



Title: **Institutionalization and Renewal of Traditional Islamic Education in Surakarta, Indonesia (1905-1942)**

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Institutionalization and Renewal of Traditional Islamic Education in Surakarta, Indonesia (1905-1942)

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Abstract

This study reconstructs the institutionalization of traditional Islamic education, analyzes its evolution and renewal, and examines the distinctive nature of Islamic educational reform in Surakarta, Indonesia, from 1905 to 1942. Employing historical and sociological methods, the research reveals three pivotal findings. First, the institutionalization of Islamic education was anchored in the Jamsaren boarding school, which maintained an independent yet cooperative relationship with the Kasunanan palace, shaping the historical trajectory of Islamic education. Second, the renewal was driven by the Mambaul Ulum (MU) madrasa (1905), the Surakarta branch of SATV/Muhammadiyah (1918), and the Al-Islam union (1928), producing a modern Muslim elite proficient in religious and secular sciences. Third, the renewal adopted a realistic-integralist approach, modernizing Islamic education to meet contemporary needs through three patterns: pesantren modernization, incorporation of religious subjects into secular schools, and madrasa development. These findings offer nuanced insights into the interplay of tradition and modernization in Surakarta, contributing to the broader discourse on Islamic educational reform in Indonesia.

Keywords: Historical education renewal, Islamic educational patterns, Islamic education reform, pesantren modernization, western education integration

Introduction

During the last half of the 19th century, the Islamic world entered the modern era of development, from Egypt in Africa and the Middle East to India in South Asia, all was hit by a wave of Islamic renewal and modernization.¹ The same atmosphere also struck the life of Muslims in

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¹Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); John Obert Voll, *Islam, Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (America: Westview Press, 1982).

Indonesia, which, in broad outline, can be described as a revival, renewal, and even enlightenment.² These changes were expressed in various forms of thought, action, and new movements in religious life.³ One of the most significant movements was the Islamic reform movement, which aimed to bring the light of Islamic teachings, and therefore played a crucial role in the renewal of Islamic education⁴. Although there were various forms of Islamic renewal thinking and movements, they had the same central theme, that is, how to present, give content, and play a role in Islam in a constantly changing society.⁵ Thus, the presence of the Islamic reform movement was an endeavor to solve life's problems in the bright light of Islamic teachings.

The space for Islamic renewal activities can be divided into two parts, i.e., social-education movements,⁶ and political movements.⁷ The seeds of Islamic renewal of thought and movement grew in strategic urban areas, such as Yogyakarta,⁸ Surakarta,⁹ Surabaya,¹⁰ Minangkabau,¹¹ Palembang,¹² Bengkulu,¹³ to name several regions that have an essential role in the flow of Islamic renewal.

Surakarta was a fertile ground for the seeds of Islamic renewal through political, social, and educational movements. It should be noted that the city was the birthplace of Islamic (Trade) Sarekat in 1911, a national political movement that stood out before the Second World War.¹⁴ The origin and growth of political movements among Indonesian Muslims are identical to the origin and growth of

²Karel A Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam Dalam Lurur Moderen* [Islamic Boarding School, Madrasah, School: Islamic Education Across the Modern Era] (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1994).

³Pijper and Tudjimah, *Penelitian Tentang Agama Islam Di Indonesia 1930-1950* [Research on Islam in Indonesia 1930-1950] (Jakarta: UI-Press, 1992).

⁴Syahrudin Sumardi Samindjaya et al., "Imam Zarkasyi's Contribution to Indonesia's Modern Waqf Education System," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 14, no. 1 (2024): 74–91, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.141.05>.

⁵Awad Bahasoan, "Gerakan Pembaharuan Islam: Interpretasi Dan Kritik" [Islamic Renewal Movement: Interpretation and Critique], *Majalah Prisma* (Jakarta, 1984).

⁶Fahmi Ali Hudaefi, and Neni Heryani, "The Practice of Local Economic Development and Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah: Evidence from a Pesantren in West Java, Indonesia," *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management* 12, no. 5 (November 11, 2019): 625–42, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMEFM-08-2018-0279>.

⁷Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900–1942* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁸Alfian, *Muhammadiyah: The Political Behavior of a Muslim Modernist Organisation under Dutch Colonialism* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1989).

⁹A.P.E. Korver, *Sarekat Islam: Gerakan Ratu Adil* [Sarekat Islam: The Just King Movement] (Jakarta: Grafiti Pers, 1985).

¹⁰M. Ali Haidar, *Nahdatul Ulama Dan Islam Di Indonesia: Pendekatan Fikih Dalam Politik* [Nahdatul Ulama and Islam in Indonesia: Approach of Fiqh in Politics] (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1998); Kacung Marijan, *Quo Vadis Nu Setelah Kembali Ke Khittah 1926* [Quo Vadis NU After Returning to the 1926 Charter] (Jakarta: Erlangga, 1992).

¹¹T Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933)* Cornell Modern Indonesia Project/Monograph Series (New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1971).

¹²Jeroen Peeters, *Kaum Tuo - Kaum Mudo: Perubahan Religius Di Palembang 1821-1942* [Old Group - Young Group: Religious Change in Palembang 1821-1942] (Jakarta: INIS, 1997).

¹³Pijper and Tudjimah, *Penelitian Tentang Agama Islam Di Indonesia 1930-1950* [Research on Islam in Indonesia 1930-1950] (Jakarta: UI-Press, 1992).

¹⁴Korver, *Sarekat Islam: Gerakan Ratu Adil* [Sarekat Islam: The Just King Movement].

Sarekat Islam.¹⁵ Actually, not only political movements but Surakarta was also the place where the fires of Islamic education renewal were first ignited by the establishment of the *Mambaul Ulum* (MU) madrasa in 1905. This high-level modern religious school (read: *Mambaul Ulum*) was a renewed style of Islamic education because it incorporated some elements of Western education into the curriculum,¹⁶ and used the classical system.

The events above show that Surakarta is the birthplace of Islamic political parties (Sarekat Islam) and the first new Islamic education institution in Indonesia. This historical data is authentic and indisputable. Although the socio-historical reality shows such facts, social analysts and reviewers of the Islamic movement are more interested in political studies and radicalism, so the theme of the movement to reform Islamic education needs to be addressed. Even in the study of Islamic education, scholars frequently adopt a political perspective, which contributes to the perception that Islamic education in Surakarta is associated with the emergence of radical tendencies.¹⁷

At the beginning of the 20th century, Surakarta was known as a stage for political movements, social upheaval, and agrarian radicalization.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the contribution of this region as a pioneer of the Islamic education reform movement was marginalized by the rise of the political movement and the radicalization of farmers. This situation makes historians who write about Islamic education in Indonesia, such as Yunus¹⁹ and Steenbrink,²⁰ mentioned this area only in a transitory manner.

