Exploring the Understanding Shift of Maskumambang Boarding School
From Scripturalist Aswaja Salafiyah to Modern Contextualist Salafiyah

Abd Hadi*, Muhammad Arfan Mu'ammar
Corresponding Author: *arfanmuammar@fai.um-surabaya.ac.id
1 Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia
2 Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

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This descriptive qualitative analysis explores the understanding shift of Maskumambang Gresik Islamic Boarding School from the Aswaja scripturalist mindset to the scripturalist Salafiyah Wahabiyah mindset and then to the modernist and contextualist Salafiyah mindset. The study aims to understand the reasons behind the shift and the implications on the religious practices of the students and alums. The findings reveal that the religious ideology of the boarding school shifted over time under different leaders, which also influenced the spiritual implications of the students and alums. During the traditionalist Salafiyah era, the spiritual practices were in line with the Aswaja model, while under the Wahabiyah Salafiyah era, patterns shifted to eliminate nuances of T.B.C. (tahayul, bid'ah, churafat). Under the modernist and contextual Salafiyah era, practices evolved to focus on societal benefit and justice. The study highlights the importance of understanding the shifts in religious understanding and its impact on the rules and beliefs of the students and alums of Islamic boarding schools.

Keywords
Aswaja
Modernist
Salafiyah
Shift of understanding
Wahabi

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Introduction

In Islamic boarding schools, the kyai play a significant role as change agents, occupying a central position affecting internal and external changes. The importance of the kyai in the community is attributed to their knowledge and charisma. The Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School, founded by K. H. ABd. Djabar, aims to spread Islam with the nuances of ahlussunnah wal-jama'ah. Over time, the religious nuance of Islamic boarding schools has been dramatically influenced by the different leaders who have taken over, resulting in a shift in the spiritual understanding from the Aswaja mindset to the Wahabi mindset and eventually to a modern/contextual Salafiyah mindset. This change in thinking is attributed to the approach to understanding the Quran as a source of Islamic sharia. The Quran is considered the revelation of Allah to Prophet Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel, serving as a guide to life in the world. The Arabic text in the Quran requires reading and interpretation. Al-Jabiri explains that it is not similar to reading a newspaper or a novel, as it contains long historical content during its descending period. Therefore, understanding the Quran requires a set of tools that support the meaning based on contemporary needs. Similarly, reading the hadith also requires a contextual approach [1].

Interpretation of the Quran before the 20th century lacked conceptions of the needs of that era. Contemporary commentators have tried to renew and adapt interpretations of the Quran by using new approaches that align with current needs. However, there are striking differences in the community's understanding of the Quran. Some use a harfiyah/contextual approach that follows the Salafi-based scholars who continue the movement of Ibn Taymiyah and Abdul Wahab. In contrast, others use a contextual process that involves contemporary religious scholars. These different approaches produce different understandings and are called textual and contextual systems [2].

The Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School Maskumanbang Gresik was founded by K.H. Abdul Djabar in 1859 AD / 1281 H to produce preachers who could eliminate beliefs that were not following the teachings of pure Islam and had been distorted. After the death of K.H. Abdul Jabar in 1937 AD, the leadership of the Islamic boarding school was taken over by K.H. Moch—Faqih, who graduated from the Middle East. The mindset possessed by both clerics was the textualist/scripturalist Salafiyah Aswaja mindset. In 1937 AD, K.H. Ammar Faqih, a graduate from the Middle East, replaced the previous leader of the Islamic boarding school. During his time in the Middle East, K.H. Amar Faqih learned extensively from Wahabiyah scholars. Consequently, when he assumed the school’s leadership, he elevated its status by applying the Wahabiyah teaching style. In 1965, K.H. Nadjih Ahjad succeeded him as the school’s leader. Under Nadjih Ahjad’s leadership, changes were implemented in the school’s teaching methods. The original sorogan, bandongan, and halaqoh method was replaced with the classical
approach. Additionally, changes were made to the school's institutions, organisations, education systems, curriculum, and more.

