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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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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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