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Sekolah Islam (Islamic Schools) as Symbols of Indonesia's Urban Muslim Identity

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Abstract
This article discusses the relationship between Sekolah Islam (Salafism-influenced Islamic schools) and urban middle-class Muslims. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in the City of Serang (Kota Serang), near Jakarta, this paper argues that these conservative and puritan Muslims demonstrate their Islamic identity politics through their engagement with Sekolah Islam. The analysis of in-depth interviews with and close observations of parents of students and school custodians (preachers or occasionally spiritual trainers) at several Sekolah Islam reveals that they have attempted to pursue 'true' Islamic identity and have claimed recognition of their identity as the most appropriate. The pursuit of a 'true' Islamic identity has infused Islamic identity politics, and there is an oppositional relationship between local Islamic traditions and Salafism, as seen in Sekolah Islam. The relationship between Islam and identity politics becomes intricate when it is transformed into public symbols, discourses, and practices at many Sekolah Islam. This paper shows that through their understanding and activities at Sekolah Islam, these Muslims are avid actors in the contemporary landscape of Islamic identity politics in Indonesia. By taking examples from Sekolah Islam in Indonesia, this article unveils social transformations that may also take place in the larger Muslim world.

Keywords: Islamic identity politics; Sekolah Islam; Urban middle-class Muslims; Salafism; Islamic education; Indonesia

Introduction

For some Muslims, 'true' Islam means "a return to the Quran and *Ḥadīth*" (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad recorded by his contemporaries), and also the *Sunnah* (the practices of the Prophet that are derived from the *Ḥadīth*). These Muslims may well be influenced by the contemporary Salafi movement, which is a branch movement within Sunni Islam that has become associated with literalist, strict, and puritanical approaches to Islam. The name 'Salafism' derives from advocating a return to the traditions of "the pious predecessors" (*as-Salaf as-Ṣāliḥ*), the first three generations of Muslims thought to know the pure form of Islam. Nowadays, Salafi teachings and ideas have become omnipresent worldwide, extending across national boundaries, so that many Muslims—even those who do not formally identify as being Salafi—are attracted to certain aspects of Salafism, namely its exclusive emphasis on textual forms of authority and its call for reform of Muslim thought and practice by returning to the model of the Prophet Muhammad and the pious predecessors (Haykel 2009). In many Muslim countries, Salafism has a close connection with Islamism or political Islam—that is, Islam as a political ideology rather than as a religious or theological construct (Ayoob 2004). The term 'Islamism' is used to encompass both Islamist politics and re-Islamisation —the process by which various domains of social life are invested with signs and symbols associated with Islamic traditions. Re-Islamisation is often characterised by religious conservatism. Examples of such a process in the Muslim world include the wearing of the veil (*ḥijāb*), consuming religious commodities, holding exclusive religious gatherings, and displaying symbols of religious identity (Ismail 2006).

In Turkey, while neglecting serious public talk on an Islamic state based on *Sharī'a* (Islamic laws), the proponents of political Islam continue to promote the virtues of conservative Islamic morality, as these remain an important indicator of an *ummah*-based (Islamic religious community) political identity

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(Hadiz 2016). In Egypt, an Islamist movement that held a conservative moral vision, populist language, a patriarchal disposition, and adherence to scripture, developed pervasively. By the early 1990s, through *da'wah* (the act of calling people to adhere to Islam), the movement captured some large tracts within society (Bayat 2010). In Iran, since the 1979 Revolution, conservative Muslims have constituted a major force and enjoyed the upper hand at particular periods of time (Ismail 2006). This rise of Islamism and religious conservatism has spread all across the Muslim world. In fact, the 'unholy alliance' between Western capital (particularly American) and oil-rich Arab Gulf countries (notably Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates) has actively aided a conservative form of Islam around the Muslim world so as to defeat progressive movements that may have opposed such alliances (Mahmood 2005).

In Southeast Asia, re-Islamisation signifies the strengthening of a conservative Islam (Ufen 2009). For example, in Malaysia, the critical juncture that marked the beginning of Islamisation in the late 1970s entailed abrupt institutional change, resulting in the reconfiguration of orthodox values and the rise of a conservative form of Islamic orthodoxy (Tayeb 2018). In Indonesia, since the fall of the authoritarian New Order administration (1966–1998), the country's transition to democracy has been accompanied by a 'conservative turn' in Islam (Van Bruinessen 2013). In addition, transnational ideas of Salafism and the influence of the global market economy can be seen in the attitudes and behaviours of the country's growing urban middle-class Muslims (Fealy 2008; Hasan 2009a; Heryanto 2011; Van Bruinessen 2015).

In the context of global Muslim education, the revival of Islamic educational institutions in the Muslim world, such as Pakistan and Iran, as well as the growth of Muslim schools in Western countries, has been marked by a move toward exclusivism and intolerance. Meanwhile, intellectual efforts to modernise Islamic education and to create a unified model of Islamic education have been viewed with suspicion. Muslim schools are portrayed as unable to prepare children adequately for the needs of the modern world. They are deemed unfit to assist students in taking advantage of the scientific and technological progress that characterises modern life (Pohl 2006) because they mostly teach Islam and largely neglect general subjects. In Indonesia, the mushrooming of Sekolah Islam (see below for explanation) is regarded by their proponents as the answer to these modern world's challenges. Is this claim substantiated? Or do Sekolah Islam in fact reinforce religious conservatism and give rise to a certain Islamic identity politics characterised by anti-pluralist and religiously intolerant attitudes?

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in the City of Serang (Kota Serang) in 2017 as well as extra fieldwork in 2020, this paper discusses the dynamics of interactions between religion, identity politics, and education among parents of students and school custodians (preachers and spiritual trainers) affiliated with Sekolah Islam. In this article, I analyse the religious understanding and Islamic identity politics of these parents and school custodians in order to detail the conditions under which the structures and configurations that form and influence these Muslim groups are built. I employ a multidisciplinary approach, referencing work from disciplines ranging from anthropology to political science. I conducted observations and in-depth interviews with parents whose children study at primary and secondary levels of Sekolah Islam (Sekolah Dasar (SD), Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP), Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA), and Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK)), and with school custodians and students. Based on the interviews, most parents stated that they are neither officially affiliated with Islamic mass organisations nor with (Islamic) political parties, yet they are influenced by certain aspects of Salafism, particularly by attempting to return to the model of Islam practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the pious predecessors. Meanwhile, most school custodians claim that they follow Salafi doctrines more extensively and support certain political parties, such as the Islamist party of Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party—PKS). In addition, most students follow the school custodians as role models, while also taking after their parents.

