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# Preserving Tradition, Maintaining Authority: Transmitting Religious Knowledge in Traditional *Pesantren* in Indonesia

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explain the attempts of traditional *pesantren* to maintain their religious authority facing the abundance of religious knowledge in the information age. Using three traditional *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in West Java as case, this study contends that, in the face of the emergence of new religious views, traditional *pesantren* uphold the traditionalism as part of maintaining their religious authority, whether from a manuscriptural, charismatic, or juridical standpoint. This study demonstrates how the patterns, objects, and methods of transmitting religious knowledge continue to adhere to traditionalism principles. The study of the *kitab kuning* (yellow books) and related sciences aims to enhance comprehension of the Quran, the most important Islamic religious text. This exemplifies the attempt to preserve religious authority in the manuscriptural aspect. The charismatic defense of religious authority is carried out by memorizing, learning, and analyzing hadith science, which is commonly used as the basis of religious opinions. Finally, the attempt to maintain religious authority in the juridical aspect is shown by *bahtsul masa'il*, which entails observing the findings of *ijtihad* by previous *ulama*. This initiative is important in dealing with various evolving times and the proliferation of various religious views circulating in contemporary society.

## Keywords

religious authority, religious knowledge, traditional *pesantren*, *kitab kuning*, *bahtsul masa'il*.

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## 1. Introduction

*Pesantren* is theoretically a place where a person studies religious sciences, with many general characteristics such as assemblies, *kitab kuning* (classical yellow books), the presence of *kyai*, a dormitory, and individual and classical methods of knowledge transmission (Dhofier, 1982). As a predominantly Muslim country, Indonesia has thousands of

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*pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) scattered in various regions and makes *pesantren* as inseparable institution from Indonesian Islam. However, in later developments, the rise of Islamic conservatism and populism has challenged the moderatism of *pesantren* (Bruinessen, 2011). Simultaneously, information and communication technology development also significantly impacts to *pesantren*'s role in the society and increasingly disrupted and potential to make traditional *pesantren* no longer significant in society.

*Pesantren* are usually divided into traditional (those who maintain the old tradition with sources of classical Islamic religious knowledge and conventional learning methods) and modern (those who have adopted modern approaches, materials, and more modern sources accompanied by patterns and more innovative learning methods), but these distinctions suggest that *pesantren* have always been more traditional than madrasas and schools (Steenbrink, 1996).

Also recent advances in information and communication technology have posed challenges not only to *pesantren* but also to formal educational institutions, as proven by various facets of social life. Internet technology, in particular, has resulted in the phenomenon of convergence and the digitalisation of the educational process, resulting in the emergence of new social ties. This relationship has increasingly resulted in the development of divergent perspectives and attitudes about the acquisition of information, including religious ones (Fakhruroji, 2015b, 2019a, 2019b). Religion has become more fluid on the internet, as it is no longer the exclusive domain (Possamai and Turner, 2014). This is what many parties, including Lukman Hakim Saifudin, were concerned when he served as the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (see, Solahudin and Fakhruroji, 2020), since religious knowledge on the internet, according to him, could not be thoroughly verified. This argument leads to the conclusion that religion is not the domain of everyone, but it is still associated with parties deemed to have authority over such matters.

Therefore, this study discusses three traditional *pesantren* in West Java; Al-Masthuriyah in Sukabumi, Miftahul Huda in Tasikmalaya, and Al-Ittifaq in Bandung. These three *pesantren* share fundamental similarities, most notably in their use of Islamic sources to comprehend the Quran and Hadith, as well as their technique of objective interpretation through the examination of the scholars' *ijtihad* performance. Thus, this paper would explain the practice of transmission Islamic knowledge through religious text sources to address the phenomenon of disruption brought about by advances in information and communication technologies. While this is a natural reaction, it can be interpreted as an effort by a traditional *pesantren* to retain religious authority and the scientific tradition and methodology associated with *pesantren* in an ever-changing age.

