

Muslim cadre education and its role in shaping religious authority in 19th-Century West Java

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Abstract

This article investigates the Muslim cadre education and its role in shaping religious authority in nineteenth-century West Java through the case of KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi and his *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). This study conceptualises religious authority as a socially produced legitimacy sustained through epistemic credibility, moral exemplarity, and networked reproduction. The research employs a qualitative historical design, based on documentary sources, and applies qualitative data analysis procedures, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that Mama Syatibi developed a *pesantren*-based infrastructure for Muslim cadre

education that contributed to the consolidation of religious authority in West Java. This model of Muslim cadre education operated through three interconnected practices: regular teaching and recitation, *da'wah bil qalam* (preaching with the pen) through extensive written works, and a role model as embodied moral discipline. These practices strengthened authority by making interpretive competence publicly verifiable, stabilising knowledge transmission through texts, and reinforcing communal trust through exemplary conduct. Moreover, the diffusion of his students —many of whom became Muslim scholars and founded or led *pesantren* across West Java— demonstrates how Muslim cadres reproduced religious authority through educational succession and institutional multiplication. The study contributes to scholarship on Islamic education and leadership by showing how *pesantren*-based education and training shaped religious authority in the West Javanese context from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

Artikel ini mengkaji pendidikan kaderisasi 'ulama dan perannya dalam pembentukan otoritas keagamaan di Jawa Barat abad ke-19 melalui studi kasus KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi. Dengan menggunakan perspektif sosiologi dan antropologi agama, penelitian ini memaknai otoritas keagamaan sebagai legitimasi sosial yang dibangun melalui kredibilitas epistemik, keteladanan moral, dan reproduksi jejaring. Penelitian ini memakai desain kualitatif-historis berbasis data dokumenter serta analisis kualitatif melalui kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Mama Syatibi mengembangkan infrastruktur kaderisasi 'ulama berbasis *pesantren* yang berkontribusi pada penguatan otoritas keagamaan di Jawa Barat. Model kaderisasi tersebut bekerja melalui tiga praktik yang saling terkait, yaitu pengajian dan pengajaran rutin, *da'wah bil qalam* melalui karya tulis yang luas, serta *uswah* berupa disiplin moral yang diwujudkan dalam perilaku sehari-hari. Ketiga praktik ini memperkuat otoritas dengan menjadikan kompetensi interpretatif dapat diverifikasi secara sosial, menstabilkan transmisi pengetahuan melalui teks, dan membangun kepercayaan komunitas melalui keteladanan. Selain itu, penyebaran murid-muridnya yang kemudian menjadi 'ulama serta mendirikan atau memimpin *pesantren* di berbagai wilayah Jawa Barat memperlihatkan bagaimana pendidikan kaderisasi 'ulama mereproduksi otoritas keagamaan melalui suksesi pendidikan dan multiplikasi institusi. Studi ini berkontribusi pada kajian pendidikan Islam dan kepemimpinan 'ulama dengan menegaskan peran *pesantren* dalam pembentukan otoritas keagamaan pada konteks historis Jawa Barat abad ke-19 hingga awal abad ke-20.

Keywords: *Muslim cadre education; Pesantren education; Religious authority; KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi; West Java*

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Introduction

Muslim scholars (*'ulama*) have historically occupied a central position in Muslim societies as transmitters of religious knowledge and as moral references who shape communal norms. In the Indonesian archipelago, this position has been sustained through long-standing scholarly networks connecting local Islamic learning to wider centres of Islamic scholarship, particularly through the mobility associated with pilgrimage and study in the Hijaz (Voll, 1988). These networks contributed to distinctive patterns of transmission and intellectual exchange, enabling scholarly lineages to develop and circulate across regions (Muhammad, 2012). In the nineteenth century, when many Muslim societies faced colonial domination, Haramain remained an important locus of intellectual deepening and spiritual formation for scholars from the archipelago (Carey, 2016; Farida, 2020; Alkatiri & Karim, 2022). Studies also show that Indonesian scholars were not merely recipients of knowledge but active contributors within broader Islamic scholarly landscapes during this period (Imawan, 2019; Imawan & Faiz, 2021). In the Indonesian context, the *pesantren* (traditional Islamic boarding school) later became a critical institutional foundation for sustaining these scholarly trajectories and reproducing religious leadership in local settings (Purnomo, 2016; A. Wahid, 1978; Dhofier, 2011; Isbah, 2020).

The concept of *'ulama* is often grounded in Islamic understandings of scholars as heirs to prophetic knowledge and as authoritative interpreters of religious teachings (Darwis, 2020; Akbar, 2021). In sociological terms, *'ulama* also function as intermediaries who influence religious, educational, and socio-cultural developments, including the way Islamic teachings interact with local cultures (R.