In this paper, all Sekolah Islam I observed are neither affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama (the NU) nor Muhammadiyah (Indonesia's largest and second largest Islamic organisations, respectively). The majority of these schools call themselves 'Integrated Islamic Schools' (Sekolah Islam Terpadu—SIT) and are registered under the Integrated Islamic Schools Network (Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu—JSIT), which has a close connection with the PKS.[1] Unlike most Muhammadiyah schools and *pesantren*

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[1]The post-New Order period has witnessed the growth of SIT, mostly established by former Muslim campus activists associated with Indonesian Muslim Students Action Union (KAMMI), who were also involved in the establishment of the PKS (Tayeb 2018: 184–185).

(Islamic boarding schools), which are mostly affiliated with the NU and administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), Sekolah Islam are mostly regarded as modern schools. Sekolah Islam largely follow the systems and curricula of government schools and are under the remit of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC). As many students from middle-class families attend Sekolah Islam, these schools are regarded as elite Islamic schools. In terms of religiosity, many Sekolah Islam are closely related to the *da'wah* movement and are influenced by Salafism (Hefner 2009; Tan 2011; Tayeb 2018).

As the capital city of Province of Banten, Serang was chosen as the field research location because it has a distinctive character. It represents a microcosm of a growing modern city, of the vibrant middle-class groups, of the rise of Salafism, and of the rapid growth of Sekolah Islam that corresponds with the larger circumstances in Indonesia; at the same time, however, the local-traditional forms of Islam, with its roots in the Sultanate of Banten (1527–1813), still prevail. Serang is one of the most conspicuous places in Indonesia, where 'local Islam', i.e., local-traditional forms of Islam that put emphasis on preserving traditionally established local rituals and scholarship, meets and interacts with the transnational Salafism movement.

On the basis of the collected materials, I argue that numerous complexities surround interpretations of Islam and Islamic identity politics of conservative and puritan Muslims with a middle-class background in contemporary urban Indonesia. In this paper, 'Islamic identity politics' is defined as these Muslims' initiative for using specific jargons, symbols, and expressions of Islam in order to distinguish themselves from other Muslims and non-Muslims through anti-pluralist and religiously intolerant attitudes. In this context, identity is employed as an instrument to promote socio-political ideologies that aim to assert group distinctiveness and gain power and recognition. Sekolah Islam have played a significant role in invigorating this kind of Islamic identity politics, and the pursuit of a 'true' Islam has also infused Islamic identity politics. The relationship between Islam and identity politics is intricate when it is transformed into public symbols, discourses, and practices at many Sekolah Islam. This paper reveals that through Sekolah Islam, these Muslims are avid actors in the contemporary landscape of Islamic identity politics in Indonesia. From the above state of affairs, we can see that many Muslim states are now characterised by the rise and strengthening of Islamism, religious conservatism, and Islamic identity politics. By taking examples from Sekolah Islam in Indonesia, this article will unearth social transformations that may also take place in the larger Muslim world.

The article proceeds as follows. First, I explore the emergence of urban Muslims. I then sketch the efforts of urban Muslims to promote 'true' Islam. Third, aspects of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia are discussed. Fourth, I focus on how Sekolah Islam shape and characterise these Muslims' religious understanding and activities. Fifth, I investigate how Muslims affiliated with Sekolah Islam demonstrate their identity politics. Finally, the last section is the conclusion.

The Rise of Urban Muslims

The New Order administration attempted to consolidate its power through policies that require the creation of socio-politically homogenous communities (Macintyre 1991). President Suharto's stance towards Islam was paradoxical. While endorsing religious activities that encouraged Muslim piety, the administration restrained political Islam, which was seen as a threat to the regime (Hefner 2000). In 1980s, a new camp that consisted of urban modernist Muslims appeared to advocate the 'cultural Islam' movement as a diversion from political Islam (Amir 2009). Many of these young Muslims came from recently urbanised middle-class families (Hasan 2006) who did not necessarily obtain formal religious training (Tan 2011) but instead were educated in 'secular' institutions.

In the more democratic post-New Order, the administration has been challenged by an urban-modernist camp of a newly reborn generation of Muslims influenced by, among other things, nineteenth-century Middle-Eastern thinkers, such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha. This generation who was politically marginalised by the old administration tends to be conservative and puritan in religious understanding and practices albeit very fiery in defending the interests of their own community. Indeed, the rise of vocal urban middle-class Muslims in Indonesia cannot be detached from their formerly politically marginalised position. They claim to be able to establish a society that is religiously resilient against the shallow materialist values and excessive hedonism associated with Western culture (Hadiz 2016).

The 1980s and 1990s were important periods of economic progress in Indonesia that led to the emergence of the middle-class. At that time, people found jobs as business executives and managers, engineers, bankers, lawyers, white-collar office workers, and other professional workers (Ansori 2009). Robert Hefner shows that these older middle-class groups gave rise to a social renaissance of Islam (Hefner 2000). Data from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) show that the number of middle-class people in Indonesia based on consumption levels grew from 25 to 43 per cent between 1999 and 2009. This means that the number doubled in a decade, from 45 million to 93 million people (Van Klinken 2016: 1).

The economic progress gave poor peasants and labourers the opportunity to ascend into the middle class. One of the means to that end was education, to which the New Order government gave top priority—for instance, by enacting the 1989 Law on National Education System (*Undang-Undang Nomor 2 Tahun* 1989 *tentang* Sistem Pendidikan Nasional) (Tayeb 2018: 56). The main striking feature of the emergence of the middle class was the improvement in the quality of their lives and the fulfilment of their social needs. The presence of middle-class Muslims in urban Indonesia can be seen in Muslim associations, social organisations, religious activities, fashion shops, beauty care centres, and schools (Jati 2015).

Serang is located about 90 kilometres from Jakarta and has a population of around 600,000. The rise of new urban Muslims in the city is closely related to its rapid development since 2000, when Banten became a new province after breaking away from West Java, in which Serang (then a regency/district/ *kabupaten*) was made the capital city.[2] Serang was transformed to receive the administrative status of a city (*kota*) in 2007, and this eventually accelerated the development of the city. The new administrative regions, such as Province of Banten and the City of Serang, were expected to provide public goods and services, such as transportation, infrastructure, and education for the growing number of the citizens, which eventually led to the creation of new middle-to-high-income jobs, many of which were white-collar and other professional works that would consequently generate new middle-class groups in due course.

