this, memories of this conflict are not only still vivid among the younger generation of NU, but also continue to occasion their socio-political and cultural behaviors in contemporary public domains (Bush 2002: 346).

Current trends of Islam in Indonesia also show the rise of Islamist groups[6] such as the political party *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* ('Prosperous Justice Party, PKS) in the early 2000s, which aims at 'Islamising Indonesia" through party-political activism leading to an establishment of an Islamic state (Machmudi 2008). Members of PKS have their origins in an Islamic predication movement called '*Jamaah Tarbiyah'* ('the Tarbiyah Movement'), mushrooming across mosques of the top Indonesian secular universities in 1980s. Many members of *Jamaah Tarbiyah* were children of the rising Muslim middle class families who benefited from the New Order's economic growth in the 1980s (Rinaldo 2008: 35). Pioneers of the *Tarbiyah* Movement had close links to ex-Masyumi members, who sent the former to Egypt or Saudi Arabia to study Islam, in which they learned the teachings of Muslim Brotherhood (Machmudi 2008: 93). The PKS and its auxiliary organizations are seen by the NU people as a rival similar with, but also different from Muhammadiyah. That is, while they similarly support a purist view

6) My use of the term Islamism/Islamist refers to the alignment of resurgent Islam with political ideology (Lybarger 2007: 1) and suggests to its diverse forms (Cinar 2005: 13). In this regard, PKS as an Islamist party, is no different in that it upholds a more moderate and pragmatic approach than do the Indonesian hardliners Islamists groups such as the Indonesian Hizbut Tahrir (HTI), or the Islamist vigilante groups such as the Islam Defenders Front (FPI) (Machmudi 2008 (2006): 193).

of Islamic orthodoxy, in term of Islamic politics, the former generally tends to hold an Islamist approach and the latter a nationalistic one.[7]

Still, as urban, educated, and middle-class Muslims, most Muhammadiyah and PKS people are similarly known for their savviness of using new media and popular culture, especially film, for propagating their Islamic understandings, and articulating their Islamic expressions in public sphere. An example of this is the 2008 release of *Ayat Ayat Cinta,* by a Muhammadiyah-affiliated director, Hanung Bramantyo, and based on a novel by a PKS-associated writer, Habiburrahman el-Shirazy. A romantic love story of a pious Indonesian student of Al-Azhar University, (thus, a santri in the wider sense), the film had attracted no less than two million paying audiences across the country's mainstream cinema theaters, and in a few neighbouring countries. Its commercial success was in turn followed by a wave of Islamic films whose narratives appropriated the structures, themes and plots of *Ayat Ayat Cinta*.

There is a tendency among the traditionalist people to respond to the innovations of their Muslim rivals in "an equally bold manner" (Hefner 2009: 25). The initial year when Sahal and his fellow santri in the NU headquarters first started their cinematic activism, i.e. 2008, is crucial here, and as far as I am concerned, by no means a coincidence. In the last part of this chapter, I discuss how this film has sparked debate among the santri I worked with in the NU headquarters and beyond. Here, it is sufficient to say that many of the santri criticized the portrayal of 'Indonesian Islam' in *Ayat Ayat Cinta* as being reminiscent of an 'Arabized-way' of being a Muslim. As such has encouraged them develop their own efforts.[8]

Four years after the release of *Ayat Ayat Cinta,* or by the time I just begun my fieldwork, cinematic practices such as film-making, film screening, and film discussion, become a new trend among younger santri across Indonesia. Sahal is only one example of the santri in the NU headquarters who 'discovered' the effectiveness, if not also the 'coolness' of cinema for expressing their beliefs and political differences. In other places, many other young santri also started to organize their own cinematic practices from their pesantren. While most of them similarly conducted their cinematic practices with the spirit of DIY (Do It Your Self), the trajectories of their cinematic practices are not always the same. Some of them do not have the support from their pesantren's authorities.

7) I associated Muhammadiyah with nationalistic movement because it is a national organization that was involved in the struggle for independence, and supported the establishment of Indonesia as a Pancasila state, instead of an Islamic state (van Bruinessen 2014: 64).

8) van Heeren (2012: 119-120) has also demonstrated that the emergence of Islamic film communities in the early post-Suharto era, which initiated the organization of film screenings and film discussions in the wide-ranged provisions of the modernist-Islamist-affiliated groups, did not only dominate, but also preceded that of the traditionalist NU people. This says the degree to which the turn to cinematic practices by the NU santri has many to do with the earlier cinematic moves done by the other Muslim 'rival' groups, i.e. the Muhammadiyah and PKS filmmakers.

Yet, many of these santri received the full support from their pesantren. This is often the case in a pesantren that, for reason of modernization, has allowed the teaching of video-making skills and relevant digital literacy subjects as part of their curriculum. Many of the films that these santri have produced are increasingly uploaded on platforms such as You Tube and Facebook. This has proved to be an effective way for the santri to spread their interest in film, and to maintain a network among the santri filmmakers themselves. Many of these santri filmmakers are connected to each other through other cultural networking platforms such as a pesantren-based literary communities. All in all, in a decade after the reform era, and following the arrival of the Muhammadiyah and PKS filmmakers into film arena, cinematic-related practices have become fashionable among the young santri in the NU headquarters and beyond.

Nonetheless, I do not argue that the figure of cinematic santri is just an imitation of what Muhammadiyah and PKS filmmakers previously have produced. This is because, long before the popularity of today's Islamic film genre, several socio-cultural and political transformations, particularly ones that are proved to be significant for the post-Suharto's emergence of our cinematic figure, have occurred inside the provision of NU societies. Below I will discuss the two most relevant transformations: educational changes of the pesantren and NU people, and the emergence of NU's civil Islam movement.

Education and civil Islam

Educational reform plays a significant role for the emergence of the cinematic santri figure. Sahal's Islamic education in pesantren, *madrasah* and Islamic university, epitomizes the educational trends among present day santri; it also breaks with the educational trajectory of the traditionalist santri Muslims.[9]

As early as 1920s, several pesantren began to teach a new subject in basic science, partly in response to the establishment of *madrasah* by their modernist rivals (van Bruinessen 2008: 224-5; Hefner 2009: 61-3). Yet, it is the increasing secularization of the country's Islamic education implemented by the ruling elites of Indonesian government that has caused greater changes. Through the serial enactments of regulations, applied from the 1950s onwards, pesantren (along with other Islamic schools) were required to include general sciences into their traditional curriculum. This initiative was arguably linked to the government's concerns, especially during the New Order era, against the

9) Since the seventeenth century, few 'pupils' from Sulawesi, Sumatra, Sumbawa, Borneo and later Java had travelled to Mecca (and two centuries later extended their travel to reach Cairo) for studying Islam. They lived in the holy land for some years, some did not return though. Later in the nineteenth century, the accumulative of these pupils would form a distinctive community of the *Jawi* people, 'people from the archipelago', in the Hijaz (Laffan 2003; Azra 2004). Those who returned would strengthen the process of Islamization and lead the emergence of santri societies in Indonesia (see Geertz 1976 [1960]: 124-6).

rise of orthodox and political Islam (Hefner 1997 and 2000; Ichwan 2006; Pohl 2009). The major expansion of state-run Islamic universities (called IAIN) across Indonesian provincial cities in the 1960s has had a strong impact on Islamic education (Mueleman 2005 [2002]; Hefner 2009).[10] It opened up wider opportunities for pesantren graduates to pursue higher education at the IAIN, from which many of them were able to take a higher degree at Western universities. By the 1980s, a few of the Islamic universities have become "incubators of innovative and progressive thoughts" of Islam in Indonesia (Barton 2002: 163).[11]

Likewise, it is through university campuses, that many of the pesantren graduates were able to engage in film-related activities, such as film screenings. Sahal and many other santri who graduated from IAIN Yogyakarta, for instance, often recalled their stories of watching and discussing as wide a variety as American, France, Iranian and local films, screened in *Jamaah Cinema*, a student's cinema club of the university in the 1990s. It was obviously not about film-making as such; but such experiences harnessed the santri's cinematic pursuit and desire to produce their own films in the years to come. Sahal's educational track, reflecting general trends in Islamic education in Indonesia, thus reveals that the emergence of the figure of cinematic santri is partly an (unintended) effect of the government's secularizing control and standardization of Muslim education in the country.

In addition to education, another significant development in NU societies for the yet-to-come emerging figure of the cinematic santri is what Eickelman and Piscatori (1996) call, 'Muslim Politics'.[12] By the late 1980s, NU started to witness the rise of young and progressive santri, dubbed as '*kaum muda* NU', who promoted an NU-style "civil Islam" (Hefner 2000), largely in response to the New Order's policy on political Islam.[13] Islamic policy under the New Order was never consistent.[14] This is because Islam was

10) One of the country's earliest state-run Islamic colleges, established in 1951, is IAIN Yogyakarta, now transformed into UIN (*Universitas Islam Negeri,* 'The State Islamic University'). It is where Sahal received his bachelor diploma on Islamic law. On the development of Islamic higher education in Indonesia, see Mueleman (2005 [2002]); Ichwan (2006), and Hefner (2009).

11) On the role of IAIN in advancing the renewal of Islamic thoughts for promoting democratization and social cohesion in Indonesia, see Kraine (2007).

12) They use this term to emphasize the sense of 'beyond the state' and 'beyond the formal' of a *thing* that is political, and to bring forward the dialectical relation between individuals and the government of that 'political thing' (1996: 4-5).

13) Other scholars have called it NU's civil society (Bush 2002; Sirry 2010).

14) In the 1970s, he marginalized Muslims in favour of secular nationalist and Javanese *abangan*. By 1980s, he courted NU to be his allies, before turning to conservative Muslim of ICMI in early 1990s and wooing the ultraconservative Islamists in the last years of his dictatorship. Suharto was never hesitant to use his "dividing and conquering" strategy, by pitting one ethno-religious group with the others (e.g. anti-Christian and Chinese propaganda in late 1990's) so as to guarantee, in his eyes, the New Order's state of order (see Hefner 2000).

never Suharto's main interest. Rather, his obsession "was power, and he was happy to change ideological grab to keep it" (Hefner 2000: 19). Thus, the general pattern of his Islamic policy is that he suppressed Islamic political parties, and was never hesitant to play the Islamic card whenever he needed to retain his power. In the 1970s, his Islamic policies had taken a toll on NU, exposing the latter to various measures of exclusion and pressure, such as the enforcement of NU to merge with other Islamic parties into a single party, i.e. the Unity and Development Party, or PPP (Feillard 1997: 135). Upset at this situation, in 1984, under Abdurrahman Wahid's leadership, NU withdrew from party-politics practices, returning to what it was originally presumed to be, a socio-religious organization, or *Kembali ke Khittah26* (Returning to the Original Principle of the 1926).[15] The withdrawal proved to have remarkable consequences: NU was able to improve its relationship with the government, and enjoyed rapid development in its education, religious predication, and charity programs (Feillard 1997).

Yet, NU's withdrawal from party politics had another significant impact on the part of its younger generation. In the 1970s, when just returning from his study in Cairo and Baghdad, Abdurrahman Wahid worked for a pesantren-related NGO, called LP3ES (Barton, 2002: 103).[16] As soon as he became the leader of NU, he architectured the proliferation of various NGOs in the NU communities. Leaders of these NGO were young santri activists who often worked under the supervision of NU's progressive thinkers not structurally affiliated to NU, but playing a significant role in transforming the cultural premises of the organization (Ibid: 161). P3M, LakpesdamNU, and later LKiS were among the first NU-affiliated NGOs to be founded and sought to promote the compatibility of Islam with, above all, values of democracy, human rights, and liberal thought (Bush 2009: 100).[17] While many observers take it that NU's civil society

15) Its withdrawal decision, however, can also be linked to NU's heightened conflict with the modernist factions within the Islamic party of PPP (Feillard 1997; Bush 2002), a dejavu of what they had in 1950s with Masyumi.

16) An abbreviation of *Lembaga Pengkajian, Pendidikan dan Pengetahuan Ekonomi dan Sosial* ('Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information), LP3ES was founded in 1971, under the auspices of the Neumann German Institute and, later, of the Ford Foundation. Interestingly, the NGO was founded by activists of modernist Muslim backgrounds, telling the extent to which both the traditionalist and modernist groups could share a common ground when it comes to values and ideas of civil society.

17) P3M ('The Indonesian society for the Development of Pesantren and Society'), established in 1983 on Gus Dur's initiative, was sort of an 'extension' of LP3ES. By early 1990s and through to 2000s, more NU's "civil society" organizations were established, such as The Wahid Institute and Gusdurian, to name only a few (Salim and Ridwan 1999; Ida 2004). It should be noted however that the popularity of "civil society" in Indonesia, as in many other regions, was largely due to the intervention of many international donor agencies (and academic circles alike) that vigorously introduce it as a jargon for propagating democracy in developing countries. For some scholars, such intervention has run the risk of essentializing civil society as a universal ideal replicable in all contexts, times and traditions (Hann and Dunn 1996; Howell and Pearce, as cited in Bush 2002: 15).

movement maintains a critical stance toward the state (Sirry 2010), Bush (2009) provides a convincing argument that their agendas are strongly informed by NU's interest in political Islam vis-à-vis the modernist groups, instead of the state.[18] By 1993 LKiS shifted its focus, becoming a publishing and literary movement, which later proved to be infrastructural for the emergence and spread of the cinematic santri (Chapter 2).

The involvement of Sahal in NU's civil Islam movement through his membership in LakpesdamNU and LKiS, shows that the cinematic santri bears a relationship with the earlier emergence of NU's civil Islam activists who worked for NU's agendas in political Islam through cultural approaches. Our figure – personified by Sahal - is an embodiment of the younger generation of santri, who shares a common 'activist' spirit with the santri activists supporting NU's civil Islam movement. Yet, the cinematic santri figure works in a different arena, and through a different medium. I will explore their activist spirit more thoroughly in a later part of this chapter. I will now explore how the emerging figure of cinematic santri connects to a wider context of the rise of '*indie*' (independent) film movement that has become popular in the early 2000s, not to mention with the other secular, Western and Asian film circuits.

The influences of 'Kuldesak' spirits and the circuits of other secular films

At the turn of *Reformasi*, a successful release of an *indie* film entitled Kuldesak (Cul-de-sac), produced by Riri Reza, Mira Lesmana, Nan T. Achnas, and Rizal Mantovani, marked a new development of *indie* film-making movement in Indonesia.[19] It is an anthology film shot in a digital format, featuring the voices of urban, middle-class Jakartan youth, concerning issues of, among others, drug addiction, (homo)sexuality, and the rebellious agency of the self (van Heeren 2012: 53). After its release, an array of *indie* film-related activities, ranging from film-making, film screening and film communities, become fashionable amongst young people in and out of the urban centers of the country (Paramaditha 2014). Most of these young people were born in educated middle-class families, had a degree of English fluency, and were comfortable with global youth culture (Barker 2011: 107). While its successful release was partly facilitated by the widespread popularity of digital technologies and practices across the globe (Negroponte 1996), and the opening of media markets of the country's film industry following the downfall of the Suharto era (Sen and Hill 2007), its appeal to these young generations was also because the film brought to them the spirits of "new alternative practice" (van Heeren 2009: 53), "space of experimentation" (Paramaditha

18) Indeed, while NU had officially withdrawn from party-politic practices, interpretation of such decision by the NU elites was highly diverse. The NU people, furthermore, have never totally shied away, in one way or the other, from party-politics practices (discussed below).

19) van Heeren (2009) has rightly noted that the *indie* film movement in Indonesia does not necessarily bear the Eruo-America's association of the term as an opposition against the mainstream studio system. It is instead a genre that becomes "a model and banner for many young people who set out to make their own films" (p. 53).

2014: 67), and "act of breaking through" (Barker 2011: 84) in all sectors of Indonesian film mediation practices.

The influence of *Kuldesak* on the emergence of the cinematic santri figure is strong. Later, I will show how Sahal often viewed his cinematic activities as an alternative to the existing film practices and an experiment with what he wanted to further achieve in film arena. I will also attend to a story in which the cinematic santri in the central office of NU had made an endeavor to invite some of the *Kuldesak* filmmakers, now seen as the new established filmmakers in the country's film industry, and get them involved in their film-making-related activities. This anecdote shows the extent to which the *Kuldesak* filmmakers have become inspirational film figures for the cinematic santri. Throughout this dissertation, I will also show how the affordability, accessibility and sense of freedom of the new digital and audio-visual technology and Internet online space have in many different ways helped the spread, exchange and intensification of the cinematic fever across the NU communities in a way that it has never occurred before.

The emerging field of cultural production of the santri's cinematic practices cannot be separated from variously secular film circuits. In fact, the Bond image, the excerpt from *3 Doa 3 Cita* which I use as a starter to this dissertation, shows the influences of secular Western film genres on the santri's cinematic aspirations. To this point, it is worth mentioning that the country's film exhibition platforms such as cinema theaters, mobile cinema practice, and TV, all have offered a variety of film genres to local Indonesian film audiences. This includes films of romantic, horror, comedy, and action genres, to name the most notable examples, all of which are variously produced by Indonesian, American, Chinese, and Indian film companies. The cinematic santri like Sahal, as evidenced by his childhood memories of frequenting an open-air film screening near his village, are familiar with these secular film genres through one of the film exhibition platforms available. Moreover, with the rising popularity of video-based social media platforms such as You Tube, and one-click hosting sites, such as RapidShare and MediaFire, through which people can watch and download collections of various film genres of world-wide production (see Slama and Barendregt 2018: 11), access to these films is unprecedentedly more open, if not easier, to the cinematic santri.

In addition to these secular films, television dramas also have played a significant role in the birth of the cinematic santri figure. The state-controlled television broadcasting system was first established in Indonesia in the 1960s, and for a long time had been largely aimed at fostering the invention of national culture (Kitley 2000). The establishment of commercial TV stations in early 1990s, however, triggered by changes in the country's political, social, and economic situations. This coincided with the advances of television products and services which had popularized new TV programs that were framed as popular entertainment. A new form, locally known as sinetron (*sinema elektronik)* emerged as an Indonesian rendition of internationally-popular television dramas, such as Latin telenovela, American soap opera, and Australian melodrama, which since the 1970s had been well-received among Indonesian

TV audiences. The early 2000s marked the "conservative turn" in religious practices among Indonesian Muslims in the public domain (van Bruinessen 2014). This saw the emergence of a new genre of sinetron in Indonesian television: that is, one that showcases obvious themes of Islam, popularly called '*Sinetron Religi*'. The Islamic genre of sinetron were a hit with Indonesian TV audiences, dominating prime time television programs, and in turn signifying the process of "mainstreaming Islam" into contemporary Indonesian pop culture (Rakhmani 2017). With this in mind, Islamic soap opera is as influential as other secular films and television dramas I mentioned above, in the birth of cinematic santri.

In later parts of this chapter, I will return to this discussion in order to show how these secular films, television dramas, and religious *sinetron* have helped shape the kind of ideal films that the santri aim to produce. Yet for now, I will continue my discussion on the history of cultural activism of the NU people, with which many of the cinematic santri I work with have maintained a historical continuity.

Cinematic tradition

A final significant notion for the rise of cinematic santri figure is the organisation's own tradition of film making. Many santri at the central headquarters of NU and elsewhere often emphasized the historical role of NU in the 'national' film arena particularly through Lesbumi, an organization for Muslim artists and cultural activists, established by the then NU Party in 1962. Although Lesbumi did not specifically focusing on film, many of its central figures were film-workers, including the likes of Djamaluddin Malik, Usmar Ismail and Asrul Sani. While Sani and Ismail were film directors, Malik was a businessman, an NU politician, and the owner of the *Persari* film-company. The trio held the central positions on the board of Lesbumi: Malik as the general head, Ismail and Sani, respectively, as the first and second vice of Lesbumi (Chisaan 2008).[20] In 1964, Lesbumi managed to produce a film about the pilgrimage to Mecca, entitled *Tauhid* (The Unity of Allah).

Lesbumi's 1960s cinematic activism was closely related to the then political situation. According to Sen (1994: 30), its establishment was "largely in response to Lekra's influence in the artistic and cultural field".[21] Lekra, an abbreviation for *Lembaga*

20) Misbach Yusa Biran, a filmmaker close to Sani, Ismail and Malik, later joined Lesbumi and headed the organization's branch for the great Jakarta (Jakarta Raya) (Biran 2008a). Compared to Lekra that only had Bachtiar Siagian as a filmmaker amongst its elite members, and seen from the logic of political economy, it is unsurprising that 'cinema was more central to Lesbumi than it was to Lekra' (Sen 1994: 30).

21) While the national stage of the country's 1957-66 political turmoil was crucial to the foundation of Lesbumi, Sen (1994) has focused 'too much' on it at the cost of neglecting both the local politics and cultural dynamics of NU, surrounding the establishment of Lesbumi. During the periods of 1930s and 1950s, NU had participated in the national debates over the questions of cultural foundation of (what is today called) Indonesia, and had made an effort for modernizing its artistic and cultural works especially among its less

Kebudayaan Rakyat ('Institute of People's Culture), was founded in 1950 and was affiliated with the Indonesian communist party, or PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*). By early 1960s, the cultural debates and polemics on the search for the cultural foundation of Indonesia reached its most vitriolic, if not worst, tip of tension, as it was marked by declaration of manifestos. The authors of Lekra had advocated "art for the people", which strongly suited the rhetoric of Sukarno's Guided Democracy.[22] Between 1963 and 1964, when PKI was in its strongest position, Lekra's cultural producers were engaged in fierce attacks against their rivals (Foulcher 1986: 126; Ricklefs 2001 [1981]: 327). Those who were attacked by Lekra, or worried about Lekra due to either its increasingly strident attacks on its allegedly ideological opposition with Islam, responded with the *Manifesto Kebudayaan* (Cultural Manifesto*)*, in which they refused to use art for political ends and as such formed an anti-communist cultural group (Vickers 2005: 153).

NU leaders, however, refused the use of art either for art's sake or for political ends, and went to call for the use of an artwork for both religious and social functions: one that is based on a belief in both monotheism of Islam and the principles of humanity. They called it 'religious humanism' (Chisaan 2008: 149). Friction between these highly fragmented groups, in which "statements of solidarity and actual alignments were subject to rapid change" (Bodden 2013: n27), finally reached its peak in the 1965-6 mass killings, during which 500,000 - 1 million people were killed. The victims were generally those with suspected Lekra and Communist affiliations. Despite NU was at the 'winning end' of the conflict, the organization disbanded Lesbumi in 1966.[23] According to Jones (2013: 108), it was partly because of 'the decreasing importance of (and increasing state and social antipathy towards) political association' of Lesbumi.

During the New Order era, the NU leaders never totally turned away from cinema. In conjunction with the rise of Islamic 'nine-saints' films in the 1980s, for example, a few of NU religious figures participated in public discourse on how film could be used

conservative members (Chisaan 2008; Salim 2012; Zuhri 1974: 236). Likewise, the cultural rivalry in local politics during the 1960s was not always between Lesbumi and Lekra, but sometime between Lesbumi and the modernist *Muhammadiyah* groups (Hatley 2012). These reflect the influence of both local tensions and dynamics of NU's cultural expressions on the establishment of Lesbumi. The establishment of Lesbumi was obviously political, but I add, in *many, and highly nuanced ways*.

22) In response to the failure of his 1950s parliamentary democracy, Soekarno created a political ideology of NASAKOM (*Nasionalisme, Agama dan Komunisme*, or 'Nationalism, Religion and Communism'), which he aimed to unite the three most progressive political factions in his government: the nationalist, communist and NU-Muslim groups. Later in 1960, he redefined it as MANIPOL-USDEK, an acronym for, 'the Political Manifesto of the 1945 Constitution – Indonesian socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy and Indonesian Autonomy. Central to his campaigns were rhetoric of anti-America, pro-communist, anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism, and slogans of political ideology (see Ricklefs 2001 [1981]; Vickers 2005).

23) On accounts of NU's involvement in the tragedy, see Cribb (1990); Hefner (1995); and McGregor (2009)

for *dakwah* (Wahid 1983).[24] At the same time, a call for an Islamic film production was often heard from the *pesantren* grounds, often as a reaction to the influx of "indecent films" (of domestic and overseas production) assumedly featuring sex, violence and incorrect representation of Islam (van Heeren 2012: 116-18). During the 1980s, as reported by van Heeren (2012: 116-18), a few of NU religious leaders took part in public discourse on how film can be used for *dakwah.*[25] In the early years of the *Reformasi,* which were signified by freedom of expressions and the rise of cultural practices such as that of the Kuldesak generation in Indonesian cinema, discussion about "upholding cultural practices for religious and political expressions" had intensified among the younger generation of NU. This in turn has led to the reestablishment of Lesbumi in 2005 (see Rapat Kerja 2010). The late Alex Komang, a santri and multi-award-winning actor who learned acting from Teguh Karya's *Teater Populer,* was appointed as the vice president of Lesbumi, and film-making was set a part of its programs.[26] His appointment was an indication that the re-establishment of Lesbumi brought new hope for the santri people to re-enter the film arena. Sahal said it this way: "Lesbumi had a history (in film arena), and was charged by NU to take part, in *dakwa* education [...] through art and culture".

To sump up this section, the modern figure of the cinematic santri is produced through changes and continuities in multiple sectors of the socio-political life of the NU community, as it is at the intersection of their relationship with the state and other Muslim communities living in Indonesia and abroad. Its emergence is an embodiment of the state-imposed transformation of Indonesian Islamic schools that has been well responded to by NU members. The state's tightening control over Muslim politics forced the santri people to turn to cultural practices as a means of expression. The cinematic santri is part of the rise of educated, middle class Muslims who have relatively easy access to discourses of civil Islam and the advance of digital media technology, be that on the part of the NU santri or their rivals. It is also an outcome of the historically and politically-driven activism of Lesbumi in the country's 1960s film arena that has been seen as a sort of cinematic tradition for the NU people. The emergence of the cinematic santri figure and its intertwinement with the historical, social, political, religious, economic and digital backgrounds posit a question regarding

24) The nine-saint films are an Islamic film genre that focus on a mission of spreading Islam through the folk-tales of nine holy men who were believed to have spread Islamic teachings in Java. News has it that an NU-affiliated *kyai* was recorded to have played in one of these films (Sembilan Wali 1985: 48).

25) This discussion had actually circulated among many urban Indonesian Muslims since early 1940s (Soerono 1941a and 1941b).

26) Teguh Karya is one of the most influential film directors that Indonesia has ever had, and his *Teater Populer* was an important training ground for new talents, as many Indonesia's best actors and actresses in the period from 1970s to 1990s received their acting class from him (Hanan 1996: 691).

the characteristics of santri's cinematic activism. I will discuss this point in the following section.

Santri NU-style film

The characteristics of cinematic activism amongst santri are diverse. They can be best understood through what I call "santri NU-style film". This term refers to "the space of styles" (Bourdieu 2010: 165) of the films that the cinematic santri is (inspired) to produce.[27] To explore it further, I will return to Sahal to discuss his ideals of what good films (about Islam) should look like.

Sahal, like many other santri with whom I worked, was concerned with films that contained messages held by NU and pesantren (*film yang sesuai dengan nilai-nilai NU dan pesantren*). When I asked him to explain what are these 'NU-pesantren' films, Sahal answered that these are films that contain one of the following: a spirit of NU's religiosity, a spirit of nationalism, a virtue of education, and attention to local culture. This answer seems to be rooted in the NU's Civil Islam discourses discussed above. Yet, on many other occasions, Sahal also told me, that an ideal film of NU-pesantren virtue should not contain one of the following scenes: kissing, defamation of the country (*menjelek-jelekkan negara*), and a hedonistic lifestyle. He also tried to convince me several times that he would never screen in his 'mobile cinema practice' any local film taking its setting outside Indonesia, even if the film had 'Islamic symbols' (*simbol-simbol Islam*).[28]

Sahal did not single out any specific film title that he regarded as 'defaming the country', 'outside Indonesian setting', or 'promoting hedonism and sexual liberation'. I argue, however, what he means by the "country-defaming" film is related to the NU's narrative of 'nationalistic credentials' (Ramage 1995: 31). This refers to the putative commitment of the NU people in supporting Indonesia as a nationalist, not-Islamic state that is based on Pancasila ideology.[29] As for the (Islamic) film with an "outside

27) The santri unsurprisingly addressed (the likelihood of) films of their production in many different names. They are *film* pesantren (pesantren film), *film* santri (santri film), *film NU* (NU film), *film Lesbumi* (Lesbumi film), *film agama* (religious film), *film Islam* (film of Islam), *film Islami* (Islamic film), and *film dakwah* (*dakwah* film), to mention most of them. The last three names, however, are sometime used by the santri in the context of a competing discourse with the other Islamic films of non-NU santri production, such as film *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (The Verses of Love), which are not in my category of the santri NU-style film. The use of all these names, however, is somewhat loose, for a film of santri production may entitle all of these names, but at the same time not every film of cinematic-santri production should be 'called Islamic'.

28) What I mean by 'mobile cinema practice' is a film screening practice Sahal usually conducted in (remote) areas where the country's mainstream cinema chains are not available and the NUers were the majority group (Chapter 2).

29) The most recent evidence of this is the 2015 publication of *Nasionalisme dan Islam NU-Santara*. It is a selection of essays by scholars of NU associates and non-associates that

Indonesian setting", it is likely that Sahal was referring to the film *Ayat Ayat Cinta*, which was released in 2008 to huge success. *Ayat Ayat Cinta* is set in Egypt and features many landmarks familiar to Indonesian audiences: the historic Al-Azhar mosque, Cairene old-dwellings, its noisy alleys, busy traditional markets, and not to mention the exotic Egyptian pyramid and deserts.

I am hesitant, however, to conclude that it is just the sheer idea of Egypt that matters to the NU santri. Throughout my time hanging out with the santri in the NU building and elsewhere, they often shared in our conversations their concerns about Islamic films that associate Islamic piety with things that are 'Arabic' - be they culture, language, or landscape. Sahal and other santri criticized the Arabisation of Islam, which manifests in the act of associating Arabic landscape, culture and language with Islam, as it is indicated by the film's exotic use and description of Arabic language, dessert lands, and the *niqab* (face veil), and of associating them with a sense of Islamic piety. In other words, his criticisms are less about a film that takes its settings outside Indonesia, than about one that associates a form of Arabic culture with a 'true' Islam. Thus, Sahal's reluctance to play such a film as *Ayat Ayat Cinta* in his mobile cinema hints at a sort of discourse of "Islamic film" that is in contention with that that is promoted by santri of the non-NU groups.

The last criteria resonates with the pedagogic purposes of the santri's cinematic activism in relation to issues of public morality. Targeting young audiences with his mobile cinema, Sahal often proclaimed that he wanted to "accompany the young while they grow up" ('*menemani anak muda yang sedang tumbuh*') by providing them with what he considered 'good films'. In this regard, Sahal and the other santri often complained that most films and soap operas targeting young Indonesian viewers, whether these are local or imported ones, centered mostly on wealthy people who lived hedonistic lifestyles and displayed lascivious behavior. For Sahal and his friends, such a lifestyle was far from the reality of most Muslims in Indonesian society.

Still, santri's concern with, and fear of sexualized morality resounds in the hotly debated Anti-Pornography Bill of 2006, the contents of which would prohibit materials deemed pornographic and covered in all sorts of mediated work, including film (Allen 2007: 101). While debates about the law had been started since the early 2000s, it was the 2004 release of a 'teen-flick' film that fueled the national blaze of its publicity (exacerbated by publication of Indonesian *Playboy* magazine the same year, see Kitley 2008; and preceded by Inul's 'drilling' dance controversy a year earlier, see Heryanto 2008).[30] The bill was ratified in 2008 and it has been viewed by some scholars as devising

conceives of NU as both an Islamic and nationalistic organization, which at the same time fully supports Indonesia as a semi-secular Pancasila state (Ubaid and Bakir 2015).

30) The movie was *Buruan Cium Gue* ('Kiss Me, Quick!'). It features a simple love story that ended with an implicit kissing scene. The controversy started when an Islamic preacher of national audiences, Abdullah Gymnastiar, protested against the film's release. Without watching the film, he was ironically convinced that it contained pornographic elements,

the politics of resistance for defining the 'ideological' future of the nation (Allen 2007; Heryanto 2008), particularly between the Islamist vis-à-vis the liberal-Muslims and the other 'secular' groups (Paramaditha 2013: 120).[31] Yet, Muslim voices are strongly divided upon these matters. The NU people, notably, had no unified voice over the bill. While a majority of NU associates are said to have supported the bill, several NU public figures including Gus Dur, and members of NU's female auxiliary, or *Fatayat*, were against it, on the ground of its threat against freedom of expression and women's rights (Rinaldo 2007). According to Rozaki (2010) Muslim groups who supported the Bill, were either for campaigning Islamic law or upholding Islamic public morality, and the NU leaders fall into the second category.

Indeed, the santri's ideals about NU-pesantren film are not only diverse, but also, sometimes are hostile to each other.[32] The case in point is my conversation with Ali, a santri in a traditional pesantren in Kediri, who had produced *Para Penambang* (The Sand Miners), a film of socio-economic problems faced by the sand miners living near his *pesantren* (see Chapter 2). By then, Ali and I were talking about Nurman Hakim, who had produced *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (3 Prayers 3 Loves) – a film I discussed at the beginning of this dissertation. In particular, we were discussing Hakim's 'brave' move of normalizing an implied homosexual-intercourse scene in his film. Considering the widespread taboo of homosexuality, along with the increasing cry for criminalizing homosexuals in Muslim Indonesia, the homosexual scene in Hakim's film is controversial to the majority of Indonesian film audiences, let alone to the santri at large.

Regarding this, Ali told me that he would have never filmed the issue of

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arguing that its title alone implicitly means "hurry up and have illicit sex with me". The preacher soon got supports from the MUI, the country's council of *ulama*, and other Islamic and non-Islamic religious organizations. On August 14, the MUI sent a letter to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, responsible for affairs of the country's film industry in post-Suharto time, asking the latter to remove the film from the cinemas. At the same time, Gymnastiar asked other non-Muslim religious figures to support the MUI's effort. Finally, on August 20th 2004, the movie was withdrawn from the cinemas. The country's film censorship board, the LSF, said to media that the decision was on the ground that the film had 'disrupted public order' (see van Heeren 2012: 161-8).

31) I used the term liberal-Muslims to refer to those embraced the liberal values by contextualizing them with their individual beliefs and practices of Islam. Meanwhile, I should also clarify here that the secular groups are highly complex, multi layered and never monolithic. Thus, my use of it here is to emphasize the various ways by which they have embraced the secular values and contextualized them with their individual (dis)beliefs and practices of religion.

32) As I have written elsewhere (Huda 2014), the cinematic santri films so far have been produced by using diverse methods of narration, tell different kind of stories, make use of a range of film formats, and go to different circuits of exhibition and circulation. They come as short and feature films, fiction and documentary, amateur and professional; as well as go to ordinary exhibition and alternative screening. Usually, such heterogeneity is an effect of combined factors ranging from film-making skills, funding, authority's support, professionalism, to knowledge and film experience of the cinematic santri.

homosexuality in pesantren the way Hakim did in his film. Understandably, for Ali, still living in a pesantren compound in a local region (certain regions are sometimes less accepting of so-called liberal thinking), the sheer mention of issues of homosexuality is already taboo, let alone depicting them in a film. But for Hakim, now living in Jakarta, and having graduated from the country's most established film school, a frequent attendant of public discussions at Komunitas Salihara, and receiving film funding from international donors, the case is different.[33] The homosexual love scene in his film is not only poetically feasible, but also what politically has made his film widely reputable amongst the transnational film festival audiences.

In my view, this diversity also reflects the heterogeneity of NU, both as an organization and as a religious community. As an organization, NU's leadership consists of different categories, ranging from politicians, (conservative) *ulama*, and reformers (Bush 2002: n.134). As a religious community, it consists of roughly 80 million members, with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.[34] Given this breadth, no one in NU has a definitive claim to the monopoly over the interpretation of (religious) truth in and for NU society at large.[35] In contrast, a (religious) truth in NU is produced, interpreted, experienced, distributed and even contested among different NU leaders and members, emphasizing the diffuse nature of NU society. Following this argument, the diverse and conflicting discourses with regard to the ideals of what an Islamic film should be among the NU santri reflects what scholars have so far argued about the diversity of NU society at large. That is, as a community of religion, NU consists of various factions ranging from conservative, moderate, and to 'hybrid' forms of neo-modernist, post-traditionalist and liberal Islam (Bush 2009; Kersten 2015).

This often-conflicting diversity, however, does not constrain the santri from recognizing their peers among the other cinematic santri. When asked if Hakim's film *3 Doa 3 Cinta* was an ideal one for the pesantren film, Sahal told me as follows: "Hakim's film still lacked in portraying the realities of pesantren. But it was much better than the pesantren films made by non-NU santri directors such as *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (The Woman with the Turban, Dir. Hanung Bramantyo)."

Similarly, Hakim also told me that he once declined Sahal's question for a film-making project after learning that they had different ideas about it. Nonetheless, Sahal has tried to screen *3 Doa 3 Cinta* at his mobile cinema practice and over time Sahal and Hakim have often worked together on film-related projects. One thing is significant here. Despite the heterogeneous, often conflicting characteristics of the santri's film

33) Salihara is a community of cultural producers associated with liberal and secular thoughts, established, among others, by a cultural activist and writer, Goenawan Muhamad.

34) There is no definitive data with regard to the exact number of NU members. Yet, many NU leaders claimed that the total number of NU affiliates, including those culturally practicing NU's specific religious rituals, is estimated in a scale of 80 million (Jumlah 2018).

35) A situation that springs from the absence of a Church-like institution for the production of religious authority characteristic of Islamic societies.

discourses, it is clear that their cinematic practices are identified within the same spaces of style, thus in turn rendering them to be systematically recognizable amongst the santri themselves. As such is largely due to the close proximity of their cinematic discourses with either the pesantren tradition or NU as an organization which is rooted deeply in pesantren. This is the crux of what I mean in the start of this section as the santri NU-style film**.**

If this is true, though, the very same proximity with NU-pesantren tradition will render their cinematic activism distinctively classifiable from the other filmmakers. In the following section, I will focus on the story of a 'film day celebration' held by Sahal and his fellow santri in the NU headquarters, in order to explore the position of the cinematic santri vis-à-vis the country's other, more established, filmmakers.

Vexing marginality

In early April 2012, Sahal, Komang and other santri in the PBNU building organized a film day celebration, commemorating the 62nd year of the so-called *Hari Film Nasional* (the National film-making Day), and the 50th anniversary of Lesbumi. Officially, the celebration of both days occurs on every 30th and 28th of March.[36] The initial plan of Film Day Celebration was to run a series of film seminars and a week-long of film screenings. Upon a preparatory meeting, seven films were listed. The films were: Usmar Ismail's *Darah dan Doa* (Blood and Prayer, 1950), Usmar Ismail's *Lewat Djam Malam* (After the Curfew, 1954), Asrul Sani's *Pagar Kawat Berduri* (Barbed Wire, 1961), Asrul Sani's *Tauhid* (The Unity of Allah, 1964), Erros Djarot's *Tjoet Nyak Dien* (1988), Nurman Hakim's *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (3 Prayers 3 Loves, 2008), and Ifa Isfansjah's *Sang Penari* (The Dancer, 2011). Some notable Indonesian filmmakers were also invited to the film seminars, such as Ifa Isfansjah, Riri Reza and Nia Dinata (Proposal 2012).

The films were chosen based on common criteria. Usmar's and Asrul's films were selected because of the involvement of both Umar and Asrul in Lesbumi back in the 1960s. Djarot's film's intense message of 'war against the colonial Dutch', close to NU's nationalistic narrative, has made his film attractive in the eye of the santri. And the selection of Isfansjah's film, meanwhile, was mainly to do with the fact that it was based on a novel of Ahmad Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (The Dancer from *Paruk* Hamlet) and starred Alex Komang. Tohari, a prolific writer with strong affiliation to NU, is one of the NU influential cultural-figures; while Alex Komang is one of the santri who initiated the Film Day Celebration itself. The film is even more significant to the santri once put in the context of NU's political history. Portraying a miserable, manipulated life of a dancer against the backdrop of the 1965-6 mass killings, the film is politically significant for NU, particularly regarding the latter's undisputable involvement in the tragedy. Meanwhile, the selection of Riri Reza and Nia Dinata,

36) The celebration of the National Film Day in 30th of March, which refers to the first shooting day of Usmar Ismail's film *Darah dan Doa,* was set by the New Order government in order to maintain a 'cultural order' through film institutions (Sen 1994).

originating from the Kuldesak generation, was based on their reputable position as film producers in today's country's film arena.

As a member of the committee, I was responsible for the availability of the films.[37] When trying to get copies of the films, I faced some problems with the four older films of 'the Lesbumi directors', and with *Sang Penari*. By that time, *Sang Penari* was still a newly released film and its DVD copy was not yet easily available. Because of that, I tried to contact Isfansjah via email in order to get a copy of his film. I did this more than once, but I didn't hear back from him. When I explained this issue to Sahal and Komang, both of them gave me a hint of similar responses from other filmmakers that they had invited to the film seminars, after which they asked me to stop contacting Isfansjah.

As for the former films, they were supposedly only available in *Sinematek Indonesia*, a center of film archives and library, established in 1975 by Misbach Yusa Biran, and financially supported by Ali Sadikin, the then governor of Jakarta (Biran 2008: 249). It turned out that the library was no longer headed by Biran and now charged a considerable cost for every film to rent. This frustrated the santri given the past involvement of Biran in Lesbumi.

The holding of the film day celebration reveals several issues. Exacerbated by other more fundamental problems than the film's availability, the santri decided to drop most of the films from the initial list. The film-screening was postponed and happened three weeks later than planned. It was moved away from its original place, i.e. the conference room of PBNU building,[38] to an auditorium of the Humanity Faculty of an Islamic State University in Jakarta, and finally only screened one film of Usmar's *Lewat Djam Malam.*[39] On another occasion after the film screening, Sahal told me that he still planned to play another title from the list at a neighboring pesantren. However, until my return to the Netherlands in July 2012, the plan had not been realized.

The film seminar, likewise, initially planned as a three-day series of public discussion, was cut back to a half-day event. None of the notable filmmakers invited were present at the film seminar. Crucially, one of the keynote speakers accepting the invitation, Hikmat Darmawan, is a film critic whose name was not even included in the initial list of speakers at the proposal of the event.[40] He opened his talk by saying that he was 'surprised' for getting an invitation letter from Lesbumi, and was more surprised when knowing what the invitation was about, a film day celebration by the NU santri. He acknowledged to the audience that he had never heard about such a film

37) I deliberately tried to not help the santri, however, in selecting the films to be screened.

38) The screening was initially planned to be held in the conference room of the PBNU building. The cancellation, I was told, was due to its being not equipped with screen-projecting technology.

39) In fact, I finally managed to get the copy of all (old) films, except that of *'Tauhid'*, from 'a black market'.

40) Yet, we did mention him upon the preparatory meetings. This means that his name was in the back-up plan.

Picture 1: The banner of NU's Film Day celebration. My photograph.

organization of NU as "the new Lesbumi" and that the NU people (still) had an ongoing interest in cinema. As a film critic, Darmawan is to my assumption knowledgeable about development of cinema issues and discourses on film-making in Indonesia, although he was probably pretending to be naive when stating his "ignorance" about Lesbumi. In any case, he was rightly putting his finger on the marginal position of the cinematic santri in the country's film arena.

And yet, the santri are also aware about this marginality. On interviewing Sahal upon my return to Indonesia, a year after the film seminar, I asked him about the difficulty that he had faced for the sustenance of his cinematic project. He answered my question as follows: "Our main difficulty is the (dearth of) human resources. After Lesbumi was dormant for so many years, we become unfamiliar with that kind of media (i.e. film)." Indeed, many of the santri who organized the cinematic project from the centre building of NU like Sahal, are not professionally trained to be filmmakers. Nevertheless, the santri are knowledgeable of the fact that the involvement of Ismail, Sani and Biran in old Lesbumi had much to do with the then political turbulence, which, according to Biran's story, forced them to find an institution able to give protection for their cinematic expressions (see Biran, 2008b: xii). Without the involvement of these men, Lesbumi would have lacked film directors amongst its board membership.[41]

41) Amongst the top film figures of Lesbumi, it was only Malik who was beforehand a

That said, I am inclined to assume that what Sahal intended to say by "unfamiliarity" refers less to their lack of technical skills and knowledge needed for film-making, than to their state of becoming, if not being, unrecognized in the national film arena. To rephrase Sahal's statement, after fifty years of Lesbumi's political exile from the country's film arena, the santri become ignorant of the field, and, more problematic to the santri and NU, was no longer acknowledged in it. Darmawan's participation at the film day conference, along with the refusal from the majority of established filmmakers whom the santri wished to give their talks (read: get involved) at the same event, well translated the NU's state of being unrecognized in the country's more established, some new, dominant filmmakers.

The cinematic santri, however, are also marginal in the eye of the NU elites. They received only little financial support from PBNU, the highest organizational structure of the NU members. To the extent that financial shortage often altered and even downgraded the santri's cinematic plans, this situation often frustrated the santri as was the case of the Film Day Celebration described above. Nevertheless, their marginality is not likely due to the lack of PBNU's finance, but because film clearly has no priority among the NU elites. Regarding this, Sahal said as follows:

> PBNU had more than enough resources to fund our cinematic programs [...] Some elites in PBNU did hear our will of developing film practices in the NU community, but we understand that our cinematic aspiration is only one out of many aspirations that are handled by the PBNU: and ours is probably queuing up after a long line of other more important aspirations.

Based on Sahal's remarks, I argue, "the other more important aspirations" with which the cinematic santri compete to having win the hearts of the PBNU elites, relate to NU's relentless contention amongst its internal elites and members regarding the primary orientation of NU as an organization, whether a political or a religious one. To explain my argument, I shall now focus, again, on Lesbumi.

The struggle to win the elites' hearts

Earlier I have talked about the santri's Film Day, coinciding with the 50th birthday of Lesbumi. From its very first preparatory meeting in early February 2012 until its commencement two months later, Zastrow Al-Ngatawi, the president of Lesbumi, was not involved in the event, a situation that often frustrated the other santri. Apparently, he had been informed about the event but he handed it over to his deputy (Alex Komang) to organize it. It was rumored though, that his absence had to do with the lack of co-ordination between board members of Lesbumi, or as my interlocutor expressed such situation in Arabic, as a typical way of doing it amongst the santri, "*wuǧūduhu ka*

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member of NU. Yet, despite he was 'a big name' in the country's film company, he was not a film director. This indicates the significant extent to which most of the santri had been unfamiliar with film-making skills and knowledge even when Lesbumi was at its best.

'adamihi" (lit. 'its existence is like its absence').[42]

As every rumor is a socio-political construction, the rumor about his absence does not come from a void. During my visits to the NU headquarters, I have never seen him around at the office of Lesbumi. Many also had told me that he rarely came to the office. Nonetheless, I don't want to position him as the scapegoat for the difficulties that the santri had to deal with in the realization of their cinematic project. He must have had his own story to explain his absence that should be heard, and more importantly, frustrations of the santri seem to be much bigger than his absence could explain.

Although I had never met Al-Ngatawi, he told a journalist of NU Online, that the position of Lesbumi was marginal in NU due to the former's political insignificance to the latter. The conversation ran as follows:

> The journalist:
> "What is the difference between Lesbumi in the 1960s and now?"
>
> The LESBUMI president:
> Lesbumi in the 1960s had a close relationship to the center of power since it was an integral part of NU as a political party, which at that time was also close to the ruling government. So it had privileged accesses to centers of power too. But now, Lesbumi is far from the central power, even in a marginal position, not only in government circles, but also within the NU itself. Among the NU elites, Lesbumi was ignored. For Lesbumi was never regarded important: it's only seen as an institute of 'entertainment' that merely organized events of art and culture. We had tried to explain to them the significance of a cultural movement, yet there was not yet any good response from them. Maybe it was because economic and political movements were more appealing to them than is a cultural movement. (Alawi 2013).

His answer to the journalist insinuates that it was the interest of NU's elites in partisan politics (in particular compared to their interest in other cultural projects) that caused the marginal position of Lesbumi within the organization of PBNU. Despite often hearing similar insinuations from other santri, I do not want to take it at face value. Instead, I use such insinuations as a way to understand the complexities of aspiration in NU as a nation-wide-scale organization with so many members and often-divergent interests, and within which the aspiration of the santri regarding their cinematic project is only but a small part. At this point, it is useful to look into the relentless debate amongst the NU elites themselves, regarding how NU wants to define its organizational platform, i.e. as a social-religious or political organization, a debate that has its roots in the very first days of NU's establishment.

When it was first established, NU was not a political organization, and it remained

42) Significantly at the time of film day celebration, the president of Lesbumi, according to his comment on a Facebook account of my santri interlocutors, was in a local branch of Lesbumi for a similar celebration. This says the extent to which the rumored lack of coordination in Lesbumi had created a conflicting situation amongst the board members.

so until it joined Masyumi, which in 1948 became a political party. Nonetheless, as many scholars have suggested, NU was as 'socio-religious' as it was political at its birth, and ever since it had been rife, and struggling, with the tensions between socio-religious and political interplays (see van Bruinessen 1994: 17-45; Feillard 1999: 7-15; and Bush 2002: 29-33).[43] As I have already stated, aside from connecting the traditionalist *ulama*, the most prominent cause for the establishment of NU was to counter the foundation of Muhammadiyah and the rise of reformist movements in the Muslim world. While its transformation to a political party only made its political orientation explicit, NU's 1984 withdrawal from party-politics practices was interpreted differently amongst both the NU elites and 'ordinary' members.

Their interpretation range widely from those that see the *Khittah26* as a complete departure of NU from party politics toward purely socio-religious activism, to other ones that understand it as the giving of full freedom by NU to its members for their alignment with any political party (Bush 2009: 79). The difference in interpretation, Bush adds, is largely made possible by the wording of the decision that is vague enough to allow room for multivocality: and as such is typical of NU (Ibid).[44] In spite of the multiple interpretations of the *Khittah26*, Gus Dur went on to regard it as "a strategic move that would allow NU to concentrate its energies in those spheres of informal political activity" (Hefner 2000: 169), allowing an Islamic organization like NU to safely get involved in 'Muslim politics' amidst the New Order's oppressive policy on political Islam. When such repression was removed, history proved that by 1999 NU declared PKB (The Resurgence of the Nation Party') as its official party, and Gus Dur ascended the presidential palace, despite disagreement between many of the NU elites and it's younger generations who were involved in NU's civil Islam movement (Bush 2002). This indeed reverberates that NU by some is considered a self-professed socio-religious organization that is replete with political motivations.

As for how NU's tight entanglement in between the socio-religious and the political interplays has its influence on the cinematic project of the santri, I will turn to my story of the first NU-documentary film competition, organized in accordance with the 33rd NU's national congress that was held on 1st-5th August 2015 in Jombang, East Java.[45]

I was at the congress for the full five days. The conference was rife with political

43) In practice, the term 'social' is often loosely interpreted by the NU people to refer to cultural and economic issues, ones that are not related to party-politics practices (Kadir 1999).

44) While multivocality is commonly marked in every society, it should not be solely understood as a way to exploit political advantage. In this regard, Beatty's illuminating work *Varieties of Javanese Religion* (1999) has brilliantly pointed out how, through an example of ritual practices such as *slametan*, multivocality has been utilized by Javanese villagers in Banyuwangi, East Java, as "a means of blending together dissonant voices and thus of orchestrating social harmony" (p. 49).

45) The congress, periodically held in every five years, is organized to elect the new top leaders of NU, as well as to discuss NU policies on cultural, economic, social, political and religious problems. This means the significance of the congress for the 're-structuration' of the

maneuvers. No sooner had the participants arrived than they were divided into two opposite blocks of the two leading candidates for the PBNU top leadership. The conference was opened by Joko Widodo, who had recently become president of Indonesia. And on the evening of August 1st 2015, rumors were circulated that many *muktamirin* (congress participants) still did not get their badges that would allow them to enter the congress venue. Many attendees still hadn't received their badges by the following day when the first plenary session on 'rule and regulation of the congress' commenced. Before the first plenary session started, water and air conditioning systems in the venue were mysteriously turned off, and it continued happening throughout the day, only to heighten the emotional state of the *muktamirin*, which was already tense. Against these unusual occurrences, it was rumored that someone was sabotaging the upcoming voting process.

Part of the tension was related to a question from participants that called for changing the format of election for the *Rais Am,* the president general of NU's administration body. This was part of an effort to return the power of *ulama* to the politicians within the NU.[46] Over the next four days, the tension between the groups increased. The small panel sessions were held on the third day - more than 24 hours behind their original schedule. While the *bahtsul masail* panel ('*baḥṭ al-masā'il'*, the panel for discussing *fatwa* on religious and other issues) was uncharacteristically very quick and smooth, the panel on the structure of the organization, in which the postponed discussion of the selection format for the top heads of PBNU was resumed, lasted until very late evening of the fourth day.