Anwar & Malik, 2003). This role becomes especially visible in traditional communities where authority is not awarded through formal appointment but through social recognition of a scholar's integrity, expertise, and moral trustworthiness (Hasan, 2022; Eaton, 2024). The prominence of pesantren leadership further reinforces this dynamic, because pesantren combine learning, discipline, and communal engagement in ways that produce and stabilize religious leadership (Dhofier, 2011; Steenbrink, 1986). Classic sociological analyses of *kyai* and pesantren leadership underline that religious authority is often sustained through charisma, moral exemplarity, and the capacity to guide social change through teaching and community engagement (Horikoshi, 1976; Purnomo, 2016). At the same time, sociological perspectives on tradition and modernity help clarify why different orientations toward social change may shape how religious leadership is exercised and perceived in society (Macionis, 2005; Saefudin et al., 2023).

To interpret these dynamics analytically, this article uses religious authority as a key conceptual lens. In the sociology and anthropology of religion, religious authority can be understood as the socially recognised capacity to interpret, define, and legitimate religious knowledge and practice within a community. Rather than being a fixed attribute attached to a religious figure, authority is relational and sustained through recognition and trust, and it is stabilised through the interplay of scholarly competence, moral credibility, and validated lineages of transmission. In pesantren-based environments, epistemic legitimacy is cultivated through disciplined mastery of the Islamic sciences and interpretive traditions, while moral credibility is generated through ethical consistency and exemplary conduct that makes knowledge publicly persuasive. Authority also becomes durable when it is routinised in institutional settings and reproduced through teacher–student networks, particularly when graduates establish a pesantren or assume leadership roles that extend an 'ulama's influence into wider social spaces.

From this perspective, the education of 'ulama regeneration, commonly framed as Muslim cadre education, is not only pedagogical reproduction but also an infrastructure through which religious authority is produced, confirmed, and reproduced across generations (Darwis, 2020; Dhofier, 2011).

Religious authority is best approached not as a static property possessed by a religious actor, but as a socially produced form of legitimacy that must be continually recognised, reaffirmed, and reproduced. In settings where religious leadership is not determined by a centralised clerical bureaucracy, authority operates through relational processes: communities come to treat particular persons, interpretations, and practices as authoritative because they are perceived to be credible, trustworthy, and anchored in accepted traditions of knowledge (Irfana et al., 2023). This legitimacy typically rests on several mutually reinforcing dimensions (Hasan and Rodliyah, 2023). Epistemic legitimacy refers to the recognised competence to interpret texts and norms in ways that are seen as methodologically grounded and faithful to authoritative traditions. Moral credibility concerns the perceived integrity of the scholar, particularly the consistency between religious teaching and ethical comportment in everyday life. Social recognition involves communal confirmation, which may be expressed through deference, participation in a scholar's teaching circles, reliance on their guidance, and the extension of their influence through students and institutions. Authority becomes more durable when it is routinised in educational and institutional settings that repeatedly display and test scholarly competence, cultivate moral discipline, and stabilise recognition beyond purely personal reputation (Irfana, et al., 2023).

This perspective clarifies why Muslim cadre education should be theorised not only as an educational process but also as an infrastructure for the formation and reproduction of authority. Pesantren-based Muslim cadre education does not merely transmit religious information; it produces authoritative religious

leadership by integrating interpretive training, ethical formation, and network expansion. The pedagogical routines of teaching and recitation function as arenas in which interpretive competence is demonstrated and socially verified, while written works extend epistemic influence across time and space by objectifying knowledge in durable textual form (Wang, 2022). Exemplary conduct strengthens moral credibility by making religious knowledge persuasive as a lived practice rather than an abstract claim. Authority is further amplified through the reproductive capacity of teacher–student networks: when students prove capable of teaching, authoring, and establishing new pesantren, they extend not only an educational model but also a lineage of interpretation and a recognisable tradition of moral discipline. Accordingly, the Muslim cadre education can be analysed as a mechanism through which religious authority is constructed, stabilised, and reproduced across generations in a specific socio-historical context, enabling a scholar's influence to persist through institutions, texts, and networks rather than depending solely on individual charisma.

This study examines the education of 'ulama regeneration and its role in shaping religious authority in nineteenth-century West Java through the case of KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi, widely known as Mama Syatibi or Mama Gentur. West Java provides a significant context for this analysis because pesantren networks played a major role in structuring Islamic learning and leadership in local society. By reading 'ulama regeneration through sociological and anthropological perspectives on religion, the article frames Mama Syatibi's educational practices not merely as historical biography but as a case of authority formation through pesantren-based learning, moral exemplarity, and the reproduction of scholarly networks. While scholarship on pesantren and 'ulama regeneration is substantial, fewer studies explicitly treat regeneration as a process of shaping religious authority in a historically grounded West Javanese setting. Accordingly, this article contributes to broader discussions of how Islamic

authority is produced and reproduced through education and networks, especially under the social conditions of the nineteenth century (Carey, 2016; Farida, 2020; Imawan, 2019; Imawan & Faiz, 2021; Bano, 2022).

