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THE ROLE OF PMII SUROMENGGOLO RAYON IN STRENGTHENING THE ISLAMIC CHARACTER OF THE WATES VILLAGE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE SAHASRA MAGANDI PROGRAM

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Abstract

This study analyzes the role of PMII Rayon Suromenggolo in strengthening the Islamic Character of the Wates Village community through the Sahasra Magandi program (2019–2024). Using a longitudinal qualitative approach (in-depth interviews with 10 PMII cadres and document analysis), three main strategies were found: (1) A cultural approach through the integration of Islamic values with local traditions (e.g., transforming the *slametan* ritual into a means of productive alms); (2) Moderate Islamic education based on the Aswaja principles (*tawasuth*, *tawāzun*, *tasāmuh*, and *i'tidāl*) in TPQ/SD; (3) Collaboration between religious and community leaders as theological legitimacy and institutionalization of the program. Analysis based on the theory of Prophetic Islam (Kuntowijoyo) and character education (Lickona) shows that this program successfully internalized the value of moderation through moral action, while simultaneously addressing the challenges of moral degradation and poverty. Key findings: Cultural-institutional synergy catalyzes the contextual transformation of Islamic Character, with implications for a village empowerment model based on student organizations.

Keyword: Islamic Character, PMII, Moderate Islam, Village Empowerment, Cultural Approach.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis peran PMII Rayon Suromenggolo dalam penguatan karakter Islami masyarakat Desa Wates

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melalui program Sahasra Magandi (2019–2024). Dengan pendekatan kualitatif longitudinal (wawancara mendalam 10 kader PMII dan analisis dokumen), ditemukan tiga strategi utama: (1) Pendekatan kultural melalui integrasi nilai Islam dengan tradisi lokal (e.g., transformasi ritual slametan menjadi sarana sedekah produktif); (2) Edukasi Islam moderat berbasis prinsip Aswaja (tawasuth, tawazun, tasamuh dan I'tidal) di TPQ/SD; (3) Kolaborasi tokoh agama-masyarakat sebagai legitimasi teologis dan institusionalisasi program. Analisis berbasis teori Islam Profetik (Kuntowijoyo) dan pendidikan karakter (Lickona) menunjukkan bahwa program ini berhasil menginternalisasi nilai moderasi melalui moral action, sekaligus menjawab tantangan degradasi moral dan kemiskinan. Temuan kunci: sinergi kultural-institusional menjadi katalis transformasi karakter Islami yang kontekstual, dengan implikasi pada model pemberdayaan desa berbasis organisasi mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: Karakter Islami, PMII, Islam Moderat, Pemberdayaan Desa, Pendekatan Kultural.

INTRODUCTION

Wates Village, situated on the Ponorogo-Pacitan border with hilly/mountainous topography (area: 1,119.15 hectares), is characterized by dryland (499 ha) and forest (325 ha) areas. A total of 4,354 people (as of 2023) rely on the agricultural sector, with 67% working as farmers (1,131 people) and farm laborers (2,223 people). Despite being challenged by poverty and limited education (71.4% of the population has a maximum of elementary school education), this village has substantial social capital. The tradition of cooperation, orphan assistance, and active participation in community rituals is the backbone of community cohesion. Religious harmony is well-maintained—a Muslim majority (97.3%) coexists with a Christian-Catholic minority, with no record of conflict, with a unique history of integration through food aid during the 1963 rat plague. Local wisdom such as *karawitan*, *wayang ruwat*, *jaranan*, and *reog* remain as moral bulwarks, supported by inclusive worship facilities (mosques, prayer rooms, and churches).¹ In this context, strengthening Islamic Character is a critical urgency. Student organizations—with their scientific capacity, networks, and spirit of change—can play a strategic role: transforming traditional solidarity into

¹ “Tingkat Potensi Desa (Desa Wates Kecamatan Slahung) Tahun 2023,” accessed March 24, 2025, prodeskel.binapemdes.kemendagri.go.id/laporan_terkini_potensi/tahun2023kode3502160004.

empowerment programs, strengthening the moral resilience of the younger generation through educational mentoring, and optimizing village assets.

One of the main challenges in strengthening the Islamic Character of rural communities is the weakening role of traditional religious institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and religious study groups (*Majelis Taklim*), amidst the onslaught of digital social media. Communities often use social media as a guide and are beginning to diminish the role of religious education in shaping the morals of the younger generation. Furthermore, changes in lifestyles and social values—such as the rise of individualism and consumerism—are eroding the spirit of cooperation and simplicity that have long characterized rural communities. Local cultural conflicts also arise when Islamic values clash with traditional customs, while the influence of globalization brings Western lifestyles that often conflict with Sharia principles.

On the other hand, economic pressures and social disparities have led some rural communities to non-Sharia economic practices, such as usury, to meet their daily needs. The urbanization of rural youth due to the lack of job opportunities in cities further exacerbates this situation, as those who should be continuing the struggle for Islamic values are instead leaving their hometowns. Another challenge is the rise of radicalism, which exploits narrow religious understandings to divide society, and weak religious literacy, which leads many to merely perform rituals without understanding the essence of Islamic morality. If left unaddressed, this situation has the potential to erode the Islamic identity of rural communities, which has long been a moral bulwark amidst the tide of modernization.