## 2. Literature Review

*Pesantren* have historically been regarded as religious authorities due to their teaching of religious understanding and their involvement in social change (Pribadi, 2014; Ni'am, 2015). The *kyai* (Islamic scholars), especially in traditional *pesantren*, is revered by the

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community, bolstering his authority. The pesantren and its various components, which were previously regarded as authoritative, are, of course, facing challenges as a result of the symptoms of change manifested by the proliferation of religious knowledge on various internet platforms, which cannot always be verified.

Religious authority is important because religion relates to life fulfillment and happiness, giving faith a much deeper practical dimension for human life satisfaction and happiness (Mutahhari, 1986: 85). Religion, by the very existence of having meaning for life, has the authority to be legitimized by those referred to as authority (Fakhruroji, 2019b: 203). This legitimacy causes the nature of authority to often manifest in two dimensions: first, the aspect of domination, which is often associated with dominance, namely the ability to coerce people to do certain actions; and second, acceptance to obey what is ordered (Weber, 1968).

In Islam, religious authority is classified into; manuscriptural, charismatic, and juridical (Lawrence, 2002). *Firstly*, manuscriptural authority refers to the Quran as the primary religious text, implying that those deemed to possess competent knowledge of Quran and related sciences may be considered authoritative. *Second*, charismatic authority is founded on the individual Prophet Muhammad and is embodied in the hadith or *sunnah* teachings. Following the *sunnah* and mastering hadith science will result in an individual being regarded as authoritative. *Thirdly*, juridical is a more complex legal authority that relies on critical interpretation to make sense of contexts not discussed in the Quran or hadith. In practice, these three types of authority can be summarized as Quran (manuscriptural), Hadith or *sunnah* (charismatic), and *ijtihad* (methodology for making juridical provisions).

This is why religious authority and religious knowledge have an extremely strong relationship, including the sources of religious knowledge. Recognize, know, and learn the origins of religious knowledge will manifest itself in everyday actions. In accordance with Lawrence's (2002) classification of religious authority in Islam, Islamic understanding is a pre-requisite for establishing religious authority. Thus, studying sources of knowledge, especially the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic legal methodology, is a means of establishing and maintaining religious authority.

As a religious manuscript, the Quran is a holy book, a source of law, and a guidance for Muslim's life so those who have access to it and the sciences associated with it are regarded as authoritative in Islam. Similarly, hadiths are often identified with the *sunnah*; many of the Prophet's noble deeds are explicitly narrated in hadith texts and historical narratives. In practice, *kyai* or *ulama* (Islamic scholars) are often referred to as the heirs of the prophets, implying that they possess the visionary characteristics exemplified by the Prophet, as well as profound wisdom and comprehension of Islamic sciences.

However, it is recognized that the Quran and Hadith do not explicitly cover all aspects of human life, especially for the contemporary issues. In this circumstance, an interpretation of *ijtihad* is essential, which is primarily concerned with relatively recent legal provisions. The topic of *ijtihad* is regarded as a right of jurists in the Islamic thought tradition.

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To address contemporary intellectual, cultural, and material challenges, the ulama are experimenting with more freely suggested *ijtihad*, as previous *ijtihad* items included historical, sociological, and doctrinal aspects that were no longer applicable to contemporary issues and traditional *pesantren* are one of the institutions that conserve classical sources and study *ijtihad*.

Additionally, *pesantren* teaches not only Islamic understanding but also broader values for social life. This is why Abdurrahman Wahid (1974) views *pesantren* as a subculture that influences the creation of new values in society. As an educational institution, traditional *pesantren* usually study classical books mainly from *kitab kuning* through the following methods: *bandongan* (listening), *sorogan* (individual), *pengajian akbar* (great lectures), *pengajian kilatan/pasaran* (one-time lectures of a *kitab kuning* in a short period of time, typically during the month of Ramadan), and *bahtsul masa'il*.