In addition, a new generation of middle-class in Serang emerged as a result of rapid industrialisation in neighbouring areas, such as the City of Cilegon (Kota Cilegon) and the Regency of Serang (Kabupaten Serang), and this generation chose to live in Serang due to the easier access to public goods and services. In the meantime, the strengthening of an older generation of middle-class groups had also taken place. In Serang, the new and older middle-class groups mainly consist of Muslims in roles such as officials and employees of local and national state institutions, employees of state-owned enterprises, medium-sized entrepreneurs, local-level (province and city) political parties' functionaries and cadres, professionals in local and foreign companies, and other white-collar workers.

Serang has witnessed the growth of middle-class Muslims, who have in turn contributed to the rise of Islamic commerce and consumerism in the city. Based on my own observation when I first visited the city in 2004, there was not a single modern shopping mall or star hotel,[3] and only a handful of middle-class housing complexes—an obvious sign of the presence of middle-class groups in the city—had been established. In recent years, dozens of middle-class housing complexes in Serang were built to accommodate the needs of these groups, along with shopping malls, star hotels, restaurants, cafés, beauty centres, and private Islamic schools. One of the strong indicators that there has been a continuous growth of the middle-class in Serang, and also Banten, is the constant increase in minimum wage in the areas that attract professionals and other white-collar workers. In Indonesia, Banten has been among the provinces with the highest minimum wage, along with Jakarta and West Java. In Banten itself, Serang has been on a par with other cities.[4]

Unfortunately, however, there are no data on the exact number of middle-class groups in Serang. Yet, in terms of per-capita expenditure (per year), we have such data. Among the six provinces in Java—the centre of economic and political activities in Indonesia—Banten is among the highest in terms of per-

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[2] After the downfall of the New Order in 1998, Indonesia witnessed the emergence of new provinces and a change in the nature of regional politics. Until 1998, there were only 27 provinces, while today there are 34 provinces in the nation-state.

[3] The first modern shopping mall in Serang, the Mall of Serang, and a four-star hotel, Hotel Ratu Bidakara (later renamed 'Hotel Horison Ultima Serang'), were built in 2011.

[4] See for instance https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2019/11/23/064800265/rincian-umk-2020-di-5-provinsi-mana-yang-paling-besar-?page=all, accessed on 19 March 2021.

capita expenditure. The sequence from low to high in 2019 was Central Java (US $ 769.102), West Java (US $ 772.56), East Java (US $ 813.23), Banten (US $ 849.809), Yogyakarta (US $ 997.15), and Jakarta (US $ 1283.47), while in 2013 the sequence, again from low to high, was West Java (US $ 652.64), Central Java (US $ 666.29), East Java (US $ 691.23), Banten (US $ 766.26), Yogyakarta (US $ 849.39), and Jakarta (US $ 1165.77). This means that the per-capita expenditure in Banten increased from 2013 to 2019 by 10.9 per cent.[5]

In Banten itself, Serang is among the highest in terms of per-capita expenditure. The sequence from low to high in 2019 was the Regency of Pandeglang (US $ 604.01), Regency of Lebak (US $ 613.09), Regency of Serang (US $ 748.32), Regency of Tangerang (US $ 864.28), City of Cilegon (US $ 916.52), City of Serang (US $ 929.54), City of Tangerang (US $ 1029.44), and City of South Tangerang (US $ 1107.58), while in 2013, the sequence from low to high was the Regency of Pandeglang (US $ 518.6), Regency of Lebak (US $ 548.52), Regency of Serang (US $ 681.05), Regency of Tangerang (US $ 806.92), City of Cilegon (US $ 825.77), City of Serang (US $ 827.84), City of Tangerang (US $ 937.37), and City of South Tangerang (US $ 984.2). This means that the per-capita expenditure in Serang increased from 2013 to 2019 by 12.28 per cent.[6] These rising numbers of per-capita expenditure highly correlate with the above data from the ADB that the number of middle-class groups in Indonesia—particularly in the Province of Banten and City of Serang, based on consumption levels—has rapidly grown in the post-New Order.

Promoting 'True' Islam

Global Islamic revival in recent years has fragmented the traditional forms of religious authority, generated new figures of public piety, and created new public spaces in which Islamic teachings are constituted and contested (Hoesterey 2012). This has become a principal reason for why Muslims around the world are attracted to global religious issues. An improved level of education and the rise of new communication media have also contributed to the emergence of a public sphere, whereby many Muslims have opinions on political and religious issues (Salvatore and Eickelman 2004).

In Indonesia, there has been a changing tone of public Muslim discourses and practices to have influences from the Arab Gulf countries, or the Arabisation of Indonesian Islam. Under the influence of Salafi preachers, many people have now rejected their predecessors' religious views, which they believe to be misguided and contain *bid'ah* (heresy) practices (Van Bruinessen 2018). In fact, these Muslims are very active in supporting the agenda of political Islam (Effendy 2003). Supporters of 'true' Islam in Indonesia are generally peaceful, in the sense that they are not violently attempting to transform Indonesia into an open battlefield of wars between Muslims and non-Muslims or between themselves and other Muslims who are seen as promoting 'divergent' Islam. Nevertheless, many, if not most of them, frequently demonstrate intolerant attitudes in how they disseminate their perspective on Islam (such as the notion that the head of state, regional head, and leading public officer must be a Muslim and that *Sharī'a* must be implemented in everyday life even in non-Islamic countries), and are highly condemnatory to other Muslims and non-Muslims who do not share their views. These intolerant acts often lead to socio-religious strains (Pribadi 2020).

The most notorious example of the intolerant and anti-pluralist act was a massive Islamist mobilisation (*Aksi Bela Islam*—Action for Defending Islam) in late 2016 and early 2017—combining street demonstrations, an electoral challenge, and issues of identity politics—directed against the incumbent Chinese-Christian governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok). In a 2016 campaign speech, Ahok made a comment about the Quran that the MUI (Indonesian Council of Ulama) perceived it as blasphemous, prompting a harsh reaction from many of the conservative Muslim groups against him (Hadiz 2018; Hadiz 2019; Hasyim 2020; Mietzner *et al.* 2018).