Islamic student organizations play a crucial role in community development, with the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII) being one of the most active. As a student organization focused on addressing social issues, PMII serves not only as a gathering place for students to express Islamic values as an ideological doctrine but also plays a strategic role in the social, religious, educational, and economic transformation of society.² PMII plays a key role in developing Character and human capacity. According to

² A Safik and M C Sirad, "PERAN PMII DALAM MENGAKTUALISASIKAN SYI'AR KEBANGSAAN DAN MENEGUHKAN ISLAM NUSANTARA DI JAWA TIMUR," *PROSIDING ...*, 2021.

Wahidah and Mahyiddin, students have a responsibility to foster community character to improve the quality of human resources.³ In this context, PMII focuses on developing an understanding and application of Islamic values in daily life to create a generation with noble Character and high competence.⁴ Students who are members of PMII are often involved in social activities oriented towards community empowerment, such as skills training and education.⁵

Additionally, PMII plays a role through social activities organized in various sectors, such as scientific discussions and forums formed to raise social awareness (Hamsyah, 1998). Empowering programs led by students are crucial in fostering public awareness of the problems surrounding them.⁶ This role demonstrates students' ability to act as drivers in the development process, channeling community aspirations to create relevant and effective development programs.⁷ PMII also plays a crucial role in facilitating dialogue between the community and the government. Student involvement in various communication forums allows the voices of the community, especially marginalized groups, to be heard and considered in development policymaking.⁸ Through these activities, PMII strengthens the capabilities of

³ Wahidah Wahidah and Mahyiddin Mahyiddin, "Peran Organisasi Kemahasiswaan Dalam Pembinaan Karakter Masyarakat," *Al-Ikhtibar Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 10, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.32505/ikhtibar.v10i2.7641>.

⁴ Amalia D Pertiwi et al., "Peran Organisasi Kemahasiswaan Dalam Membangun Karakter: Urgensi Organisasi Kemahasiswaan Pada Generasi Digital," *Aulad Journal on Early Childhood* 4, no. 3 (2021): 107–15, <https://doi.org/10.31004/aulad.v4i3.202>; Wahidah and Mahyiddin, "Peran Organisasi Kemahasiswaan Dalam Pembinaan Karakter Masyarakat"; Ahmad Wasi' and Muna Erawati, "PERAN PERGERAKAN MAHASISWA ISLAM INDONESIA (PMII) KOTA SALATIGA DALAM MENYEBARKAN NILAI-NILAI ISLAM NUSANTARA," *An-Nida: Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 11, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.34001/an.v11i1.937>.

⁵ Neli Muna Amalia, "PERAN PEMUDA DALAM MEWUJUDKAN SUSTAINABILITAS PEMBANGUNAN EKONOMI INDONESIA: Studi Kasus Kader PMII Kota Semarang," *Syria Studies* 7, no. 1 (2015).

⁶ Ismatullah Ismatullah and Gerry K Mahendra, "Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Pembangunan Infrastruktur Jalan Di Desa Kaligintung Kecamatan Temon Kabupaten Kulon Progo 2019," *Journal of Social Politics and Governance (Jspg)* 3, no. 1 (2021): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.24076/jspg.2021v3i1.556>; Andi R Razak, "Peran Serta Masyarakat Dalam Pembangunan," *Otoritas Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan* 3, no. 1 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.26618/ojip.v3i1.54>.

⁷ Zamroni, "Peranan Organisasi Mahasiswa Dalam Pembangunan," *Bestari* (-, 1990).

⁸ TitikTriwulan Tutik, "Peran Mahasiswa Sebagai Social Control Dan Agent Of Change Dalam Kehidupan Berbangsa Dan Bernegara," in *Meneropong Masa Depan Legislatif*

local communities while fostering mutual trust among community members, laying an important foundation for social development.⁹

The Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII) was founded on April 17, 1960, in Surabaya as a student organization affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). PMII emerged as a response to the political and intellectual dynamics of the time, primarily to offer an alternative student movement based on the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* (*Aswaja*). From the outset, PMII has been committed to developing moderate, inclusive, and nationally oriented Islamic thought. PMII is also recognized as a crucial element in the Indonesian civil society movement, particularly during the New Order and Reform era.¹⁰ PMII's contribution to community development demonstrates that this Islamic student organization can be a vital driving force for positive change through educational, social, skills, and leadership transformation movements¹¹. Therefore, the role of organizations such as PMII is crucial in responding to complex and evolving social challenges. That aligns with the organization's ideals, specifically as an agent of change and social control.

PMII has excellent potential as an agent of social change that spreads moderate Islamic values in society.¹² Based on *Aswaja*'s scientific foundation, which emphasizes *tawasuth*, *tasāmuh*, and *ta'adul*, and adapts to local wisdom, PMII is actively engaged in interfaith dialogue, community

Dan Generasi Z Sebagai Legislator Terbaik (Surabaya: Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, 2020), 1–10.

⁹ Sjafriz Mangkuprawira, "Strategi Peningkatan Kapasitas Modal Sosial Dan Kualitas Sumber Daya Manusia Pendamping Pembangunan Pertanian," *Forum Penelitian Agro Ekonomi* 28, no. 1 (2016): 19, <https://doi.org/10.21082/fae.v28n1.2010.19-34>; Intan Modanggu et al., "Peran Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Proses Perencanaan Wilayah: Studi Kasus Di Desa Butu Kecamatan Tilongkabila," *JGS* 1, no. 2 (2023): 79–84, <https://doi.org/10.69606/geography.v1i2.72>.

¹⁰ Amalia, "PERAN PEMUDA DALAM MEWUJUDKAN SUSTAINABILITAS PEMBANGUNAN EKONOMI INDONESIA: Studi Kasus Kader PMII Kota Semarang."