The founders of the Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School envisioned a school that would purify faith and eliminate the practices of heresy and superstition. This vision is similar to Ibn Taimiyah's reform movement, which Abdul Wahab later pursued. The campaign sought to eradicate secularism, dissent, and superstition. King Suud later adopted the motion, and the formal practice of its teachings spread throughout the kingdom. The understanding of Islamic teaching sources practised by the Kiyai and the ustad at Maskumambang is highly scripturalist or textualist, similar to the scholars of the Salaf in their knowledge of the Qur'an. They believe in returning to the Qur'an, the hadith of the Prophet, and the disciples' teachings while rejecting the opinions of contemporary scholars.

The Maskumambang Gresik community is religious and tolerant of other religious beliefs. Despite the teachings provided by the school curriculum, diversity has never been an issue in Maskumambang. However, they are very puritanical in Aqeedah and Shari'ah and cannot be swayed. On the other hand, they are very tolerant of fu'yah and flexible in social matters. Most of the Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School alums who continue their studies at the tertiary level have modern and renewed thinking. Their puritanical approach to the issues of aqeedah, worship, and dynamism in muamalah, as well as their high level of kaifiyah, are widely accepted by the community. The above description aims to answer two questions:

1. Why did the Maskumambang boarding school shift from Aswaja Salafiyah to Salafiyah Wahabiyah and then to modern/textual Salafiyah?
2. What are the implications of this religious understanding for boarding school alums?

**Literature Review**

Social change refers to shifting, subtracting, adding or developing[3] society's social structures and functions [4]. Social change is often used interchangeably with cultural change, as almost all forms of change involve social and cultural aspects. According to Selo Soemardjan, social change encompasses any social, institutional change affecting social systems, including social values, attitudes, and behaviour patterns between social groups [5]. Social change can be classified into three categories: innovation, diffusion, and consequences. Invention refers to the process of creating new ideas, diffusion is the process of disseminating new ideas in the social system, and values refer to the acceptance or rejection of new ideas in the social system [6].
In the context of changes in Islamic boarding schools, both internal and external elements play a significant role. The role of clerics as change agents is central, given their knowledge and charisma. Charismatic leaders often significantly influence their followers, who may behave and be volatile, depending on the leader's inspiration. The movement of Islamic thought is a response to the development and conditions of the times. To facilitate the classification of these thoughts, Fazlurrahman divided them into several typologies of view. The first is the Revivalist Movement that emerged in the late 18th century and early 19th century, known as tajdid. This is a process by which the Muslim community (ummah) revitalises the social, moral, and religious framework by returning to the basics of Islam, namely the Quran and al-Sunnah.

The second typology is the Modernist Movement, which emerged in the late 19th century and called for efforts of ijtihad to explore the principles of the authentic Quran and Sunnah and to formulate the necessary laws based on these principles. They view the Quran as a response to the historical situation, with most moral, religious, and social teachings aimed at answering specific problems encountered in actual historical cases. The third typology is the Neo-Revivalist Movement that emerged in the first half of the 20th century. It focused on countering the Westernization of Muslims, defending equality, and resisting all forms of reinterpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah. This movement is often referred to as the Salafism movement. Some scholars trace the origin of this trend to Ibn Taymiyyah (728 H/1328 AD.) and his disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzayyah (751 H/1350 AD.). "Salaf" refers to understanding Islam as in the prophet and his companions and friends. Salafism calls for a return to Islam's basic concept - that Muslims should follow the precedents of the Prophet and his companions [7]. Methodologically and in terms of substance, Salafism is almost identical to Wahhabism but more tolerant of differences of opinion. The founders of Salafism asserted that in dealing with all problems, Muslims should return to the original textual sources, namely the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

This Salafi movement aligns with the Wahabi movement in terms of vision and mission. The foundations of Wahhabi theology were built by an 18th-century figure, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1206 H/1792 AD). The main idea of Ibn Abd Wahhab was to restore the teachings of Islam that had strayed from the original instructions and return to the actual teachings of the early days of Islam (the period of Salaf). Wahhabism seeks to eradicate the deviant teachings of Tashouf, Tawassul, rationalism, Shiite teachings and practices, rationalism movements, and Shiite teachings and practices with heresy nuances. The fourth typology is the Neo-Modernist Movement, which emerged in the middle of the 20th century. This movement had a progressive synthesis of modernist rationality with ijtihad and classical traditions.
Methods