In addition to my role as a member of the delegation of NU's special branch for the Netherlands, my attendance at the conference also related to my research agenda to attend the ceremonial announcement of the film competition. The schedule of the announcement, however, was still uncertain. Initially, news had it that it would be held on the first day of the congress, but later I was informed that it was changed to the fifth day of the congress, coinciding with the election schedule for the new top leaders of PBNU. On the evening of the fifth day of the conference, an hour before the election started, I met Sahal, who was in charge of the film competition, in front of the entrance venue. He told me that the trophy conferring ceremony for the winners of the film competition would be held at 'Pendapa' at 9p.m. in the city's meeting hall, about three

organization for the five years to come.

46) The organizational structure of NU consists of the board of *Syuria*h and *Tanfidziyah*. Theoretically, the difference between the two is that the former, mainly consisting of NU's senior *ulama,* is conceived as the legislative body, upon which the highest authority of NU is vested. The latter, consisting of those who are capable of doing organizational and administrative jobs, and dealing with NU (more practical) decisions on a daily basis, is conceived as the executive body. The *Tanfidziyah*, therefore, while seen as 'political', are theoretically subjected to the authority of the *Syuriah*. At the practical level however, the relation of power between the two councils has constantly been negotiated and reversed over time (Bush 2009).

hundred meters from the congress location. As we parted, I promised that I would come to the conferring ceremony.

Since the first day of the conference, I had seen a huge crowd of santri people and others surrounding places of the congress. Yet on this night, it was at its busiest. Everyone seemed to be flocking to the main venue of the conference. As the election time drew near, I went back inside the venue. I observed the heightened tension. A large fenced-area was installed inside the ground, guarded by many *Banser*, NU's paramilitary division. Only the voting members of NU, the provincial and regional leaders of NU, were allowed to enter it. Those who were not authorized to get in, including me, gathered around the fence. The election process lasted until dawn. Yet before 9 p.m., I managed to leave the venue through the crowd of people, hastily heading to Pendapa but only to find out that no one was there. I checked other nearby possible locations for thinking that I might have misheard what Sahal said: still, I could neither find him, nor able to spot any conferring ceremony of sort.

I did not try to reach Sahal afterward. Three months later, however, he wrote on his Facebook account about his dissatisfaction regarding the competition. He wrote as follows:

> The '*khataman'* (ending ceremony) of the competition was lukewarm, as if there was nothing happening. There was no *sembelih jago* (a slaughtering of rooster), no *nasi tumpeng* (a cone-shaped rice) decorated with various fruits, and no prayers from the elder, as it is a *khataman* of *pengajian* (a religious learning) ritual usually looks like. Whereas, we had run the competition as if it were a *pengajian,* even, (a religious learning) of a national level.[47] ...It had no trophy-conferring ceremony; the plan of compiling the seven best films was not yet realized; and the plan of screening the films was still uncertain. ...Of course, a film competition in NU could (have) be(en) organized in a proper, right, and continuous way, because NU is not *a political party*. Do you agree, Bro(ther)?

Notably, the chaos at the congress squarely mirrors the strong intertwinement of the socio-religious and the political in NU as a national organization of many interests, in which the political seems to be more attractive than the former. Furthermore, the metaphor of *pengajian* that is used by Sahal for describing the importance of a cultural activity like his film competition is telling the extent to which a cinematic activity, however political it can be, is seen by the NU santri within a "theological discourse" (Bowen 1993).[48] I argue, it is against the backdrop of NU's complicity between the socio-religious and the political that the santri's cinematic activism is trying to find its

47) According to the news, no less than seventy films from both NU and non-NU filmmakers residing as far as Aceh, Yogyakarta, South Sulawesi and other provinces across the country participated the competition.

48) Bowen (1993: 10) uses the term 'discourse' in its most diverse meanings and broadest senses, in order to show that the production of everyday life practices in a Muslim society is embedded in "the practice of exegesis", in which local events are linked with the authoritative texts of Islam. In many of the following parts of this dissertation, I will make

strategic position in the NU's institutional supports. While acknowledging the poor preparation of the NU film competition, film is not highly valued among the NU elites. This has forced the cinematic santri to creatively find a way to win their place in the heart of the NU leaders: and as reverberated from the ethnography above, the santri is struggling to do so.

Modes of operation

A set of operational patterns of the santri's cinematic activism is created in the context of such a struggle. Sahal's mobile cinema project provides a good example. Sahal told me, while he seemed often to be using his own money, NU-Online supported him a lot in terms of financial matters and beyond. His film screenings which I attended in Brebes district, aside from being befriended by film maker Hanung Bramantyo, was also in partnership with a broker: a local journalist who was an NU-online respondent and was primarily in charge of organizing the audience and the film screening.

A project such as running a week-long of film screening involves many people with different skills. Thus, the santri's cinematic project used its operation as a 'collaborative' strategy. The collaboration some time took between several (groups of) santri, or between (a group of) santri and a third party. To a certain extent, the project did display the individual agency of the santri (see Chapter 4 and 6), in most cases nevertheless, it was never a purely personal enterprise. The third party, who more often is not a santri associate, and consists of people with different ideological and social-economic backgrounds, causes significant influence to the ways the project is carried out.[49]

Thus, whimsicality becomes another common feature to the operational patterns of the santri's cinematic projects. Uncertainty, change of plan, and even cancellation is part of the "art of survival" efforts that the santri had to deal with. In fact, most of the films the santri have produced, such as Ali's *Para Penambang* I mentioned above, and films by Aisyah and Jalal which I will discuss in Chapter 4, are of amateurish sort. Despite that, more often than not, the santri tended to have strong desire to create something new, something alternative, and as I will discuss it later, something critically intrusive to what they considered to be 'mainstream'.

In relation to such *modus operandi*, many santri often told me in a typical way that their cinematic project had initially started from *percobaan* (an experiment; an attempt). In his explanation of his mobile cinema project, Sahal for instance, said as follows: "it was not [meant to be] a permanent program. It was actually an experiment (*uji coba*), which was meant to observe the response from the NU people in local regions."

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this issue more pronounced.

49) My conversation with the broker of Lintang Sanga's film screening in Brebes, and from what I overheard of his conversation with his peers at the last afternoon after the film screening had ended, suggested that the local organizer did not share Sahal's cinematic values. They appeared more concerned with the amount of money they earned from the film screening: a situation that Sahal was annoyed by.

Sahal's explanation brings to mind Paramaditha's "the scenario of experiment" that she solicited to explain the prevalence of experimental modes of production among the young Indonesian cultural producers of "the Kuldesak generation". This generation saw rehearsal as their tactical tool of grasping with newness, uncertainties and opportunities of the post-Suharto time for their search of something in the making, the new wave, the new project (2014: 51-91).

While coming from a very different realm, the Kuldesak generation is similar to the cinematic santri in the sense that they emerge after the commencement of the *Reformasi* era. The santri thus shared a similar tactic to the 'Kuldesak generation'. Yet, what is different in the santri's experiment is that their cinematic activities were often spoken of as, Sahal said, a strategic move to "*caper*", an abbreviation of *cari perhatian,* or 'looking for attention' from, according to Sahal, the government. However, I would extend this 'looking for attention' to reach, the NU elites, their santri peers, and the competing others, i.e. the country's most established film producers and the Muhammadiyah and PKS Muslim filmmakers. To say it more explicitly, it was not only as a strategic tool to grasp with the uncertainty, newness and opportunities of the post-Suharto time, but also to deal with their marginality of being 'unacknowledged and unsupported' both in the country's film field and within NU politics.

One of the purposes of this chapter is to examine the ways by which the cinematic santri adapt and establish their positions within the field of cultural production of the contemporary Indonesian cinema. In order to show this, I will now turn my discussion on the use of Lesbumi rhetoric among the santri.

'Lesbumi film(s)': a creative, but ambivalent strategy

The term 'Lesbumi' often appears in santri's conversations about their cinematic activism as one kind of filmic ideal that the santri seek to be identified with. The list of films to be screened in the Film Day celebration is a case in point. I noticed through my field notes that the santri were aware that it was only Asrul Sani's *Tauhid* (The Unity of Allah, 1964) amongst the seven films that were actually produced by Lesbumi members.[50] However, the santri often used the term "Lesbumi Films" (*Film-film Lesbumi*) in a plural form to refer to the list. I had never asked them what those were, partly because I was not aware of this issue when doing the fieldwork; they had never told of such a list of 'Lesbumi films', and I doubt if they had one.

50) It was most probably only *Tauhid*, if not along with Misbach Yusa Biran's *Panggilan Ibrahim* ('The Hajj', 1964), made in supplementation of the former, that was produced by *Lesbumi* (Biran 2008a: 139). Talking about pilgrimage to Mecca, or hajj, Tauhid's funding come mostly from the ministry of religious affairs, then headed by an NU central figure, Saifuddin Zuhri (Said 1982: 80). And it was also pointed out by Salim, that the shooting processes of Tauhid in Saudi Arabia was eased through a kind role of the then Indonesian ambassador for Saudi Arabia, another NU leading figure who later would succeed Zuhri's position in the ministerial office, K.M. Ilyas (2012: 99).

Nonetheless, the context of their talk about films of the Lesbumi kind is quite revealing. I often heard people mixing-up the Lesbumi films with films produced by the Lesbumi filmmakers at the course of time beyond their involvement in the organization, despite some of them were well aware of this confusion. A case in point is Ismail's *Lewat Djam Malam* ('After the Curfew' 1954). When I indirectly asked Sahal if the film was a Lesbumi one, he refused to call it so because it was made before the establishment of Lesbumi in 1962. Nevertheless, during the screening of the film at the occasion of film day celebration, many santri sympathized with the film due to its association with Lesbumi.[51] The term 'Lesbumi Films', apparently, has attained a new meaning to the santri people of so many decades later. It is now used in such a way to include particular films of Lesbumi filmmaker activists produced beyond the time of their activism in the organization.

Significantly, central to the ways the santri idealized Lesbumi for their cinematic project is the creation of a new meaning of films of the Lesbumi filmmaker activists. In the process of such appropriation, as the time extension indicates, films of Lesbumi filmmaker activists seemed to be experiencing a sort of distortion by which they become augmented from their initial memory, or "the memory once they were made" (Barthes, 1972 [1957]: 142). This way, Lesbumi has become a mythical type of discourse amongst the santri. As such, I argue, the appropriation of Lesbumi can be seen as one example of efforts that the santri need to perform in order to strategically locate their project in the national landscape. As such, the Lesbumi strategy, in my view, is creative. For it is precisely Lesbumi that provides the NU people with claiming a cinematic tradition in the country's film arena. And because of that, the santri finds in it, to use their term, a "*sanad*" ('*isnād*'), a genealogical linkage that connects them in an authentic way to the NU-earlier generations in the film arena.[52]

By referring to Lesbumi, the santri create a sort of legitimate continuity in their project with the cinematic tradition of their elders. By extension, they creatively innovate through such continuity an opening space in the cinematic field that will render their state of being unrecognized now becoming visible and recognizable, i.e. to have a place "on the map" (Ferguson 1999: 235) among the others in the country's 'national' film worlds.

Yet, the return to Lesbumi for branding their project is ambivalent. Two following cases show this. First. Another Lesbumi-inspired film that received frequent mention

51) Mostly, they referred to it as films that breathe Lesbumi values (*film-film yang bernafaskan Lesbumi*).

52) In the *hadis* scholarship, *sanad* refers to a chain of oral transmission of a *hadis*, made up of a list of reliable and pious Muslims through whom the hadith reaches the latest transmitter all the way from Muhammad in an unbroken linkage, a guarantee of the hadith's authenticity (Brown 1996: 81). Influenced by such tradition, the santri is strongly aware of a notion of "being connected" to their greater masters in the past through their Islamic knowledge studied in pesantren (van Bruinessen 2008: 221).

in the santri conversation is Ismail's *Darah dan Doa* (released as The Long March in English), a film that "is intended to be a historical document of the Siliwangi division's suppression of the Madiun rebellion in October 1948, its role against the Darul Islam movement in West Java, and its celebrated 'long march' from Central Java back to West Java after the so-called 'Second Dutch Police Action" in December 1948" (Sen 1994: 21). Its mention by the santri, however, had often been instilled in a slightly different context from that of the other 'Lesbumi films' I mentioned above. It is often appraised by the santri in relation to its signification by the New Order as 'a role model of the national film' in view of the fact the authoritarian regime had decided the film's first shooting day (March 30, 1950) as "*Hari Film Nasional*" ('The National Film-making Day'). Scholars of Indonesian cinema have pointed out the New Order's political ideology and national historiography inherent in the signification of the 30th of March as the Film Day (Sen 1994; van Heeren 2009). Yet, the santri had a tendency to take such signification as a historical fact.[53] This likely indicates the encroaching extent to which New Order's propaganda effort of narrating its history of the nation through film arena had its aftermath impact on santri's cinematic discourse.

Second, in relation to trends in Indonesian cinema, the santri often made a public outcry over the dominance of Hollywood films in the country's mainstream cinemas. According to them, this trend was to the detriment of the local film-making community. To my surprise, one santri once asserted to the other santri that his concern with the American-Hollywood domination in the country was inspired by Lesbumi's anti-American movement in the 1960s, and no one who heard his assertion corrected him. My surprise was related to what I had learned that it was not Lesbumi's vow but Lekra's (Sen 1994: 32; Said 1982: 68), and largely because ex-Lesbumi filmmaker activists such as Biran himself made it very clear in his autobiography (Biran 2008a: 186).

Nevertheless, I came to know that the (other) santri are not oblivious about the true fact of the anti-American film movement. A santri author wrote an article in which he rightfully credited the stance to Lekra, and his writing was distributed at the film day celebration by the committee and circulated in the Internet through NU Online (Malik 2012). Still, his observation went overlooked during the discussion. The twist of an anti-American film movement is not existent only amongst the santri. Sen has stated that such an ironic twist of crediting the anti-American film movement not to Lekra but instead to Lesbumi filmmakers appeared in Indonesian newspapers in early the 1980s, and re-occurred in 1990s, as a result of the New Order's agenda of rejecting the PKI, that is, by distorting its cultural and political role in Indonesian historiography after 1965 (Sen 1994: 35).

53) As many other Indonesians do it too! While at the same time, scholars of Indonesian cinema, insiders and outsiders, have severely criticized the term of *nasional film* as part of the way the New Order regime took its full control toward the repressive, single definition of what the Indonesian film should look like (Sen 1994; Sen 2006; Setijadi-Dunn and Barker 2010).

The collective memory, notably, becomes a pivotal issue in the process of Lesbumi re-branding by the santri. They spoke of their turn to cinema as a critique of the government's film policies, and the film day celebration is a considerable evidence of (their effort to realize) it. Yet, paradoxically, their inadvertent preference of the New Order version of the national film, along with their twist of anti-American movement is an example of how "the ghost from the past" of the New Order's cinematic historiography are still at work today (van Heeren 2009). The use of Lesbumi for branding their cinematic project has in turn required the santri to uphold some features signifying the 1960's political discourse as a one big package. Considering the historical enmity between Lesbumi and Lekra in the past, the very name of Lesbumi has been recalled in the collective memory of the santri in reference to the 1965-66 bloodshed in which NU had been involved. On one of my visits to the NU Online editorial board, I overheard a santri, to my assumption born in late 1980s, telling the other santri that an elder santri told him about how a member of Lekra was destructing a reel of film of a non-Lekra filmmaker with a pair of scissors.[54] This story significantly attests to Fealy and McGregor's argument that despite there being a small voice within NU to criticize NU's participation in the bloodshed, the dominant attitudes in NU were, among others, to justify the killing, e.g. for protecting the Muslim community and Indonesia from communist aggression (2010: 59).

'Budaya tanding': competing discourses

For the cinematic santri, film is often viewed as a medium that can embrace and bridge all classes of people (*semua kalangan*) i.e. the wider masses. According to them, particularly in comparison to paper-based printing media such as books and magazines, film is not only cheaper but also more 'pleasurable', especially for those who do not like reading. When discussing about this, significantly, the santri always compared "the high potential of reaching the masses" of the film medium with that of the paper/printing media. Usually, they will follow it by explaining the need "to produce a "*tontonan*" (a show) that becomes a "*tuntunan*" (educating values) at once.".

The 'show that educates' discourse is often translated by the santri in two similar ways. Firstly, it takes on the spirit of *dakwa* and educating people, which has been for long time the concern of the pesantren folks (as it is for the Tarbiyah and Muhammadiyah folks). Conversation like this usually revolves around the call for filming the NU-pesantren's Islamic teachings and moral values. Secondly, it takes in the spirit of "the cinematic battle" (Heryanto 2014). A particular group of santri, such as those in the PBNU building, not unusually bluntly suggested the use of film

54) The very word 'scissors' suddenly evoked to my own memory a haunting scene from the New Order's film on PKI that I was 'imposed' to watch it when I was only a schoolboy. The scene was about a cruel cut with a razor blade by a woman described as a member of PKI on the face of one of the generals killed in the 1965-66 bloodshed.

medium for "*budaya tanding*", as a battle arena over, let's say, the right interpretation and practice of Islam, vis-à-vis their Muslim rivals, especially the Muhammadiyah and PKS groups.

Earlier, I have explained about the santri NU-style film discourse, in which I hinted at the contention between the cinematic santri and film producers from the secular strands. Indeed, the secular strands are never monolithic, but what I intended to refer here is those who embrace Western liberal-secular values when contextualizing their beliefs and religious moralities in public domains. Having in mind the Anti-Pornography Bill controversy I have mentioned above, which was not coincidentally triggered by a secular film entitled *Buruan Cium Gue*! (Kiss me Quick! 2004), the rise of cinematic santri obviously has much to do with their efforts to counter the secular and Western films, especially the ones which according to them feature hedonistic life-style and sexual imagery.

Yet, the santri have actually never totally turned away from filmmakers of the other secular strands, evidenced by their effort to invite Riri Reza and Nia Dinata, representatives of the secular filmmakers from the Kuldesak generation who are among those who reject Anti-Pornography Bill, to get involved in a film day celebration that the santri organized. By this, I argue that the santri's film discourse is less driven against that of the secular filmmakers, than against the rise of Islamic-themed films produced inside the Islamic discourse of the non-NU santri Muslim groups.

On commenting upon the cinematic santri project, one santri said as follows:

> As for me this is interesting... that NU as a traditional organization has a media (film), which is very modern. There has been an idea (of NU film production), and it has to be realized. But Muhammadiyah does not have one. I think this is important.

In my view, the santri was naive to assume that the modernist-Muslim's organization like Muhammadiyah did not have any interest in producing a film. Conversely, as I have said earlier, a similar cinematic movement in the provision of Muhammadiyah communities has preceded that in the NU communities. The 2013 release of 'Sang Kyai' (The Kyai), a biopic film of Hasyim Asy'ari, the NU's founding father, in which some of the NU elites were said to have been involved during its production process, was actually preceded by the 2010 production of 'Sang Pencerah' (The Enlightener). It is a biopic film of Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah. The santri's naive assumption, as it is of a recurrent case amongst them in term of comparing themselves with the Muhammadiyah group, is telling, given the significance of the rivalry between the NU-affiliated santri with the modernist Muslims for the former's decision to make a comeback into film arena after a long break.

Sahal's rejection to screen *Ayat Ayat Cinta* is worth recalling here. Sahal has an argument for this rejection, as it is common knowledge that *Ayat Ayat Cinta* is produced by a film director who affiliates himself openly with Muhammadiyah, and this director has come to a Muhammadiyah religious leader for seeking religious advice regarding the

Islamic contents of his film. On another occasion, I asked Sahal about how domestic Islamic films have so far portrayed pesantren and the NU people. He said:

> There was no complete portrayal about the santri society in national films. NU in a specific way did not appear. But, Islam probably did. What's covered was (only) Islam, which was far from the realities of Islam in the archipelago at large, let alone the Islam of NU. ...in general those Islamic films were fine, despite many had criticized us. For an example, (the critic of NU by) "*Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*" ('Woman On Turban', Dir. Hanung Bramantyo) was okay.[55] But he (the film director) made a mistake when making that film. For an instance, the way he (poorly) wrote "*Al-Huda*" in Arabic (the name of the pesantren in the film) was an indication that he had not "finished" yet on 'learning' about Islam. If he were to criticize (the santri society), he could have balanced it with (reflecting on) the positive side of the santri too. Yes indeed, the novel on which it was based was not my preference: full of rage, nothing enjoyable, I only read the first 75 pages of it. It was a project that was funded by the Ford Foundation.[56] But to say it in general, these Islamic films were disappointing. They were trapped in the superficial symbols of Islam.

Significantly, the arrival of the modernist groups at the center of national film stage, marked by the increasing production of an Islamic film genre in post-Suharto Indonesia, often was of concern to the traditionalist santri. I have earlier argued that it was NU's conflicted relationship with the modernists that has triggered its establishment in 1926, and ever since such rivalry has become the main driving factors of NU's socio-cultural and political behaviors in the public sphere (Bush 2009). Sahal's rejection to the film *Ayat Ayat Cinta*, along with his fellow critics of those Muslim filmmakers who have wrongfully depicted pesantren, exacerbates the competition between the traditionalists and the modernist groups over the right interpretation of Islam which is now extended into the film field.

Muslim competitors, however, do not come only from the modernist side. On one of the meetings for the film day celebration, Alex Komang advised that the cinematic project of the santri be aimed at countering against what he called *film seolah-olah Islam*, or film that only superficially deals with Islam, clearly singling out *Ayat Ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (When Love Glorifies). Heryanto (2014) has analyzed at length

55) The film, above all, speaks about women equity and is an argument against a patriarchal culture in pesantren and society at large

56) By mentioning as such, Sahal seems to point out his presumption about the film's hidden agenda of promoting Western's liberal ideas of women equality. This indeed indicates that a topic of, let's say, liberalism can be sensitive to Sahal; and as the next chapters will unfold, also to many other santri. This does not mean, however, that the santri reject liberal values all together, and that they all share a uniform attitude toward it. In fact, while to an extent the santri generally accept religious pluralism and tolerance; there was a significant movement among a segment of the young NU santri to embrace Western's liberal philosophy in order to reinterpret Islamic orthodoxy, exemplified by the recent emergence of the Islam Liberal Network, or JIL; however controversial this movement is to many other conservative majorities of the NU communities (see Bush 2002; Ibrahim 2011).

the battleground that surrounds the production of both films. Yet, considering the fact that both films are adaptions from the novel of the similar writer, and similarly portray the life of protagonist Indonesian *Azharis* in Cairo, they were seen by the santri to have had some parallels with each other. My treatment of them in this chapter, thus, is to foreground the extent to which they are similarly at odds with the santri's cinematic discourse.

The novel versions of the two films, notably, were written by Habiburrahman el-Shirazy, a santri who was trained in a combination of Islamic institutions: Javanese pesantren, modern *madrasah* and Al-Azhar University. Yet, member of FLP, an Islamic writing club that has a strong affiliation with the *Tarbiyah* movement (see chapter two), el-Shirazy identifies himself as being different from that of the traditionalist NU-santri in the NU headquarters and beyond. Significantly, identification with the ideology of the *Tarbiyah* movement is observable throughout the narratives, images and messages of both *Ayat Ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih.* As Barker says, they yield a picture of Islamic piety that leaves a commitment to social change for a dedication in individual development of faith (2011: 224), a characteristic of the *Tarbiyah*'s ideological emphasis on the 'individualistic pattern of Islamization' (Machmudi 2008). In the words of a film critic, Eric Sasono, that emphasis on the individualistic pattern of Islamization is described in the films as follows:

> [T]he main issue in *Ayat Ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* is mundane love, which in the films is transformed into finding life-partners (as in the near-future marriage arrangement) because categorically love can lead Muslims into *zina* (fornication) which is strictly forbidden in Islam. The lead characters of these films are depicted performing prayers and reciting the Qur'an (*Mengaji*). They often quote the Qur'an and Hadith (The prophet Muhammad's saying as quoted by his disciples), or book written by classical Islamic scholars in Arabic, but they rarely addressed issues related to the deprivation of the *Ummah's* life or other social and political issues. Personal issues dominate the discourse of piety in these films (2013: 45-76).

It is the focus of Islamic-themed films of "the *Ayat Ayat Cinta* formula" on Islamic symbols and normative reference of individual's piety, which are seen by the santri group as a 'superficial' form of Islam, that is in contention with the santri's discourse on Islamic cinema as I have earlier discussed. One point is clear here. The increasing production of Islamic-themed films in the post-Suharto Indonesia, particularly since the phenomenal success of *Ayat Ayat Cinta* in 2008, that, seen from the santri's perspective, have misrepresented "the realities of Islam in the archipelago," after a long pause has encouraged the santri to return to the national cinematic contest. Significantly, their come back to the film arena, I argue, has mainly to do with the question of authority regarding who has the legitimate right for "picturing Islam" (George 2010) on film screen, vis-à-vis other Muslim rivals in the country.

In the past, a similar motivation has forced the NU elders for the establishment of their organization in 1926. Yet, today, the situation is different. If in the past, the

rivalry mainly came from the modernists, especially Muhammadiyah, now it also comes from the Islamists, especially the Tarbiyah movement, who are similarly, and with some overlapping interests, 'not only comfortable with pop culture but also sees pop culture as a means by which *dakwah* can occur' (Barker 2012: 224). Such a differently armed rivalry has challenged the NU santri to once again response to it with 'a reform of their own' (Hefner 2009); that is by arming themselves with the similar weapon and running back into the film arena.

Conclusion

I have explained in this chapter the social actors, ideal discourse, space of positions and position-takings, as well as competing discourses of film that became the cultural fields in which the escalation of cinematic fever in the provision of the NU-santri communities operates, and with which it competes.

I have illustrated this by zooming in on the cinematic santri figure, that has played a significant role in the escalation of the cinematic fever among the santri in post-Suharto Indonesia. I argue that their emergence, symbolic of the historical trajectory of NU's Muslim politics, explains a strong desire of the santri to run into the question for legitimate authority to speak for, and on behalf of, the assumedly 'right' interpretation of Islam in Indonesia. One of their major causes to do so is by responding to the production of Islamic films by the other (Muslim) groups, i.e. the modernist and the Islamist, who do not only find in film a mean of *dakwa* but are also conversant with film-making and popular culture practices.[57] The marginal position of the cinematic santri both in NU and the country's film industry, though, has caught them up in the struggle to win the hearts of both the NU elite santri and the country's more established filmmakers. Because of that, the santri is often required to employ particular strategies for making them visible in the film world, such as by linking themselves with the elder Lesbumi's 'NU filmmakers' of the 1960s.

This does not mean, however, that the figure of cinematic santri is a bold imitation of the Modernist filmmaker groups. This is because, long before the popularity of today's Islamic film genre, the social, cultural, technological, and political transformations, significant for the post-Suharto era's emergence of our cinematic figure, have taken place inside the provision of NU societies. Therefore, as much as the emergence of cinematic santri is a phenomenon belonging to the post-Suharto Indonesia era, the present day cinematic fever among the santri, and very unlike to the past, is followed by, firstly, the concerted development of film-making infrastructure and, secondly, the expansion of cultural sites of cinematic activism in many local centers of NU community. I will explore this in the following chapter.

57) I especially thank to Peter Mandaville for urging me to think of the 'intrusive' character of the santri's return to cinema at the course of the 2012 NISIS autumn school held at Leiden University.

Chapter 2

Cinematic Infrastructures

Introduction

In early 2016, with funding Sahal had received from the ministry of religious affairs, Sahal started a documentary-making project, titled *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren* (A Pesantren's Way of Proselyting Islam). For this occasion, he collaborated with Yuda Kurniawan, an *indie* filmmaker, who managed the main tasks of directing, editing and filming. By September 2016, the film had been released. The film did not make it into the mainstream commercial cinemas. This was based on it being in a digital format, pesantren themed, a documentary, and non-commercial. Instead Sahal brought it to various pesantren and other pockets of NU communities, mainly in, but not limited to Java. In early December 2016, I tried to make an appointment with Sahal in order to discuss the possibility of screening his film to a potential number of (NU) audiences in the Netherlands. After several postponements due to his film-screening related - travels, we finally managed to meet at the Dunkin Donuts café in Pancoran, in South Jakarta.

At the start of our conversation, I made a comment about his busy schedule in regard to his film's release. But his reaction, for a moment, surprised me. His body language conveyed his disappointment. He said to me: "Despite the enthusiastic responses from the pesantren people for screening *Jalan Dakwah Pesantren*, the film has not yet been played in the PBNU building, ever since its release". I was intrigued by this comment. I chased him to tell me how he had so far afforded the travel costs for screening his film in different pesantren across the island of Java without the support of the PBNU.[1] He answered,

1) PBNU, an abbreviation of *Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama* ('The Central Board of NU'),

> Yes, we had funding. But it covered the production costs only. So, we even had to cover the editing costs ourselves. To screen this film in the local regions, I arranged my travels through my personal networks. If I am to be invited to screen the film in Yogyakarta for example, I will contact my networks around Yogyakarta and ask whether they wanted to screen the film too. This way, we would spend less money on our travels. Instead from Jakarta to their places (in central Java), now the travel cost is cut (as the travel now started) from Yogyakarta. The left-over budget, then, could be spent on another purpose. Sometime, as part of our film screening tour, we also organized a film-making workshop in the pesantren.

Sahal's answer reverberates the absence and existence of infrastructure upon which the "mobility" and "immobility" of the santri's cinematic project are highly structured.[2] For many scholars, infrastructure is often defined as "built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space" (Larkin 2013: 328; see also Larkin 2008; Anand 2012; Leigh Star 2012; Xiang and Lindquist 2014; and Korpela 2016). While these "built networks" are easily understood in their physical terms, such as rail roads, pipes, and electricity, they can also manifest in the form of human interactions and an exchange of ideas, or the non-physical terms. As such, Sahal's remarks about the slow response from the PBNU, and the utilization of various pesantren as "a cinema house", indicates a lack of certain physical (and non-physical) infrastructure in the provision of the NU community that would potentially hinder the feasibility of a santri's cinematic project. But his dependency on his networks, the use of pesantren ground for film screening, and the prevalence of DIY tactics to finish the film project, also reveal that at the backdrop of such infrastructural scarcity, 'another kind of infrastructure' has (necessarily) been improvised by the santri in order to render their cinematic projects feasible and mobile, as to circulate them across the NU communities.

In this chapter, my aim is to explore what kinds of infrastructure have been used, developed and mobilized by the santri, and how they work. My exploration ranges from santri mobile cinema practices of *Lintang Sanga* and *Gajah Wong Sinema*, to a santri writers' community called *Komunitas Matapena*, to the training in film-making, to DIY tactics, and to the use of online infrastructure. Theoretically I take a cue from scholars who have emphasized the ambiguity of infrastructure, that is, every infrastructural system has always consisted of both soft and hard, political and poetic, physical and non-physical, and exhibit bridge and barrier dimensions. I argue that in the absence of an existent physical infrastructure that supports santri cinematic practices, the cinematic santri have developed alternative forms of infrastructural systems that enable them to successfully, for example, play a santri NU-style film in front of the targeted NU audiences. As I will show, the establishment of these infrastructures is fundamentally operated by the santri on the basis of their cultural connection and political affiliation

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the highest organizational structure of NU, is responsible for the highest decision and policy making of the organization.

2) This is following Korpela, who said, "infrastructure provides framework within which people can, or cannot, move" (2016: 113).

with the NU-pesantren tradition. Yet, while successfully generating the mobility of the santri's cinematic projects, this practice of self-identification with the NU-pesantren tradition has the potential to – paradoxically - limit their mobility. Throughout the chapter, I will look at infrastructure as an ongoing cultural process, one that is part of the ways through which the NU people react to, and negotiate with, their everyday realities.

I divide this chapter into two parts. I start with a theoretical exploration of infrastructure. After that, I proceed to a number of ethnographic cases that show the uses and development of existent NU's film infrastructures. These consist of the following: the establishment of an alternative cinema house, the significance of a writer's community, the organization of a santri film festival, the use of DIY tactics, and the use of Internet. Finally, this chapter questions the extent to which strategies that have been developed by the santri in order to render mobile their cinematic projects across the NU communities are both culturally strategic and creatively successful.

The ambiguity of infrastructure

Infrastructure refers to "built networks" that become the basic structural system, upon which the flow of particular goods, knowledge and people is mobilized throughout space (Larkin 2013 and 2008). In general, infrastructure is easily recognized in terms of its technical and physical forms, such as roads, cables and pipes. These are often referred to as hard infrastructure. In relation to a film project, this hard form of infrastructure may include a cinema house, a film camera, and a built film school. Yet, anthropologists have elaborately shown that infrastructure also consists of what Larkin (2008: 6) has called a "cultural system" of infrastructure, such as the "regulatory" (Xiang and Lindquist 2014), the "ideology" (Humphrey 2005), the "phatic labor" (Elyachar 2010) and the "people" themselves (Simone 2004). In relation to cinema, this so-called 'softer dimension' of infrastructure includes, to name only a few, state-imposed film regulations, (networks of) film communities, and film ideology. I argue, however, that both the soft and hard dimensions of infrastructure should be seen as something relatively fluid and contingent with each other, rather than fixed and separate.

Issues of infrastructure have recently become a popular research field in anthropology.[3] For many anthropologists, however, infrastructure is less interesting if viewed from its technological characteristics only, and rather should include also the ways the "social life" (Appadurai 1986) of infrastructural technologies have streamlined

3) Within a decade or so, research on infrastructure has dramatically grown within anthropological discipline, covering a wide variety of issues of infrastructure in many different countries. They range from urban life infrastructure in Nigeria (Larkin 2008) and Johannesburg (Simone 2004); to road construction project and transportation system in post/Socialist Albania (Dalakoglu 2012) and in Peru (Harvey and Knox 2012); to hydraulic and irrigation technologies in South Africa (von Schnitzler 2013), in Nepal (Lam 1998) and in Mumbai (Anand 2012); to architecture projects in Soviet Russia (Humphrey 2005);

across the contours of people's lived realities. As Larkin has pointed out (2013), scholars in anthropology have made (or have been advised to make) an endeavor to look at infrastructure as a form of double dimensions: the "politic" and the "poetic". If the former refers to various consequences of the material operation of technology for political processes and practices (Larkin 2013: 330), the latter is assigned to mean a variety of ways by which infrastructure could operate beyond its technical function, and is served to address, for example, a semiotic aspect of one's desire and fantasy that can be wholly autonomous from the technical function of the infrastructure (Ibid: 335). In other words, an anthropological approach to infrastructure is one that recognizes both the multiplicity and contingency of form, function and meaning of infrastructural system, operated by and for people in different circumstances.

Also, sociological and anthropological studies have challenged the conventional understanding that accounts infrastructure only for mobility (Korpella 2016). For most of them, a system of infrastructure is often created to reduce one's "migratory capabilities" (Xiang and Lindquist 2014), an ability to pass through immigration checks and borders, or is manipulated to rehearse "abjection" (Anand 2012), a condition in which one particular group of people is marginalized by, for example, the government. In the word of Susan Leigh Star (1999: 388), infrastructure is designed to both "bridge and barrier". In our everyday life, for instance, we witness that thousand miles of new-built roads remained empty because of the state's strict regulation against those who had no access to auto-mobility (Dalakoglou 2012), or that a construction project of thousands of houses for surviving-disaster victims did not succeed in them possessing such houses, while many of the houses were in fact empty (Samuels 2012). Obviously, to again cite Star (Ibid, 380), "one person's infrastructure is another (person)'s ... difficulty". A luxurious cinema house in a shopping centre in an urban city of Indonesia will only screen a particular kind of film genre while leaving out others and thus targets a particular economic class of audiences. It both includes and excludes at once.

Some anthropologists have also shown the possibility of creating an alternative infrastructure which possibly works against the ruining of physical infrastructure. In his illuminating study on "People as Infrastructure", Simone (2004) has brilliantly explored how "the ruin" of the material infrastructures in the inner city of Johannesburg has triggered people of different ethnics, nationalities and classes to make a tentative collaboration for diverse activities such as doing business, sharing and other interpersonal relations that are based on trust. Elyachar (2010) makes a similar argument about how an Egyptian women's specific social practice of "phatic labor" has become "a communicative channel" through which these women were empowered to help their family's men to pursue the family's economic security. It seems that in a situation

to issues of transnational migration and mobility (Xiang and Lindquist 2014 and Korpela 2016); and to satellite engineering in Indonesia (Barker 2005); and to cultural infrastructure of new media production in America (Turner 2009).

where "physical infrastructure is lacking and inexpensive labor is abundant" (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: S133), social relations can function as "social capital" (Coleman 1999). Thus, if the presence of physical infrastructure does not necessarily guarantee a flow, its absence also does never mean a definite obstacle.

Thus, in order to demonstrate the workings of an infrastructural system, it is necessary to look at (the ambiguity of) infrastructure as a contingent process. It is society that creates an infrastructure; but that very infrastructure will feed back into that society by privileging some groups while excluding others (Kramer and Palmer 2018). In other words, and by extension, there is always the imagination of how an infrastructure might mean and work for particular society and in particular circumstances.

Now let me start my exploration on the use and development of film infrastructures in the provision of NU communities. I will begin from the establishment of NU's alternative cinema houses, firstly, *Lintang Sanga* ('Nine Stars') by the santri in the NU's central headquarters, and secondly, *Gajah Wong Sinema* ('Elephant Man Cinema') by the santri in Yogyakarta.

Screening film the alternative ways

Sahal establihsed *Lintang Sanga* in 2011. It mostly consists of film-screening events, which are usually followed by a discussion of the film. The first *Lintang Sanga* film screening, took place in October 2011 at the NU center of Brebes, Central Java – where NU has a strong following. About 2,000 spectators were in the audience.[4] In Javanese, *Lintang Sanga* means 'nine stars', most probably referring to the nine stars that circle the globe depicted in the NU's logo, and that is often said to represent the nine saints (*Wali Sanga*) who are believed to have spread Islam in Java. Through such name, Sahal wants *Lintang Sanga* to be associated as an NU mobile cinema; and as such NU values have significantly influenced the way he operates his mobile cinema practice.

Sahal explained that he aimed to take *Lintang Sanga* to local regions where major theatre chains such as 'Cinema 21' and 'Mega Blitz' are not available or too expensive for the local people.[5] As such, *Lintang Sanga* resembles the New Order mobile cinema practice. While this open-air cinema in Indonesia has its roots in the colonial period (Biran 2009 [1993]: 28), it was during the New Order times that it reached its highest

4) The event of the screening was reported by NU Online, see "Lesbumi" (2012).

5) The majority of lower class cinemas in Indonesian small towns, which mainly cater to lower-class audiences, has broken down following the downfall of the Indonesian film industry in early 1990s. Few, though, are still existent and operate, despite struggling with their sustenance, and mostly playing local cheap horror and *biru,* 'blue', films (see Pasaribu 2011). The *Cinema 21* chain, conversely, along with its recent competitor Mega Blitz, is mostly built in big malls of urban centres in Indonesia, only runs new films of local and global production, and corollary charges much higher price for its film ticket than the lower-class cinemas do. This only adds another layer of 'constraint' and absent infrastructure for lower-income people in small towns, including the NU people, to access (new) films in plush cinemas.

point of popularity especially amongst those living in small towns and rural villages (Sen 1994). Thus, to the extent that mobile cinema has the potential to distribute and exhibit films to non-regular audiences outside the mainstream cinema, *Lintang Sanga* can be seen as an alternative to the formal institutions of film exhibition practices in Indonesia.

The screening mode of *Lintang Sanga* is also very revealing of its alternative fashion. As I once observed it, the mobile cinema was run at a governmentally owned public hall that was transformed into a cinema house. The glass windows of the hall were covered with sheet of newspapers as to shield incoming light. A huge whitewashed screen of cloth was banded onto the front wall of the building. Rows of plastic chairs were arranged neatly before the screen, and a laptop and a video projector were put on the table placed in between the screen and the rows of chair. In the morning of the first day of the film screening, hundreds of students of local high schools, the target audiences of the screening, packed "the cinema hall". So large was their number that the film was played three times only in the morning session. During screening, electricity went down several times; students regularly went out of the building only to return inside with their soft drink at hands; and noises from the audiences sometime climbed up to the rooftop of the building, keeping them up with the film phases. At the outside, it was full of cars that lifted the students to and from the cinema hall, not to mention "temporary-installed" food-selling vendors. None of the students, however, showed up at the afternoon session. The number of spectators also slightly decreased in the second day of the film screening, and declined dramatically during the third day. The organizer finally decided to finish the screening program earlier than planned, which was five days. Still, to my estimation, around 1,500 students in total attended *Lintang Sanga*'s film screening. (See picture 2).

Nevertheless, almost all film screenings of *Lintang Sanga* took place in the provinces where, not only the mainstream cinema chains are unavailable, but also where NU was strongly represented. Moreover, the films that are played are only those that fall within the scope of santri NU-style film discourse, which I have outlined in Chapter 1. Hence, despite *Lintang Sanga* often rhetorically being claimed by Sahal as criticising the government's inability in providing equal access to cinemas for its citizens, it has been deployed primarily as a place for playing films of the santri NU-style kind, with a distinct NU audience in mind. In other words, the establishment of such an alternative mobile cinema practice as *Lintang Sanga* by the santri is operated against not only the lack of formal cinema-house infrastructure in the provision of the NU communities, but also is a response to the marginal place of NU people in the country's film industry and market, and showcases the aspiration of NU men and women to be part of wider national film discourses.

Korpela (2016: 124) said that against the shortage of an institutional form of infrastructure, people tend to invent an infrastructure of their own right as a tactic to navigate their flow. In this regard, I argue for seeing the establishment of *Lintang Sanga* by the santri as a tactical move for the spread (read, the mobility) of santri NU-style films.

Picture 2: A film screening in Lintang Sanga

The shortage of infrastructure referred to by Korpela, however, should not be understood as a mere absence of infrastructure per se, but it is better conceived of as the absence of a dominant infrastructure that institutionally supports one's mobility. In the case of the development of film exhibition infrastructure in Indonesia, for instance, the last seven years or so have witnessed an increasing number of luxurious cinema-house construction projects across cities of varying sizes in Indonesia (Barker 2013). Yet, in my view, they are not necessarily infrastructural and do not necessarily contribute to the circulation of santri NU-style films. This is because films of the cinematic santri's production could hardly pass as "the recognized and accepted categories" (Korpela 2016: 125) of movies that the country's major cinema chains would likely see them to be screened, considering the incipient character of their cinematic practices as well as of their film discourse. This way, the mainstream cinema houses challenge the santri's access to infrastructure. It is against this backdrop that santri like Sahal are forced to create their own film-screening infrastructure in order to play their films for their target audiences. As such the establishment of mobile cinema practices such as *Lintang Sanga* is not merely due to the scarcity of existent physical infrastructure of cinema buildings within the purview of the NU communities. But it is largely because of the fact that in order to screen a santri NU-style film, the santri need an alternative circuit of film exhibition that takes place outside the country's formal institutions of major, commercial, mainstream cinemas.

But, how does an alternative mobile cinema practice such as *Lintang Sanga* operate as infrastructure? Infrastructure is not merely about things, ideas and people, but a relation of them, a 'network' of various 'actors' (Latour 2005). To operate a mobile cinema practice is to bring together a constellation of film screening entities including a film DVD, a projector, a film screening place, and film audiences, that are made to be an 'actor'.[6] In this regard, anthropologists look at infrastructure as "a system of substrates" (Star 1999: 380), that is, the backgrounds upon which other kinds of objects, works or ideas are enabled to flow. In elucidating this point, Larkin writes that although electricity is the most obvious stratum allowing a computer to operate, the computer is also infrastructural to electricity because it is also the computer that entirely regulates the work of electricity (2013: 329). As such, I observe that the relation between mobile cinema and the santri is one that is similar to that between a computer and electricity. While the mobile cinema enables the santri to play a film across the NU communities, it is also the santri who provide the mobile cinema for NU santri audiences to function. To explain this further, I will now move to the case of *Gajah Wong Sinema* (GWS) in Yogyakarta.

Established in 2012, GWS is an *indie* film movement run by santri of Kaliopak pesantren Yogyakarta, who are also mostly students of the local Islamic universities, such as UIN Yogyakarta. The Kaliopak pesantren, well known for its engaging activism in artistic and cultural forms of local Islam, was founded by Jadul Maula, the president of Lesbumi Yogyakarta, and one of the key founders of LKiS (see below). Since 2009, the pesantren has regularly organized a film-making workshop for santri, and it has continued to occasionally stage similar programs throughout the last ten years.

In May 2012, GWS organized a series of film-screenings. The films played included a domestic film by Eros Djarot, *Kantata Takwa* (2008 [1990]), and a Greek production film of Tassos Boulmetis, *A Touch of Spice* (2003). While the Greek film was freely provided by a local rental film store, the other film was obtained through the help of Zastrow Al-Ngatawi, the then president of central Lesbumi in Jakarta, who borrowed the film from Eros Djarot himself.

The screening program took place in *Ngeban Resto,* a cafeteria that is owned by the NU-affiliated Wahid Hasyim pesantren. For the screening purpose, the santri transformed a corner in the café into a "film theater" as they installed in there a film projector, a white screen and rows of neatly arranged chairs. In the lead up to the event, they sent invitation letters to several university-student organizations and local independent film communities. They also spread flyers of the film-screening program and street posters, Facebook messages and Twitter posts. On the first night of the screening program, around fifty persons packed the "cinema hall". As the film progressed, other regular visitors of the café, who did not know of the screening plan

6) Latour does not see an actor as the source of action, but as "what is made to act by many others" (2005: 46).

before, took a seat in the room and joined the screening. The number of the visitors, though, decreased at the next screening occasions. On average, the regular attendants of the film screening numbered between 20 and 30. Most of them, nevertheless, were either santri of Kaliopak pesantren or university students associated with NU-affiliated organizations such as PMII.[7]

The idea of a 'network' (Law & Callon 1988) plays a crucial role in the processes of setting up an alternative cinema as infrastructure.[8] As shown by the GWS case, efforts to transform the café into an alternative place for a specifically public activity of film screening yielded both a web of relationships and a distribution of roles between multiple entities. These entities consist not only of the technical (the film-projecting equipment and the built space of the café), but also the economic (the very purpose of a café as a profit-making space), and the social (the relations among the santri, the invited spectators, and the regular visitors of the café voluntarily joining the screening). An absence or malfunction of any of these entities could risk disruption and even cancellation of the film screening practice. The agency, thus, does neither solely rest in the bodies of certain technologies, nor in the hands of certain individuals. Rather, it is located in a networked assemblage of multiple actors, both humans and non-humans (Latour 1999).

Yet, the GWS case is also telling of the poetic dimension of an NU's alternative cinema house as infrastructure. The ways in which the santri obtained a copy of the film, selected the screening place, and targeted the film audiences, show that the successful appropriation of an NU's alternative cinema house is based on the santri's cultural backgrounds and institutional affiliations with the NU-pesantren tradition. The NU is a community where the existing infrastructural system of the country's film-screening circuits do not target them as mainstream audiences. This marginality is only exacerbated by the fact that cinematic practices are still generally undervalued by the NU leaders. In my view, it is against the backdrop of such marginality, that the santri have generated amongst them "a sense of cinematic solidarity". That is, a collective emotion among the cinematic santri to help and support each other, the connection of which is shaped on the ground of their common identification with the tradition of NU and pesantren. This solidarity, as shown from the GWS case, proved to have successfully helped the santri navigate their efforts of making mobile their film-screening practice.

It is true that in order to realize their film screening programs, the santri have collaborated with a third party who has a looser, or less attachment with the NU/santri tradition. Yet, their reasons to collaborate with them is more poetical than, let's say, economic. To show this, I will return to one of the *Lintang Sanga*'s film-screening

7) It is an abbreviation of *Perhimpunan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia,* or the Indonesian Muslim Student Association.

8) Law and Callon define 'network' as a simultaneous connectivity by which actors "*define and distribute roles, and mobilize and invent others to play these roles*" (1988: 285 italic original; see also Latour 2005).

event in Brebes, which Sahal co-organized with *Dapur Film*, a film company founded by Hanung Bramantyo, the film director whose *Ayat Ayat Cinta* was refuted by Sahal to be screened in the NU's film day celebration (Chapter 1).

As a partner organization, *Dapur Film* was mainly in charge of making available the film and film-projecting facilities. Nonetheless, during our conversations, Sahal repeatedly made some efforts to justify his decision to work with Bramantyo. He stated, "That now I wanted to collaborate with Bramantyo was because the film he played in Brebes contained different massages from those of *Ayat Ayat Cinta.* The messages of Hanung's film that I now played here were relevant to NU's commitment to issues of youth, local culture and nationalism".

It is clear here that Sahal's choice of to collaborate or not to collaborate with a particular third party is exercised against the practices of identification with the virtues of NU-pesantren tradition. Sahal's changing position may appear inconsistent. Yet, I would rather see it as a negotiation that reflects the santri's awareness of different ethical and political virtues at play. Such awareness, considering the fact that a decision like this is often observable in many other film screening practices by the santri, is essential for the successful realization of the santri's alternative film screening practices.

In the sections that follow I show that practices of self-identification with the NU-pesantren tradition among the santri are central in their efforts of developing other NU's film infrastructure. However, the very practice of identification with NU-pesantren tradition, at the same time, has the potential to ostracize certain people, ideas and objects. To show this, an exploration of a literary community called *Komunitas Matapena* is crucial, since this community serves as both bridge and barrier.

From *lembar* to *layar*: the role of a writers' community

Addressing itself as a *komunitas* (community), concerned with literary work, and mainly composed of santri members, *Matapena* (the Pen's eye) is a santri-based literary community. Matapena was established in 2005 by an NU young cultural producer and intellectual, Ahmad Fikri. It focuses on organizing a series of discussions, workshop, publication of book and magazine, and staging training camps for literature writing, involving a substantial numbers of santri specifically in, but not limited to, the island of Java.[9] In 2011 alone, Matapena published as many as 38 books throughout its branches in different Indonesian cities. There are some 37 branches throughout Indonesia and are often connected with pesantren and other NU institutions. Matapena has some 1300 members across the country (Isma 2011: 9). One of its branches is Matapena of Kidang pesantren, whose cinematic practices and engagement will be discussed in the next chapters.

As a publishing company, Matapena is a branch of LKiS. This is an institute with

9) The profile of *Matapena* can be seen at: http://www.komunitasMatapena.com/profil/tentang-Matapena.html.

a base in Yogyakarta, and that has played a key role in the consolidation of civil Islam movements within NU in the late 1980s (Chapter 1). Thus, in order to understand the characteristics of Matapena, it is crucial to briefly explore the historical backgrounds of the establishment of LKiS.

Initially, LKiS was a study circle consisting of young NU intellectuals such as Imam Aziz, Jadul Maula and Akhmad Fikri, to mention only a few of its members. Its main concerns were to spread transformative forms of Islam and alternative discourses of Islamic renewal (Bush 2009: 167). Their publication of *Kiri Islam* in 1993, the translation of Kazhuo Shiogaki's *al-Islam al-Yasar* that discusses Egyptian Hasan Hanafi's concept of "the Islamic Left" (Isma, 2011: 9), was crucial for the influence of the leftist tendencies on their early Islamic discourses and thoughts.[10] In the long run, they evolved to include activism that introduces dialogues on religious tolerance, concept of human rights and pluralism among Muslim communities (Bush 2009: 168).

Not surprisingly, thus, Matapena inherits the literary interest and ideology of its "mother". My conversation with Fikri reveals such inheritance. He explained to me that the establishment of Matapena was strongly stirred by his worries about the proliferating publication of novels and short stories that targets young readership, but roots their virtues on either Western-inspired or Arab-Islamist lifestyles. For this reason, he felt an urge to add balance to the consumption of these texts by publishing a similar kind of work that foregrounds virtues of pesantren and local Indonesian culture. Fikri did not mention any title of the criticized young-readership literature; yet it seemed to me that he was referring to FLP's Islamic-themed writings and its secular-themed counterparts, both of which will be shortly discussed below.

The FLP or *Forum Lingkar Pena* (The Pen's Circle Forum) is a writers' community co-founded in 1997 by Helvy Tiana Rosa, Asma Nadia and Muthmainnah, all of who were mosque activists of the *Tarbiyah* movement (see Chapter 1). Helvy, a prolific Islamist writer who had acted as the chief-editor of *Annida* magazine since 1991, was appointed the first general chairperson of the community.[11] No less than ten years after its establishment, the community managed to attract five thousand members across 100 branches in local cities and 8 other branches abroad, making it the biggest Islamic writing community in Indonesia. As an instrument of *dakwah*, published works by the FLP-associated writers in the form of short stories, novels, comics and magazines often contain "a didactic purpose, [...]frequently employ *religious symbolism,* and suggest ways to be *a good Muslim*, for example, by presenting the characters as models of modesty,

10) Considering the New Order's anti-communist legacy, such publication in 1993, when Suharto was tending to play his Islamic card with the conservative groups of ICMI, or Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (Hefner 2000), seems to be both highly critical and courageous.