Religious scholars are highly respected community leaders who determine behavioural norms that must be in accordance with Islamic teachings and law. They also play an active role in social change, either through preaching or education (*tarbiyyah*). In addition, religious scholars are able to communicate religious teachings effectively within the local culture, giving rise to a culture that embodies Islamic values. This was done by one of the famous scholars from Tatar Sunda (Gentur Cianjur, West Java), who became the focus of the author's research, namely KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi or better known as Mama Syatibi or Mama Gentur.

Research on 'ulama regeneration and pesantren-based cadre formation has expanded across several strands of inquiry. A first cluster emphasises the production of moral and religious dispositions through communal rituals, pedagogical routines, and the social life of pesantren, showing how religious traditions operate as formative infrastructures for Islamic education and ethical habituation (Rusmana et al., 2024). A second strand examines 'ulama as public actors whose authority is exercised in managing social tensions and responding to governance-related problems, including conflict and human rights concerns, thereby highlighting the continuing importance of 'ulama legitimacy in maintaining social cohesion (Matondang, 2024). Another body of work focuses on institutional strategies for cadre education, including structured programs and organizational models that seek to address contemporary deficits of 'ulama by formalizing recruitment, training, and leadership preparation within specific Islamic centers or movements (M. Wahid & Ishlahuddin, 2021; Palahuddin, 2022). Complementing these studies, historical scholarship has traced the development of 'ulama cadre formation and the broader trajectories through

which Islamic scholarship reproduces itself across generations, often emphasising the long *durée* of educational transmission and the evolution of scholarly specialisation (Darwis, 2020). Within this broader landscape, studies that discuss Mama Gentur primarily underline his scholarly standing and his role as a reference point in West Javanese fiqh transmission, situating him within local intellectual genealogies and identifying his significance for subsequent religious scholarship in the region (Himam, 2021).

However, much of the literature tends to treat 'ulama regeneration either as a general educational process, a contemporary institutional response, or a descriptive historical narrative, without making the analytical link between regeneration practices and the production of religious authority in a specific nineteenth-century local setting. What remains less developed is a historically grounded explanation of how *pesantren*-based education, the circulation of written works, and embodied moral exemplarity function together as mechanisms through which religious authority is constructed and reproduced through teacher–student networks in West Java. Accordingly, this article examines the education of 'ulama regeneration through the case of KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi by analysing how his *pesantren*-based teaching, textual production, and moral exemplarity contributed to the formation and reproduction of religious authority in nineteenth-century West Java, particularly through the expansion of teacher–student networks that later shaped *pesantren* development across the region.

This study employs a qualitative historical design informed by sociological and anthropological perspectives on religion. The anthropological perspective is used to examine the relationship between religious actors and the social institutions and normative orders within which religious life is organised, enabling an analysis of how a figure such as Mama Gentur could become socially recognisable as an authoritative reference in a West Javanese religious milieu

(Dedi, 2016). The sociological perspective complements this by directing attention to authority-making processes embedded in educational practice, institutional routines, and the reproduction of teacher–student networks. Empirically, the study relies on documentary materials and published sources relevant to KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi, pesantren-based learning, and 'ulama regeneration in nineteenth-century West Java. Source work followed established procedures in historical research, including the collection and classification of materials, assessment of source credibility through external and internal criticism, and interpretive synthesis of the evidence into an analytic narrative (Sulasman, 2014; Pradadimara et al, 2022). The analytical process combined historical interpretation with qualitative data analysis, drawing on an iterative strategy of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing to develop a coherent explanation of the education of 'ulama regeneration as an authority-forming process (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Sugiono, 2016). This approach allows the article to move beyond a descriptive biography by situating Mama Gentur's educational practices and textual production within the broader social mechanisms through which religious authority was produced and reproduced.

KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi: a biographical sketch

Al-'Alim Al-'Allaman Al-Kamil Al-Waro' Ash-Shaikh Ahmad Syatibi bin Muhammad Sa'id Al-Qonturi Asy-Syanjuri Al-Jawi Asy-Syafi'i—widely known as Mama Syatibi or Mama Gentur—was born in Gentur Village, Warungkondang, Cianjur, West Java. The precise date of his birth is not consistently recorded in the available sources; some accounts place it between the twelfth and eighteenth, while others suggest the mid-thirteenth Hijri century (Rifai, 2021; Budi, 2025). In Sundanese usage, “Mama” denotes a senior religious scholar, while “Gentur” refers to the locality that later became the base of his pesantren and scholarly

activity (Rifai, 2025). He was the third of four children of Haji Muhammad Sa'id and Hajjah Siti Khodijah, and family records list his siblings as Hajjah Ruqiyah, Mama Haji Ilyas, and Mama H. Muhammad Qurthubi (Budi, 2025). Mama Syatibi passed away on Wednesday, 14 Jumadil Akhir 1365 H (approximately May 15, 1946) (Himam, 2021).