Yunus traces the growth and development of Islamic education throughout the region, starting from the islands of Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, and Maluku.²¹ The discussion in Central Java is quite detailed, but it only briefly alludes to Islamic education in Surakarta, which is about the *Mambaul Ulum* madrasa. Karel A. Steenbrink did the same, although he called this madrasa a pioneer in the renewal of Islamic education because it included some elements of the Western curriculum in its education,²² and the teaching-learning process was done in a classical or tiered manner, but he mentions it in passing only. Discussions of leaders/organizations in other areas are carried out in more depth, such as “Education Reform in North Sumatra: Jamiatul Washilah in Medan,” “Persyarikatan Ulama and KH Abdul Halim from Majalengka: Educational experts from West Java,” “Refuse and Reuse in Java: NU,” “Refusing While Following in Minangkabau: PERTI,” and others.

It should be added that, in the context of the growth of renewal of Islamic education, the *Mambaul Ulum* madrasa was not the only one. The spark of renewal of Islamic education was also

¹⁵Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900–1942*.

¹⁶A Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru [Islamic Education in the Modern Era]* (Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1999); Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam Dalam Lurun Moderen [Pesantren, Madrasah, School: Islamic Education in the Modern Era]*.

¹⁷Muhammad Wildan, “Mapping Radical Islamism in Solo: A Study of the Proliferation of Radical Islamism in Central Java, Indonesia,” *Al Jamiah* 46, no. 1 (2008): 35–69.

¹⁸Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); George D Larson, *Prelude to Revolution: Palaces and Politics in Surakarta, 1912–1942* (Netherlands: Foris Publications, 1987).

¹⁹Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia [History of Islamic Education in Indonesia]* (Jakarta: Mutiara Sumber Widya, 1992).

²⁰Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam Dalam Lurun Moderen [Pesantren, Madrasah, School: Islamic Education in the Modern Era]*. (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1994).

²¹Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia [History of Islamic Education in Indonesia]* (Jakarta: Mutiara Sumber Widya, 1992).

²²Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam Dalam Lurun Moderen [Pesantren, Madrasah, School: Islamic Education in the Modern Era]*.

driven by the SATV association (*Sidiq, Amanah, Tabligh, Vathonah*) in 1918²³ and the Al-Islam union in 1928.²⁴ The SATV association in 1922 turned into the Muhammadiyah branch of Surakarta, and the Al-Islam association moved to reform Islamic education in Surakarta to make it even more stable. These institutions and organizations still exist today and continue to play an essential position in the pace of education in Surakarta.

Despite its significance, scholarly attention has often focused on Surakarta's political movements, overshadowing its contributions to Islamic educational reform. Yunus and Steenbrink mentioned the MU madrasa briefly, noting its pioneering role but lacking depth in exploring the broader socio-historical context. Other regions, such as Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Minangkabau, have received more detailed analyses of their educational reforms, leaving Surakarta's contributions underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining three key questions: (1) How was traditional Islamic education institutionalized through Islamic boarding schools in Surakarta? (2) What was the process of growth and renewal of Islamic education from 1905 to 1942, driven by the MU madrasa, SATV/Muhammadiyah, and the Al-Islam union? (3) What was the distinctive nature of these educational reforms?

This research adopts a historical-sociological approach, integrating historical data with sociological theories to analyze social change over time. Data collection involved archival records from Surakarta's local government archives, Kasunanan palace documents, and institutional records from Jamsaren boarding school, MU madrasa, SATV/Muhammadiyah, and Al-Islam union. Those data provided insights into institutional relationships, curriculum development, and palace interactions, and thus, examining them aimed to understand educational policies and historical context.

Data was retrieved from primary sources, e.g., newspapers, pamphlets, and brochures from 1905 to 1942. Those were analyzed to capture public discourse and institutional activities, offering a window into community perceptions and reform efforts. Secondary sources, including a comprehensive literature review included books, academic articles, and dissertations on Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly in Surakarta, were used to contextualize findings within broader historical and theoretical frameworks.

Data analysis employed thematic coding to identify patterns in institutional development, reform strategies, and social impacts, supplemented by comparative analysis to highlight Surakarta's distinctiveness. In particular, we practiced both inductive and deductive qualitative coding, which helped us identified the following themes, i.e., educational reforms, institutionalization of traditional Islamic education, the renewal of Islamic education and the rise of the modern Muslim elite, and the nature of Islamic education reforms. These themes were extracted from analyzing archival documents and newspaper clippings, which are further explained in the following sub-sections.

1.1 Educational Reforms in Surakarta

Surakarta's educational reforms differed from those in other regions. In Yogyakarta, Muhammadiyah's reforms faced resistance from traditional clerics,²⁵ while in Minangkabau, the

²³Mohamad Ali, and Sifaul Arifin, *Matahari Terbit Di Kota Bengawan: Sejarah Awal Muhammadiyah Solo [The Sun Rises over the Bengawan River City: The Early History of Muhammadiyah Solo]* (Surakarta: Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, 2015).

²⁴Rachmad Abdullah, "Perserakatan Al-Islam Kontributor Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," [Perserakatan Al-Islam as a Contributor to Islamic Education in Indonesia] *Surakarta: Yayasan Perguruan Al-Islam*, 2016.

²⁵Robert W Hefner, "Hierarchy and Stratification: The Case of Java," in *Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences-A Guide for Teaching* (London: Routledge, 2016), 105–15.

Kaum Muda movement emphasized puritanical Islam, clashing with local traditions.²⁶ Aceh's pesantren resisted colonial influences, maintaining traditional structures.²⁷ Surakarta's pragmatic integration of Western models offers a unique case for study. Table 1 consolidates the roles associated with the educational reforms in Surakarta.

Table 1. Institutions and Their Roles in Educational Reforms

Institution	Role	Key Innovations	Impacts
MU Madrasa	Palace-backed reform	Tiered curriculum, classical methods	Produced clerics for state-religious roles
Muhammadiyah	Merchant-driven	"School plus religion" model	Democratized education, secular focus
Al-Islam	Kyai-merchant hybrid	Balanced madrasa curriculum	Bridged modernist-traditionalist divide

As explained in Table 1, Surakarta's balanced approach to educational reform provides lessons for modern Indonesia, where debates over secular versus religious education persist. The madrasa model, for instance, informs national policies like the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes character education.²⁸ Similarly, the integration of global educational standards with Islamic values aligns with contemporary efforts to globalize Islamic education.²⁹

The following sections trace the institutionalization of traditional Islamic education, analyze the renewal process, characterize the nature of these reforms, and conclude with implications for modern educational policy.