11) Annida is an Islamic teenager-targeting magazine, founded in 1991. By early 2000, both FLP and Annida seemed to work in cooperation, as the latter often published works of the FLP's writers (Arnez 2009: 50).

chastity and benevolence" (Arnez 2009: 46, italics mine). To make it more explicit, when employing "religious symbolism" and giving "suggestion to be a good Muslim" to the readers, the characters in most of the FLP fiction stories seek reference from the purification-oriented Islamic teachings of the *Tarbiyah* movement and identify themselves as young, intellectuals, and urban middle class Muslims, an affinity shared by members of the FLP writers. Issues such as the Palestine-Israel conflict, Islamic transnationalism, and the global *ummah* frequently appear in the FLP publications, and *Ayat Ayat Cinta* is one of the FLP's most popularly consumed works of all.

The other block of youth-targeting fiction literature is the published fiction that falls within the secular-themed categories, referring to youth-targeting publications that do not necessarily contextualize their contents with individual beliefs and practices of religions. The popularity of the secular-themed fiction categories, starting much earlier than that of the FLP works, is especially marked by the 1986 book appearance of Hilman Hariwijaya's *Lupus* series, initially popularised in a secular weekly youth magazine, entitled *Hai.* Lupus, "a young and delinquent protagonist", personifies young Jakartans of rich families, who enjoys "prestige markers of international consumer culture" and speaks in *Engdonisan* language, "a racy slang of Jakarta's urban youth peppered with English terms" (Sen and Hill 2007: 33). Importantly, in the film arena, Lupus story is comparable to the famous *Catatan Si Boy* series (Boy's Diaries), which is perceived by Heryanto (2014) as a film series that bears representation contradictory to that of *Ayat Ayat Cinta*. According to him, Boy's Diaries is a film that "displays the flamboyant lifestyles and trappings of wealthy Indonesian families living the American dream... fancy cars, luxurious homes, frequent travels to London or Los Angeles, holidays at the beach, and partying at the nightclubs" (Ibid: 70).

Having said that, now I will go back to Matapena.

The main goal of Matapena is, firstly, to create a *budaya literasi* ('literary culture') amongst students of Indonesian pesantren, and secondly, to propagate a moderate and inclusive view of Islam that is reconcilable with local tradition and culture, through the production of literary works. Its emphasis on the adaptability and compatibility of Islam with local tradition and culture, reminiscent of Abdurrahman Wahid's idea of *Pribumisasi Islam* (Indigenizing Islam), resonates with the current debate of *Islam Nusantara* ('Islam of Archipelago'), introduced by NU during its 33rd 2015 national congress.[12] Politically, the introduction of *Islam Nusantara,* defined by the NU leaders as a kind of Islam that is "tolerant, peaceful, and accommodative of local cultures" (Sahal 2015: 16), is a political means to promote a specific NU Islam (Fachrudin 2015: 263). In other words, the discourse of *Islam Nusantara* is in part constructed against the background of ongoing religious rivalry between different Muslim groups in Indonesia. The close affinity of Matapena's literary ideology with *Islam Nusantara*

12) Initially promoted by Wahid in the 1980s, *Pribumisasi Islam* is a term that refers to an idea of reconciling Islamic scriptures with local tradition and cultures (Wahid 1989).

discourses signifies the political difference of the NU's literary community against that of the non-NU santri groups.

Although Matapena is primarily a literary community, its members are still interested in film-making. Their *Matamovie* program is evidence of this. It is a program that is said to organize film-related activities such as film screening, film discussion, and "do-it-yourself" film-making. Yet, the *Matamovie* seemed to be a local program, as it was absent in majority of the branches of Matapena, except in a very few of them such as in Kidang's Matapena. Apart from the disengagement of some santri toward film technologies as I have discussed here and there, such different appreciation of a film-making program amongst branches of Matapena is partly because of the nature of Matapena as a community. Matapena does not require a definite degree of commitment from its branches in the local pesantren. It does not require a fee membership for instance, nor does it force a face-to-face meeting upon its members. It also does not require its branches to follow the whole programs of Matapena Yogyakarta. Conversely, Matapena allows its branch communities to structure their own programs and do their own works on the basis of their own interests. What binds these communities together is the mere fact that they are students of, or have an affiliation with NU and pesantren tradition, and that they share the same interest in literature and other forms of creative writing.

Matapena's writing training camp program renders the community instrumental for the spread of cinematic fever among the santri. LSDP, an abbreviation of *Liburan Sastra di Pesantren* ('Literary Vacation in Pesantren'), is a three-day training camp of literary work, in which different pesantren-branch members of Matapena take a turn to hosting the camp. In June 2012, a pesantren in Jepara, Central Java, hosted the 8th edition of the camp. Following the participating santri of Kidang pesantren, I went to Jepara for joining the LSDP. I noticed, around 50 santri from around ten different pesantren across Java attended the camp.

On the first day, we received extensive materials through a series of lectures on, among others, how themes of local Islam could be inspirational for literary work, and how a literary work should tell about surrounding social realities. This not only makes it close to a social-religious realism theory of literature that is close to the literary world view of the 1960s Lesbumi, but also resonates with the idea of *Islam Nusantara,* that is, its emphasis on indigenizing Islam with local culture. On the second day, we were given a series of workshops on how to produce a proper creative writing, in which all of us were tasked to write a short story, and then we discussed it in a selected group supervised by an experienced writer. On the last day, we were trained to act out a play and some other theatrical performances, and then we performed them at the closing ceremony.

As far as I am concerned, many santri make their films on the basis of a story that they first wrote it in a form of fiction and other creative writings. It thus goes from *lembar* (sheet) to *layar* (screen), meaning that the writing activities would serve as a foundational step for some of the santri before they move forward to film culture. The

LSDP program has served to provide the santri with training on writing a proper literary work that suits the virtues of NU-pesantren tradition. As such the community can be seen as a training ground from which a generation of cinematic santri can be sourced, as well as contents of the santri NU-Style films are enhanced. Matapena through its writing programs has played a significant role as infrastructure to the rise of cinematic santri within the provision of NU communities.

As stated above, infrastructure can serve as both a bridge and a barrier. As a community, Matapena is often claimed by its board members to be 'inclusive'. The observation I made on a couple of film screening activities held by Matapena in Yogyakarta has confirmed a certain degree of its openness, as people of different ethnic, economic and religious backgrounds were welcomed to join. On the other hand, in the the LSDP program I attended in June 2012, those who participated in it were all students of either pesantren or Islamic schools that are culturally and structurally identified as NU. Moreover, in my conversations with some of these students suggest that their decision to become members of Matapena was less driven by the fact that it is a writer's community of santri, than because it is an NU-affiliated santri writers' community.

Having in mind the kind of "NU-friendly Islamic contents" that were mainly taught during the Matapena's writing workshops, along with the affinity of Matapena's literary ideology with the *Islam Nusantara* idea, and its ideological rivalry with that of the FLP writers, all of these indeed challenge the inclusiveness of Matapena as a community. I argue, to an extent that an identification with NU-tradition has encouraged these Muslim students to join Matapena, the very same identification may discourage those who are not identified as NU-affiliated santri to become its member. This means, as infrastructure, Matapena has the potential to limit the mobility of santri NU-style film discourses and practices within the provision of NU-santri communities and is exclusive to those who are not affiliated with NU-tradition. This is because the rhetoric of 'komunitas' (community) that is used by the founders of Matapena is ideologically appropriated to exclude others, especially those (Muslims) writers who are affiliated with the Islamist Tarbiyah groups. This also means, additionally, that Matapena as a community has challenged the dominant idea among activists and scholars, working on quite different communities recently on the rise in post-Suharto Indonesia, who argue for both the fluidity and openness of contemporary Indonesian communities (Jurriëns 2014; Crosby 2014; and Ida 2014).

I will now continue with a discussion on the infrastructural system that helps santri obtain the skills of film-making. To do so, I will turn to an NGO's film festival as my starting point.

NGO's film festival: training on film-making skills

On an afternoon in June 2013, hundreds of pesantren students attended the launch of

a santri film festival at the building of Erasmushuis in South Jakarta. The festival was organized by Search for Common Ground (SFCG), a US-based NGO, in partnership with two NU's NGOs, *The Wahid Institute* and *P3M*. The first festival of its kind, the committee claimed that as much as 21 films of santri production were received from ten NU-affiliated pesantren across the country: from the islands of Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi. Out of the twenty-one films, it was said that ten films were selected for nomination of the best "*film* santri", and to be played in the festival roadshows, which would commence after the festival launch. Three out of the ten-selected films were played during the launch, in addition to the screening of trailers of all the films. All of them were short documentary films, and as suggested by the festival's title of "Understanding in order to Respecting" (*Memahami untuk Menghargai*), their themes revolve around issues of peace, tolerance, local wisdom, and anti-violence, not to mention pesantren identities. These are issues that are close to NU's civil Islam concerns.

At the festival I spoke with someone who had come from Cilacap in Central Java. He was a santri and attended the local pesantren. He said he first heard about the initiative when members of an NGO came to his pesantren to attend a four-day workshop on peace and tolerance, and on a documentary film-making.[13] The santri admitted that never before the NGO came was he capable of operating a film camera, let alone think about making a film. But during the workshop, he and his fellow santri received training in film production, stretching from doing research, writing a film script, operating a film camera, to editing video footage for a complete film. After the workshop, he said, the NGO challenged him and his peers to make a documentary film on particular themes they had learnt about at the workshop.[14] With a small subsidy of 500.000 *Rupiah* (50 US Dollar) and a facility of camera provided by the NGO, his film-making team spent four weeks for the research, drafting, and shooting processes of their festival-competing film, "*Déwék Bé* Islam" (a *Ngapak* dialect of Javanese language equivalent to 'We are also Muslims'). Despite the fact that his film did not win the best film award, such an experience encouraged him to continue to try to make more films.

The main organizer of the festival, SFCG is a non-profit organization principally promoting peaceful resolution for ethno-religious conflicts in society, and which has its branches in territories worldwide. As explained to the festival audiences, members of SFCG of Indonesia had paid visits to the pesantren of the festival-participating santri, and had assisted these santri for making documentary films for as long as three months. During this time these santri were scheduled to finish their films for the festival.[15] It

13) The NGO's workshop's theme on peace and tolerance is crucial viewed from the context of the escalation of ethno-religious violence especially in but not limited to the eastern parts of Indonesia, such as Maluku, Kalimantan and Sulawesi, following the loosening grip of the post-Suharto transition government. On accounts of the violence, see Spyer (2002), van Klinken (2007); Al Qurtuby (2015).

14) On the NGO's reports of this program, see Isma (2014).

15) News report of the event, see "Festival" (2013).

was also stated that the NGO would organize film roadshows to pesantren and other relevant places for playing the films.[16]

The organization of the Festival Film santri or a similar festival was not conducted in the following two years. However, as the NGO's report of the program notifies, these santri continued to produce documentary films after the two-year assistance program of the NGO was resumed. The santri producing "*Déwék Bé Islam*", for instance, have added to their filmography two other self-produced films entitled, *Kyai Santri* and *Janéngan* ('Praises to the Prophet'), both of which were concerned with issues of pesantren and local tradition. Other santri joining the film workshop were also reported making similar progress (Isma, 2014: 33). Significantly, the NGO's film-making project is another good example of the ways the film-making fever has spread across the santri communities. Yet, unlike the literary community discussed above, the significance of the NGO's film-making program lies at its function to not only introduce to the santri an awareness of using film medium for propagating the messages of Islam, especially ones that fit with the NGO's concerns on inter-ethnic tolerance and inter-religious dialogues, but also, more importantly, bring forward to the santri a range of basic skills for proper film-making production.[17]

Still, many santri in other pesantren made films largely on the basis of a 'Do It Your Self' (DIY) spirit. The following story of Ali will help account for how the santri may come to a cinema project "on his own".

The case of Ali: making film with "DIY" efforts

Ali is a santri of a traditional pesantren in Kediri, East Java. In 2010, he made *Para Penambang* (The Sand Miners), a documentary film I have mentioned in Chapter I. The film shows Ali's interviews with several sand miners who work in the river that flows behind his pesantren, and it portrays the hard life that these miners have to go through, particularly after the coming of their rival miners equipped with large and expensive machines; the illegal big-capital miners that are backed up by the authorities.

16) For a popular writing mentioning the road show, see "Astuti" (2014).

17) The SFCG is not the only film festival potential to the spread of cinematic fever among the santri. Film festivals catering to diverse audiences started to mushroom across the country following the era of *Reformasi* (van Heeren 2012: 67-8). Of one notable example is the *Pesta Sinema Indonesia* (Feast of Indonesian Cinema), held on each June from 2001 to 2005 in Purwokerto, Central Java, by a group of students of Youth Power community. The organization of this festival has involved some filmmakers having NU-santri cultural backgrounds, who later proved to be taking part in the efforts of spreading the cinematic fever among the santri. Dimas Jayasrana (one of the speakers in NU film day celebration we discussed earlier) and Tomy Taslim are two cases in point. The latter, furthermore, has traveled across cities in Central Java for film-making campaigns among high school students, and organizing film training, scholarship, and a series of student film festivals. According to Taslim, several santri who are at the same time still within the category of 'student' did participate in his student's film festivals.

In his film, Ali not only sympathizes with the traditional miners, but he also explains his compassion to them by referring to the pesantren's teachings.[18] The film ends with a scene that showed the santri groups who made the films going to perform a prayer in the pesantren's mosque. The film, in my view, nicely points out an intricate relationship between Islamic teachings and socialist critique of poverty, corrupt businessman and practices of capitalism, a point that brings Ali's film close to Lesbumi's view on art and culture, 'politically' manifested during the 1960s (Chapter 1).

Ali, who comes from a town in the Western tip of Java, had been living in his pesantren for more than seven years. During his pesantren studies, he also attended a nearby Islamic college for his bachelor's degree in Islamic education. Ali, who is an avid reader and has a strong interest in creative writing and journalism, established a literary community in his pesantren, which is a branch of Matapena Community of Yogyakarta. Nevertheless, Ali acknowledged that he has never joined in LSDP programs, nor met with board members of the Yogyakarta's Matapena. So far, he had maintained his contact with the latter only through SMS and emails and Matapena's periodical magazines. On my visit to his pesantren, Ali told me that he had sent the draft of his novel to Yogyakarta's Matapena, and hoped they would publish his novel. The story of his novel was developed from his film.

Ali had never seen a film in a cinema before, but one of his friends showed him the highly celebrated Islamic film *Ayat Ayat Cinta* on his laptop. Having watched the film, he realized the importance of film for disseminating Islam, and its potential use for spreading pesantren values.[19] Hence, he was encouraged to make a film about Islam in the context of his pesantren. Unfortunately, the santri did not own a camera, had no budget for such creative projects, and had no knowledge about film production. This, however, did not stop him from realizing his ambition. His fellow santri came to his help as they had attended a nearby vocational school and had studied camera and video editing skills. At the same time, a santri who returned for good to his home gave him 100.000 *Rupiah* (about 10 US dollars), an amount that is enough to pay the miners he interviewed. And luckily, a relative of a *santriwati* (or a female santri) was willing to lend him a digital handy-cam. In short, his writing skill, a borrowed handy-cam, his friend's technical knowledge, and a donation from a parting santri, all helped enable Ali to realize his ambition: producing an amateur documentary film. This was a film made with very limited resources and with simple equipment, but a film nonetheless.

Two years later, when I visited his pesantren, Ali still showed his passion in film-making, but he failed to produce any single film after *The Sand Miners.* According

18) Most part of the story of Ali has been published by *IIAS Newsletter*, see Huda (2014).

19) His story resembles that of Dadasaheb Phalke, the father of Indian cinema, who is said to produce his 1913 first film *Raja Harishchandra,* after watching a 1906 American Christian film production, *The Life of Christ,* as the film's deep religiosity and cinematographic potentialities are said to have aroused the man's religiously cinematic engagement (Dissanayake 2009: 877).

to him, this failure was apparently due to his friend with the camera skills who had returned home for good in Kalimantan. Ali's film-making story, nonetheless, exemplifies an emergence of a generation of santri who is capable of producing film from within the pesantren grounds by way of learning and improvising at their own ways the skills and knowledge required for film-making. Ali made a film even though he was untrained and inexperienced. He did so by capitalizing on all possible means and help available and "necessary" (Luvas 2012: 1), even if they are at very minimum level, as to realize his film. On my visit, Ali and his friends who were still living in the pesantren recalled how they managed to make a quick observation in the river area, talked to the miners, wrote the storyline, shot the footage, and edited the footage before finishing the film only within two days. Irrespective of the film's poor quality, they made the film on the basis of trial and error, with a DIY ethos.

Ali is not the only santri to have made a film in the spirit of DIY. In fact, the emergence of cinematic santri within the NU communities is worked out through DIY practices. Santri like Sahal, for instance, have created a film-screening place with its own experimental ethos. The santri in Yogyakarta's Matapena often run the *Matamovie* film-making program on an occasional and spontaneous basis. Aisyah, a cinematic santri of Kidang pesantren who I will discuss later, told me how she has first learned and developed her directing skills from the films she watched. Even the santri who received some basic film-making skills from professionals we discussed above, all work on their films with the DIY principles. Indeed, this is to argue, following Barendregt's (2011), that DIY culture does not necessarily mean 'amateurish' and 'without knowledge'. In short, Ali is a personification of many other cinematic santri who learn film-making skills on the basis of DIY spirit, thanks partly to the proliferation of digital cameras and other cheaper-budgeted video-making tools, not to mention the abundant DIY-film-making knowledge on Internet, such as the website, Film Pelajar (.com).[20]

The spirit of DIY does not appeal only to the cinematic santri, but also to many other Indonesian cultural producers, regardless of their religious identities and affiliations. The Indonesian Islamic *nasyid* music communities, for instance, persist to cling to DIY ethos by spreading their *nasyid* music via home-produced cassettes circulated in university campuses and Islamic book fairs – practices already popular amongst them at the course of their initial emergence in the 1990s – despite many *nasyid* boy bands have now signed contract with multinational record companies (Barendregt 2011: 239). Likewise, Paramaditha (2014) has demonstrated the widespread practices of DIY culture among the Indonesian independent cultural producers working in varying arenas of art, film, music and literature. Luvaas (2012: xv) argues, the prevalence of DIY culture among the independent cultural producers has mainly to do with the desire to be an active participant in the cultural production of a global community. Such active

20) The website is meant as a platform of knowledge-sharing and exchange of information relating to student's film festival and competition. Yet, it also has a special section which features a number of articles on film production.

participation, Paramaditha adds (2014), is linked to the idea of youth as new citizen subjects who partake in the political and cultural transformation after the Reform era. In the context of the cinematic santri, however, as I have argued in chapter one, their active participation in the cultural production of a global community through DIY practice, should be better related to the battlefield discourse in which the santri are competing with other varieties of Islam for public visibility, attention and political influences through popular culture, and more specifically film.

The desire for visibility and political influence in a public sphere, significantly, is also reinforced through the 'occupation' of Internet cyberspace by the santri, a phenomenon I discus below due to its significance as part of the infrastructural system for the spread of cinematic fever among the santri, one that takes place in the realm of the virtual.

The use of the Internet space: *online infrastructure*

The rise and emergence of the cinematic santri often lend their credence to the advent of the Internet technology. Santri like Sahal in Jakarta, Ali in Kediri, and those living in Yogyakarta (GWS and Matapena), or those in Western-Javanese Kidang pesantren, have often used the Internet to varying degrees for reaching out their fellow santri filmmakers, as well as for developing their cinematic knowledge, and spreading their cinematic projects. In the contexts of the santri the use of Internet platform for their cinematic practices becomes crucial.

The cinematic santri are Internet savvy. Most of them are not only reachable through emailing platforms such as Yahoo or Gmail, but also have several active accounts of different social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogger and YouTube. Among the santri, the use of social media platforms for cinematic-related purposes is extensive. Sahal, for instance, often posted on his Facebook account several notes of different length in which he narrated his cinematic projects, sometime along with pictures. His cinematic notes and pictures would trigger a number of comments from his Facebook friends. Many santri would post their statuses, short notes, pictures, articles and even videos of their cinematic projects on a variety of social media platforms at once. Aisyah is one such person. As she posted some photographs of her film-making projects, she wrote the synopses of her films on her blog, accompanied by the photographs, some of which she had posted on her Facebook. She even uploaded trailers of her films on her YouTube account under the label of "*film santri*", hyperlinks of which are observable throughout her blog, lenasayati.blogspot.co.id, and the blog of her pesantren, ppcondong.wordpress.com.

The spread of the santri's cinematic project through the Internet is significantly extended by online news media platforms developed by the santri. NU-Online, the official news media platform of the PBNU, plays the most crucial and active role in this. Recalling my story on the film day celebration at the NU headquarters in Chapter

One, the NU-Online would make a news report of every single event concerning santri's cinematic projects, as well as circulate other forms of journalistic writing about the santri's cinematic discourse. Publication by the NU-Online, significantly, is often shared in turn by the santri through their social media accounts, especially on Twitter and Facebook.

The significant use of the Internet for the spread of cinematic fever by the santri is made possible partly by the rise of Internet accessibility as well as the quick growth of a more affordable mobile phones-based connectivity across the country. Since the mid 1990s state-initiatives to create public, commercial access (Sen and Hill, 2007: 197), the Internet connectivity in Indonesia has achieved dramatic growth in the urban areas, while making slower progress into rural areas (Lim 2011: 9). With the increasing ownership of mobile phones that come with Internet connectivity – in 2010, there were approximately 211 million mobile phone users across Indonesia, although some people owned more than 2 phones, or 88 % of the total population – the growth of Internet accessibility has become accelerated, as "prices are relatively affordable and the cost for the necessary infrastructure is far less than for the cable broadband" (Lim 2011: 8). Most of the cinematic santri with whom I work, especially those who has finished their pesantren studies, access the Internet through their mobile phones.

Another factor that has significantly allowed the santri to use Internet space for the spread of their cinematic activities is the nature of Internet space itself. The Internet is a technology that has the potential to be a 'convivial platform', a state of being that is characterized by high autonomy and freedom (Lim 2005). As such is enabled by technological features of the Internet, which include the following: "convergence (one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many communication), broad availability, low cost, and resilience to control and censorship". With these features, the Internet has "provided an 'affordances' for less dominant actors to use the technology without being controlled by the more dominant actors" (Lim 2005: 28, emphasis original). In this way, the Internet can be used not only to express ideas, but also to reinforce one's identity and ideology in a relatively more democratic atmosphere (*Ibid.*: 179). Following her, I argue, the cinematic santri are not oblivious to the conviviality of the Internet, and hence they make some use of it for their cinematic campaigns.[21]

The conviviality of the Internet has the potential to create an inclusive and wide participation. However, one's activities on the Internet do not operate in a vacuum, but are worked out through the social, cultural and political conditions of the users as well as the vast technological potentials of the Internet (Jacobs, cited in Ali 2011: 117). For example, a cinematic santri like Sahal may have thousands of Facebook friends who are not necessarily santri, i.e. having variously socio-religious backgrounds. However, not all

21) The occupation of Internet space by the santri is nothing new among Muslim communities. Garry Bunt (2009) has earlier explored how the expansion of Internet has transformed the ways Muslim societies understood and practiced their religion, and the ways they perceived themselves and their fellow Muslims.

his Facebook friends would like to follow his cinematic activities posted on his Facebook page, let alone click their likes and give their comments on them. While following his post about the NU's film competition I mentioned in Chapter One, for example, I observed that the post received no more than ten comments, all of which, significantly, were coming from Facebook users with NU-pesantren backgrounds, many of who had been involved in the cinematic project. This indicates that those who most likely read his update statues on Facebook are online friends with whom he has established particular links, connections and networks through offline realities.

NU-Online is a similar case. Despite its vigorous effort of circulating cinematic events and discourses of the santri, the site is especially popular and widely read, as indicated by its search traffic index, mostly by Internet users who would identify themselves with religious views of NU-flavored Islam.

The above examples evoke a question about the extent of participation of the Internet users in the santri's cinematic activism in the online space. While the conviviality of the Internet has potentially offered a democratic and permeable space of exchange, sharing and communication platforms, as such do not necessarily guarantee whether voices of the santri's cinematic campaign at the online world are, widely, heard. Moreover, the character of Sahal's Facebook friends and NU-Online readers show that online activism is never separated from, but an extension of, the offline realities (Lim 2005 and 2015; Ali 2011). Internet-using individuals seem to play their role as agentive subjects, determining their online activism on the basis of their alternating social, cultural, political and religious preferences. It is in the light of such understanding, I argue, that the (limited) significance of the online infrastructure for the spread of film-making fever among the santri has to be framed: as Star (2009) writes, it forms both bridges and barriers.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that against the lack of cinematic infrastructure in the provision of NU communities, the santri develop alternative forms of infrastructure in order to make their cinematic projects viable and mobile. These forms include an alternative cinema house, a friend's film camera, and a rented film DVD, as well as a writer's community, an NGO-sponsored training in film-making, a DIY ethos, and the use of the Internet online space. While some of these infrastructure consist of hard materials, such as a film camera, film DVD, and the building that was temporally made up as 'a cinema house', the ways they are operated by the santri are based on their softer dimensions, that is, the cultural networks and identification with NU-tradition that are shared among the santri.

The cinematic infrastructure established by the santri is an expression of DIY practices. This means that there is always the imagination of what an infrastructure might mean for the santri, and how it would allow their films to be produced and

circulated. Some of this imagination becomes voiced in term of their disappointment via the lack of support from NU and the marginal place of the NU people in the country's film industry and markets. As I have shown in the chapter, this imagination is largely constructed by the santri through their connection with the NU-pesantren tradition.

The santri's contingency on NU-tradition for mobilizing their cinematic project resembles the use of "trust" among the people in the city of Johannesburg for gaining economic transaction amid the city's lacking of physical infrastructure but abundance of inexpensive labor (Simone 2004). In the case of the cinematic santri, they face various forms of marginality. First, they are marginal to the country's film infrastructures. Second, they preside in a marginal position either in front of their elite leaders or vis-à-vis the more established filmmakers, be them from the secular-liberal order, or the non-NU santri Muslim filmmakers. It is against the backdrop of such 'marginalities' that the santri have generated amongst them "a sense of cinematic solidarity". That is, a collective emotion among the cinematic santri to help and support each other, the connection of which is shaped on the ground of their common identification with the tradition of NU and pesantren.

However, as much as the notion of NU-tradition has the potential to enable the mobility of the santri's cinematic projects, the very same tradition has the equivalent potential to limit that mobility only within the provision of NU-santri communities. It even not *seldom* renders it exclusive to those who are "rivals" of the NU-santri groups.

Chapter 3

Pesantren, Cinema and the Reproduction of Tradition

Introduction

On an afternoon hanging out with a number of santri in the office of NU-Online, I happened to introduce my research to a santri who seemed to be one of the NU-Online regular visitors. When I told him that I was doing a research on santri making films in an NU-associated pesantren in West Java, he looked at me with surprise in his eyes, and then questioned me if there is any traditional santri who dares to engage with such a modern technology as film.

To a certain extent, his reaction was not odd. For beside film technology being a fundamentally modern phenomenon, doing film-related practices is something not entirely common among santri of the so-called traditional pesantren. Yet, I found his staggering questions as striking, because they assumed that santri are distanced from film-making practice. As a matter of fact, in many times during my research, people with no pesantren background have often questioned me about the supposed irreconcileability between "the 'traditional' santri" and "the 'modern' film-making practice". Nevertheless, I always have kind of expected the coming of these typical questions from them, simply because of the widespread stereotypes surrounding, and associations of living in, a traditional pesantren with being essentially backward, rural and confined from the world out there. However, apparently, the stereotype that "a traditional santri is not engaged in such a modern practice as making film" also exists among the santri themselves.

The West Javanese pesantren I mentioned above is called Kidang Pesantren. This pesantren is in a Sundanese heartland, and was founded in the nineteenth century. The

pesantren is said to have held a strongly genealogical linkage with both the traditional center of Islam's Arab heartland, and the intellectual networks of Indonesia's traditional Muslim groups, especially the NU. However, since the last quarter of the twentieth century, and in response to the socio-political changes that challenged the pesantren's survivability, Kidang pesantren has transformed its educational system into what they've called the *Sistem Terpadu* (the Integrated System). With the new system of education, the Kidang people strive to integrate the Kidang's traditional learning of classical texts of Islam, with the modern *madrasah* curriculum of Gontor pesantren (which I discuss below), and the secular education that follows the standard of the state's national education.[1] After the implementation of the *Sistem Terpadu*, the Kidang santri have recently managed to attend to cinematic-related practices such as film-making and film screening as part of the tertiary learning activities in the pesantren. These transformations notwithstanding, the Kidang people refused to call their pesantren a 'modern one'. Conversely, they continue to identify themselves as 'traditional Muslims', and have shaped the "narrative of transformation" of their pesantren as part of their desire to safeguard traditional practices of Islam.

This chapter aims at examining the ways by which the Kidang people have turned their roads into film-making practices. In particular, it questions about the sociological transformations, key individuals, and religious discourses that are central in bringing forward cinematic practices into the Kidang ground. In the Introduction of this dissertation, I proposed to study the turn of the pesantren people into cinema through a focus on the compatibility of tradition and modernity. In this chapter, I will do so by focusing on the centrality of a specific pesantren's tradition, notably the so-called kitab kuning, along with the discourses that have historically been built around it, in instructing the pesantren people about how to creatively adapt and successfully deal with the transformations in and surrounding the pesantren world, including the film-making practices, ones that come with modernity. This way, this chapter is also intended to show that the stereotype I mentioned above does not essentially apply to the Kidang, and other pesantren people.

I draw my theoretical framework from scholars in the field of Islamic studies, anthropology, sociology, and others, who do not regard Western modernity as the only authentic patterns of modernization, and argue to think of modernity in terms of its creative, multiple, and alternative inflections in contexts other than the West - which in itself is far from being homogenous (Gaonkar 1999; Eisendstadt 2000; and Masud, Salvatore and van Bruinessen 2009). One significant strategy to hold this approach is by viewing modernity as a cultural project. That is to say that modernity always unfolds within a specific cultural context with its own understandings of personhood, social

1) Indonesian *madrasah* is best described as an Islamic school, which, unlike the traditional pesantren, classifies its students into different grades and teaches them a varying amount of general and Islamic subjects.

relations, virtues and the like, ones "that have been handed down to us" as tradition (Taylor 1999: 166-167). In line with this strategy and in order to grasp the culturally pluralistic dimensions of modernity, it is imperative for us to disentangle the notions of tradition from its negative connotations with socio-economic stagnation and blind dependence on unquestioned authority (Salvatore 2000: 5).

In this regard, I take a cue from MacIntyre (2007 [1981]: 222) who has conceived of tradition as a historical extension and social embodiment of a set of arguments, narratives, and practices that characteristically affect the ways in which individuals seek to implement their virtues. Seen this way, a traditional practice is conceptually related to a past (when it was instituted) and a future (how it is either strengthened or weakened in the future), through a present (how it is linked to other practices, institutions and social conditions) (Asad 1986: 14). Tradition, in other words, is not an "invention' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), but it is characteristically related to the worlds within which it originates and from which it springs (Kapferer 1988: 211). Seen this way, I argue that tradition has the potential to be "a modality of change" (Waldman 1986: 326), one with which individuals and societies are able to "get a grip on the modern world" and feel "at home in modernity" (Marshall Berman as cited in Chakrabarty 1999: 109).

This chapter is divided into three parts. I begin by exploring the historical changes of Kidang pesantren, especially focusing on the pesantren's changing educational systems from a pesantren in the *Salafiyah* (traditional) system to a pesantren of *Sistem Terpadu*. As I will show, the focus on the historical changes of pesantren's educational system allows me to identify the influx of a new type of santri in Kidang, along with their new activities not existent in the Kidang past, both of which played a significant role in bringing about cinematic practices to Kidang pesantren. In the second part, I explore the rise of cinematic practices in Kidang. I specifically focus on particular individuals who play a role in the realization of the pesantren's film-making practices. The last part of the chapter discusses the centrality of the *kitab kuning*, for the pesantren's transformations and its uptakes on cinematic practices. Here, I draw attention to the act of citing one particular Arabic quotation deemed to be originating in the pesantren's centuries old tradition, popular among the Kidang women and men as a textual authorization (*dalil*) for their engagement with so-called modernity. I argue, such acts of referring to the *kitab kuning* owes to the prominence of texts among the pesantren people both as ritual and identity. Their interest in cinematic practices, by way of extension, revolves around the production and reconstruction of that textual tradition.

Historical changes of Kidang

Kidang's long and strong tradition in Islamic learning, and its close affinity with the traditional "centres" of Islam are significant in the stories about Kidang pesantren in the past, either as I was told during my fieldwork or as they are written up in the pesantren's

documents.[2] Most of these stories emphasize the year Kidang was founded, 1864, making it one of the oldest pesantren in Indonesia. They also focus on foregrounding Kidang's sources of Islamic teachings, especially ones that the Kidang members have for long inherited,[3] and one that intellectually links them not only to Islam's heartland of Mecca and Egypt,[4] but also to a larger network of Indonesia's traditional Islamic scholarship, notably that of NU.[5] The focus in Kidang's historical narratives on tradition is a reflection of not only how Kidang wants to be seen by others as an institution of Islamic learning with considerable authority, but also the importance of tradition to the Kidang people in their engagement with change. It is for this reason that I start this chapter with Kidang's historical parts.

The 'Salafiyah'

During my research, I was often told that Kidang pesantren had been identified as a '*Salafiyah* pesantren'. Rooted in the Arabic verb *salafa* – the name *salafiyah* is the

2) The source for the historical information of Kidang is mainly based on my series of conversation with the grandson of the current leader of Kidang, Taufik, and on the pesantren's documents. The use of the latter documents has been consulted to and approved by Taufik. Other than these sources, I also significantly use information from the santri and other family members of the pesantren's. The pesantren's documents I consulted are mostly ones that are made for public and pesantren profile, such as brochures, photographs and drawings, and pesantren periodicals.

3) For instance, the founder of the pesantren, *Kyai Haji* (K.H.) Nawawi, was said to be a santri and son in law of K.H. Badruddin, who was reputed for his bright memory (*hafalan*) in *Fathul Wahab* (*Fatḥ al-Wahhāb)*, a classical text on Islamic Islamic jurisprudence written by a 15th/16th century Egyptian *ulama,* Zain al-Dīn a. Yaḥya Zakariyyā b. M. al-Anṣāry al-Sumaiky al-Shāfȉy (GAL II, 122). The book is one of the most popular *fikih* (*fiqh*) texts in Indonesian pesantren, which is particularly studied by advanced-level santri (van Bruinessen 1990: 264).

4) For example, some later predecessors of the Kidang pesantren are said to have gone to Mecca and have lived there for years, during which they are said to have studied with, for example, Imam Bajuri, or Ibrāhīm b. M. al-Bāğūry al-Shāfȉy (d. 1783/1860) (GAL II: 639), an Egyptian born *ulama* whose works on Islamic jurisprudence (*fikih*) are widely popular in the pesantren world (Hurgronje, as cited in van Bruinessen 1990: f.236). The Bajuri's book that is studied in Kidang is "Ḥāṣiyyah al-Bāğūry 'ala Ibn al-Qāsim al-Ğāzy", (also) a commentary on *fikih.* Yet, it was not sure for me how the son could interact with the Egyptian *shaykh*. So far, I could not find any reference that indicates the *shaykh's* visit to Mecca, nor any information that confirms the Kidang's predecessors' pilgrimage to Egypt. Yet, referring to Laffan's information (2003:128) that as early as 1850s, a relationship between the *bilād al-jāwah* (referring to what is now Indonesian archipelago) and the scholarly triangle of Mecca, Medina and Cairo had been established, it may be assumed that the Kidang's predecessors had traveled to Egypt in a time during their stay in Mecca.

5) The son of K.H. Nawawi, called K.H. Arifin, for instance, was said to have attended the pesantren of *Kyai* Kholil of Bangkalan in Madura, East Java, in which *Kyai* Hasyim Asy'ari had also studied. Both *Kyai* Hasyim and *Kyai* Kholil are popularly known for their decisive role in the 1926 establishment of NU, the basis organization for the traditionalist Muslims in the country.

English equivalent of "to precede" or "to be past" (Vehr 1974: 422).[6] Yet, the noun subject form of *salaf* (p. *aslāf*), comparable to English "forefather" or "predecessor" (Vehr 1974: 423), is often related to what is amongst the pesantren men and women called *salaf al-ṣāliḥ,* which can be translated as 'the venerable forefathers'. This term may also refer to the earlier generation of Muslims who have attained the highest authority of Islamic knowledge. To the extent that the name *salafiyah* is understood to have contained both meanings, it has not only an explicit association with the tradition(al) and the classic(al), but is also an explicit claim to a genealogical continuity with the authoritative people of the past.

Likewise, some scholars have pointed out that the formation of *Salafiyah* pesantren is distinguished on the basis of the traditional aspects of religious life and learning of the pesantren (see: Dhofier 2011 [1982]: 6-10; van Bruinessen 2015 [1994]: 86-89; Lukens-Bull 2005*;* Phol 2009: 103-106).[7] From my own experience of being a santri, the schooling and everyday life activities in a *Salafiyah* pesantren, which foreground the holistic education of both intellectual and moral development of the santri, are carried out under the sole guidance of the kyai, the pesantren's most central and highest authority. There is no classroom system, curriculum and management are based on kyai's instructions only, and a state-recognized certificate is not offered.

Apart from the Qur'an, the focus of learning is mainly on a corpus of classical Arabic texts of Islam, i.e. the *kitab kuning*. The transmission of knowledge, called *ngaji* or *pengajian* (lit. learning), usually takes place in the pesantren's mosque, during which both the *kyai* and santri sit together on the floor. In front of the gathered santri, the *kyai* will read the texts word by word, translate them into the local language, and often explain and interpret difficult parts of the texts. The santri, holding the same text as that of the *kyai*'s, will make some notes below the word of the texts that they do not know its meaning. This learning method is called *bandongan* (a collective learning). In an advanced class, however, the santri are often required to personally read the *kitab kuning* before the *kyai* who will test their understanding of the *kitab*. This method is called *sorogan* (a private learning).

The organization of a santri's everyday life in *Salafiyah* pesantren, is self-governing, modest, and ascetic. As well as the santri (are instructed to) self-organize their daily affairs and perform the daily five-time prayers and other acts of worship and rituals on

6) Pesantren *Salafiyah* or *Salaf*, however, should not be confused with pesantren *Salafi*. Not only because they are different, but also because to the extent that pesantren *Salafi* promotes the teachings practices of Salafism, a 'strand' of Islam that derives from the works of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia, the latter is in the opposite axis to the former. For the most recent account of pesantren *Salafi* in Indonesia, see Wahid (2014).

7) Because of its association with facets of the traditional, it is often opposed to another type of pesantren that applies modern systems of religious education, called pesantren *khalaf* (*khalafa* means "to succeed" or "to come after").

a regular basis, they also share the food that they cook themselves, the thin carpet that they sleep on, the small room in which they store their few belongings, with their fellow santri. In my experience, this monastery-like way of life is created for certain purposes, as pointed out by Lukens-Bull (2005: 54), to train the santri to learn in practice the values of simplicity (*sederhana*), sincerity (*ikhlas,* or *iḥlāṣ*), self-sufficiency (*kemandirian*), and, arguably, self-restraint (*kesabaran,* or *sabr*) and humbleness (*tawaduk,* or *tawāḍu'*).

A number of ritual practices observed at a *Salafiyah* pesantren are distinctive, in a way that they are not only close to Sufi tradition but are different from and at odds with those learned and practiced by, modernist Muslim groups for example. The clearest example of them is what is called *tahlil* (*tahlīl*). This is the practice of recitation of particular verses of the Qur'an that is coupled with repetitive chanting of Arabic phrases of *zikir* (*ḏikr* means 'remembrance', here, of the God), and *selawat* (*ṣalāwah* means a 'prayer', here, for the prophet Muhammad). *Tahlil* is usually reserved for the spirit of deceased Muslims, as well as, by extension, other human beings and other God's creatures.

In many cases, living in a *Salafiyah* pesantren is free of charge. If the santri has to pay, the amount of tuition fees is relatively low. Thus, it is common for the santri to carry out the domestic work for the *kyai*'s family and regulate his farms and agricultural works "in exchange" for the knowledge they learn from him. This way, although Muslim parents of any economic backgrounds are pleased to send their children to traditional pesantren, the majority of santri in a *Salafiyah* pesantren come from rural areas and lower class and less wealthy families. Moreover, in a pesantren of traditional system, santri may attend and leave the pesantren as they wish regardless of their ages and length of their studies in the pesantren. This is because the latter does neither 'administratively' register, nor regulate the duration of stay of the santri. Some santri would only leave their pesantren when they have reached the age of marriage, but many of them would move from one traditional pesantren to another in order to learn specific expertise of Islamic knowledge only studied in a particular pesantren. Additionally, a few santri living nearby would attend the pesantren's lessons only at night, and choose to stay in their homes during the day, for which they are nick-named santri *kalong* (a 'bat' santri). The loose arrangement like this has often resulted in the disparity of santri's age and length of study in a *Salafiyah* pesantren.

As far as I heard from my informants, Kidang has proved able to survive as a *Salafiyah* pesantren for a long time. And Kidang's graduates, as the pesantren's profile document claims, are widely spread across different regions of the Island especially in West Java, many establishing new pesantren and becoming the local's traditional, charismatic, religious leaders.

*The '*Terpadu*'*

However, around the 1980s, Kidang had run into trouble in term of attracting new students, as the number of Kidang's new santri had slowly declined. By the late 1990s

it even slumped to its lowest curve. While reasons for the decline were many, the plummeting popularity of pesantren was not exclusive to Kidang. In fact, studies on Indonesian Islamic education suggest that over the course of the twentieth century, the stability and survival ability of Indonesian traditional pesantren was both challenged and shaken by external developments in society, which changed the national scene of Islamic education (see Lukens-Bull 2005: 62-65; Hefner 2009: 63-64; and Pohl 2009: 106-116).

In the period after Independence, the national system of education separated between general and religious educational institutions (state-run and private-driven alike), and has placed them respectively under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education and The Ministry of Religious Affairs.[8] Pesantren are part of the latter. Yet, the state's educational system is developed along the lines of modern-secular systems of education, and the Indonesian government persisted bringing the pesantren educational system in close accordance with the state's secular approach (Pohl 2009: 93-94). From the 1950s onward, for example, the state has enacted a series of regulations that increasingly required the *Salafiyah* pesantren (and other Islamic schools) to include general sciences into their traditional curriculum. According to these regulations, only (Islamic) schools able to fulfill the obligation of devoting a certain percentage of their curriculum to general sciences are entitled to award their students with the state-recognized certificates, the required document for an entrance to university as well as for a range of economically interesting careers. Coinciding with it, it is reported that Muslim parents of different backgrounds did no longer expect their children to exclusively study Islamic sciences. Rather, they demand that the children also learn general sciences in order for them to gain social and economic success in the future (Azra, Afrianty and Hefner 2007: 172-198).

These external developments are influential on Kidang's vision. In fact, the Kidang people have been responding to them since an early stage onwards. Evidence for this is the persistent efforts by Kidang's leaders in developing Kidang's *Salafiyah* educational system. K.H. Izuddin was said to be the first Kidang's leader who carried forward a new change to Kidang. During his leadership from the late 1930s to 1980s, he established an elementary formal education system in Kidang, called *Madrasah Wajib Belajar* (or 'Islamic School of Compulsory Learning'), in which santri of Kidang were taught basic secular sciences. In the future, the school would become an elementary Islamic school (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*) independent from Kidang's training system, despite still standing on pesantren ground. *Kyai* Muhammad, the successor of K.H. Izuddin, continued his older brother's effort. No sooner did he begin his leadership in 1986, he introduced into Kidang a large share of Gontor pesantren's modern educational system.

Gontor is one of the first pesantren that "mixes the study of classical and modern religious texts with general education and intensive study of Arabic and English"

8) This policy is largely a reminiscent of the colonial Dutch's educational system (Pohl 2009: 92).

(Hefner 2009: 26). Founded in early 19th century in a village called Gontor, Ponorogo, in East Java, it was initially a pesantren of the *Salafiyah* kind. Only from 1926 onwards, when the popularity of pesantren plummeted, the new generations of the pesantren family decided to reform their pesantren by combining the virtues of *Salafiyah*-pesantren systems with those of modern educational theory and practice (Castles 1966: 30). Inspiration for such reforms is said to be deriving from a reformist trend in Egypt and similar modernist experiments in India (van Bruinessen 2008: 223). While the use of English and Arabic is obligatory among Gontor students, central in Gontor's educational system is the concept of "24 hour curriculum". This means that student activities in the pesantren during the after-hours are part of the curriculum, which includes sport, music, arts, speech practice, writing exercise, scouts and other activities that contribute to the development of santri's personality and life skills (Hady 2012).

The introduction of Gontor's educational system into Kidang first started by the attendance of two of *Kyai* Muhammad's sons in Gontor pesantren. When these sons returned to Kidang by the late 1980s, they were asked to apply what they had learned from Gontor to the curriculum of their home pesantren. Yet, the adoption of Gontor's curriculum back then was still limited to the obligation of using Arabic and English for daily communication. As I was told, by early 1990s, the Kidang santri distinguished themselves by their fluency in spoken Arabic and English, especially if compared to other santri of the neighboring traditional pesantren. Indeed, many people of today's Kidang, especially when recalling the pesantren's past, have laid their claim on the adoption of Gontor's language curriculum to its positive influence during the early 1990s.

Nevertheless, by December 1996, the Kidang people suffered from a traumatic disaster. It begun when a senior santri of Kidang pesantren carried out a physical punishment on a santri *kalong* ('a bat santri', or those only attending the pesantren's lessons at night) after the latter had violated the pesantren's ethical discipline. The santri's father, who happened to be a police officer and was obnoxious against the pain-inducing punishment received by his son, brought the case into the town's police station. The son of *Kyai* Muhammad, who was taken to the station, was rumored to have been killed in police custody. In a way that was beyond the control of both the pesantren and police authorities, what was in the beginning an act of disciplining practice by the Kidang people broke into a mass riot and violent vandalism, involving religious and racial divides at grass root level that destroyed the town's economic activities.[9]

The riot seemed only exacerbating the already set in decline of Kidang. "After the 1996 incident", as one member of a Kidang family said, "almost all students left the pesantren, and by the late 1990s, only about ten students persisted to stay". Apparently,

9) News of the riot got national coverage (see Kompas, December 27th, 1996), and report of the riot by Tempo news online website is re-uploaded on one of the pesantren's blogs (see, Kerusuhan, 2011). Many have related the riot, however, with the political sabotage of the then ruling government's scenario (Hefner 2000: 192).

a situation of extreme decline like this has, time and again, forced the Kidang's leaders to make another major change for survival of their pesantren. Still under the command of *Kyai* Muhammad, the Kidang authorities eventually decided to 'refashion' the pesantren's *Salafiyah* system of education, by combining it with both the modern *madrasah* system of Gontor, and the 'secular' system of education sanctioned by the state, hoping thus to attract a wider audience of santri.

The modeling after Gontor's educational system in Kidang, which in the past was limited to the use of Arabic and English, is now broadened to include the development of santri's life skills through extra-curricular activities. Then the pesantren's didactic method is refined to aptly follow that of the modern graded system schools, along with its serious effort of persevering the own *Salafiyah* didactic method. The pesantren's teaching of classical texts, furthermore, is now combined with the general "secular" education that follows the standards of the state's national educational system, called *Sisdiknas* (*Sistem Pendidikan Nasional)*. By 2001, the Kidang authorities established inside the pesantren complex the pesantren's junior high school (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama*, SMP); by 2004, the senior high school (*Sekolah Menengah Atas*, SMA); and by 2009, the joint program of an Islamic college. If in the past, the Kidang santri were allowed to leave the pesantren ground during day time, especially for pursuing their education at state-sanctioned schools outside the pesantren, all of them are now obliged to stay in the pesantren compounds under a strict 24/7 disciplinary surveillance (see Chapter Four).

The Kidang people called this new system of education *Sistem Terpadu* (The 'Integrated System'), signifying the spirit of integrating several different educational systems into a single synthesis. *Sistem Terpadu*, nevertheless, is by no means specific to Kidang, since many other pesantren have created similar versions of it. In fact, the trend of *Sistem Terpadu* pursued by many Indonesian pesantren has been a subject of critics among those tending to pesantren tradition themselves. Opponents of this system are worried about the less desirable effect of, among others, the reducing amount of time used for training the students in mastering the classical religious texts, hence reducing the ability of pesantren to (re)produce the traditional *ulama.*[10] Moreover, the term *"Sistem Terpadu"* itself is often confused with the rise of an integrated Islamic schools movement (*Sekolah Islam Terpadu*), one that tends to blend religious instructions into all subjects of the curriculum, established across urban and sub-urban areas, and informally tied with the Islamist PKS political party (Hefner 2009: 73).

According to the explanations of the Kidang authorities, however, the Kidang's *Sistem Terpadu* is never meant to diminish or replace the classical-*Salafiyah* religious materials in favor of both the modern 'Gontor' curriculum and the general 'secular' subjects. Conversely, they interpreted it as an effort to create a balanced synthesis

10) For an account of the recent trends and developments in pesantren education and the extent to which *Sistem Terpadu* is differently interpreted by various pesantren, see Phol (2009).

between the three curriculums of *Salafiyah*, Gontor and secular education of *Sisdiknas.*[11] This also means, that Kidang's *Sistem Terpadu* is significantly different from the similar system applied in the integrated-Islamic school movement associated with the Islamist PKS political party. This study does not focus on the extent to which the *Sistem Terpadu* is applied in Kidang, but many Kidang teachers firmly proclaimed that, "the three systems of education should be equally applied with a one hundred percent of commitment". Significantly, ever since Kidang transformed into a pesantren of a *Sistem Terpadu*, it did not only steadily grow in terms of student numbers, lodges and facilities of the pesantren, but it also has become attractive to a new kind of santri that before hardly came to Kidang.[12]

The new santri

In a significant way, the implementation of *Sistem Terpadu* has changed the kind of santri who attend Kidang pesantren. In the past, most of the Kidang santri were of rural backgrounds, who came to Kidang mainly for learning religious knowledge. Yet, Kidang's establishment of state-sanctioned high schools has attracted Muslim families who want their children to not only learn religious knowledge but also study secular education for the sake of their children's economic prosperity in the future. This has in turn resulted in the influx of santri who come from urban family backgrounds.

Yet, the implementation of *Sistem Terpadu* requires santri to spend bigger amounts of money for their living and study costs, especially if compared to Kidang's santri's living cost in the past. For example, for reason of being time consumptive, today's santri are not allowed to cook their food themselves, but to buy their food from the pesantren-owned kitchens.[13] Each santri now also has to have certain kinds of uniforms that they wear on different occasions, such as uniform for schools, uniform for religious activities,

11) The Kidang people also interpreted the *Sistem Terpadu* as an effort for integrating all aspects of pesantren's management into one vision, called *Manajemen Terpadu*, or the integrated management. It means, despite the management of pesantren is now divided into several departments, the main leader of the pesantren remains *Kyai* Muhammad. For a clearing example, the establishment of general schools in Kidang has divided the pesantren's structural organization into several units of managerial offices. Each of them managed only a small part of pesantren's affairs. *Pak* Harun, the eldest son of *Kyai* Muhammad who went for his Islamic studies to a *Salafiyah* pesantren is in charge of the *Salafiyah* curriculum of Kidang. Meanwhile the other two sons who were sent to Gontor, *Pak* Zubair and *Pak* Hasan, were respectively stationed in the principal office of the pesantren's junior and senior high school. However, any decisions of their departments should be consulted to, and approved by the central leader of the pesantren, who is *Kyai* Muhammad.

12) By the time I was doing my fieldwork, there were about 1.300 male and female santri living in Kidang.

13) The implementation of three different curriculums in Kidang has pushed the Kidang's santri to use more amount of time for their study than that they used to take when the pesantren was still a *Salafiyah* kind. This means that the santri has to reduce their time that they used to spend for non-study purposes, including time for doing their little errands,

uniform for sport, uniform for extracurricular activities et cetera. These regulations mean that more money has to be paid for both the food and the clothing. With these additional costs, previously not existent in Kidang, lower-class Muslim parents would struggle to afford the cost of sending their children to Kidang of the *Sistem Terpadu*.