Therefore, studies and publications on *pesantren* generally portray it as traditional Islamic educational institutions and *pesantren*'s scientific and intellectual traditions, including the social and political roles of the *kyai*; the relationship between *pesantren* and modernity and globalization; and aspects of spirituality (*sufism*) in *pesantren*. While Geertz (1963) was not specifically discussed the *pesantren* dynamics, he offered an anthropological explanation of the life of *santri*, who later became one of the groups of Javanese religious trends apart from *priyayi* and *abangan*. *Santri*, according to Geertz, are those who have an Islamic intellectual tradition, which distinguishes them from the more feudal *priyayi* and the more secular *abangan*. Specifically, the *pesantren* intellectual tradition was defined by one of its characteristics: the use of the *kitab kuning* as a source of Islamic knowledge (Mas'udi, 1985; Bruinessen, 1994).

On the other hand, Nilan (2009) views this *pesantren* intellectualism as the spirit of education caused by the fact that the physical quality of *pesantren* is mostly substandard, even when comparing to Indonesian public schools. Earlier, Steenbrink's study revealed the dynamics of *pesantren* in relation to the growth of Islamic education institutions in Indonesia. He traced the evolution of *pesantren*, which were then confronted by the presence of schools and *madrasas*. Steenbrink attributes this to Indonesia's dual education system, which affects one another and results in intellectual traditions that are distinct from one another; traditional and modern (Steenbrink, 1996).

Meanwhile, (Horikoshi, 1987) study on the socio-political positions of *kyai* as *pesantren* components, in which he made some important points about the *kyai*'s central position in Indonesia's socio-political transition, owing to charismatic *kyai* leaders who are easier to pioneer social change on their own. Apart from charisma, other factors such as heredity or the piety contribute to the *kyai*'s central position in social change (Shodiq, 2011). However, modernity has resulted in a number of changes to the *kyai*'s leadership as an agent of social change, caused, among other things, by the *kyai*'s leadership position fading with the emergence of many other figures (Arifin, 1978).

In line with the modernisation challenges confronting *pesantren*, other studies examined the *pesantren*'s efforts to absorb modernisation and adapt to change, including the devel-

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opment and adjustment of the national education system (Mastuhu, 1994; Isbah, 2020), as well as the pesantren's efforts to meet contemporary challenges, such as advances in science and technology (Azra, 1992; Wahid, 2014). Additionally, some studies assert that the pesantren group regards itself as the embodiment of traditional Islam's influence (Fauzi, 2012). Also, as Indonesia's oldest educational institution, pesantren is inextricably linked to kyai figures who contribute to the color and design of the pesantren, especially those in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) setting, which is more associated with Sufism (Pribadi, 2014) while other studies show the importance of pesantren in creating generations with qualified religious perspectives and a place to develop morality as an Islamic Sufism-style educational institution (Solahudin, 2008).

As these numerous studies show, the long history of pesantren in Indonesia is also linked to their attempts to protect themselves as religious institutions. Several studies on pesantren efforts to maintain religious authority include Dhofier (1982), who explains how kiais in Java maintain their social status and religious authority through endogamous marriage between kyai families. Endogamous marriage not only serves as a means of affirming public acceptance of the kyai's social position, but it also enhances the institution of the pesantren.

The struggle of pesantren and religious figures to maintain religious authority in the face of modernisation has also been widely studied, including Steenbrink (1996), who describes pesantren efforts to face the growth of other educational institutions, while others examine the defense of the traditional pesantren education system by developing a modern system (Zarkasyi, 2017). The religious authority of pesantren and kyai can also be seen in the context of the development of information and communication technologies (Fakhruroji, 2015a), and others have tried to make adjustments because of the involvement of various new technologies in the dissemination of religious knowledge (Rahman, 2015; Halim, 2018; Solahudin and Fakhruroji, 2020).

All of these studies illustrate the various dynamics confronting pesantren in Indonesia over time, from coping with modernity and a new educational system to how pesantren are dealing with developments in information and communication technology that have altered people's religious behavior and spawned the phenomenon of religious authority. Thus, this study details the attempts of traditional pesantren to maintain religious authority through the transmission of traditional religious knowledge during a period of disruption brought on by advances in information and communication technologies.