The promotion and dissemination of 'true' Islam in Indonesia is largely generated by the rise of Salafism, which attempts to transform and even replace local ritualistic forms of Islam with those of highly conservative and puritan Salafism. Attempts to replace the former by the latter had slowly taken place for quite some time in Indonesia. However, in the post-New Order, these attempts have

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[5]See https://www.bps.go.id/site/resultTab, accessed on 25 March 2021.
[6]See https://www.bps.go.id/site/resultTab, accessed on 25 March 2021.

been taking place very rapidly and on a large scale. The replacement attempts have also been taking place in Serang and elsewhere in Banten. While the area is well known for its long history of the Sultanate of Banten, and the Islamic orientation of its society is highly influenced by local traditions (Pribadi 2013), these Muslim groups have fervidly been attempting to change the city's religious landscape to a more conservative and puritan character.

Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia

Indonesia houses one of the largest Islamic educational institutions in the world. In fact, mainstream Islamic schooling in the country has long had a reputation for being among the most educationally reformed in the larger Muslim world (Noor *et al.* 2008). In the country, *pesantren*—traditionally linked to the NU—are mostly considered as traditional Islamic educational institutions. *Pesantren* are traditional in terms of the content of education, which is primarily religious; in terms of teaching and learning processes; and of management, which is mainly in the hands of the *kyai* (leaders of *pesantren*) (Azra and Afrianty 2005; Van Bruinessen 2008).

These Islamic education institutions did not emerge before the eighteenth century, and in fact, they only became widespread in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Since their establishment, *pesantren* have been very influential among Muslim communities (Ricklefs 2007; Van Bruinessen 1995). This is unsurprising given that religious education has played a significant role in the history of education in Indonesia. For example, *pesantren* were the only form of education in Java prior to the twentieth century (Abdullah 1988). *Pesantren* are centres of the transmission of traditional Islam, with *kitab kuning* (yellow tinted papers of Arabic Islamic books) serving as classical texts of Islamic knowledge in order to both maintain tradition and mould people to guard the tradition (Van Bruinessen 1994).

Meanwhile, the reformist Muhammadiyah has established Islamic schools modelled after the *pesantren*, although none of these are recognised as true *pesantren* (Lukens-Bull 2001). The reformist ideas stress a return to the Quran as the main source of Islamic belief and aim to bring Islam in line with modern scientific advances and empiricism. These ideas show a willingness to examine the great social, political, and economic upheavals of the modern world in light of Islamic 'truth' (Noer 1973).

The Muhammadiyah certainly is not a newcomer to the world of education. Since its inception in 1912, the organisation has placed education at the forefront of its social mission and has been a leader in reforms to Islamic education. Today, this organisation runs some 10,000 schools across Indonesia, from kindergartens to universities, 5500 of which are day schools and boarding schools (Hefner 2016). Both the NU and the Muhammadiyah have been able to rely on Indonesia's Islamic educational scene to mobilise support for their more moderate brand of Indonesian Islam, which they saw threatened by the recent acts of religious conservatism (Pohl 2006).

Furthermore, the driving force behind the establishment of Sekolah Islam came from *da'wah* groups in secular universities in the late 1980s, such as Jemaah Tarbiyah (Hefner 2009). Instead of agitating for political change, these educated middle-class Muslims promoted a revised means to achieve their religious aspirations in a 'cultural Islam' movement. This movement allowed religious struggle to be waged outside of the realm of power politics, particularly through *da'wah* and educational fields. In 1993, Jemaah Tarbiyah activists founded five SIT primary schools in greater Jakarta area. These pioneering schools are SDIT Nurul Fikri in Depok, SDIT Al-Hikmah in Jakarta, SDIT Iqro in Bekasi, SDIT Ummul Quro in Bogor, and SDIT Al-Khayrot in Jakarta. By 2014, there were 1926 SIT in Indonesia, including 879 kindergartens, 723 primary schools (SDIT), 256 junior high schools (SMPIT), and 68 senior high schools (SMAIT). Despite their registration with JSIT, not all of these schools are linked with the PKS or Jemaat Tarbiyah. Nonetheless, they share the philosophical belief in integrated Islamic education as the ideal form of education for Muslims (Tayeb 2018). It is obvious that throughout the history of Islamic education in Indonesia, the NU, the Muhammadiyah, and later, JSIT, have played significant roles in establishing and operating Islamic schools as well as characterising Islam in contemporary Indonesia.

Sekolah Islam: Religious Understanding and Activities

There are more than 50,000 Islamic schools in Indonesia, which can be divided into three main types: *pesantren, madrasah* (Islamic day schools), and Sekolah Islam. According to Charlene Tan, of the

50,000 Islamic schools, 16,015 of them are *pesantren,* 37,000 are *madrasah*, and only few are Sekolah Islam (Tan 2011: 92). Azmil Tayeb shows that Islamic schools administered by the MORA alone amount to 47,221 (Tayeb 2018: 2). In Serang, there are 510 schools under the management of the MORA and the MOEC at all levels (SD, SMP, SMA, SMK, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), and Madrasah Aliyah (MA)), the majority of which are state-owned public schools. In other words, there are more than enough public schools to accommodate the children. Of the 510 schools, 97 of them are Sekolah Islam (19 per cent) under the auspices of the MOEC, of which 25 are SD (elementary/primary schools), 39 SMP (junior high schools), 15 SMA (high schools), and 18 SMK (vocational high schools).[7] The high numbers of Sekolah Islam in Serang indicate that there is a high degree of enthusiasm among Muslims to establish such schools, in addition to the fact that founding such schools is financially rewarding due to the income in the form of tuition. However, of the total number of 135,717 students in Serang, only 8984 students (6.6 per cent) enrol in Sekolah Islam in all levels.[8]

The lower numbers of the students compared to the higher numbers of Sekolah Islam indicate that many parents in Serang may not be able to afford the high school fees charged by Sekolah Islam, or that they believe that some well-regarded state non-religious schools have a better, or at least equal, quality compared to Sekolah Islam. Therefore, even though there are favourite Sekolah Islam with high numbers of students in Serang, such as SDIT Al-Izzah, SD Islam Tirtayasa, SDIT Widya Cendekia, SD Islam Al-Azhar, SD Islam Khalifah, SMPIT Insantama, SMP Peradaban, SMP Islam Pariskian, and SMP Islam Al-Azhar, most Sekolah Islam have fewer students compared to public schools. A woman from a middle-class family highlights the high school fees charged by Sekolah Islam.