Mama Syatibi married twice—Hajjah Siti Nafi'ah and Hajjah Siti Sholihah—and had seven children, many of whom later became teachers in the Picung and Gentur pesantren environments (Budi, 2025). Genealogical narratives in local sources connect his lineage to Shaykh Abdul Muhyi of Pamijahan, Tasikmalaya, and some accounts extend the genealogy further in hagiographic form (Seto, 2016). His educational trajectory, however, is more consistently described: he studied in several West Javanese pesantren—Keresek, Bojong, and Gudang (Tasikmalaya)—before continuing study in Mecca and Egypt, and later returning to West Java to study at Bunikasih prior to establishing his own pesantren in Gentur (Himam, 2021).

Mama Gentur or Mama Syatibi is a champion of Islamic education in West Java, even Mama Gentur became a kind of centre for the flow of Islamic intellectualism in the land of Pasundan in the 19th century because of the many people who studied religion with Mama Gentur. Then most of those who studied with Mama Gentur became 'ulama in various corners of West Java. Therefore, Mama Gentur is the teacher of the scholars of West Java, so when discussing the chain of Islamic knowledge in West Java, Mama Gentur's discussion and contribution is a necessity.

Accounts of his early education indicate that he briefly stayed at Pesantren Keresek in Garut, then pursued more sustained study under KH Muhammad Adzro'i at Pesantren Bojong, Garut, before continuing to Pesantren Gudang in Tasikmalaya under Mama Syuja'i, where he studied for an extended period (Himam, 2021). After completing these stages, he traveled to Mecca to deepen

his studies and later continued to Egypt. Local narratives emphasize that his competence was recognized within these learning settings, including reports of his strong ability in textual preparation and scholarly exchange (Himam, 2021). Following his period of study in the Middle East, he returned to Cianjur and continued learning under Shaykh Shoheh of Bunikasih, after which he settled in Gentur and developed pesantren-based teaching and scholarly activities that later became central to 'ulama regeneration in the region (Himam, 2021).

Pesantren-based Muslim cadre education

The word regeneration itself is “cadre”, in French, cadre means the most important part of an administrative organisation. In Latin, the word “cadre” is *quadrum*, which is a rectangle or frame. In terminology, regeneration is the process by which a person prepares leadership for the future and takes full responsibility for the organisation (Kartono, 1994). Meanwhile, the word 'ulama is defined as one who knows or one who has knowledge (M. K. Anwar & Afdillah, 2016). The word 'ulama is generally specific to people who have or master Islamic religious knowledge in the form of sharia or fiqh. Although in the Middle East, 'ulama means people who are experts in both religious and general sciences (Burhanudin, 2002).

The word 'ulama in the Indonesian context is generally a person who masters various religious sciences, not only Islamic law (fiqh), because it is often seen in Indonesia that there are many people who master the fiqh but the community does not call them 'ulama, but only as scholars or intellectuals (Azra, 2002). The scholars, after studying and performing pilgrimage to Mecca then return to Indonesia or Nusantara, but some scholars stay in Haramain forever. However, the scholars who chose to remain in Haramain still have a commitment to the Nusantara Muslim community to educate their students from Java in Haramain (M. K. Anwar & Afdillah, 2016). They are also productive in writing

various scientific works to be sent to the Malay world (Southeast Asia) (Huda, 2013). Moreover, the scholars who chose to return to their homeland, Indonesia, immediately educated and produced their successors in various regions in the Archipelago.

The regeneration process carried out by the scholars was not only carried out by the process of recitation and teaching, but also by *da'wah bi al-qalam* (preaching through the pen). The scholars were prolific writers with volumes of classical Islamic books to small treatises. The works are written in various languages, including Arabic, Malay, Javanese or other local languages in the Archipelago. Even the works of Nusantara scholars have been published in several other Islamic countries such as Istanbul, Cairo, Beirut, Bombay and Singapore (Huda, 2013).

The cadre of scholars carried out in the early days in Indonesia was through the institution of Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools were indeed established to produce prospective scholars. Pesantren is a place where prospective scholars are placed to explore various Islamic disciplines in a typical pesantren-style manner, because pesantren itself is a model of traditional Islamic education institutions typical of the Archipelago (Dhofier, 2011). This boarding school is growing, and there are many enthusiasts in the rural hinterland (Murdan, 2004). For example, Wali Sembilan on the island of Java developed pesantren as a forum for Islamic propagation and a cadre institution for prospective scholars (Murdan, 2004).

A simple definition of this boarding school educational institution is part of Islamic education in which there are scholars (Kiai) who educate various disciplines, especially Islamic science to *santri* (students) with mosque facilities in the implementation of this education which is sourced from classical books (yellow books), then there are dormitories for *santri* residence (Mujib & Mudakkir, 2006).