### 3. Method

The aim of this study is to examine traditional pesantren's efforts to maintain religious authority through the transmission of religious knowledge. This study involved three traditional pesantren in West Java through the lens of a case study: Al-Masturiyah in Sukabumi, Al-Ittifaq in Bandung, and Miftahul Huda in Tasikmalaya. The three pesantren were chosen because they exhibit a variety of fascinating religious views. In terms of so-

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cio-religious organisations, the three regions include areas where Muhammadiyah, Nahdhatul Ulama, and Persatuan Umat Islam (Islamic Community Association, PUI).

As a qualitative study, this research employs three steps: *first*, employing a multiple observation strategy on the same research object to allow for cross-checking of the findings system and attempting to reduce inaccurate self-interpretation, either with informants or parties outside the field; *second*, employing the method of inductive analysis by examining propositions that arise concerning the case; and *third*, applying the method of inductive analysis by examining propositions that arise concerning the case.

Data were gathered through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and a documentation study. Participant observation was used to gather information about the method of transmitting religious knowledge and the sources used. Meanwhile, interviews with different parties in each pesantren were conducted to elicit knowledge about the religious sources examined in each pesantren and the transmission conducted by each pesantren. Finally, a documentation study was conducted to supplement numerous observations and to serve as part of the verification process. The following stage involves the analysis of data and knowledge findings using triangulation techniques in order to link them to various previous studies and theoretical perspectives, most notably on the religious authority of traditional pesantren in sociocultural life.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This study examines three well-known traditional pesantren in West Java: Al-Masthuriyah in Sukabumi, Al-Ittifaq in Bandung, and Miftahul Huda in Tasikmalaya. Pesantren Al-Masthuriyah was established in 1920 by KH Masthuro and often referred to as '*Pasantren Tipar*' due to its location in Tipar Village, Sukabumi (7 km west of Sukabumi). Originally a madrasa, KH. Masthuro began managing this pesantren in 1941 under the name Sirojul Athfal Islamic School, which expanded in 1950 with the establishment of the Sirojul Banat Islamic School. Madrasah Tsanawiyah Sirojul Athfal/Banat was established in 1967, followed by Madrasah Aliyah Sirojul Athfal/Banat in 1968. KH. Masthuro passed away in the same year, and his pesantren was continued by KH. Syihabuddin Masthuro, KH. Fachruddin Masthuro, and KH. Abdul Aziz Masthuro. The name was changed to Al-Masthuriyah in 1974.

Meanwhile, Pesantren Al-Ittifaq is located in southern Bandung where it was established on February 1, 1934 by KH. Mansour. While Al-Ittifaq has recently gained prominence as an agribusiness-oriented pesantren, the education system operated is classified as traditional due to its continued reliance on the kitab kuning sources. KH. Rifai assumed leadership of this pesantren in 1953 until he died in 1970. Since then, the leadership has been held by KH Fuad Affandi, who later merged religious activities with agricultural business activities (agribusiness) to take advantage of the natural resources surrounding the pesantren.

Furthermore, Pesantren Miftahul Huda Tasikmalaya was founded on August 7, 1967 by KH. Choer Affandi. Following his death, this pesantren was handled directly by his sons,

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son-in-law, and grandchildren under the supervision of KH. Asep A. Maoshul Affandy. Even though it has adapted to the changing times, this pesantren has retained the characteristics of a traditional pesantren, namely learning the kitab kuning using the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods. In this way, these three pesantren have something in common in that, despite having adapted to change and modernity, they still retain the sources and teaching methods of the kitab kuning as one of the key identities of traditional pesantren.