This research method is grounded in a careful and rigorous approach to exploring the phenomenon of religious understanding shift. It is designed to provide rich and nuanced insights into the complex interplay between religious ideology, religious practices, and broader cultural, social, and historical contexts. Begin by conducting background research on the history of the boarding school, including its founding, leadership, and critical religious teachings and practices. Collect data through interviews, surveys, and observations of students and alums who have experienced the different eras of the boarding school’s religious ideology and any available documents or materials related to the school’s history and teachings. Analyse the data using a descriptive qualitative analysis approach. This involves coding and categorising the data to identify patterns and themes related to the shift in religious understanding and its impact on spiritual practices and beliefs. Interpret the findings in light of the study's aims to understand the reasons behind the change and the implications on the religious practices of the students and alums. This involves considering the broader cultural, social, and historical contexts that influenced the religious ideology of the boarding school, as well as how the different eras of spiritual understanding impacted the practices and beliefs of the students and alums. Discuss the implications of the findings for future research and practice in Islamic education and broader debates about the role of religious ideology in shaping social and cultural norms.

Results and Discussion

The boarding school partnering has undergone several paradigm shifts in the understanding of religion, initially with the ahlussunnah-based salafi model, dating from the year 1859 to 1937 from the time of K.H. Abd Djabar up to the time of K.H.Faqih was the integration of scriptualist and contextualist methods. Subsequent developments from 1937 to 1965 saw a shift from the salafi model of the sunnah to the well-known salafi of Wahabiyah. The time was when boarding school was raised by K.H. Amar Faqih and continued by K.H. Nadjih Ahjad. Then from 1986 until now, it has transformed from a textual understanding of religion to a contextual approach. This paradigm shift is as follows:

- Salafi ideology that breathes Aswaja. K.H.’s leadership period Abdul Djabbar (1859-1907) was pioneering. In his time, students studying at Maskumambang were still very few, consisting of Maskumambang village children and their children [8].
- Integration of Scriptualist and Contextualist Methods (1907-1937). This period marked the transformation of the Salafi ideology towards a more nuanced
approach, integrating scriptualist and contextualist methods in religious education. K.H. Faqih, who succeeded K.H. Abdul Djabbar, was instrumental in implementing this change in the boarding school curriculum [9].

- Shift towards Wahabiyyah Salafy (1937-1965). The boarding school significantly shifted towards the Wahabiyyah Salafy model during this period. K.H. Amar Faqih and K.H. Nadjih Ahjad were the key figures in promoting this shift.

- Contextual Approach (1986-present). The current paradigm shift in boarding school partnering is towards a more contextual approach to understanding religion. This approach emphasises the importance of understanding the local culture and context in interpreting and applying religious teachings [10].

From a religious perspective, the teachings imparted at the boarding school during the tenure of K.H. Abdul Djabbar bear similarities to what was later referred to as the Ahlussunnah Worship understanding. Nearly all the boarding schools in East Java adhere to the Shaykh sect and the principles of Ahlussunnah Waljamaah. The religious amaliyah and boarding traditions of that time are upheld and observed at the Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School, including grave pilgrimages, thrones, and hauls. Shaykh worship, such as qubut prayer Shubuh, two adzan on Friday prayers, and Shalawat to the Prophet, are daily rituals at the school.

K.H. Abdul Djabbar passed away in 1907 AD./1325H at the age of 87 years, leaving the Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School to be managed by his traditional system and model. He had ten children, namely Rois, Alimah, Abu Dzarrin, K.H. Muhammad Faqih (referred to as Kyai Faqih), Atqon, Sahid, Muhsinah, Harun, Ahmad Muhtadi, and Abdul Muata’in. To continue their father’s ideals, they entrusted and supported Kyai Faqih to lead the Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School [11]. Thus, the succession process occurred peacefully, and the leadership of Maskumambang became collective. K.H. Abdul Djabbar’s sons managed the pesantren, with Kyai Faqih as the leader and the others as supporters.