¹¹ Amalia; Hasan Labiqul Aqil and Moh. Aris Munandar, "Kaderisasi PMII Cabang Kota Semarang Dalam Meningkatkan Kapasitas Kepemimpinan Anggota," *Unnes Political Science Journal* 4, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.15294/upsj.v4i1.42378>; Hamsyah, "Peranan Pmii Terhadap Pembinaan Kader Dilingkungan Mahasiswa Perguruan Tinggi Negeri Palangka Raya" (IAIN Palangkaraya, 1998).

¹² Wasi' and Erawati, "PERAN PERGERAKAN MAHASISWA ISLAM INDONESIA (PMII) KOTA SALATIGA DALAM MENYEBARKAN NILAI-NILAI ISLAM NUSANTARA."

empowerment, and advocacy for just policies.¹³ In the digital era, PMII also utilizes social media to counter the narrative of radicalism and advocates a friendly and progressive Islam.¹⁴ Through its network of Islamic boarding schools and campuses, PMII continues to train its cadres to become leaders who integrate Islamic values with the spirit of nationalism. In this context, PMII plays a crucial role in upholding authentic Islamic traditions while responding to modern challenges with a contextual approach. In their work, they maintain the principle of *al muhafadzatu ala qadimi shalih, wal akhdzu bil jadidi al aslah*'.

PMII Rayon Suromenggolo has taken a role in understanding the current challenging situation. With a strong understanding of ideological doctrine and a strong social sensitivity, PMII Rayon Suromenggolo initiated a program called Sahasra Magandi. This activity aims to enhance the participation of PMII cadres in marginalized communities. As mentioned earlier, Wates village is situated in a marginal area with limited potential. Sahasra Magandi is an activity whose primary focus is aimed at strengthening Islamic Character through various social activities, including Islamic education for children and adolescents, religious counseling, and the distribution of basic food packages to underprivileged families. This activity was conducted by PMII Rayon Suromenggolo from 2019 to 2024, held twice annually.

This article is important to assess the extent of PMII's contribution to community empowerment. That is something PMII rarely does in real terms. PMII has always been close to campuses and students; however, in the author's view, this closeness has somewhat diminished in the context of community support. The struggle should be rooted in the grassroots, the fringes, and the marginalized. That also serves as constructive criticism for the PMII movement, as the current student movement appears to be fading and needs revitalization. Public trust in the student movement has begun to

¹³ Fajarudin Ashari, Tuty Maryati, and I Gusti Made Suta Arya Wirawan, "Peran Organisasi Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (PMII) Cabang Buleleng Terhadap Toleransi Umat Beragama Dana Potensinya Sebagai Sumber Belajar Sosiologi Di SMA," *E-Journal Pendidikan Sosiologi Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha* 1, no. 2 (2019).

¹⁴ Abdulloh Hadziq, "Nasionalisme Organisasi Mahasiswa Islam Dalam Menangkal Radikalisme Di Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Surakarta," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah* 4, no. 1 (2019), [https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2019.vol4\(1\).2791](https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2019.vol4(1).2791).

wane, along with a growing sense of powerlessness and declining student contributions. One way to regain that trust is to return to the foundation of the struggle: community empowerment and support. This article focuses on the strategies implemented by PMII's Suromenggolo branch to strengthen the Islamic Character of the Wates village community, as well as the programs that contribute to this effort.

This study employs a qualitative approach to examine the dynamics of the Sahasra Magandi program's implementation in depth and a holistic manner. Data collection was conducted through two primary methods: open-ended interviews (in-depth interviews) with 10 active PMII Rayon Suromenggolo students, who were involved as activity implementers across generations (2019–2024). The open-ended interview technique was chosen to allow researchers to flexibly explore the subjects' experiences—from motivation and operational challenges to ethical reflection—thus producing rich and authentic narrative data. Furthermore, the document analysis included activity records, evaluation reports, photos/videos, as well as program planning archives, during the implementation period. The research was designed as a longitudinal study with repeated data collection (twice per year) over 5 years (2019–2024). This design allows tracking of program evolution, strategy adaptation, and the consistency of prophetic Islamic values (liberation-humanization) in practice. The selection of subjects across generations aims to uncover diverse generational perspectives while maintaining validity through triangulation of data sources.

This qualitative approach is considered appropriate for understanding the complexity of moral action in the context of community empowerment in Wates Village, where the meaning of participation, self-transformation of cadres, and social impact cannot be reduced to mere statistical figures. The data analysis process adopted the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (data reduction, data presentation, verification), which was operationalized dialectically with two theoretical analysis tools: Kuntowijoyo's prophetic Islamic theory as an analytical framework to analyze the manifestation of moderate Islamic Character in the Sahasra Magandi program and Thomas Lickona's character theory to analyze the strengthening of Islamic Character. Prophetic Islam (Kuntowijoyo) and Character Education (Lickona) are symbiotic—the former provides a philosophical-axiological foundation for empowerment. In contrast, the latter provides a map of the moral

development of the agents of change. This combination allows the research to answer not only what is done, but also how the program shapes the Character of the actors.