Significantly, despite there are still some Kidang santri who come from rural areas and belong to the lower classes in society, as far as I know, many of the santri in today's Kidang is coming from urban and middle class families. I remember, during the welcoming days of Kidang's new santri, the pesantren's square and driveway were full of cars belonging to santri's parents who came to drop off their children. Ibu Usman, a villager who helpfully prepared my food and other errands during my fieldwork, ironically described such situation as follows. "Most students of Kidang pesantren come from distant places and rich families. None of the nearby girls and boys attends the pesantren teachings, however much their parents wished them to be able to do so, because it is just too expensive to afford living in the pesantren". In short, the increasing prosperity in Kidang arises with the changing and multiplying backgrounds of santri's social class.

Religious practices and rituals of worships characteristic of *Salafiyah* pesantren and NU tradition, such as recitation of the *tahlil* over the deceased relatives of the pesantren people and others, are still widely taught and practiced by today's santri of Kidang. Yet, the *Sistem Terpadu*, along with the dissociation of Kidang with any partisan-party politics, has attracted the interest of prospective students from Muslim family of non-NU backgrounds. It has also welcomed a handful amount of discourse and style of Islamic piety that is more akin to those of urban middle class Muslims, evidenced by the fine circulation of published works of, let's say, the FLP writers, inside the pesantren dormitories. Nevertheless, even members of the well-to-do pesantren families affiliated themselves with a variety of social and political Muslim organizations. To the best of my knowledge, as well as there are members of the pesantren family who personally involved in an NU-affiliated party politics, there are those whose religious views were close to, if not having an influence from the puritan-Islamist ideologies such as the *Tarbiyah* movement and PKS.

Still, the fluid coalescence of NU religious views and traditions with those of puritan-Islamist (urban) Muslim groups adopted by some of the Kidang people has to be related to the historical and socio-political contexts of the Sundanese Muslims living in *Priangan* regency, the regions from which majority of Kidang's prospective students originate.[14] For one thing, the Sundanese Muslims of the *Priangan* regency generally are said to tend to adhere to a stricter interpretation of Islam than that that is hold by, for

such as cooking and washing their laundry.

14) Historically, *Priangan* referred to territories of the Hindu Sundanese Kingdom of Pakwan Pajajaran (now in West Java), which after the 1620s was annexed by the Islamic Javanese kingdom of Mataram (now in Central Java). Today, after multiple ruling administrations, it refers to the Sundanese speaking municipalities (*kabupaten* and *pemerintah kota*) of

Picture 3: Kidang's santriwati (female santri).

Picture 4: Kidang's santriwan (male santri).

instance, the Javanese Muslims (see Woodward 1999). During the formation periods of the country, crucially, many Sundanese Muslims in *Priangan* had taken an active participation in *Sarikat Islam,* a political movement associated with puritan-modernist Muslims (Noer 1980), and they had shown a considerable support for the establishment of an Islamic state of Indonesia (van Dijk 1981).[15]

The santri of today's Kidang are also mostly of one age group. The application of the reformed system requires santri to attend not only the pesantren's learning of the *kitab kuning*, but also the pesantren's general lessons in its high schools, either junior or senior one. This means, all santri in Kidang are "students" of (Kidang's) high school. The greater number of the Kidang santri, hence, would (have to) leave the pesantren once they received the high schools' diplomas, a few of them even left it after finishing their junior school grades. Only those who decide to serve as 'teacher on service' (*ustadz pengabdian*), and whose number is currently only a minority, would continue to study in the pesantren. Either way, the majority of santri in Kidang are still young and coming from a teenager category.

The transformation of Kidang pesantren from *Salafiyah* to *Sistem Terpadu* has changed the social backgrounds of santri who study in Kidang pesantren. Unlike in the past, the majority of Kidang santri are now teenagers who come from middle-class Muslim families. The influx of new santri to Kidang has in turn ushered in a number of modern activities that are new to the Kidang people, one of which relates to cinema.

The cinematic practices

This section explores the rise of cinematic practices in Kidang pesantren. I start from Kidang's Matapena: a writing community from which cinematic practices have emerged

the Southern West Java, which include Garut, Ciamis, Tasikmalaya, Bandung, Sumedang, Cianjur and Sukabumi (Iskandar 1991: 16).

15) van Dijk (1981), however, has demonstrated that the support for Islamist ideology of *Darul Islam* from Muslims of different parts in Indonesia were results of a variety of factors, including conflicts in the army, political tensions between center and local powers, changes in economic agraria, and last but not least religious emotions.

in Kidang pesantren. This start enables me to focus on the agency of certain individuals in introducing cinematic practices into their pesantren. It also allows me to find both the connection and disconnection of Kidang's cinematic practices with the wider cinematic rise of NU communities.

Kidang's Matapena

On every Thursday evening, just as the Friday holiday in Kidang was about to start, a group of santriwati (female santri) gather in one of the pesantren classrooms, or, sometimes, at the backyard of the pesantren's female area, for a creative-writing-and-literary-related-club meeting. In one of their gatherings that I attended in early March 2012, I found these female santri were rehearsing a play. As I was told beforehand, the play would be performed at an event of a literary-book discussion that they were going to organize the following week. After they finished the rehearsal, they gathered around their mentor, a senior santriwati whom they called *Ustadzah* Aisyah to discuss their preparation for the upcoming literary-related event.

After a while, they moved to discuss the problems they had struggled with when writing a piece of creative literary work such as a short story. Commenting upon their problems, I noticed, Aisyah gave her advices very patiently, often by sharing her own writing experience. Some time, toward the end of her explanations, seemingly with the purpose to motivate her younger peer santriwati for writing much harder, she often mentioned some Arabic proverbs, one of which is '*man jadda wajada*', which means, "those who work diligently will prevail". As she mentioned the proverb, the attentive santriwati suddenly broke into a noise of excitement. As I would learn later, these young and motivated girls apparently have studied the Arabic proverb in other Kidang classrooms, as part of the pesantren's curriculum. Yet, the excitement was less caused by the familiarity of the proverb to the santriwati, than by the fact that a pesantren-themed film that was about to be released in the Indonesian mainstream cinema had similarly highlighted the use of the proverb throughout the film's trailer. I noticed that these female santri suddenly turned their talks into the film's scheduled release, and to their excitement to watch the film in any possible ways. And just before the meeting parted, they watched the film's trailer from Aisyah's laptop.

These female santri are members of Kidang's Matapena, the pesantre's literary club (*klub sastra*) that is a branch of the similarly named community in Yogyakarta (Chapter Two). Established in late 2010 by Aisyah and Taufik, it is an 'extracurricular club' (*ekskul*) that serves to accommodate the interests of the Kidang santri, and to develop their potential for producing literary-related work and activities. Similar to its center in Yogyakarta, the programs of Kidang's Matapena mainly consists of the regular member's meetings, in addition to its occasional 'non-member-friendly' discussions and workshops, in which participants learned the skills of how to produce, for example, poems, short stories, and a drama performance.

Picutre 5: Members of Kidang Matapena watching the trailer of *Negeri Lima Menara* film.

Unlike the central Matapena club in Yogyakarta, Kidang's Matapena has included film-related activities, such as film screening and film-making as part of its main programs. In mid-2011, for instance, it produced a 90-minute film of everyday life stories that characteristically happened in the Kidang's dormitories. The film entitled "*Hidup Sekali Hiduplah Yang Berarti*" ('We Live Only Once, Live it Meaningfully', or *Hidup*, Dir. Aisyah). The launch of the film was held at the main yard of the pesantren complex in the presence of the Kidang's *kyai*, the Kidang's santri and many invited audience members from the nearby local high schools. Kidang Matapena also invited Ahmad Fuadi as the main speaker. Fuadi is a Gontor-graduated-santri writer, whose best-selling pesantren-themed novel, entitled *Negeri Lima Menara* (Land of the Five Towers, N5M), was still in its filming stage and was yet to create interest amongst the Kidang santri. On this occasion, Fuadi was invited to share his writing experience and to speak about his upcoming film.

Hidup was followed by more films from Kidang. Two years later, members of Kidang's Matapena produced *"Intensif"* (The Intensive Class), this time, a full feature film that tells a story of a group of Kidang's female santri who are able to transform her life experience in Kidang into a new spirit for their successful life in the future.

Throughout the later chapters of this dissertation, I will discuss their film texts and practices in details. At this point, however, it suffices to state that through Kidang's Matapena, the Kidang santri have organized various forms of cinematic-related activities,

ranging from film-making, open-air film screening, film-based drama performance, and film discussions inside their pesantren quarters. They also promoted their cinematic work and activities through their Internet-based social media channels and sold the DVDs of their films inside, but not limited to, the pesantren market circuits. In contrast to the complicit relation between santri or perhaps between many Muslims elsewhere and film, the Kidang santri seemed to have a strong interest in cinematic practices.

It is obvious that the establishment of Kidang's Matapena, which has been central to the uptake of cinematic practices among the Kidang people, lend its credence to the institutional changes of and within the pesantren – both in terms of its educational systems and its santri*'s* social backgrounds. However, the fact that Taufik and Aisyah have played a leading role in the establishment of Kidang's Matapena in general, and of Kidang's cinematic practices in particular, also suggests that our exploration of the rise of cinematic practices in Kidang should be related to the role of particular individuals in such processes. For this reason, I will dedicate the following subsections to further explore the biographical accounts of both Taufik and Aisyah. By doing this, I aim to shed light on the extent to which both Aisyah and Taufik have been, to borrow Hafez's term (2011), 'a desiring subject' for film-related practices.[16]

Taufik

Taufik is the grandson of *Kyai* Muhammad. Born in 1987, he first studied Islam with his father in Kidang, and right after finishing his junior high school in 2002, went to study in pesantren Gontor for five years. Returning home from Gontor, he went to a nearby secular university for his bachelor's degree in English education. Since early school age, Taufik has excelled in Arabic and English, and has always been interested in reading and writing. According to my interlocutors in Kidang nevertheless, Taufik is less conversant in religious knowledge from the classical texts of Islam (the *kitab kuning*), especially if compared to other pesantren families who graduated from a traditional '*Salafiyah*' pesantren. He has started blogging since junior high school, and during his study in Gontor he was active in the pesantren's library and journalistic activities.

Finding that writing provides him a way to comment upon his surrounding world, Taufik has always shown great concern with literacy-related activities, and he has written articles on various topics, many of which are available on his blogs.[17] Some of his writings relate to issues of Islamic education, particularly the development of Islamic educational system and integration of Islamic and non-Islamic sciences. His views on

16) Hafez uses this term to refer to a state of becoming in which individuals strive to create their subject positions predicated upon a complex range of their own understanding of themselves and of the world around them (2011).

17) Taufik has at least two blog addresses: one is https://syahruzzaky.wordpress.com, containing of his English-language writings, and the other is https://islamiced.wordpress.com consisting mostly of his writings on issues of Islamic education. This is not to mention his articles published via the pesantren's website.

these issues, as he told me, are very much influenced by the Malaysian conservative Muslim thinker, Naquib al-Attas, who seemingly is his favorite writer. Nevertheless, Taufik is knowledgeable as well about Islamic thoughts of more liberal thinkers such as Nurcholish Madjid, despite his sometime rather critical stance towards him. His knowledge of Islamic thought is related to his study in Gontor during which he was exposed to Gontor's massive collection of Islamic books written by various Muslim thinkers. As such, it has made him not only an open minded, but also somewhat outspoken and critical person, especially when seen from the perspective of the *kyai*-centered model of the pesantren's authority.

From 2007 onwards, Taufik started to devote himself to help developing his parents' pesantren, particularly in bringing forward the application of Gontor's language curriculum in this pesantren. However, his critical ideas and thoughts often stunned some of the older *kyai* in Kidang. One day, I heard from him that one of the oldest *kyai* furiously left a pesantren's meeting in which he questioned the *kyai* for a particular idea on how to better develop the implementation of the *Sistem Terpadu* in Kidang. Despite his sharp criticism, nevertheless, Taufik's innovative ideas, without overlooking his interlocutor's efforts, is significant, as he established a journalistic extra-curricular activity in Kidang, called *NahLab* (*Nahdlatut-Thullab,* 'the awakening of the student'). Through it, he taught the Kidang santri a bevy of basic theories and skills of journalism, and gave them a direct experience in publishing their journalistic reports and works. As far as I am concerned, the santri working in *NahLab* had managed carrying out some journalistic workshops for the Kidang santri, as well as publishing a number of newsletters, bulletins and magazines, all of which contained of the Kidang santri's writings.[18]

Later, finding that santri's interest and potentials in writing-related activities are not limited to just journalism, but that they also include literary work, Taufik came up with an idea of founding a literary community. For this reason, he asked the help from *Ustadzah* Aisyah whose interest in creative writing has surpassed that of all people in Kidang, an exploration I will elaborate below.

Aisyah

Aisyah was born in 1991, in a remote village in the *Priangan* regency, in a middle-class family. Her father was a small local businessman (*wiraswasta*), and her mother worked as a petty trader. She first attended Kidang pesantren in mid-2004, after finishing her elementary school. She has loved music, film, literary work and creative writing since

18) As far as I am concerned, journalistic activities in Kidang are mainly aimed at developing vocational skills of the santri for their future careers. However, considering the fact that Kidang's journalistic writings tended to spread pesantren's religious teachings and values, and the similar journalistic practices are also popular in other pesantren across the country (Aziz 2011), I argue for their potential to be a hotbed for a new generation of NU journalist, which in turn can steer the already existing NU's websites, journals, et cetara. This assumption, however, still needs to be explored for a further research.

childhood. She recalls that when she was in elementary school, she managed to write a few short stories, and win school level competitions in singing and poetry reading. When entering the second grade of Kidang's junior high school, she joined *Tazakka,* the pesantren's *Mading ekskul* activity, and was appointed as the *Mading*'s chief editor.[19] From then on, she developed her writing skills either at her own initiative or through the pesantren's literary-related programs and activities. Her skill at writing has gained her many trophies in writing competitions at various levels, from local to national.

Additionally, her hobby of music also became more focused in Kidang, as she was involved in Al-Faiza, the pesantren's *nasyid* girl band.[20] Here, she also started dedicating her time to making photography, and later film-making, in DIY spirit and using similar creativity. By 2010, Aisyah who won the 2005 Kidang's best female santri of the year, started to blog on her various sites, in which she put most of her creative writing, including articles with her own thoughts, reports of her traveling, and her own photography, not to mention writings related to her daily activities in Kidang's Matapena community.[21]

It was only when she came to Kidang that she began to develop the ways she looked at her creative-writing activities as more than just a hobby. She told me that during her study in the pesantren, her interest in creative writing and literary work only got intensified since the Islamic boarding school had created for her and for other santri a wider access to new sources of fiction readings. In particular, she still recalled her excitement when she first encountered *Annida*, an Islamic teen-lit magazine, which she borrowed from her senior-santri fellows, when she was still in junior school. The magazine, published in close partnership with *Forum Lingkar Pena* and very popular in the 2000s, is one of the oldest and biggest Islamic teen-lit magazines in Indonesia, that caters to urban young Muslim readership, particularly, of middle-class families. According to Arnez (2009), the magazine is aimed at fashioning and promoting new ways of being cool but pious (*gaul tapi syar'i*) young Muslims in the modern world. In particular, it encourages its teenaged readers to behave and keep their lifestyle in accordance with Islamic values, for example, by wearing a wide head-covering (*jilbab besar*) for women and disapproving of any form of dating relationship *(pacaran*) before marriage.

19) An abbreviation of *Majalah Dinding* ('Wall Magazine), Mading is a common extra-curricular activity in many Indonesian high schools, which publishes student's writings and other creative works such as drawing and photography, by using a board that is laced on wall as its medium. Interestingly, despite the popularity of Facebook wall today, Kidang's Wall Magazine activity still widely persisted among the Kidang people, at least, by the time this fieldwork was being conducted.

20) Generally speaking, *nasyid* is not very popular among the NU-affiliated pesantren people, despite there is always a few exception in some of them. Kidang is one of such exception, perhaps because of the santri's urban and middle-class backgrounds, as I have explained above.

21) Look for instance, http://lenasayati.blogspot.co.id.

Aisyah's gluttonous consumption of *Annida* appeared to have introduced her to other FLP writers and their published works. In an interview (Crew 2011: 38), she once professed that the *Annida* magazine and its editors had a significant influence on her writing. In particular, she admired the work of Bang Iyus, a prolific FLP writer and an editor of *Annida*, who also wrote the film script of *Sang Murabbi*, a film that was produced by PKS (Imanda 2013). It was perhaps el-Shirazy's celebrated FLP's novel *Ayat Ayat Cinta* that principally changed the "color" of her writings. She said it this way:

> "When reading it, I was suddenly overwhelmed. Even after reading it, I sort of got enlightened; I got something new. I gained extraordinary benefits from a mere piece of writing. I then got motivated. Why didn't I take my writing hobby as a field of *dakwah* (propagation of Islam), just like his? So that I did not write of, and for nothing, but for "*berdakwah*" (or spreading Islamic teachings)."

Before her reading *Ayat Ayat Cinta*, the short stories that Aisyah used to write were mostly romatic. After she read the novel, however, she began to write stories which conveyed the moral values of Islam. Now, if she wrote a love story, for instance, she would make it sure that the story did not contain any suggestion for its readers to practices regarded forbidden in Islam such as *pacaran* (dating). Topics of her writings are now primarily about friendships.

Likewise, Muslim scholars from the pesantren tradition have also influenced Aisyah's writing activism. When I asked her why she decided to commit herself to writing, she cited a phrase she recognized as originating from Imam Al-Ghazali, a great Muslim scholar from the medieval period of Islam. His work, especially Ihya Ulumuddin (*Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn*), is widely read across Indonesian pesantren. The cited phrase reads, "If you are not a king, be a writer." She then told me that the citation from Al-Ghazali's had fascinated her and had made her to think about the benefits of being a writer, and hence motivating her to keep writing and to be a writer. In this sense, as some of her writings implicitly say, her musical activities and creativity, as well as that of her writing and later film-making, are one of her ways to improve her quality of being a devout Muslim woman.[22]

When graduating from Kidang's senior high school in 2010, Aisyah had planned to leave the pesantren in order to pursue her bachelor's degree at university. Her desired major of study was International Relations or Communication. Yet, as she told me, one of the Kidang's leaders approached her to offer a position of *ustadzah pengabdian* (lit, 'teacher on service'), tasked mainly to help the pesantren develop the santri's language and literary programs and activities. After failing an exam for an entrance to university, she decided to accept Kidang's offer, and soon afterwards, together with *kyai* Muhammad's grandson, she established Kidang's Matapena, through which her dream of becoming a film director was finally realized. Pace her story, I need to mention that

22) See for example her writing entitled "Menjadi Wanita Solehah" ('On Becoming a Pious Female Muslim'), uploaded in the following link. http://lenasayati.blogspot.co.id/2010/10/menjadi-wanita-shaliha.html.

while staying at Kidang, I often heard rumors that Aisyah and Taufik were in a romantic relationship. I never spoke with them about these rumours, but, they got married in the period after I had finished my research there.

'Desiring subjects'

The biographical accounts of Aisyah and Taufik, along with their writing (and film) activism reflect that the coming of cinematic practices into the Kidang ground is largely enabled by the individual experience and agency of certain Muslim subjects. Both of the pair's interest and obtained knowledge in literary and film work, and their leadership skills and spirit of activism, have constituted "the capacities and required skills" that allow them "to undertake particular kinds of moral actions" (Mahmood, 2012: 29), or the quality of their agency. The privilege that Taufik held as the *kyai*'s grandson, which enabled him to an access to elite authorities of the pesantren, furthermore, seems to have strengthened his agency. In short, Kidang's cinematic uptake is founded on the agency of Taufik and Aisyah.

However, Aisyah's childhood dream to be a film director, her personal attachment to the 'Islamic' film and literary discourses, and her romantic relationship with the grandson of the pesantren's *kyai*, all demonstrate that cinematic activism of the santri might have been closely related to a combination of varied desires: personal and societal, general and private.

In *Islam of Her Own* (2011), Sherine Hafiz argues that desire and subjecthood are always heterogeneous, discontinuous and inconsistent, because they are often produced in and through daily negotiations of the Muslim subjects within the larger contexts of sociocultural changes in society. Desire, Hafiz adds, is a result of "incomplete, contradictory, and unpredictable fields of power relations" (p. 16). The santri, with regard to their agency in bringing forward cinematic practices into their pesantren, are desiring subjects. They come to cinematic practices for a bevy of desires that they wished to realize upon a complex range of their understanding of themselves and the world around them. As I will furthermore make explicit in Chapter 5 and 6, the cinematic skills and vision that Aisyah has come to acquire often bear witness to her personal desire as a female subject, who tries to negotiate, and often challenge, the relations of power strongly embedded in the patriarchal culture of the pesantren compounds.

Dis/connection with the NU's film discourse

The affiliation of Kidang's cinematic practices with the literary community of Yogyakarta's Matapena reveals an obvious connection between Kidang's turn to cinema with the *budaya tanding* discourse of the cinematic santri I discussed in Chapter 1. In relation to this, Aisyah also told me that her decision to affiliate Kidang's literary community with Yogyakarta's Matapena is because of their common grounds in pesantren tradition.

However, the influence of literary works of the FLP writers among the Kidang santri is also strong. Aisyah's films are heavily influenced by films and novels such as *Ayat Ayat Cinta*. This in turn may stir us to question about the consistency of the Kidang cinematic santri with the NU's film discourse.

To explain this, I borrow the description about the Kidang santri, used by Sundari, one of my santri interlocutors who happened to be the leader of Yogyakarta's Matapena. She stated, Aisyah and many of her peers in Kidang pesantren are close to the prototypical urban middle-class Muslims. This means, they can be easily connected to the literary works by the FLP writers, which according to Arnez, arguably promote Islamic piety discourses well accepted among educated middle-class and urban Muslims (2009). I argue, thus, the popularity of the FLP writers among the Kidang people, reveals a wide variety of santri NU-Style film discourses that exist within the provision of the NU communities.

The popularity of FLP writings among the Kidang santri reminds me of the term "hybrid santri", introduced by Carool Kersten (2015). Kersten used it to refer to the "hybridity" of the *Kaum Muda* NU (the young members of NU) of the post-Suharto era regarding their avid consumption of critical thoughts from "Arab-Islamic scholars and intellectuals" and from "postmodern philosophy and postcolonial theory developed in Western academe" (p. 65). While doing so, these young members of NU do not necessarily feel less-NU than their counterparts.

Connecting it with the case of the Kidang cinematic santri, I argue, the scope of hybridity of the "*Kaum Muda NU*" can still be broadened. It may also include the Kidang santri who consume texts that are produced by the Islamist Muslim writers and intellectuals, i.e. the FLP books. For one thing, by reading these books, the Kidang santri do not necessarily feel less-NU than their counterparts, provided that they are still strict adherents to NU tradition, which I will explore in the following section.

Tradition that matters

So far, this chapter has argued that the coming of cinematic practices into Kidang is enabled by, firstly, the changes of pesantren's educational systems from *Salafiyah* to *Sistem Terpadu*. This in turn has invited, secondly, the influx of urban middle-class santri who actively utilize popular culture such as music and film as part of their everyday life expressions as Muslims. Thirdly, it is also inspired by the agency and creative work of charismatic individuals such as Taufik and Aisyah. However, during my stay in Kidang, especially when discussing Kidang's transformations, (and not to mention Kidang's active engagement in film-making practices), the Kidang men and women would always cite an Arabic quotation which reads, *al-muḥāfaḍzah ʿala al-qadīm al-ṣālih wa al-aḥḍ bi al-ǧadīd al-aṣlaḥ*. Literally, it means, "preserving the old that is good, and embracing the new that is better". To them, the quote functions as a maxim that justifies their take on modernization and cinematic practices.

In his book *A Peaceful Jihad*, Lukens-Bull (2005) argues that the above maxim has empowered pesantren people to shift the discussion of modernity from changes in institutions to matters of the heart and mind and thus enabling them to "(re)invent" modernity in an image of their own (p. 11 and 129). This quote, however, does not explain why this Arabic quotation, out of a myriad of Islamic texts available in Islam has become so central to the pesantren people in regard to their negotiation with modernity. In relation to Kidang, we have to ask what is so specific in this maxim that many people in Kidang need to cite it when justifying their turn to cinematic practices? And more importantly, what does the act of citing the maxim among the santri tell us about their preferred cinematic practices?

In the section below, I will try to make clear the significance of the maxim and the act of citing it for the santri's uptakes on cinema. Thus I will attend to, firstly, the ways the maxim can be related to Kidang's tradition in referring to Islamic classical texts for their religious guidance, and secondly, the ways the Kidang people have appreciated the maxim in their everyday lives. The focus on the social practice of citing the maxim allows me to describe the centrality of pesantren's tradition, notably *kitab kuning*, for the pesantren's transformations and its santri's pathway to cinematic practices.

Origin of the maxim

The origin of the mentioned maxim has never been determined. Growing up as santri myself, I have heard the maxim uttered on many occasions, and in a variety of contexts. I had assumed that the maxim was either derived from the texts of *kaidah fikih* (*qawāid al-fiqhiyyah,* basic rules of Islamic jurisprudence) or inspired by the *ushul fikih* texts (*uṣūl al-fiqh*, principles of Islamic jurisprudence).[23] However, when, for the purpose of this research I checked several pesantren books of *fikih* (*fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence) and *ushul fikih* categories*,* I didn't find a similar quotation in any of them. And while majority of the Kidang santri I asked asserted that the maxim was from the *usul fikih* texts, none of them was able to specify, like I do, the scriptural sources from which the quotation was either taken or inspired.

Few of my santri interlocutors in either Kidang or other pesantren, though, were sure enough to claim that the maxim was authored by an older generation of the pesantren *ulama*. They said that it was a result of an *ijtihad* (*iğtihād*, intellectual struggle for an interpretation of Islamic law) conducted by earlier generations of NU *ulama,* in response to challenges of reform coming from the modernist Muslim groups like Muhammadiyah. They also told me that formulation of the maxim was inspired by the established rules of the *kaidah fikih* that the pesantren people learnt from the classical texts of Islam. Still none of them was able to mention any definite names of

23) While *kaidah fikih* is a science in Islamic jurisprudence that studies the basic parameters of Islamic jurisprudence, that is called *fikih (fiqh), ushul fikih* studies the roots of Islamic jurisprudence: that is, on the legitimized sources of Islamic law, such as the Qur'an, *Hadis* (*Ḥadīṯ), ijma* (*ijmā'*), and *qiyas* (*qiyās).*

both the scriptural sources of the maxim and the pesantren scholars who authored it.

One may interpret the lack of clarity of the maxim's origin indicates its fabrication. I would, however, propose an alternative reading that goes beyond the question of whether such claim was true or not true, and that it draws instead upon a set of scriptural practices that have not only structured the very basis of the religious tradition of the santri, but also helped them to forge a "an affinal connection" (Spyer 2000: 32) with the larger, longer-established, and elsewhere tradition of Islam.[24] In order to come to this alternative reading I first need to show the prominent position of textual tradition among the pesantren people, before exploring how such a textual tradition has historically shaped their practice of citing the Arabic quotation for their uptakes on cinematic practices.

Kitab kuning: ritual and identity

Islam is a scripture-centered religion. The Qur'an and the *Hadis*, believed by Muslims respectively to be the speech of God and reports of the prophetic tradition of Muhammad by those close to him, are the two central scriptures of Islam, and thus, occupy significant roles in Muslim's everyday lives. Not only have they been used as the major source of textual authority upon which Muslim's belief, rituals and conducts are predicated, but they have also been treated with great care and respect in every Muslim society. As the intellectual disciplines of Islamic scholarship evolved, these two central texts have been developed through their derivative texts, such as interpretation of the Qur'an, commentary of the *Hadis* collections, basic texts in jurisprudence, morality and mysticism along with their commentaries, collection of prayers and invocations, biographical accounts of the Prophet and the Muslim saints. Among a large number of Muslim communities, the role of these derivative and secondary texts is no less significant than that of the Qur'an and the *Hadis* (see for instance Lambek 1990; Messick 1993; and Bowen 1993).

These religious texts are of central importance in the lives of the santri. As I have stated earlier, after finishing learning the recitation of the Qur'an, the santri are instructed to study the *kitab kuning,* mostly in the form of commentaries of older original texts (*matan,* or *matn*) that originate from the medieval period of Islamic history. According to van Bruinessen (1990: 236), no less than 900 titles of *kitab kuning* were studied in Indonesian pesantren across different times and places.[25] Out of the nine-hundred *kitab kuning*, almost five-hundred of them were written and translated by Southeast Asian *ulama*, with the majority of them being of Indonesian origins. While

24) Spyer uses this term to explain the ways by which the Barakai islanders in the Aru's backshore imagined the claim of their genealogical connection with the Malay elsewhere.

25) Out of these numbers, van Bruinessen (1990: 228-9) has classified the pesantren*'s kitab kuning* into the following categories: *fikih* and *ushul fikih* (Islamic jurisprudence and its principles), *akidah* (doctrine of Islam), *ilmu nahwu*, *shorof* and *balaghah* (traditional Arabic grammar), *kumpulan hadis* (hadith collections), *tasawuf* and *akhlak* (mysticism

most of the Indonesian *ulama* composed their *kitab kuning* in Arabic language, some of them also wrote the books in local Indonesian languages such as Malay, Javanese and Sundanese. The most popular author of the *kitab kuning* is Syeikh Nawawi al-Bantani, the Indonesian born *ulama* whose works mostly are commentaries of the influential *kitab kuning* written by the *ulama* of Islam's traditional heartlands, particularly, those in Mecca. This is also to mention that some works by al-Bantani were printed in Egypt, Mecca, Beirut, and Cyprus (al-Ǧābi 2005), indicating the possible use of some of his works beyond Southeast Asia.

The statistical figure of both the numbers and authors of the *kitab kuning* reflects (1) a "textual domination" (Messick 1993) in the pesantren community, (2) an intellectual respect for an earlier generation of *ulama*, and, most importantly, (3) a genealogical link of religious tradition of the pesantren people to that of Islam's traditional heartland via the intellectual routes and connections of, among others, their learning of the *kitab kuning*.[26] To the extent that Islam requires its believers to be able to read Arabic and to the extent that *kitab kuning* is an intellectual product of, and originated from, the medieval *ulama* of the traditional heartlands of Islam, the *kitab kuning* texts hold an implicit claim to both authenticity and authority of "the word of the fathers" (Bakhtin 1981: 342f). That is to say that the turn of the pesantren people to the texts of *kitab kuning* as one of the fundamental sources of their religious knowledge reveals that the significance of the latter for the former has been, to use Bakhtin's term again, "the authoritative discourse" (*Ibid*), the discourse upon which the creation of authority and authenticity of the texts is predicated.[27] In other words, the *kitab kuning* tradition has provided the pesantren people with an authorizing power to the Islam that their communities have understood and practiced, some time, but not necessarily, vis-à-vis the understanding and living of Islam by the other Muslim groups.

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and morality), *doa*, *wirid*, and *mujarobat* (collections of prayers and invocations, and Islamic magic), and *mawlid* and *manaqib* (texts in praise of the prophets and saints). Yet, according to him, over the last century or so, there have been significant changes in the kinds of *kitab kuning* popularly studied in pesantren across Indonesia. Interest in the Qur'an and *Hadis* texts has increased, while the interest in *fikih* texts steadily remained as the most popular science in the pesantren world. A new subject called *usul fikih* has been recently added to, and obligatory subject in almost all pesantren. All in all, there has been an increasing popularity amongst the pesantren people of, to borrow Messick's term (1993: 152), the "*shari'a* text" category, referring to the authoritative body of written materials that represents the core of Islamic knowledge, upon which Muslim individuals carefully predicate, but is not limited to, the acceptability of their deeds and actions.

26) Not to mention the fourth, that is, *kitab kuning* is ultimately rooted in the Middle East and yet the majority of texts that is used is of local produce.

27) According to Bakhtin, "the authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with the past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers." (1981: 342f).

Picture 6: Santri of Kidang studying the *kitab kuning*.

This brings us to the second meaning of *kitab kuning,* that is as an identity (van Bruinessen 1990: 227). In *A New Anthropology of Islam*, Bowen (2012: 52) has pointed out that an assumed correct performance of rituals by Muslims may become an index of their affiliations with, for example, a particular religious group. On another note, what on the part of the Kidang people has come to be called "the intellectual tradition of *kitab kuning*" has been discursively purported as the repository of religious knowledge upon which the orthodoxy of their ritual performance is both predicated and scrutinized by them. Analogically, thus, if the central ritual of *shalat* opens for its worshipers the possibility of an "indexing practice", the usage of the scripture on which the worshiper's knowledge of the 'right' ritual of *shalat* is grounded may have concluded the similar possibility.

Keeping in mind the significance of textual tradition among the pesantren people, the practice of citing the above-mentioned maxim and of associating it with *kitab kuning* texts are not discontinuous with the pesantren's histories. In contrast, their capacity to refer to the maxim and to make a claim that it is originated from *kitab kuning* texts is creatively rooted and honed within the pesantren's historical scholarship of learning and interpreting the foundational texts of Islam, from which they get authority and significance, i.e. tradition that is discursive (see Asad 1986). This relates to Kapferer's statement (1988: 211) that "no tradition is constructed or invented and discontinuous with history". Old traditions may "decay" (MacIntyre 2007 [1981]: 222) and new traditions are appearing: yet, "many of the things that human beings fashion contain

aspects of the world from which they spring or to which they refer" (Kapferer, Ibid). Tradition, in other words, contains an aspect that is reflexive, dynamic and adaptable to the present, hence it can become modern. In relation to it, I will explore below how the maxim has been interpreted by the Kidang people in their daily life experiences, as "a particular way of dwelling in modernity" (Chakrabarty 1999: 144).

Tradition that is modern

One morning, when I was at the office of Kidang pesantren, I happened to sit with Pak Zubair, the son of *Kyai* Muhammad. As we started our conversation, I took the liberty to ask him about the meanings of the Arabic quotation, particularly in the context of Kidang pesantren. His answers to my questions, as I will show, unfold the ways the Kidang people always linked the Arabic quotation with the *kitab kuning*. In my field notes, I summarized our conversation as follows:

> I asked him about the meaning of the quotation *"al-muḥāfaḍa 'ala al-qadīm al-ṣālih wa aḥḍu bi al-ğadīd al-aṣlaḥ"*. According to him, if he were to relate it with the educational transformations in Kidang, he would argue that the word "*al-qadīm*" referred to the tradition(s) of pesantren (*tradisi-tradisi* pesantren), such as the values of modesty (*kesederhanaan*), self-acceptance (*keikhlasan*) and humbleness (*tawaduk*). These values, he told me, had to be preserved by the Kidang people for they were "the old traditions that were good". And then, he related the word "*al-ğadīd al-aṣlaḥ*" to the ways by which the Kidang men and women could better organize the pesantren's educational system. He thus picked up the implementation of classroom system in Kidang as an example of how to better organize his pesantren. And he further told me that what was more important (between the latter and the former) was actually about the better organization and management of pesantren. He then cited an Arabic text from the Hadith, implying the importance of good management.

Responding to Pak Zubair's explanation, I then asked him whether *kitab kuning* belonged to the old or the new tradition. He answered as follows:

> *Kitab kuning* could not be simply called *tradisional* (traditional). This is because *kitab kuning* is an intellectual work, which required great roles of rational thinking. In the *fikih* texts for instance, he mentioned a number of them such as Safinah, Bajuri and I'anah_, santri learnt about diversity of intellectual *ijtihad* from the old generations of *ulama*, which could not be easily surpassed by those of the latter generation. So, according to him, if one regarded *kitab kuning* as not '*moderen'*, he or she might do not know yet about it".

Many people in Kidang shared an argument similar to Pak Zubair's. They mostly relate "the old that is good" with their *Salafiyah* tradition, and "the new that is better" to innovation that could help them better maintain their *Salafiyah* tradition through facing the challenges of the modern world. Yet, the majority of santri in Kidang, whom I asked to mention an example of the Kidang tradition, would refer to the *kitab kuning* in the first place. As such it does not necessarily mean that Zubair's answer I mentioned above is exceptional, though. santri have been called by many as *tradisional* people in a way that being traditional is associated with condescending meanings, such as old-

fashioned, rural and backward. Taking this context into consideration, Zubair was never denying the fact that the *kitab kuning* is part of the pesantren's many traditions. He was only rejecting the stereotypical meanings that are infused into the *tradisional* santri. Seen from this context, Zubair's assertive answer to defend the modernity of *kitab kuning*, therefore, is understandable.

Furthermore, the Kidang people are also concerned about how they should apply this quotation in practice. When talking about Kidang's transformation, Taufik said that people in Kidang were currently more open to changes and new practices, compared to their predecessors in the past. Yet, he told me that the higher authorities of Kidang always kept warning him to be "not overly occupied with taking up innovations, without preserving the old (*tradisi*) that is good."[28] As such, Taufik was warned that the act of taking up the 'new but better' tradition (*al-ǧadīd al-aṣlaḥ*) should be accompanied with an equal effort of preserving their old but good tradition (*al-qadīm al-ṣālih*). In other words, before any transformation is allowed to take place in Kidang, they first have to make sure that what they have already had from the past time is well preserved. In this sense, all in all, the cultural practice of the maxim reflects a particular, let's say conservative way in which the santri are able to deal with the irresistible changes, by extension, dealing with modernity.

I will end this section by returning to one of the questions I posted in the beginning of the section, that is, "what does the act of quoting the maxim among the santri tell us about their cinematic practices?" I argue, it is telling us about the role of a pesantren tradition, notably the *kitab kuning,* for the introduction of cinematic practices into Kidang pesantren. In other words, it is the santri's historical engagement with the *kitab kuning* that has enabled them to authorize their cinematic practices according to "the wisdom of centuries of Muslim scholars before them" (Lukens-Bull, 2005: 69). Yet, paradoxically, to the extent that cinematic practices are seen as an ethical practice, their turn to cinema, as I will show in the next chapters, is essentially directed to preserve the domination of textual '*kitab kuning*' tradition in the pesantren world through the visual medium. Here tradition appears not only as a means to transformation, but also an end of that transformation.

Conclusion: cinematic practices and the reproduction of tradition

Anthropologist Talal Asad (1986) suggests that Islam is best viewed as a discursive tradition, that is to say, a set of historically evolving practices and forms of reasoning over the foundational texts of Islam, conceptualized through institutionalized forms of learning, and established by specific relations of power. For Asad, as long as the correct practices of Islam are authorized by the established practices of the preceding generations

28) *"Jangan akhdzu-akhdzu saja yang didahulukan, tapi harus dijaga juga yang qadim shalihnya".*

(see also Calder 2007: 230), what matters to all Islamic practices is the discourse in which the pedagogy, the training and the argumentation about *the apt performance* of the practice are discursively learned and communicated across different contexts of time and space in Islamic societies, and the case becomes more prevalence in societies where Muslims are minority. Viewed this way, an Islamic discursive tradition, "is therefore a mode of discursive engagement with sacred texts, one effect of which is the creation of sensibilities and embodied practices (of reason, affect, and volition) that in turn are *the conditions* for the tradition's reproduction" (Mahmood 2005: 115, emphasis mine). What distinguishes discursive tradition from the standard definition of "traditional" is that it refers not simply to the past or its repetition, but rather to the pursuit of ongoing coherence by making reference to a set of texts, procedures, arguments, and practices, which frames the practices of Islamic reasoning (Haj 2009: 5). This means that while there is heterogeneity in Islamic traditional practices across different places, times and populations, there is also modernity in traditional practices of Islam.

Despite Asad's approach being criticized for its proto-theological paradigm (Lukens-Bull 1999; Marranci 2008; Schielke 2010; and Ahmed 2016),[29] I find many aspects of Kidang's uptake of cinematic practices resonate with Asad's notion of discursive tradition. The Kidang men and women I worked with, as it should be clear by now, understand their turn to cinematic practices in terms of both ethical discourse and preservation of their traditional practices amidst socio-historical changes occurring in and surrounding the pesantren world. I have shown in this chapter that the capacity of the Kidang people to refer to the maxim for authorizing their cinematic practice is constituted of various skills and knowledge honed in the pesantren's century-old textual tradition, the *kitab kuning*. In this sense, if *kitab kuning* is a result of, as Pak Zubair's said, *ijtihad* (learning, debate, and reasoning) of the older generations of the pesantren's ulama over foundational texts of Islam, their turn to cinematic practices, (a turn authorized by their reference to, and their perseverance of the very same foundational texts of Islam), thus, is a mirror of a reproduction of a new tradition of, and, through a film medium. In the next chapter, I will turn to the practices of film-screening and cinema-going among the Kidang men and women, in order to explore the ways by which cinematic practices as a new tradition in Kidang are engaged with and negotiated by the pesantren people.

29) Such emphasis, according to Ahmed (2016), has put Asad's approach into a risk of missing the fact that Islamic practices are not always prescriptive, in a sense that it is related to Islamic law, but sometime also explorative: one that is instituted by, for example, the Avicennian philosophy, Akbarian Sufism and Hafizian poetry.

Chapter 4

Watching Film and the Secularity of Cinema

Introduction

In February 2012, just as I arrived in Kidang, a film about santri was to be screened at *Cinema 21*, the biggest cinema chain in Indonesia. The film, entitled "*Negeri 5 Menara*" (The Land of Five Towers, also known as N5M), was based on the autobiographical novel of the same title, written by Ahmad Fuadi, a former santri of pesantren Gontor.[1] N5M has so far attracted no less than 700.000 cinemagoers: this is quite a good sale for the case of Indonesian cinema market.[2] In Kidang, too, it received great attention. The Kidang santri talked about the film's release as well as about the excitement they felt when going to the cinema to watch it. Kidang's shared heritage with Gontor no doubt intensified the desire of its santri to watch the movie. However, the santri soon realized that they had

1) For information about pesantren Gontor, see Chapter 3. Regarding the film's story line, it centers on the successful life story of Alif, a santri in a modern pesantren. Dreaming of becoming an engineer, young Alif wants to attend a secular school, but his father forces him to study in the pesantren. In the depth of despair, Alif's first year there is full of hesitation as well as disappointment. But after passing his first year, he slowly changes his mind; not only does he start enjoying living at the pesantren, but the place also gives him a whole new spirit of life. With his roommates, he forms a santri club called *sahibul menara* (lord of the tower). Members of the club dream of pursuing their studies at overseas universities, emblematized by five different towers associated with the various countries.

2) This number does not include those who illegally watched the film from pirated VCDs/DVDs, - a practice that is is common among Indonesian film audiences. With this number, N5M was ranked the fourth most watch film in 2012.

limited chances to attend its screening in cinema, due to the enforcement of disciplinary practices and gender-based segregation rules in Kidang.[3] Thus, they initiated a plan to book one theater at the local cinema for a private screening of single-gender audiences. But this was ultimately disapproved by the pesantren authorities on the argument that the santri's trip to the cinema would only disrupt the pesantren's disciplinary rhythm. Nevertheless, despite the disciplinary exercises from the authorities of Kidang pesantren, a few of the Kidang santri managed to leave the pesantren ground in a timely and well-organised way for the cinema, without making the pesantren authorities suspicious.

The above story indicates the ways in which practices of film screening and cinema going are desired, regulated, and negotiated in, and by santri of Kidang pesantren. The story also reveals that different things were going on, and that there seemed to be in conflict with each other: there is desire about cinema going and about exploring an imagined place 'out-there' that is putatively in conflict with the norm of being 'good' santri as designated by the pesantren's disciplinary practices and gendered-segregation rules. As revealed from the argument regarding the ban, such a tension is strongly implicated by a suspicion of space as profane/secular that is assumed to be distinct from one that is sacred/religious. It is one that is imagined and separate, and which is not subject to pesantren's disciplinary practices, and presumably seen by them as "unknown and possibly threatening" (Larkin 2008: 9), especially to the orders and rules of living inside the pesantren's authorized grounds. Yet, the santri's secret and timely well-organized excursion to a cinema also shows that particular strategies of negotiation are formulated by the Kidang santri in order to safely link the putative contradictions between one place that is subject to the pesantren's authority and discipline practices (i.e. sacred/religious) and the other places that are not (i.e. profane/secular).

This chapter, as such, is aimed at understanding the ways in which people in Kidang have identified, differentiated and negotiated the relationships between the secular and religious space, through their practices of film screening and cinema going. I assume, however, that dimensions of secular and religious space are fluid, changeable and not-fixed categories. Obviously, by saying so, I follow the trend of scholars and philosophers who have questioned the binary between the religious and the secular (e.g. Asad 2003; Taylor 2007; and Casanova 2008).

Recent anthropological studies of the secular have been highly influenced by the works of Talal Asad (e.g. 1993 and 2003).[4] He describes the secular as a concept of

3) Note that on the basis of such regulations the Kidang students would be prohibited to leave the pesantren ground without approval from the Kidang authorities: let alone to go to a cinema theater, a quarter many Muslims in Indonesia (and elsewhere) have still avoided visiting due partly to the illicit associations with it, especially it being a mixed-gender space.

4) The popularity of Asad's works can be evidenced by the commonplace of his concept of the secular amongst anthropologists and scholars from other disciplines (see Bangstad 2009 and Cannell 2010). Publication of *Power of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors* (Scott & Hirschkind 2006), obviously, speaks volumes to this popularity.

behaviors, sensibilities, and ways of knowing that relates to the ways people think about personal freedom and sovereignty vis-à-vis the constraints from religious discourse (Asad 2003: 14-16; Starret 2010: 630). In problematizing both the fixedness and binary opposition between the secular and the religious, Asad takes the view that "the secular is neither continuous with the religious that supposedly preceded it (that is, it is not the latest phase of a sacred origin), nor a simple break from it (that is, it is not the opposite, an essence that excludes the sacred)" (2003: 25).[5] This way, the secular and the religious, to borrow Agrama's metaphor "are like two hands constantly drawing each other into existence" (2012: 40).

Yet, Asad also demonstrates that secularism is a never-ending project: it is instead one that always changes and is continuously negotiated in particular places and particular times. In this regard, he sees secularism as a form of power, in which agency, understood as a culturally mediated capacity of action, plays a crucial role in the ways individuals and various institutions of authority draw the negotiating lines between "*core political principles*" and "*background justifications*" (2003: 6, italics original). This may mean, for instance, that while people negotiate the relations between the secular and the religious, the distinction between the secular and the religious is relatively fixed. In other words, to say that both the secular and the religious are changeable and negotiable does not necessarily mean that they are entirely fluid either. Or as Asad puts it, both the secular and the religious are never *essentially* fixed categories (2003: 25), in a sense that it is never for once and for all.

In Kidang, when venturing to a non-pesantren-authorized space such as a cinema, the santri often showed certain behaviors that imply an extension of the pesantren-authorized (sacred) space into the non-authorized (secular) space of the cinema. This in turn has "forced" them to carefully organize, when, how, and with whom to leave the pesantren ground as part of their ways of dealing with the distinguishing lines between secular and religious spaces. Asad's approach, thus, relates to my analysis of how people in Kidang have negotiated, "politicized" (Hurd 2011) and "imbricated"[6] (Hafez 2011) what otherwise is a relatively fixed divide between the secular and the religious.

Asad's work, however, has been criticized for viewing the genealogy of the secular as an exclusively Western-Christian historical phenomenon, not to mention its state-centrist inclination and ethnographic shortcomings (see Das 2006; Bangstad 2009;

5) For example, in his earlier work, *Genealogy of Religion*, Asad shows how, through a monastic discipline that is cultivated as a program of learning, the medieval Christian monastery has appropriated dangerous desires in the cause of Christian virtue, aiming "not to repress secular experiences of freedom", rather "to form religious desires out of them" (1993: 165): thus, ritual behavior is not necessarily in opposition to non-ritual behavior.

6) Hafiz particularly uses the term "imbricated" to emphasize the significance of to begin our inquiry of the secular with an assumption that "religion and secularism are *seldom* distinct or separate" (2011: 5, italics mine). In this regard, this term is significant to develop my argument as it reinforces my engagement with Asad's exploration of the relative (un) fixedness of the secular (and the religious).

Cannell 2010; and Starret 2010). The epistemological problem with such a Western-centrist approach, is that once it is exported to a non-Western context, it is difficult "to locate the place of the secular in the lives of ordinary people whose lives transcends the Western and non-Western boundaries" (Bangstad 2009: 195). One way to overcome this problem, Bangstad argues (2009: 201), is that anthropology of secularism should regard the secular as "vernacular practice." This is not the local translation of an overarching designation of the secular. Instead, writes Cannell (2010: 97), we need a definition that observes "the enactment of the understandings of, interest in, or perhaps total indifference to, the secular and the religious in the actual and lived situations of local societies".[7]

In the case of Muslim societies, the focus on vernacular practice of the secular may correlate with an approach proposed by Otayek and Soares (cited in Soares and Osella 2009), called *Islam Mondain*. It is one that dismisses privileging Islam as religion over anything else, emphasizing instead the actual world in which Muslims self-fashion their ways of being Muslim in secularizing societies and spheres, compatible with modernity and neoliberal economy (p. S11-S12).[8] Also, I find it imperative here to mention the late Harvard historian Shahab Ahmed, who warned against the conceptualization of Islam in terms of the secular/religious binary as "both an anachronism and an epistemological error", calling instead for attending to the conceptualization of *being Muslim* in terms of legal and non-legal constructions of the meaning of Islam, all of which are seen as *Islam* (2015: 210-11). By mentioning him, I want to emphasize here that to study the secular in the context of Muslim society we need to take into account the construction of meanings of Islam by the Muslim subjects as a product of not 'always' only legal, but also non-legal discourses.

This chapter is divided into three parts. I start with an exploration of the suspected secularity of cinema space. Then, I draw my attention to Kidang's technique of surveillance in order to make it clear how the notion of an authorized and non-authorized space is constructed amongst the Kidang people. In the third part of the chapter, I focus on ethnographic stories of santri's collective practices of film-watching on Kidang's grounds, and about their excursion to cinema-related spaces. Thus, by focusing on their use of different narratives, behaviors, and strategies that relate to their

7) For example, writing on the secularity of musical sound in India, where significant features of imported and localized understanding of secularism thrived (Cannell 2010: 93-5), Bakhle dismissed the assumedly-general origin of the secular, and decided instead to focus on "different historical contexts" that are constitutive of "the emergence of locally elaborated secularism" (2008). This approach resonates Agrama's suggestion to look secularism as "a problem space", that is, "a historical arrangement of power in which the question of how and where to draw a line between religion and politics becomes seemingly indispensable to the practical intelligibility of our ways of life" (2012: 41).

8) *Islam Mondain* is comparable to Patrick Haenni's 'Market Islam', a term that he coined to refer to Islam as a life style choice in a neo-liberal time, one that exceeds the political Islam (Haenni 2005).

film-screening and cinema-going experiences, I foreground how the putative binary of authorized/non-authorized, piety/pleasure, and discipline/desire places is both collectively and subjectively negotiated, imbricated and politicized by the Kidang santri in view of the pesantren's cultivation of spatial sensibilities. Finally, I argue, by linking the cinema-going experiences of the Kidang santri with the pesantren's production of spatial sensibilities, we will be able to shed some light on the vernacular enactment of the secular/religious dimensions of space in a Muslim society.

Cinema as a secular space

It is commonly viewed that film theaters can be separated from Islamic norms because they are mixed areas in which people of different sexes sit under dim lights and watch films that may contain, albeit not always, nudity and erotic scenes (see Jasin 1930; Mihardja 2009 [1949]: 52; Hassan 1969: 1187-90 and 1211; and Hooker 2003: 85). Despite the fact that many cinemas in Indonesia today are located in venues in which prayer rooms are part of the building's public facilities, and films with religious themes are now common across the country's mainstream cinema chains, a film theater is still seen as un-Islamic by some Muslims in Indonesia, including in Kidang pesantren. This taboo is also observable in other Muslim societies (see Larkin 2008; and Shafik 2003 [1998]: 48).[9]

Anthropologist Brian Larkin (1998, 2002, 2008), in his ethnographic writing on controversies over a construction plan of cinema theaters among Nigerian Hausa Muslims in the city of Kano, has shown that cinemas in Nigeria are never a discreet building. Instead he points at the combination of the sensual and material qualities of cinema theaters, the historical creation of urban topography of the Nigerian sociability, and the local political struggles of Kano Muslim society, that has simultaneously helped stigmatize the publicness of cinema space with illicitness, insecurity and a destabilizing force. What is important in Larkin's work here is his suggestion to look at the secularity of cinema as a socio-historical phenomenon.