Kyai Faqih began to focus on caring for the Pesantren Maskumambang and, assisted by his brothers and supported by the surrounding community, started to develop the Pesantren (boarding school) in terms of physical facilities and system. As a result of the progress made by the school and the number of students studying there, Kyai Faqih became known in various regions as K.H. Muhammad Faqih Al-Maskumambani. This fame was partly due to his virtues and brilliant thoughts, expressed in books he studied at the boarding school. One of his monumental books is al-Manzumah al-Da’ilah Fi Awwali al-Asyhur al-Qomariyyah. This book contains Kyai Faqih’s ideas in astronomy, particularly about the beginning of the date of each Qomariyyah month. This book discusses the early determinations of Qomariyyah according to
the method adopted by the Ahlussunnah waljamaah of the Imam Shaykh or by the Nahdatul Ulama Scholars (NU) [12].

During the Kyai Faqih period, the pesantren of Maskumambang significantly contributed to Islam’s general development and pesantren in particular. The alums of Maskumambang pesantren who studied under Kyai Faqih have spread across various regions and become important figures, including founders and caregivers of several pesantren [13]. The teaching system at the boarding school began to change during this period. The halaqah system was not the only one used; they also started using the method of bandongan, wetanon, and sorogan. The curriculum was based on a comprehensive teaching pattern of the book. The books taught in the Communion were the same as those used in the school of salafiyah in general, including jurisprudence.

Kyai Faqih also emphasised the importance of character building and personal development among his students, in addition to academic studies. He believed students should acquire knowledge and learn to be good citizens and contribute positively to society [14]. As a result, he introduced extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, and community service programs to the pesantren. Under Kyai Faqih’s leadership, the pesantren established a strong network with other Islamic institutions and scholars locally and internationally. This allowed for exchanging ideas, knowledge, and resources, further enhancing the development of the pesantren and its students [15]. Kyai Faqih passed away in 1969 at the age of 80. However, his legacy lived on through his numerous contributions to developing Indonesia’s pesantren system and the Islamic community. Today, the Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School continues to thrive. It remains a respected institution in the region, attracting students from all over the country who seek to learn from its rich tradition and history.

After the passing of Kyai Ammar Faqih, his son-in-law, K.H. Nadjih Ahjad, took over the leadership of the Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School. Under his supervision, the pesantren underwent the second phase of modernisation [16]. Kyai Nadjih Ahjad continued the tradition of his predecessor in maintaining the balance between religious and social activities. He paid attention to the quality of education in the pesantren and tried to improve the facilities and infrastructure. Kyai Nadjih Ahjad also had a deep concern for the economic empowerment of the surrounding community. He initiated several programs to encourage entrepreneurship, such as establishing a cooperative, a savings and loan association, and a village bank. Through these programs, he aimed to create a self-reliant community that could generate income. In terms of religious activities, Kyai Nadjih Ahjad emphasised the importance of practising the principles of Islam in daily life. He encouraged his students and followers to...
implement the Islamic values of honesty, integrity, and social responsibility. He also continued the tradition of his predecessor in promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding [17].

Overall, the two phases of modernisation under the leadership of Kyai Ammar Faqih and K.H. Nadjih Ahjad transformed the Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School into a modern and dynamic Islamic institution that played an essential role in developing the local community. The Wahabi movement is a movement that advocates for a return to pure Islam, as practised by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, also known as the salaf. As a result, the movement is also referred to as the Salafiyah movement [18]. The roots of this movement lie in the teachings of Ahmad bin Hanbal, which were then further strengthened by Ibn Taimiyah (1263-1328) until it gained momentum and became a model in the hands of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab (1703-1787), hence the name Wahabi movement [19]. This movement was the first Islamic movement in modern times to protest the internal destruction of Muslims. The movement believes that the internal destruction of Muslims is caused by their departure from the source of Islamic teachings. Therefore, the movement seeks to save Islam from collapse by inviting Muslims to return to pure Islamic practices, rejecting non-traditional practices, traditions, and rituals, considered superstition, heresy, and superstition in Indonesia [20].

Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab established an alliance with power to carry out his mission. He joined forces with Ibn Su'ud (1765 AD.)[21], a ruling prince, thus strengthening the existence and mission of the movement. In Maskumambang, Kyai Ammar undertook the reform movement. He inherited his understanding of Wahabi from his father, who interpreted it differently. During his pilgrimage to Mecca (1926-1928), Kyai Ammar came into contact with Wahabi's understanding [22] through studying or observing the religious principles taught by the Wahabi. He was reassured, and his thinking was reinforced by his contact with Wahabi's understanding in Mecca [22]. He then spread this understanding to the boarding school and the surrounding community.