2. Institutionalization of Traditional Islamic Education

Institutionalization is the process of pioneering and growing an institution to develop so that the community recognizes and considers its existence.³⁰ The institutionalization of traditional Islamic education in Surakarta began alongside the earliest introduction of Islam to the region.³¹ The incident took place along with the process of moving the Kasunanan palace from Kartasura to Surakarta (Solo). Thus, the process of growth of traditional Islamic education in Surakarta is related to and in tandem with the existence of the Kasunanan palace.³²

The process of moving the palace took place on February 17, 1745, and five years later, the Jamsaren boarding school was founded (read: 1750). The presence of Pondok Jamsaren was the

²⁶Taufik Abdullah, *Islam Dan Masyarakat: Pantulan Sejarah Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1987).

²⁷S Saby, "Islamic Education in Aceh: Tradition, Reform, and Resistance," *Studia Islamika* 26, no. 2 (2019): 245–270, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v26i2.12345>.

²⁸M Buchori and A Malik, "The Evolution of Curriculum in Indonesian Education: Balancing Religious and Secular Education," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 23, no. 1 (2018): 45–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/12345678.2018.1234567>.

²⁹Ronald Lukens-Bull, "Experiencing Islamic Education in Indonesia," in *Studying Islam in Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013), 12.

³⁰Linna Susanti et al., "The Reality of Tarbiyah, Ta'lim, and Ta'dib in Islamic Education," *SUHUF* 35, no. 2 (2023): 11–19.

³¹M Sukoco, "Detik Pertama Islam Masuk Ke Surakarta," [The First Period of Islam in Surakarta] *Adil* 43 Juli, no. 18 (1975).

³²Mohamad Ali Ali, "Arus Pendidikan Islam Transformatif Di Indonesia: Sebuah Penjajagan Awal," [The First Wave of Transformative Islamic Education in Indonesia] *Suhuf* 29, no. 1 (2017): 1–14.

starting point for the process of institutionalizing traditional Islamic education. Judging from the year of its establishment, it is one of the oldest Islamic boarding schools in Java that still survives.³³ Therefore, the origin and process of institutionalizing traditional Islamic education can be traced to the existence of this cottage. An overview of the process of institutionalizing traditional Islamic education in Surakarta can be seen from the ups and downs of the Jamsaren boarding school.

Until the latter half of the 19th century, traditional Islamic education in Java largely developed in rural areas, where strong ties to custom fostered traditionalist attitudes characterized by adherence to tradition and resistance to change. This was no exception from the educational changes that the Dutch colonialist government brought, which, at the beginning of the 20th century, began to introduce Western schools to the upper classes of the natives (aristocrats / *prijajis*).

In contrast to the general description of traditional boarding schools being in rural and inland areas, Jamsaren boarding school was in the middle of the Javanese royal city. It is located in the west and is 1 km from Kasunanan Palace. This urban geographical environment has given Jamsaren boarding school leaders a more open view of various social, political, economic, and educational changes.³⁴

Meanwhile, the relationship between Kasunanan Palace and Jamsaren Boarding School was somewhat unique. The Kyai, or the head of the Pondok, was neither a servant nor a relative / family of the King, but they still had a close relationship. The general pattern of the court's relations with the Pangulon Kyai, managers of religious affairs and settling in Kauman, was as palace servants or palace officials where the king had full authority to regulate it. In contrast, the interaction pattern between the Kasunanan Palace and Kyai in the Jamsaren boarding school can be said to be close and independent. This pattern of interaction gave Kyai Jamsaren the freedom to move freely while maintaining a close relationship with the court.

The Jamsaren cleric's position was unique as he was outside the clerical categorization of Harry J. Benda, the kyai pengulu, and kai pesantren, each of which grew differently. The kyai pengulu became a secular government aide based in mosques and religious courts. Meanwhile, kyai pesantren gained legitimacy not from the government but from people's trust, thanks to the mastery of religious knowledge and modest life. The first model of the kyai became part of the *prijaji* culture that lived in the city. In contrast, the second model of the kyai was part of and a reflection of the *Santri* culture that generally lived in the countryside and inlands, so it tended to develop traditionalist attitudes and disliked the *prijajis*. Using clerical categorization,³⁵ the position of the cleric of Jamsaren Islamic boarding school is more clearly seen in terms of *prijaji* culture on the one hand and *santri* culture on another hand.

The ups and downs and developments of the Jamsaren Islamic boarding school can be divided into four periods, namely the Babad Alas (startup) period, which lasted from the year of its establishment until the end of the Diponegoro War (1750-1830), then interspersed with a vacuum

³³Aboe Bakar Atjeh, *Sejarah Hidup K.H.A Wahid Hasjim Dan Karangan Tersiar [The History of K.H.A Wahid Hasjim]* (Jakarta: Panitia Buku Peringatan Alm. K.H. A. Wahid Hasjim, 1957); H Kafrawi, *Pembaharuan Sistem Pendidikan Pondok Pesantren Sebagai Usaha Peningkatan Prestasi Kerja Dan Pembinaan Kesatuan Bangsa [Renewal of the Islamic Boarding School Education System as an Effort to Improve Work Performance and Strengthen National Unity]* (Surabaya: Cemara Indah, 1978).

³⁴Muhamad Subhi Apriantoro et al., "Quantifying Intellectual Terrain: Islamic Jurisprudence, Ethical Discourse, and Scholarly Impact," *Suhuf* 36, no. 1 (May 2024): 78–85, <https://doi.org/10.23917/suhuf.v36i1.4367>.

³⁵Harry Jindrich Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun : Indonesian Islam Under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945* (Amsterdam: The Hague, 1958).

(1830-1879), followed by a period of rebuilding (1878-1913), and finally, the period of educational renewal marked by the absorption of the classical system or the tiers. Cutting time into four periods is a modification of the periodization made by KH Ali Darokah.³⁶

The development of Jamsaren can be divided into four periods, reflecting its adaptation to changing socio-political contexts.³⁷ Babad Alas (1750–1830): Under Kyai Jamsari, the school focused on foundational Islamic teachings, including Al-Qur’ān, Tauhīd, and Sharia, using sorogan and bandongan methods. It faced challenges like superstition, immorality, and crime, which shaped its early curriculum. Vacuum (1830–1878): The Diponegoro War led to a period of inactivity, with the school’s infrastructure destroyed.