According to McLuhan, film excels as a medium because of its capacity to transport its audiences into other realities (2001 [1964]: 310-312). As a place of film screening, the cinema has the potential to accede to such a transporting capacity, even to a greater intensity than the film itself does. For one thing, the connection between the cinema audience and film screen is visceral rather than visual (Hoek 2009: 83; see also Sobchack 2004: 71). Watching a film in a cinema is greatly distinguished by the processual feature of cinema-going experience, the material qualities of a cinema hall such as the dark room, the arranged row of seats before the big screen, and the packed crowd. All of

9) This is not to overlook the fact that the "inter-sensorial" (Howes 2006: 161) qualities of an object like cinema theater can appear to be "disruptive" and "dangerous" for many people in other places around the world irrespective of their religious backgrounds (see for example, Hahn 1994 and Gerritsen 2012: 185).

these qualities have the potential to heighten the liveliness of what is seen in the film in a cinema theater (Larkin 2008: 152). More than the film itself can do, the infrastructure of a cinema theater may offer a "carnal experience" (Sobchack 2004: 3) to film audiences whose "bodies" are magically transported into imagined places far beyond the physical boundaries of the cinema hall while they remained sitting in their seats.

Cinemas in Indonesia have screened both domestic and imported films.[10] Considering the cinema's transporting ability, stepping into a cinema hall in Indonesia can become a magical journey into a global world, in which Indonesian realities are commingled with those of America's, China's, and India's – i.e. countries which have long dominated Indonesian cinema (for a similar case in Nigeria, compare with Larkin 2008: 124). This way, cinemas are highly public, and watching a film in a cinema can be experienced as both strengthening and eroding one's cultural identities (*Ibid.*).[11] In short, the extension of the cinema hall beyond its physical boundaries may have rendered the space inside it so fluid that it is difficult to control.

Furthermore, some authors have linked the practices of film screenings in Indonesian cinemas to the discourse of political security, national, and religious morality (Sen 1994; van Heeren 2012; Paramaditha 2014). The fear of films has its origin in colonial times, during which films were censored due to their assumed effects on "the prestige" of the Westerners before the eyes of native audiences (Biran 2009 [1993]: 41; Sen 1994: 14; Nugroho and Herlina S. 2015: 63).[12] Since independence, in particular during the New Order period (1966-98), film censorship regulations were enacted

10) Films that have been screened at Indonesian cinema theaters are diverse across history. The country's first film screening of a Dutch documentary in December 1900 (*Bintang* 1900) was soon followed by the popularity of American and European films in the first two decades afterward (Sen 1994), and by the emerging production of domestic films by Chinese-Indonesian filmmakers in late 1920s (Said 1982: 16-17). After a short outbreak of Japanese war propaganda films in mid 1940s, the dominance of American films was quickly restored in 1950s, along with the increasing imports of Chinese and Indian films (Said 1982), not to mention the few screenings of films of Egyptian production (Madjalah 1948 & 1949). After that, despite the ruling government's continuous efforts of increasing domestic film production, the popularity of Asian films from China and India, and the overt dominance of Hollywood films at Indonesian cinema theaters continued to prevail until today (Said 1982; Sen 1994; Barker 2011).

11) On another note, there have been occasional removals of domestic and imported films from the country's cinema screens after receiving severe protests from Indonesian publics on the basis of the films' assumedly erotic, and, to a lesser degree, political and religiously sensitive, contents (Said 1982; Sen 1994: 25; Barker 2011: 73; Hoesterey 2012).

12) From December 1900 onward, cinema going was firstly introduced to Indonesian native audiences as "an elite, racially coded, leisure practice" (Larkin 1998), as the ticket prices for a film screening were affordable only to Western and native elite audiences. Three years later, it was established as a colonial activity, as the "*slam*" audiences, referring to low-income native audiences, were included into the country's cinema scenes (Biran 2009 [1993]). Writing in 1940s, Indonesian novelist Achdiat Karta Mihardja showed how local Indonesians had related the illicitness of a cinema space with colonial associations, as he

through the perspectives of public morality and political security (Sen 1994: 69). In today's context, while the morality and security discourses have continued to preside at the center of the state's film censorship regulations, an emerging force from religious "street" groups have often intervened in the public screening of a film in the cinema theaters (Hoesterey and Clark 2012; Paramaditha 2014).[13] In short, the publicness of a cinema space is always related to the centrality of films screened at cinemas and to the national debates of public and religious morality and political security (Gerritsen 2012: 187).

Moreover, the physical space of the cinema can evolve into "a trans-local space": one in which people of different class, religious, ethnic and gender boundaries mix with one another (Larkin 1998: 49). The sites of cinemas in Indonesia have always been integrated into the marketplace which is also sites for game shows, gambling stalls, food and open bazaars, and folkloric performances (Biran 2009 [1993]: 28-9). The variety of leisure activities that simultaneously happens around the cinema building may render the act of cinema, involving "an aura of improvisation, of adventure, of illicit and abrupt departure from daily routine" (Tsivian 1994: 30). In regard to the linkage of cinema building with the marketplace, it is significant to remember that "markets are inherently dangerous by virtue of their unboundedness (Masquelier 2001: 212). Markets are an open public space in which all sort of people – traders, businessmen and women, witches, thieves, prostitutes, thugs, clerks et cetera – may come across for various forms of interpersonal exchanges, highlighting the insecurity and illicitness of the market space. While an act of going to market can be experienced as transgressing class, gender, ethnic and religious boundaries, the physical proximity of the cinema with the market, adds Larkin (2002: 326), has the consequence of associating the former with the later. That is, the cinema theater becomes constitutive of the moral aura that grows around its surrounding spaces. As such, what is illicit and transgressive about a cinema-going activity relates not only to what is on screen, but also to surrounding space of the cinema building.

The spatial and material quality of contemporary Indonesian cinema theaters, however, has changed over time. Equipped with air-conditioning, cushioned seats, multiple screens, and galleries for snacks and refreshments, they are now integrated into the space of shopping malls, which have mushroomed across Indonesian cities since the early 2000s. This should not be read, though, as if the brightly lit, spacious,

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wrote, "...It (cinema) is a place of disgrace; that is the only meaning of cinema, of film, a place for non-believers (the European and American men) to give examples of kissing, sensual hugging, and adultery (on screens)" (Mihardja 2009 [1949]: 52, bracketed words mine).

13) The term "religious street groups" refers to Islamist militia groups, such as FPI (Front Pembela Islam, 'Defender Front of Islam') who often marched on the street, protesting against particular screenings of a film which they deem inappropriate according to their 'somewhat radical' understanding of Islamic teachings.

clean and comfortable constructions offered by the space of shopping mall diminishes the 'adventurous' association of the cinema space. Conversely, replete with clothing shops, jewelry galleries, bookstores, food courts, beauty centers, game and entertainment facilities, prayer room, and security checks, the space of shopping mall offers a wealthy-middle-class lifestyle of economic, social, cultural, leisure, and even religious activities that are secluded and controlled from the trouble of the surrounding slum areas (Schmidt 2012: 399). This means that the space of the shopping mall as a public sphere (Jewell 2013), despite it being highly controlled and exclusionary, is no less trans-local than that of the open marketplace where the old cinema buildings were located. In contrast, the luxury, controlling and exclusionary characters of the shopping mall may intensify the insecurity, and hence the uncontrollability, of the mall space, especially for those who are not familiar with it.

I will now move to an exploration of how the notion about illicit and non-illicit space is produced in Kidang pesantren.

The production of space in Kidang pesantren

Since the *Terpadu* System was implemented in Kidang by early 2000s (see Chapter 3), some disciplinary practices have been reinforced by Kidang's authorities in order to successfully run the pesantren's educational programs.[14] This includes, among others, a prohibition to leave the pesantren grounds without approval from the pesantren's authorities, a requirement to actively participate in all Kidang's daily ritual and learning activities, and a restriction to possess and use electronic and information devices – i.e. mobile phones. There is also an operation of gender-segregation rules: any contact between santriwan (male santri) and santriwati (female santri) is restricted to one that is under informed consent from the authorities; a partition of the pesantren area on the basis of gender distinction, one for santriwan and the other for santriwati; and all activities of learning and rituals are organized separately between male and female groups. If a santri is found guilty of breaking any of these rules, he/she will undergo a series of punishments, risking ultimately the continuation of his/her study in the pesantren. The spatial structure of Kidang has been designed so as to strengthen the ability of authorities to keep the students under surveillance.

The Kidang pesantren is located at the edge of the Kidang village, nearly separated from the quarters of villager's houses. If one wants to enter Kidang's area from its main gate, one has to walk down an alley, which connects the pesantren square up to the village's main street, from which, if one goes further up to the southwest, one arrives at an intersection in which the city busses stop. The entrance to the pesantren is at the end of the alley. There is a gate, but it is unguarded. Behind the gate is a *madrasah* building, and by a section of scattered houses belonging to the pesantren's *kyai* and

14) Obviously, some of them were already in practice beforehand, but with a lesser degree of disciplinary mechanism.

families. Despite the houses' main doors look onto dissimilar directions, and their walls are disconnected from one to another, yet, an accumulation of their built space erected along the lines of the pesantren's frontier areas seem to draw a dividing line between the pesantren area and the world outside it. To the south, for instance, they extend up to the pesantren's huge fish farm, disconnecting the southern-end of the pesantren's square from its neighboring quarter. And to the north, they finish at a high concrete fence, behind which is the back wall of the santriwati's dormitories, separating the other end of the pesantren square from another quarter of villager's houses in the north.

After passing the complex of the *kyai*'s and pesantren families' houses, there is a mosque at the heart of the pesantren area. This is where the *jumat* sermon, religious rituals and other activities of the santriwan mostly take place. In front of the mosque's main door is the main section of pesantren's buildings, each of which looks onto different sides of a yard in the middle of them. Consisting of multiple floors, every two first floors of the buildings are mostly used for dormitories, and the upper-part floors for the classrooms. Meanwhile, the first floor of the building standing right across the mosque's main door is operated as the pesantren's administration office. In addition to these dormitories, to the right side of the mosque's main door, is a cemetery for the pesantren's deceased family members. Next to it, and only separated by a small muddy path, is a connecting area of a male-only kitchen and bathrooms, whose back wall is adjoining to the pesantren's fish farm. Built on top of the nearest end of the fish farm are a couple of wooden classrooms that are also reserved for santriwan. Across from the fish farm, and stretching to the backyard of the santriwan's dormitories, is an open and wide area of paddy fields that in the south reaches at the last block of the villager's houses, and in the east at thick bushes.

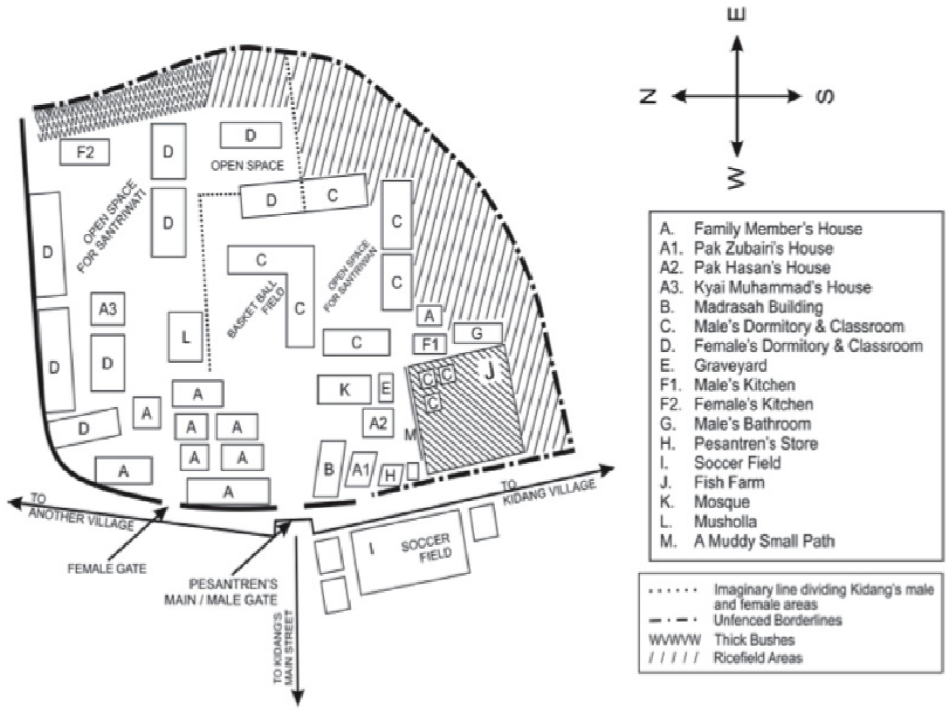
Similar to the openness of the pesantren's gate, most of Kidang frontier area is not marked by a fence. Except for the female areas in the northern side of Kidang, most of its borderlines are left unmarked. They are only determined by the wide rice-field area and the unfenced fish farm. Taufik, a grandson of Kidang's *kyai*, often told me that the openness of Kidang areas is related to pesantren's willingness of integrating pesantren to the neighboring villagers. Yet, for the Kidang santri, pace Taufik's explanation, the openness of the pesantren borderlines are experienced as an open gaze, because every santri who walks in and out of the pesantren area is under surveillance. In other words, the open, unfenced border of the pesantren frontier areas can effectively help control the circulation of santri in and out the pesantren grounds.

In contrast to the male-only zone in the southern side of the pesantren area, the northern side of the pesantren ground is constructed as a female-only space. There is, though, no concrete wall that separates the two gendered domains. The symbolic object that is taught to be a marker of their separation is a *musala,* a female-only prayer room, located across a basketball court next to the main section of the dormitory buildings for santriwan. As I was informed about it on the very first days of my arrival in the pesantren, the *musala* building draws an invisible wall stretching to the East and upright

Picture 7: Kidang's *musala* and the pesantren's invisible wall. My photograph.

to the West, marking an imagined divide between the male and female areas. While the male santri are allowed to sit around the left-side terrace of the *musala*, which is imagined as male-space, they are prohibited to walk across the front yard of the prayer room, and vice versa for the female santri. As far as I know, no one in particular conducts surveillance from the *musala*. Yet, the arrangement of buildings close to the *musala* is imposing to anyone who is walking around it a sense of being continuously watched. This is because, while the front yard of the *musala* is left open, about twenty meters to its left, is the house of *Kyai* Muhammad, the Kidang's main leader: his house's main door and clear-glassed windows looking straightly away onto the *musala*'s front space, and through to the basketball court in the male-only area. (See picture 7).

Although santri of Kidang (must) remember by heart the pesantren's disciplinary regulations and gendered segregation rules, these rules are extensively written on paper, on pesantren's corners and walls, taught during the class, discussed among santri, as well as inculcated through disciplinary mechanism (I will describe it shortly later). Yet, this does not mean that the santri have never transgressed nor endeavored to circumvent these rules. On the contrary, reports about santri transgressing the disciplinary practices and segregation rules always dominate the talks on *Kemisan*, a weekly evaluation program held on every evening of Thursday (*Kamis*), attended by Kidang's *ustadz* and higher authorities. An ustadz of Kidang said during the *Kemisan,* for example, that many santri who transgressed the pesantren's segregation rules, they managed to do so because they were given permission by their supervisory teacher to leave the pesantren



Picture 8: The map of Kidang's area. My own sketch.

ground for doing a homework assignment at an Internet café. According to him it was on their way to the café, or through the Internet-based social media that the male santri had their interactions with the female santri. For this reason, the *ustadz* strongly advised that circulation of santri in and out the pesantren had to be more restricted.

But even within the pesantren grounds, secret exchanges of short messages, small talks and flirt of greetings between santri of the opposite gender were noticeable. Avoiding a face-to-face contact, the santri usually did so by throwing from a distance a piece of paper with a short note on it, at a specific corner of the pesantren space and on specific time when to throw it, under notification of the intended person. Another way, they did it through the help of *Ibu Dapur* (some middle-aged women who worked to prepare the food for the Kidang santri) who would send the greetings to the intended persons as they freely moved from the male to female kitchen areas of the pesantren. Kidang teachers, I believe, are by no means unaware about the discreet contacts between santri of the different gender, and about the role of *Ibu Dapur*. Thus, all suspicious corners of the pesantren are controlled by a security division that watches them under continuous observation; as well as each student of Kidang pesantren is grouped under an authority of assistant teachers who put them under their continuous supervision.

The highest authority in Kidang resides with the pesantren's main leader, who at the time of my fieldwork was *Kyai* Muhammad. Theoretically, all decisions relating to the Kidang's governing system may only be taken with his approval. In practice, though, he lent his authority to a trio of his sons, namely Pak Zubair, Pak Hasan and Pak Harun, who are stationed in the principal offices of, respectively, Kidang's Senior High School, Kidang's Junior High School, and Kidang's *Salafiyah* education. Under their authority, Kidang's system of governance is divided into several divisions, each of which is directed by a senior teacher (*ustadz*). One of these divisions is the so called *Divisi Kepengasuhan Santri* (the Division of Santri-related Supervisory Affairs) by then headed by *Ustadz* Rizal, a(nother) grandson of Kyai Muhammad), whose main tasks is to govern the operation of Kidang's disciplinary programs.[15]

Under the command of *Ustadz* Rizal, each santri of a similar dormitory in Kidang is placed under the authority of an assistant teacher, called *ustadz pengabdian* (lit, '*ustadz* on service'), who ceaselessly takes the santri under his or her supervision. Usually, the assistant teachers are santri of Kidang who have graduated from high-school, but who have decided to remain living in the pesantren, serving themselves as a sort of an *ustadz* in training, but still learning an advanced level of pesantren's *kitab kuning* curriculums from Kidang's *kyai*.[16] For this reason, they can be regarded as 'senior santri' of Kidang pesantren.

The *ustadz pengabdian* regularly come to santri's dormitories, observing the latter's daily conditions. If a santri has a problem, they should be the first persons to know about it and to provide a counseling service. If a santri gets ill, they are responsible to bring him/her to hospital. On every Friday, the only day when the santri are allowed to leave the pesantren ground, they are tasked to make sure that reason of leaving of the santri is permissable under the pesantren's 'exit-permit' regulation, and that the santri returned to the pesantren area at the time due, or before the Friday night, when a new week of Kidang's learning cycle is begun. They record every circulation of santri in/out the pesantren grounds, conduct random inspections in certain areas of the pesantren grounds, document the attendance of every santri at Kidang's activities of learning and rituals, and ultimately write a report of their jobs to the higher authorities of Kidang's, i.e. *Ustadz* Rizal. If they fail to do their tasks, they can be criticized and eventually released from their position.

At the lowest level of Kidang's structure of authority, there is a collection of santri selected as board members of OSPK (*Organisasi Santri Pesantren* Kidang), the highest

15) Aside from it, assignments of *Divisi Kepengasuhan* include development programs of santri's social (*etika*) and ritual (*ibadah*) behaviors, sanitary and cleanliness affairs, application of English-Arabic speaking discipline, organizing the sporting and extracurricular activities, and organization of matters related to healthcare, food and nutrition, and problem counseling.

16) Yet there are a number of junior teachers in Kidang who are fresh graduates of Gontor pesantren: they are sent to Kidang on the basis of Kidang's relationship with Gontor.

and only form of Kidang's santri association. While all santri are automatically members of the OSPK, the fifth graders of them are required to become board members of the organization, the first two-top positions of which are democratically elected by all santri of the pesantren. Board members of the OSPK will work for a one-year period, starting from the time they were elected, usually in every October of a year. When they move up to the sixth grade, the last and highest grade in Kidang, the next cohort of fifth-grader santri will replace their positions in the board membership. After retiring, they are no longer allowed to participate in any kind of organization and extracurricular activities in the pesantren, but must focus on their studies and prepare for the pesantren's final examinations.

Placed below the authority of *Ustadz* Rizal and under direct supervision of the assistant teachers, assignments of the OSPK board members are an extension of programs of *Divisi Kepengasuhan*. One kind of the OSPK programs, however, is the security division: one that is significantly involved in the enactment of disciplinary mechanism of Kidang pesantren. From my observation, "their gaze is alert everywhere" (Foucault 1977 [1975]: 195). Generally, after the *isya* prayer, or in situations in which santri has higher probability to sneak out from the pesantren areas, members of the security division regularly inspect places around the pesantren areas and neighboring houses where the santri may leave without permission. Occasionally, the security also enter the santri's dormitories, raiding the santri's belongings that are deemed illegal by the pesantren, such as electronic and communication devices. They recorded the attendance of every santri at the five-time prayer rituals; as well as documented those who left the pesantren area and when they returned, making sure that they did so under a notified approval from their assistant teachers. If a santri is caught wrongfully leaving the pesantren area, or when she or he is absent from a collective prayer in the mosque, or in a possession of an electronic device, they are punished. One kind of such punishments usually takes the form of wearing a green veil for a female santri or having one's head shaved for a male santri, announcing the 'criminality' and dangerousness of the transgressing body to a public gaze of the Kidang people. If the rule breaker continues to violate the rules, or if the violation is deemed very serious, such as dating (*pacaran*), their case will be submitted to the higher authorities of Kidang, punishment of which may take the form of discontinuation of the santri's study in the pesantren. In any of these cases, they are obliged to record the act of transgression committed by a santri, and to report it to the assistant teachers, who will then submit the case into the higher authority of the pesantren.

Obviously, the notion of space in Kidang is strictly divided between pesantren's authorized and non-authorized places in view of the pesantren's disciplinary mechanism. The non-authorized places, at once real and imaginary, are often seen by the authorities of Kidang as threatening to the maintenance of disciplinary practices in Kidang pesantren: hence, they are instilled as possibly dangerous and illicit spaces any possible access by the Kidang santri is put under strict surveillance. In this regard, Kidang's

unfenced/unguarded borderlines, as one of the Kidang's techniques of surveillance, bring into mind the work of *panopticism* (Foucault 1977)[17], for the openness of Kidang border areas, similar to the panopticon tower, has rendered everyone passing them overtly vulnerable to unverified, but sensuously authoritative, gazes.

However, Kidang's disciplinary mechanism also relies on coercive measures to the body in relation to the space, commensurating Foucault's work on disciplining the docile bodies (Ibid).[18] A santri's body is permitted and not permitted to be in certain places by certain measures; a santri's body is recorded and reported to be in one place and not in other places; a santri's body that has contravened the pesantren's regulations is announced to Kidang's public as dangerous and contagious through a symbolic measure of "green veil" and "baldness". The cultivation of spatial sensibilities in Kidang involves different "particularities of corporeal being and acting" (Spyer 2006: 125), that are, bodily conducts and scrutinizing gazes from both Kidang's authority and Kidang's publics. Also, notion of time is imperative in Kidang's production of space, instilled through security's random foray into santri's dormitories, its inspection of suspicious areas on a timely-regular basis, and santri's obligation of being seen at specific times at certain places. Spatial sensibilities in short are cultivated by the Kidang people through corporeal and temporal senses.

The cinema-going experience of the Kidang people is performed against the backdrop of Kidang's cultivation of spatial sensibilities. As such, I will proceed to my ethnographic stories on practices of, respectively, film screening in Kidang's areas, on Kidang people's experience of cinema going, and on their excursion to cinema-surrounding spaces.

Practices of film screening by the Kidang santri

In June 2013, I returned to Kidang for the second period of my fieldwork only to find out that the santri had just finished their end-year examination. While all Kidang's activities of learning were temporarily suspended, luckily for me, the santri were not allowed to return to their homes until results of their examinations were announced, which was to take another week. Unlike my previous fieldwork for which I stayed in Kidang's dormitory with the santri, this time, I decided to rent a room from a villager living close to Kidang pesantren. From my rented place, I regularly went back and forth to the pesantren area when needed, which to some extent helped me to detach myself from fieldwork chores, especially when they were getting too much to handle.

17) It is a technique of surveillance that generates a sense of being permanently vulnerable to the central authority, whose towering outline of power is visible but unverifiable (Foucault 1977: 201).

18) In various traditions, the docile bodies, bodies that are manipulatable, have become an object and target of power. They are shaped, transformed and improved through different techniques of disciplinary practices, in order to increase the aptitude of those bodies (Foucault 1977: 138), as for example military service.

A male-only film screening

One, after spending the whole day in the pesantren, I returned to Kidang's mosque for the *maghrib* prayer. As usual, after the prayer, I remained in the mosque for joining the santri in a collective recitation of a middle-length *surat* (verse) of the Qur'an. But this time, as soon as we finished the recitation, a santri of the OSPK board member made an announcement that after *isya* (the night prayer) an open-air cinema screening would be held in front of the mosque. The solemnity of the praying space suddenly broke into joyful screams coming from the santri. One of them who sat next to me half whispered, as if he wanted to explain to me about his friends' reaction, this way: "We never watch a film. So (all of us) are happy (for hearing such announcement). We live in a remote area, so (we) become like that". After a very brief talk with him, I left the mosque for picking up my research equipment in my room. Fifteen minutes later, when I arrived back at the pesantren's mosque, I had found a large screen was erected on a terrace of the pesantren's office that looks onto the mosque's main door. I noticed, a small table was put next to the screen; a laptop and beamer were put on it; and a sound-system amplifier stood beside it. An assistant *ustadz*, whom I later came to know as Jalal, was operating the laptop. I came closer to him, asking about the screening plan. He told me that the screening was a back-up plan for a guest lecture and as the invited speaker was not able to come on the very last minute, a substitute for him could not be found. But he also added that an activity like film screening was good for refreshing the mind of the santri who had just finished their exams; otherwise they could be bored if having no activity.

Once the *isya* prayer was completed, all santri quickly dashed onto the mosque's main veranda, from where they could get the best view to the film screen that was on the terrace of the pesantren's office. Those who did not find sitting space on the veranda, put a table behind the mosque's door, or spread a carpet in between the mosque and the pesantren's office, to use as their seat. There were many santri who squeezed themselves on the veranda, standing on their feet throughout the film screening. In the meantime, I saw the screen being turned on, and Jalal's hand selecting the film to be played. After a brief moment, the lights around the mosque were turned off; the santri suddenly cheered, turning the ambiance of the mosque, which minutes ago was overwhelmed in solemnity, now one of excitement and anticipation.

The screening started with Walt Disney Picture's *Finding Nemo*. Yet, only after a few seconds, some santri began to shout in Arabic "*baddil*, *baddil*!" (change, change!), asking Jalal to change the film. Then, *Finding Nemo* was turned off from the screen, only to be replaced by *The Medallion* (2003), an action-comedy film of an American - Hong Kong production starred by Jacky Chan. When Jacky Chan appeared on the screen, many clapped their hands. After a minute or so, however, other santri yelled *"qudamaaa, qudamaa!!"* ('old, old!'), which means, they have watched the film and wanted it to be changed with a newer kind. *The Medallion* was then quickly stopped. The screen was left blank for a while, before it projected another film, a Singaporean production entitled, *"I not Stupid"* (2002). The santri clapped their hands once more

and yelled even louder. Nevertheless, no sooner than the audiences lowered their noises, the film pictures were suddenly corrupted, making the attentive audience angry and impatient. Apparently, there was a 'technical' problem with the film's files, suggesting that the Jalal's films were illegal downloads from the Internet. Jalal continued to work on his laptop to solve the problem. After about ten minutes, during which the santri kept complaining to each other, the film finally worked again. Yet, before it was re-started, Jalal stood up toward the santri audiences. Half-screaming, he said to the santri that the film had many lessons to them from which they could learn, and he wished them to accept those lessons. (His voice, however, was drowned by the din of the chattering santri). He then clicked the "play" button. The film resumed. And the santri cheered in excitement again.

Not all santri joined the film screening, though. I noticed a few of them kept staying inside the mosque, seemingly unbothered by noises of excitement outside. Some were praying the late *isya*; the others were studying; the rest were just lying down on the mosque's floor. As the film continued, the enthusiasm from the audience also increased. Their reactions, though, varied from one scene to another. They booed at an implicit kissing scene, clapped their hands at the action parts, applauded when the film's protagonist fights against the bad guys, and laughed out loud at the funny moments. The film lasted about two hours. Yet, I saw the majority of audiences stay awake in their seat and, on their feet. Only very few of them fell asleep. The low quality of the film's pictures and the unpleasant seats did not seem to bother the joyful sensation that the film screening offered that night. When the film finally ended, there was no audible reaction from the santri who quietly left the mosque area: the noises heard during the film screening immediately turned into silence.

The secular as relational

The pesantren's mosque where the film screening took place, facing to Mecca direction, situated at the center of the pesantren, and central to Kidang's ritual activities, is an 'imago mundi' (Eliade 1956: 42), or the Kidang people's center of the world. In the Eliadean sense, the mosque is manifested as a sacred space. In contrast to the mosque space, the screened films, with their origins as a US Hollywood, Mandarin and Singaporean film containing an implicit kissing scene, brings Kidang santri audiences into a world that is, not only beyond the pesantren's spatial boundaries, but also probably beyond Kidang's disciplinary practices. The joyful noise from the packed santri audiences throughout the film screening, along with them staying until the last moments of the film, nevertheless, revokes any contradiction between the sacredness of the mosque and the secularity of the films screened, and it also reveals an overlapping affinity between them. For Eliade, the mosque's veranda is viewed as the "threshold", that is, the boundary that allows the continuity of the secular with the sacred worlds (Ibid.: 25). Yet, since many santri did join the screening from the mosque's very interior space, (and yes, all of them were still in their praying outfits), Eliade's idea of the "threshold"

space, implying the hierarchical difference between the sacred and secular space, is also not unproblematic. Here, I would rather argue that the santri's experience of a space is relational (rather than hierarchical): that is to say that space is never a bounded and fixed entity, but is continually shaped and reshaped through various negotiations, and in different circumstances. It is not the mere mosque "threshold" that allowed the Kidang santri audiences to have the film screening without disciplinary mechanism, but it is the presence of Jalal as a representative of Kidang's authority. That is Jalal's combination of a 'pedagogic' and 'entertainment' discourse about, and during the films screened, along with the fact that the screening was organized when santri were on their break from learning activities.

A female-only film screening

The relational feature of space in Kidang becomes more apparent at my participation in the pesantren's film screening for female students. The organization of film screening in Kidang, like any other activities in the pesantren, is a clearly demarcated and gendered experience. But in the female section, the film-screening activity is held more regularly, and this is mostly thanks to female members of Kidang's Matapena.

During my research, I was only able to attend their screening once. For this occasion, considering Kidang's gendered segregation rules, *ustadz* Taufik advised me to attend the screening with a male companion, for which he offered himself to be such a one. Before his offer, however, I had earlier asked Imam, an assistant teacher of Kidang who had become my roommate during my first phase of fieldwork, to come with me. As far as I stayed in Kidang, Imam had always become my devoted companion on my regular visits to the santriwati's area. Nevertheless, when I told him that Taufik would also join us, Imam hesitantly told me that he could not go with us for reasons he did not want to further specify. However, upon insisting, he finally joined Taufik and me in the screening.

The screening at the female spaces was held on a Friday afternoon in one of Kidang's santriwati classrooms, which was transformed into a make-shift cinema. Tables and chairs were moved to the room's backsides, leaving the middle area of the class empty, around which the santriwati sat cross-legged on the floor. In front of them, a laptop and a projector were put on top of a table standing before a whiteboard that is latched on a front wall of the classroom. From the laptop, the beamer projected the film onto the whiteboard.

When we arrived at the classroom, the film was being played. Around twenty santriwati were sitting casually on the floor. After noticing our arrival, though, they immediately changed their sitting positions, and flocked to a rear corner of the class. Contrary to the santriwati's sudden retreat, Taufik confidently led our way entering the classroom. After we sat down on the floor in the other corner, Taufik quickly explained to the santriwati the purpose of our visit.

No sooner did he finish his explanation than I quickly sensed an awkward silence in the room. The santriwati looked stiff in their position, and a few of them left the classroom in shyness. Imam also barely said anything. He repeatedly tapped my back and asked me if he could return to his room, to which I only insisted him to stay. His bashful face indicated that he was embarrassed to be there among the female santri. It seemed only Taufik who looked relaxed in the room. Although I knew that he avoided looking to the santriwati, rather tried to stay focusing on the screen and at times on his mobile phone.

Half an hour later, though, Taufik's mobile phone rang, and after talking to someone over the phone, he decided to leave Imam and me with the santriwati. His departure seemed to have an effect on the atmosphere in the room. As he disappeared behind the classroom's door, the santriwati started to make some noises and became more responsive to the film that was being screened. I also noticed that Imam slowly changed his sitting position into an easy one, forgetting his question to leave the classroom. As the situation in the classroom calmed down, a santriwati came closer to us for offering a bag of biscuits that she brought to the classroom. Only by then I realized that many of them came to the classroom with drinks and snacks as a refreshment, indicating that Kidang's gendered segregation rules have influenced, for good or ill, the ways I conducted my fieldwork in the female areas of Kidang pesantren.

This story shows how the pesantren's rules of gender division and spatial surveillance have been embodied and internalized by the Kidang santri. For the reader's information, the film that these female santri watched was entitled *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (When Love Glorifies, 2010). It is full of Islamic references, and at once contrary to the kind of film that the santriwan had screened at the other occasion, which had nothing to do with Islamic themes. Yet, the film seemed to be less crucial to the ways film screening has to be structured in terms of gender. Likewise, the mere appearance of male bodies in the female's classroom did not necessarily trigger the sudden changes in bodily conduct of the santriwati. I argue, it was the (bodily) presence of Kidang's higher authority, Taufik, a grandson of Kidang's *kyai* and at once a head division of Kidang's language affairs, that has put both the santriwati and Imam a senior santri, (and me too), into a direct gaze of Kidang's disciplinary and spatial surveillance. This is the reason why Imam was hesitant to join the screening after knowing Taufik would come too, as well as why the santriwati were quick to calm down following the disappearance of Taufik from the classroom. The notion of spiritual authority seems to have played crucial roles in the process of internalization of Kidang's spatial regulations among the Kidang people. Yet, this does not mean that when the authority is invisible to their eyes the santri will ignore the pesantren's spatially disciplinary mechanism. To explore it, I will move to the case of santri leaving the pesantren grounds for the cinema and its surrounding spaces.

Practices of cinema going by the Kidang santri

Baso's case: an extension of space

Baso is an assistant teacher (ustadz pengabdian) at the Kidang pesantren. My interaction with him started during my early days in the pesantren. On the first night of my arrival, he stopped by the room that I had been assigned to, and we exchanged basic details about our personal backgrounds. Baso was born in Ambon, Maluku, in 1982, and after finishing elementary school, he was sent to Gontor pesantren. After finishing his study in Gontor seven years later, he moved from one pesantren to another throughout Java. Yet, unlike Gontor, the later pesantren he attended were of *Salafiyah* type. Finally, in 2005, he decided to live in Kidang and work as an assistant teacher, or *ustadz pengabdian* (lit. '*ustadz* on service'). I remember, as soon as he left the room that night, Ulin and Imam, the two senior santri who were my roommates, told me that Baso had never returned to his home after leaving Ambon, and nobody knew why.

Baso, like many other santri, has never attended any film screening in a commercial cinema. He must be aware about the prohibition of leaving the pesantren ground by the rules of Kidang's disciplinary practices, and about the fact that, as an *ustadz*, he has to show to his santri an act of obedience and discipline in regard to the pesantren's rules. However, the *Cinema 21* release of N5M (discussed above) had encouraged him to break his personal habit and go to the cinema for a film screening. Possibly, the fact that the film was about santri of his pesantren alma mater, i.e. Gontor pesantren, triggered his curiosity to watch the film in cinema. In short, despite the head of Kidang's *Kepengasuhan* division to whose authority Baso is responsible of his supervisory assignments had beforehand rejected Kidang santri's plan of a private screening of the very same film in the city's only cinema, Baso firmly decided to join us (Ulin, Imam, and I) to go to Aisa Mall, where the only cinema theater of a *Cinema 21* chain existed in the centre of town, and to watch the film.

Before our departure to cinema, we carefully arranged our movements from the pesantren ground. Ulin, Imam and Baso agreed that the best time to go is on a Friday afternoon. Every Friday, the Islamic holiday, learning activities are suspended in Kidang, during which Kidang's santri are allowed to leave the pesantren area with approval from their assistant teachers. Yet, for the assistant teachers like Ulin, Imam, and Baso themselves, permission is not necessary. At least that was what they tried to assure me when we were setting up our plan. Still, from the way we snuck out of the pesantren, I quickly gathered that we were going to a place we should never visit.

Avoiding any attention from the Kidang santri, we left for the cinema separately. Baso went to the city early in the morning. He told me that lately he had been bored of staying in the pesantren, and to pass the time, every Friday for the last six months he had been hanging out in the city's central mosque. He always went to the mosque early in the morning and returned to Kidang before the evening prayer. So, Baso left earlier than the rest of us, promising that after attending the Friday sermon at the city

mosque, he would meet us at the entrance gate of Asia Mall. In the meantime, Imam, Ulin and I were supposed to leave together the Kidang ground an hour after the Friday sermon. But Imam was unexpectedly asked to meet with one of the pesantren's high authorities right after the sermon. So, Ulin and I decided to leave him behind and then wait for him at the near end of the street, where we could catch public transportation to the cinema. As we approached the main gate of the pesantren by crossing the front yard of the pesantren's mosque, Ulin and I suddenly realized that a religious learning session was going on inside the mosque.[19] I sensed that we immediately increased our speed, and I noticed that Ulin kept looking at the ground as if he wanted to hide his face. After passing the gate, he told me that instead of the main road, we had better take a shortcut, a narrow street that crosses the paddy fields and neighboring houses in the back of the southern end of the pesantren. Arriving at the meeting point and waiting for Imam to join us, Ulin repeatedly complained that we shouldn't have walked in the front yard of the mosque.

When the three of us got to Asia Mall, we found Baso already standing on the steps at the mall's entrance. He had worn a hooded jumper and had fully covered his head with the hood. As soon as we greeted him, he worriedly told us that while waiting, he had been spotted by a girl (seemingly) from Kidang. He said he felt uneasy because the assumed santriwati might think that he was up to no good. In fact, inside the mall, each time we crossed paths with a crowd of girls, Baso glanced at them suspiciously, worriedly asking us if they were santriwati from Kidang pesantren. As we were approaching the cinema theater in the basement, I sensed that he looked increasingly uncomfortable. The glance of his eyes and his gait looked very awkward. As I tried to make a bit of conversation with the ticket lady, Baso sat on a bench in the lobby, became very quiet, continuously looked around the hall, and kept his hood over his head.

At 4:00 pm we went inside the screening hall and sat next to each other to see the film. At one point, Imam told me that he thought Baso was crying. It was a scene where one of the film's santri leading characters had to leave pesantren and goes home because his family cannot support him any longer. Later I would understand why that scene was so personal to Baso, for he would tell me the story that he'd kept secret for almost 14 years, the reason why he could never go back to his own village.

After about two hours, the film came to its end. Ulin reminded Imam and Baso that they had a meeting with the pesantren's high authority after the night prayer, at 8pm. We quickly left the cinema only to find that outside, it was raining torrentially. We heard the call for evening prayer and decided to drop in at a mosque next to the mall's parking lot. After finishing our prayers, the rain was still falling heavily, and we decided to stay longer. Sitting in a corner of the mosque, we chatted about many things: the film we had just seen, the girls we had encountered in the mall, the missed meeting with the

19) Later I would know that the learning season is intended not for the santri but for their parents who are only allowed to visit their children during the pesantren's holidays.

Kidang official, and the worry of being sighted by Kidang's authorities. Still, the three santri were much more relaxed in the mosque than they had been in the cinema and mall space. Ulin took off his cap and long-sleeve shirt, and Baso took off his hooded jacket, leaving them in their short-sleeve t-shirts. Baso started to relax. At one point in our conversation, he told us that this was the first time he had seen a film in a theater. He said, "I wondered how it would be. But, now I know."

Obviously, there was a strong feeling of curiosity and vivid desire about the world out there in regard to Baso's decision of cinema going, not to mention his need of pleasure to relax him from his family problems and boredom of living in Kidang. Yet for him, as well as for Imam and Ulin, a decision to go to cinema can be followed by a feeling of guilt, and that of transgressing the pesantren's boundaries, and of being seen as bad person for making a trip to the movies. The story of santri's cinema going experience is indeed a story about tension between desire and discipline, between pleasure and obedience, and between being a citizen of the pesantren or becoming part of the global (and secular) culture.

In my view, such tension has resulted from Kidang's disciplinary regulations and explicit discourses on unauthorized and authorized spaces. For Kidang's santri, the mosque and pesantren areas are not only the "sacred" places in which they study and practice the ethics and rituals of Islam in their everyday lives, but also the "authorized" space in which they are supposed to be and not to leave. In contrast, the Asia Mall and *Cinema 21* can be experienced as a profane space they are not allowed to be seen in and to be around. Not only because of the socio-historical association of a cinema building and its surrounding spaces with an aura of adventure, illicitness and publicness we have discussed earlier, but also because these places are beyond the pesantren's authorized boundaries. In other words, while leaving the pesantren's authorized zone without permission alone can be experienced as an act of transgressing Kidang's spatial regulations, the secularity of cinema building and its surrounding places have put more weights on the transgressive features of the santri's desire of going to cinema.

Their uneasiness, I argue, also comes from the fact that they entered a foreign, less sacredly defined territory. Asia Mall, which is five stories high, is one of the biggest shopping malls in the close provision of Kidang. Fashion stores and supermarkets occupy the largest parts of the mall, but it also contains beauty centers, American fast-food franchises (e.g. KFC), a local's nation-wide bookstore (Gramedia), a hardware store (ACE-Hardware), cafeterias (e.g. J-Co), a fitness center, game facilities and a cinema theater. It also contains a hotel that consists of 60 rooms, located in the highest floor of the mall. There is a small mosque next to the mall's parking areas. With these facilities, people of different ages, especially during holiday and off-hours times, thronged the mall's spaces for various forms of reasons, such as for economic, social, cultural, and religious activities. Many of these people are dressed up in fine clothes, branded shoes, and wear expensive perfume, very much in contrast to the modest appearance of Baso, Imam and Ulin. My recurrent visits to the mall with the santri, as it will become clearer

later, indicate that it has never been easy for the santri to deal with the publicness of the mall's spaces. I think, the fact that Baso decided to wait for us at the mall's entrance, instead of inside the mall, is telling of his difficulty to adapt to the mall's publicness.

In addition to that, a notion of space extension seems to be crucial here. Baso's constant fear of being seen when in the mall by the pesantren people who are supposed not to be in there either, along with his hiding with the hooded jacket, seems to indicate that the pesantren's alert gazes continued to work even more intensely, despite the santri were far beyond the pesantren's areas. The operation of Kidang's spatial disciplinary surveillance has relied upon panopticism and resultant bodily conducts. These techniques, exploiting the power of imagination and corporeal sensations, seemed to have strongly impacted upon the santri's internalization of spatial regulations. Considering that the pesantren's space that these santri have left is literally open (unfenced), it is arguable that its imagined borderlines seemed to have recalcitrantly extended into where the santri now ventured, i.e. the cinema theater. That is why, even when the pesantren's towering authority is on the surface no longer visible, their behavior shows that the secret excursion to such a secular space as a cinema theater has provoked a feeling of being observable and vulnerable to the pesantren's disciplinary mechanism and spatial regulations.

A number of strategic negotiations have to be appropriated by the santri in order to reduce the tensions they felt. In the case of Ulin, Imam and Baso, such strategies are hinted at through their timely organized departure from the pesantren grounds, their bodily behaviors when in the cinema space, and their stop by at the mall's mosque. In this regard, I find it crucial to discuss the mosque space in its relation to the cinema space, due to the latter's significance as a place to drop by on each of my excursion to cinema-related spaces with the Kidang santri. Larkin (2008) has linked the space of cinema to that of market in term of their uncontrollability to public sociability; and Gilsenan (1982) on the contrary, has linked the space of market to that of mosque in term of their interconnectedness in Muslim society. Here, putting together both Larkin's and Gilsenan's, the santri's stop at the mosque as part of santri's strategy of leaving Kidang's grounds can be seen as two interrelated meanings. Firstly, it reflects that, when outside Kidang's authorized boundaries, space is also recognized by Kidang santri through its divide between "secure" or "insecure", "sacred" or "profane", and "religious" or "secular", definition of which is strongly influenced by Kidang's production of tempo-corporeal space. Secondly, the fact that they did not feel compelled to talk about the girls they encountered and the film they have watched in the cinema while they were in the mosque speaks to how the process of meaning-making of the world for being a Muslim santri often transgresses and overlaps the religious and secular boundaries.

The fact that Baso was the most uncomfortable of the three senior santri warrants further reflection. Unlike his two friends, Baso had never gone to a cinema before, and he has lived a very different and tougher life than his two peers, including a family problem closely similar to that of one of the film's characters. The combination of

the "first experience" factor and his personal-family background seems to have added a further emotional layer to his first cinema going experience. Baso's case illustrates that santri have individually shaped their cinema going experiences and made them meaningful in term of "their own pasts" and their own "social and historical factors" (Samuels 2012: 3). By this I mean that our approach to the ways the Kidang people have dealt with the secular should be one that places the santri as agentive Muslim subjects.

I will now tell the story of Jalal, in which I will further explore how as an agentive subject, santri will personally explore the sensual and material qualities of the built cinema and its surrounding spaces.

Jalal's case: an explorative subject

Jalal was born in 1992, and was raised in a family with a strong pesantren background in Bandung, about 80 kilometers to the northwest of Kidang. His parents sent him to Kidang after he graduated from elementary school. Having finished high school in Kidang, he now works in the pesantren as an assistant teacher, besides pursuing his bachelor's degree in Islamic education at Kidang's Islamic college.

My interaction with Jalal only started in the late months of my stay in the pesantren. I had actually seen him since my early stay there. I remember, once during my first weeks in Kidang, a santri came to me for a question if I could let him copy my film collection. I was surprised by this question because I had never met the student before. About a year later, when I returned to Kidang for the second period of my fieldwork, I came to know him as Jalal. Many people in Kidang told me that, Jalal was the one who had a lot of films stored in his laptop, he mostly (illegally) downloaded from the Internet through the pesantren's Wi-Fi connection (the access of which is granted by his position as an assistant teacher).[20] When I got to know him better, he would admit that unlike the majority of the Kidang santri, he often went to a cinema theater for a film screening. Jalal had also often directed santri's drama performances for competitions and he had made a few short films with other male students (see chapter 5 for discussion about his films). Based on this information, on one evening I came to Jalal for an interview. Although I didn't bring any kind of recording equipment, the interview turned to be a very long night conversation in his room. And we ended up making an appointment to watch a film together in a cinema theater.

We agreed to meet up at *Asia* Mall on one Monday afternoon. I went to the mall earlier in the morning, hanging around first in one of the mall's cafés while waiting for Jalal. Before two o'clock, Jalal texted me if he was on his way to the mall, accompanied

20) These illegal downloads may wonder us to question the extent to which the Internet is seen as a secular space for the santri. In regard to the (il)legality of the Internet space, see also my discussion on the social life of film-related technology, including the Internet, in chapter 5 of this dissertation. In short, it seems that Jalal and many other santri take for granted their illegal downloading activities on the Internet space. Only when it comes to pornographic materials, that the santri will be seriously concerned.

by Nurman, another senior santri. In about thirty minutes, I saw him standing next to the mall's lift. On my way to approach him, he gave me a sign that we needed to hurry up to take the lift to the ground floor, where the *Cinema 21* is located, and then told me that the film was about to commence. Letting him lead our way to the cinema hall, I asked him if he had decided upon the film he wanted to watch, to which he nodded his head. Meanwhile, Nurman looked very quiet, and only spoke when necessary. As soon as we arrived at the cinema's main door, Jalal dashed to the ticket desk while I glanced for a while at the film display. I remember there was only one Indonesian film that was being screened, and the rest were Hollywod films. I thought Jalal would watch one of these Hollywood films. Not only because I thought that they were his preference (which was apparently a mistake!), but also because the poster of the Indonesian film implied a kind of nudity contained in its scenes. Moreover, on the lower part of the film's poster, it was labeled D, or *Dewasa*, indicating that the film was intended for an adult audience. Yet, when I arrived at the ticket desk and asked him what film should I buy for the ticket, he told me in a confident way that we were going to watch the Indonesian film.

It was a comedy genre film entitled *Kawin Kontrak* 3 (Temporary Marriage 3), a sequel of the same-titled films centering on practices of temporary marriage in a village in Western Java. In the cinema theater, Jalal sat next to me. During the screening, I often observed his reactions regarding particular scenes, especially those that showed various parts of female's body (*aurat,* or 'aurah), and those that display intimate acts such as kissing and cuddling between female and male characters. He seemed to enjoy the film very much as he constantly laughed at the funny, but mostly, lascivious parts of the film. However, I noticed that he looked quite cool at the kissing and cuddling scenes. As a particular example, I didn't see him avoid looking at such scenes, as I expected him to do, and as I saw Nurman did. Out of curiosity, I tried to ask him about his film choice right away as we left the cinema hall. He told me that he had been wanting to watch the film for long time. I then further asked him if the film, considering its nudity, worried him as a santri. To my surprise, he told me that he had expected that the film, classified for adult audiences, would feature erotic and nudity. Yet, he added, he did not worry about those scenes because the place where he watched the film, i.e. the cinema, is a public space.

Significantly, in contrast to Baso, Jalal seemed to be at ease in the cinema theater, and relatively knowledgeable with cinema-going practicalities and with film classifications. This perhaps can be seen as a performance that Jalal intentionally created in order to show me how modern he is as a santri and as compared to his peers in Kidang. Yet, even if this is true, the fluency of the ways he was doing it must be a result from his regular experience of visiting cinema theaters. Therefore, I doubt to conclude that his excursion to cinema is less transgressive than Baso's. His decision to watch the film on a Monday afternoon, instead of a Friday, is worth noting. I have said earlier that on every Friday the Kidang santri are allowed to leave the pesantren ground as long as they have approval from the pesantren's *Kepengasuhan* division. Conversely, on Monday, an active day in Kidang, all santri are obliged to stay inside the pesantren

ground by Kidang authorities. This means that those who leave to go to the cinema on Monday are less likely to be caught by other people of Kidang than those who leave on holiday times. I remember, after the film screening ended, Jalal and Nurman hastily left the Mall, trying to be back in Kidang area before the *maghrib* prayer. I think their presence in Kidang area by the *maghrib* time, when all people in Kidang are supposed to be seen, is imperative, as they will escape from suspicious questions from either the santri or the higher authority of Kidang. In other words, Jalal shared Baso's constant feeling of being seen in the cinema space, yet he could deal with that feeling better, thanks to his experience of visiting the cinema space.

Moreover, unlike Baso and many other Kidang men and women, Jalal viewed the openness of cinema space in an exploratory way. He said, that one should not worry too much about watching an adult classified film in a highly open space like *Cinema 21*. His statement implies that the publicness of a cinema theater is not always threatening, but conversely can be one that is protecting its audiences from acting and being acted upon illicit behaviors. His argument has a point. *Cinema 21*, in spite of its relatively secular characteristics, is not totally secular either. I remember, when I was observing a screening of an Islamic themed film on a Ramadan evening, the screening was interrupted by some ticket ladies who entered the hall for selling snacks and drinks for those who want to break their fasting. Indeed, it is less a religious, than commercial action. Yet, this indicates that it is always possible for the film audiences to be religious in many other ways while inside the cinema space not to mention that many cinema theaters have a prayer room as part of its amenities. Still, as far as I know, Jalal's view is by no means common among the Kidang's santri and its higher authorities. Even Aisyah, a female member of Kidang who is the pesantren's cinematic figure, admitted that she would never attend a film screening in a cinema theater on her own but always with either her female friends or male relatives, implying her anxiety about the illicitness of a cinema theater as a mix-gender space. I don't mean, however, that by treating cinema space as such (and watching an adult classified film in cinema) Jalal becomes less pious than his santri peers who stayed in the pesantren.

Asad (1986: 14) has highlighted the role of authority in relation to the production of the correct form of Islam as a discursive tradition. Ahmed (2015: 282), however, on criticizing Asad's oversimplification of authority as necessarily prescriptive, argues that authority that is operative in Islam (and in other religions) can be explorative. According to him, while the prescriptive authority gives to its proponent a license to prescribe to another, the explorative authority grants its bearer a license to explore (by) himself a range of possible and contradictory meanings of being Muslim that at once are unsettled and unsettling (p. 284). I find Ahmed's notion of the explorative authority especially useful to better understand Jalal's regular frequents of cinema as well as his preference of watching adult-labeled films. Instead of looking at them as "transgressing the correct norm of being santri prescribed by Kidang authority", I argue, as such is illustrative of his exploration to discover a range of possibility of being santri. Put differently, it is part

of his subjectively exploratory experience of "meaning making of the self" (Ahmed 2016) and of "self-fashioning" (Soares and Osella 2009), for being a Muslim in a "secular age" (Taylor 2007) in the sense that the rise of secularity is now irresistible and inescapable in every society. This way, both the secular and the religious are coexistent in and can be part of *Islam*.

Of course, in order to explore, one does not only need a will to do it, but also a capacity to do so, which can be attained through a possession of "authority" and a process of "value-making" (Ahmed 2015: 283). At this point, let me mention the case of the OSPK security division, through which I will examine the ways by which the Kidang santri have gained some sort of capacity regarding their practice of escaping the pesantren grounds.