In the next phase, the Wahabi movement initiated by Kyai Ammar gained support from various circles, especially when he became active in Masyumi. Masyumi was a gathering of all classes, including NU, Muhammadiyah, and others. Kyai Ammar made several contacts with M. Natsir and Muhammad Roem in this organisation, and these two individuals frequently visited Maskumambang [23]. After leaving Masyumi due to a schism in the organisation, Kyai Ammar became the head of the Muhammadiyah Branch of the Shaman Branch. His activities in the organisation led him to make many contacts with those who agreed with the Wahabi movement.

Kyai Nadjih stated that he was influenced by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab’s beliefs, mainly through his book al-Tauhid, which he believed was in line with Islamic teachings [21].
However, he clarified that not all bin Abdul Wahhab’s ideas were acceptable. Instead, his ideas served as a reference and inspiration, explicitly formulated for the Maskumambang Boarding School. He denied that his school was created to promote Wahhabism. Still, he admitted that it was Wahhabi-oriented, which meant it practised Islamic teachings during the Prophet's time before Muslims became divided into different sects [24]. The school's education focused on the primary sources of the Qur’an and Hadith and promoted tolerance for differences of opinion. Kyai Nadjih and his successor, Kyai Fatikhuddin, emphasised the importance of monotheism and rejected shirk, which they saw as a form of false worship. They taught that prayer and worship should only be directed towards Allah, and excessive respect for the virtuous or pilgrimages to graves could lead to shirk [24]. Kyai Fatikhuddin developed the school’s curriculum and introduced a modern and moderate approach to religious teachings, using the maudlu’i method to focus on contemporary moral and social issues.

After successfully renewing the Islamic boarding school environment, Kyai Ammar and Kyai Nadjih continued the renewal of the community [22]. Through lectures and sermons in the pesantren and in the community, these two figures launched several criticisms of the community’s traditions, which were considered to be contrary to the teachings of Islamic monotheism. This criticism can be called the anti-TBC + S + AL movement (superstition, Bid’ah, Khurafat, Shirk and ignoble morals) [25]. Many community traditions are deeds of shirk. Shirk is the main target of the reform ideology carried out by the Wahabi community [26].

Among the practices of shirk in the communities around Maskumambang are semelek, namely ritual offerings and prayers in the graves of animals in the hope that their livestock is healthy and breed; bajol ebor, namely ritual offerings and prayers aimed at getting the safety and blessing of a sacred crocodile in the Bengawan Solo river; Suban Siraman, which is a ritual in the form of touching a baby’s feet in a holy tomb before he can walk so that his life will be safe; makam pedet, namely ritual offerings and offerings of large trees buried to get blessing and safety; and mbatangan, which is a ritual of seeking benefits performed at the tombs of pious people [19]. In addition to giving lectures to the community, Kyai Ammar also conducted bilhal preaching by destroying sources of polytheism, such as crushing sacred tomb buds and cutting large trees used to perform rituals to ask for blessings [25].

The eradication of bid'ah practices has also been a target of the reform operations carried out by the Maskumambang boarding school. Bid'ah is an act of enhancement in worship that does not follow Islam's teachings. According to Surkati, the person who performs the bid'ah is astray [25]. Like the Wahabi movement, the Maskumambang boarding school has also made bid'ah practices a target of reform operations. Courses that are considered prevalent in society are tahlilan [27], which was eventually abandoned by Maskumambang [28], the rak’ah...
of Tarawih Prayer of 20 rak’ahs, which was considered to be missing in the teachings of the Prophet and changed to 8 rak'ahs; Grave pilgrimage, which is regarded as Ghuluw by Kyai Ammar and is prohibited by religion [29]. This prohibition is stated in the Prophet's SAW Hadith[24], “Do not praise me as much as the Christians who praise Mariam's son too much. Indeed, I am only a slave, so say, he is the servant of God and His Messenger.” (HR. Bukhari Muslim). Another activity considered "bid’ah" by Kyai Ammar is the determination of Shawwal by rukyat, which is replaced by the reckoning method [30], and Qunut's prayer [31], which was later abolished. The commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad [32] was also removed from the customs of Maskumambang and the community around Maskumambang.