Islamic boarding schools, which are part of Islamic education, aim to develop the mind and heart to be good from an Islamic perspective. Islamic education through boarding schools can produce cadres of scholars who want to transmit the teachings of Islam (Jauhari, 2008). According to Din Syamsudin, Islamic boarding schools are a kind of photocopying machine to print cadres of scholars who are able to convey religious teachings and messages to the wider community. To achieve the success of the education of 'ulama regeneration in the world of Pesantren is inseparable from the great role of the figure of the cleric who leads a Pesantren (M. Wahid & Ishlahuddin, 2021).

The central role of 'ulama in the formation of 'ulama cadres is at least as educators, teachers, mentors, role models, informants, organisers, activists, trainers, initiators, facilitators, mediators and companions (A.M, 2012). Meanwhile, 'ulama according to the Nusantara tradition, are often identical or paired with Kiai (Dhofier, 2011; Faisal et al., 2022). In traditional societies, the name Kiai or 'ulama comes from the community, because the community accepts it as someone who can master various Islamic disciplines. This is what makes the community believe in asking for advice and entrusting their children to learn Islamic knowledge from the 'ulama (Assiroji, 2020).

H. Aboebakar Atjeh quoted by Karel A. Steenbrink states that there are at least four factors for a person to be called a 'ulama or Kiai, namely because of his knowledge, his piety, his descent and the number of his students. This agrees with Vrendenbregt, namely because of his descent, religious knowledge, the number of students and the way he devotes himself to society (Steenbrink, 1986). The position of 'ulama in rural areas has several functions, namely as administrators of madrasas and mosques, as teachers, and as *fuqaha* or experts in Islamic law. According to Horikoshi, 'ulama cadres or candidates tend to marry late, this often happens because 'ulama cadres must continue their knowledge and education in Pesantren for a long period of time (Horikoshi, 1976).

Therefore, this Pesantren is an ideal place for Muslim cadres because it has good moral examples from the 'ulama or kyai who run the Pesantren, meaning that this Pesantren not only teaches various disciplines in the classroom, but also provides moral lessons from the 'ulama. This is in accordance with Abdurrahmad Mas'ud's view that exemplary is an effective way for the cadre of prospective scholars, as the companions used to get examples or examples directly by the Prophet Muhammad Saw.

After graduating from a boarding school, the Kiai or 'ulama leader of the boarding school will deepen the religious knowledge of his cadre directly by giving special lectures in private to develop himself, then after that, he will be assigned to open a new boarding school in the area of his birth or in another area (Dhofier, 2011). The cadres of scholars who graduate from a Pesantren often continue their studies in other Pesantren as their knowledge matures. These 'ulama cadres usually take a long time to acquire more mature knowledge, skills and experience needed to become an 'ulama.

The tradition of *hijrah* (migration) for the development of Islamic disciplines in the Archipelago can be observed in the 19th and 20th centuries, and in the 19th century, many cadres of scholars studied in the centres of the Islamic world, namely. Mecca and Medina. In contrast, the cadres of Indonesian scholars who studied in the 20th century only went to Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (Mas'ud, 2006). It is from this process of travelling to study 'ulama cadres that an established scientific network is formed. The scientific validity of being a student of a famous teacher or 'ulama is proven by a scientific *sanad* (transmission chain) that is neatly written. This scientific *sanad* network is very important for the world of Pesantren (Mastuki & El-Saha, 2006).

The process of regenerating 'ulama is not only equipped with knowledge from various Islamic disciplines, but also equipped with the knowledge of leadership and public speaking. In addition, sometimes 'ulama cadres are also

given special skills such as health, martial arts, trade and farming (Horikoshi, 1976). This regeneration is continuously guarded by being guided to manage the Pesantren, teach general students and senior students. Only after that, the 'ulama cadres are ordered to open new Pesantren institutions or devote themselves to the community in their respective home villages.

Therefore, in a sociological review, the main purpose of pesantren is to guide and produce individuals with Islamic character and understanding of Islamic religious knowledge, so that they can convey it (*mubaligh*). In particular, pesantren is a medium to prepare santri to become an *alim* (Dahlan, 2016, p. 2). This is what is referred to as a pesantren above, a place of regeneration for scholars. The purpose of pesantren is the same as the purpose of life in Islam, namely, the balance between the hereafter and thereafter and paying attention to the social order of a civil and religious society. This is also a strategy employed by boarding school institutions to produce prospective scholars.