A capacity to leave

The OSPK's case: a possession of authority

During my second period of fieldwork in Kidang, I hung out with santri board members of the OSPK more often than with the others. In the beginning, I thought that this was because they were more approachable than their fellows. But later I would understand that those hanging outs were a conscious choice, realizing that santri of the OSPK board members often struck me with their capability of circumventing the spatial regulations and gendered division in Kidang, a capability that I was less easily able to note from my hanging out with the other groups of santri. I do not mean that other groups of Kidang santri have never 'endeavored' to leave the pesantren grounds, as indeed they do. However, while OSPK santri are relatively older and have more experience of living in the pesantren, it is their (newly-acquired) status in Kidang's structure of authority that has given them a capacity to challenge the pesantren's regulation of spaces to an extent that other groups of Kidang santri are hardly capable of keeping up with.

To prove this point, I will narrate the story of their first ever cinema-going experience as follows. Many of them often animatedly recalled, usually on my attempts of soliciting them about film-related practices in Kidang, that their first ever cinema-going experience occurred on the very first hours after they were inaugurated as board members of the OSPK. According to their narrative: led and organized by their assistant teachers, still in *maghrib* time right after the inauguration ended, and still in their inaugural outfits, around sixty of them left the pesantren ground through different routes, before meeting at the nearest end of the main road, in which their rental cars were ready to lift them to the cinema theater, unnoticeable by the Kidang's head of *Kepengasuhan* division, i.e. *ustadz* Rizal. The occasion, I was told, was intended by their assistant teachers to, ironically, motivate the santri before they go through a whole year of tedious work in the OSPK board membership.

My purpose of mentioning their first-experience story of cinema going here is also to highlight its significant impact on their everyday lives in Kidang notably after their

newly acquired status of authority in the pesantren. The "inaugural ceremony", I argue, can be experienced as "rite of passage", a symbol of the fifth-grader santri's transition from being "ordinary" santri to becoming "authoritative" ones. The excursion to a cinema-theater right after their official membership in the pesantren's authoritative bodies, and right under the supervision and companionship of their "senior" in Kidang's structure of authority, may actually become one that gives them a sense of entitlement to them escaping the pesantren grounds under particularly permissible conditions and strategic negotiations, knowledge of which were acquired through their experience of living in Kidang, but only officially handed down by their senior on that very event of the evening's cinema-going experience.

Irfan's Case: value-making processes and strategies of leaving

I will now focus on the case of Irfan, the current head of OSPK's security division, and on his discreet excursion to the city's market centers with his santri security fellows. Through his case I will highlight that "strategies of leave" taken by the 'santri' (of OSPK members) are similar to those of their 'senior santri' (of assistant teachers). This in turn makes it plausible to argue, having in mind the story of cinema excursion after the inauguration above, that the knowledge about how to leave the pesantren grounds is a sort of tradition handed down from one generation to another in Kidang. Yet, through his case, I will also show that, despite their similar strategies, how they valued their leavings might differ from one santri to the other.

I first became friends with Irfan in June 2013, a couple of weeks before the Ramadan fasting month commenced in Kidang. It was when I had an afternoon conversation with a group of the OSPK board members, in which his figure was standing out amongst his peers, at least to my attention. From that conversation, I began to build a friendship with him (if not we built it together), the closest friendship with the OSPK board members that I had. In short, after that conversation, Irfan often paid occasional visits to my rental house with or without my invitation, as well as tried to become my faithful companion whenever I hang out in the pesantren - not to mention the regular presents as well as attention that I gave to him. More significantly, we managed to leave the pesantren ground together a few times, despite his highly demanding workloads in the OSPK. One of our departures was on a Thursday afternoon of the Ramadan. As Irfan told me, it would be a visit to a city center with other members of the security division for repairing their broken flashlights, which are property of the security division. However, it turned out that the visit was more than just repairing the broken flashlights.

Irfan and I left the pesantren ground after the *dzuhur* (*ḍuhr*) prayer (at about 1:00 p.m.), just as when the majority of Kidang santri were starting a *bahtsul masa'il* (an answer and question forum concerning religious matters led by one of the Kidang *kyai*) in the pesantren's mosque. We left via a small muddy path in between the pesantren's graveyard and fish farm, before we continued our route via a shortcut that passes the

villagers' houses, the same shortcut that Ulin and I took a year ago. Irfan told me that the other six santri of the security division who joined had departed to the city earlier. But we managed to catch up with two of them nearing the shortcut's ends, from which we continued the excursion to the city by taking an *angkot* (*angkutan kota*, a typical minibus used as public transport in many Indonesian cities). After about an hour, as our public transport reached the city, we stopped at an intersection next to the city's grand mosque, only to find that the other four santri had waited for us at the mosque's veranda.

From the mosque, which is only a short walking distance from the city's market area, we started our adventure. Instead of going to a place for repairing their flashlights, though, we firstly went to "Toko Asli", a Muslim's traditional clothing store located at the western end of the city's market, because one of them wanted to buy a new *kopiyah* (a fez). But, failing to get the suitable *kopiyah,* we encountered inside the store a group of Kidang santriwati who were also, as I was told, board members of the OSPK's female section. I saw they exchanged a few words in a careful manner, about which I could not hear clearly, but later Irfan would tell me that the girls were going to the market, like these boys, for a pesantren-related errand. Leaving the girls in the store, we continued our tour to "Murah Plaza", another mall in the city, which stands across the Toko Asli.

Inside Murah Plaza, we walked around the stores window-shopping, before we finally spent almost an hour and a half in the game center. Cheerfully, they tried most of the game facilities available, likely indicating that gaming is not a serious issue for the santri. At about 4.00 pm, we left the game center for an afternoon prayer at the mall's prayer house, located close to the parking lots outside the mall. After the prayer, we walked back to the central market, where most of the electronic stores resided. We moved from one electronic store to another to ask if they could repair a flashlight, only discover that none of them provided that service. Fed up, Irfan suggested that we go for another tour to a department store that was newly opened in the city, to which all of us agreed. Then we walked up to the south, to another end of the market quarter where the store is located. Inside the department store, we took another tour of window-shopping, and finally we went off from it when we realized that the *maghrib* (*maġrīb*, evening) prayer was about to commence.

We walked more quickly to reach the nearest stop of public transport that would take us to the pesantren. However, no sooner had we reached the stop than the young students had an argument. One group wanted to break our fasting in the city's square; another wanted to return back to the pesantren. I let the santri take the decision, and they finally opted for the former. On our way to the square, however, all of these santri suddenly took a quick run, as if trying to hide their figures from one's sight. I looked around and saw a group of Muslim women wearing *jilbab* (veils) standing at another section of the street. When I caught up with the santri at the city's square, I asked them what was going on. They told me that they were seen by a group of *ustadzah* (female teacher) of Kidang. Since *maghrib* time was approaching, though, we stick to our plan

to spend the *maghrib* time in the city's square. Shortly afterward, we heard the call for *maghrib* prayer, and we quickly dropped by at a food booth for breaking our fasting. After we finished our meal, we went to the nearest *musala* for performing the *maghrib* prayer. After the prayer, as almost all of us look tired, we finally decided to return to Kidang. The broken flashlights, in the meanwhile, remained unrepaired.

Obviously, replete with discrete features, their excursion to the market space triggered a strong sense of worriedness among the santri. On our way, back to Kidang, I asked Irfan why they had to keep discreet their leaving. He told me this way:

> Because, despite we went to the city for repairing the flashlights, we did it without a permit ('*pergi tanpa izin*') from the pesantren's higher authority (i.e. the *Kepangasuhan* division). Well, if we asked for it, we surely won't be allowed to do so. Moreover, we did not want that other santri in Kidang knew that the security division had escaped from the pesantren area, because our division has never had any bad record so far.

Considering Irfan's answer above, the space they left for, i.e. the city's market areas, seems to be less threatening than the fact that they have transgressed Kidang's spatial regulations, that is, of leaving Kidang's areas without notification from Kidang's authority. Irfan might justify the leaving over the flashlight-repairing service, about which they did make an effort to do so: however, if we look at the places that we visited in the city center, along with the fact that the flashlights remained unrepaired, the leaving concerns less about the flashlight than about other personal purposes. If this is true, especially comparing Irfan's case with Baso's and Jalal's, an excursion to cinema theater by Kidang santri is no more *transgressive* than for them to go to other pesantren's non-authored spaces. I was also surprised, moreover, by Irfan relating his anxiety with the reputation of his security division, reminding me of Baso's worriedness of being seen as a bad person by other Kidang people for making a trip to a cinema theater. Kidang's cultivation of spatial sensibilities seemed to have casted a long shadow over the santri's collective perception about being a good santri, noting that under Kidang's disciplinary mechanism, as I have explained earlier, a body contravening Kidang's disciplinary practices will be labeled as "criminal" and put under Kidang public gazes. This in turn has put the santri under constant examination of both Kidang's authority and their santri peers.

'Fun' practices

Yet, in contrast to their secretive manners and tightening feelings, the young students were full of delightful expressions along the ways of our afternoon city tour. Aside from the fact that we spent most of our times in the mall at game centers and entertainment facilities, the mall is where these boys could see and be seen by the girls. Often time we came across a girl on our way, the santri would flirt in order to gain the girl's attention, such as by approaching her for some trivial questions or making particular noises with

their lips, a sort of cat calling.[21] In addition to that, places and things appearing to be symbolic of a Western lifestyle often attracted their attention. As on our arrival at the mall, for example, pointing his fingers to an American fast food franchise standing next to the mall's entrance, Irfan made an inquiry that we take a group picture with my camera at the background of the food franchise's name. Also, the santri often played jokes with objects we encountered on our excursion about which they were unfamiliar. When we took the lift to reach the game center in the third floor, for instance, one santri was pretending that he was "flying" because of the lift's upward movement; an act that provoked laughter from his peers.

Indeed, for these young santri, visiting city centers, malls and the like is not an activity that they can do in a regular basis due to their full-day activities in Kidang, as well as their high workloads at the OSKP board membership. Upon my hanging outs with Irfan and his friends, I often heard some complain about their laborious work as board members of the OSPK, along with the high responsibility that was assigned to them. I was also often told, or could overhear their conversations, about their wish to quickly get free from the board of the OSPK; about their lost motivation in the OSPK's tiresome tasks; and about their wearisome toward the pesantren's monotonous situations. It appears that "to kill the boredom" discourse becomes common among santri who escaped the pesantren grounds.

Bonding friendship

Going to these places, more importantly, can be experienced as bonding the santri friendship. As Irfan told me, his excursion with members of security division was purposed for tightening the bonds between them. That was why, Irfan added, ignoring my involvement in the group, they "went to the city only with all of us, not with the other santri". That said, to an extent that their excursion to the mall centers is replete with charms of discovery, with curiosity of knowing and experiencing the world out there, and with "fun practices" (Bayat 2010: 138) with their close friends, santri's excursion to cinema and city centers reverberates a celebration of being young santri in a secularizing society and sphere.

In relation to making friendship, furthermore, who is allowed and not allowed to come on their excursion becomes a matter of strategic concerns. One day, I asked Irfan to go to the city together with Abduh, a fifth grader santri I also often hang out with. Irfan's reaction however surprised me. He said this way, "No, I do not want to go with him. He is a *terroris*", a harsh reaction that caught me in a full surprise. Abduh, who often involved in Matapena's filmmaking programs, in my view, is a helpful and strong-minded santri. On our series of conversations, however, he often mentioned about

21) Since I had never caught any of their more senior santri doing such overtly flirtatious, if not harassing, behaviors with the girls on our excursion, at least not on my notification, as such is hardly synonymous with the santri way, and perhaps can be related to the fact that they were still growing-up teenager santri.

his friends who studied in other schools, whom he knew through his involvement in school's competitions and extracurricular activities, and with whom he preferred to hang out. He said, "My friends outside Kidang were nicer and much cooler than my friends here. I loved to go out with them mostly for playing soccer or basketball. Playing with them also gave me more experiences (one that he did not get from his santri friends)".

Nevertheless, it is his hangouts with non-Kidang students that have regularly put him under Kidang's disciplinary surveillance. This in turn has rendered him, in the eyes of Irfan and other Kidang people, "notorious" for his "rule-breaking" behaviors of Kidang's spatially disciplinary regulations. Significantly, when I asked Irfan what he meant by his word "*terroris*", he mentioned about Abduh's disappearance from Kidang's grounds and about him being avoided by many of his peers because of his notoriousness. If he went out with him, Irfan continued telling me, it will easily put obvious suspicion on to him from Kidang's *Kepengasuhan* division, as if, his behavior was a disease one would be contaminated by a mere contact.

Timing as strategy

Timing is also imperative in santri's strategies of leaving. Still on our way back from our Ramadan excursion to the market, I asked Irfan why he had the courage to leave Kidang without an exit-permit from Kidang's higher authority, especially considering their assignments as members of OSPK's security division, to watch out movements of santri in the pesantren area. He told me more or less this: "We had a courage to escape the pesantren ground because during the Ramadan, our task to control the pesantren's activities is taken over by the Ramadan Committee. So, we left the pesantren area because other santri handled our jobs".

Irfan's answer has a significant point. During Ramadan, the activities of santri in Kidang slightly change: while the amount of learning activities at classrooms are reduced, Ramadan and ritual activities of collective kind, such as recitation of the Qur'an, *bahtsul masa'il*, religious preaching, *tarawih*[22] prayer et cetera, are intensified. More significantly, in order to organize the Ramadan activities, a special committee, called the Ramadan Committee, is formed. Its members are all santri of a grade that is one level lower than that of the reigning OSPK's board members, signifying Ramadan as a training ground for them to the next year OSPK tasks. The Ramadan Committee looks after the pesantren's activities from the time students get up from their beds for *sahur* meal, usually at 3 a.m., to that when they go to their beds after the night's recitation of the Qur'an finished, usually at 10 p.m.. The Ramadan activities will finish on the last week of the Ramadan month, by which time the santri will be sent to their homes for celebrating *Idul Fitri* holidays with their families, and the Ramadan committee will be dismissed. This way, the Ramadan committee seems to be taking over a huge load of

22) *Tarawih* is a non-compulsory prayer usually conducted in congregation during the *Ramadan* nights.

responsibilities that in a regular situation is assigned to the OSPK's security division. Irfan and the security division's excursion on Ramadan, thus, were doable because of its good timing. At this point it is worth mentioning that after Ramadan passed by, it became less easy for me to make an appointment with Irfan outside the pesantren ground. Even, at many times of our appointments of leaving the pesantren ground, Irfan canceled our plan in the very last minute, telling me that a call for his security-related jobs had restricted him from leaving the pesantren ground.

Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter the effectiveness of seeing the secular and the religious as "vernacular practices" for understanding the practices of film screening and cinema going among the Kidang santri. As the secular associations that grow around the cinema space, which at the same time is at odds with the pesantren's spatial regulations and gender segregation rules, practices of film screening and cinema going among the Kidang santri can be experienced as "secular", one that is not authorized by the pesantren's authorities. Yet, at the same time, the santri is a "desiring subject" (Hafez 2011), who may yearn for visiting a movie theater and its surrounding spaces either for personal reasons, or for doing something fun with friends, or for experiencing the (imagined) world out there. Likewise, the santri is an explorative subject, who may explore a range of possible strategies, collectively or individually, in order to imbricate the tensions between the pesantren's secured spaces and the publicness of the cinema space. In this regard, notions of the secular and the religious, and the demarcation between them, are not just found, but "made" (Calhoun 2010: 48) by the Kidang santri. How this is made are staged at the very center of Kidang's production of space: this is a space that is publicly gazed, bodily sensed and temporally perceived, such as the santri's *strategies* of leave on Friday or during the Ramadan.

I have also described that as santri departed to a cinema theater, they felt an extension of the pesantren's space to the cinema, and a sense of being constantly observed by an invisible authority of Kidang. Yet, by looking at dimensions of space in relation to its tempo-corporeal sensations, I have tried to show that space does not only shape the experience of the Kidang's santri cinema going practices, but it is also shaped by the ability of Kidang santri to learn a sort of capacity to transgress the pesantren's spatial boundaries, as their leaving strategies appear as a complex arrangement of space, bodily conduct and timing. While the production of space at the Kidang pesantren, has been built on the basis of the pesantren's structure of authority, it is the very same authority that has 'authoritatively' enabled the santri to explore the many possible ways of escaping Kidang's spatial boundaries, the capacity that they have learned through their living times in Kidang, but only officially bequeathed as tradition by their seniors when they are inaugurated as part of the pesantren's authoritative bodies.

Finally, I conclude that the element of fear when santri are outside the pesantren

being transgressive (i.e. leaving and going to malls and movies) suggests that they 'make' the difference between the religious and the secular, but do so at a risk and also do not seem to unmake the distinction imposed by the authorities. Since the knowledge of how to leave the pesantren is passed on by the student-authorities themselves it is almost as if the pesantren has allowed a little 'escape valve' to be built in. In other words, the authorities are aware that every year the santri student-authorities take students into town by allowing a little license they may actually be retaining and affirming their authority.

Chapter 5

Social Life of Film and Technology

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have shown that the emergence of the cinematic santri echoes McLuhan's thesis of "the medium is the message" (1964: 6), in the sense that film technology for the pesantren people is the extension of their various "conditions of existence" (Larkin 2009: 108) – such as the historical, the social, the political, the economic, the religious, and the popular –, against which they become able to express their religion.

Yet, within the discipline of digital anthropology, the relation between technology and human beings is never seen as a one-way traffic, and in which the former subsides a dominant position over the latter.[1] "People", write Horst and Miller (2012: 11), "are not an iota more mediated by the rise of digital technologies". That is, human beings are neither less nor more cultural before the rise of the digital, and that, by extension, they have the capacity to use the digital in order to achieve the meaningful out of their everyday live circumstances.[2] As an example, while digital technologies such as mobile phone and online-networking sites continue to speed up the process of human interactions, many

1) Taking the cue from Milller and Horst (2012), my use of the term digital here refers to everything that can be reduced into binary code. By this definition, film obviously is part of the digital category.

2) Such approach is indeed closely related to the social constructivist theory of technology, which argues that the meanings of the technology are largely constructed within the various dimensions of human's social practices (Bijker 1995). See also below.

scholars have demonstrated how 'quickly' people domesticate these technologies for their mundane purposes and according to their everyday life necessities (Barendregt 2008 & 2012; Horst 2012; and Miller 2012). As such, digital anthropology refuses to look at the digital as mere technology, but calls for the significance of studying the ways in which human beings use the digital technology in order to "shift our conceptualization of being human" (Horst and Miller 2012: 29).

At the heart of this digital-anthropology's theoretical framework is a question about the relationship between people and objects. To answer it, one can derive an important theory from material culture studies, which is called "objectification", that is, "the manner in which objects or material forms are embedded in the life worlds of individuals, groups, institutions or, more broadly, culture and society" (Tilley 2006: 60). While assuming the centrality of objects at the heart of our social inquiry (Küchler 2006), this theory refuses the subject-object dualism, and attempts to recognize instead the dialectical relationship between subjects and objects, between persons and things. Objects are "not simply a mirror of social distinction, set of ideas and symbolic systems", but they are the very medium through which these very forms of human culture and society "are constantly reproduced and legitimized, or transformed" (Tilley 2006: 61).

Of one particular type of objectification relates to a consumption practice as elaborated by Daniel Miller in his *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987, and also Miller 2006). In his work, Miller challenges our common tendency to value practices of consumption through the "morality of spending" perspectives (2006: 342). He instead points out that people have actively shaped and reshaped their personal and collective identities through the consumer goods they bought, such as furniture, cloth, cars, food, drink, and leisure activities. This is because as soon as a consumer good is purchased, its "purchaser or intended users" will translate, re-contextualize, and transform it from "being a symbol of ...price value to being an *artifact* invested with particular inseparable connotations", such as social class, ideologies, and personal preferences (Miller 1987: 190, italics mine). Once consumed, in short, a thing will be perpetually appropriated by its users for fashioning their personal and collective identities, as well as their social distinctions: this is what this chapter means by objectification.

In Kidang, this type of objectification over the material forms of film and other media technologies is pronounced. What I mean by the material forms of media technologies here, however, refers less to the materiality of technology than to the use of, and engagement with it. Many Kidang *ustadz* and *kyai* worry about particular aspects of film, mobile phones, the Internet, and various kinds of digital technologies, which they regard as being dangerous to the structures of pesantren's authorities, beliefs, and identities. This has in turn forced santri to place the use of these technologies under particular regulations. At the same time, film technology as material objects has been attributed by the Kidang people, especially the santri, with particular desires and aspirations for an imaginary elsewhere: one that is distant and global but arousing their

bodily sensory receptors and curiosity. In this chapter, my aim is to explore the ways in which the material forms of film and other media technologies are consumed by the Kidang people, and how it could tell us about their conceptualization of being human beings.

I start this chapter by outlining my theoretical approach to film as a technology, in which I also briefly explain the significance of equating film with other media technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones in the context of the Kidang people. I then explore the ways by which the Kidang *kyai* and *ustadz* have negotiated the use of these technologies in their pesantren, especially against the contexts of Kidang's structure of authorities, social order and morality. Here I provide an ample examination about Kidang people's opinion regarding the legal status of these technologies, especially film, according to Islamic law; as well as about the material aspects of the technologies that are seen as threatening to the Kidang authorities and how they are so. In the second-half part of the chapter, I shift my focus towards exploring the significance of (the engagement with) these technologies as material culture among the Kidang santri. Here I attend to a number of ethnographic stories by which I show how practices of consuming film technologies among the santri are invested with particular desires and aspirations. I argue, finally, that the ways the material forms of film and other newer media technologies have come to matter to the everyday life of the Kidang people, or the "social life" (Appadurai 1986) of the technologies, affirms the reciprocal relationship between human subjects and material objects, that is, they are shaped and are shaped by each other (Tilley 2006: 61, see also Horst and Miller 2012).

Theorizing film as a (new media) technology

As I will state explicitly throughout this chapter, the ways by which the Kidang people do, or should do with the material forms of film technologies have always been stimulated and estimated both *toward and against* new discoveries, new thoughts, new imaginaries, new interactions, and new possibilities. Because of this, I am not inclined to regard film in the context of the Kidang people as a mere technology, but as a form of new media. In this section, I will briefly explain my theoretical underpinnings with regard to my use of the term 'technology' and 'new media'. I start with the latter.

It goes without saying that new media is commonly defined as a new form of communication technologies. What is "new", however, in new media has always been contested.[3] In this chapter, my guiding principle is as follows. I frame the 'new' in its relatively historical situations, cultural contexts, and social practices (Marvin 1988; Eickelman and Salvatore 1999; Gitelman and Pingree 2003; Meyer and Moors 2006; Dewdney and Ride 2006; and Gershon 2017); and I refuse to reduce it either to its "novelty" or mere "computing technology" (see Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 2003; Levinson 2009).

3) For the latest account on such debates, see Gershon 2017.

This is because, the first introduction of a new medium in each society differs historically across time and space. All new media were at once new (Gitelman and Pingree 2003: xi) and every invention in a new communication technology is but an elaboration of the earlier works of communication technologies (Marvin 1988: 3). Also, as suggested by Boyd, an introduction of new media technologies, despite may alter the landscape in which people get connected with each other, does not affect the underlying motivations and social practices by which people engage and disengage with such new technologies (2014: 13). Because of these, Gershon gently reminds us that what is new in new media does not locate in the technology, but in the ways it calls forth "a new social practices" (2017: 16). That is, the potential of media technology to enable people to create a new way of knowledge circulation, public involvement, communication roles and strategies, and political engagement. Considering this definition, the term new media (especially in the contexts of the Kidang people) can be broadened into one that does not only refer to the most recently-invented forms of communication technologies such as computer, mobile 'smart' phone, and the Internet, but also includes older media (that are used in new settings), such as television, radio, photography, and, especially, film (camera).

However, introducing film technology as new media requires further problematization. Unlike other technologies - such as dishwashers and bicycles - new media technologies facilitate mediation practices which link the private with the public sphere, incorporating the production of what is the meaningful into the everyday life (Silverstone, Hirsch and Morley, as cited by Horst 2012). In their edited volume, *Religion, New Media, and the Public Sphere,* Moors and Meyer (2006), emphasized that the adoption of newly introduced media technologies in religious communities "significantly transforms existing practices of religious mediation" (p. 11). This in turn has brought forward a new form of public visibility of the religion, the mode of which might be difficult to control by established religious authorities. Apparently, to introduce film technology as a new media, to paraphrase Moors' and Meyer's (Ibid), is to recognize both the destabilizing and enabling potentials of the technology for the established practices of religious mediation.

In relation to my emphasis on the dimension of "new social practices" of new media, it is imperative to mention here now, that the term technology that I use throughout the chapter is more designed as a social practice than an artifact. Technology, or the use of technology, is an embodiment of how people, negotiate, conduct, and give meanings to the ordinary practices of their social lives.

My approach is largely inspired by those who propose the significance of studying technology beyond its technological details and confines, but in the ways by which "technologies are shaped and acquire their meanings in the heterogeneity of social interactions" (Bijker 1995: 6, but see also Pinch and Bijker 1989, and Pfaffenberger

1992).[4] This is because, all technical engagements are never merely technical, but they are "immediately and intimately" linked to variously social dimensions of the everyday lives of the individuals (Mitcham 2003 [1990]: 491; see also Marvin 1988: 4). Brian Larkin, for example, in his seminal work *Signal and Noise* (2008), has shown that the meanings, social usages and technical functions of technologies are not an inevitable consequence. Rather, they are something that is negotiated over time and is contingent upon various contexts of considerable cultural debates within which these technologies exist. Thus, following this line of argument, in order to understand the meaning of film (and other media) technologies among the pesantren people, it is important for us to explore, to mention the most notable ones, the social, cultural, political, and textual dimensions, within which these technologies retain their significance among the pesantren people.

The next section looks at a textual understanding of technology among the Kidang people.

Technological ambiguity and the importance of 'intent'

One day in June 2012, I interviewed Pak Hasan, the youngest son of *Kyai* Muhammad, the main leader of Kidang. Throughout the interview I asked him about the legal status of the use of film technology according to Islamic law. Answering to my question, he cited an Arabic phrase from a *kaidah fikih,* or basic rules of Islamic jurisprudence. It says, "*Al-aṣlu fi al-ašyā' al-ibāḥah".* He translated this as follows: "The initial law of everything is permissible (*mubah,* or *mubāḥ*), depending on its intention (*niat,* or *niyyah*) and its usage (*penggunaan*)". When later I asked him to further explain the Arabic text he just cited, he told me to imagine the film as if it were a 'double-edged knife'. He said:

> "Assume it (the film) as a knife. (It) depends on how it is used. If it (the film) is used for *dakwah*, it (becomes) better, even (the *dakwah* film) has to be more (produced). But if ... the knife is used to slaughter an animal, (it makes the animal) as *halal* food.[5] Conversely, if (the knife is used) to commit suicide, (it) is *haram* isn't it?"

Pak Hasan's answer represents the dominant view of the Kidang people over the permissible status of film media technology in particular, and all technologies in general. In Kidang, the use of technology is pervasive. It has, for example, electricity installed in all the pesantren's buildings, used microphones for its ritual practices, placed a big

4) Such approach is closely linked to Heidegger's take on technology (2003 [1954]: 252), in which he argues, "the essence of technology is by no means... technological", but is "a mode of revealing" (255) the truth that does neither "happen somewhere beyond all human doing", nor "exclusively *in"* and "definitively *through"* human being (259, italics original). This means, the salience of technology is not located in it being a tool, but in its being, as a tool, used in relationship with others.

5) In Islamic society, slaughtering an animal either for consumption or ritual should be done in such a way that it does not "excruciate" the animal, one of the recommendation of which is by using a sharp tool such as a knife.

television set at the pesantren's dining room, built a telephone café accessible to all santri, installed a wireless-Internet access point, and had Internet-connected computer facilities accessible both to Kidang teachers and students. The Kidang people apparently acknowledge the 'sublime power' of technology (Larkin 2008), i.e. a knife that has the force to cut effortlessly, or a film that has the power to animate still pictures. Yet, they also believe that such power is not inevitable, instead it depends upon the ways it is used by others, i.e. a knife may be used either for ritual slaughtering or for killing innocent souls. Therefore, to say that a film technology is like a double-edged knife that can be used either to do moral damage or religious salvation is to argue that the sublime power of technology is neither value free nor inherently good. Rather, it is deeply invested with the moral character and social order of the society in which the technology is being used. This way, technology may appear as a paradox to the santri: it has the power to bring forth both good and bad influences.

Pak Hasan's answer also illustrates that the legal status of film and other media technologies depends less heavily on the technology itself than on the subject's intention of using the technology. Intention, here, is the matter: if one's use of film technology is for good purposes, their engagement with it should be fine. It is by shifting the use and meanings of technologies from their technical affordances into a matter of intention of their users, that the Kidang people become capable of appropriating film and other new media technologies for their own, acceptable purposes. Such an approach echoes the technological engagement of the Amish people, who carefully consider an introduction of every new technology in their society on the basis of their efforts of strengthening their culture, identity, and community's values (Wetmore 2007). What differs between the two societies, I argue, is the underlying cultural backgrounds by which both have considered the acceptability, meanings and social functions of the technology.

Kidang people's view over the acceptance of film technologies, however, differs from that of earlier generations of the pesantren people. Initial public discussion on the legal status of film-related technologies among Indonesian Muslims most possibly occurred in not earlier than the 1930s (Jasin 1930; Soerono 1941a; Soerono 1941b). By this time, while the majority of the NU people tended to refuse any iconic representation of God and His animate creations (Masyhuri 1977: 41; Hooker 2003: 85), most Indonesian Muslims, even the modernist groups, regarded that any act of going to, and being in a cinema transgresses permissible conduct (Jasin 1930: 282; Hassan 1969: 1187-90 and 1211; and Hooker 2003: 85). Not so long a mere two-decades-ago, more importantly, this view was still common among santri - and even today, is still recognizable to a much lesser degree. This discrepancy, however, should not be understood that the Kidang people have strayed from the 'authentic' path of Islam held dear by their earlier generation. Rather, as such is better understood that an interpretation of Islamic texts among Muslims, including the santri, is by no means static, but conversely, is historically contextualized. By the 1930s, Islam was barely present in local cinema theaters and local Muslims were ranked as the lowest category

of the country's film audiences (Biran 2009 [1993]), meaning they were not yet familiar with the cinematic culture. But today, images about Islam are circulated everywhere, for good or ill, and Muslim men and women are increasingly exposed, if not forced to be so in one way or another, to engaging with image-producing technologies. In other words, there are indeed some aspects in new media technology that become an issue among the santri, yet, what aspect of it and how it is viewed as such are contingent to historical moments and circumstances.

Pak Hasan's answer reveals that Muslims put much emphasis on the significance of intent, in a sense of "rightly guided", for defining their deeds as either worships, hobbies, habits, or others (Möller 2007: 55). Leaving the legal status of film technology to one's intention or its use, however, can be difficult to discern to the personal user. This is because one's intention, whether good or not, is never easily tangible. Intent has a broad meaning: it can be "other than what one sees in behavior" (Bowen 1997: 172), and it is deeply ingrained in an esoteric dimension of one's practices of Islamic teachings of ethics and morality.[6] In addition, what is regarded as good may differ amongst people, so that one's good *niat* can be multiply and wrongly interpreted by others. During the interview, Pak Hasan did exemplify what he meant by good intention, when saying that "if the film is used for *dakwah*, then it is good, even more films about *dakwah* should be produced". Pace his explanation, the meaning of *dakwah* among Muslims is as multi interpretative as that of "good *niat*". For example, a modernist Muslim film director Hanung Bramantyo once told me that film for him is a culprit to a Muslim preacher: a means for *dakwah*. Yet, almost all his Islamic-themed films have triggered public controversy among other Muslims for one reason or the other (Huda 2010; Heryanto 2014). Hence, at this point, we still have the same problem, that is, what does it mean "good intention" when it comes to the utilization of film and new media technologies, especially in the context of Kidang pesantren?

I argue that "what is intentionally good and not good" about the use of new media technologies among the Kidang people is socially constructed and context sensitive. To prove my argument, it is imperative that we shift our attention to particular aspects of new media technologies that trigger a sense of fear and anxiety among the Kidang men and women.

From visual excess to 'communicative' freedom

One day, *Ustadz* Rizal, head of Kidang's *Divisi Kepengasuhan Santri* (Santri Supervisory Division), started a weekly evaluation meeting for Kidang's assistant teachers, or *ustadz pengabdian* ('*ustadz* on service') with an emotional speech. His face was reddish and his voice was piercing. Despite being renowned for his loud voice, this time I was pretty

6) Barendregt (2013) finds out the similar discourses amongst Malaysian nasheed artists, who often refer to "*Ilm al Akhlaq*" (Islamic teachings on ethics and morality) if it comes to intentions.

sure that he was ragged in anxiety. I turned to Imam, my faithful companion in Kidang who sat next to me, with a questioning look, hoping he would explain what was going on. But he only shook his head and said nothing. Realizing everyone in the room was in heightened tension, I tried myself to listen to Rizal's speech, from which I then learned that two couples of santri were caught dating (*pacaran*) around the pesantren area. To the Kidang people, dating is considered a serious infringement of the pesantren's disciplinary and gender segregation rules, one that may risk the continuation of the santri's study in the pesantren.

Rizal asserted, he "had evidence" that the dating santri couples had used mobile phone and Facebook as their means for communication. Because of this, he was sure of himself that many santri must have similarly smuggled mobile phones into the pesantren's dormitories or have escaped to an Internet café for accessing Facebook and the like. Based on his assumption, he urged all the assistant teachers to be more watchful in monitoring the everyday movement of the santri. In particular, he asked them to inspect more strictly the forbidden use and access of mobile phone and Internet amongst santri.

A day after this had happened, I approached *ustadz* Rizal and asked him about the reasons behind his command to restrict the use of communication technologies among the santri. He answered, as follows: "information and media technologies such as Facebook, mobile phone, TV, and film, are dangerous for the santri". To exemplify his answer, he then recalled a piece of news he had read in a newspaper. It was about a boy who committed a crime that was triggered by a program he had watched on TV. It arguably seems to me that, Rizal, along with many other authorities of Kidang pesantren, were worried if new media technologies, as he said, "could influence the santri to break the pesantren's rules".

Implicit in this story is that the use of new media technologies in Kidang environs has ushered in a number of new possibilities, circulation and material freedom among the pesantren pupils that has bluntly subverted the pesantren's social order and morality, highly maintained by the pesantren's authorities. There is obviously a question about image, or the visual, that is problematic and worrisome to Kidang's authorities, as indicated by Rizal's reference to the violence-containing images on TV, hence by extension, images that freely circulate on film, mobile phone, and other new media technologies. I am not inclined, however, to relate their anxiety of the visual either with the prohibition of figural representation in Islamic tradition (*hadis*) or with Muslims' iconoclastic practices across Islamic histories. This is not only due to the scarcity of iconoclastic discourse amongst the Kidang people, but also because of the fact that, firstly, many Muslims throughout histories of Islam have challenged the dominant interpretation of the legal prohibition of figural representation, that is, by celebrating the production of images (Ahmed 2015). And secondly, contemporary acts of Muslim iconoclasts have sought the logic of their iconoclasm within the roots of socio-economic and political realities of global modernity (Barry-Flood 2002).

Compared to spoken and written words, images are not only much more 'vivid and indelible' (Daston and Galison 1992) but also much denser with meanings, and much more prone to be always in motion (Spyer and Steedly 2013). Images in motion, argue Spyer and Steedly (Ibid: 8), do not only move intransitively; but as they circulate they also affect their audiences in multifarious ways, often unpredictable and uncontrollable either by their producers or consumers. Yet, "images do not freely flow either within or across borders"; rather the movement of image is "limited by economic interests and moral norms", as well as "enshrined in law as copyright, anti-blasphemy, anti-incitement, anti-libel, or anti-pornography legislation" (Barry-Flood 2013: 62. See also Barry-Flood 2002, Gerritsen 2012, and Larkin 2013). That is why some images are more threatening, more contagious, and more mobile than others, as exemplified by the case of the Danish caricature controversy of the prophet Muhammad (also the Bamhiyan Budhas).

Rizal's reference to a violent image is revealing here. In the early years of *Reformasi* which was characterized by serial eruptions of regional civil wars, political upheavals and freedom of press and expressions, mass-mediated images of violence were omnipresent in the country's public domains, triggering public fears about the effects of these images to children being exposed to them. Against such fears, assuaging the putative effects of images of violence on children was normalized as a pedagogical strategy by many parents and educational agencies, who regard children as a site of their anxiety, desire and aspirations (Strassler 2006). In Kidang nevertheless, the greatest fear among its authorities is less about santri watching images of violence than watching pornographic images accessible through technology, not the technology in itself. This difference relates to both the fact that the young santri in Kidang are more teenagers than children, and the notoriety among many Indonesians about the use of mobile phone as a circuit of (production and) exchange for "mobile pornography" (see Barendregt 2008).

Yet, I never found an occasion in which the Kidang santri used mobile phone or other new media technologies for accessing pornography.[7] This echoes the article by Nilan and Mansfield (2014) about online activities of Indonesian young adults and teenagers at Internet cafes, in which they found out that while most teenagers used internet for socializing with their teenage peers, online activities of the young adults, conversely, often suggest an exchange of adult contents (compare with Barendregt 2008 I mentioned above). If this is true, hence, the rhetoric of image fears is triggered less by what the santri is actually doing with film and other new media technologies, than by the ways adult authorities in Kidang look at their santri: i.e. they are vulnerable teens that have to be protected from the perceived dangers of the use of technology.

In addition to persuasive images, new media technology is worrisome to the Kidang people due to its technical affordances for "communicative possibility", which I broadly

7) The closest I came to finding an example of 'pornography' among them is when a group of santri rented a Hollywood film that contains images of scantily clothed females and males; yet it is absolutely not a porn film.

define here as "a desire to the newer spectacles" (Marvin 1988:153). Film, for example, is a communicative technology because of its technical ability to show the other worlds and it is for this reason that film in the context of Kidang is categorized here as a "new media technology". Likewise, mobile phone is technically equipped to generate an instantaneous exchange of information at distance, while some of it has come with built-in camera, radio, and internet connectivity, thanks to the so called "convergence culture" (Jenkins 2008).[8] The invention of Internet technology, more importantly, has provided greater amounts of information and faster modes of socialization that are much more readily available to much more people than ever before.

The communicative possibilities allowed by these newer technologies are often at odds with Kidang's social structures and cultural values. An institution of Islamic learning, Kidang recognizes the significance of social order, structure of authority, standardized morality, and ethics of learning. Everyday life activities in Kidang, for example, are tediously organized through a series of disciplinary surveillance and regulations. Participation of every santri in Kidang's learning activities, their circulation in and out pesantren areas, and their communication with the opposite gender, all are put under close examination enacted by the pesantren's structure of authorities, in this regard, led by *Ustadz* Rizal (see Chapter 4). It is at the background of such social systems that the use of film and other new media technologies by the santri may become disturbing to many *ustadz* and *kyai* in Kidang. For one thing, while seeing that film could expose santri to the other worlds, using a mobile phone could allow them to exchange messages with people inside and outside the pesantren's area (for dating or anything else), without knowledge and authorization of the pesantren authorities. Similarly, with the Internet technology, santri could enter into a chatting room, read articles, watch videos, play social media, and possibly access pornographic materials in ways that are invisible to the "alert gaze" (Foucault 1975) of pesantren surveillance. These possibilities have in turn frightened Kidang's authorities in that they may bring the santri into "the other worlds" that are harder to be comprehended and more difficult to be controlled by Kidang's authorities.[9]

The worries that emerge around the use of new media technologies in Kidang, thus, are not because of their sheer artifacts as technologies that come from the West, but due to their ability to allow the santri to go outside and against the channels of the pesantren's authority, thus attacking the very heart of Kidang's social systems as an institution of Islamic learning. Such worries reflect scholarly works on the impacts of new media technologies in Muslim societies, which argue that the negative response of

8) One of the meanings of "convergence culture" is an acceleration of the flow of media contents across various delivery channels taking place within the same appliances (Jenkins 2008: 15-16).

9) In the language of Marvin's (1988), these newer technologies are feared because they "created unprecedented opportunities" that "went unobserved by the regular community" (p. 70).

Muslims toward information and media technologies is not simply because of the fact that these technologies come from the West (Robinson 1993). But because of their instrumental roles in shaping variously new Muslim actors, who vigorously created alternative sites of learning about, and speaking of and for Islam (Eickelman and Anderson 1999), that subvert, break with, and even attack the traditional structures of scholarship, ideologies and authorities in the Muslim world (Devji 2005). The emergence of these new media practices, these works suggest, has in turn led into democratization of Islamic knowledge, individualization of Islamic discourses, globalization of Islamic movement, and fragmentation of religious authority; the accumulation of which demands a restructuration of Muslim beliefs and practices.

Ustadz Rizal was very confident when blaming new media technologies and the fear of the santri's violation of pesantren's gender segregation rules.[10] Upon my fieldwork in Kidang, I did encounter with santri frequenting an Internet cafe and using a mobile phone without authorization from the pesantren's authorities. Yet, most of them told me that they were using mobile phone for contacting their parents and friends, or they went to an Internet cafe for searching materials needed to accomplish their school's assignments. Still, it is imperative to recall here that upon my hanging out with the male santri, I often witnessed a discreet exchange of flirtatious communication between male and female santri inside Kidang areas, not through an illegally owned mobile phone nor illegal access of the Internet, but through a small group of middle aged-women working in the pesantren's kitchens (Chapter 4). Having free access to move across Kidang's male-female spatial boundaries, these women would help deliver a message from a male santri to his girlfriend in a female dormitory, and vice versa. This means, an introduction of new media technologies into Kidang does not necessarily bring up a "dating" practice between the santri; rather, the (use of) technology only extends the similar practice that has always been there among the Kidang santri into unbounded settings.

In contrast to their worries about the use of new media technologies among the santri, almost all *ustadz* and *kyai* in Kidang are mobile phone users, and a few of them are also active on social media.[11] Yet, I never heard them fearing *themselves* of being corrupted because of using these technologies. Conversely, a (not so) young *ustadz* of Kidang, married to a daughter of a Kidang's *kyai,* once confessed to me *in a very casual*

10) In Indonesia, the use of moral panic discourse against the uptakes of newer media technologies among teenagers is not specific to Kidang authorities, but is prevalent among adult people across the country (see Smith-Hefner 2007; Kailani 2011; Lim 2013; and Nilan and Mansfield 2014).

11) To essentially regard young people as "digital native" and old people "digital immigrant" is inaccurate (Boyd 2014; see also Thomas 2011). For not every santri in Kidang has similar skill and knowledge about using newer technologies like the Internet, and a few of Kidang's older generation is savvy enough in using social media. Indeed, if knowledge is not inherently generational and technical skills are acquired through active cultivation, then people of various ages have a relatively equal chance to become either digital native or naive.

manner that he first knew his wife through a Facebook communication. His confession is to a certain extent paradoxical, because what he was doing on Facebook (for 'dating' his wife to be) is exactly what the teenage santri are assumed not to be doing with new media technologies by the Kidang 'adult' authorities. I do not mean to judge the *ustadz*. Yet as such is reinforcing my argument about the tendency of Kidang authorities not only to look at teenage santri as vulnerable figures before the assumedly dangerous seduction of technology, but also to regard them as "a site of their aspiration, desire and anxiety" (Strassler 2006). This significantly means that what is intentionally good and not good about the use of technology among the Kidang santri is decidedly located at the hands of Kidang adult authorities, that is, in the form of particular regulation and authorization.

Regulation and authorization

The logical consequence of their worries over the assumed danger of communicative freedom and visual excess of new media technologies is that Kidang authorities went on to regulate the use of these technologies among the pesantren's pupils. This regulation asserts that every santri is not allowed to bring any communication and digital devices such as mobile phone, radio, television, and laptop into pesantren dormitory. In a situation that a santri needs for a considerable reason to bring one of these devices, let's say mostly mobile phone, they have to report it to their supervisory teachers, who will keep it under their reservation, retrievable only either when the santri want to call their parents on weekend, or when they return to their homes during the pesantren holidays. If they fail to report their possession of one of these devices, the pesantren's security division is entitled to collect the device, as well as to put them in a series of punishment, ranging from reading the Qur'an at public to a physical sanction, such as having one's head shaved for male santri (for my discussion on the structures of authority in Kidang, see Chapter 4).

Use of new media is not totally restricted in Kidang. In contrast, Kidang has provided some of these as public facilities to its santri, such as television, Internet-connected computers, an Internet hotspot, a camcorder and DSLR camera, a telephone cafe (*wartel*). In addition, every santri is suggested to borrow their supervisory teacher's mobile phones whenever they need to call their families. Also, every supervisory teacher should give their phone numbers to their supervised santri's parents, so that the parents are able to talk to their children when needed.

Still, it is necessary to mention here that access to these facilities is highly controlled by Kidang's temporal and spatial surveillance, along with authorization from Kidang's authorities. For example, the use of television, while set in the pesantren's dining room, is only allowed during the off-study hours, or when learning activities in Kidang were in suspension during holidays. The use of computers by santri, moreover, is limited for study purposes under supervision of an *ustadz*, and any access to social-media sites

such as Facebook (not to mention porn sites) is blocked. The Internet hot spot, while strong enough to stream a YouTube video and free from any social-media blockage, is only accessible from the pesantren's central office. Considering that none of the santri in Kidang are allowed to possess a mobile phone, the Internet hot spot is apparently specifically provided to serve the teachers, not the santri. Supposed there is an occasion in which a santri is able to access it with or without notification from the authorities, the fact that it is only accessible from the pesantren's main office is significant to limit the santri's liberty of using it. An organization of film-related practices, such as film-making, film-screening and film discussion, is no different in the sense that it has to be authorized by one of the Kidang authorities. In the case of film-making, santri are especially required to go directly to Pak Hasan, handing in to him a copy of their film proposals, on the basis of which he is expected to value their film projects.[12] I argue, the use of these new media technologies among Kidang santri, while allowable, is tediously regulated in such a way that santri are only able to do so under the control and surveillance of Kidang authorities.

This does not mean, however, that the teenage santri are incapable of being agents of their own rights. In Chapter 4, I have shown how some of the santri have reclaimed their agency to achieve their "freedom" of, for example, going to a cinema theater for a public film screening, by creating various strategies to control and reconfigure their situations against the pesantren's disciplinary practices and surveillance. In the following section, yet, I will focus on showing the ability of Kidang santri to interpret in their own rights one of the meanings of "good intention" in regard to their use of new media technologies, one that is distinctive to that that is constructed by Kidang authorities. In this regard, I will focus on the ways by which the santri have objectified the material aspects of film-related technologies, such as a film camera, through "their emotions and attitudes as human beings" (Marranci 2008), in the ordinary lives.

Stories on film technology among the santri

Film camera

One day in June 2012, I went to see Aisyah in Matapena's office for an interview (on Aisyah and Matapena, see Chapter 3). Since the office is located in the female area, where the mere presence of a single male is prohibited, I asked Taufik to be my companion.

12) Yet, I was told that the process of authorization was always very quick, and Pak Hasan did not read the whole film's scripts but only its synopsis. This however, not necessarily has to be indicative of his authorization being a mere formality. For according to Taufik, a grandson of Kidang's main *kyai* who is responsible to supervise film-related practices in Kidang, his quick examination of the film proposal was uncharacteristic of Pak Hasan. Usually, he had been always quite critical to the writings of Kidang santri submitted to him for publication in Kidang's bulletin and magazine. I argue, as rightly pointed out by Taufik, his uncritical examination toward santri's film proposals may have much to do with his lack of knowledge of film-making.

We arrived at the office earlier than Aisyah. It was a small room located in one of the pesantren's female buildings, just behind the staircase of the second floor. Its door was left open. As I entered the room, I noticed that it had only one table, one bookshelf and two chairs, all of them stood at the rear side of the room. A vase of plastic-made flowers was on the table. Next to it was a box of bulletins and DVD films of the Matapena's production. Neither did I remember what kinds of book were on the bookshelf, nor if there was any of them in there. But as my notes recall, I was more attracted by the two wooden boards hanging on the room's wall, just above the table. The first board contained the newest edition of *NahLab*, a student monthly bulletin published by Kidang santri. The other board displayed a series of pictures of santriwati's cinematic-related activities, and is entitled, "Matapena on the Wall".

Looking at these pictures, my eyes quickly spotted a snapshot of a female santri posing with a big film camera. I had actually seen a similar picture before, uploaded on a social media account of the very woman in the picture that I was now looking at, Aisyah. Yet, seeing it now hang in the office where the female in the photo had a significant position, I could not disregard the photo anymore, as I did when I first saw it on the Internet. I remember, while waiting Aisyah to come, I took a while to carefully look at the photo. It pictured Aisyah with her ordinary Islamic dress: a combination of a long skirt, a long-sleeve blouse and a loose-fitting headscarf. She looks sitting on a chair, facing onto a video camera that was steadily put on a tripod. Her left hand held the main body of the camera, and her right hand was on the neck of the tripod. Her eyes - she was wearing glasses - were looking on through an object that is supposed to be the camera's viewfinder. Her eyes looked focused, likely indicating that she was seriously working with the film camera in her hand. Yet, her lips were smiling, just a little, posing! (See picture 9).

After a while, Aisyah finally came in to the office. Yet, no sooner did we start our interview than a female santri came over at the office. She asked Aisyah for a short supervisory advice about her short story that she had been struggling to finish. I let Aisyah first finish her business with her student, before we continued the interview. While waiting for them, though, my mind kept thinking about the "Aisyah snapshot". The night before, I had a long night conversation with Taufik, in particular about the production process of the film. He told me that one of the most difficult parts of it was finding the camera. This was because the pesantren did not have a video camera that is good enough to make a film. He went to some people, asking around if they have a film camera to hire. In the beginning, he came to a friend he knew from his university whom he thought had camera skills. But he only came to find out he was an amateurish cameraman without having any camera. Then after a while of searching information, he found a newly established production house, called *Lingkar Kreatif*. It belonged to a professional community of cameramen, who used to work in various local TV stations. Still new, they offered him a promotional price. Taufik, then, happily decided to hire them for the pesantren's film production, including the film's shooting and editing.

Picture 9: Picture of Aisyah at the centre of "Matapena on the Wall".

When Aisyah finally finished her supervisory session, I began my interview, and asked her to talk about the photograph. She explained that what in the picture was a mere performance. She did not take the imagery. Not only because the film camera was not hers, but also, she was lacking the skill for operating a film camera. Then she told me that as the film director, what she did was instruct the cameraman to take the scene from certain angles that she desired. But what she did in the picture, she adds, was "to try how it did feel to work with the film camera". She finished her answer by saying that giving creative instruction to the cameraman was much easier than operating the film camera herself, because "the film camera was a bit heavy, and often bothered by her wearing eyeglasses".

The 'Aisyah Snapshot' indexes how the camera as a material object matters to Aisyah, in a sense that it connotes "a diffuse, sentimental association" (Miller 1998: 11). Unlike many other people in Kidang, Aisyah owns herself a digital SLR camera[13], and self-confessedly recognizes the "evidential force"[14] (Barthes 1981: 89) of photography, which is apparently her another hobby, next to film-making and writing. During my fieldwork, almost in every event in Kidang that I attended, I always noticed Aisyah taking photographs of the events with her digital camera, a few of the photographs

13) Because of her position as an assistant *ustadzah*, it is allowed for her to posses and bring digital devices such as camera, mobile phone and even laptop, into her dormitory.

14) Or the capacity of photograph to be a testimony of a past reality (Ibid).

of which would be uploaded either on the pesantren's official website, or on her blog. Aisyah's explanation about what she was mainly doing with the film camera, i.e. she tells the cameramen what to shoot, reveals the importance of the snapshot for Aisyah in order to reclaim her authority with the film camera especially to the public recognition of the Kidang people. Yet, the camera in the photo is also aspirational for Aisyah. Writing on the use of various backdrops which displayed images of an airplane, an expensive car, and a luxurious hotel among photo studios in modern Java, Strassler (2010) argues that material objects have the power to embody aspirations, because backdrops such as these embody the longings of those who visited the studios toward signs of material wealth and modernity, ones that are unable to "be brought home... as personal accoutrement" (p. 98). In a similar way, the story of Aisyah's need to hire someone with professional skills as a cameraman because of her lack of such skills, and that this was part of Aisyah's explanation of her snapshot, evokes her aspiration over the film camera as a material object. I think, to the extent that the film camera has been produced and introduced as an icon of modernity in the sense that, for example, it creates new imaginaries (Siegel 2005), the camera in the photo embodies Aisyah's desire toward a sign of modernity. Or to say it in different words, through the materiality of a (film) camera, Aisyah attempts to present herself as a modern female santri.

We are santri *(but/and) 'moderen'*

Aisyah is not alone among the Kidang santri who have embraced film technology as an emblem of modernity, though. Regarding this, my unstructured interviews with a number of santriwati (female santri) who all took part in Kidang Matpena's film projects, are worth recalling.