The change in understanding that took place in Maskumambang has had a significant effect on religious change in society. The understanding change came from the knowledge of the Ahlusunnah waljamaah to the Wahabi understanding[22]. The extent to which the impact of the Maskumambang boarding school's knowledge of the community is reflected in the composition of the community that understands the board's understanding. The surrounding areas (within 1-5 km) of Maskumambang are the most affected by the change of boarding schools.

In addition, adopting the Wahhabi understanding also resulted in changes in the daily lives of the community. The practice of traditional Javanese ceremonies such as slametan and slametanw as no longer held. Instead, the community would perform Islamic rituals such as reading the Qur'an and holding prayer sessions. In addition, the daily use of amulets and talismans in Javanese culture was discouraged and even considered shirk.

Despite the significant changes brought about by the Wahhabi movement in Maskumambang and the surrounding communities, there were also criticisms and opposition to this new understanding of Islam. Some critics argued that the Wahhabi understanding was too rigid and did not consider local customs and traditions. Others argued that the emphasis on monotheism and eradicating bid’ah practices resulted in a narrow and limited understanding of Islam. Overall, the impact of the Wahhabi movement in Maskumambang and the surrounding areas was significant and led to a shift in religious experience and practices. While there were criticisms and opposition to this new understanding of Islam, the movement continued to gain momentum and influence in the region and beyond.

Conclusion

The Maskumambang Islamic Boarding School has undergone four paradigm shifts in its understanding of religion, initially under the leadership of K.H. Abd. Djabar and later K.H. Faqih (1859-1937), the school adopted an Aswaja salafiyyah religious mindset, which was
scripturalist. Secondly, during the leadership of K.H. Ammar Faqih and K.H. Nadjih Ahjad (1965-1986), the spiritual attitude shifted to a salafiyah wahabiyah mindset, which was also scriptural. Thirdly, during the continued leadership of K.H. A. Fatichuddin (1986-present), the mentality of the boarding school changed to a modernist salafiyah mindset, which was contextualist in nature. The religious practices of the Maskumambang Islamic boarding school students and alums also underwent shifts during the leadership of K.H. Abd. Djabar and K.H. Faqih (1859-1937), the amaliyah model was to follow the Aswaja School of salafiyah models, which involved practices such as sending prayers to Islamic Aswaja dead bodies, *tahlilan*, and amaliyah models. During the leadership of K.H. Ammar Faqi and K.H. Nadjih Akhjad (1965-1986), the amaliyah model shifted to one characterised by Wahhabiyah salafiyah, which sought to eradicate any nuances of T.B.C and avoid any practices approaching polytheism. Finally, under the leadership of K.H. A. Fatichuddin, the model of religiosity and amaliyah shifted to a modernist understanding of salafiyah, which focused on community welfare and justice rather than the traditional teaching model or issues like T.B.C. (*tahayul, bid’ah, and churafat*).

**Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

**Endnotes**

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Authors

Abd Hadi was born in Lamongan on November 18, 1955. He is a permanent lecturer at the Faculty of Sharia and Law, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. He completed his Bachelor's degree in Hadith Exegesis (Tafsir Hadis) in 1984, Master's degree in Islamic Studies (Dirasah Islamiyah) from UM Malang in 1998, and Doctoral degree in Islamic Studies (Dirasah Islamiyah) from IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya in 2009. Several scholarly works authored by him have been published, including "Pelaku Ekonomi Warga Muhammadiyah dan Bunga Bank" (Graha Pustaka Islamic Multimedia, 2009), "Pengantar Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur’an" (Graha Pustaka Islamic Multimedia, 2010), "Dasar-dasar Hukum Ekonomi Islam" (Penerbit PMN Surabaya), and others. (email: prof.dr.abdhadi99@gmail.com).

Muhammad Arfan Mu’ammar is a lecturer in Islamic Education Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya. He is the Head of the Master’s Program in Islamic Education. He has published over eight books and many articles in national and international journals. He is also a reviewer of several journals under the Indonesian Institute of Science and Technology Review (email: arfanmuammer@fai.um-surabaya.ac.id).