#### 4.1. Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Traditional Pesantren

As a religious educational institution, all studies conducted at pesantren are primarily aimed at interpreting religious texts and putting them into practice in daily life. Thus, learning Arabic is a methodological effort toward understanding the vocabulary of the Quran. Pesantren also teaches morality and fiqh based on the works of previous scholars to be incorporated in daily life. As a result, this section will explain the analysis of the Quran, Hadith, and Ijtihad. Learning on sources of religious knowledge, especially in traditional pesantren, has its own characteristics, namely by using the *kitab kuning* (yellow books) as a guide and is carried out using the *bandongan* (listening), *sorogan* (individual), and *classical* (group) systems. At Pesantren Al-Mashturiyah, the method of learning Quran is focused on the levels and abilities of the students defined through the grouping test, the results of which are then used as a criterion for deciding the class of the *santri* (students). Santri is expected to comprehend Quran from the standpoints of understanding, translating, and interpreting.

At the Pesantren Al-Mashturiyah, Quran is taught using the following sources: *Iqra*, *Qiraat Tajwid*, *Tafsir Juz 'Amma*, and *Tafsir Jalalain*. Meanwhile, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, *Shafwatu Tafasir*, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, *Tafsir Jami'ul Bayan*, and *Tafsir Ad-Durul Mansur* all serve as supporting literature. These diverse literature contribute to students' comprehension of the Quran, including how to read, write, translate, learn Quran pronunciation, and comprehend the context of the Quran in general. A similar phenomenon occurs in Pesantren Al-Ittifaq, which studies the Quran using the *bandongan* system. However, Pesantren Al-Ittifaq expressly preferred the *tafsir* method to gain a detailed understanding of the Quran and teaches interpretation and other methods of learning, such as reading, translating, and generally understanding the Quran.

Specifically, learning to translate the Quran at Al-Ittifaq is accomplished concurrently with an understanding of Arabic grammar, ensuring that students in this pesantren have a firm base of both reading and recitation skills. Interestingly, Al-Ittifaq develops an interpretation of the Quran through the *Tafsir al-Adabi wa al-Ijtima'i*, which describes the social life of society by establishing relationships between the Quran and the laws that govern community life and can provide intellectual illumination. The method of learning the Quran is highly influenced by the pesantren's orientation toward the social realm, specifically agriculture.

Pesantren Miftahul Huda, like these two pesantren, studies kitab kuning, but they do not only use *Tafsir Jalalain*, but also *Tafsir Ibn Katsir*. *Tafsir Ibn Katsir*, in general, can be

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classified as a book with the style and orientation of *tafsir bi al-ma'tsur*, as shown by its dominance in interpretations based on hadith and the opinions of the Prophet's companions. In other words, this interpretation takes a normative approach to history, even though it makes use of justification or logic to explain the Quran verses. Not only that, given that this pesantren is geared toward comprehending *tawhid*, or the contents of the Quran, this pesantren also makes reference to the book *Tafsir Ruhul Ma'ani*.

Apart from studying Quranic sciences, the three pesantren also concentrate on hadith. The term hadith refers to anything that is based on the Prophet Muhammad, whether it is sentences, acts, or provisions. Several other words are sometimes used interchangeably with hadith, including *sunnah*, *khobar*, and *atsar*. Hadith shares the same place and function as religious authority, particularly of charismatic authority, as it contains the Prophet's teachings, who serves as a role model for all Muslims. Additionally, hadith serves as an explanation for the Quran, and therefore is often regarded as the Prophet's interpretation of the Quran.

The most frequently used method in the pesantren for comprehending hadith is through the *matan* (content) of the hadith. This is accomplished by taking into account a variety of factors that are tailored to the students' circumstance and condition. Similarly, the books used as teaching resources are usually non-religious in nature, as the object of studying hadith in pesantren is to gain an understanding of everyday life. This is unquestionably not the same as comprehending the hadith according to the theory advanced by hadith experts.

At Pesantren Al-Masthuriyah, hadith learning is approached in a variety of ways depending on its degree. However, the focus is more on memorizing hadith and *asbab al-wurud* (historical contexts of a hadith) in order to comprehend the context of the hadith's meaning and narration. Similarly, at Pesantren Al-Ittifaq, which continues to emphasize observational learning, this is because the primary goal of hadith learning is to gain guidance in applying religious concepts. Additionally, the memorization approach is used to comprehend hadiths, making it easier for students to comprehend and recall hadiths. Additionally, the Pesantren Miftahul Huda employs the memorization method to educate students about hadiths, especially those concerning character. Apart from memorizing, students are expected to document the hadiths they memorize in order to bolster their retention. Students may also gain an understanding of hadith by studying *Mushthalah al-Hadith* book, which explains to determine the status of hadiths, in order for them to learn and be able to discern different types of hadith based on their form and quality.