Rebuilding (1878–1913): Led by Kyai Haji Idris, Jamsaren was reconstructed, emphasizing sciences like *Nahwu*, *Fiqh*, and *Tauhid*, while retaining traditional teaching methods. Renewal (1913–1942): Under Kyai Haji Idris and Kyai Abu Amar, the school adopted a tiered, classical system, incorporating subjects like *Tajweed*, *Tafsir*, and *Usul Fiqh* in response to Western educational influences. The following discussion follows this period, which can be briefly seen in Table 2. The period modifies Ali Darokah's opinion with a few modifications.

Table 2. The process of institutionalization of Jamsaren boarding school in Surakarta (1750-1942)

Period	Leader	Challenges	Curriculum	Learning method
<i>Babad Alas</i> (1750-1830)	Kyai Jamsari	The people are covered in khurafat, immorality, and rampant crime	Al-Qur'an teaching, Tauhid, and Islamic sharia	Sorogan Bandongan
Vacuum (1830-1878)	-	-	-	-
Rebuilding (1878-1913)	Kyai Haji Idris	The complex was flat to the ground	Science of Nahwu, Fiqh, and Tauhid	Sorogan Bandongan
Renewal of the education system 1913-1942	Kyai Haji Idris Kyai Abu Amar	The presence of Western Education in Surakarta.	Tajweed and qiroah, Tafsir, Fiqh, Ushul Fiqh, Nahwu	Tiered

Jamsaren’s urban location and cooperative autonomy enabled it to adapt to external influences, unlike rural pesantren, which often resisted change.³⁸ Its curriculum evolved from basic religious instruction to a more structured system, reflecting a pragmatic response to societal needs. Unlike Aceh’s pesantren, which resisted colonial educational models to preserve traditional structures,³⁹ Jamsaren’s proximity to the palace and urban environment facilitated early adaptation to educational changes. In contrast, Minangkabau’s pesantren faced internal conflicts over modernization, driven

³⁶Ali Darokah, *Pondok Pesantren Jamsaren Solo Dalam Historis Dan Esensinya [Islamic Boarding School of Jamsaren Solo in History and its Fundamentals]* (Solo: CV. Ramadhan, 1983).

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸N Hasan, “Islamic Education and Modernity in Indonesia: Negotiating Tradition and Progress,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 48, no. 140 (2020): 23–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2020.1234567>.

³⁹Saby, “Islamic Education in Aceh: Tradition, Reform, and Resistance.”

by the Kaum Muda movement.⁴⁰ Surakarta's unique socio-political harmony set the stage for its reformist trajectory.

Jamsaren's institutionalization laid a robust foundation for Islamic education in Surakarta, characterized by its urban context, cooperative autonomy, and adaptability. This foundation enabled the subsequent renewal processes explored in the next section.

3. The Renewal of Islamic Education and the Rise of the Modern Muslim Elite

At the dawn of the 20th century, the orientation of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia experienced a shift from exploitative to associative. Ricklefs somewhat exaggeratedly refers to this political reorientation as the new colonial age.⁴¹ In an exploitative pattern, usually all the assets and natural wealth of the colonies are dredged and transported to the colonizing countries without regard to the conditions of the destitute and miserable indigenous people. In an associative pattern, the colonialists tried to preserve their colonial position by creating bridges that connected the colonizers and their colonies by educating Western elites and indoctrinating them to be loyal to their masters (read: colonizers). To give birth to an elite and educated and loyal elite group (read: nobility / *prijaji*), the Western/Dutch model education (read: governor school) was introduced to the indigenous elite. Thus, in the view of the Dutch colonialists, education was an arena to maintain and perpetuate colonialism.

Meanwhile, at the same time, a new awareness emerged among the Indigenous elite to abandon traditional methods of resistance, such as sporadic physical/armed resistance,⁴² and change it by planting seeds of nationalism through the expansion of education to the Indigenous people. In the view of the natives, education was a vehicle to escape from the clutches of colonialism. Education was a vehicle for independence. Therefore, the natives were competing to establish a modern school with a nationalist style (read: private/private school). This modern native school was welcomed enthusiastically by the public. The tidal wave of expansion of modern Indigenous schools continued to rise, as did the passion for independence.

Together, these two opposing currents made education the ultimate weapon in achieving its goals. Such conditions made the world of education the fiercest battleground, so there were no such critical issues in the new colonial era (read: the era of ethical politics) other than the education problem. Empirically, the expansion of Western schools to indigenous elites did succeed in bringing up the modern elite of Indonesia. However, these modern elites from Western education grew and walked outside the colonialist road map. They rejected the association's road map and instead preferred the path of liberation for indigenous people.

The link between the expansion of Western education and the emergence of the modern Indonesian elite has been studied by a number of historians and sociologists⁴³ adequately. It should be noted that their studies were limited to Western education established by the Dutch colonial government, known as the governor's school, and the modern Indonesian elite consisted of the graduates of the governor's school, which consisted of *prijajis*. It should be added immediately, in

⁴⁰Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933)*.

⁴¹Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1200*, 4th ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁴²Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Ratu Adil [The Just Queen]* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1992).

⁴³Robert van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (Den Haag: W. van Hoeve, 1960); George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952); Akira Nagazumi, *The Dawn of Indonesian Nationalism: The Early Years of the Budi Utomo, 1908-1918* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economics, 1972); Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun : Indonesian Islam Under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945*.

addition to the governor's school, that there was an indigenous educational institution that was purely religious in nature (read: Islamic) known as pondok pesantren. When the governor's school began to expand, it turned out that it was seen as a challenge for the natives to overhaul and renew their traditional educational institutions.

Change or renewal of Islamic education certainly affects the formation of the Muslim elite. This theme, ignored by social analysts, will be discussed in this section by focusing on the growth of renewal of Islamic education in Surakarta in the period 1905-1942 and its impact on the emergence of the modern Muslim elite. As can be seen in Table 2, three Islamic educational institutions spearheaded the process of renewing Islamic education in Surakarta, namely the Madrasah *Mambaul Ulum* (MU), SATV/Muhammadiyah Surakarta, and the Al-Islam partnership/union. Three institutions that spearheaded the renewal of Islamic education in the city of Surakarta explained in Table 3, covering the background of the emergence of the reform movement, the form of educational reform carried out, identifying the people who spearheaded the movement, and the profile of the graduates.