DISCUSSION

PMII's strategy in Strengthening Islamic Character in Wates Village Approach Culturally to Build Public Trust

A cultural approach is a social intervention strategy that recognizes, respects, and utilizes the value systems, traditions, beliefs, and practices of local cultures that have become ingrained in a community as a basis for building change or strengthening new values. Its essence lies in the principles of cultural sensitivity and appropriateness, where programs or da'wah are not conducted in a confrontational manner or by replacing local culture, but rather by integrating, adapting, and revitalizing target values (such as Islamic values) into existing and respected cultural structures.¹⁵ This approach is particularly significant in communities with strong cultural identities, such as the Javanese community in Wates Village, because it reduces resistance, increases acceptance, and ensures program sustainability. By starting from the community's "world" (such as *slametan* rituals, *kenduri*, or social beliefs), a cultural approach builds emotional and cognitive bridges that facilitate the internalization of new values more naturally and meaningfully.¹⁶

The Wates Village community demonstrates the steadfastness of Javanese Islamic practices through the sacred interaction between Islamic rituals and inseparable local traditions, where activities such as *kenduri*, *slametan*, *tahlilan*, and *manaqiban* are not merely customs but expressions of religiosity that are integrated with their cultural identity.¹⁷ Belief in the power of *weton* (calculation of birth day) in determining fate, *tingkeban* rituals (pregnancy ceremonies), and *tedak siten* (seven-month ceremonies for babies) remains alive as part of the Javanese cosmological framework,

¹⁵ Sister Mary William and Clifford Geertz, "The Religion of Java," *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 22, no. 1 (1961), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3708141>.

¹⁶ Syaiful Arif, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Diskursus Negara Islam: Pemikiran KH Abdurrahman Wahid," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 13, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v13i1.189>.

¹⁷ William and Geertz, "The Religion of Java"; Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam* (New York: Springer, 2011).

which is considered to complement, not contradict, Islamic values¹⁸. The preservation of Reyog art, which is full of spiritual symbols, is evidence of the resilience of this value system, where society interprets Islam through a local lens: monotheism is experienced in slametan, alms in kenduri, and silaturahmi in tahlilan, while still upholding the principle that ancestral traditions are the path to socio-spiritual harmony.¹⁹

In its application, as implemented by PMII Rayon Suromenggolo through the Sahasra Magandi Program, the cultural approach manifests itself in two main mechanisms: value infusion and meaning transformation. First, existing cultural spaces (e.g., *kenduri*, *tahlilan*) are filled with substantive Islamic content – such as a short lecture on monotheism during a *slametan* (prayer) event – without losing their basic format²⁰. Second, this approach involves critical dialogue to transform the understanding of ambiguous practices (such as excessive reliance on *weton*) by linking them to universal Islamic values (*tawakal*, *ikhtiar*) and distinguishing between cultural aspects that can be Islamized and those that contradict the faith²¹. Through this mechanism, the cultural approach not only strengthens moral knowing (knowledge of Islamic values) contextually, but also awakens moral feeling (a sense of belonging and pride) and encourages moral action (concrete actions based on values) within a familiar cultural framework, so that strengthening of Islamic Character occurs through an effective enculturation process (melting new values into old culture).²²

Education Based on Moderate Islam

Moderate Islam (*al-wasathiyah*) is an Islamic paradigm that emphasizes the principles of balance (*tawazzun*), tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), and justice (*ʿadalah*) in practicing religious teachings, where its adherents reject

¹⁸ Andrew Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁹ Azyumardi Azra, "Islamisasi Jawa," *Studia Islamika* 20, no. 1 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v20i1.352>; M. C. Ricklefs, "Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries," *EastBridge, a Nonprofit Corporation* 1, no. (2006).

²⁰ Amin Haedari et al., *Masa Depan Pesantren: Dalam Tantangan Modernitas Dan Tantangan Kompleksitas Global* (Jakarta: IRD Press, 2004).

²¹ Abdul Munir Mulkhan, *Nalar Spiritual Pendidikan: Solusi Problem Filosofis Pendidikan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2002).

²² Lickona, *Mendidik Anak Untuk Membentuk Karakter*.

extremism in the form of both radicalism and liberalism by adhering to an inclusive middle path.²³ This idea emphasizes the contextualization of universal Islamic values (*maqashid sharia*), such as the protection of life, reason, and faith, through an adaptive approach to local culture, democracy, and human rights, without sacrificing the basic principles of *sharia*.²⁴ In practice, moderate Islam in Indonesia is manifested through respect for tradition (such as the practice of Javanese Islam), interfaith dialogue, and the rejection of violence in the name of religion, as reflected in the principle of *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* (blessing for the universe).²⁵ Its main characteristics are a holistic interpretation of texts, a prioritization of ethics over legal formalism, and a commitment to the public good (*maṣlahah 'āmmah*) as the basis of contemporary *ijtihad*.

PMII, as an organization that is ideologically affiliated with *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah* (*Aswaja*), makes the principle of *al-wasathiyyah* (moderation) the axis of its movement, referring to the concepts of *tawassuth* (middle way), *tawāzun* (balance), *tasāmuh* (tolerance), and *i'tidāl* (justice), which are the main pillars of Aswaja theology.²⁶ This principle is manifested in PMII's rejection of all forms of extremism – both rigid textual radicalism (*tasyaddud*) and liberalization that ignores the authenticity of *sharia* (*tasāhul*) – while adhering to the inclusive and contextual tradition of Islamic scholarship. As emphasized in the *Risalah Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah Nahdlatul Ulama* (2019), PMII practices the *ijtihad tawazuni* methodology that combines the authority of texts (*naql*) with common sense (*'aql*), respects the diversity of schools of thought (*ikhtilāf*), and upholds the public interest (*maṣlahah 'āmmah*) as the basis for decision-making. This approach enables PMII to respond to contemporary issues – such as democracy, human rights, and multiculturalism – without being uprooted from the roots of authentic Islamic tradition.

²³ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "The Indications of Wasatiyyah or Moderation in Islam," *ICR Journal* 7, no. 2 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.52282/icr.v7i2.267>.