To supplement contemporary awareness, these three pesantren also studying the *ijtihad* of their predecessor in order to comprehend the meaning and methods used. Understanding *ijtihad* is critical as it relates to how religion is contextualized, especially in terms of legal opinions. In this sense, learning *ijtihad* is one of the practices and attempts to preserve the third religious authority, juridical. In practice, methodological skills are needed to comprehend and apply *ijtihad*, and they must be accompanied by new knowledge and thoughts in order for religious understanding to be established for the modern era and to

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benefit society. Studying ijthad is important because all sciences have a degree of reality and must be viewed as an integral part of the process of improving people's thinking ability and imagination at a given time. This is because, while science may have appeared sophisticated in the past when it came to resolving various issues of Islamic law, it appears helpless when applied to the present. This is entirely fair, given the historical context and the controversial existence of Islamic law, which became the subject of debate.

One of the essential parallels between the three approaches to transmitting information about the effects of ijthad and their methods is the use of a particular practice called *bahtsul masa'il*, or the analysis of contemporary problems using the perspectives of predecessor ulama and the methodology employed by each of these ulama. *Bahtsul masa'il* is important in terms of examining the long-term effects of ijthad. It is held on a weekly basis in these three pesantren and covers a variety of subjects. This activity is conducted in a discussion, which normally includes four major components: (1) a moderator to lead the forum, (2) participants as forum members, (3) a topics, and (4) a drafting team. This drafting team is often regarded as qualified in Islamic science. The kyai, ustadz, or senior santri are the members of these three pesantren who serve as the drafting team.

Generally, *bahtsul masa'il* are opened under the supervision of a moderator who provides context for the topic at hand. Following that, the moderator invites all participants to respond with scientific arguments based on trustworthy books. The drafting team was charged to accommodate all of the responses and viewpoints expressed by each participant throughout the discussion forum. At the conclusion of the case, the drafting team took into account and evaluated each participant's responses and argumentation in order to arrive at the optimal formulation. Following that, the drafting team decided a response to the problem addressed in the forum, based on the findings of their ijthad.

#### **4.2. Traditional Pesantren and the Struggle to Maintain Religious Authority**

Modernisation has been dramatically embodied in its most tangible manifestation by the globalisation of information, which began with the advent of information and communication technologies. One of the direct consequences is the emergence of religious knowledge and information—as well as other types of information—that were previously associated with authoritative parties. In other words, authority becomes more permeable as a result of the widespread dissemination of viewpoints through various internet platforms. The proliferation of various religious views on the internet and social media appears to exert power in the sense of the world itself through various forms of activism, extending to a wider public space (Lengauer, 2018). This demonstrates that some Islamic activism does not start with mainstream Islamic organisations such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and others, and further demonstrates how social media has aided religious populism (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020). Traditional pesantren are one of the parties facing significant challenges in this regard, as they are not only confronted with a new pattern of religious comprehension, but also with a more rapid mode of dissemination, which means that, within some parameters, traditional pesantren may experience symp-

toms of disturbance, especially regarding the religious authority that has been attached to them.

Although religious knowledge on the internet and social media is often devoid of qualified sources, it still has the potential to establish religious authority. In this regard, and with reference to the three traditional pesantren studied in this report, one might argue that the preservation of the traditional nature is part of the effort to protect the institution's authority. Although these three pesantren use certain information technology in the transmission of religious knowledge, they maintain certain classical sources and methods, which are important characteristics of traditional pesantren.

These three traditional pesantren demonstrate that the content, sources, and methods used to convey religious knowledge are based on enhancing one's comprehension of the Quran, hadith, and *ijtihad* performance. In other words, when they learn Arabic grammar, *tafsir*, and *fiqh* through different references to the *kitab kuning*, the ultimate goal is to read Quran and to explore the meanings inside. In accordance with Lawrence's (2002) view of religious authority in Islam, all of the three pesantren's studies and teaching sources on the sciences of the Quran are an effort to preserve authority with a manuscriptural dimension.

Similarly, when it comes to hadith sciences transmission, the three traditional pesantren share similar trends, processes, and references. Lawrence (2002) equates hadith or *sunnah* with the second Islamic religious authority, namely charismatic, since hadith and *sunnah* are teachings that are directly based on the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, since hadith is a primary source of Islamic knowledge, having an understanding of it can help *santri* enhance their understanding of Islam. Additionally, having an understanding of hadith can help *santri* develop their status as an authoritative party when it comes to religious knowledge.

Apart from the Quran, hadith is often used to provide a foundation for interpretation, which is then disseminated in the public. However, not all hadith can be used as a legal justification for religious view, as hadith is classified. This knowledge of the degrees and categories of hadith demonstrates that these pesantren have made an effort to maintain their religious authority amidst the deluge of information and religious knowledge on the internet. In this case, traditionalism is an effort to maintain its authority in terms of religious knowledge.

These three traditional pesantren also study various contemporary theological topics while studying the sciences of the Quran and hadith, as well as the classical sources in the *kitab kuning*. This is accomplished through an examination of contemporary Islamic thought as a result of *ijtihad*, especially *ijtihad* pertaining to Islamic legal views on worship and everyday life, which Lawrence (2002) views as a form of juridical religious authority. In practice, the three pesantren have a history of debating contemporary socio-religious issues through *bahtsul masa'il* activities aimed at studying and producing *ijtihad*.

Thus, *ijtihad* serves two purposes: *first*, to protect against developments in science and phenomena in the contemporary era; and *second*, to contextualize the findings of *ijtihad* to make it more alive and meaningful as a living tradition. The outcome of this *ijtihad* serves as an inspiration for the works of previous thinkers who provided religious responses to the challenges of their time, or as an example of their understanding and interpretation of revelation, given the social context in which it occurs; *third*, *ijtihad* would have ramifications for the re-actualization of Islamic understanding in the various spheres of life. Thus, *bahtsul masa'il* in traditional pesantren is a practice that serves as a duty and logical consequence for pesantren while also attempting to maintain their religious authority.

## 5. Conclusions

In the Indonesian context, pesantren are classified as modern or traditional, which are typically distinguished by management, educational curricula, and methods of transmitting the materials. This means that modern pesantren are seldom associated with a particular figure, as is often the case with traditional pesantren. Although traditional pesantren have evolved over time, this study focuses specifically on the transmission of religious knowledge through kitab kuning sources in order to protect them against the deluge of religious information that exists in society in general and in various media contexts in particular.

According to this study, the transmission of religious knowledge by Al-Masthuriyah, Al-Ittifaq, and Miftahul Huda is an attempt to preserve the tradition of Islamic learning contained in the kitab kuning, one of the characteristics of traditional pesantren. Additionally, this is also done to maintain their religious authority, as all of the material discussed seeks to improve students' methodological comprehension of the Quran as a manuscriptural component and hadith as a charismatic dimension of religious authority.

Meanwhile, the juridical dimension is demonstrated by *bahtsul masa'il*, which is used to examine the outcomes of *ijtihad* and the methodologies employed by previous ulama. Every week, *batshul masa'il* is conducted in these three pesantren using a discussion directed by a drafting team which usually are kyai, ustadz, or senior santri who are presumed to possess theological knowledge and expertise in problem analysis. The aim of studying the results of *ijtihad* is to defend against changes in science and contemporary phenomena, as well as to comprehend the contextual results of *ijtihad* in order to become more practical. Thus, it is not only a ritual in traditional pesantren, it is also an attempt to maintain religious authority in society.

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