The pesantren centres itself on community education, especially pesantren education in the context of breeding prospective scholars by pesantren Kiai. It looks at the behaviour of Kiai's life in the midst of society in carrying out all their activities as religious leaders as well as community leaders (Dahlan, 2016, p. 10). Furthermore, the sociology of pesantren is also an educational institution, which is clear if you look at Mama Gentur's role through the pesantren institution she founded, it is used as a medium or place for the cadre of 'ulama in West Java. In addition, the pesantren is also a *da'wah* (preaching) institution, social and intellectual network (Dahlan, 2016, pp. 14–17). The pesantren established by Mama Gentur is clearly at the same time a *da'wah* institution both through oral (*bi lisan*) by organising recitation activities for students in particular and the community in general. Mama Gentur's pesantren is also a *da'wah* institution through writing, because Mama Gentur herself is a prolific scholar from West Java. From these *da'wah* activities, it will produce a social network, especially *santri*

who are used as prospective scholars, and in the next development, there are indeed many students of Mama Gentur who become scholars and leaders of pesantren in West Java. This fact becomes a social network as well as an intellectual network or lineage of Islamic knowledge in West Java.

Mama Syatibi's model of Muslim cadre education in West Java

The anthropological approach in understanding religion can be interpreted as an effort to understand religion by looking at the form of religious practices that grow and develop in society (Dedi, 2016). This is seen from historical data and facts in examining a character's role that occurred in the past, if done with an anthropological approach to religion. It also sees the relationship of religion with various problems of human life, and with it, religion looks familiar and functional with various phenomena of human life. Thus, an anthropological approach is needed in understanding religious teachings (Dedi, 2016). If we look at the context of Mama Syatibi in the educational model of 'ulama regeneration in West Java, it can be seen that the phenomenon that occurred was the interest of the community to gain knowledge to Mama Syatibi's boarding school and learn directly from her, so this gave birth to the term that Mama Gentur was the centre of Islamic religious knowledge, especially the discipline of *fiqh* in West Java in the 19th century.

When Mama Syatibi returned from Mecca and settled in Cianjur to study with Sheikh Shoheh Bunikasih, and settled in Gentur, Mama Syatibi decided to open an educational institution, Pondok Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) (Budi, 2025). The 'ulama regeneration education model carried out by KH Ahmad Syatibi at Gentur Islamic Boarding School is with three models;

First, through teaching or regular recitation conducted by Mama Syatibi. One day, when Mama Syatibi was giving an explanation or routine recitation to her students and the general public, the Dutch colonial government entourage

came. Mama Syatibi was asked to participate in a discussion about the Dutch political agenda, so Mama Syatibi took the time to fulfil the invitation. Shortly afterwards, Mama Syatibi returned to teaching and continued her recitation, but Mama Gentur did not discuss the meeting with the Dutch during her recitation. This shows Mama Gentur's focus in her Pesantren to educate future 'ulama cadres without interfering with political conditions, which is why Mama Gentur received the three-star moon sign Security Star Award from Wihalminak, the Governor of the Dutch East Indies at that time. Meanwhile, during the Japanese occupation, Mama Syatibi received an award from Emperor Tenohekka for her pure ideology, meaning that she only carried out religious teachings without intending to mix politics with religion (Islam, 2020).

But actually, Mama Syatibi was not indifferent to politics or social conditions during the colonial period. Mama Syatibi, as a form of protest against colonialism, issued a fatwa haram against music, formal schools, mosques should not use loudspeakers, scholars and students are prohibited from wearing long pants, and must wear sarongs. This is due to the social-historical nature of all colonial objects or things that represent the cultural symbols of the infidels. This is also a form of strong protest from Mama Syatibi, who issued the fatwa against the evil actions of the colonisers (Dsy, 2021).

Second, it is through her written works in the form of various classical books, so that Mama Syatibi preaches not only by using oral means through her recitation, but also she preaches through written works (*da'wah bi al-qalam*). During his lifetime, Mama Syatibi had written approximately 80 books in Arabic and Sundanese. Among his famous books are *Siraj al-munir* and *Tahdid al-ainayn* in the discipline of Islamic law, then *al-Mukodimah al-amarkandiyah*, *Al-fatbiyah*, and *al-Dahlaniyah* in the discipline of Arabic linguistics (Himam, 2021).

Therefore, Mama Syatibi was the main axis of knowledge of the scholars of West Java in the early 20th century. Most of the scholars in Sundanese land

were students of Mama Syatibi (Himam, 2021). The educational model with *da'wah* through the works of this book is effective in maintaining the chain of Islamic intellectualism in Sundanese land. So that even though Mama Syatibi has passed away, her work will continue to be studied and developed.

Third, the model of Muslim cadre education carried out by Mama Syatibi is the exemplary model (*uswah*), which is also what the Prophet Muhammad Saw. Just as Mama Syatibi did not teach her students before she had practised it herself. Then, Mama Syatibi's simplicity during his education in several Islamic boarding schools, he still practices even though he has become a great scholar. This is the exemplary model that Mama Syatibi applies to her students.