²⁴ Zaprul Khan Zaprul Khan, "Maqāṣid Al-Shariah in the Contemporary Islamic Legal Discourse: Perspective of Jasser Auda," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 26, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.26.2.3231>.

²⁵ Rahman Fazlul, *Islam and Modernity. Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, *Archives de Sciences Sociales Des Religions*, vol. 58, 1984.

²⁶ Yusuf Al Qaradhwī, *Fiqh Al-Wasatiyyah Al-Islamiyyah Wa Al-Tajdid* (Cairo: Dar Syuruq, 2010).

In practice, PMII's moderate Islamic values derived from Aswaja are realized through three main frameworks: first, cadre education that emphasizes understanding of *fiqh al-wāqī'* (contextual fiqh) and *fiqh al-tanawwu'* (recognition of the diversity of religious practices), such as respect for local traditions (*'urf*) as long as they do not conflict with sharia principles²⁷; second, a social movement based on community empowerment that prioritizes social justice (*al-'adālah al-ijtimā'iyah*), interfaith dialogue, and non-violent conflict resolution, by the principle of *hubb al-waṭan* (love of the homeland) in *Aswaja*; third, cultural criticism of religious practices that deviate from moral substance, such as ritual formalism without social ethics or the doctrine of exclusivism. As exemplified in the Sahasra Magandi program in Wates Village, PMII uses the approach of *al-muhāfazhah 'alā al-qadīm al-sālih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadīd al-aslah* (maintaining good traditions and adopting more relevant innovations) to strengthen Islamic Character without deconstructing local culture. Thus, PMII's moderation is not a form of ideological compromise, but rather a social transformation strategy based on Aswaja wisdom that bridges Islamic universalism with Indonesia's socio-cultural realities.

Aswaja in PMII's perspective should not be trapped in mere symbolic identity, but should be grounded as a "transformative project" that realizes Kuntowijoyo's Prophetic Islamic trilogy: humanization (human dignity), liberation (liberation from oppressive structures), and transcendence (strengthening divine relations).²⁸ In line with the principle of *al-muwāzanah baina al-nash wa al-wāqī'* (text-context balance) in Aswaja NU, this idea demands the internalization of the values of *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawāzun* (balance), and *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance) into real actions: empowering marginalized communities such as farmers and laborers (liberation), fighting discrimination through inclusive education (humanization), and integrating spirituality in environmental and justice movements (transcendence). As reflected in the Sahasra Magandi program in Wates Village – where PMII dialogues Islamic-Javanese traditions with social issues – *Aswaja* is grounded through prophetic methodology: mentoring the creativity of teenagers and

²⁷ Said Aqil Siraj, *Khazanah Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah: Konsep Dan Implementasinya* (Jakarta: LTN PBN, 2011).

²⁸ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*, 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2007).

young people through organizations (liberation), strengthening humanitarian values through various practices (humanization), and transforming the *tahlilan* ritual into a space of social solidarity (transcendence), so that theology is not separated from the practice of empowerment.²⁹

PMII Rayon Suromenggolo is grounding moderate Islam at the elementary level through a collaborative learning facilitation program at the Elementary School and TPQ of Wates Village, which is designed as experiential learning based on the ASWAJA principle (*tawassuth, tasāmuh, tawāzun*). Grounding moderate Islam through elementary-secondary education in Wates Village is focused on two main strategies: (1) Learning fiqh thaharah based on the principles of *tawassuth-tawazun-tasamuh-i'tidal* for elementary school/TPQ children, using creative methods such as "Holy Water Games" (simulating the flexibility of ablution laws) and storytelling the story of the Prophet Moses (connecting rituals with ecological responsibility and tolerance), in order to teach fiqh as a contextual practice that avoids rigid formalism; (2) Collaboration with IPNU-IPPNU in sholawatan as a leadership incubator, where NU youth design inclusive events (guaranteed access for the disabled, rotating call to prayer between prayer rooms) while integrating prophetic values – such as linking the lyrics of the *sholawatan* with the empowerment of the dhuafa (liberation) and the "Sedekah Buku Bekas" project—in order to train leadership that combines ritual authenticity with social responsiveness.

Collaboration with Religious and Community Leaders

PMII's collaboration with traditional religious leaders (*kiai, ustaz*, and Islamic boarding school administrators) is a key pillar in establishing moderate Islam in Wates Village, given their religious authority as guardians of tradition recognized by the community.³⁰ The involvement of religious leaders in the Sahasra Magandi program provides theological legitimacy to the principle of moderation: when *kiai* explain during *tahlilan* recitations that the *slametan* ritual is a form of friendship and charity (not ancestor worship),

²⁹ Ahmad Najib Burhani, *Islam Nusantara as a Promising Response to Religious Intolerance and Radicalism, Trends in Southeast Asia Series.*, 2018.

³⁰ William and Geertz, "The Religion of Java"; Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*.

or interpret *weton* beliefs as a means of endeavor (not determinism), the community accepts them as legitimate Islamic authorities.³¹ Without this collaboration, PMII's efforts risk being viewed as a "new movement" that challenges tradition, as only religious figures are considered capable of transforming the meaning of rituals (e.g., shifting the focus of *tingkeban* from myth to maternal health, by Islamic law), while maintaining its cultural form. Furthermore, the involvement of *kiai* in *bahtsul masail* (contextual fiqh discussions) with PMII produced a consensus that local art, as long as it does not contain shirk, is part of *al-'urf al-sahih* (legitimate custom), thus strengthening the foundation of *Aswaja*-based moderation.