> I have four children. All of them study in state schools. For me, this is the ideal condition: If I had a lot of money, I would send my children to Sekolah Islam when they were in secondary level of Sekolah Islam (SMP). When they were in primary level (SD), I would send them to state non-religious schools in the morning, and in order to obtain Islamic knowledge, I would send them to Sekolah Agama (Madrasah Diniyah Awaliyah) in the afternoon.[9] And because they would no longer enrol in Sekolah Agama when they were in SMP, I would send them to Sekolah Islam, of course if I had much money. When they were in SMA, I would send them to state non-religious schools again because I believe that it would be best for my children to compete with other students in their public university entrance examination. In that case, I believe that well-regarded state SMA are still better than Sekolah Islam. Anyway, Sekolah Islam are way too expensive for me. (Interview with Annisa 9 November 2020)[10]

In 1989, the Indonesian government enacted the National Education System Law, which put Islamic education institutions under this system and placed Islamic schools on an equal standing with other types of national schools (Azra and Afrianty 2005: 19–20). Tayeb argues that the enactment of the law indicates the growing influence of Islamic groups in the New Order (Tayeb 2018: 55–56). Furthermore, in the post-New Order, the 2003 Law on National Education System (*Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional*) provided the advocates of Islamic education an opportunity to push a bigger role of Islamic education within the national education system (Tayeb 2018: 58–59). Thereby, it is not surprising that today, the flourishing of Sekolah Islam is highly visible.

Most Sekolah Islam are located in urban areas, and their popularity among parents is due to the desire of middle-class Muslims to provide modern Islamic education for their children that simultaneously offers a high academic standard in general subjects. Charging much higher school fees compared to *pesantren* or *madrasah*, Sekolah Islam are well-equipped with modern facilities such as air-conditioned classrooms, language laboratories, and multimedia facilities. As modern institutions, Sekolah Islam are

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[7]See http://referensi.data.kemdikbud.go.id/index11.php?kode=286200&level=2, accessed on 30 April 2019.

[8]See http://referensi.data.kemdikbud.go.id/pd_index.php?kode=286200&level=2, accessed on 30 April 2019.

[9]Madrasah Diniyah Awaliyah are non-formal schools for primary school students that focus on the teaching of Islamic knowledge with a learning period of four years. These non-formal schools operate in the afternoon (usually at 1 or 2 pm) to accommodate the students who study in formal schools in the morning.

[10]Annisa is a 48-year-old civil servant whose children attend state non-religious schools. All names of the interviewees in this article are pseudonyms.

run by professionals in terms of management, teaching, learning processes, and curriculum development (Azra and Afrianty 2005; Tan 2011). Such excellences obviously motivate parents to send their children to Sekolah Islam. While there are limitations to conducting classes and offering intra- and extracurricular activities, most Sekolah Islam modify their curricula to include religious subjects and inculcate Islamic moral values (Hasan 2009b).

In terms of inculcating Islamic moral values, many Sekolah Islam pay much attention to extracurricular activities that play a crucial role in ideological cultivation efforts. In *Standar Mutu Sekolah Islam Terpadu* (The Quality Standards of Integrated Islamic Schools), a manual book of JSIT,[11] the importance of group dynamics in reinforcing the values of the schools is given a great emphasis:

> Character education, values and discipline in the framework of Islamic values (*shakhṣiyyah Islāmiyyah*), becomes the essence in the standard to cultivate the students. One of the dominant ways to achieve the aim of *shakhṣiyyah Islāmiyyah* is to have group dynamic in the inculcation process. (Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu 2010: 599, quoted in Tayeb 2018: 189)

Students at Sekolah Islam not only concentrate on learning Islamic subjects, such as *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *ʿaqīdah* (theology), *akhlāq* (morality), or *ʾibādah* (devotional practices), but they also focus on general subjects such as science, arts, history, social studies, and sports. At the same time, Sekolah Islam surpass state non-religious schools by allocating more hours to religious instruction. They also include Arabic language and Quranic studies in their curricula.

In *Standar Mutu Kekhasan Sekolah Islam Terpadu* (The Distinctive Quality Standards of Integrated Islamic Schools), Integrated Islamic Schools' (Sekolah Islam Terpadu/SIT) educational philosophy is summed up:

> School that instils the organisational approach that combines general education and religious education into one interconnected curriculum. With this approach, all subjects and all school activities will not be excluded from the frame of Islamic teachings and messages of values. (Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu 2014: 5, quoted in Tayeb 2018: 187)

In short, Sekolah Islam are known for combining a high-quality general education with an Islamic ethos and morals, as well as ensuring that students perform daily (noon) prayers at school. This type of school is also known for offering its students a rich variety of extracurricular activities with the aim of inculcating Islamic values. Sekolah Islam aims to build students' Islamic characters based on religious ethics and values. In other words, religion is not considered only as part of cognitive knowledge but rather forms part of, and is manifested in, the daily life of the students. For these students, Islamic values and ethics should be practised on a daily basis (Azra and Afrianty 2005: 25; Tan 2011: 95).

It must be noted that these practices actually belong to a wider scheme of 'Islamisation of knowledge', first proposed at the 1977 World Conference on Muslim Education in Mecca. The outlines of the Islamisation of knowledge in Sekolah Islam are the embodiments of the ideas of leading Muslim thinkers such as Ismail al-Faruqi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Osman Bakar. Al-Faruqi suggested that there must not be any conflict between scientific inquiry and revealed knowledge since that would mean that the scientific finding was wrong and needed to be revisited. Meanwhile, Nasr argued that without grounding general knowledge in the immutability of divine revelation, one could never achieve the truth and would always be at the risk of committing immoral acts. Finally, Bakar, a student of Al-Faruqi, proposed that empirical knowledge provided by Western scientific inquiry was in fact highly valued in the Islamic intellectual tradition but came with limitations that only religious consciousness was able to transcend (Tayeb 2018: 177–180). The following sub-sections highlight religious activities inside and outside the school, as well as parents' religious understandings, to demonstrate how Sekolah Islam shape and characterise the students' religious understanding and activities whilst instilling in them Islamic moral values.

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[11]Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu (JSIT) is the umbrella organisation of Sekolah Islam Terpadu, which was established in 2003 with the aim of coordinating and facilitating the establishment and operation of the schools. The main focus of JSIT is to bring the various Integrated Islamic Schools together under the same umbrella organisation (Hasan 2009b: 10).