From this fact, it can be seen that the education of 'ulama regeneration by Mama Syatibi, namely through a knowledge approach with various book recitations held at her boarding school educational institutions. Mama Syatibi is also a productive scholar, this is evidenced by her various book works both in Arabic and Sundanese. The Muslim cadre education by Mama Syatibi is not only by recitation but also by her written works. The process of regeneration of scholars carried out by Mama Syatibi is also exemplified by the morals and manners practised by Mama Syatibi daily, for example, the nature of his *tawadhu'*, *wara'*, and *qona'ah*

Mama Syatibi's regeneration impact is evident from the trajectories of his students, many of whom later became 'ulama and established or developed pesantren across West Java. Available accounts indicate that his disciples were not limited to a small circle but formed a broad teacher–student network that carried his scholarly influence into new institutional settings. Several figures associated with his learning circle are noted as founders or leaders of pesantren in different localities, including KH A. Shohibulwafa Tajul Arifin in Tasikmalaya, KH Habib Usman Al-Aydarus in Indramayu, and KH Ahmad Sanusi in Sukabumi, among others (Saefullah, 2010). Further documentation also records

a wider constellation of students identified with the Gentur's *pesantren* milieu who later served as local religious authorities and *pesantren* leaders in multiple regions of West Java (Himam, 2021). This pattern shows that regeneration in Mama Syatibi's case was not merely an internal pedagogical achievement but a reproducible educational process whose outcomes can be traced through the diffusion of alumni into new *pesantren* and teaching circles. In this sense, the extent and continuity of his student network provide concrete evidence of the education of 'ulama regeneration as a mechanism of 'ulama regeneration and the reproduction of religious leadership beyond Gentur (Saefullah, 2010; Himam, 2021).

Impact on the *pesantren* development in West Java and beyond

Regarding the impact of 'ulama regeneration education carried out by KH Ahmad Syatibi through his Gentur boarding school educational institution on the development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, if viewed from the perspective of his own students who went on to develop Islamic boarding schools, it had a significant effect on the subsequent development of Islamic boarding schools. For example, one of Mama Gentur's students who became the leader of the Suryalaya Tasikmalaya boarding school, KH Shohibulwafa Tajul Arifin (Abah Anom), developed his boarding school apart from being a centre for *tarbiyyah* and *da'wah*, also developed Sufi order, especially the development spread of the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqsabandiyya (TQN), so that this Sufi order was so rapidly growing in Indonesia, especially during Abah Anom's era.

Then there is also the leader and founder of the As-Salafiyah Islamic boarding school, namely Sheikh Tubagus Ahmad Bakri, or often known as Mama Sempur Purwakarta. He developed a traditional boarding school education model, while the tarekat or method of getting closer to Allah, carried out by Mama Sempur is reciting the Quran or *thalabul ilmi*. Mama Sempur is also a

student of Mama Gentur, who has something in common with her teacher, namely, both scholars are active and productive in writing books; her written works become a medium for ‘preaching through the pen’, so that the development of Islamic boarding schools is not only through various routine recitations.

There are at least two models of development of boarding school institutions in Indonesia, if analysed from the impact of 'ulama regeneration education carried out by KH Ahmad Syatibi through Gentur boarding school to his students, namely the development of Sufi boarding school institutions and the development of traditional boarding school institutions. Two such boarding school educational institutions were rampant and mushroomed in Indonesia, especially from the 19th century to the early 20th century in Indonesia.

Muslim cadre education and the formation of religious authority in nineteenth-century West Java

This study conceptualises religious authority as a socially produced form of legitimacy sustained through epistemic credibility, moral trustworthiness, and networked reproduction. In pesantren-based settings, authority is not established solely through formal position but through repeated recognition of interpretive competence, the persuasive force of embodied piety, and the continuity of teacher–student relations that stabilise legitimacy beyond an individual’s lifetime. Read through this lens, KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi’s 'ulama regeneration operated as an infrastructure of authority formation, because it integrated pedagogical practice, textual transmission, and moral exemplarity in ways that were socially observable and institutionally reproducible.

Mama Syatibi’s regular teaching and recitation practices functioned as a primary arena for producing epistemic authority. In the pesantren milieu, interpretive competence becomes authoritative when it is repeatedly

demonstrated through the explanation of canonical texts, the formation of students' understanding, and the public validation of method and judgment within a recognised scholarly tradition. Routine instruction, therefore, served not only to transfer knowledge but to make scholarly mastery visible and socially testable, enabling communities and students to recognise a teacher's interpretive legitimacy through sustained pedagogical performance. At the same time, the credibility of such knowledge was strengthened by pesantren discipline, where learning is closely tied to religious practice and ethical expectations. In this setting, knowledge becomes persuasive not merely because it is correct in textual terms, but because it is delivered within an environment where moral discipline and seriousness signal integrity. Teaching thus linked epistemic authority to moral credibility by situating interpretation within a lived ethical order.

