

# When Santri Played Music:

## An Overview of Music Learning in *Pesantren*

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**Abstract**—In order to provide capital for success and prosperity, the education process should not only be developed in formal education such as in schools, but also in the *pesantren* community. The process of fostering the style of *pesantren* in providing capital for the success and prosperity of humanity has been able to survive for years and has become a form of special educational culture. In *pesantren*, the *Kyai* has his own involvement in conducting the education process. The values of local wisdom developed by *pesantren* as its trademark have become a personification of its own education system. One of the values of local wisdom that occurred is in music learning activities. Therefore, this research aims at deeply examining the phenomenon of music in a *pesantren* environment. Regarding this issue, the literature from previous research was focusing only in the ontological aspects of music in *pesantren* while no research has been conducting on how the music learning process in a *pesantren* environment carried out by the *Kyai* or *ulama*. Hence, this research has become unique and rare because of it since music has become a device of moderation or a device that drawn out a balance between *pesantren* lessons and the arts that must be followed by the *santri*. So, this research will discuss the ins and outs and how the music learning process takes place.

**Keywords**—*santri, pesantren, music learning*

### I. INTRODUCTION

*Pesantren* is an Islamic boarding school that provides Islamic education to all participants. Ideally, the purpose of education in *pesantren* is to realize the perfect human generation where it can benefit the family, community, nation, state, and religion [1,2]. *Pesantren* education has its own tradition that has grown since the early arrival of Islam in Indonesia [3].

Observing the values of local wisdom in *pesantren* is a necessity in fostering the personality of the *santri* to become independent and responsible, especially in the process of education and learning that is directly handled by *kyai* or religious teachers continuously. Since before the Republic of Indonesia (RI) independence era, the development of the national education system was very long and influential. However, the development of *pesantren* with its local wisdom values in fostering *santri* is not very well known. After

surviving for hundreds of years, fostering the style of *pesantren* in providing capital for the success and prosperity of humanity has an impact on the formation of an education culture itself. The *Kyai* have their own way of conducting the education process. The values of local wisdom developed in *pesantren* as its characteristics have colored the Indonesian national education system [4]. One of the values of local wisdom fostered in *pesantren* is in the music learning activities.

Some of the students who enrolled in the *pesantren* have ambitions to become an *ulama* and other students enrolled in the *pesantren* because their parents want their children to get enough religious education so that their children can avoid the hustle and bustle of "chaotic modern morality." After getting acquainted with some elementary books, the students learn Arabic in order to deepen their learning on books about *fiqh* (Islamic law), *usul fiqh* (knowledge of the sources and systems of Islamic jurisprudence), *tarikh* (Islamic history), *tasawuf*, and *akhlaq* (Islamic ethics) [3]. However, besides the learning activities mentioned above, there is another learning activity that is integrated with other materials, which is music.

The phenomenon of music in the *pesantren* environment has attracted many researchers to conduct research on this matter [5-11]. Their perspective is more focused on the form of music. Meanwhile, there is no research that examines how the teaching process that is integrated with music performed by *Kyai* in a *pesantren* environment. Therefore, this has become unique and rare, considering that all the previous research focused on the ontological aspects of music in *pesantren*. Meanwhile, there is no research that studies the teaching of music in *pesantren*, which has become a device of moderation or a balancing device between the *pesantren* lessons and the arts that must be learned by the *santri*.

### II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### A. The Development of *Pesantren*

The development of *aqidah* and *akhlaq* was carried out so that *pesantren* can become educational facilities to form agents of change [4,12,13]. This was carried out to prepare a perfect human being by instilling the concepts of *aqliyah*, *khuluqiyyah*, and *jismiah*. These concepts were instilled through the

*pesantren* education process where *aqilyah* is to foster reason and knowledge of reasoning based on faith and piety to Allah (SWT). Then, *khuluqiyah* shows behavior and attitudes in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Last, *jismiah* is to show the ability and potential of oneself to the community, state, and religion.

The current form of *pesantren* is the result of a very long and dynamic process. As the oldest educational institution in Indonesia, *pesantren* has a significant contribution to the struggle of the nation in educating people to become fully human. The basis of the educational process in *pesantren* is *fiqh*, which is an understanding of the teachings of Islam based on the Qur'an and *hadith* [4,6,14-16]. The framework of the education process implemented the cultivation and development of values regarding the relationship between humans and God, humans and humans, and humans and the surrounding environment.