Religious Activities inside the School

While a number of authors emphasise the importance of extracurricular activities such as outdoor trips, camping, scouting, educational trips, and other overnight activities that form the methods of ideological cultivation of Islamic moral values in Sekolah Islam (e.g., Damanik 2002; Hasan 2012), I focus on religious activities inside such schools that instil Islamic values and reinforce the Islamic identity of the students. In this paper, religious activities in Sekolah Islam are defined as sets of activities related to Islamic teachings and practices outside the formal curriculum. Examples include communal prayers and *kultum* (literally 'seven-minute sermon'). Other examples include animal sacrifices during *'Ĭd al-Aḍḥā* (an Islamic holiday) and the establishment of Islamic studies forum.

Most Sekolah Islam require their students to perform communal prayers (usually *ṣalāt aẓ-ẓuhr*, the noon prayer) and attend *kultum*. On these occasions, religious preachers from outside the school often deliver a sermon. Through these activities, students learn about Islamic ideas, which are regulated and approved by the school, and at the same time learn to reject what is not appropriate according to the school's religious orientation. These activities are made possible through the 2003 Law on National Education System, which gives the schools broad leeway to organise co-curricular religious activities to complement the classroom teaching.

Tan suggests that an Islamic school that embodies 'moderate Islam' would be one that is inclusive, progressive, and modern. Such a school would be inclusive by being pluralist, progressive by emphasising strong rationality and strong autonomy, and modern by preparing its students to meet the challenges of a globalised world (Tan 2011: 91). However, most Sekolah Islam in Serang are not like that. Not many schools are willing to learn from various religious traditions that exist in the Islamic world or even in Indonesia. Most of them reject local religious traditions, such as the reading of a salutation to the Prophet Muhammad, *shalawat nariyah* and *shalawat badawiyah* (types of prayer) in religious practices, and *tahlilan* (a prayer performed on six consecutive nights to facilitate a deceased person entering paradise). What is also striking is that most Sekolah Islam do not dismiss their students on other religions' holidays, such as Easter and *Nyepi* (a Hindu celebration mainly celebrated in Bali, Indonesia), which are actually public holidays set by the government, because they believe that dismissing the school on those days is tantamount to approving those religious holidays, which in turn recognises the truth of other religions.

> My children must be educated in Sekolah Islam because in public schools they will not learn about Islam properly. In public schools, Islamic subjects are not adequate and many of the things that are heretical are also taught. In addition, not all teachers and students are Muslim. I am very concerned that my children will be affected by various sets of impure Islamic thought. Therefore, I am very glad that now there are many Sekolah Islam that teach the purity of Islam. (Interview with Erik 24 May 2017)[12]

The above interview shows that through a systematic insertion of Islamic values, general codes of conduct, and religious subjects and activities, parents appear to support Sekolah Islam that encourage anti-pluralist and intolerant attitudes amongst their students in order to prepare them for the long-term process to accept and implement *Sharī'a* in everyday life or even to create an Islamic state. I argue that, besides religious subjects and Islamic moral education, religious activities in Sekolah Islam (such as communal prayers and *kultum*) play a significant part in the process of encouraging students to accept and implement a particular understanding of Islam—not only as a religion but also as a way of life.

> It is my duty to invite Muslims to worship Allah. Children should be taught about their obligation to pray five times and other commandments of Allah. Indonesia must apply Islamic law because the majority of its population is Muslim. I put my expectation to the students in this school that one day they can become the leaders of this country who will apply Islamic law. (Interview with Ilham 15 July 2017)[13]

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[12]Erik is a 43-year-old entrepreneur whose children attend a Sekolah Islam.
[13]Ilham is a 38-year-old *ustadz* (religious teacher) serving as a school custodian at a Sekolah Islam in Serang.

This school custodian's assertion indicates that there are people wishing to take over the Indonesian state to apply Islamic law, or even to capture specific institutions as a means to impose their views society and to suppress the contending views of other Muslims (Ricklefs 2013: 19). It is clear that despite the limited time allocated for religious instruction, the imparting of religious knowledge at Sekolah Islam can be maximised by including a variety of Islamic subjects, such as memorisation of Quran and *Ḥadīth* and *da'wah* activities. In spite of the development of the students' rationality and autonomy through general subjects and student activities, most Sekolah Islam do not put emphasis on the value of religious pluralism. Most Sekolah Islam appear unwilling to have their students learn from or even about other religious traditions. In fact, most Sekolah Islam draw the students' attention to other religions for the purpose of denouncing them. What is the reason behind this attitude? It seems that they are concerned that learning about other religions will lead to apostasy; moreover, non-Muslims are considered *kāfir* (unbelievers), and so there is no need to learn about the unbelievers' religions. In addition, they are afraid that learning about other religions will lead to the practice of *shirk* (polytheism), which is a serious sin.

Indeed, it is striking that school custodians' appeals in religious sermons at school show strong signs of exclusivism and intolerance. For instance, they urged fellow Muslims in and outside the school to take part in the 2016–2017 Jakarta protests against Ahok.[14] It is clear that the role of school custodians in translating the visions developed by Sekolah Islam is very significant. Although I do agree that the role of teachers is of prime importance, the role of these men of religion cannot be neglected due to their importance in influencing the religious understanding and practices of many young students. They act not only as preachers but also as moral guides who insert their own version of Islam into the minds of students. For many students, these school custodians are surely role models. The interaction between the custodians and the students has served as a catalyst to instil religious values and awareness of current socio-political issues that may be manipulated for the sake of the socio-political aspirations of the school custodians. Indeed, Sekolah Islam exhibit ideological and political nuances in their teaching and learning process. These nuances, for some authors, are unequivocally a significant contribution to the strengthening of 'young Islamists' (Bryner 2013; Hasan 2009b, 2012).

Certainly, the appeals to various forms of religious conservatism within religious activities inside the school are apparent mostly in sermons in communal prayers and *kultum*. While there is a growing number of *pesantren* that teach and promote a moderate and plural understanding of Islam (Nafis 2017; Nilan 2009; Pohl 2006; Raihani 2012), most Sekolah Islam tend to assert Islamic identity politics through anti-pluralist and illiberal attitudes, and to disseminate other Islamist messages to the students and the wider public by the teachers and school custodians' systematic and structured approaches.

Religious Activities outside the School

Outside the school, many parents send their children to various forms of additional Islamic education and extracurricular activities, such as Quranic recitals and *pesantren kilat*. These children normally participate in Quranic recitals in the evening at nearby mosques. Meanwhile, *pesantren kilat* refer to incidental occasions of Islamic teaching imitating *pesantren* held in mosques or schools, especially during the fasting month of *Ramaḍān*.

In the Quranic recitals, students of Sekolah Islam who are not yet able to recite the Quran properly participate in intensive classes. In Serang, many teachers in such classes usually come from a local-traditional Islamic backgrounds. In addition to learning to recite the Quran, these teachers sometimes give religious lessons related to morality and Islamic rituals. Due to their background, these teachers also teach a 'hidden curriculum' avoided in Sekolah Islam, such as local Islamic traditions deemed heretical by the schools. The children are asked and sometimes told to participate in, for instance, *panjang mulud* (local Bantenese style of the commemorations of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad) and *tahlilan*. Most Sekolah Islam disapprove of these rituals and consider them heretical. Nevertheless,

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[14]See for instance: https://www.radarbanten.co.id/ribuan-muslim-banten-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-ke-jakarta/ for the protest on 4 November 2016 and http://sp.beritasatu.com/metropolitan/ratusan-masyarakat-banten-melakukan-long-march-dari-serang-menuju-jakarta/117629 for the protest on 2 December 2016, both accessed on 31 March 2018.

children often enjoy participating in such occasions. In the Quranic recitals, children also learn about *tahlilan*. When someone in the neighbourhood passes away, a *tahlilan* is usually held either at his/her residence or at the mosque. When held at the mosque, the students sometimes participate in it.

During *Ramaḍān*, most mosques in Serang hold *tarāwīḥ* (a prayer performed in congregation during *Ramaḍān*) prayers in 20 *rakaʿāt* (a single unit of Islamic prayers), whereas most Salafi Muslims hold *tarāwīḥ* prayers performed in 8 *rakaʿāt*. Therefore, while children of Sekolah Islam are taught to have 8 *rakaʿāt* of *tarāwīḥ* prayers, in *pesantren kilat* they usually perform 20 *rakaʿāt* of *tarāwīḥ* prayers. For most children of Sekolah Islam, *pesantren kilat* serve as a medium to learn about different practices of Islamic rituals.

> *Pesantren kilat* are a means to keep my children from lounging around at home during *Ramaḍān*. Usually during the day they sleep, and in the evening they play outside the house or just play with their mobile phones. I am often annoyed to see that. Therefore, I usually send my children to join *pesantren kilat*. I actually do not know what is taught there. However, it is important that my children have activities during *Ramaḍān*. (Interview with Rita 18 August 2017)[15]

The above pragmatic views of parents in sending their children to *pesantren kilat* is in line with pragmatic reasons as to why people send their children to Sekolah Islam and encourage their children to participate in religious activities outside the school. For instance, most Sekolah Islam have longer lesson hours than conventional non-religious schools. For busy parents, they can rely much on the schools to educate their children.

> My husband and I work full-time every day from Monday to Friday. When I come home at 4.30 pm, my children are already very tired and choose not to play with their friends in our neighbourhood. So, they have no time to play. Actually, I am always concerned about the intermingling between my children and their "badly-behaved" friends [who do not enrol in Sekolah Islam]. So, sending them to full-day Sekolah Islam is very good for us because we can reduce our concern. (Interview with Siska 5 May 2017)[16]

Nonetheless, it is precisely the longer lesson hours that students from state non-religious schools express objections to the system in Sekolah Islam. A highlight of the objections is given below.

> I have friends who study in Sekolah Islam. I think my knowledge on Islamic teachings is on a par with them. Maybe it is because I previously enrolled in Sekolah Agama, and so I think it is not necessary to study in Sekolah Islam in order to obtain Islamic knowledge. In fact, I do not like the longer lesson hours and the more subjects given in Sekolah Islam because I think it is too tiring. (Interview with Izzan 1 November 2020)[17]

Religious activities outside the school for students of Sekolah Islam evidently provide constructive avenues for the children to engage with the community whilst learning about cultural and religious diversity and tolerance. On the one hand, through local Islamic traditions, the children learn that there are various Islamic teachings that are not only limited to those taught at school, such as those that are practiced in the community. By learning about and experiencing them outside the school, they may come to identify and pay more respect to religious differences. On the other hand, this also shows that some busy parents are largely incognisant of religious instructions taught in Quranic recitals or local Islamic rituals held at nearby mosques. In addition, some of them, who never received formal religious training, do not formally identify as being Salafi, and thus do not really express objections to after-school programmes deemed heretical by the schools. Finally, some of them are also pragmatic in viewing local Islamic rituals followed by their children; as long as the children are busy with religious practices, the parents will be pleased. This

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[15]Rita is a 39-year-old housewife whose children attend a Sekolah Islam.
[16]Siska is a 45-year-old civil servant whose children attend a Sekolah Islam.
[17]Izzan is a 15-year-old student who attends a state non-religious school (SMP).

also shows that the parents simply see *pesantren kilat* and Quranic recitals as ways to gain a well-rounded Islamic education. Nevertheless, we must remember that there are more parents who unequivocally reject after-school programmes and local Islamic rituals deemed inappropriate for 'true' Muslims, and so they only rely on 'proper' religious instructions in Sekolah Islam or certain *pengajian* (Islamic congregations/Islamic religious circles) held in their own exclusive communities.

Parents' Religious Understanding

Most of the parents featured in this article believe that the ideal parental approach is to educate their children in Sekolah Islam. They assert that their children will learn about general subjects whilst learning about Islam comprehensively. They argue that in public schools, children learn a limited number of Islamic subjects, whereas in old-fashioned and traditional *pesantren* that teach only *kitab kuning*, they mostly learn about Islam and neglect general subjects. By sending their children to Sekolah Islam, the parents are convinced that they have fulfilled their duty as parents, i.e., to make sure the children survive both in life *and* in the afterlife.

Such a view also reflects these people's Islamic identity politics. In terms of education, we have seen that these Muslims patronise and demand Sekolah Islam in producing and disseminating their way of Islam and their identity through religious activities inside the school, and through these activities, the students learn about 'proper' Islamic ideas according to the schools' orientations; in turn, Sekolah Islam can be seen in a tandem position with religious conservatism and Islamism in developing anti-pluralist and illiberal characteristics. In relation to the landscape of religion and identity politics in Indonesia, the relationship between the two elements has created a powerful albeit loosely tied group that may challenge existing traditional-moderate Islamic groups.

