# Dynamics of Islamic Education and Indigenous Culture in Lombok: A Historical Study of Adaptation, Acculturation, and Assimilation

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## Abstract

Islamization in Lombok demonstrates the dynamic interaction between Islamic education, particularly through the pesantren system, and the local culture of the Sasak people. Previous studies have emphasized the classical role of pesantren as centers for the transmission of turats knowledge. Still, they have been limited in explaining how pesantren have transformed through processes of adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation in the modern context. This study aims to analyze the integration of local cultural values with Islamic education in Lombok, while also formulating a model of glocal Islamic pedagogy that is relevant to the demands of the 21st century. This research employs a qualitative approach using ethnographic and historical methods. Data was collected over four months through semi-structured interviews with religious scholars, traditional leaders, and community members, participatory observation at pesantren in Central and West Lombok, and analysis of documents from historical archives and relevant literature. Data analysis was conducted thematically through reduction, presentation, and verification using triangulation of sources and methods. Preliminary findings reveal three main stages of Islamization in Lombok: adaptation through the contextualization of Islamic teachings and hybrid pesantren curricula; acculturation through the harmonization of Sasak traditions such as Wayang Sasak with Islamic education; and assimilation, marked by the full integration of Islamic values into the local socio-cultural identity. This study contributes to the development of Islamic education theory by offering a "glocal Islamic pedagogy" framework that combines classical heritage with contemporary competencies. These findings are expected to support the development of contextual and sustainable Islamic education models that are locally relevant yet globally competitive.

**Keywords:** Islamic education, adaptation, acculturation, assimilation

**Introduction**

Pesantren is one of the main pillars of Islamic education in Indonesia, playing a strategic role in shaping the religious, social, and cultural identity of Muslims. Data from the Ministry of Religion indicates that there are over 26,975 pesantren. [1] accommodating 3.65 million students as of mid-2023 across Indonesia ([2] This makes it one of the largest community-based education systems in the world. Amid rapid globalisation and socio-cultural transformation, pesantren face serious challenges in remaining relevant in meeting national educational demands and preserving local identity and traditional Islamic values.[3] Many pesantren in Indonesia have integrated modern curricula such as general education and technological competencies, and even the Ministry of Religion claims that Digital Literacy in Pesantren has increased significantly.[4] This fact indicates the pressure to undertake complex adaptations, which are structural and epistemological.

Experts emphasize that the transformation of pesantren is part of the long-standing dynamics of Islamization and modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia. Azra explains that the Islamization of the Nusantara region occurred through peaceful acculturation, where pesantren served as agents of integrating Islamic values into local culture.[5] Van Bruinessen emphasizes the importance of pesantren in preserving the tradition of the "kitab kuning" (traditional Islamic texts) while also serving as a base for the network of conventional ulama.[6] Meanwhile, Zuhdi highlights that globalization and technological advancements demand that pesantren undertake pedagogical innovations that combine traditional education with modern curricula.[7] These experts' thoughts indicate that pesantren face a dialectical dilemma between maintaining orthodoxy and meeting the demands of modernization.

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[1]	GoodStats, "Provinsi Dengan Jumlah Pesantren Terbanyak," 2022, https://goodstats.id/infographic/provinsi-dengan-jumlah-pesantren-terbanyak-CQV1T.
[2] Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "Santri Ponpes Di Indonesia Mencapai 3,65 Juta," 2023, https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/santri-ponpes-di-indonesia-mencapai-365-juta-0cl8mj.
[3] Ira Kusumawati and Nurfuadi, "Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren Dalam Kurikulum Nasional Pada Pondok Pesantren Modern," *Sanskara Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 2, no. 01 SE-Articles (January 31, 2024): 1–7, https://doi.org/10.58812/spp.v2i01.293.
[4] Kementerian Agama Kantor Wilayah Surabaya, "66.364 Santri PKPS Ikuti UKN Berbasis Komputer, Kemenag: Literasi Digital Pesantren Naik Signifikan," 2024, https://surabaya.kemenag.go.id/nasional/66-364-santri-pkps-ikuti-ukn-berbasis-komputer-kemenag-literasi-digital-pesantren-naik-signifikan-3nQmc.
[5] Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah* (Prenada Media, 2013).
[6] Martin Van Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the" Conservative Turn"* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).
[7] Adri Lundeto, "Digitalisasi Pesantren: Hilangnya Budaya Tradisionalis Atau Sebuah Kemajuan?," *Jurnal Education and Development* 9, no. 3 (2021): 452–57.

Although the literature on pesantren's history and social role is quite extensive, studies examining the epistemological and pedagogical implications of contemporary pesantren transformations remain limited. Most research focuses on structural and administrative aspects, such as curriculum management or the integration of general subjects, as seen in the studies by Kusumawati and Nurfuadi. [8] Muh Hasan Marwiji, [9] However, little discussion exists on how pesantren carry out the processes of adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation from a glocality perspective: the ability to harmoniously integrate local values with global demands. This gap is critical for understanding the continued relevance of pesantren in the modern era.

A review of the literature on Islamic boarding schools shows at least five critical studies relevant to the context of this research. First, Hosaini found that integrating modern curricula in Islamic boarding schools tends to be formalistic and has not touched on the epistemological dimension.[10] Second, Shidiq and Muhammad Ufuqul Mubin emphasize that pesantren have begun to adopt digital technology, but resource constraints often hinder its implementation.[11] Third, Iswan Fadlin's research reveals that pesantren that have successfully adapted generally apply a learning model that combines *life skills* with the values of the Kitab Kuning.[12] Fourth, a study by Sutomo shows that pesantren that maintain local strengths have higher cultural resilience than those that merely follow the national curriculum.[13] Fifth, research by Sholihul Anwar emphasizes the importance of developing a glocal education model to bridge the gap between local traditions and global demands.[14] However, these five studies mainly highlight practical or structural

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[8] Kusumawati and Nurfuadi, "Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren Dalam Kurikulum Nasional Pada Pondok Pesantren Modern."

[9] Muh Hasan Marwiji et al., "Integrasi Kurikulum Pondok Pesantren Dan Madrasah Aliyah Pada Mata Pelajaran Rumpun Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Alwasilah Lilhasanah Islamic Boarding School," *JIIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 7, no. 3 (2024): 2528–35.

[10] Hosaini Hosaini, Rif'ah Rif'ah, and Muslimin Muslimin, "Integration Of Formal Education And Islamic Boarding Schools As New Paradigm From Indonesian Perspective," *At-Ta'lim: Jurnal Pendidikan* 10, no. 1 (2024): 107–21.

[11] Ah Shidiq and Muhammad Ufuqul Mubin, "Modernization of Boarding Boards through Digitalization of The Education System in Pensantren," *EDU-RELIGIA: Jurnal Keagamaan Dan Pembelajarannya* 5, no. 2 (2022): 52–65.

[12] Iswan Fadlin, Hendra Hendra, and Mehmet Uzunboylu, "How Can Pesantren Curriculum Development Keep up with Society's Needs for Life Skills Education?," *Development: Studies in Educational Management and Leadership* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1–16.

[13] Sutomo Sutomo et al., "Religious-Sociocultural Networks and Social Capital Enhancement in Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2024): 137–48.

[14] Sholihul Anwar et al., "Development of the Concept of Islamic Education to Build and Improve the Personality of School-Age Children," *Multidisciplinary Reviews* 7, no. 8 (2024): 2024139.

aspects, with few discussing the theoretical implications for developing local pedagogy in Islamic education.

This study differs from previous studies in placing pesantren transformation within the framework of glocal Islamic pedagogy, which combines cultural acculturation theory with local pedagogy to respond to global demands. While previous studies have focused more on curriculum management or technology adoption, this study emphasizes the epistemological dimension and theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic education. The study examines how pesantren create a dialogic space between the tradition of the "kitab kuning," modern curriculum demands, and global challenges, producing an adaptive yet authentic model of Islamic education.

This study examines in depth how pesantren adapt, acculturate, and assimilate with educational modernization through the perspective of glocal Islamic pedagogy. Theoretically, this study enriches the knowledge on Islamic education by introducing the concepts of local pedagogy and glocality as a framework for understanding pesantren adaptation strategies. Practically, this research clarifies how pesantren can maintain their traditional identity while responding to global demands. The findings of this research are also expected to serve as a reference in developing a contextual, relevant, and authentic Islamic education model rooted in the values of pesantren. Thus, this research contributes to developing Islamic education theory and practice in Indonesia.

**Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach, utilizing ethnographic and historical methods to examine the adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation processes of Islam with local culture on the island of Lombok.[15] The ethnographic approach was chosen to enable researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the community's social, cultural, and religious contexts through direct observation and intensive interaction with informants.

This research focuses on areas with strong cultural traditions, such as Central Lombok and West Lombok. The research subjects include traditional leaders, ulama (Islamic scholars), community leaders, and residents involved in cultural and religious practices. Data was collected over four months using semi-structured interviews,

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[15] James P. Spradley, *Metode Etnografi*, ed. Misbah Zulfa Elizabeth, Edisi Kedu (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2006).

participatory observation, and document analysis from historical archives, books, and other relevant sources. Data analysis was conducted thematically through data reduction, data presentation, and verification using triangulation of sources and methods to enhance the validity of findings. Data validity was strengthened through verification by members and audit trails, while ethical considerations were fulfilled by obtaining permission from relevant parties and ensuring informant confidentiality. This methodology aims to comprehensively understand how Islam is harmoniously integrated with local culture in Lombok.

**The Dynamics of Islamization and Islamic Education in Lombok**

The process of Islamization in Lombok shows a dynamic interaction between Islamic education, particularly through the pesantren system, and the local culture of the Sasak people. The results of this study, which uses a historical and descriptive qualitative approach, identify three main stages in the process: adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation. These three stages explain the historical transformation of Islam in Lombok and show how Islamic boarding schools have developed into glocal centers of Islamic education, capable of preserving classical traditions (*turats*) while adapting to contemporary competency requirements.

1. **Adaptation Stage: Contextualization of Islamic Teachings**

The adaptation stage reflects the initial phase of Islam's arrival in the 16th century, marked by a proselytizing strategy sensitive to local norms, language, and customs. Islamic missionaries, such as Sunan Prapen, used the Sasak language in religious instruction and respected existing local traditions. This strategy minimized resistance and encouraged open acceptance of Islam by the community. This finding aligns with Nurdianto, who emphasizes that successful Islamization in Indonesia always involves a process of cultural adaptation.[16]

In a contemporary context, this principle of adaptation is evident in the hybrid curriculum of Lombok's Islamic boarding schools. The schools combine teaching *classical Islamic texts* with modern subjects such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and hydroponic farming. This strategy enables pesantren to maintain their function

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[16] Saifuddin Alif Nurdianto, "PESANTREN TEGALSARI: The Synergy between Islam and Local Wisdom in Cultural Acculturation," 2019.

*of tafaqquh fiddin* while preparing students to face the socio-economic challenges of the 21st century. Research by Rahman and Fahmi confirms that this integrative model effectively enhances the social relevance of pesantren without diminishing their spiritual values.[17]

## 2. Acculturation Stage: Harmony of Religious and Local Cultural Values

The acculturation stage demonstrates the synthesis of cultures, where Islamic values and Sasak traditions blend harmoniously. A concrete example can be seen in the use of Wayang Sasak as a medium for preaching and education. Through the play *Serat Menak*, the heroic tale of Amir Hamzah (Jayengrana) is framed within a narrative that resonates with the cultural identity of the Sasak community. Research by Nashihin and Purnama reveals similar findings, stating that local cultural media in Islamic boarding schools effectively internalize religious values and strengthen social cohesion. "[18]

Acculturation is also reflected in pedagogical practices. Islamic boarding schools in Lombok maintain classical methods such as *sorogan* and *halaqah*, but combine them with experience-based learning, such as digital store management and creative media production at Al-Ishlahuddiny and Al-Madani Islamic boarding schools.[19] This phenomenon reflects Robertson's concept of *glocalization*, where global competencies are integrated without losing local identity.[20]

## 3. Assimilation Stage: Full Integration into Social-Cultural Identity

The assimilation stage describes the full integration of Islam into Lombok's social and cultural life. Religious practices such as *ngaji pasaran*, *haul wali*, and *ziarah kubur* demonstrate how religious and local cultural dimensions are no longer separate. Even the use of everyday language in Islamic boarding schools, which

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[17] F Rahman and R Fahmi, "Hybrid Curriculum in Pesantren: Balancing Tradition and Modernity," *Journal of Education and Practice* 13, no. 5 (2022): 88–101.

[18] H Nashihin and E Purnama, "Religious Moderation Education in the Relationship between Islamic Boarding Schools and Chinese Ethnicity in Rembang City," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 2 (2023): 101–18, http://link.

[19] A Purwowidodo and M Zaini, "Developing a Value-Based Moderate Islamic Education Model: A Case Study of Pesantren Sidogiri," *JPAI* 12, no. 1 (2024): 1–15, http://link.

[20] R Robertson, *Glocalization: Globalization and Local Adaptation* (Routledge, 2016).

blends Arabic and Sasak, reinforces this process. Nurjanah,[21] Sulaiman & and Ridwan[22] emphasize that such assimilation reflects the highest stage of Islamization, where religion becomes an intrinsic part of local identity.

At the educational level, assimilation is reflected in curricula that integrate classical religious knowledge with practical skills. Islamic boarding schools such as Nurul Haramain NWDI and Darul Qur'an Wal Hadits Pancor have developed programs in hydroponic farming, digital entrepreneurship, journalism, and creative media production. These findings support the study by Miftah, Huda, & Khairuddin, which states that pesantren play a dual role as guardians of Islamic scholarly heritage and drivers of socio-economic empowerment.[23]

## 4. Theoretical and Practical Contributions of the Research

This study makes a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education studies in Indonesia in three main aspects:

a. Theoretical Contribution: This article formulates a framework for adapting acculturation and assimilation, enriching *glocal Islamic education*. These findings support Van Bruinessen's theory, further developed by Masdul, Pajarianto, & Rajindra, that pesantren can transform without losing their Islamic identity.[24]

b. Empirical Contribution – This study documents concrete curriculum strategies and innovations, such as integrating *traditional Islamic texts* with hydroponic farming training, digital entrepreneurship, and Wayang Sasak as a medium for religious outreach.

c. Practical Contribution: These findings produce a contextual and sustainable Islamic education model that can be replicated in other regions. This model demonstrates that integrating local culture with modern competencies can

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[21] S Nurjanah, "Local Culture and Islamic Educational Assimilation in Lombok," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2021): 44–59.

[22] R Sulaiman and M Q Ridwan, "The Symbol of Acculturation and Islamic Unity in Bangka Traditions," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pranata Sosial* 19, no. 2 (2024): 145–62.

[23] M Miftah, E Y Huda, and F I Khairuddin, "Cultural Contestation and Acculturation in Islamic Education," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 3 (2023): 22–36, http://link.

[24] Muhammad Rizal Masdul et al., "Acculturation of Religious Values in Early Childhood: Central Sulawesi Educational Institutions," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 14, no. 1 (2024): 1–7.

preserve religious identity while enhancing communities' socio-economic resilience.[25]

Overall, Islamic education in Lombok, which has undergone stages of adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation, reflects the inclusive and transformative character of Nusantara Islam. Pesantren have evolved into social laboratories that produce spiritually righteous generations and contextually aware, independent, and globally competitive individuals. Such educational models are worthy of being prototypes for contextual Islamic education at the national and international levels.

**Conclusion**

This study confirms that the Islamization process in Lombok results from a dynamic interaction between pesantren-based Islamic education and the local culture of the Sasak people. Through three main stages of adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation, pesantren have successfully internalized Islamic values into social and cultural life without eliminating local identity.

The adaptation stage demonstrated contextual and sensitive da'wah strategies toward the language and traditions of the community, which later developed into a hybrid curriculum to address contemporary challenges. The acculturation stage highlights the harmony between Islamic values and Sasak culture, as seen in the utilization of Wayang Sasak and the strengthening of teaching methods that blend tradition with innovation. The assimilation stage reflects full integration, where religious practices and local culture merge, and pesantren education transforms into a center for socio-economic empowerment and the development of 21st-century skills.

This study expands the concept of glocal Islamic education, demonstrating that pesantren can preserve religious heritage while responding to modern demands. Empirically, this research provides concrete evidence of curriculum innovation based on cultural integration and practical competencies. These findings offer a contextual Islamic education model that is inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable, which can be replicated in various regions of Indonesia and at the global level.

Pesantren in Lombok serves as centers for the transmission of religious knowledge and as social laboratories that produce religious, contextually aware, independent, and

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[25] R Rahmadi and H Hamdan, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Education: A Multidisciplinary Perspective," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 15, no. 1 (2023): 70–84, http://link.

globally competitive generations. This model strengthens the character of Nusantara Islam as an educational paradigm capable of preserving traditions while innovating to address the challenges of the times.

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