**B. The Existence of Music in Pesantren**

The existence of music and other elements of arts in Islam have been used for the benefit of society as a medium for preaching. The success of the spread of Islam in Indonesia is inseparable from the intelligence of the scholars (*Wali Songo*) in utilizing music or songs and cultural heritage as a medium for preaching. Al-Fandi stated that Sunan Giri or Maulana Ishak (Raden Paku) created Asmaradana and Pucung music as a medium to spread Islam. Sunan Kalijaga or Maulana Muhamad Syahid delivered his sermon through *wayang* art. Sunan Kudus or Maulana Jakfar Al-Sadiq Ibn Sunan Uthman created the music of Maskumambang and Mijil, and he also wrote many Islamic stories. Sunan Muria or Maulana Raden Umar Said, the son of Maulana Jakfar al-Sadiq, created Sinam and Kinanti music [17].

Judging from its development in the spread of Islam, music has become an inseparable part of society. Music tradition in *pesantren* arises from various media, which may be seen by some people as being at odds with Islam because some *ulama* still contradict the prohibited laws against music. However, concrete examples of the use of music as a medium of Islamic teachings have been produced in the scope of *pesantren*, such as the Al Falah Pesantren in Bandung and Al Hanif in Cianjur.

**C. Music Traditions in Al Falah and Al Hanif Pesantren**

Music tradition in *pesantren* is generally used as a medium for learning music while studying Islam. Studying music through the learning process of *marawis*, *hadroh*, *qosidah*, and *nasyid* instruments performed in *pesantren* is considered as a medium to accommodate the interests and abilities of *santri* in showing their expressions. Through this facility, *santri* can learn how to convey messages containing Islamic teachings and music. Therefore, this musical activity is a step in encouraging physical and spiritual dimensions, individual and social dimensions, and knowledge and action dimensions.



Fig. 1. Female *santri* at Al Hanif *Pesantren* were performing *Hadroh* music (Documentation by Gunara, 2020)

Because the language of music is universal and abstract, the above dimensions must be understood and vice versa. To develop those dimensions, music should become a media that is psychologically, anthropologically, philosophically, and metaphysically related to the meaning of human life. From interviews with *Kyai* at Al Falah and Al Hanif *Pesantren*, music has an important role in the process of Islamic education in *pesantren*. Music is needed because the *pesantren* community considers *marawis*, *hadroh*, *qosidah*, and *nasyid* music to have Islamic values formed in the aesthetics of music.



Fig. 2. *Santri* in Al Falah *Pesantren* were studying *Hadroh* music (Documentation by Gunara, 2020)

In addition to being a medium for spreading Islamic *da'wah*, the music approach is also used as an effort to develop the learning motivation of *santri* in which they can hone sensory sensitivity, both musical and contextual aspects, through the learning process and practice of playing musical instruments such as *marawis*, *rebana*, *qasidah*, and *nasyid*. In its presentation, the music is played together or in groups. Thus, in the process of learning and practicing, *santri* are exposed to contextual activities, such as socialization, collaboration, enhancing solidarity, and developing self-understanding. Meanwhile, in terms of musical aspects, it

consists of rhythmic and percussion patterns as an accompaniment of song melodies. Song melodies are built by lyrics that contain teachings about Tawhid, the stories of the Prophet, and stories about the piety of life.

### III. CONCLUSION

The effort to foster the perfect *santri* through music in *pesantren* has several steps that must be carried out with music material and learning activities and practices of *marawis*, *hadroh*, *qasidah*, and *nasyid*. The material consists of rhythmic and percussion patterns as an accompaniment of song melodies and lyrics about faith and moral values. Through learning activities and practicing musical instruments, the *santri* are faced with understanding and developing the perfect human dimension which consists of physical and spiritual dimensions, individual and social dimensions, and knowledge and action dimensions. In the tradition of music in *pesantren*, religious studies and music are closely interwoven. However, each of them has its own meaning in influencing *santri* and improving the education process in *pesantren*.

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