> We know that today the influence of electronic and social media for the younger generation is very significant. Western norms are not suitable for us, but the youth are crazy about imitating Westerners' lifestyles. The negative effect is very damaging. Children may fall into promiscuity, abuse of narcotics, and engage in teenage violence. I do not think public schools can answer these problems because Islamic moral education is not given emphasis there. In Sekolah Islam, in addition to studying science and technology, matters of morality and Islamic worship are given special emphasis. (Interview with Eko 7 September 2017)[18]

This sort of moral panic has greatly influenced these Muslims who have witnessed the impact of modernisation and globalisation. They send their children to Sekolah Islam because they are worried that their children will be influenced by the West, or by unbelievers, or even by other Muslims who do not share the same values. The heightened interest in and promotion of 'true' Islam among these Muslims in Serang has occurred in tandem with their adoption of many aspects of a more stringent Islamic way of life.

For the patrons of Sekolah Islam, promoting 'true' Islam is a certain means to reinforce Islamic identity. Their version of Islam has been highly influential in Bantenese society. Nevertheless, most of these people tend not to openly attack local Islamic traditions since its main supporters, the *kyai*, are still highly regarded by some segments of society in Banten, especially in rural areas. In fact, in Banten, to oppose a *kyai* is considered a serious breach of etiquette, with social and spiritual consequences (Tihami 1992: 99; Wilson 2003: 246).

Aspects of Islamic Identity Politics

Banten has a mixed Islamic worldview. On the one hand, local traditional forms of Islam, with its roots in the Sultanate of Banten, still prevail, and traditions and customs such as *tahlilan, panjang mulud,* and *ziyārah* (pilgrimages to sacred graveyards) are still practised. On the other hand, Salafism is increasingly at the heart of some people's religious activities.

While there are a few supporters of conservative Islam who engage in violent acts to realise their goal of establishing an Islamic state, there are others who share the same goal but prefer peaceful means such

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[18]Eko is a 33-year-old university lecturer whose daughter attends a Sekolah Isla

as education and democratic elections (Tan 2011). Indeed, the significance of religion in Indonesia, and of religion in education, corresponds with the fact that education is an appropriate arena in which to address the increasing problem of religious intolerance in the country (Parker 2014: 489). The role played by educators in schools and the community in influencing and directing multiple aspects of the educational process is vital for the creation of a strong civil society that supports multiculturalism, religious tolerance, and pluralism.

Through education, Islamic identity politics in Serang has been exposed. For many urban middle-class Muslims, being a Muslim means that they must be both modern and pious: they and their family members have to be educated in 'true' Islamic learning institutions. For instance, the parents learn Islamic teachings in Salafist, urban-style, and exclusive *pengajian* (Pribadi 2020), while the children are required to study in modern and exclusive Sekolah Islam so that they acquire 'secular' and 'Islamic' knowledge at the same time. Indeed, mixing the two is a way in which Sekolah Islam are arranging 'Islamic modernity' (Lukens-Bull 2000).

> I once was asked to give a sermon in a Sekolah Islam in Serang. They said that I had to adjust my style. The hardest task was that I had to give a sermon on certain topics in which the sources must come from the Quran and *Sunnah* only, not from our traditions in Banten … After many times, I have now enjoyed giving sermons in Sekolah Islam. In fact, I have also learned a lot from them about their understanding of Islam. (Interview with Hasan 20 July 2017)[19]

The affirmation of this preacher indicates that the rise and resilience of these Muslims, whose agenda is to promote 'true' Islam, is neither a myth nor a groundless fact. In point of fact, the socio-political transformation since 1998 has generated various expressions of these Muslims' identity politics. This circumstance includes the creations of Muslim religious identities, piety, and pride that are quickly politicised (Fealy 2008; Lukens-Bull 2008; Millie *et al.* 2014). For them, being a Muslim means that one not only has to perform religious duties and to avoid immoral and misconduct activities, but also to proudly, persistently, and openly demonstrate his or her Islamic identity in a conservative, puritan, and strict way.

Conclusion

The dynamics of the interactions between religion, identity politics, and education in contemporary Indonesia have been complex. Sekolah Islam at various levels show the characteristics of religious conservatism, spread Islamist messages, and nurture the future generation of Muslims who are expected to disseminate their ideas, implement Islamic laws, and establish an ideal Islamic society. Meanwhile, certain urban middle-class Muslims who are influenced by Salafism have made religion the basis of their identity. For them, religion offers a sense of security in the world and the afterlife. Religion can be a place for them to bind themselves to the community, and it therefore becomes part of their identity. Sekolah Islam are seen as a sanctuary because they offer a 'true' Islamic place to become a real Muslim.

By observing Sekolah Islam, I find that such schools may well be able to prepare Muslim children to face the modern world, given the fact that they offer a high academic standard in general subjects, are well-equipped with modern facilities, and are run by professionals. Nonetheless, through investigating religious activities inside and outside the school, as well as parents and school custodians' religious understanding, I discover that Sekolah Islam reinforce religious conservatism and give rise to certain Islamic identity politics characterised by anti-pluralist and religiously intolerant attitudes that may have a negative impact on the development of the students and that of Islam in Indonesia.

These Muslims' pursuit of a 'true' Islamic identity has embedded Islam in the cultural, social, political, and economic terrain of their lives. They have continuously attempted to pursue, claim, and promote their conservative, puritan, and exclusive religious understanding and Islamic identity. At the moment, Muslims who are influenced by these shared religious identities have accumulated power and presented a socio-political challenge at national and local levels. It is in and through Sekolah Islam that these

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[19]Hasan is a 47-year-old *ustadz* serving as a school custodian, who is also a well-known 'spiritual trainer' amongst Sekolah Islam in Serang.

Muslims have played a significant role in invigorating anti-pluralist and intolerant Islamic identity politics in Indonesia.

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Unattributed Interviews

Annisa (pseudonym), interviewed on 9 November 2020, Serang, Indonesia.
Eko (pseudonym), interviewed on 7 September 2017, Serang, Indonesia.
Erik (pseudonym), interviewed on 24 May 2017, Serang, Indonesia.
Hasan (pseudonym), interviewed on 20 July 2017, Serang, Indonesia.
Ilham (pseudonym), interviewed on 15 July 2017, Serang, Indonesia.
Izzan (pseudonym), interviewed on 1 November 2020, Serang, Indonesia.
Rita (pseudonym), interviewed on 18 August 2017, Serang, Indonesia.
Siska (pseudonym), interviewed on 5 May 2017, Serang, Indonesia.

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