One of the main questions I asked to the santriwati during the interview was about their feelings to film practices. All of them said they were happy and proud of the films they have acted in and produced. They went further to tell me that they showed the films to their family members, to their friends and to their neighbours back in their villages, who would together watch the films. Some santriwati even bluntly told me that by making and playing in the film, they could prove to their friends who attended the non-pesantren schools, that they were able to make a film while living in a pesantren.[15] I also asked them if they watched films in *Cinema 21*, and if yes, how they found information about the films being shown in the cinema. While most of them said no, a few of them had attended a film screening in a commercial cinema, especially, during the pesantren holidays. Those who often went to cinema admitted that they found information about the films from the Internet and in newspapers, passionately mentioning a number of films they have watched. When I asked why they loved watching and searching

15) As far as my hanging out with the male santri can tell, a few of Kidang santri are friends to students of other non-pesantren-based schools whom they knew through their participation in extracurricular activities.

information about films, a santriwati replied in a short but sharp sentence, saying, "Karena kami santri tapi moderen!" ('Because we are santri but modern!') Unlike when I was talking to Aisyah and other teachers in Kidang, I hardly heard these santriwati emphasizing that their cinematic practices were for *da'wah* or propagating Islam. Most of them translated their cinematic practices with the vocabularies associated with being youthful, santri and modern.

Here I want to consider the expression of 'we are santri but modern'. Some santri in Kidang refused to be associated with being rural. Yet, the fact that the student chose to use "but" in order to relate the word "santri" with the word "modern" is telling. As the word "but" suggests an opposition between the objects before and after it, the grammatical structure of this expression indicates, at least for a while, that the word santri already bore an association of 'not modern in itself' to the unconscious minds of the Kidang santri. During my hanging out sessions with the santriwan, the santri I talked with often confessed that they somehow and sometime had an inferior feeling in front of their fellow teenagers who study outside the pesantren. This feeling of inferiority is seen in the prevailing mockery that circulates amongst the santri. A good example of such mockery is a slang expression of "*kamseu*!", an abbreviation of "*kampungan sekali*", which literally means, very rural, being backward, lack of education, ignorance, et cetera.

Smith-Hefner (2007) has argued that the prevalent use of slang expressions among Indonesian young people registers their aspiration for youth modernity. We need, however, to unpack the use of the slang expression "*kamseu*" among the santri, because the social contexts in which the santri use this expression may lead to a different conclusion.

The santri used the word "kamseu" in many different contexts. Mostly, however, it is used as mockery when someone makes a silly mistake. I remember, some santriwan used this word as a joke when their friend who borrowed my camera couldn't operate it. Another time a santriwan also mentioned this word to describe his funny first experience of watching film with his friends in the cinema: he described the situation in which he and his friends were not really sure what to do in the cinema as very "*kamseu*". And still another time a santriwan complained to me that an *ustadz* was very "*kamseu*" because the latter had made a mistake in a book he wrote but refusing the former's offer to correct the mistake.

Indeed, most of the time the use of the word "*kamseu*" refers to a mild joke, indicating the close friendship between them. However, a joke is never a mere joke: it hides something that underlies it. For ages, pesantren have been associated with being rural and backward due to its historical emergence in remote and countryside areas. But even to this day, despite majority of Kidang students being of urban and middle-class backgrounds, there are still some of the students who come from villages and small towns, and from lower middle-class families. This, no doubt, has contributed to the widespread existence of "*kamseu*" mockery practices among the Kidang santri. Yet, I also think another explanation is relevant. The fact that, in Kidang, as well as in many

other pesantren, santri are living a monastic way of life, and that their access to mobile phone, Internet, cinema, shopping malls, and mixed-sex socializing symbols of urban youth culture of fun practices and trendy lifestyles is placed under strict regulations is worth considering. I argue, the word "*kamseu*" is better understood in relation to the santri*'s generally* restricted access to, and by extension being less up to date about current trends of young people's urban lifestyle and practices of popular culture, especially if compared to those young people studying in non-pesantren-based schools. That is why, when santri are able to closely engage with, let's say, film technology and film practices, even from the very ground of their pesantren, they associate such practices with a self-entitlement of being a modern santri. In other words, there is a strong desire to be able to participate in the wider, and global world among the Kidang santri.

The statement 'we are santri but modern', thus, suggests a long struggle among the Kidang santri to prove to themselves and to others that as traditional santri they are not 'that rural', but are conversant with, and being up-to-date to current trends of global popular culture, the proof of which they found it in, among others, their engagement with film technology. Still, the word "but" in my view should not be thought of as an incompatibility of "being santri" with "being *modern*". Bearing in mind Kidang people's strong attachment to tradition as one of their ways to live as a good Muslim in the modern(izing) world (Chapter 3), I am not inclined to translate the word "but" as a tradition/modernity dichotomy. I would rather relate it with what Strassler (2010) has called as, "an alien and yet to be achieved modernity."[16] Note that in the previous part of this chapter, I have explained that Taufik and Aisyah had to hire professional cameramen for making their films because Kidang did not own a film camera. A year later, however, I returned to Kidang to find out that the pesantren now had a digital SLR camera and a handy-cam, both of which were a gift from a local donor. While, I have seen santri in Kidang using both devices for documenting various events in the pesantren, Taufik and Aisyah continued to hire "*orang dari luar*", non-pesantren people who have a "professional" skill on camera and film editing, for making their second feature film project, *Intensif*. Taufik once implicitly told me that such hiring was due to Kidang's lack of a good film camera, e.g. a low-end professional camcorder to say the least. I would however argue that it is their lack of skills in both using camera and film editing that was crucial to their hiring decision, as self-confessed by Aisyah on her explanation about the 'Aisyah Snapshot'.

Implicit in the expression "we are santri but modern", thus, is that Kidang people have treated film technology as an emblem of modernity, with which they yearn to identify themselves. Yet, they have unconsciously viewed that such modernity is originally foreign to pesantren tradition. Indeed, for many people in Kidang, modernity

16) Strassler (2010: 16-18) uses it to refer how photography has been treated by the Javanese society in relation to their desire to achieving "the culture of documentation", one that is viewed as part of a modernity that is still alien to Javanese tradition.

is often seen as an equivalent of Westernization and hence coming from afar, a notion I will make clear through a following ethnographic case.

Western modernity: desirable but dangerous

One afternoon, I deliberately went to Kidang in formal santri attire. I covered my head with a *kopiyah,*[17] put on a long sleeve t-shirt, and wore a *sarung.*[18] Yet, as usual, I also put on my eyeglasses, wore my wristwatch, brought my digital camera, and, wore some perfume. Arriving in the pesantren, I sat for a while at the terrace of the pesantren's office, just across the mosque. I saw many santri passing by in front of the office, most of them just finished from their *dzuhur* prayer. A few of them, particularly those with whom I mostly hang around, approached and sat around me. As we talked, one of them asked to try my camera to take some photos. I gave it to him. He took some random pictures with the camera, until at one point, he faced the camera to me, or us, as I was sitting with some other santri. Instinctively, we came closer to each other and made a pose toward the camera. As we finished our picture making, a santri who was sitting right on my left side, suddenly extended his nose tip to my shoulder and smelled it for a short while. No sooner did I realize what he was doing there, then he told me, "*Ah*, *ustadz*[19] *mah* santri *moderen"* (lit. "Oh, you are a modern santri"). I stared at him with astonishment, trying to understand what he was meaning by it.

The smelling act of the santri reverberates Appadurai's term of "synaesthetic experience of modernity" (2003 [1996]: 1), that is, a sensation of an elsewhere modern which is distant and global, yet, intrusive and arousing our bodily sensory receptors and curiosity. Once modernity is supposed to be "something triggered elsewhere" (Barendregt 2014: 7; see also Spyer 2000: 32), imagination becomes central to one's experience of modernity. In the case of the Kidang people, many of them often spoke to me of moments in which they imagined the embodied Netherlands that I deliberately made visible in Kidang as a desired modernity. The smelling incident above was not the first and only time to happen to me in Kidang. As almost all people in Kidang knew about my Dutch educational background, many of them often questioned me about sharing my experience of living in the Netherlands with them, or to show to them my picture collection about Dutch cities and people. To these santri, the Netherlands was seen not only as a distant place they were connected to through colonial history, however critical these santri can be about it, but also as a symbol of progress, of wealth, of a developed country, and of modernity. Yet, what they imagined the Netherlands as

17) *Kopiyah,* or, *peci,* is a truncated-cone-shaped head cover, resembling the Ottoman cap, usually made from a black-colored velvet.

18) *Sarung*, is a loose-fitting, and skirt-like cloth that is typically worn by traditional Southeast Asian men, by wrapping it around the lower part of the body, and tucking it in at the waist.

19) As I have explained in Introduction*,* a few of Kidang santri called me by the name *ustadz*, probably, out of respect of my older age, as well as due to my self-confessed status as a pesantren graduate.

a modern country is often confused with their imagination about modernity in other places in Europe, North America and Australia, simplified in what they typically referred to as 'Barat' or the West. In other words, the santri saw the Netherlands as a modernity that is at the same time an essentially representative of Western modernity. In this regard, film technology is by its nature suitable for one's imagination of Western modernity, not only because, as a modern device, it is a result of Western innovation, but also because, as a medium, it allows a relatively democratic access (among the santri) to intimate images of modern lifestyles of Western societies.

Their excitement about Western modernity notwithstanding, the Kidang santri often criticized it and saw it as dangerous. The following story of Fauzan is revealing. One evening, he went to my rental room for returning a book that he had borrowed from me. It was a book on a number of santri who shared their personal experiences of studying in Europe and America, which is edited by Sumanto Al Qurtuby, one of the young santri intellectuals by then just obtaining his PhD degree from an American university. In particular, Fauzan asked me about Al-Qurtuby whom he suspected to be a liberal thinker. I asked him how he could think about him that way, to which he told me that he knew about it from the Internet, and he then asked me if I am also a liberal too or not. I replied to his question in a diplomatic way, telling him that it very much depended on what he thought of being liberal. I told him that for me being liberal was about being an open-minded and respectful person to other's choices of lives. If he agreed with my definition then I might be a liberal. Instead of agreeing with or arguing against my answer, Fauzan continued to tell me about an *ustadz* in Kidang who often warned him and his other classmates about the danger of liberalism, and about santri who studied at Western universities. These santri, said Fauzan, are well knowledgeable about Islam, but because they had lived in the West for long time, they were indoctrinated with *liberalisme* ('liberalism'). When they returned home, concludes Fauzan, they became *kaum liberal* (liberal people), thus being westernized.

Importantly, in Indonesia, liberalism is often understood in a derogatory way, exemplified by the 2005's release of MUI's controversial, but widely supported fatwa on pluralism, secularism and liberalism, in which liberalism was defined as a total domination of human rational over interpreting religious texts (Gillespie 2007). In Kidang, where MUI's definition of liberalism is to a certain extent influential, evidenced by the cautious *ustadz* against liberalism in Fauzan's story above, liberalism is also occasionally simplified to moral grounds. On many occasions, the Kidang santri asked me about the Netherlands in relation to its sex liberation and its legalization of homosexuality and same sex-marriage. In short, by associating Western counties with liberalism in its simplified meanings, and equating modernity with Westernization, Western modernity can similarly appear to the Kidang people as destructive to their (religious) identity as santri.[20]

20) Imagining modernity as Westernization and seeing it as dangerous, however, is not unique

Before I finish this section, I will briefly relate the ambivalence of Kidang's aspiration of Western modernity with the materiality of film and other newer media technologies. In Kidang, as in many other societies, modernity is technological, in the sense that a newly-used technology like film, the Internet and mobile phone - a compelling symbol of material freedom and connection to the other worlds - is objectified by the Kidang people to hook up with modernity. That is to say that by personifying themselves with these technological devices, the Kidang people created an image of "being modern", while at the same time disassociating themselves with their stereotype of "being backward". Yet, the widespread anxiety among the Kidang *kyai* and *ustadz* toward the communicative possibilities of these technologies, and Fauzan's story about the danger of being intoxicated by modern Western cultures and lifestyles, both indicate that the effects of using a symbol of modernity in a Muslim society is never uniformly welcomed (Göle, cited in Barendregt 2006: 173). By saying this, I argue, that film technology, along with other newer media technologies that are being related to it in the context of the Kidang people, become a rich site for the pesantren people to continually negotiate and articulate their particular voices of "being modern" the santri ways.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how the Kidang people have looked at and engaged with film and new media technologies not only as material objects but also as being emblematic of modernity. For the Kidang people, the legal status of these technologies is highly contingent upon the intentions of their users, which, importantly, never come as inevitable but are socially constructed. In Kidang, the santri's communication with the wider worlds, including with other teenagers living outside pesantren, is placed under strict regulations, enacted by the pesantren's *ustadz* and *kyai*, who are, to borrow Zaman's words (2002), the "custodians of change" of the pesantren tradition. Yet, at the same time, the visual and communicative possibilities brought up by film and other new media technologies such as mobile phone and the Internet, have allowed them to be very much part of the world. This in turn has triggered a sense of anxiety among the Kidang *kyai* and *ustadz,* fearing that the santri may subvert and break away with their authorities. As a result, the use of film technology in Kidang has been regulated in such a

to the Kidang people. Studying Al-Hikam pesantren in Malang, East Java, by the early 1990s, Lukens-Bull (2001: 359) found out that such attitude has been widespread among the pesantren people, both in Al-Hikam and other pesantren, who often lamented the putative danger of American films and television shows to Islamic values and societies, due to their portrayal of women with bare shoulders and knees, young people drinking alcohol, disco-frequenting, and blue-jeans wearing. Likewise, working on the consumption of Islamic films and self-help books among urban young Muslims who studied in Islamic and secular universities, Haryadi (2013) also attests to the widespread association of modernity as originating from the West, and can be destructive to their Islamic identity.

way that the engagement of Kidang santri with film and new media technologies is only allowed as long as it is observable under the gaze of the Kidang authorities, manifested in the form of regulation and authorization.

This regulating system notwithstanding, the santri are by no means 'stripped off' from ('reclaiming') their agency, which I understand here as 'a capacity for action"(Mahmood 2001) for realizing their own interest.[21] In fact, they went on to translate their engagement with film and other new media technologies with and in their own languages, i.e. being youth and modern Muslim santri. In this regard, the second part of this chapter has shown how many people in Kidang have objectified the materiality of film technology for their desire to modernity, and for producing "a sense of difference" (Larkin 2009: 133), either against the widespread stereotype of santri's backwardness, or against the other young people who live outside the pesantren worlds. That being said, the problems of how to control authorities, manage the santri, and aspiration of modernity, apparently converge in the materiality of film and other new media technologies.

Yet, modernity is not always desirable, or precisely not always uniformly desirable. To the extent that film technology is seen to have a threatening nature, modernity that is associated with it also contains the similar threat. This circumstance is heightened by Kidang people's association of modernity with Westernization, in which the Western world, which includes not only the Dutch-experience that I happen to bring to Kidang, but also generally the European countries and the States, is often imagined to have contained destructive characters. Through Fauzan's stories of 'the simplified notion of liberalism' and 'the alleged danger of the liberalized santri who had studied in Western universities', taught to the Kidang students by a Kidang *ustadz* on his classes, I pointed out how "modernity-Westernization" is seen as destructive to santri's piety and morality. I argue, it is in the context of imagining Western modernity as one that is both desired and destructive that film as a material culture becomes 'a matter' to the Kidang santri, that is, they want to master these technologies, and then to use them according to their own tastes and needs, or to phrase it with their own rhetoric: "being santri 'and' modern, not just being santri 'but' modern".

In the following chapter, I further explore how the santri have used these technologies according to their own tastes and needs, that is by focusing on the films that have been so far produced by the Kidang people.

21) By this I mean that agency is not identical with being 'active' only. But as pointed out by Mahmood (2001) when working on the practice of 'virtue of patience', or *sabr*, among Egyptian mosque Muslim women: one's ability to endure in the face of hardship without complaint can be seen as a constructive project of the self against social injustice.

Chapter 6

Imagining Everyday Pesantren Islam

> We wanted to present a face (*wajah*) of pesantren in a film format that could serve as an image (*gambaran*) for others: 'Oh, pesantren is an extraordinary place, [that its everyday life dynamic is] not to be found in any other places'.
>
> (*Personal interview with both Taufik and Aisyah*)

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the films produced by Kidang santri. These films are *Hidup Sekali Hiduplah yang Berarti* (We Live Only Once, Live it Meaningfully, or *Hidup*, 2011), *Intensif* (The Intensive Class, 2013), *Untuk Sahabat* (For Friends), *Sumpah Pemuda* (The Youth Pledge), and *Demam Cakra* (Cakra Fever).[1] The last three films were produced between 2012 and 2013. The first two films were directed by Aisyah[2], and the others were by a man only known as Jalal.[3]

These films are both engaged with representations of everyday life in pesantren, as experienced in Kidang. Daily stories and activities of learning that occurred in Kidang, along with pictures of Kidang's santri and *kyai*, and Kidang's popular objects such as

1) Cakra is a nick name of an Indonesian popular singer, see below.

2) For an account on Aisyah, see Chapter 3.

3) For an account of Jalal, see Chapter 4.

kitab kuning, the pesantren's buildings, and the santri's use of video camera, laptop and mobile phone, are common to all of the films. Nevertheless, some aspects of everyday life at the Kidang pesantren are excluded. Even the realities visible on their films, they have been done so by the Kidang films in many different ways: some are overlooked and others are overemphasized. Arguably, Kidang's films are less concerned with realities of pesantren, than with an imagined dimension of pesantren's realities (Dissanayake 2009: 878).

Scholars of film studies have long disputed whether the wedded provision between film and reality should offer a realistic mirror of the world (Kracauer 1960), a new form of the reality (Bazin 1946), or even a meta-psychological simulation of an impression of the reality (Baudry 1975). My theoretical inquiry departs from film theorist Rudolf Arnheim, who has argued that the reproduction of even a perfectly simple object is not only a mechanical process, but also a matter of delicate sensibility (1933: 283). That is to say that the choice of, for example, camerawork involves a feeling that is beyond any mechanical operation. Viewed in this way, what is given attention in a filmic expression is "often selected deliberately for the sake of achieving specific effects" (Ibid). Following him, I am inclined to presume that the Kidang people have been involved in a conscious process of selection regarding what and how the everyday realities of (Kidang) pesantren should and, or, should not be pictured on their films. By saying this, I want to emphasize here that the selection process can be technical, ideological and even political, that is, never purely visual.

In order to understand the ways in which images of pesantren's everyday life realities are filmed by the Kidang santri, I will follow the steps of scholars in the field of visual culture who refuse to recognize "the practice of showing and seeing" as one that is "purely visual" (Mitchell 2005), and have encouraged instead the significance of a non-essentializing approach for studying the visual. That is to say the manner in which the visual is regarded as one that is mutually and reciprocally related to other sensory dimensions, and highly operated within various relations of power and regimes of values (see Mitchell 1994; Mirzoeff 1998; Bal 2003; Mitchell 2005; Pinney 2006; and Edwards and Bhaumik 2008; Spyer and Steedly 2008; and Meyer 2009).

Such an approach is largely influenced by the rise of the "pictorial turn" (Mitchell 1994) in the study of visual culture. It refers to the emergence of image as "a central topic of discussion in the human sciences in the way that language (once) did" (Mitchell 1994, p.13), acknowledging the complex relation between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, and bodies, in turn positing the need of "a post-linguistic and post-semiotic rediscovery of picture" (p. 16). By this new discovery, explains Mitchell (1996), we should stop questioning what images can do to us, but instead ask "what do pictures really want?" through shifting the question of subjectivity from the producers and consumers of images to the images themselves.[4] By treating images as a subject, we

4) Mitchell writes that "pictures are things that have been marked with all the stigmata of

do not only refuse to reduce images to language, but also recognize them "as complex individuals occupying multiple subject positions and identities" (1996: 82).

Similarly, Christopher Pinney, in an essay where he examines *Four Types of Visual Culture,* i.e. the visual as language; as transcendent; as power relation; and as presence, has argued that the visual should not be conceived as "a kind of language", because it will only "disallow any confrontation with the figural and resistant properties of certain visual forms" (2006: 134). Yet, he also stated that the visual should not be regarded as "entirely antithetical, and inaccessible to, signification" either (Spyer and Steedly 2008). The best way to study the visual, Pinney said, is to look it as "a continuum ranging across different qualities from which different paradigms are called" (2006: 135). This way, the visual "is neither one thing nor the other, but encompass instead a diverse set of forms, differently constituted" (Ibid.), connection of which is better seen as "complexly intersecting practices, best described as networks, rather than territories" (p. 142).

Spyer and Steedly (2013) push these points further, emphasizing the ways in which "images *take place* in wider worlds" (p. 8, emphasis original). They argue, certain images become worthy of attention simply because they are made to be so through particular processes of "enframement" and "refocalization" (p. 19). That is, the manifold ways in which images are technically, ideologically, historically, politically and so on, made to be seen as an object of attention and desire in particular places and for particular audiences and contexts.

Following Spyer and Steedly, my approach of studying the images of a pesantren's realities represented by the Kidang films is one that is foregrounding the ways in which one's act of seeing and being seen is always never purely visual in the first place, but it is at all times "refracted" (Strassler 2010) through various "intentionalities and desires" (Spyer and Steedly 2013). And by considering the theoretical backgrounds I have explained above, my aim in this chapter is to question the contents of Kidang's santri's films, to paraphrase Edwards and Bhaumik (2008: 3), not only in terms of the use of the visual, but also of how the visual is *felt*, emotionally, physically and intellectually, at the interface between vision and the other sensory ratios, between the visible and the invisible, and between the seen and the overlooked (italics mine).

Images that are made by Kidang's santri's films are images of a specific feature. They are moving images, that are not primarily produced for mass-commodity, yet not created for internal collection either. Copies of Kidang's films are sold, and publicly screened to Kidang and non-Kidang members. Some are also uploaded to YouTube. Production processes of the Kidang films, more importantly, are highly controlled by pesantren's authorities, either through Kidang's supervisory mechanisms or through internal funding (despite that paid-in-advance money had to be returned). Yet, at the same time, all Kidang's cinematic santri are first-timer filmmakers who have no professional training in film-making.

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personhood: they exhibit both physical and virtual bodies; they speak to us, sometimes literally, sometimes figuratively".

On top of these characteristics, most of Kidang people, especially those who maintain the structure of Kidang's male-dominated authority, are less conversant with visual culture than with textual traditions, meaning that their views on the significance of film-making are often in conflict with those of Kidang's cinematic santri, who are (not) coincidentally female members of the pesantren. In short, these images have been produced by Kidang people at the intersection of various intentionalities. On the one hand, there is a strong desire among the Kidang members to produce films, as Aisyah and Taufik phrase it, that "could serve as an image" of the pesantren world for the non-pesantren people. But on the other hand, as we will see through this chapter, personal desires, motivations and experiences of the Kidang films' producers have strongly contoured the processes of visual production of the Kidang films. This is where the significance of understanding Kidang films through the notion of "there is no such a purely visual media" lies.

I divide this chapter into four sections. I firstly attend to the development of santri's film-making skills and discuss how such development could influence their film-making creativities. Then I focus on the portrayal of Kidang's daily life in Aisyah's first film, exploring the extent to which structure of the film's narratives is a mirror of the pesantren's ideological values. Next, I venture to the depiction of several core elements of pesantren realities, questioning the kinds of motivation that are infused in their depiction. Here, I especially give ample attention to how particular realities are depicted, the reasons for certain depictions, and what are their wider contexts. In the last part of the chapter, I question the extent to which films by the Kidang santri is served as a means to express a sort of Muslim femininity among the Kidang (female) santri. This focus is especially crucial, considering that majority of Kidang members who are engaged in film-making practices are women.

An ongoing creativity

In this section, I argue for the significance of considering the Kidang santri's film-making projects as a learning process. I draw attention to, firstly, how the santri have learned to improve their film-making skills through the films they have so far produced, and secondly, how such improvements of film-making skills have influenced the ways of them filming their own pesantren reality.

Before coming to that, though, I need to state a fundamental difference in the ways both Aisyah and Jalal have covered production costs of their films. This does not mean that I want to compare Aisyah's films to those of Jalal. Conversely, by showing the difference in financial support from each of their pesantren, I want to argue that our valuing of their films should be done on the basis of their films' own merits. Unlike Jalal's films that are his personal project, Aisyah's films are part of the pesantren's extracurricular activities of Kidang Matapena, the pesantren-sanctioned and funded literary-film club. This means that while Jalal had to self-fund his film-making projects

(if needed), Aisyah received a payment in advance from the pesantren's treasurer, approximately around 300 USD for each film production.[5] This in turn has significantly influenced the ways both Aisyah and Jalal have experienced the processes of their film productions.

With the advanced payment she received, for example, Aisyah was able to rent a set of video-making technologies, and hire professional camera operators and video editors, to shoot every scene of her films and to edit them later.[6] In contrast to Aisyah's case, and having no source of funding, Jalal's film production seemed to primarily investing in his personal business. Thanks to a digital camera of the pesantren, a newly acquired property from a local donor, he shot and edited the films himself, relying on his learn-it-yourself skills of operating camera and editing video. Locations and other properties background to his films are based on real places and materials available in and near the pesantren area, at most times, without any further decoration. Characters in his films, played mostly by santri under his supervision, all wore their ordinary everyday clothes, with minimal make-up. Access to his films in Kidang, at least by the time I was conducting this fieldwork in 2013, was limited to his close friends only, as they were neither sold nor circulated through any possible means of film screening, even not to a 'wider public' of the Kidang pesantren.

The cases of Aisyah and Jalal reflect the heterogeneity of film-making experiences of the santri, even though they live in similar pesantren. The different production costs is reflected in some aspects of the quality of the films. Nonetheless, their films should be judged by the ways in which the difference of their film-making experience is meaningful to inform us about the patterns on which their film-making skills and creativities take shape in various processes. That said, I decide to focus on how both Aisyah and Jalal have similarly developed the format and narrating techniques of their films from time to time.

At first glance, both Aisyah's and Jalal's films are characterized by a choice for particular formats: the latter tended to focus on short and the former on feature films. However, it is worth mentioning that Aisyah's first film, *Hidup*, is actually a compilation, of nine short films that are paralleled by their thematic similarities and which chronicle the santri*'s* everyday life and studying in Kidang pesantren.[7] Likewise, Jalal's short films also center on comparable accounts of living as a santri in Kidang.

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5) The payment, however, is regulated as a loan that Aisyah has to pay back to the pesantren after she had completed the film project, money of which is expected to come from the selling of the film's DVDs, mostly, but not limited to the Kidang santri.

6) To the extent that the advance payment can be translated as the pesantren's institutional support at its widest sense, the production of Aisyah films has called for the attention and efforts of almost all Kidang men and women to be involved in it.

7) They are *Language is Our Crown*, *Ummu Naum* (The Sleeping Girl), *Blezzer, Saksi Bisu Terunik* (Blezzer, the Unusual Silent Witness), *Pepping, No Way!* (Peeping, No Way!), *Pondok Tak Pernah Tidur* (Pesantren Never Sleeps), *Belanja Sambil Beramal* (Shopping

What makes the difference, particularly viewed from the point of the film format, is the fact that Aisyah put together her short films into one feature, and Jalal did not. This means, despite the apparent length difference, both Aisyah's and Jalal's first films actually similarly take a short format. Yet, the length difference in film format is important for the case of the Kidang filmmakers.

In the context of the Kidang cinematic santri, who are first-timer filmmakers with no professional training in film-making, making a short film is apparently a good way to start from. This is what I have described in Chapter 1 as a *percobaan:* an attempt, effort or an experiment. The choice of a short film format by the santri has some resonances with Cheng's exploration (2007) on how indie filmmakers in Malaysia were forced by their limited budgets to start their project "from small and began from [what] they know best and simplest". In the case of the Kidang santri, it is not only because of their limited budgets but also their nascent knowledge and skill in film-making. In this regard, Aisyah's second film, *Intensif*, and Jalal's third film, *Demam Cakra,* are worth mentioning here as both films take a longer format from that of Aisyah's and Jalal's first films. Unlike *Hidup*, *Intensif* is produced as a complete feature film of 72 minutes long. Likewise, *Demam Cakra* – despite being a short film – now takes a longer duration (11.41 minutes), especially if compared to Jalal's earlier short films. On commenting upon the release of *Intensif*, Aisyah said: "it (the production of her second film) is a kind of our way of proving (to ourselves and other people) that we can do it again, and that we want to improve (our film-making skills) better and better." This suggests that, in the contexts of the Kidang santri, there is a close relationship between the development of the santri's film-making skills and the length format of their films.

Another part of the development of both Aisyah's and Jalal's film-making skills relates to narrative techniques. In the case of Aisyah, the progress in her films' narrating techniques is seen in the ways she exploited 'the visual power' of a moving image in order to convey the main messages of her film. In her first film, Aisyah often slipped, whether conscious or not, into the trap of verbalizing the dramatic intention of her film. In *Intensif*, while such an act of 'verbalization' is discernible, she has made some good efforts to let the images convey messages to the audience, for example, by varying the focus, angle and placement of the film camera in order to capture particularly significant scenes of the film. She had indeed experimented with camerawork in her first film, yet in *Intensif* Aisyah was able to further exploit it in a more effective, and smoother way.

The establishing scene of *Intensif,* which portrays "a modern-looking santriwati who walked down the pesantren's entrance" – the most central part of the film that epitomizes the film's main message – is a case in point. To capture the importance of this scene, Aisyah has simultaneously varied the camera placement, that is, starting from the front side where the girl is moving forward, then from the backside that follows up

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for Charity), *No Gosob* (No Stealing), *Alunan Nasyid dan Dakwah* (Melodious Nasyid and Dakwah). I will discuss their contents in the following sections.

the girl's movement, and finally from the house of the pesantren's *kyai*, from which the film story begins. She also varied the use of camera angles, such as, a lower camera angle that signifies the grandeur of the pesantren's towering building the girl looked at, and an eye-level camera angle that emphasizes the girl's full-body gestures. Aisyah also kept changing the camera focus, in particular by playing on close-up shots, in order to highlight, among others, the girl's smiling face, her elegant-looking shoes, and a thick book she holds on her chest with her left hand. All in all, the complexity of narrating techniques through variation of the camerawork that Aisyah has deployed in *Intensif* reflects an (on-going) improvement of her film-making skills and knowledge.

Similarly, Jalal's films also show some progress in his film-making techniques. As far as the production of his films depends mainly on his DIY creativities, the progress of Jalal's film's narrating techniques were even more obvious. Jalal's first two works, *Untuk Sahabat* and *Sumpah Pemuda*, are possibly regarded as video than as film, considering that they are humble recordings of selected dance/drama performances made by the Kidang santri. Yet, because they consist of a story with a message, I also regard them as films. If almost all scenes of *Untuk Sahabat* seemed to have been shot from one angle and, mostly, in a static position, clearly indicating that Jalal only used one camera, in *Sumpah Pemuda,* Jalal began to vary the camera angles and at times to play with the zooming in-out techniques, despite those still being used in a rough way. But Jalal's third work, *Demam Cakra,* reveals the biggest sign of improvement in his film's narrative technique, as the film contains a fully developed storyline, has several film characters, and uses a few of film props and various musical backgrounds. In his third film, Jalal even employs a narrator who helps dramatize the film's story lines and solicit its main messages.

The improvement of certain qualities in Jalal's and Aisyah's films reveals a process of learning about making film and its related creativities among the Kidang santri. Having no professional training in film-making, both Jalal and Aisyah learned and developed their skills and knowledge of film-making in a self-taught manner. Usually, they learned the required knowledge of film-making from the films they have watched. The Internet, especially YouTube videos, has become another important source and reference for their film-making knowledge. The pesantren's digital SLR camera has also been helpful for them to practice their photographic skills. Aisyah's participation in several writing workshops have become a foundational source of knowledge regarding how to write, a film script. Their creative will to "learn from the film they watched" is commensurate with the culture of "cut and paste" that is used by Luvaas (2012) to describe the development of do-it-yourself creativities among the indie communities in the post-Suharto Indonesia who depend their mode of production on a principle of "*creating by any means necessary*" (p. 1).

Considering how the Kidang santri have creatively developed their film-making skills, along with the apparent progress of their film qualities, I am inclined to argue that the visual production among the Kidang santri is always an ongoing process of creativity.

Disciplining everyday life

Film theorist S. Brent Plate (2008) has argued about the mirror-like proximity between film and religion, writing that, "the ways films are constructed", arguably, "shed light on the ways religions are constructed and vice versa" (p. 2). This means, film as a visual form, has the affective capacity to frame and being framed by the ways religion is lived in one particular context. In this section, I want to explore the ways the films by the Kidang santri have particular resonance with the pesantren's ideological principles as an Islamic learning institution. That is, Islam in Kidang is not just a religion, but one that is daily framed, spatially and temporally, in a particular setting (see Chapter 4). To this end, I will focus on the narrative structures of their films. My reason to focus on this aspect is because most of the Kidang's films similarly consist of what I will later call, "the narrative of order", referring to Turner's perspective of 'social drama' (Turner 1974) which consists of four phases: the breach, the crisis, the redressive action and the reintegration of the disturbed social group.[8] This in turn triggers the following questions: "why does it (the films' similar narrative structure) so?"; "what does it tell us about, as Plate has above argued, the proximity between their films and the role of Kidang pesantren as an institution of religious learning?" and "how does it help us to read (the images that are produced by) their films?". I will start my exploration by looking at an episode of Aisyah's *Hidup* as an example, that is, *Language is Our Crown* (LOC), simply because of the strong resemblance of its narrative structure with that of other episodes from *Hidup*.

LOC, as implicit from its use of the word "crown", is a metaphor for how the Kidang people have treated both English and Arabic languages as one of the pesantren's targeted points of excellence. In Kidang, there is a rule that all santri are obligated to speak in both English and Arabic for daily communication - the schedule of which is rotated once in every two days. Any failure to follow such an obligation will cause him/her a series of disciplinary procedure as punishment. To implement this regulation, a band of fifth grader santri are appointed as members of the pesantren's Language Section (see also Chapter 4). And as one of their main tasks, every day after the morning prayer, members of the Language Section will gather the santri at the pesantren's main yard in order to practice their English/Arabic speaking comprehension. In the end of the gathering, they will announce names of the santri who were found guilty of breaking the language rule during the yesterday and give them a punishment according to the severity of their transgression.

The LOC episode centers on Linta, a female santri who is not willing to obey the language rule. She was portrayed to have violated the rule more than three times in

8) Turner describes a social drama as a collection of harmonic and disharmonic social process that arises in a situation of crisis. He especially introduced this concept to describe how a ritual is essentially a processual form, while it is in itself a process of social drama (1966: 14).

just one week. Because of that, and on the basis of pesantren's disciplinary mechanism, she was punished by wearing a green veil for one day. It is a brightly green-colored head cover with a tag line "Transgressor of the Language Section". The punishment, emphasizing the state of exposure of the language transgressor to the public gaze of the Kidang people, caused her not only a feeling of shame and humiliation, but also an exclusion from her friends (see Chapter 4). As the episode proceeds to describe Linta's fate during the punishment period, almost all her santri friends avoided to talk to her and made her an object of their gossiping routines, a situation that only worsened to her embarrassment. Yet, thanks to the positive advice and support from both her best friends and members of the Language Section, Linta was finally encouraged to learn harder and to publicly speak the "international" languages. In the end, Linta was depicted happily looking at the list of the pesantren's language transgressors, for her name was cleansed from it.

Institutional perspective

Central to the ways LOC has been structured as narrative is a notion of order. The LOC's narrative structure consists of the following phases: order, crisis, a situation of disorder, and a restoration of order. The crisis is portrayed by LOC when a santri failed to follow the proper pesantren conduct – that is the student doesn't use the official language. Such a crisis then results in a situation of disorder. An act of violating the pesantren's rule by a santri would lead to public moral disgust, that is to say that the transgressing santri will be excluded by their friends, causing him/her an emotionally terrible feeling of pain. Here, the santri is forced to learn not only about "obeying the proper pesantren conduct", but also about "the danger and pain of exclusion". But at the story's conclusion, the disorder is described as resolved by the solidarity of santri being best friends, and the role of members of the Language Section, as a representative of the pesantren's institutional authority. That said, the notion of order is crucial here, not only because it is how the film's narratives are structured, but also because the main message of the film's narrative is about "how to maintain a situation of order inside the pesantren grounds". If you obey the rules all is well and if you do not obey the rules you will suffer from the danger and pain of exclusion. Considering that LOC's narrative of order is common among the other *Hidup*'s episodes,[9] even among the other Kidang films, it is imperative for us to question what does it mean in relation to the expansive visualization of Kidang's daily life by the Kidang santri's films?

Indeed, the narrative of order used by the Kidang films is nothing new. Yet, this

9) To illustrate their narrative structure similarity: if in LOC, the disorder is burst out when a santri had not been willing to communicate in the pesantren's "official" languages; in *Pepping, No Way*, it occurred when a female santri refused to stop her habit of peeking into the restricted corner of Kidang's male area; in *No Ghosob*, when a santri took one's belongings without permission; and in *Ummu Naum*, when a santri had an unbearable habit of sleeping during the learning season.

reminds me of Sen's exploration of the New Order films, in which she found out that most films produced during the New Order applied a similar narrative of "ordered" structure, moving "from order through disorder to a restoration of the order". She argued that such ordered pattern should be referred to both the particular history of the country's film medium and the political characteristics that are attributed to it by the New Order regime (Sen 1994: 159-161). By this, I do not mean to conclude, that the narrative structures of *Hidup* films are reminiscent of the New Order's films, without first investigating their specific contexts. Rather, following Sen's argument, what I want to argue here is, in order to understand what is the meaning behind *Hidup*'s narrative of order, we should place it in the context of how the Kidang people have – historically, politically, socially, religiously – turned to particular cinematic practices.

In Chapter 3, I have discussed how the pesantren people have come to engage with filmic practices. I argue that their cinematic turn is predicated upon their efforts on the one hand to keep up with changes taking place inside and surrounding the pesantren grounds, but on the other hand to maintain pesantren's discursive tradition at the course of the changes. *Hidup*'s narratives of order are structured on the similar efforts. Since the application of the *Terpadu* system in Kidang by early 2000s[10], all Kidang santri have to fully stay inside the pesantren areas and are required to participate in all Kidang's learning activities and religious practices, extending from the time they wake up, early in the morning to the time they return to their beds in the late evening. This rule has in turn come with an arrangement of a set of disciplinary mechanisms and security institutions that control, among others, circulation of the santri inside and outside the pesantren grounds, and segregation of the female and male area, as to regulate interaction between santri of the opposite gender identities. Such a rule is very much to create a situation of order imposed for the effectiveness of the learning and religious activities of the pesantren, hierarchy of which is strongly embedded in the pesantren's patriarchal structure of authority (more on this, see Chapter 4).

That said, to the extent that much of the *Hidup* films seem to be geared at disciplining Kidang members, and teaching them how to be a good member of the Kidan community, if not 'citizens' of the institution, the narratives of order of the *Hidup* films is a reflection of Kidang's understanding of authority. Thus, insofar as it is very much about patriarchy at work, Kidang films are reminiscent of the New Order films (Sen 1994). As such I argue, the daily life that is visualized by the films of the Kidang santri is not 'just' a daily life: but it is a daily life that affirms the institutional perspective of the pesantren.

10) In response to changes that happened within and surrounding Kidang's backgrounds, Kidang's family members reformed the pesantren's educational system, by combining its '*Salafiyah*' traditional education with Gontor's modern *madrasah* curriculum and the state-sanctioned system of education. The new system is called, *Sistem Terpadu*, or the 'Integrated System' (see also Chapter 3).

Ethical goals

Another crucial aspect of the narrative of order of the Kidang santri's films, as exemplified by LOC, is that all of their stories finish with ideal endings. I argue, that these ideal serve particular purposes. To explore this, I will return to my fieldwork notes, notably in regard to how these ideal endings relate to what actually happens in the 'real world' of the Kidang pesantren.

During my stay in Kidang, I was often told about problems involving both male and female santri breaking the pesantren's regulations, in which the disorder they created was not always easily resolved, or at least the breaking of regulations was in practice restored differently from how it was portrayed by the films. There were cases in which the santri were expelled from the pesantren after committing an assumedly serious violation of the pesantren proper conduct, such as going on a date (*pacaran*) with another santri. I also often encountered that several santri did not speak in the official language(s) of the pesantren without fearing being caught by someone from the Language Section. And still, I was also told that parents of Kidang's santri occasionally visited the pesantren's office in order to call into question the kinds of punishment their sons/daughters had received. As such, there is always a gap between what happens in the pesantren and what their films' ideal endings portray about the daily life of Kidang. By saying this, I have neither intention to say, nor having an interest in doing so, that the narratives of their films are *not* true. However, as I have time and again argued, the gap between what has been visualized in the film's narratives and what has actually happened in the pesantren's realities should be understood in a way that informs us on the ways religious life, practices and expressions are learned, experienced, and ideally constructed by the Kidang people *within* the Kidang contexts.

In a way, the narrative structures of Kidang films might have reflected the impression of some film scholars about efforts of "applying religion and film to Islam" (Blizek and Yorulmaz 2005). That is, the use of film by the believers for didactic, preaching, and devotional purposes of the religion, such as Dwyer's 'Muslim devotional film genre' (2010) in Indian cinema.[11] Indeed, as it is apparent from LOC's narrative, Kidang films contain strong pedagogical and ideological elements of pesantren and Islamic teachings. However, I would go further to look at the ideal ending of narrative structure of the Kidang films in a slightly different way.

Anthropologist Kenneth M. George (2010), in his work on the making of Islamic art by an Acehnese Muslim painter, offers an insight into "how making art might help Muslims [to] pursue their ethical and religious goals". George writes that the painter often used his paintings to record 'spiritual notes' that might function to him, and his painting audiences too, as a retrospect for reflection and meditation (p. 105). In the case

11) The use of film for such purposes, indeed, is not specific to Islam (Wright 2007). As examples: for a Christian 'Evangelical genre' context in Benin, West Africa, see Merz (2014); and for an India's 'Hindi mythological and devotional genre' film context, see Dwyer (2006).

of the Kidang santri, who come to and live in Kidang first and foremost for learning how to practice Islam correctly (according to pesantren tradition), the ideal endings of their films might be telling the extent to which the making of the visual image of pesantren realities is experienced as an ethical practice: one that functions to perfect their piety. This is not to argue that all ideal endings of a film should be read as a sole ethical practice. My reading, conversely, is highly dependent on the discursive settings of Kidang, meaning that it should not always be applicable to other contexts, or as Bal (2003) puts it, "the same visual can mean different things in different settings". I will return to my observation on how the meaning of *Hidup* is translated among the Kidang people.

I have stated elsewhere in this dissertation that *Hidup Sekali Hiduplah yang Berarti* was originally a book of the same title, written by members of Kidang's Matapena. The similar title of the book and film merits a special examination, particularly regarding the way the title is given its meanings by members of Kidang pesantren. While expression of *Hidup* (We Live Only Once, Live it Meaningfully) seemed countering the more secular street slang of YOLO (You Only Live Once), the use of *Hidup* as the title for both the book and film is, according to Taufik, due to the importance of the expression for the Kidang people. Taufik said:

> The title was inspired by the pesantren's motto. It reads, "Our life in this world is only once, so that our life should be meaningful" (*hidup kita di dunia ini cuma sekali, karena itu hidup kita ini harus berarti*). It becomes a kind of wisdom that all santri of Kidang is taught about during their study. Like the book, the film brings the same mission. It wants to bring forward the Kidang values. Specifically, it wants to portray that what santri of Kidang have learned here [in the pesantren] is meant to reach that end, being [a] meaningful [Muslim].

In Kidang, the motto of *Hidup* is engraved on a monument that stands near the pesantren's mosque and is frequently cited by members of Kidang. During a weekly evaluation meeting I attended, one senior *ustadz* explained to a number of assistant *ustadz* and *ustadzah*, including Aisyah and Jalal, that the expression of *Hidup* shall motivate all members of Kidang pesantren to be more creative and make use of their times in order to reach the goal of being, to cite his words, "a Muslim who is advantageous to other people." Significantly, he supported his explanation by citing a *hadis*, which says, *khairu al-nās anfa'uhum li al-nās* (the best men are those who are the most helpful ones for others), which to the best of my knowledge is very popular too as a moral teaching amongst the Kidang people.[12] A female santri who wrote about the *Hidup* expression in her essay published by Kidang's Matapena argued that such an expression could be used for motivating one to be a better santri, that is, by spending

12) Many santri in Kidang use the *hadis* of *khairu al-nās anfa'uhum li al-nās* as their motto of life, as do many other santri outside Kidang. This says the degree to which such *hadis* is popular amongst, specifically members of Kidang pesantren, and generally santri across the country.

his/her time in doing rewarding activities and for worshiping God, or *ibadah* (Hapadoh 2011: 46-51).

The use and interpretation of the *Hidup* motto reveals the symbolic, at times sublime, power of the oft-quoted words amongst the Kidang people. It symbolizes their continuous effort to perfect themselves through worships and good deeds in order to be a meaningful person, which according to the prophetic tradition is the main virtue of *khairu al-nās,* or the 'best human being'. Explicit from the entitlement of the film's episodes to the pesantren's motto, thus, is that the making of visual images of the pesantren realities in *Hidup*, and arguably in any other films of their production, is purposed for self-improvising themselves for, to cite Kloos (2013), "becoming a better Muslim". In other words, the notion of ethic is very crucial to a production process of the visual by the Kidang santri. To provide a background for it, a brief discussion of ethics needs to be introduced here.

Ethics, in the Aristotelian sense, is defined in terms of the goal, action, purpose, or inquiry that aims to "reach at some good" (MacIntyre, 2002 [1967]: 55). This implies that ethics do not only question about what is good, but also, more importantly, about how to be good: meaning that ethics is different from morality, and a dimension of action is central in the so-called ethical. Foucault, similarly drawing his argument from Aristotle's work, refers to ethics as a set of practices, techniques, and discourses by which human subjects transform themselves in order to achieve a particular state of being, happiness, or truth (as cited in Mahmood 2005: 28; but see also Foucault 1984a and 1984b). In his view, an ethical formation essentially consists of agency and the role of subjectivity.

Anthropologist Michael Lambek has further pushed the Aristotelian concept of ethics by complicating the ethical as an immanent part of human condition (2010a: 1). For him, ordinary practices such as daily speech and social interaction are inherently ethical, because in order to act well and judge wisely, we must constantly exercise our judgement with respect to what we do or say in relation with others, and within a set of cultural contexts and relations of power (Lambek 2010b: 39, see also Lambek 2015). Webb Keane elucidates Lambek's approach by showing that the ethical is embodied in our act of objectification, or in "the surfaces of things and the interactions they mediate" (2010: 69). Using the practice of gifting as an example, he shows that an act of gift exchange does not have a moral weight unless "the gift, the persons and the act of passing the gift" (or the surfaces of thing) are framed to have had moral consequences through "certain physical and verbal expressions" (or the mediated interactions). Seen this way, the ethical is always a form of never-ending interpretation about how to become a better person in certain contexts: it is part of "people making sense of their lives in the course of living them" (Lambek 2014: 491).

Considering the notion of ethics as an immanent dimension of the social life of the human condition, the quotidian use of *Hidup* by the Kidang people as a modality of learning with which they perfect themselves to be a better Muslim, is a mirror of

how picturing pesantren on screen is valued by the santri in an ethical weight.[13] To say it differently, the films' narrative of order and ideal endings are discursively "objectified" (Tilley 2006) by the Kidang santri as a "framing" (Keane 2010) with which they give ethical appropriateness to how realities of Kidang pesantren should be or should not be filmed. The film's voiceover that accompanies the introductory scenes of *Hidup*, emphasizing the film's protagonist's transformation from what she was in the past into what she is now in the present, is worth reading to summarize my argument:

> *I used to ask myself*, what life is? What do I live for? And how should I live my life? It is often said, life is only once and chance never comes twice. But I never know, what is my life for and what can I do with it. Hmm... *but now I understand* that life only needs one principle, a principle that brings me into a reality of life, and helps me to color it with decency. Because life is only once, I decide to choose a life that is meaningful. This is my life, this is me, this is my taste. Its texture, color and nuance are meaningful. (*Emphasis mine*).

In this section, I have interpreted the production of the visual as highly pedagogical, ideological and constituting of an ethical practice for the Kidang members, in the following section, I will move on to an exploration of how the production of the visual is related to a yearning among the Kidang people to give voice to everyday realities of pesantren that are hitherto unheard.

Voicing the realities of a pesantren

John Berger (2002: 53) writes, "the photograph cannot lie, but, by the same token, it cannot tell the truth; or rather, the truth it does tell, and the truth it can by itself defend, is a limited one". To an extent that making film is highly dependent on a similar technology that produces a photograph, that is a camera, images, or reel of images of a film, like a photograph, cannot fully capture the truth, but rather, the truth that has been modified.

In relation to "a notion of capturing the truth through film", at many times during my research, as well as apparent from the films that the santri have produced, an effort of filming "what truly happened in Kidang" is a matter of concern among the Kidang people. Indeed, the Kidang films are by no means documentary works, and they were not intended to be so. Nevertheless, most of their films contain some of the virtues of the documentary, as for example, they speak about Kidang's values as directly as possible, and they do so for conveying (to their audiences) a host of information, awareness, and voices about the pesantren world.[14] In this section, I explore their decision of "filming with documentary virtues", by focusing on the portrayal of, respectively, Kidang's learning activities, Kidang's santri, and the *kitab kuning*. My reason to focus on these

13) Somewhat resonating the utility of listening practice to cassette sermon for the task of ethical self-improvement among Cairene Muslims (Hirshkind 2006).

14) Since the complicity between documentary and filming the real has received strong criticism from film scholars (e.g. Aufderheide 2007), here, following Nichols Bill (2010) I define

"everyday realities" of pesantren life, is not only because of their highly recurrent visibilities throughout the Kidang films, but also their political significance in and to the santri's film discourses that I have already discussed in earlier chapters, that is to say, they are part of "the main elements of pesantren tradition" (Dhofier 1999).

Insider's insight

The representation of learning activities in Kidang pesantren across the Kidang films is both common and also faithful. The last episode of Aisyah's *Hidup* confirms my point. Entitled *Pondok Tak Pernah Tidur* (Pesantren Never Sleeps, PNS), the episode designates what have made Kidang as a pesantren incessantly alive. It centers on a santri*wati* character playing as a host of a TV's infotainment show program. The show is titled '*La Ghibah*', an Arabic word roughly meaning 'Don't Gossip'. While the show's name can be interpreted as an implicit critique by the Kidang people of the popularity of infotainment shows among Indonesian TV audiences, it suggests that what is reported by the show is "not a gossip", but "the reality" of Kidang pesantren. As such it is consistent with the show's content, as it presents a kaleidoscopic view of 24-hours activities in Kidang pesantren, which are shot on *real* locations, and are based in *real* time, on *real* people, and using *real* costume and props. Importantly, the daily activities that are presented by the show, are (only) those that pertain to Kidang's learning practices, such as *muhadasah* (English-Arabic conversation), *muhadlarah* (training of oratory skills), *mudzakarah* (reviewing session of the pesantren*'s* course materials), boy-scouting program, and sporting exercises. Considering its emphasis on showing the 'factuality' of the learning activities in the Kidang pesantren*,* PNS does not only send a message about the centrality of learning particular activities in the pesantren world, but also speaks to its audiences that (Kidang) pesantren is fundamentally an educational institution of Islam.

Aisyah told me, her decision to maintain the 'factuality' of Kidang throughout her films was partly due to time and budget efficiency. Yet, she also acknowledged that her decision of filming the "real life" of Kidang pesantren was also deliberate. Here, it is worth mentioning that Aisyah and many other santri in Kidang (and elsewhere) shared similar views on that representation of pesantren as an Islamic educational institution is often vilified by various media platforms. For example, after the events of September 11, 2001, which was followed by a series of bombing attacks in Indonesia, media coverage has, in a way of generalization, increasingly described pesantren as fostering religious militancy and 'terrorist' jihad (see Pohl 2006). While radical pesantren do exist (see

a documentary film as one that "speaks directly about the historical world" (p.7), that is purposed to stimulate "a desire to know" (p. 40) in their audiences. It is a particular film genre that "convey an informing logic, a persuasive rhetoric, and a moving poetics that promises information and knowledge, insight and awareness", and that is produced by "He-Who-Knows" to "those who wish to know" (p. 40). And as I will make it explicit throughout the following paragraphs of this section, several parts of Kidang films contain some of these documentary characters.