Meanwhile, synergy with community leaders (village heads, traditional elders) is an irreplaceable socio-cultural gateway, considering that they are the holders of social capital and control public space in Wates Village.³² The Wates Village Head welcomed the social programs implemented by PMII, providing a creative space for community activities. The legality of activities is ensured through permits granted by the village, while PMII fully controls the management of activities. In the planning and implementation of activities, village community leaders remain involved because they are the ones who truly understand the context of the village community. PMII, in this case, acts as a facilitator who bridges problems or assets with fresh ideas typical of students.

Collaboration with local religious figures serves as a shield of theological legitimacy that prevents ideological resistance, where their religious authority validates the reinterpretation of moderate Islam—for example, transforming the *slametan* ritual into a means of substantive charity (not just a tradition) or reducing *weton* beliefs from determinism to *ikhtiar*—so that PMII's efforts are not considered a threat to cultural identity³³, while partnerships with community leaders guarantee socio-cultural penetration through the institutionalization of programs in village policies and the transformation of local arts into a medium for internalizing values, so that

³¹ Burhani, *Islam Nusantara as a Promising Response to Religious Intolerance and Radicalism*; Okamoto Masaaki, "Anatomy of the Islam Nusantara Program and the Necessity for a 'Critical' Islam Nusantara Study," *ISLAM NUSANTARA: Journal for Study of Islamic History and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.47776/islamnusantara.v1i1.44>.

³² Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion*.

³³ Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*.

moderate Islam does not become an alienated imported discourse, but rather becomes integrated into the pulse of society through a convergence mechanism: religious leaders provide a sharia basis, community leaders open up practical space, and then the value of moderation crystallizes in rituals.³⁴

Contributing Programs in Strengthening Islamic Character

1. Mosques Reciting Prayers: Changing Behavior Rites Becoming an Agent of Change

As an *Aswaja (Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah)* student organization, PMII Rayon Suromenggolo places the practice of *sholawat* not merely as a ritual, but as an ideological manifestation of the principles of *tawassuth* (moderation) and *mahabbah* (love) for the Prophet Muhammad SAW, by the theological doctrine of NU, which considers *sholawat* as a path of spiritual transformation (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and a unifier of the people.³⁵ In the opening of *Sahasra Magandi*, thousands of candles were lit along with the chanting of *Sholawat Al-Barzanji* and *Simthud Durar*—led by local *kiai*—to emphasize two key messages: first, respect for the Nusantara Islamic tradition that combines Arabic texts with Javanese melodies (avoiding puritanism); second, an emphasis on *akhlakul karimah* (good Character) as the core of Islamic Character, where *sholawat* functions as a moral reminder of the Prophet's exemplary role in building an inclusive society. This ritual serves as a statement that PMII is not anti-traditional, but instead utilizes cultural heritage as a medium for education.³⁶

After the *sholawat*, the event continued with a contextual sermon from the village *kiai* who linked the values of the prayer to the social reality of Wates Village—for example, juxtaposing the story of the Prophet's concern for the poor with the *Sahasra Magandi* economic empowerment program—and a joint feast (*slametan*) involving religious leaders, farmers, and *reyog* artists. This collaboration was not merely ceremonial, but a strategy for instilling the value of moderation based on

³⁴ William and Geertz, "The Religion of Java."

³⁵ Siraj, *Khazanah Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah: Konsep Dan Implementasinya*.

³⁶ Haedari et al., *Masa Depan Pesantren: Dalam Tantangan Modernitas Dan Tantangan Kompleksitas Global*.

local wisdom: the feast was formatted as a space for intergenerational friendship as well as a practice of collective almsgiving³⁷, while the dishes (*tumpeng*, *ingkung*) symbolized an expression of gratitude and solidarity.³⁸ In *Aswaja's* perspective, this combination of *sholawat-tausiyah-kenduri* reflects the principles of *al-muhâfazhah 'alâ al-qadîm al-sâlih* (maintaining good traditions) and *al-akhḍu bi al-jadîd al-aslah* (adopting relevant innovations), so that the opening of the event becomes a gateway for public acceptance of the PMII agenda without resistance.

Sholawatan in the framework of Kuntowijoyo's Prophetic Islam functions as a medium of transcendence (*ta'ālî*) that actualizes the prophetic trilogy—humanization, liberation, and transcendence—through the transformation of collective consciousness from symbolic rites to social action, where chanting praises to the Prophet Muhammad SAW (such as *Sholawat Al-Barzanji* or *Simthud Durar*) is not merely an expression of devotion, but a spiritual catalyst that (1) Awakens trans-historical awareness of the Prophet's exemplary role in defending the oppressed (liberation); (2) Internalizes the values of *shiddiq* (integrity) and *amanah* (responsibility) as the foundation of ethical empowerment (humanization); and (3) Transmuting spiritual energy into transformative praxis, as reflected in the post-sholawat kenduri ritual in Wates Village—where rice and agricultural products from participants are distributed as business capital for the poor, reflecting the integration of transcendental worship with social justice.³⁹ In this context, *sholawatan* becomes a "metaphysical bridge" that converts *dhikr* (remembrance of the Divine) into *fikir* (critical analysis) and *amal* (real action), thus fulfilling the essence of prophetic transcendence: connecting the vertical dimension (*hablun min Allah*) with the horizontal (*hablun min al-nās*) while simultaneously moving society from the "mosque" (sacred space) to the "market" (social space). Transcendence here is not spiritual escapism, but rather an elevation of consciousness that transforms participants from ritual performers into agents of

³⁷ Burhani, *Islam Nusantara as a Promising Response to Religious Intolerance and Radicalism*.

³⁸ William and Geertz, "The Religion of Java."

³⁹ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*; Burhani, *Islam Nusantara as a Promising Response to Religious Intolerance and Radicalism*.

change, according to Kuntowijoyo's dialectic: "From monotheism to emancipatory praxis.

Meanwhile, *Tausiyah* in this context is understood to function as an instrument of liberation (liberation) that deconstructs extremist doctrines towards a moderate Islamic paradigm through the deconstruction-reconstruction of religious understanding, where PMII kiai or facilitators systematically (1) Unravel the roots of extreme ideologies—such as the doctrine of takfir (calling fellow Muslims infidels) or rigid puritanism that rejects local traditions—using the method of *muqāranah al-adillah* (comparative evidence) based on *maqāsid syarī'ah*⁴⁰, showing its contradiction with the principle of *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* (the world's mercy) (Q.S Al-Anbiyā: 107); (2) Reconstructing moderate understanding by presenting the authoritative interpretation of *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah* (*Aswaja*) which emphasizes *tawassuṭ* (middle way), such as emphasizing that the essence of jihad is defending the poor (not violence) or that the tradition of slametan is a manifestation of silaturahmi which is legitimate according to fiqh⁴¹; (3) Linking doctrine with transformative action—for example, explaining that fighting poverty (through the Sahasra Magandi program) is a form of contemporary jihad—so that liberation from extremism does not stop at discourse, but becomes the gateway to humanization (human dignity) and transcendence (action oriented towards public welfare) as in the prophetic trilogy.

Kenduri can then be interpreted as a humanization practice that dignifies humans through the deconstruction of social hierarchies and the strengthening of communal solidarity, where rituals involving religious figures, communities, and marginalized groups—as in the opening of Sahasra Magandi in Wates Village—transform symbolic traditions into egalitarian spaces. The value of charity is manifested through the redistribution of food (*tumpeng*, *ingkung*) as an instrument of economic justice, where food can be shared with anyone present. Inclusivity is achieved by inviting all levels of society, from children and

⁴⁰ Jaser Auda, "MAQASID AL-SHARIAH as Philosophy of Islamic Law A Systems Approach," *The International Institute of Islamic Thought London Washington*, 2008.

⁴¹ Siraj, *Khazanah Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah: Konsep Dan Implementasinya*.

teenagers to adults, regardless of social class, thereby breaking down class segregation through the act of sitting on the floor together as a symbol of equality (*musawah*). Then the collaboration of local religious figures and the community becomes a catalyst for change, where joint prayer is not only for transcendental salvation, but also a commitment to real action (transcendence), reflecting the integration of *hablun min Allah* (vertical relationship) and *hablun min al-nās* (horizontal relationship) in the prophetic trilogy.⁴²

2. Indonesian Islamic Schools: Moderate Islam-based Education

The grounding of moderate Islam at the elementary (SD/TPQ) and secondary (SMP) levels is a strategic investment to instill moral knowing (value knowledge), moral feeling (ethical sensitivity), and moral action (real action)⁴³, where PMII Rayon Suromenggolo in Wates Village designed an experiential learning program based on local wisdom. For example, learning activities focused on fiqh material. The learning of *thaharah* (purification) fiqh for elementary school/TPQ students in Wates Village is designed as an entry point to instill moderate Islamic values through internalizing the principles of *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawāzun* (balance), *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), and *i'tidāl* (justice), where PMII and TPQ teachers develop creative modules such as "Holy Water Games" – ablution simulations using illustrations of various water sources (wells, rivers, taps) to teach legal flexibility (*tawassuth*) according to environmental conditions, while emphasizing that the perfection of ablution is not merely technical, but sincerity of heart (*i'tidāl*) to avoid perfectionist attitudes that trigger exclusivism; The storytelling approach of the story of the Prophet Moses cleansing himself in the Nile River is also used to link *thaharah* with the value of tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*) – that water as a gift from God must be kept clean for the common good of all religions, while simultaneously training balance (*tawāzun*) between individual rituals (*hablum min Allah*) and ecological responsibility

⁴² Burhani, *Islam Nusantara as a Promising Response to Religious Intolerance and Radicalism*; Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*; William and Geertz, "The Religion of Java."

⁴³ Lickona, *Mendidik Anak Untuk Membentuk Karakter*.

(*hablum min al-'alam*), so that fiqh is not taught as a rigid rule, but rather a contextual and socially just religious practice.

The collaboration between PMII and IPNU-IPPNU cadres in organizing sholawatan (such as *Simthud Durar* and *Al-Barzanji*) is a leadership incubation strategy to instill leadership based on the principles of moderation (*tawassuth*, *tawāzun*, *tasāmuh*), where NU youth are not only passive participants, but also design the event design – starting from coordinating inclusive health protocols (guaranteeing access for the disabled), arranging rotating adhan schedules across prayer rooms (a symbol of intra-*ummah* tolerance), to managing the logistics of feasts with the principle of justice (*i'tidāl*) by prioritizing food distribution for stunted families – while simultaneously training public speaking skills as bilingual MCs (Javanese-Arabic) who link the lyrics of the sholawatan with Kuntowijoyo's prophetic values: for example, linking the praise "*Ya Nabi Salam 'Alaika*" with the story of the Prophet defending the rights of orphans (liberation) and inviting post-ritual reflection through the "*Sedekah Buku Bekas*" project for remote TPQ, so that *sholawatan* becomes a medium of transcendence that crystallizes the trilogy of humanization-liberation-transcendence at the same time proving that *Aswaja*'s young leadership was born from collective practices that combine ritual authenticity with social responsiveness.⁴⁴

The grounding of moderate Islam through elementary-secondary education in Wates Village is focused on two main strategies: (1) Learning *thaharah* fiqh based on the principles of *tawassuth-tawazun-tasamuh-i'tidal* for elementary school/TPQ children, using creative methods such as "Holy Water Games" (simulating the flexibility of ablution laws) and storytelling of the story of the Prophet Moses (connecting rituals with ecological responsibility and tolerance), in order to teach fiqh as a contextual practice that avoids rigid formalism; (2) Collaboration with IPNU-IPPNU in *sholawatan* as a leadership incubator, where NU youth design inclusive events (guaranteed access for the disabled, rotating adhan between prayer rooms) while integrating prophetic values – such as linking *sholawat* lyrics with the empowerment of the *dhuafa* (liberation) and the "*Sedekah Buku Bekas*" project – to train

⁴⁴ Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*.

leadership that combines ritual authenticity with social responsiveness. These two approaches emphasize that moderate Islam is grounded in educational transformation, moving from traditional fiqh learning (*i'tidāl*) to inclusive leadership regeneration.

3. PMII Cares and Shares: Realizing Universal *Maslahah*

The essence of Islam is to realize the welfare (*maṣlahah*)—namely universal goodness that guarantees the protection of the soul, mind, and social justice—where this welfare is only achieved through moral action (ethical action) as the peak of religious awareness, because mere moral knowing (value knowledge) and moral feeling (emotional sensitivity) without real implementation only gives birth to sterile religiosity.⁴⁵ In Kuntowijoyo's Prophetic Islam perspective, religion must humanize and liberate—raising human dignity from the shackles of poverty, ignorance, and dehumanization—so that moral action must be embodied in the form of active concern and sharing of resources as a concrete manifestation of *hablun min al-nās* (social-transformative relations), as reflected in PMII caring and sharing transforming sympathy (moral feeling) into structural solutions; Thus, religion is not a passive ritual, but rather an emancipatory project that demands real action to transcend individual piety towards collective justice, where sharing is not merely generosity, but a strategy to combat inequality as a pillar of universal welfare (*maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*).⁴⁶

PMII Rayon Suromenggolo distributed staple foods (rice, oil, eggs) sourced from strategic donors such as Baznas Ponorogo to vulnerable communities in Wates Village—especially the elderly, people with disabilities, and stunted families—as a concrete implementation of moral action within the framework of Prophetic Islam, where this food distribution not only fulfills the principle of *hifzh al-naḥs* (protection of the soul) in *maqāṣid sharia*⁴⁷ but is also designed as an active learning

⁴⁵ Lickona, *Mendidik Anak Untuk Membentuk Karakter*; Auda, “MAQASID AL-SHARIAH as Philosophy of Islamic Law A Systems Approach.”

⁴⁶ Kamali, “The Indicatio of Wasatiyyah or Moderation in Islam”; Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*; Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi Untuk Aksi* (Bandung: Mizan, 1991).

⁴⁷ Kamali, “The Indicatio of Wasatiyyah or Moderation in Islam.”

laboratory for cadres and the community. For cadres, the process of identifying recipients, verifying data, and distributing them becomes a means of experiential learning to internalize the values of social justice (*i'tidāl*) and empirical concern, such as the case of distributing rice specifically for malnourished children who need protein. At the same time, for the community, the momentum of receiving the package is used as a space for dialogue sessions about the essence of productive alms by local religious leaders, transforming charitable assistance into a stimulant for independence (liberation); Then, collaboration with Baznas confirms institutional synergy in building a sustainable sharing ecosystem, while also grounding the doctrine of "a hand above is better than a hand below".

The "PMII Cares and Shares" program by Rayon Suromenggolo is a concrete implementation of moral action within the framework of Prophetic Islam. The distribution of necessities to vulnerable communities (elderly, disabled, stunted families) in Wates Village not only fulfills the principle of *hifzh al-nafs* (protection of life) in the *maqasid sharia*, but also functions as an active learning laboratory for cadres (internalization of the values of justice and empirical concern) and the community and also as a manifestation of *hablun min al-nās*, which emphasizes religion as an emancipatory project through concrete actions against inequality. Collaboration with Baznas Ponorogo strengthens institutional synergy in building an ecosystem, while grounding the doctrine that sharing is a strategy to realize universal welfare (*maṣlahah*).

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the implementation of the Sahasra Magandi program (2019–2024), PMII Rayon Suromenggolo succeeded in strengthening the Islamic Character of the Wates Village community through three strategic pillars: (1) Cultural transformation by combining local traditions (*Sholawatan, kenduri, selametan*) and moderate Islamic values, changing rituals into empowerment actions (*kenduri, tingkeban* are converted into social capital). (2) Contextual education based on the principles of *Aswaja (tawasuth, tawāzun, tasāmuh, I'tidāl)* in TPQ/SD, produces a young generation who understands *fiqh* as social ethics, for example, the Holy Water Game" teaches the flexibility of ablution laws. (3) Ecosystem

collaboration with religious figures (theological legitimacy) and the community (program institutionalization) creates a synergy model that prevents cultural resistance. This program demonstrates that strengthening Islamic Character is not enough with normative doctrine. However, it requires the integration of a prophetic trilogy: liberation (freeing oneself from poverty through productive alms), humanization (dignifying individuals through inclusive dialogue), and transcendence (transforming rituals into social action). Recommendation: A similar model needs to be adopted structurally through village policies (APBDes) and replicated in other marginal villages.

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