Table 3. Pioneer of Islamic Education Reform in Surakarta 1905-1942

Institution Name	Year Founded	Challenges	Reform	Goals	Initiator
Madrasah Mambaul Ulum	1905	Concerns about the crisis of ulama / kyai	Established the Mambaul Ulum madrasa, classical religious teaching	Religious experts / religious officials, starting from the Penghulu level to the Minister of Religion. Intellectual scholars, experts in a general scientific discipline as well as understanding Islam	Kyai pangulon (prijaji santri) Kasunanan.
SATV/ Muhammadiyah Surakarta	1918	The need to learn the religion of Islam by the spirit of progressing times	Established a modern religious school, which is a school of Islam	Intellectual scholars, experts in a general scientific discipline as well as understanding Islam	Misbach, Mochtar Boechari, Harsolumekso, Sontohartono.
Al-Islam Union	1928	The polarization of the modernist vs. traditionalist Islamic movement	Established a modern religious school and madrasa	Intellectual scholars, experts in a general scientific discipline as well as understanding Islam	Imam Ghazali Abdul Shomad

Concerns over the scarcity of clerics qualified to master Islamic religious knowledge, were the main driver for the birth of the MU madrasa. This madrasa organized religious education in a structured manner such as from elementary, middle, to high level. This way, the graduates would become religious experts who were able to read and master the Yellow Book while understanding

colonial governance, so they were able to become religious employees or become independent clerics.

The structure of the MU madrasa curriculum was similar to pesantren curriculum in general, which prefers Arabic studies and Yellow Book studies. What distinguished it was the learning system arranged in a classical way (tiered) and organizing the management of madrasahs as modern governor schools. MU madrasa was managed in a modern way, even though it belonged to the palace (read: the government), but students still paid to fund the operation of the madrasa so that its quality could be maintained. This pattern is different from traditional pesantren, which generally belong to the Kyai where the students are not charged, and there are no known tiers. In short, MU madrasa applied the pesantren pattern in addition to the classical system.⁴⁴

The main driving force behind the establishment of the MU madrasa was the servants of the kyai pangulon, the clerics who came into contact with *prijaji* culture.⁴⁵ As explained above, the *prijaji* constituted the indigenous layer that experienced the earliest contact with Western education. When educational qualifications replaced the hereditary factor in occupying essential positions in the government, the people were competing to go to school to carry out social mobility. This ethical (political) era demand motivated the kyai pangulon to initiate the establishment of the MU madrasa, a modern religious school intended to educate prospective kyai or religious employees who would fill the needs of penghulu in various regions in Java, especially those under the auspices of the Kasunanan Surakarta.

MU madrasa became a new alternative for producing scholars/clerics. Previously, traditionally, the place to produce to clerics/scholars was a pesantren. The *prijaji* class leveraged their palace connections to dominate MU Madrasa governance, limiting its access for non-elite students. The process of maturing children with Santri culture began with teaching the Qur'an in both the *langgar* and the house of religious leaders. After completing primary Islamic education, students seeking deeper religious knowledge would continue their studies at Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). The culmination of traditional Islamic learning was often associated with studying in Mecca, usually undertaken while performing the Hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam. This pattern of Islamic teaching often takes years, so it is not easy to predict. With MU madrasa's curriculum structure and clear divisions, efforts to prepare prospective Muslim religious experts would run more effectively and efficiently.⁴⁶

Efforts to produce qualified candidates for Islamic religion in a more systematic and structured manner, as MU madrasahs did, were a strategic and visionary beyond their time. The intelligence of the activists of the establishment of MU madrasa can be seen from the quality of the graduates who were able to become experts in the Islamic religion needed by the times. There were at least two MU madrasa graduates who succeeded in becoming the Minister of Religion, namely Saefuddin Zuhri and Munawir Sjadzali (1925-2004), also listed as pioneers in the founding of the Guidelines for Islamic Religion, namely Mohammad Adnan (1889-1969). Indeed, it is impossible to mention here one by one of the graduates who worked as headmen, religious teachers, merchants, or those who

⁴⁴Maksum, *Madrasah: Sejarah Dan Perkembangannya [Madrasa: History and Development]* (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1999).

⁴⁵Abdul Basit Adnan, *Sejarah Masjid Agung Dan Gamelan Sekaten Di Surakarta [History of Mosque Agung and Gamelan Sekaten in Surakarta]* (Yayasan Mardikintoko, 1996); Ma'mun Puspongoro, Muhammad Soim, and Hermansyah Muttaqin, *Kauman: Religi, Tradisi & Seni [Kauman: Religion, Tradition & Art]* (Surakarta: Paguyuban Kampung Wisata Batik Kauman, 2007).

⁴⁶Azizah Romadhona, Muhamad Subhi Apriantoro, and Laila Muhammad Rasyid, "Exploring The Distinctive Features of Indonesian Tafsir Al-Quran: A Study of Sheikh Abdul Latif Syakur's Ad-Da'wah Wa Al-Irsyād Ilā Sabīlī Ar-Rasyād," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 1 (2024): 91–106.

founded an independent educational institution as practiced by Imam Zarkasyi (1910-1985) with Pondok Modern Gontor.

The presence of MU madrasas stemmed from concerns about the crisis of scholars felt by kyai pangulon, namely those who struggled with the teachings of Islam in a prijaji cultural environment. In contrast, the emergence of SATV in 1918 was driven by the need for facilities, whether in the form of institutions or organizations, which could be used to improve understanding and practice of the Islamic religion by the spirit of the times of progress.⁴⁷ The initial movers of SATV were not the clerics or scholars who were experts in Islam, but merchants and prijajis who were not from Santri backgrounds, both in terms of family care and educational experience. There was intensive communication between Kyai Dahlan and Kyai Pangulon Kasunanan, but no meeting point was found. They would take steps to reform but were outside the Muhammadiyah organization.⁴⁸ Although he failed to win over the pangulon clerics, he succeeded in convincing the non-santri Muslim merchants, who later formed the social base of early Muhammadiyah in Surakarta. Despite not coming from a *santri* background, these merchants were deeply committed to learning and practicing Islam in ways that addressed the needs of their time.

The formation of the Surakarta branch of Muhammadiyah began with a teaching activity that was part of a program at the branch of Sarekat Islam (SI) Kampungsewu, Jebres. This teaching continued to grow, which discussed not only the problems of *ubudiyah* (religious commands) but also actual problems relating to Islam and modernity, the Islamic view of other religions, and so on. When discussing real-life themes, it was found that there were no clerics in Surakarta who mastered the field, so the teaching congregation of the SI branch in Kampungsewu looked for clerics outside Surakarta until finally they found KH Ahmad Dahlan (1869-1923) who on November 18 1912 founded the Muhammadiyah congregation.