Atran, Magouirk and Ginges 2008), the Kidang members, and the pesantren people elsewhere, seem quite irritated by such generalization. For example, when I asked one of the Kidang *kyai* about his opinion regarding the portrayal of pesantren in Indonesian commercial films and Television dramas,[15] the kyai told me that pesantren as a place of Islamic learning was generally misrepresented. He then cited a TV soap opera (*sinetron*) currently being broadcast on Indonesian TV station, entitled "Pesantren Rock & Roll" (2011), which according to him had distorted the image of pesantren as a mere dating place between the pesantren members.[16]

Keeping in mind both Aisyah's and the *kyai*'s statement, I argue, representation of "the real life" of Kidang's learning activities by PNS, could be interpreted as an index of shared efforts among the Kidang people for providing an "insider view" (to non-pesantren people) regarding the shape of everyday life practices of pesantren, notably as an Islamic learning institution.

The 'cool' santri

Another portrayal of Kidang's realities that recurred in almost every film produced in Kidang pertains to images of the (Kidang) santri. It is self-evidently acceptable that a film about pesantren will contain portrayals of the pesantren's students. Yet, what I will problematize here is less the omnipresent image of the santri throughout the films, but rather how and why the Kidang people have similarly tended to represent santri in their films as young, 'cool' and pious Muslims, as the following case of Jalal's third film *Demam Cakra* reveals.

Demam Cakra speaks about an epidemic 'fever' (*demam*) of Cakra Khan's popularity, that (is said to) have plagued the santri of Kidang pesantren. Khan is an Indonesian pop singer whose 2012 single release, *Harus Terpisah* (We Must Separate), received a country-wide popularity, especially among the Indonesian teenagers. The beginning of the film shows that many of Kidang santri were excited to sing Cakra's song every now and then, and to follow updates of the singer through any possible

15) Note my story in Chapter 1, in which I solicited Sahal's disappointment at Hanung Bramantyo's filmic portrayal of a pesantren world in his "*Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*" (Women on Turban).

16) 'Pesantren Rock & Roll' is a story of Subuh Wahyu, a Jakartan ex-rock-singer cum ex-prisoner, who was forced by his parents to live in a pesantren in Yogyakarta for rehabilitating his (mis)behaviour. As a protest against his parent decision, Wahyu shows rebellious conduct during his first days in the pesantren, hoping he will be expelled by the pesantren's *kyai*. But when he sees Nada, the pesantren's *kyai*'s daughter whose beauty has attracted the attention of male members of the pesantren, including one of the pesantren's young teachers, *ustadz* Najib, Wahyu starts to enjoy his time in the pesantren. Wahyu falls in love with Nada, who seems to give him a mutual signal. Yet, despite their reciprocal feeling of affection, it is not easy for Wahyu to stay close with Nada, not only because of the pesantren's strict regulation against a mix-sex sociability, but also because of Najib's fierce resistance against their apparent love affairs, not to mention the interception from Wahyu's ex-lover in his past life.

ways, including via the Internet that is accessed without permission from an *ustadz*'s laptop. The intensity of this Cakra fever, unfortunately, has held up many of the santri from performing a punctual attendance to the regular communal prayers. After being disciplined by the pesantren's santri organization, however, they realized that their fondness for Cakra's song should not lead them away from practicing the religious rituals and performing their 'duties' as pesantren students.

Central to *Demam Cakra* is the santri's aspiration for how to be a pious Muslim and a young person at the same time. Bayat and Herrera (2010) argue that being young is not a matter of age per see, but involves a sort of socially constructed dispositions in which young people cultivate their consciousness of being young, by participating in manifold forms of youth practices, cultures and activism that fit within their generational consciousness (p. 6-8). Implicit in the film's focus on Cakra Khan's single is an association of santri being attuned to the current trends of Indonesian youth culture and lifestyle, especially ones that are regarded as global, modern and secular. Such association is also tangible through the portrayal of santri as an Internet and technological savvy. Likewise, the language use in the film is telling. Instead of speaking in Sundanese, English or Arabic, the three most daily spoken languages among the Kidang people, the film's main character maintained the use of Jakartan-street dialect of Indonesian language (*bahasa gaul* Jakarta), a language that associates its user with being a "trendy and modern" subject, especially among the Indonesian youngsters (Barendregt 2008: 166). The film's narrative style, too, cannot be more telling about such an association, as it imitates that of Raditya Dika's *Malam Minggu Miko* (Miko's Saturday Night), a YouTube serial comedy that was so popular among (Indonesian) YouTube users that it was later broadcasted by a nation-wide TV station and adapted to a film format.

That said, reading *Demam Cakra* with Bayat's and Herrera's theory in mind, the portrayal of the santri seems to have concerned with their efforts of "reclaiming the youthfulness" (Bayat 2010), that is, by participating in "the current trends that make them cool" (Naafs 2012: 119) as young and Muslim santri. This interpretation will lead us to conclude that the portrayal of the cool santri by Kidang films is a reflection of Bayat's and Herrera's (2010: 18) "politics of possibility", which refers to the ability of young people to make their best to accommodate their youthful claims within the constraining norms and institutions of their "poorest situations".[17] An example of this kind of political acts ranges from appearing in the fake but globally typical brands such as Nike baseball caps, to listening to pirated international CDs: and here, in the case of *Demam Cakra*, I add, by producing a film that is relevant and in line with the country's nationally–acclaimed trends of popular lifestyle and culture.

17) Be it financially or politically: which in the case of Jalal and many other cinematic santri can be broadly interpreted as the incipience and shortage of film-making infrastructures, the lack of financial backing and institutional support from the central board of NU for example, et cetera.

However, I would like to push these ideas further by underlining both the political and ethical dimension of "the portrayal of the cool santri" in their film. A santri is indeed a Muslim - but being a santri is different from being a Muslim, largely because the former is politically differently charged than the latter. Elsewhere in the dissertation, I have talked about the century-long stereotypes of the santri being backward and rural people, and I have also explored how such stereotypes have occasioned their desires to turn to film practices. That is to say, making film is part of their long struggle to prove to themselves and others that, like the other young people elsewhere, they are not 'that rural', but are conversant with, and being up-to-date to current trends of global popular culture. That said, the depiction of the cool santri is a defensive strategy against the views that the santri are not being cool. The use of *gaul* language by the film is particularly telling here: for among the Indonesian youngsters, *gaul* means 'talking about the right things, having your own opinion and lifestyle, but also being interested in modern technology and gadgets" (Barendregt 2008: 166), including making film.

This way, the "cool santri" differs from Khabeer's "Muslim Cool" (2011, 2016), which she uses to describe "a way of being Muslim' that links together the notions of Islam, hip hop music and blackness in order to resist and contest both the supremacy of white American normativity and the hegemony of Arab and South Asian Muslim communities, in the US. The notion of resistance, blackness and its racial narrative seems to be too strong in the context of the santri. Yet, what I found interesting in Khabeer's "Muslim Cool" and something which is close to the context of the Kidang santri, is that it articulates a particular way of thinking and of being a Muslim that is grounded in the notion of popular culture, foregrounding that being Muslim is not something that is foreign or threatening to one particular place. By extension, the "cool santri" is another side of the same coin of what Rudnyckyj (2009) has called, "market Islam", referring to an effort by some Muslims to "mobilize Muslim ethics to meet the challenges of the free market, yielding Islamic practices conducive to economic liberalization" (p. S197). The cool santri phenomenon seems to be revealing the claim made by the santri that they are 'just' part of this larger modern world.

I will now explore the portrayal of *kitab kuning* in Kidang films.

Kitab kuning

Another of the Kidang realities that received a lengthy portrayal in and across the Kidang films is images of the *kitab kuning.* Examples of such portrayal range from a book the santri was continuously holding in their hands, to the santri reading loudly from it in their class rooms, to the santri carefully putting it on their bookshelves, and to that of competing to become Kidang's 'santri of the year'. The following excerpt from a trailer of *Hidup* is the most revealing one, not only because it closely pictures the *kitab kuning*, but it is part of the establishing shot of the trailer. The trailer was also uploaded on a YouTube channel that belongs to a Kidang student, and it was tagged as "film santri". So, this means, while the trailer has been deliberately signified for drawing public

attention that the film is about life and (mis)behavior in pesantren, showing the *kitab kuning* means, "we are in pesantren". The excerpt is as follows:

> In a full close-up shot, it starts with an image of an open book that lies squarely on a school table. As the close-up image got quickly clearer, it shortly exposed details of the book: tinted pages containing of black-inked Arabic scripts. By the right side of the book, brown-skinned bare fingers were seen loosely holding it. The camera then slowly made a zoom-out shot, thus revealing to the film's audience that the fingers belong to a Kidang santriwati who, sitting in an empty class, seemingly felt asleep at the course of self-studying the book. By the time the audience realized this spatial context, two girls holding the similar book with that of the sleeping student's, entered the class. Then, as the scene was fading into another sequence, a voice over was heard, saying, *"I used to question what is life, what it is for, and how I should live it"*. (Trailer of *Hidup*, minutes 00.05 - 00.11)

Notably, representation of the *kitab kuning* in Kidang's films reveals the process of transmission, sacredness, and authoritative power of the *kitab kuning* among the (Kidang) pesantren people.

The history of Indonesian cinema only has a few films with Islamic themes which portray the everyday lives of the country's assumed observant Muslims since the 1960s. Very few of these films portray the *kitab kuning*. When it comes to representation of the importance of scriptural tradition among Muslims, most of them have referred to the Qur'an and the *Hadis*, or to Islamic books that are written in Romanized Indonesian, usually call *buku putih* (lit. 'white book'). It is probably Chaerul Umam's *Al-Kautsar* (1977, Scr. Asrul Sani) that has tried most significantly to endow the portrayal of *kitab kuning* with a certain prominent position, as the film described it stacking up on a *kyai's* table, that is, at the film's establishing scenes.

While, it is arguably only Nurman Hakim's *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (3 Prayers 3 Loves) that has portrayed the *kitab kuning* in a similarly extensive way as the Kidang films have done so far, in that it has carefully pictured details of not only the book's contours, but also the book's process of being transmitted from a pesantren's *kyai* to his santri. Not coincidentally, *3 Doa 3 Cinta* is a film of a NU-affiliated santri director, thus revealing the extent to which the typical portrayal of *kitab kuning* by films of santri NU-style in general is aimed for articulating a specific voice. By saying this, I argue that to the extent that "appropriate" representation of the role of the *kitab kuning* for the pesantren people has been lacking in, if not ignored by, Indonesia's mainstream 'Islamic cinema', the portrayals of the *kitab kuning* by the Kidang films can be regarded as voicing the pesantren's tradition that is hitherto underrepresented by the history of Indonesian films.

In conclusion, the everyday realities that are pictured by Kidang films are eclectic. Not only they are selected for particular intentions, but the way they are pictured by the film is driven by a range of motivations. They range from an aim to provide an insider view of pesantren life, to a defensive strategy against pesantren stereotypes, and to picturing an element of pesantren tradition that is hitherto unheard in the history of Indonesian Islamic cinema.

A female gaze in patriarchal culture

In the last section of this chapter, I focus on the portrayal of female santri in Aisyah's second film, *Intensif*. I explore the extent to which making a film by Kidang (female) santri can be seen as a way of expressing a Muslim femininity in a place that is strongly dominated by patriarchal symbols, narratives, images, and structures of authority. Such exploration is especially significant because of the fact that most of the Kidang members who engaged in the practice of film-making are (not) coincidentally females.

Many recent works on the status of Muslim women have shown that the agency of Muslim woman subjects can neither be reduced nor compared to Western feminists' and women's rights activists' ideas, which foreground secular agendas and individual agency (Deeb 2006; Mahmood 2005; Srimulayani 2006; van Doorn-Harder 2006). Yet, any effort to simply equate, let's say, gender (in)equality in Muslim society with Islam's patriarchal tradition is similarly misleading, considering that the status of women in different Muslim societies greatly varies from one to the other.

In this regard, working on a women's piety movement in Egypt, Mahmood (2001) proposes two interrelated approaches for an analysis of woman Muslim agency. The first is to consider the kind of "desires, motivations, commitments, and aspirations" (p. 225) of female Muslims, by which they are able to uphold particular practices "that are germane to the cultivation of their ideal virtuous self" (p. 202). The second is to look at female Muslim's agency not as "a synonym for resistance to relations of domination", but as a "capacity for action" (p. 203) that is embedded in Islam's patriarchal tradition (that legitimates women's subordination). In a similar way, Kloos (2016) suggests that an analysis of the status of women (in Muslim societies) needs to consider the "salience of gender", referring to the social conditions and backgrounds within which gender becomes a salient factor in women's lives and careers, especially in relation to their male counterparts.

In the context of Indonesia, Rinaldo (2006) and van Doorn-Harder (2006) have demonstrated the ability of contemporary Indonesia's woman Muslim activists, leaders, and scholars to interfere in public debates about the (re)interpretation of Islamic teachings concerning the role and rights of women, as part of their strategies to mobilize and improve the condition and position of women in their communities. Their findings are strengthened and enriched by Srimulyani (2006), who worked with a number of pesantren's female santri and leaders (*nyai*, lit. wife of *kyai*) in Java, who pioneered the emancipation of women's status in pesantren communities. Srimulyani describes the pesantren in which she conducted her fieldwork as one that maintains an obvious patriarchal tradition, one that is essentially originated in both Islamic teachings and Javanese (and other Indonesian) local cultures.[18] In these pesantren, women are seen as the ones who, by their *kodrat* (God-given nature), have to undertake domestic chores and responsibilities. Nonetheless, continues Srimulyani (2006), many of the pesantren's

18) For the prevalence of patriarchal tradition in Sundanese pesantren, see Kusmana (2017).

nyai and female santri "have refused to be daunted, and have explored their potential and transformed this into an agency, whose effect is felt not just in their pesantren but also their community" (p. 27). She concludes, the ability of these female figures to arrange their domestic activities in a well manner, such as by being a good wife or a good mother, is a necessary condition for their expansion to the public space (p. 107), meaning that recognition of these women's leadership authority in public domains goes hand and hand with their ability to perform well their domestic duties.

By reflecting on the arguments of these scholars, I want to explore the possibility of Kidang santri's films as a means for the female members of Kidang pesantren, such as Aisyah, to empower their agency as a female (santri) Muslim subject. I decided to focus on *Intensif* as my point of departure, largely because of its strong emphasis on imagining woman santri Muslim as a modern subject, and the ways it reflects the female gaze in Kidang's public space.

Intensif tells a story of a former santriwati of Kidang, namely Raihani, who pays a short visit to Kidang out of nostalgia for her pesantren days. It starts with a scene in which Raihani is seen walking down the pesantren's main area, in her bright-colored long dress that is combined with elegant-looking high heels and fine veils, symbolic of her modern and successful taste. In front of her *kyai*'s house, Raihani stops by to give a *salam* (greetings) to the *kyai*'s wife, who then praises her for becoming a successful writer. The film however, hardly tells about Raihani's writing career, except through a thick book that she holds on her chest. Rather, through a hidden handycam owned by a mysterious santriwati, the film focuses on Raihani's memory of studying in Kidang.

In a flashback, *Intensif* portrays Raihani as a student of Kidang's *Intensif* class.[19] She is smart, diligent, and has a strong leadership character. It is described that while other members of Kidang have gone to their beds on a midnight, she is still reading her pesantren's textbooks and writing her diary project. On her first day in Kidang's classroom, Raihani is grouped with Nuni, Hana, and Ina, who later become her best friends. The rest of the film then centers on portraying that the best friends face several problems during their living in Kidang. Examples of their problem range from Nuni's and Hana's lack of confidence in joining Kidang's extra-curricular activities, to their difficulties in keeping up with the pesantren's language rule and *kitab kuning* lessons, and to Ina's tragic family problems which threatens a continuation of her study. Faced with all these problems, Raihani plays a heroic role since she always appears as the one who helps her friends to find a solution to their problems. Toward the end of the film, Raihani is selected by *Ustadzah* Rani, their *Intensif*'s supervisory teacher, to represent their class in joining the pesantren's *kitab kuning* competition. A surprise to many people in Kidang, and as how *Intensif* is ended, Raihani champions the competition. (See picture 10).

19) In Kidang, *Intensif* class is designed for those starting their study in Kidang from high school, which means that members of the *Intensif* class are mostly still unable to read the *kitab kuning*.

Picture 10: The shooting process of Intensif. Courtesy of Aisyah's photography.

Significantly, Raihani is a representation of a female santri, who is educated, modern, pious and well-versed with religious texts, all together. I argue, the signification of Raihani's images as an 'empowered' female subject, (especially through her veils, dress, expensive shoes, thick book and her '*kitab kuning'* trophy), "is undoubtedly intentional" (Barthes 1998: 72). To an extent, Raihani's 'veiled' image resonates the increasing visibility of veiling and female's veiled body in contemporary Indonesian cinema, which according to Izharuddin (2015), has mainly to do with a wider discourse of representing an identity of (pious, tolerant, and educated) Indonesian Muslims versus the Other. In the case of *Intensif*, however, I will not focus on veiling per se, rather on the whole figurative elements that are used by Aisyah to signify Raihani's powerful image.

When first watching Raihani's image during my first screening of the film, I immediately sensed that she is quite a personification/representation of Aisyah herself, a sensation that increasingly got stronger as the film rolled on. Raihani's interest in writing, her leadership character, and her 'trophy-winning" knowledge of religious texts, all concurs Aisyah's biographical accounts, which I have explored in Chapter 3. If one is to find a significant character of Aisyah that is missing in Raihani's, it is perhaps the former's interest in film-making. Yet, not-coincidentally, the film describes that among Raihani's friends in her *Intensif* class other than Nuni, Hana and Iina, there is a mysterious female santri*,* namely Shella, who comes from Jakarta, and has an unusual hobby of filming her friends with her handycam in a secretive manner. Even

the final scene of the films, showing Shella's hidden handycam secretly filming Raihani and her friends celebrating her winning of the *kitab kuning* competition, seems to suggest that *Intensif* is a film that this girl might have produced: an ability that she had secretly developed while studying in Kidang. Shella's character in her *Intensif* obviously signifies Aisyah's effort of representing herself throughout, if not Raihani, several of the santriwati protagonists in her film.

To read the meanings of the images of the empowered female santri in Aisyah's *Intensif*, I argue, it is imperative to place them within the context of the pesantren's patriarchal culture, which manifests in the form of, among many others, gender-segregation rules and domination of male authority (see Chapter 4). In this regard, Aisyah and other santriwati often told me, either explicitly or implicitly, that as a woman in pesantren, their mobility, expressions and activities in public domains (of Kidang pesantren), are more limited than those of Kidang male members. One obvious example is that there is a regulation in Kidang that every cultural performance such as dancing and singing organized by santriwati of Kidang, is restricted to female santri spectators only; while the one organized by male santri is open to both male and female audiences. The reason of such regulation is that, for members of Kidang, female's voice (let alone her dancing body) is considered as an *aurat*, one that is forbidden to be exposed to a male's public gaze.

Making a film has undoubtedly allowed Aisyah to speak across gender-segregated forms of Kidang's public space, as her films, unlike her veiled body, will circulate more easily, if not more freely, in an otherwise restricted gaze of the male spectators. By extension, it is through her films that she is capable of obtaining her agency to speak to not only to public domains of Kidang people and beyond, but also, to a certain degree, to Kidang's male authority. Or, as Aisyah often phrased it, making film is one of her many "means to be productive" (*sebagai sarana untuk berkarya*), notably, as a female santri in Kidang. It is a means through which her putative 'dangerous' gaze, voice, and embodied femininity gain an emancipated form of expressions in Kidang's male-dominated public.

Aisyah is not, and never explicitly identifies herself as, a woman's rights activist or a female *ulama* who deliberately works to improve the status of woman in her community. Her view on religious ideas in general, and the position of women in particular, is also conservative. She holds a belief that veiling properly, one that loosely covers an upper part of the female's chest, is mandatory for a female Muslim, and an unsupervised sociability between male and female (*pergaulan bebas*) is forbidden in Islam. In an essay she wrote for her blog (Bicara 2011), she confirms and conforms to patriarchal views that assign men to become family's patriarchs and breadwinners, while women are directed to handle domestic responsibilities, raising children and nurturing family at home. She also rejects a Western liberal (Muslim) feminists' idea of gender equality, critically citing in particular the controversy of a US-based Muslim feminist Amina Wadud who led a Friday prayer in a New York prayer house. For her,

men and women are born in different *kodrat* (God-given innate nature), which in turn has ascribed them differently "natural" roles and obligations.

Aisyah, however, has a concern with the idea of women's emancipation. In the very same essay of hers as I cited above, she also argues that women should be given equal rights to education as that of men and should be allowed to decide their own choices in life. More importantly, in her daily life, Aisyah aspires to public recognition and social mobility. Aside from her activities in Kidang's Matapena, she teaches Indonesian language to both male and female santri of Kidang's high schools, directs the publication of Kidang's semi-annually magazines, and later, handles the operation of Kidang's radio-news programs. In 2013, she was a representative of the province of West Java for a national-level competition of Qur'anic interpretation, in which she finished as a runner up. She is also a freelance writer for local newspapers, and a member of several local writers' communities. She also often traveled to other provinces in Indonesia for a few of writers' community gatherings, workshops and conferences. Many of my male interlocutors in Kidang, as far as I asked them, considered Aisyah as a woman of a high profile and respect. Her marriage to a grandchild of the pesantren's *kyai*, Taufik, seems to ascribe Aisyah with a sort of power in regard to her social mobility. Yet, it is her religious knowledge, her leadership characters, and her potentials and skills in writing, film-making, and public speaking, that have been a significant source of power for her agency.

Considering the apparent contradiction between the pesantren's patriarchal values (Chapter 4) and her conviction to improve the status of woman, one day I asked Aisyah to comment upon pesantren's segregation rules that often limited her mobility in Kidang. She told me that such regulation is enacted for the good sake of all people in Kidang. She added, more or less this way, "Kidang gives a same freedom to every male and female santri to express and develop their potentials, but Kidang needs to regulate how we (Muslim women) are doing it according to Islamic teaching, because we are in pesantren". Her answer seems to resonate with what van Doorn-Harder (2006: 8) has called "Islamic feminism", referring to a sort of feminist agenda that is prevalent among Indonesia's women's rights activists and female religious leaders, who seek references for their discussion on Islam and women's rights from Islamic teachings mostly written by (male) Muslim scholars. Islamic feminism, she said, is manifest in various forms, ranging from conservative, to liberal, and to ultraconservative.

Still, Kidang's patriarchal culture is somewhat pressing (to the way Aisyah experiences her agency). In 2013, for example, a couple of months after her marriage to Taufik, Aisyah gloated on her Facebook page about what she thought a wife-husband relation should look like. No sooner did I read her status it triggered a couple of harsh reactions from both her female and male counterparts in Kidang. A (more) senior *ustdazah* told her quite dully that she had to learn to be wiser in keeping a family's private problem, and as a woman she had to sincerely follow her husband, a comment that was supported even more harshly by one of the pesantren's *ustadz*. Aisyah did not

confront to their critics, saying instead that what she wrote did not relate to her family affairs. Yet, after this Facebook incident, Aisyah shows a more careful behaviour on her Facebook page (read, public space), indicating the extent to which her capability of managing her family's domestic and private affairs will influence the expansion of her agency into public domains and recognition in Kidang's patriarchal culture.

To this point, Shella's character in *Intensif*, and the ways she mysteriously appeared in many scenes of the film with her hidden camera is worth recalling. Considering the restricting feature of Kidang's patriarchal culture toward the visibility of female's bodily expressions in (male's) public space, Shella's mysterious character and her hidden camera are revealing the ways in which a female gaze should be carefully and quietly mediated when it comes to (Kidang's male dominated) public space. In this regard, I argue, the prominent role of women in Kidang's cinematic practices should never be seen at face value. In fact, I argue, the eagerness of these female students to come to film as a medium for their expression in Kidang's public space has much to do with the fact that film to many of the NU leaders is not highly valued, nor even central to NU today. In other words, it is precisely because of the marginal position of film among the pesantren and NU communities, including in Kidang, that the female students are granted easier access to their agency. The exercise of female agency in Kidang, while it is not impossible, is fundamentally predicated upon, and operated within the "limitations" of pesantren's patriarchal values; and it is by moving eagerly into film, a practice that is deemed marginal in Kidang today (and elsewhere), that Aisyah have an easier way of channeling her desire to exercise more freely her agency to speak in, and to Kidang's male-dominated publics.

Conclusion

I started this chapter with a citation from Aisyah and Taufik about the desire of the Kidang people to produce an authoritative representation of the pesantren world in a film format. Not surprisingly, contents of their films consist of particular ordinary stories and materialities prevalent in Kidang's pesantren compounds. Yet, by focusing on the notion that "the practice of showing and seeing is never purely visual" (Mitchell 2005), I have shown throughout this chapter that the ways by which the Kidang people have selected and filmed certain realities and materialities of the pesantren world are highly shaped by manifold intentionalities, example of which range from the technical, the ideological, the historical, and to the political. In this regard, the efficacy of images not only takes place on the surface of screen, but it also unfolds in the ways they are emotionally, technically, religiously, and politically rendered significant in the contexts of how the Kidang people understand and give meanings their life words.

In the beginning of the chapter, I have shown that the (incipient) knowledge of film-making techniques among the Kidang santri are influential to their film qualities: yet insofar as qualities of their films show a sign of progress, the production of the visual

in Kidang should be viewed as a learning process. In the following sections, I have also explained how certain images of the pesantren realities and materialities, such as the language speaking practices and the *kitab kuning*, are intentionally voiced and muted by the Kidang films for various reasons: such as to signify an ethical practice that confirms the pesantren's ideological perspective of being a good citizen of the pesantren world, to defense against pesantren stereotypes, and to speak up an element of pesantren tradition that is hitherto unheard in the history of Indonesian Islamic cinema.

Images of the pesantren on screen can be revealing as an arena for a cultivation of religious self that is embedded in a relation of power between the individual santri and the pesantren institution. My exploration on the images of a modern Muslim female subject as they are emphasized by Aisyah's film *Intensif,* speaks volumes to her desire to exercising her female agency of speaking in, and to Kidang's male-dominated publics. Finally, this ends up by arguing that the prominent role of female santri in Kidang patriarchal settings may be enabled by the marginality of film practices in NU today: that is, because these practices are marginal they are able to move into areas that are less prestigous and receive less attention.

Epilogue

I remember at the time I had just begun the research for this dissertation in 2011, my quick search on YouTube for "*pesantren*-themed films" showed only a few results; with the trailer of Aisyah's first film, *Hidup,* topping the list. Roughly, seven years later, at the time of writing the concluding part of this dissertation, however, the result of a similar query has massively increased some ten thousand videos.[1] Despite many of the videos not being categorized as films, but videos of, mostly, religious learning (*pengajian*) and documentations of pesantren activities, my quick exploration of the list of these videos testifies that more and more films are increasingly uploaded onto YouTube channels by people who live in pesantren throughout Indonesia. It should be stated, however, that majority of these films are concerned with the representations of everyday-lived realities of the pesantren world and that they can be considered articulations of being Muslim and being *modern* among the younger generation of santri.

In this dissertation, I have examined the rise of cinematic practices among the santri communities through the salience of tradition, that is, the ways in which notions of tradition become important in and to everyday life circumstances of the santri, especially with regard to their engagement with image-making technologies, and their aspirations

1) One of them is a short film *Terlambatkah?* (Are we Too Late?), which was produced by *Kopi Ireng* (Black Coffee). An acronym for *Komunitas Fotografi Tebuireng* (Tebuireng Photography Community), *Kopi Ireng* is associated with Pesantren Tebuireng, a traditional pesantren in East Java, established in the late 19th century by Hasyim Asy'ari, one the founding fathers of NU. Later in 2018, the pesantren established *Rumah Produksi Tebuireng* (Tebuireng Production House) and by April 2019, the production house released a feature film entitled *Sakinah* (A Peaceful State of Life).

and negotiations to blend Islamic piety with symbols and spaces of modernity. In this regard, I am inclined to extend Asad's (1986) notion of "Islamic discursive tradition" beyond the establishment of orthodoxy, and broaden it to include Muslims' projects of exploratory discourses and practices (Ahmed 2015) over "living" (Marsden 2005) Islamic tradition through the concerns, complexities, and fluidity of the everyday life circumstances.

This conceptual framework gives insights into how the pesantren people have personally and collectively established connections between revelatory texts of Islam and mundane practices of the everyday life, as revealed in my ethnographic stories about the need to have the *kitab kuning* in the establishing shot of Aisyah's films and the use of religious discourse by the Kidang people for justifying their cinematic practices. In addition, this approach also enables us to recognize a range of desires, struggles, and morally ambivalent situations through which they negotiate and make meaning of the social changes that occur in and surrounding their worlds. Evidence of this strongly resonates from the santri's engagement with the material forms of film technologies. More importantly, the focus on the salience of Islamic tradition, while linking together ordinary practices of Islam, social changes and cultivation of the Muslim-selves, illuminates the ways in which those who even consider themselves as pious and 'elite' Muslims do not simply aspire to perfectionist ideas of pious life. As my stories of Baso and Jalal reveal, they also account for pragmatic sensibilities of living Islam in accordance to the complexity of everyday life considerations.

In this dissertation, I have also invoked an idea of looking at the cinematic santri as a figure of modernity, which I define as a real person who is at the center of a constellation of many different things that happens simultaneously in a society at one particular historical moment (Barker and Linquist et al 2009). As I showed throughout the chapters of the dissertation, such an approach helps me to provide a productive entry into a range of dispersed social, political, historical and religious processes, with regard to the rise of cinematic practices among the santri Muslims in contemporary Indonesia. In particular, it enables me to draw attention to the political dimensions of the current popularity of cinematic practices among the santri. As I have explored in Chapter One, the term 'cinematic santri' implies a strong and contagious energy that the santri have invested in campaigns that highlight the significance of cinema in articulating their political differences. In this regard, the cinematic santri emerges within a particular field of cultural production, and the politics of Muslim identity and visual representation of Islam are crucial to the willingness of the pesantren people to (re)turn to the film arena. By focusing on the ways in which Sahal has organized his cinematic practices in the headquarters of NU and beyond, I have tried to show how the santri have characterized their cinematic practices through an identification with NU-pesantren tradition not only to be recognized among each other, but also to position themselves in the country's cinematic battle of Islam vis-à-vis the modernist and Islamist Muslim groups with regard to the right interpretation and practice of Islam.

This dissertation, however, has extended dimension of the political into one that is reflecting the dialectical relations between the individuals and the government (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996). NU is a community where the existing system of the country's film infrastructures do not regard them as main audiences (Chapter Two). In response to such marginalization, many of my santri interlocutors often generated among themselves "a sense of cinematic solidarity", that is, a collective emotion among the cinematic santri to help and support each other for the mobility and development of their cinematic projects, the connection of which is shaped on the ground of their common identification with the tradition of NU and pesantren. In this regard, their turn to cinematic practices articulate their critical stance against the presumed ignorance of the state towards the lack of film-screening infrastructures in small town and rural Indonesia, which (not) coincidentally, is where the main pockets of the NU-santri communities are situated, as well as their social distinctions and political identities of being the NU-santri filmmakers/activists. This in turn, however, has ushered in some unintended consequences. That is, as much as the notion of NU-pesantren tradition has the potential to provide a cultural bond among the cinematic santri, the very same tradition, or an identification with the very same tradition, has the equivalent potential to limit the mobility of santri's cinematic projects within the provision of NU-santri communities, and not *seldom* render them exclusive to those who are "rivals" of the NU-santri groups.

There is also an ethical dimension in the ways NU-pesantren tradition is crucial to the santri's engagement with image-making technologies. The rising popularity of cinematic practices among the santri illuminates changes in multiple sectors of the socio-political life in and surrounding the santri communities. In particular, it reflects changes in social and economic backgrounds of the pesantren families, the modernization of pesantren's educational systems largely imposed by the state, and the (global) proliferation of new media technologies which is also felt across the santri communities, among many others (Chapters 1 and 3). For the cinematic santri, however, rather than being frightened by these changes in society, they take it as opportunities that may help remove upon themselves the imposed stereotypes of being "backward Muslims', and to open up new possibilities of improving their quality of being 'cool' and pious Muslims in the secularizing societies and spheres. As I have explained in Chapter Three, they do so by foregrounding their cinematic practices upon the maxim of "preserving the old tradition that is good and taking up the new tradition that is better," the social practice of which is established trough the santri's historical scholarship of learning the classical texts of Islam. Consequently, their turn to cinema is essentially directed toward preserving the domination of textual tradition in the pesantren world through the film medium, meaning that their turn to cinematic practices is in practice a reproduction of pesantren's new (textual) tradition of, and, through a film medium.

While cinematic 'visual' tradition is newly introduced among the santri, the ways in which they have established their capacity to engage with image-making technologies

and practices is, both epistemologically and practically, still, and perhaps will always be, an ongoing, if not unfinished process. I suggest here that this process is highly contingent upon various intentionalities, which do not come as inevitable, but socially and relationally constructed at the intersection of individual agencies, institutional authorities, and social situations. I explore the construction of these intentionalites in Chapters Four, Five and Six, and focus my explorations on the manifold ways the santri have subjectively and collectively translate their intentions and desires of engaging with image-making technologies and cinematic practices through the complexity, struggles, and moral ambivalence of living Islam in their ordinary practices of everyday lives. I show here that, while a turn to cinematic practice by the santri can be imbued with a range of fluid and conflicting desires, the santri have always tried to keep linking such desires with Islamic moral registers, characteristics, particularly, with those of an NU-pesantren tradition.

Yet, notwithstanding the adherence to tradition, or the lack of desire to challenge or depart from tradition, many parts of the dissertation also provide insights into how the medium itself fosters significant changes to tradition. I see tradition as something that is never fixed and rigid, but one that is flexible and contingent upon particular settings and circumstances. The prominent role of women in Kidang's cinematic practices, the communicative possibilities offered by film technologies, and the publicizing of what is (the daily life) in the pesantren looks like, all of these, while seems to be enabled by the embrace of cinema, will bring forward into the pesantren's world some new challenges, practices and circumstances that might facilitate a new tradition to "spring" (Kapfer 1988). Perhaps what I imagine happening in the future is the possibility to expanding the democratic spaces within which the (young) female santri are enabled to speak their voices, one that do not only challenge the male-dominated narratives of NU-pesantren tradition, but also reach wider and global scales of recognition.

Finally, in a summation of the relationships between Islam, everyday life, and the uptake of santri of image-making technologies and practices, I would like to re-emphasize that, while the traditionalist Muslims are strict adherents of religious practices prescribed by the earlier generation of *ulama* from the medieval period of Islamic history, they are, just like many other human beings, by no means lacking in knowledge about how to feel at home in the modern world. It is through their continuous interpretation of that very notion of tradition which they inherited from the medieval period of Islam, that the Muslim santri are able to negotiate their faith and religious believes with mundane aspirations, struggles, and moral ambivalence of the everyday live circumstances, especially ones that they encountered through the material forms of image-making technologies and practices. While the term 'cinematic santri' reflects a symbolic agency of the santri as a figure of modernity, the santri and the everyday lives of Muslims - even those in pesantren - are just as ordinary and multi-faceted as anyone else's.

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Summary of the Dissertation

The Cinematic Santri explores the rise and development over the last decade of cinematic practices among pious young Muslim students (*santri*) of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest traditionalist Muslim group in Indonesia and elsewhere. This exploration takes place from multiple angles. These include the study of the historical engagement and disengagement on the parts of some Indonesian Muslims of film technology, looking at the charged space of cinema theaters and certain kinds of images, through focusing on the new genres of *film Islami* that are produced by pesantren students, as well as paying attention to the kinds of creativity, challenges, experimentation, and negotiations that go into the production of the emerging new phenomenon of the "cinematic santri".

This dissertation is based on one year fieldwork at the Jakarta headquarters of NU, and in an NU-affiliated pesantren in West Java, in which I followed the santri as they watched popular films in a cinema theater, created their own short films set in the context of their own pesantren environment, and as they screened films of their own across the main pockets of NU's local communities. A library research was also conducted in Jakarta (at the Sinematek Film Library) and in Leiden (at the former KITLV library, its collections now being moved to the Leiden Asian Library), in order to collect information related to historical texts and discourses about Islamic film in Indonesia. Materials for this dissertation are framed by incorporating anthropological theories of discursive tradition and of ethics as everyday life, combining them with Bordieu's concept of the 'field of cultural production', and an analysis of visual and material culture.

Results of this research are presented in six chapters. I start with a chapter introducing the fields of cultural production in which the cinematic santri work and (they feel) they compete with. Here, I explore the socio-historical background of the rise of cinematic santri among the NU people, the range of style and discourse of their cinematic activities, and their positioning within their santri communities and against Muslim filmmakers with 'other' affiliations. I show here how santri in the NU headquarters and beyond have characterized their cinematic practices through an identification with the NU-pesantren tradition in order to get recognized, while at the same time they have used a similar strategy to position themselves in the country's Islamic 'cinematic battle' vis-à-vis the modernist and Islamist Muslim groups. I argue, while the rise of cinematic practice among the santri is produced through changes and continuities in multiple sectors of the social, political and technological life of the NU community, it is also a contest over the question for legitimate authority and who is to speak for, and on behalf of, the assumedly 'right' interpretation of Islam.

In the following chapter, I explore the ways in which, despite the lack of cinematic infrastructure, the santri have developed alternative ways for facilitating their cinematic practices, such as a mobile cinema practice, the making of a writers' communities, DIY film-making projects, and an infrastructure which extends online. By focusing on the 'poetic dimension' of infrastructure, or those mechanisms that operate beyond its mere technical function, I show that the use and development of alternative cinematic infrastructure by pesantren people is largely facilitated by what I call "a sense of cinematic solidarity", that is, a collective emotion among the cinematic santri to help and support each other in the development of their cinematic projects, the connection of which is shaped on the ground of their common identification with the tradition of NU and pesantren.

I dedicate the next four chapters to discussing a range of cinematic practices in the everyday lives of santri of the Pesantren Kidang of West Java. I start this discussion by looking at the ways the Kidang people have paved the roads of cinematic practices into the very interior of their pesantren's areas. I focus on the pesantren's narratives about changes, the agentive role of cinematic santri figures, and their habitual acts of citing classical texts of Islam (assumed to be originated from the *kitab kuning*) in order to authorize their engagement with either new directions of pesantren life in general, or cinematic practices in particular. I show how filmmaking has become an ethical practice among the santri, as ideas about the (re)production of the pesantren's (textual) tradition are intimately tied to their collective capabilities and desires to engage with cinematic technologies and practices.

In Chapter Four, I explore the ways in which practices of film screening and cinema going are desired, regulated, and negotiated in, and by the santri of Kidang pesantren. I focus on the production of "authorized and non-authorized spaces" -places in which the santri are strictly regulated to stay or not to stay- in Kidang, secular tensions that come along with cinema going practices among the santri, and the cultural and subjective ways

by which the santri have dealt with these tensions. I give ample attention to the ways structures of authority are constructed and distributed among the Kidang members. I show that to the extent that Kidang's production of space has been lied out on the basis of the pesantren's structure of authority: it is the very same authority that has 'authoritatively' enabled the santri to leave the pesantren's ground for going to such a space as secular as a cinema theater. Interestingly, their capacity to do so is cultivated through their time spend in Kidang, and is passed on from generation to generation, as if a tradition in itself. Here, tradition continues to play a role in the ways the santri deal with worries and tensions arising from the cinema going experience.

In Chapter Five, I turn my attention to the materiality of film and other new media technologies that relate to it, such as mobile phone and the Internet, and the ways they have been objectified by members of the Kidang pesantren in fashioning their personal and collective identities, and their social and political distinctions. This chapter shows how the engagement with these technologies, along with the visual and communicative possibilities offered by them, has generated anxiety among the older members of Kidang pesantren, and have often disrupted the pesantren's social order and authority. In contrast to it, many of the younger generation of santri come to the materiality of film technologies for their aspirational desires toward Western ideas of modernity, despite modernity that comes with it is seen by the Kidang people as destructive to santri's piety and morality. Because of this, the santri developed a particular discourse on how to master these technologies, and to use them according to their own tastes and needs, or to phrase it in their own rhetorical mode: "being santri 'and' modern, not just being santri 'but' modern".

In the last chapter of the dissertation, I explore the ways in which images of the pesantren are produced in and by the films of the Kidang santri. Here, I attend to the various ways in which the decision to film and not to film certain realities and materialities of the pesantren world are highly shaped by manifold desires and intentionalities. In particular, I examine the development of santri's film-making knowledge, relations of power and moral virtues that structure the everyday life practices of Islam in Kidang pesantren as an institution of learning, and politics of representation of the pesantren world in Indonesian film history. I argue that the efficacy of images do not only take place on the surface of screen, but that the efficacy of such images also unfolds in the ways they are emotionally, technically, religiously, and politically rendered significant in the contexts of how the Kidang people understand and give meanings their life words.

Toward the end of this chapter, however, I broaden my argument by examining the extent to which film can be served as a means to express a sort of Muslim femininity in a place that is strongly dominated by patriarchal culture, considering the fact that the majority of Kidang members who are engaged in film-making practices are (not) coincidentally women. I show here that through film practices, female students and teachers in Kidang are able to exercise their female agency of speaking in, and to Kidang's

male-dominated publics. Ironically, as such is enabled by the fact that film to many of the NU leaders is not highly valued, nor even central to NU today. In other words, it is because of the marginal position of film practices among the NU leaders that these female students are able to move into areas that are less prestigious and receive less attention.

Nederlandse Samenvatting

The Cinematic Santri verkent de opkomst en ontwikkeling in de laatste tien jaar van de cinematografische praktijk van jonge vrome Moslim studenten (*santri*) die verbonden zijn aan de internaten (*pesantren*) van de grootste traditionalistische Moslimbeweging in Indonesië en elders, de Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Deze verkenning vindt plaats vanuit verschillende perspectieven, zoals vanuit de verbondenheid die sommige Indonesische moslims wel of niet voelen met film technologie, maar ook door te kijken naar de beladen ruimte die de bioscoop soms voor gelovigen is, net zoals bepaalde beelden voor hen provocerend en problematisch kunnen zijn. De studie richt zich ook op *film Islami* en nieuwe genres die geproduceerd worden door studenten verbonden aan deze religieuze internaten, net als dat de studie kijkt naar verschillende vormen van creativiteit, experimenten, uitdagingen en de onderhandelingsruimte die gepaard gaan met de opkomst van de 'cineastische santri' als fenomeen.

Deze dissertatie is gebaseerd op een jaar veldwerk in het Jakartaanse hoofdkwartier van de NU en onderzoek in een aan de NU geaffilieerd internaat in West Java, waar ik de santri volgde tijdens het bekijken van populaire films in de bioscoop, in de wijzen waarop zij zelf korte filmproducties maakten, - vaak gesitueerd in de context en de omgeving van hun eigen internaat, - en terwijl zij hun eigen producties toonden aan NU gemeenschappen op verschillende plekken. Daarnaast werd bibliotheek- en archiefonderzoek gedaan in Jakarta (in de Sinematek Film Bibliotheek) en in Leiden (in de voormalige KITLV-bibliotheek, waarvan de collecties nu in de Leiden Asian Library aanwezig zijn), waarbij ik historisch materiaal verzamelde dat blijk kon geven van de verschillende discussies omtrent de Islamitische cinema in Indonesië. Deze materialen

bekijk ik door de lens van antropologische theorieën die oog hebben voor zowel de discursieve traditie als alledaagse moraal, en waarbij ik ook de Bourdieu en zijn idee van 'field of cultural production' van stal haal, en mij richt op de analyse van de visuele en materiele aspecten waarmee deze cineastisch cultuur gepaard gaat.

De resultaten van dit onderzoek worden gepresenteerd in zes hoofdstukken. Ik begin met een hoofdstuk waarin ik verder uiteenzet in welke 'fields of cultural production' de cineastische santri zich zoal begeeft en met welke krachten hij of zij moet wedijveren daartoe. Ik verken daarbij de sociaalhistorische achtergrond die de opkomst kan verklaren van de cineastische santri in de NU gelederen, de stijl, en discursieve traditie waarin hun cinematografische activiteiten kan worden geplaatst, evenals hoe zij zich positioneren te midden van hun eigen santri gemeenschap en ten opzichte van Moslim filmmakers van andere dan NU huize. Ik toon hier hoe het werk van santri in het NU hoofdkwartier maar ook daarbuiten gekarakteriseerd kan worden door de identificatie met de NU *pesantren* traditie. Tegelijkertijd gebruiken ze eenzelfde soort strategie om zichzelf te positioneren in een breder nationaal debat omtrent wat Islamitische film is, dit versus meer modernistische en Islamitische getinte groeperingen met hun eigen ideeën omtrent het gebruik van film. Ik betoog dat, hoewel do pkomst van cinematografische praktijken onder santri voortkomt uit zowel verandering en continuïteit in sociale, politieke en technologische aspecten van het leven binnen de NU gemeenschap, het ook gaat om onderlinge competitie over wie het voor het zeggen heeft, wie spreekt voor en namens Islam en de vraag wat de telt als de 'juiste interpretatie' van Islam.

In het daaropvolgend hoofdstuk analyseer ik de wijze waarop door het gebrek aan cinematografische infrastructuur een tal aan alternatieve praktijken zijn ontwikkeld die de cineastische santri faciliteren, zoals de 'mobiele bioscoop', het oprichten van een schrijversgemeenschap, het produceren van zelfgemaakte films en een online film(ers) infrastructuur die steeds verder wordt uitgebreid.

Door mij te richten op de meer 'poëtische dimensie', of te wel op die mechanismen die verder gaan dan de louter technische functie van het begrip infrastructuur, toon ik aan dat de ontwikkeling van een alternatieve filminfrastructuur door santri wordt vergemakkelijkt door een alom heersend gevoel van wat ik 'cineastische solidariteit' noem, dat wil zeggen, een collectief gedeeld sentiment en de gevoelde noodzaak elkaar te (moeten) ondersteunen bij de ontwikkeling van filmprojecten. Een gevoel dat vooral wordt gevormd door de gedeelde noemer die men in de NU traditie vindt.

De volgende vier hoofdstukken wijd ik aan het bespreken van een reeks van cineastische praktijken in het dagelijkse leven van de leerlingen van het Kidang internaat in West Java. Ik begin deze discussie door te kijken naar de manieren waarop de Kidang santri hun filmische praktijken tot diep in de muren van het internaat hebben gebracht. Ik concentreer mij daarbij op pesantren verhalen over verandering, de agenderende rol van sommige cineastische santri en de centrale rol van het citeren van klassieke Islamitische teksten (die verondersteld worden afkomstig te zijn uit de zogenaamde

kitab kuning). Hiermee rechtvaardigen zij nieuw ingeslagen wegen in het algemeen en experimentele filmische praktijken in het bijzonder. Ik laat ook zien dat film maken voor de santri vooral een ethische praktijk is geworden, omdat ideeën over de (re)productie van de bovengenoemd tekstuele traditie nauw verbonden zijn met wat zij als groep kunnen (zijn) en met hun verlangens zich vanuit hun pesantren achtergrond bezig te houden met de filmtechnologie en daaraan verwante praktijken.

In hoofdstuk vier onderzoek ik de manieren waarop film kijken en bioscoopbezoek een verlangen zijn maar ook een praktijk die volop gereguleerd is en onderhandeld moet worden door elke leerling van het Kidang internaat. Ik concentreer me in dit hoofdstuk op de productie van zowel geautoriseerd als niet-geautoriseerd ruimtegebruik, strikte regels omtrent de plaatsen waar de santri mee te maken krijgen en die bepalen wat wel en niet in-en-buiten het internaat gedaan mag worden. Maar ook de 'seculiere spanningen' die hierbij komen kijken alsmede de culturele en subjectieve wijzen waarop de santri met deze spanningen omgaan.

Ik besteed volop de aandacht aan de manier waarop autoriteit wordt gevestigd en bevestigd onder de leden van het Kidang Internaat. Ik laat daarbij zien dat het gebruik van de ruimte binnen en rond de pesantren voortbouwt op de daar heersende gezagsstructuur. Precies diezelfde structuren kunnen ook autoriseren dat iemand de internaat gronden mag verlaten om een ruimte te bezoeken die zo seculier is als de bioscoop. Interessant is dat dit vermogen en begrip van autoriteit wordt gecultiveerd door en in de tijd die de leerlingen in Kidang doorbrengen, en zo ook wordt doorgegeven van generatie op generatie, en zo een traditie op zichzelf aan het worden is. Traditie blijft zo een rol spelen, ook in de wijzen waarop de santri omgaat met de spanningen die voorvloeien uit de ervaring van een bezoekje aan de bioscoop.

In hoofdstuk vijf richt ik mijn aandacht op de materiële aspecten van film en andere nieuwe media technologieën die er aan verwant zijn, zoals mobiele telefonie en het Internet, maar ook op de manieren waarop ze door de leden van Kidang welhaast zij geobjectiveerd zodat ze nu gebruikt worden in het vormgeven aan individuele en collectieve identiteit, sociaal maar ook politiek onderscheid. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien hoe de betrokkenheid bij deze technologieën, samen met de communicatieve mogelijkheden die zij de gebruiker bieden, bij vooral de oudere Kidang generatie angst inboezemt en vaak heeft geleid tot een verstoring van de openbare orde en het gezag binnen de pesantren. In tegenstelling daartoe gebruikt de jonge generatie santri veel van de materiële aspecten van daze nieuwe technologie om te contempleren over hun eigen ambities, de hang naar Westerse ideeën van moderniteit, ondanks dat een dergelijk moderniteitsbesef door veel Kidang leden als destructief wordt ervaren en wordt gezien als een gevaar voor het vroom gedrag en de zedelijkheid van de santri. Hiertoe hebben de santri een bepaald discours ontwikkeld dat uiteenzet hoe zij technologie kunnen beheersen en hoe het ingezet kan worden voor eigen gebruik en naar eigen smaak en behoefte. Of, zoals men het in eigen retoriek vangt: men kan 'santri zijn en modern', niet alleen 'santri, maar modern'.

In het laatste hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift onderzoek ik de manieren waarop afbeeldingen van het internaat leven worden geproduceerd in en door de films van de Kidang santri. Hier besteed ik aandacht aan de beslissing wat of niet te filmen sterk beïnvloed wordt door verschillende verlangens en intenties. Meer in het bijzonder onderzoek ik hier de kennis van het maken van films wordt opgedaan, de machtsverhoudingen en morele waarden die de dagelijkse praktijken en het geloof in Kidang pesantren als een onderwijsinstelling bepalen, alsmede de verschillende vormen van representatie van de pesantren wereld in de Indonesische filmgeschiedenis. Ik beweer dat de effectiviteit van gebruikte afbeeldingen niet alleen gerealiseerd wordt op het scherm, maar dat de effectiviteit van dergelijke afbeeldingen zich ook ontvouwt op de wijze waarop ze emotioneel, technisch, religieus en politiek significant worden gemaakt in de context van hoe de Kidang-leden hun eigen leefwereld invullen en van betekenis voorzien.

Tegen het einde van dit hoofdstuk verbreed ik mijn betoog door te onderzoeken in hoeverre film kan worden gebruikt als een middel om een soort moslimvrouwelijkheid uit te drukken op een plek die sterk wordt gedomineerd door een patriarchale cultuur, dit gezien het feit dat de meerderheid van Kidang-leden die zich bezighouden met het maken van films (niet) toevalligerwijs ook vrouwen zijn.

Ik laat daarbij zien dat vrouwelijke studenten en docenten in Kidang door middel van door hun gebezigde filmpraktijken in staat zijn om hun vrouwzijn bewust vorm te geven en uit te spraken te midden en ten opzichte van Kidang's door mannen gedomineerde publiek. Ironisch genoeg wordt dit juist mogelijk gemaakt door het feit dat film voor veel van de NU-leiders momenteel niet erg wordt gewaardeerd, en zelfs niet centraal staat binnen de NU als beweging. Met andere woorden, het is vanwege deze marginale positie van film onder de NU-leiders dat deze vrouwelijke studenten bepaalde expertise kunnen opzoeken die vooralsnog als minder prestigieus te boek staat en van bovenaf nochtans minder aandacht krijgt.

Curriculum Vitae

Ahmad Nuril Huda was born in 17 April 1983, at a small village in South Lampung, Indonesia. He completed his high school (2000) in a state-funded boarding-school system *madrasah*, called MAKN, in Bandar Lampung. After the high school, Nuril moved to Malang, East Java, for pursuing his BA in Arabic Language and Literature at Universitas Islam Negeri Malang (2004), during which time he was also studying in Pesantren Gasek. He had worked for two years in the university's pesantren, before he received a scholarship of Training Indonesian Young Leaders Program from Leiden University in the Netherlands. The scholarship enabled him to do an MA in Islamic Studies, which he finished in January 2010. In December 2010, Nuril received a grant from NISIS (Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies), allowing him to work on his PhD research on "The Cinematic Santri" at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, in Leiden University. For this project, he did a one year fieldwork in a number of NU centers and pesantren in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, West and East Java. Now he is working as a tenured lecture in the Department of Study of Religions, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Religious Study, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung.