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# PROCEEDING

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## “WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATISATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ASIA”

27-28 April 2018 | Widya Graha Building LIPI Jakarta, Indonesia

Editor:

Kumiawati Hastuti Dewi, Augustina Situmorang, Widjajanti M. Santoso

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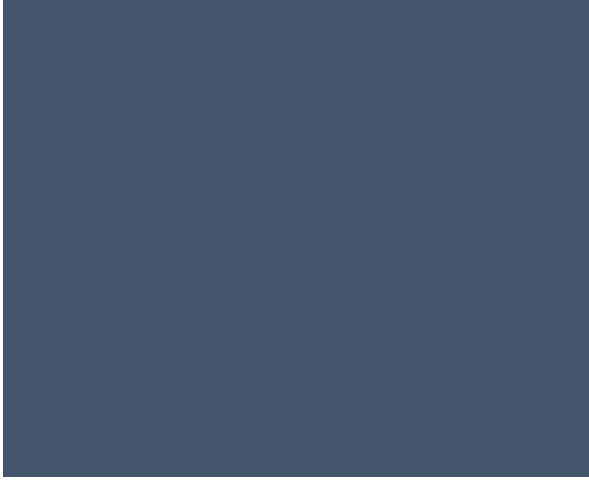


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# THE ROLE OF NYAI KHAIRIYAH IN ADVANCING EDUCATION: A PROTOTYPE OF FEMALE ULAMA IN PESANTREN

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## **Abstract**

The female leader in the male-dominated community is very rare, let alone female religious leader in the pesantren. This research examines the role of 'female ulama' in forging intellectualism amid traditional Muslim community which is represented by Nyai Khoiriyah in the Pesantren of Seblak, East Java. This study attempts to capture the pattern of leadership of Nyai Khoiriyah in managing religious education under the male-dominated circumstance. While most women have limited access to religious texts, Nyai Khoiriyah shows a different inclination. She was not only well-trained in the contemporary Islamic studies, but also mastered various classical books on fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), tafsir (qur'anic exegesis) and nahwu (Arabic grammar). Her competence led her to be a respected 'female ulama' whose capacity and reputation surpassed fellow women and male scholars in the 20th century. This study focuses on the contribution of Nyai Khoiriyah in the advancement of traditional Muslim women to have access to education and enhancement of religious knowledge.

**Keywords:** female ulama, pesantren, progressive ideas, female education.

## **Introduction**

Topic on women's role in the formation of social and religious life has been conducted in a very limited study. Most studies tend to neglect the participation of women's agents in the male-dominated world. In the 'Pesantren world' where Islamic intellectualism and traditionalism meet, women's role also gains lack of scholar's attention. It is not only because of its difficulty to investigate, but also, to some extent, the lack of political will to present women's role in

making this better world. Focusing mostly on Kiai (male agent), early studies on pesantren tend to capture male actors in empowering and developing the indigenous institution.[1] Few of studies on the existence of female agents in pesantren can be found in the subsequent development. Marcoes and Meuleman explored Muslim female and male scholars (ulama) in expressing ideas about gender relations through public speaking and their literary production.[2] Marhumah identified the role of both kiai dan nyai in forging gender discourse in Muslim community (pesantren).[3] In a deeper study on the role of women agent in pesantren, Srimulyani captured an important role of several nyais in the Jombang's pesantren.[4] Ma'mur found female agents have contributed significant role in boosting the religious-based issues on gender relations.[5]

Studies on female agents are still handful, but the development of female ulama (religious expert) in the contemporary Indonesia shows an interesting progress. The growing progressive Muslim women movements since colonial era to the Reformasi era demonstrates great contribution of female Muslim agents in responding social and cultural changes.[6] Documentation on female ulama who participated in various tracks of the development shows how female clerics devoted their life to many kinds of channels.[7] Serious effort of female ulama to reinterpret Islamic classic texts becomes an inspiring step to explore the richness of pesantren assets.[8] Strategic program of women Muslim activists to reproduce female ulama signifies awareness of supplying well-educated female agents to Muslim public. Also, the assembly of women ulama to campaign gender equality and justice harbors a great expectation of encouraging female ulama to voice women's aspirations.[9]

Serious efforts to keep searching female figures who contributed their life to the nation are remain conducted by women activists and researchers. However, such efforts are still not sufficient compared to the project of researching the role of male ulama in the social and cultural life. Moreover, study on the role of female ulama in the 20th century which is still lack of exploration and maneuver. One of female figures who played important role in developing pesantren for female pupils and capacity building is Nyai Khairiyah from Jombang, East Java. Her dedication to advance male and female santri in pesantren can not be underestimated. By exploring her experiences and stories, study on women's role will be more developed and gained important references to link this current situation with the previous development. It is important to capture continuity and change of women movement in the early campaign of gender equality, including in the traditional pesantren world.

I argue that the emergence of qualified female ulama in the milieu of traditional Muslim society is resulted from serious interactions with closest agents coming from the elite structure of religious authority. As Smith and Hamdi found that gender practices could be still under the patriarchal gender scripts and constructing ideas of female piety and behavior in docile ways, but cultural elements in the pesantren world such as spiritual bilateral kinship systems enable women to negotiate gender-based issues without necessarily trying to reform the authoritative nature of patriarchy.[10] The proximity of Nyai Khairiyah to the competent ulama granted a good image and a distinct religious authority which might not be found beyond the pesantren community. She represented a female ulama in Javanese Muslim community whose intellectual journey was forged by three prominent scholars with different expertise. Her progressive ideas reflect her deep understanding of the Qur'an, hadith and Islamic classic texts which she shared to her pupils and audiences. Nyai Khairiyah dedicated her life to education and women empowerment with motherhood approach and altruist spirit of preacher. She became an outstanding agent of pesantren

who frequently turned to be a consultant to solve many social and religious problems. Khairiyah's body of language reflected an intellectual actor who easily mingled not only with women but also with men counterparts. She is the product of sincerity, piety, and sense of curiosity of pesantren agent in 20th century of Indonesia.

### **Research Methodology**

This research constitutes qualitative research which uses 'life history' approach. It is a type of social science research that collects data through non-numerical data and seeks to interpret meaning to understand social life. As Shaw suggests on the method of life history, it should notice several important aspects. The life history does not only need to emphasize the importance of the teller's sociocultural dimension, but also should focus on the perspectives of individual as a unique source. It also involves a time depth of personal history to reveal relevant information to a region's or group's local history and the most important thing, it should explore the local history based on the perspective of indigenous people.[11] This study focuses on santri community which becomes a targeted population and place to be analyzed. By means of the life history, this research is intended to explore the pattern of female leadership in the Javanese Muslim social structure and gender relations in the pesantren world. In collecting data, this research involves some techniques such as documentary, achieves, interview and observation. It is conducted for about a year since 2016-2017. The main location of this research is 'Pesantren Seblak Salafiyah Syafi'iyah, Jombang, East Java where Nyai Khairiyah spent most of her life time. This research uses gender perspective to identify the female role in social and cultural changes. By means of aforementioned procedure, this research attempts to answer these questions: (a). What is the role of Nyai Khoiriyah in forging the intellectualism in the Javanese Pesantren? (b). To what extent did she contribute her scholarship and competence to the community? (c). How important does her life history become a reference to the study on female ulama?

### **Research Highlight**

#### **Profile of Nyai Khairiyah**

##### ***Educational Background***

Khairiyah was born in Tebuireng, Jombang, East Java, in 1908. She was the second child from the marriage of Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari to Nyai Nafiqoh. Her name was later known as Ummu Abdul Jabar after she had borne her first son.[12] Her father is the founding father of the biggest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), whose genealogy links to the great King of Java, Jaka Tingkir. Her mother is presumably descendant of Maulana Ishak which is known as Sunan Giri, one of prominent Nine Saints (Walisongo). Their line of genealogy meet at the line King Brawijaya VI, a sixteenth century Javanese king.[13]

The young Khairiyah was trained under the mentor of her own parents, particularly on principle of 'santri life' and reading the Qur'an and also the Kitab Kuning (lit. Yellow Book/classic books on Islamic studies). Since she was five-year old, Khairiyah learnt various Islamic studies such as fiqh (Islamic Law), Tafsir (Quranic Exegesis) and Arabic grammar (Nahwu and Sharaf) from her father. By means of 'bandongan' (reading for group of student/santri) and 'sorogan' (individual reading) method, she absorbed such religious ideas with high ethos of learner. She often consulted many issues to her father if she found something unclear or doubtful understanding.

Even in the dinner time, her father frequently discussed on religious topics and the conversation on the table became an important learning process for her.[14]

Since the colonial administration had restricted education for certain citizen, many people did not attend the formal school. However, santri people rejected to send their children to formal school for their non-cooperative stance to the Dutch colonial. That's why, Khairiyah's father did not send her to formal school. Moreover, in the early 20th century, priority to send male students to attend formal schools was much higher than female students. In other words, it was not common for girls to attend school.[15]

Khairiyah pursued her study on Islamic studies to her husband after he had got married in 1921. In the very young age, her father matched her with a young Kiai (Muslim scholar) from the elite circle of Pesantren Maskumambang, Gresik (East Java), Maksum Ali. He is one of her father's favorite disciples. Khairiah later on married with the matched-man who have a high competence on mastery of Islamic studies and learnt from him on tafsir (Exegesis), fiqh (Islamic Law), hadits (Prophet traditions), ushul fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), tauhid (Theology), tasawuf (Islamic mysticism), mantiq (logic), balaghah (Arabic literature). In this period, she finished reading (khatam) various classic books such as Tafsir al-Jalâlain, Fathul Mu'în, Tahrîr, Asymûnî, Jauhar al-Maknûn, Alfiyah, Jam'u al-Jawâmi, al-Hikâm and some other classic books.[16]

Another important experience of learning of Khairiyah on Islamic studies is her stay in Mecca for about 20 years. As the center Islamic World, Mecca has been an important destination for nusantara scholars both traditionalists and modernists. Among Javanese, Mecca is 'pusat ngelmu'. The fact that Khairiyah spent a long period in Mecca raised a speculation that she was forged by intellectual atmosphere where Islamic learning were delivered by authoritative scholars and agents. No wonder, people expected a share of barakah of her and religious knowledge after she returned to Jombang.[17] Her circumstance and qualified actors of Islamic studies around her certainly strengthen her capacity as the female ulama on the mastery of Islamic topics.

### **Pesantren Mileu**

In 1921, she and her husband erected a pesantren in Seblak which is closed to Tebuireng. It is only 300 meters from khairiyah's new pesantren to her father's residence. The half hectare of pesantren's land was given by Khairiyah's father, KH. Hasyim As'ari, which is later known as Pesantren of Seblak Salafiyah Syafi'iyah, Jombang. The land was used to build pesantren compound and mosque.[18] Another version of this pesantren is sometimes mentioned or written with 'Pesantren of Seblak Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Khairiyah Hasyim'. It is seemingly to perpetuate the name of key person who played important role in the early formation of the pesantren.

The pesantren initially recruited male pupils and Khairiyah taught them Islamic subjects with traditional method. The classic books were read by Khairiyah with bandongan method where pupils listened the reading and taking note. One of important books taught to her student was Tafsir Al-Ibriz, written by Kiai Bisri Musthafa.[19] In 1938, Pesantren Seblak built a religious school for female pupils which was called 'Madrasah Banat'. It was formally opened by government as a support to education for female students. This school provided an elementary level (ibtidaiyah) which was later managed by Khairiyah's daughter and her son in law, Nyai Abidah Maksum and Kiai Machfud Anwar.[20]

The opened mind of pesantren agents to accept female pupils proves how pesantren community responded the changing social and cultural development. Not only men who deserve

knowledge on religious teachings, women also deserve it. Although this changing framework was still new in the early 20th century, the innovative idea becomes an important milestone of women empowerment in the pesantren world. Pioneered by Kiai Bisri Syamsuri in 1917, pesantren for female pupils was opened. Madrasah Al-Banat in Padang Panjang was erected by Rahmah El-Yunusiah in 1923. Also, Madrasah Mu'allimat or school for female teachers was also popular in 1960s.[21]

### **Social and Religious Activism**

The life history of Khairiyah was seemingly destined to involve in education and female empowerment. After her husband died in 1933, she controlled the pesantren by herself. The young and learnt widow taught many classic books to her disciples replacing her husband's position. Although it was not common for female tutor (nyai) teaching male pupils, this practice continued for about four years during her leadership in the pesantren.[22] Her charisma and competence in mastery of Islamic sciences seemingly became power to continue her pesantren. However, Khairiyah did not lead the pesantren for a long time. She had to leave Jombang and lived overseas.

In 1940, Khairiyah flew to Mecca and lived there for about twenty years. Her father matched her with a young and bright Kiai, Abdul Muhaimin, who had worked in Mecca. The wedding ceremony was not common. Because of the groom resided in overseas, the wedding ceremony was conducted by representative. Kiai Bisri Syamsuri represented the groom in the second marriage of Khairiyah. After this wedding ceremony, she went to Mecca to join her husband. In the holy land, her husband assumed as director of education of Madrasah of Darul Ulum in Mecca.[23]

Khairiyah's concern to education and female empowerment grew in Mecca. In 1942, she found the first madrasah for girls (Madrasah Banat) which was part of Madrasah Darul Ulum where her husband works.[24] It is located at Syamiah, a small district in Mecca. In this religious institution, Khairiyah taught students for about nine years. Soon after the emergence of this school, the idea to develop the educational institution was executed by Nyai Aminah, the wife of Syaikh Yasin Al-Fadani. She also erected a social unit which is known in Indonesia as PKK (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga, Training for Family Welfare). In its development, the institution was continued by a daughter of Abdul Azizi Malik Faishal, one of Saudi King family. Until 1955, the school was managed by her husband and later on taken over by Saudi's government.[25]

Back to Seblak in 1957, Khairiyah still remained consistent with her commitment to teach, lead the pesantren and participated in NU organization. During her absence, Pesantren Seblak which was managed by her daughter, Nyai Abidah, had developed a higher education. Since the pesantren for girls has produced its graduate, Nyai Abidah started to erect Teacher Training for women which is known as Sekolah Muallimat or Sekolah Guru Putri. Due to the return of her mother, Nyai Abidah moved to Jombang to handle the Pendidikan Guru Agama Puteri Nahdlatul Ulama (NU Female Religious Teacher Training College). In the second leadership, Khairiyah spent more time than the first period of her leadership in Seblak.[26] Her daily life was filled by teaching and managing santri (pupils) until 1968. She was also appointed twice as the adviser for the national level of the Muslimat NU organization (1959-1962 and 1967-1979).[27] She decided to retire due to her healthy problem.[28]

However, she still showed her passion in teaching and preaching in the end of her life. For example, during her stay in Surabaya for therapy, she taught for women in the Yayasan Khadijah (Khadijah Foundation) and Yayasan Masjid Rahmat Kembang Kuning (Foundation of Rahmat

Kembang Kuning Mosque). Every Friday, She gives a speech in majelis taklim (Islamic learning forum) for local people. Sometimes, she delivered a speech in five different places at the same time. [29] It is interesting that she also wrote her thoughts and published her works. One of her articles discussed understanding of Islamic schools (madzhab) and tolerance.[30] In 1981, Khairiyah's healthy deteriorated and was treated in local hospital. She passed away in July 2, 1983.[31]

## **Gender Relations in Pesantren**

### **Social and Cultural Construction of Gender**

In the setting of traditionalist Muslim society, spirit of Islam might be based on the values of piety, modesty and practicality. In the early 20th century, such values continuously negotiated and adapted in accordance with social and cultural changes under the challenge of modern ideas of life. In this wave of change, ideas on women's progress emerged and responded by elements of society with various ways. Those who against the idea was seemingly afraid of breaking the established norm of society and might be comfort with the 'status quo', while those who accept it keen on the better life of Muslim society in an atmosphere of gender justice. That's why, female participation started to be considered in certain aspect of life among those who accept the idea of gender balance. One of the recorded data in the history of pesantren is the emergence of female-attended pesantren in Denanyar-Jombang, East Java in 1917.[32] Initiated by a prominent Kiai, Bisri Syansuri, this pesantren signified the awareness of the importance of education for women which is encouraged to be as pious as men, but still uphold of a modest life of pesantren and their knowledge and competence would be hopefully benefit to strengthen the next Muslim generations.[33]

In the period of Khairiyah's life, opportunity for women to access religious education was not as easy as men. A very few traditional institution of religious education for women was only limited to learn basic subject of Islamic teachings.[34] That's why, some Kiai teach their own daughter privately as happened to Khairiyah. However, the rest of women did not attend religious or formal education due to social and cultural construction which prioritize men rather than women. In Java, tradition of 'pingitan' (being kept the girl inside the house until she married) was practiced in the early twentieth among santri and priyayi in general. It gradually disappeared after the rise of Islamic reformist movement in 1912 and the emergence of women's associations that encouraged education for girls.[35]

Among traditional Kiai, although the early idea to educate women was resisted, it is slowly accepted and responded positively. This inclination can be identified in the policy of Kiai Bisri Syamsuri who tacitly accepted female pupils in his pesantren without consulting this issue with his master, Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari. That's why when his master had planned to visit his pesantren, he hid his female santri in a secure place in order to evade from Kiai Hasyim's observation.[36] A santri who consults any idea to his master is an ethical standard in the pesantren world. However, experiment of Kiai Bisri Syamsuri to open pesantren for female gained a support from his master. This surprising fact shows how thoughts of pesantren agents is very dynamic. Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari even sent his granddaughters to Denanyar which distances about 15 km from Tebuireng. The girls took andong (traditional vehicle drawn by horse) to get to the pesantren every day. Given this fact, Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari initiated to erect pesantren for girls close to his residence and asked Nyai Abidah to execute his idea in Seblak.[37]

The shifting of gender perception among traditional Muslims is also reflected in the changing pattern of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) policy. Most NU decrees in the *bahsul masa'il* in the early and middle of 20th century tends to treat women issues conservatively. For example, the decree of '*bahsul masa'il*' on the female leader of village in 1950. It has been stipulated that woman is not allowed to run for village leader (*kepala desa*) because it is same with the ban of women to be a judge.[38] The trend of decree on gender issues in the subsequent development is different. The involvement of progressive gender and democracy activists in NU has changed the performance of NU regarding gender issues. The decree of '*bahsul masa'il*' in 1997 on female leader becomes an important part of how NU agents positively respond women's role in public domain. It is said that women in Islam is placed in a noble position. Al-Qur'an and hadith gives the same rights to women regarding their opportunity to dedicate to religion and their country.[39]

### **Moderate Female Ulama**

The excellent mastery of Nyai Khairiyah on Islamic sciences reveals an outstanding agent of *pesantren* from female wing within traditional structure of Muslim society. She became an icon of female ulama who bore in the early wave of Kartini's idea on women emancipation. Although coming from traditional milieu, Khairiyah was not compelled to conservative trend of framework which is traditionally constructed among *pesantren* agents. In many issues, she even showed her moderate way of thinking in responding social and cultural changes. Dealing with the issue of Family Planning (KB, *Keluarga Berencana*) program which was resisted by most *pesantren* agents, for example, Nyai Khairiyah had a different perspective. She argued that 'program KB' is a lawful (*halal*) practice in Islam. It is needed to control birth for the sake of mother's health and safety. For her, it is also important to ensure the quality of children's education and the condition of people's welfare by participating in the 'program KB'.[40] This argument even became an institutional opinion of Muslimat NU who concerns on women's welfare and prosperity.

Similar with Kartini who easily mingled with male counterparts, Khairiyah's interaction with male figures frequently lasted in a polite and honorable atmosphere. Due to her moderate and progressive ideas on Islamic teachings, there were many people who met her in the *pesantren*. Those who were recorded in history was Hamka, Kahar Muzakir and Soekiman WiryoSanjoyo. All of them were affiliated with Muhammadiyah organization instead. Another men who came to Nyai Khairiyah was Nasarudin Latif who worked for Family Planning Council (BKKBN).[41] He consulted on Family Planning program in terms of Islamic jurisprudence to Nyai Khairiyah. The meeting with male figures seemingly did not only at the level of sharing ideas, but also tended to asking for fatwa or religious opinion as commonly happened to laymen to the cleric.

In terms of appearance, Nyai Khairiyah did not show a conservative style. While most people still assume that wearing trousers for women as a 'men-resemble practice' and taboo, she challenged it. She argued that it does not contravene Islamic teachings and certainly allowed for women to wear it. For Khairiyah, wearing trousers would be more comfortable, practical and eligible to cover female *aurat*. Wearing trousers is easier to move rather than cloth (*kain*) which basically hinder women to move quickly. Although her opinion and practice were resisted by many people, she remained holding her opinion. She believed that Islam does not mention about women dress in a very detail explanation. That's why she chose trousers considering its eligibility to cover female body particularly women's calf. Based on her observation, many women who wear cloth can not consistently cover their calf if they have to move or make a larger step.[42] This unthinkable idea



must have been an important reasoning to reconstruct people's mind on the criteria of covering 'aurat' rather than following unreasonable ideas and practices.

Another important aspect of moderatism in pesantren is respecting other people's opinion. In the life history of Nyai Khairiyah, there are a variety of stories which formed her moderate and inclusive way of thinking. Those stories are important to be reminder of tolerance and harmony within diversity. The different opinion between Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari and Kiai Ma'shum Ali, for example, is a good reference on how Muslim should appreciate one another dealing with different opinion which is believed by respective individual. As testimony of Khairiyah, Kiai Hasyim argued that using documentation by photograph is unlawful (haram), while her husband believe that it is lawful (halal). But they respect one another. Another case was determination of the first day of fasting (Ramadhan). While Kiai Hasyim believed that it should be decided by the rukyat method (lunar sightings), Kiai Ma'shum used the hisab method (mathematical and astronomical calculations). Consequently, Kiai Ma'shum family in Seblak started fasting earlier than Kiai Hasyim in Tebuireng. However, the relationship between the two Kiai lasted in harmony and people who affiliated with such pesantren followed their respective Kiai.[43] This atmosphere is important to describe the image of pesantren which basically has tradition in the formation of spirit of tolerance in diversity.

#### 4. Research Result

##### Intellectualism and Pesantren World

The remarkable understanding of Nyai Khairiyah to Islamic Sciences signifies a great potency of pesantren in forming intellectual maturity which is absorbed from classic Islamic texts. The capacity of Kiai (mentor) becomes an important aspect in forging intellectual and spiritual of his disciples. Three great scholars who had influence to the intellectual journey of Nyai Khairiyah: Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari, Kiai Maksum Ali and Kiai Abdul Muhaimin, all of them had a specific mastery of Islamic sciences. Her father, Hasyim Asy'ari was known as the expert on hadith (discipline on complexity of prophet sayings), Maksum Ali was expert on 'ilmu falak' (astronomy) and Abdul Muhaimin was expert on comparison of Islamic school of thoughts (madzahibul arba'ah). In many opportunities, Khairiyah learnt many subjects under supervision of three important agents of pesantren.

Without a strong foundation of scholarship (keulamaan), progressive ideas which were introduced by Nyai Khairiyah might not be recognized and respected by Muslim community. Nyai Khairiyah had religious authority to interpret sacred texts in accordance with social and cultural contexts. That's why, it is understandable when she has different opinion with mainstream on certain issues such as family planning, wearing a trousers and her ideas on gender equality. Instead of being kept away by people, she had been approached and consulted by those who recognize her competence. It means that Nyai Khairiyah has been a role model of female ulama which reflects her spirit of intellectualism and her concern on gender justice. This would be easier for next generation to refer the agenda of gender empowerment as started by gender activists in 1990s.[44]

It is important to note that traditionalism in pesantren does not always mean conservatism. Progressive ideas coming from Nyai Khairiyah prove that pesantren produced intellectual agent who capable of voicing moderatism which is basically inherent to Islam. At this point, Nyai Khairiyah had an important role in the effort of interpreting religious texts into current

situations which make Islam relevant with changing realities. Her repudiation to the content of classic book of 'Uqudu al-Lujain', for example, particularly on the husband and wife relations reflected her autonomous standing point as a cautious female ulama. This predisposition has been continued and manifested in the project of reinterpretation of 'Uqud al-Lujain' by Sinta Nuriyah Abdurrahman Wahid through Forum Kajian Kitab Kuning (FK3, Forum for Studies of Islamic Classic Books).[45]

Pesantren is an important religious institution which continuously produces educated and pious agents. The growing number of pesantren which accommodates female pupils implies a positive development to reproduce female ulama as caliber as Nyai Khairiyah. Based on Zamakhsyari's observation in 1977-1978, female pupils were 60% of total population in the pesantren. It means that the potency of female candidate of ulama has a greater number than male counterparts. In the meantime, female pupils in the pesantren which accepted male and female students were about one third of male students. This could be found in Pesantren Cukir, for example, where the number of female santri was 1,100 from total 3,300 santri. According to Dhofier, this number has increasing trend from time to time.[46] No wonder if well-educated women graduated from pesantren participate in the domestic sphere and intellectual field.

### **The Existence of Female Ulama**

It is very rare finding a female ulama in the male-dominated world, let alone those who wrote their thoughts. One of few clues of female author has been recorded by Martin van Bruinessen in his article 'Kitab Kuning dan Perempuan, Perempuan dan Kitab Kuning'. He found a Malay woman who wrote a basic teaching of five pillars of Islam and six articles of faith in a book, 'Perukunan Jamaluddin'. However, the identity of author is purposely hidden. It is written in the first page that the book is written by 'al-alim al-allahmu mufti Jamaluddin ibn almarhum al-alim al-fadhil al-syaikh Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari'. It is true that Jamaluddin, a son of Arsyad Al-Banjari, was a prominent ulama in South Kalimantan at that period. However, the book is actually written by his niece, Fatimah, who was born from the couple of Syarifah and Abdulwahhab from Bugis. [47] She was even known as the "Mutiar Katulistiwa" for her mastery of Islamic sciences in Kalimantan.[48] There is no convincing explanation why she did not write her real name, but speculation that writing as a male profession is difficult to argue. At the same time, authority and competence of women as the expert of Islamic sciences was still questionable during the early wave of Islamization in nusantara.

Nyai Khairiyah is one of rare female ulama who spent most of her life time to lead her pesantren, teach her pupils and deliver a speech for local women. As a central figure in the pesantren, she has sufficient power to control the religious institution. In many occasions, she teach her pupils, but sometimes it is delegated to her daughter or son in law. Like many female leaders, she has motherhood nature which tends to educate children with care and love.[48] For Khairiyah, her pupils are entrusted creatures from God to her to be looked after and protected from any disturbance. That's why, she did not only teach them, but also guide them in terms of intellectual and spiritual development. Some of the rituals which have been continued in the pesantren can be seen in the recent activities of santri. Before starting regular learning, she has obliged santri to recite 'Surah Yasin' together. As the typical pesantren, santri are trained to conduct 'tahlil' (pray for the death) and 'istighosah' (communal pray), shalawatan (pray for Prophet Muhammad), and 'manaqib' (reading the biography of Al-Jailani).[49] Besides managing her pesantren, she also

spent her time to educate women in her neighborhood. Khairiyah regularly delivered religious preaching for them. It seems that she dedicated her life for the virtue of society.

Nyai Khairiyah's experience is important to identify a prototype of female ulama whose competence was obtained by informal education of pesantren institution under the supervision of qualified ulama in the Javanese Muslim community of 20th century. Her proximity to the competent ulama formed a good image and a distinct religious authority which can not be found beyond the pesantren community. Most female ulama are not as qualified as her in mastery of Islamic knowledge. From four category of female ulama which is conceptualized by Azra, Nyai Khairiyah might have qualification of three categories of ulama who concern on social-religious organization (ulama ormas), involved in the preaching agenda (ulama tabligh) and grew and develop in pesantren (ulama pesantren). Since Khairiyah did not attend formal or modern education, she is not a type of female ulama who spent her life through modern school (ulama kampus).[50] People has known her as an excellent product of the pesantren world.

The current awareness of reproducing female ulama dealing with the guarantee of autonomous agents in the interpretation of religious texts does not only emerge from pesantren institutions. The aspiration comes from progressive organizations of women movement which have a good network with pesantren actors. One of successful stories about reproduction of female ulama is a program conducted by Rahima, a women organization for education and reproductive health, called Pengkaderan Ulama Perempuan (PUP, Training for Female Ulama). By recruiting Nyai and female santri who have potency to be ulama, this program has supplied a variety of important materials on sexuality and reproductive health, methodology of Islamic studies, social analysis, social organization and advocacy.[51] It is designed to produce female ulama who have a good perspective on gender equality and justice.[52] For the time being, participants of the program come from various regency throughout Java. They may 'destabilise the unequal relations between men and women' by applying a gender-equal interpretation of sacred texts and Islamic classic books. However, it does not mean that the leadership and authority of female ulama will replace the male ulama; rather, both are supporting one another in creating a better Muslim community for both men and women.[53]

The peak of Indonesian women aspiration regarding serious efforts to strengthen the network of female ulama was manifested in a convention of female religious authorities which is called KUPI (Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia) in 24-27 April 2017. This is an extraordinary progress of Indonesian ulama in voicing gender issues through a congress which is even unthinkable by many Muslims beyond Indonesia. By inviting many female ulama, this congress discussed many important issues such as child marriage, environmental degradation and sexual violence. The convention which invited various guest speakers from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Indonesia and Nigeria, recommended many important issues. According to Kathryn Robinson, this movement has been slowly building for a long time and is significant voice in defining the future of Indonesia.[54] The first and historic of female ulama gathering would be important step to multiply women agents who understand the problem of gender injustice.

## 5. Conclusion

The life history of Nyai Khairiyah shows her important role in forging the intellectual tradition of pesantren where she became a role model of female ulama who has extraordinary competence in Islamic sciences and great responsibility to advance her community. Although she was informally trained in traditional pesantren, her capability to understand and interpret the qur'an, hadith

and Islamic classic texts showed her progressive ideas which are possibly difficult to be found to other female learners. Her passion and spirit to learn and share her knowledge became her basic ethos. No wonder, she became an outstanding agent of pesantren who frequently turned to be a consultant to solve many social and religious problems. Like Kartini, her body of language reflected an intellectual actor who easily mingled not only with women but also with men counterparts. Fortunately, she also wrote her thoughts in local magazines. One of interesting words from her dealing with the intellectual ethos: "minimum standard of santri is thinking critically and highly desire in searching knowledge." [55]

Nyai Khairiyah dedicated her life time to teach her pupils and women in her circumstances. She capable of reading and conveying her moderate interpretations by logical arguments. Despite the fact that her method of learning in pesantren still conventional, her pesantren produced many qualified alumni and contributed many important things to society. She treated her santri with care and love as if she is mother of the children. Besides, her schedule to educate women sometimes was so busy that she had to move from one place to another. To fulfill other people's request, she often forgot her own needs and interests. This altruist inclination has been also an ethos of Kiai in pesantren whose time in serving people hardly ever take a rest. At this point, the pattern of leadership and management of Nyai Khairiyah in running the pesantren and serving people tended to motherhood and altruist pattern.

The inspiring experience of Nyai Khairiyah is important to identify a prototype of female ulama whose competence was forged through informal education of pesantren institution under the supervision of qualified ulama in the Javanese Muslim community of 20th century. Her proximity to the competent ulama formed a good image and a distinct religious authority which possibly can not be found beyond the pesantren community. Three great Kiai who shaped her intellectual framework made her much easier to gain what is so called 'religious authority' without being questioned about her qualifications, virtues and abilities which is commonly happened to current female ulama who establish her competence from a community-based authority.[56] In many aspects, social and intellectual life of Nyai Khairiyah has paved the way for shifting paradigm of male-dominated framework to be more aware to gender equality.

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- [2] Interview with Muhsin Zuhdi by phone, in 7 August 2017.
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