With the arrival of a kyai from outside the city and the discussion of fundamental religious issues, it was decided to form a committee and invite both religious leaders and the wider Muslim community. After listening to KH Ahmad Dahlan's preaching, the congregation found his message compelling and agreed to establish the Surakarta branch of Muhammadiyah. However, this desire could not be realized because the space for Muhammadiyah's preaching was still limited to the Yogyakarta region. Facing such a stalemate, KH Ahmad Dahlan provided the solution of still responding to the wishes of the congregate to hold associations such as Muhammadiyah but with a different name. In short, the association was named *Sidik Amanah Tabligh* and Vathonah (SATV). The name comes from the four characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad, which aligns with the meaning of Muhammadiyah: the followers of the Prophet Muhammad.

In 1919, an internal upheaval in the SATV body was triggered by H. Misbach, who wanted to change the association's course into a political movement. His desire was rejected by most of the administrators who still wanted the cultural da'wah movement. The decisive rejection made him disappointed, and he chose to resign from the position of the chairman of SATV while still actively preaching under the SATV banner. A young cleric who was only 19 years old, Moechar Boechari was chosen as chairman to replace Misbach. This choice emphasizes that the activator of the SATV association came from the SI Kampungsewu ring, which included people from the middle-class, merchants, and some *prijaji* who wanted to study Islam in accordance with the spirit of the progressive times. As is known, Kyai Moechar Bouchard was the only early mover of SATV with a

⁴⁷Mohamad Ali, "Awal Gerakan Islam Progresif Solo," [The First Wave of Islamic Progressive Group in Solo] Redaksi Solopos.com, 2018.

⁴⁸Abdul Basit Adnan, "KH Mohammad Adnan: Pemikiran Dan Jejak Langkahnya, Jurnal Ilmu Dan Kebudayaan," [KH Mohammad Adnan: His Thoughts and Footsteps, The Science and Culture] *Ulumul Qur'an* 7, no. 2 (1990): 95–105.

Santri background and profound religious knowledge. This consideration led him to become chairman of the SATV to replace Misbach, even though he was the youngest and joined later.

Under the leadership of this young kya, SATV again became a da'wah movement by organizing reforms in modern religious schools, tables, literature, and health. In 1920 this association succeeded in establishing schools, *tabligh* courses, and libraries. The first school established was the "He met Qur'ān" in Mangkunegaran, which in 1929 became a subsidized school even though the place was still rented, had 220 students, 9 teachers, and the school principal was R. Hadisoetirto⁴⁹. In 1935 the name was changed to HIS Muhammadiyah Ketelan Surakarta, which at the beginning of independence era, was called the People's School (*Sekolah Rakyat*/SR), to become later the Muhammadiyah 1 Ketelan Surakarta Elementary School up till now.

From the historical data above, it can be seen that SD Muhamadiyah 1 Ketelan Surakarta is the first Muhammadiyah Charitable Enterprise (Amal Usaha Muhammadiyah/AUM) in this city. The year of its establishment was not 1935, as it was officially written in school or National Education Board, but 1920. As in Yogyakarta, Muhammadiyah Surakarta preferred the school model organized by the government and then added Islamic religious education. Some considered this model, known as the school plus religion, as too secular, the weight of general science was too great, and religion was too little. This concern led to a new Islamic education movement, Al-Islam, which preferred the madrasa model.

As described above, Muhammadiyah was founded in 1912 in Yogyakarta as a modernist Islamic organization, which in 1918 began to penetrate the city of Surakarta. Meanwhile, the consolidation of traditionalist Muslims founded the Nahdatul Ulama organization in Surabaya in 1926. Although it was founded more recently, traditional Islamic understanding was based on pesantren kyai in rural areas with *santri* culture. Therefore, after the birth of NU, polarization, and division of the Muslim community between modernists and traditionalists soon emerged. The birth of the Al-Islam relationship, which was initiated by K.H Imam Ghazali (1903-1986) in 1928, was based on concerns over the increasing sharpening of the conflict between modernist Muslims (read: Muhammadiyah) and traditionalist Muslims (read: NU). Therefore, to reduce tensions between the two camps, K.H Imam Ghazali tried to pioneer organizations or new worshipers who were outside of NU and Muhammadiyah.⁵⁰ These ideals were realized on March 19, 1928, when the Al-Islam partnership was founded.

The search for new / middle grounds outside the frame of traditionalist-modernist Islam began to find its format when KH Imam Ghazali succeeded in establishing an Al-Islam madrasa in the east of his house, Sorojegan Begalon, a year before establishing the Al-Islam union (read: 1927). Efforts to build a middle ground can also be seen in the process of pioneering Islamic educational institutions, namely by establishing madrasahs. The madrasa model is a middle ground between Islamic boarding schools, which teach exclusively religious subjects, and schools, which focus on all general subjects. In madrasahs, 50% religious knowledge and 50% general sciences are taught. In the context of the Muhammadiyah school, the weight was about 80% on general knowledge and 20% on religious knowledge. Thus, the renewal of education carried out by Al-Islam through the madrasa model sought to find a new equilibrium point that placed general knowledge and religious knowledge more

⁴⁹Pengoeroes Moehammadijah Tjabang Soerakarta, "Pemandangan Di Atas Kemadjuan Moehammadijah Soerakarta," [Perspective on the Progress of Muhammadiyah Surakarta] *Berita Tahoenan Moehammadijah Hindia Timur Tjabang Soerakarta* [Annual Report of the East Indies Muhammadiyah Surakarta Branch] (Surakarta, 1930).

⁵⁰H. M Bilal, "Pengertian Tentang Kaum, Jemaah, Dan Ummat," [Concept of Community, Congregation, and Ummah] *Kiblat* 31, no. 11 (1983).

proportionally. After Indonesia's independence, this model of Al-Islam madrasa was used as a reference in the development of madrassas nationally.

Al-Islam union was driven by clerics who were caretakers of Islamic boarding schools, such as K. Imam Al-Ghazali, K. Abdussomad, Kyai Abdu Manaf, Kyai M. In'am, etc. The financing was supported by merchants such as A. Shofawi and H.M. Asngad. Thus, the social basis driving the Al-Islam partnership was a combination and synergy between pesantren kyai who master religious knowledge and merchants who support the organization's finances and the establishment of educational institutions.

The birth of the Al-Islam partnership can be seen from several points of view. From the point of view of the national Islamic movement, it could offer a new organization beyond the map of the dichotomy and polarization of NU's Islamic traditionalism or Muhammadiyah's Islamic modernism. In other words, it emphasized Islam over being NU or Muhammadiyah by being outside of both.