Mama Syatibi's 'preaching through the pen' further strengthened religious authority by extending epistemic legitimacy across time and space. Written works function as durable objects of transmission: they stabilise interpretation, allow knowledge to circulate beyond face-to-face settings, and enable students and later readers to reproduce a teacher's scholarly orientation within new learning circles. In contexts where authority depends on the continuity of tradition and the validation of scholarly methods, textual production helps transform a teacher's influence from personal reputation into a transmissible intellectual resource. Accordingly, Mama Syatibi's authorship—reported in local accounts as extensive—can be read as part of the mechanism through which authority was sustained, because texts enable instruction and interpretive frameworks to persist beyond the immediate boundaries of the pesantren and beyond the lifetime of the scholar (Himam, 2021).

The role model dimension of Mama Syatibi's regeneration practices complements these mechanisms by grounding authority in moral credibility. In pesantren societies, the persuasive force of 'ulama leadership is closely tied to the

perception that religious knowledge is embodied through consistent conduct, humility, and ethical discipline. Moral exemplarity reduces the distance between doctrine and practice and provides a visible basis for communal trust. As a result, the exemplary model operates as a stabilising mechanism for authority: it supports the acceptance of a scholar's guidance by demonstrating that interpretation is anchored in integrity rather than merely in textual expertise. In combination with teaching and textual transmission, the exemplary model helps explain why authority becomes socially durable, since it is sustained not only by what is taught, but by how religious teaching is lived and witnessed.

The regeneration outcomes associated with Mama Syatibi become most evident in the reproductive expansion of his student network. When students later became 'ulama and established or developed pesantren across West Java, they did more than replicate an educational format; they carried forward a lineage of interpretation and moral discipline that bore the symbolic weight of a recognized teacher. Reports of disciples linked to his learning circle who later assumed leadership roles in various regions indicate that the Muslim cadre education functioned as a mechanism of networked reproduction, enabling authority to circulate beyond Gentur into wider institutional settings (Saefullah, 2010; Himam, 2021). This networked diffusion is crucial for understanding “shaping religious authority” historically, because it shows how authority was reproduced through educational succession and institutional multiplication rather than through centralised appointment. In this sense, the evidence of regeneration is not only the existence of many students, but the patterned continuity of teaching lineages and pesantren establishments that allowed Mama Syatibi's scholarly influence to persist across generations.

Taken together, these findings support the argument that the Muslim cadre education shaped religious authority in nineteenth-century West Java through an integrated process. Pedagogical routines produced epistemic legitimacy, moral

exemplarity sustained trust, written works stabilised interpretation, and student trajectories reproduced authority through expanding networks and institutions. This explains why Mama Syatibi is remembered not simply as a prominent scholar, but as a regional axis of religious authority whose influence was sustained through the educational infrastructures and scholarly networks generated by pesantren-based 'ulama regeneration.

Conclusion

This study has examined the Muslim cadre education through the case of KH Ahmad Syatibi Al-Qonturi and its role in shaping religious authority in nineteenth-century West Java. Drawing on sociological and anthropological perspectives on religion, the analysis demonstrates that 'ulama regeneration functioned not merely as a pedagogical process but as a mechanism through which religious authority was constructed, stabilised, and reproduced within the pesantren milieu.

The findings indicate that the religious authority associated with Mama Syatibi was established through an integrated process. Pedagogical routines of teaching and recitation produced epistemic legitimacy by making interpretive competence publicly visible and socially verifiable within established scholarly traditions. *Da'wah bi al-qalam* (preaching through the pen) extended this authority across time and space by stabilising interpretation in textual form, allowing religious knowledge and scholarly orientation to circulate beyond face-to-face instruction. Moral exemplarity (*uswah*) grounded authority in ethical credibility, reinforcing communal trust by aligning religious teaching with embodied discipline and consistent conduct. These elements did not operate in isolation but mutually reinforced one another within pesantren-based educational life.

Most importantly, the regeneration outcomes of Muslim cadre education are evident in the expansion of teacher–student networks. The emergence of

disciples who later became 'ulama and established pesantren across West Java demonstrates that Mama Syatibi's authority was not confined to personal charisma or a single institution. Instead, authority was reproduced through educational succession and institutional multiplication, allowing interpretive lineages and moral norms to persist beyond Gentur and beyond his lifetime. This networked reproduction explains how religious authority was consolidated during the nineteenth century and sustained into the early twentieth century, despite the absence of centralised clerical structures.

By conceptualising Muslim cadre education as an infrastructure for the formation of religious authority, this study contributes to broader discussions on Islamic leadership and education. It shows that pesantren-based 'ulama education shaped religious authority through the integration of knowledge transmission, moral credibility, and network expansion rather than through formal appointment or bureaucratic control. In doing so, the article highlights the significance of local educational institutions in structuring Islamic authority within specific historical and cultural contexts. Future research may build on this study by incorporating primary manuscript sources or comparative cases to further examine how different pesantren traditions negotiated authority formation across regions and periods in Indonesia.

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