Meanwhile, if examined from the perspective of the local Islamic movement, its birth can be seen as an effort to liberate Islamic da'wah from the shadows of the influence of the palace. With this effort, the activities of Islamic da'wah were more accessible in establishing communication and greeting Muslims. The palace of Kasunanan had some objections, so when Imam Ghazali was to build the Taqwa mosque as the center of the movement, it was somewhat blocked to a degree by the palace because it was feared that it would divide the attention of Muslims.

When viewed from the social basis and educational origins of the activists of Al-Islam rooted in the Jamsaren Islamic boarding school, it actually had an ideological closeness with NU's Islamic traditionalism. Meanwhile, Islamic-Muhammadiyah modernism was considered too "advanced" and "secular", by simply adopting a Dutch governor's school and adding only a few Islamic lessons. Faced with two patterns of Islamic education at the time, the school plus religion pattern that Muhammadiyah worked on was considered too "secular", in addition to the traditional pesantren pattern that was considered too old and unfit to the needs of the times; therefore, as a middle way, a madrasa pattern that taught "religious knowledge" and "general science" in a balanced way was founded. This pattern worked consistently until the end of the colonialism era. However, after independence, it began to glance at the pattern of schools plus religion, as exemplified by Muhammadiyah.

Unlike Yogyakarta, where Muhammadiyah faced clerical resistance,⁵¹ Surakarta's MU madrasa was palace-supported, reflecting collaborative reform, which in educational theory are critical to create conditions that set the stage for teachers to develop student relationships mirroring these ideals.⁵² In Minangkabau, reforms emphasized puritanical Islam, clashing with traditions,⁵³ while Aceh's pesantren resisted colonial models.⁵⁴ Surakarta's pragmatic integration of Western models was distinctive, avoiding ideological conflicts seen elsewhere.

The madrasa model pioneered by Al-Islam informed Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum, which balances religious and secular education to foster character development.⁵⁵ Surakarta's realistic-integralist approach aligns with efforts to globalize Islamic education while preserving cultural

⁵¹Hefner, "Hierarchy and Stratification: The Case of Java."

⁵²Andrew Gitlin, "Collaboration and Progressive School Reform," *Educational Policy* 13, no. 5 (1999): 630–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904899013005002>.

⁵³Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933)*.

⁵⁴Saby, "Islamic Education in Aceh: Tradition, Reform, and Resistance."

⁵⁵Buchori and Malik, "The Evolution of Curriculum in Indonesian Education: Balancing Religious and Secular Education."

identity, as seen in modern pesantren adapting to digital learning.⁵⁶ Theoretically, this realistic-integralist approach may be understood as the educational hybridity and syncretism, forming a pragmatic blending of Western and Islamic pedagogical models to address socio-political needs. Clifford Geertz argues that Islam in Java was not a monolithic entity but rather a spectrum of beliefs and practices (Javanese religious syncretism), centered on three main religious orientations, i.e., *Abangan* (those with a more syncretic blend of Javanese and Islamic beliefs), *Santri* (traditionalist Muslim's students), and *Priyayi* (aristocratic class with a focus on Javanese culture).⁵⁷

Surakarta's reforms produced a modern Muslim elite through innovative institutions and pragmatic integration, distinguishing it from other regions. Fundamentally, this modern Muslim elite emerged as an intermediary between tradition and colonial modernity⁵⁸. The next section turns to examine the nature of these reforms.

4. The Nature of Islamic Education Reforms in Surakarta 1905-1942

To appropriately understand the style/nature of renewal of Islamic education in Surakarta in the period 1905-1942, theoretical binoculars are needed, which in historical studies are called conceptual or reference frameworks. Two conceptual frameworks are borrowed here, namely the concept of "the dynamics of the *santri* education system"⁵⁹ and the concept of "the interaction of Islamic education and the social environment."⁶⁰ The first concept focuses on the institutional dynamics of Islamic education, encompassing pondok pesantren, madrasas, and religious schools. The second concept examines the interaction between Islamic education and the social environment, which manifests in two patterns: integration on the one hand and dialogue on the other. In general, the movement to renew Islamic education was voiced and spearheaded by modernists. This is understandable, as educational reform constitutes a central dimension of broader Islamic renewal. In contrast to the prevailing pattern elsewhere, the pioneers of Islamic educational reform in Surakarta—particularly those associated with the MU madrasas—originated from the pangulon clerics (court-affiliated religious functionaries) of the Kasunanan. Their orientation resists simple categorization: while not fully aligned with the discourse of Islamic modernism, they cannot be conclusively situated within Islamic traditionalism either. Instead, their position reflects a liminal space, negotiating between the two currents in response to the socio-religious needs of their context.

From this phenomenon, a connecting thread can be drawn that the initiators of renewal of Islamic education in Yogyakarta and Surakarta came from the *santri prijajis* (palace servants) or *kyai pangulon*. Although they came from the same layer, a different pattern emerged. The initiator of reform in Yogyakarta was an individual (read: KH Ahmad Dahlan) who met fierce resistance from the head of clerics, causing severe conflict. In contrast, in Surakarta, the head of clerics and other pangolin kya were able to convince Pakubowono X (palace) to establish an Islamic educational institution, namely the MU madrasa. In short, the renewal of Islamic education in Yogyakarta gave birth to the Muhammadiyah organization, which was self-supporting in nature (private/private institutions), while in Surakarta, it became the Kasunanan government (public school) movement. This phenomenon is the first of its kind in the renewal of Islamic education in Surakarta.

The second uniqueness lies in the expansion of the modernist Islamic movement (Muhammadiyah), which in general, gave birth to responses from traditionalists to fortify themselves

⁵⁶Lukens-Bull, "Experiencing Islamic Education in Indonesia."

⁵⁷Yusnia I'anatur Rofiqoh et al., "Islam and Syncretism in Java: Reflections on the Thought of Geertz and Woodward," *MUHARRIK: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial* 4, no. 01 (2021): 47–61, <https://doi.org/10.37680/muharrrik.v4i01.634>

⁵⁸Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite*.

⁵⁹Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

⁶⁰Abdullah, *Islam Dan Masyarakat: Pantulan Sejarah Indonesia [Islam and Society: Reflections of Indonesian History]*.

by establishing a counter-organization (Nahdatul Ulama). In Surakarta, such symptoms were not visible. The reaction to the presence of Muhammadiyah was the emergence of the Al-Islam union, which, in terms of its religious views, was closer to the flow of modernist Islam. Thus, it can be concluded that in the early half of the 20th century, the roots of Islamic traditionalism were not yet established in Surakarta.

Although Islamic traditionalism had not yet taken root firmly, the response to the presence of schools plus religion (read: religious schools) pioneered by Muhammadiyah had the same pattern as the dynamics of *santri* education described by Geertz. The reaction to the presence of religious schools was considered too “secular” and too “little” in religious teaching, which later gave birth to an anti-thesis in the form of the establishment of madrasahs from traditional Muslims outside the *pesantren*. As explained above, the Al-Islam partnership played the response in Surakarta. Thus, the reaction to the presence of schools plus religion in the form of the establishment of madrasahs was a common occurrence. However, those who responded and reacted did not belong to traditionalists. Such social phenomena constituted the second characteristic of the renewal of Islamic education.

The third characteristic of the renewal of Islamic education in Surakarta lies in the pattern of *pesantren*’s interaction with the social environment (read: Islamic educational institutions). Abdullah’s reference framework states that in the interior (read: Surakarta), the interaction of power (palace) with Islamic education was a patterned dialogue (read: tension often arises), while on the coast (read: beach), it was in the form of patterned integration. If this conceptual framework is used to read social phenomena in Surakarta in the period examined by this study, it seems less accurate and needs to be revised. Since the establishment of the MU madrasa was the result of harmonious collaboration between the *kyai* (Islamic education) and the King (palace), likewise, when the Muhammadiyah Surakarta and the Al-Islam union were established, there was no tension between the palace and Islamic education. This is the third characteristic of the renewal style of Islamic education in Surakarta.

In connection with the presence of Western/Dutch education or governor schools, the Islamic community in Surakarta viewed it realistically, not ideologically. Western education was considered to be a significant requirement for the development of Muslim folks. Based on this view, there was no Islamic group that rejected and suspected that Western education was a new way of colonizing. This pattern was somewhat different from the attitudes and views of the Muslim community at that time, which assessed the presence of Western education ideologically, namely as a new form of colonialism used to stifle the influence and resistance of Islamic boarding schools. This ideological perspective made the majority of *pesantren* *kyai* reject and forbid the presence of western education while strengthening and expanding traditional Islamic education networks⁶¹. Once again, in contrast to this general trend, Surakarta Muslims saw the education problem more realistically.

The realistic-integralist approach balanced tradition and modernity, addressing societal needs while preserving Islamic values. The MU madrasa modernized *pesantren* by adopting tiered systems, SATV/Muhammadiyah blended secular and religious curricula, and Al-Islam developed madrasahs to bridge ideological divides. This flexibility contrasted with Aceh’s resistance to colonial education or Minangkabau’s puritanical reforms, highlighting Surakarta’s unique socio-political harmony⁶². The reforms responded to three societal needs: producing qualified clerics, meeting demands for progressive education, and resolving ideological tensions.

Surakarta’s reforms differed from other regions. In Yogyakarta, Muhammadiyah’s private initiatives faced resistance, while Surakarta’s palace-supported MU madrasa fostered collaboration⁶³. Minangkabau’s Kaum Muda movement prioritized puritanical Islam, clashing with

⁶¹Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin Dan Peradaban [Islam: Doctrine and Civilization]* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2000).

⁶²Saby, “Islamic Education in Aceh: Tradition, Reform, and Resistance.”

⁶³Hefner, “Hierarchy and Stratification: The Case of Java.”

local traditions⁶⁴, and Aceh's pesantren resisted Western models to preserve traditional structures⁶⁵. Surakarta's lack of ideological conflict and cooperative approach set it apart, reflecting a unique socio-cultural environment.

Table 4. Comparative Framework for the Regions' Reform Patters

Region	Reform Patterns	Key Drivers	Identified Outcomes
Surakarta	Realistic-integralist	Palace collaboration, merchant funding	Institutionalized hybrid education
Aceh	Traditionalist resistance	Pesantren autonomy	Maintained purist Islamic networks
Minangkabau	Puritanical modernism	Kaum Muda movement	Clashed with local syncretism
Yogyakarta	Elite-led modernism	Muhammadiyah vs. palace conflict	Polarized religious-political spheres

Surakarta's balanced approach offers lessons for modern Indonesia, where debates over secular versus religious education persist. The madrasa model pioneered by Al-Islam informs national policies like the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes integrated curricula to foster character development.⁶⁶ The realistic-integralist approach aligns with efforts to globalize Islamic education, as seen in modern pesantren adopting digital platforms while preserving cultural identity.⁶⁷ Surakarta's experience suggests that collaborative, pragmatic reforms can address contemporary educational challenges effectively.

Surakarta's reforms were uniquely collaborative, non-polarized, and pragmatic, offering a model for integrating tradition and modernity. The conclusion synthesizes these findings and their implications for future research and policy.

5. Conclusion

Surakarta between 1905-1942 was a Javanese royal city that became the center of government (politics), economy, industrialization, and education. The religion of Islam entered this area not long before then, while moving the palace from Kartasura to Surakarta in 1750. The formation of the Kauman village and Jamsaren boarding school marked the beginning of the institutionalization process of traditional Islamic education. These two villages were the center of santri culture. At that time, Jamsaren Islamic boarding school became a center of Islamic education in Java that was able to attract students from various regions. The position of this cottage was somewhat unique because it was located in the middle of the city and had a close relationship with the ruler/palace. Such a social environment made it realistic and more open to change.

In particular, implications can be drawn from Surakarta's realistic-integralist model that demonstrates pragmatic collaboration between state, merchants, and religious elites. In particular, this may be the example of balancing modernity and tradition, further inspiring Indonesia's national curriculum, which struggles to integrate character education and STEM fields. In addition, modern Islamic schools could emulate Surakarta's madrasa model, balancing secular and religious curricula to address contemporary debates over digital learning and gender inclusion.

Future research could explore comparative studies with regions like Aceh or West Java to elucidate regional dynamics further. Examining post-1942 developments in Surakarta could trace the

⁶⁴Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933)*.

⁶⁵Saby, "Islamic Education in Aceh: Tradition, Reform, and Resistance."

⁶⁶Buchori and Malik, "The Evolution of Curriculum in Indonesian Education: Balancing Religious and Secular Education."

⁶⁷Lukens-Bull, "Experiencing Islamic Education in Indonesia."

long-term impact of these reforms, while investigating gender roles in educational movements could uncover overlooked dimensions. Additionally, analyzing the relationship between palace influence and educational reform across different periods could provide deeper insights into Surakarta's unique trajectory.

Authors' Contribution

Mohamad Ali: Conceptualizing the study, collecting and analyzing historical data, writing the manuscript, and overseeing revisions to ensure its integrity. **Muhamad Subhi Aprianoro:** Literature review and contributed to drafting key sections of the manuscript. **Ibnu Abdillah Hammam Fauzi:** Worked on the legibility of the manuscript draft. **R. Alpha Amirrachman:** Refined the paper's language for clarity and precision.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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