

ISLAMIC VERSUS TRADITION: AN IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE IN THE USE OF GENDANG BUGIS AT YASRIB SOPPENG ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to uncover the ideological dynamics of *Gendang Bugis* in Islamic schools, by mapping how educational actors (teachers, students, principals) articulate this symbol in the tension between Islam and tradition. The methods used are qualitative approaches based on critical discourse analysis (CDA) and symbolic ethnography, with data collection techniques through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies in a number of Islamic traditions. The results of the study show that religious schools are not monolithic spaces, but rather a battleground of discourse between normative Islamic expressions and local Islam that lives in tradition. Student identity is also formed through a process of ambivalence between religious demands and cultural memory. The discussion placed *Gendang Bugis* as a locus of ideological articulation, where cultural symbols were contested, reinterpreted, and reproduced according to power relations and dominant discourse. Religious education becomes an arena of reproduction and symbolic resistance that forms the subject of religion in a particular social context. The importance of integrating cultural values in religious education without sacrificing the universal values of Islam, as well as the need for dialogue between education stakeholders to build a more inclusive, participatory, and locality-based model of religious learning.

Keywords: Islamic, Tradition, Gendang Bugis, Islamic Boarding School, Ideology.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap dinamika ideologis *Gendang Bugis* di sekolah-sekolah Islam, dengan memetakan bagaimana pelaku pendidikan (guru, siswa, kepala sekolah) mengartikulasikan simbol ini dalam ketegangan antara Islam dan tradisi. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif berbasis analisis wacana kritis (CDA) dan etnografi simbolik, dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumen di sejumlah aliran Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sekolah agama terbukti bukan ruang monolitik, melainkan medan pertempuran wacana antara ekspresi Islam normatif dan Islam lokal yang hidup dalam tradisi. Identitas mahasiswa juga terbentuk melalui proses ambivalensi antara tuntutan agama dan memori budaya. Diskusi tersebut menempatkan *Gendang Bugis* sebagai lokus artikulasi ideologis, di mana simbol-simbol budaya diperebutkan, ditafsirkan ulang, dan direproduksi

sesuai dengan relasi kekuasaan dan wacana dominan. Pendidikan agama menjadi arena reproduksi dan perlawanan simbolis yang membentuk subjek agama dalam konteks sosial tertentu. Pentingnya mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai budaya dalam pendidikan agama tanpa mengorbankan nilai-nilai universal Islam, serta perlunya dialog antar pemangku kepentingan pendidikan untuk membangun model pembelajaran agama yang lebih inklusif, partisipatif, dan berbasis lokalitas.

Kata Kunci: Islam, Tradisi, Gendang Bugis, Pondok Pesantren, Ideologi.

A. Introduction

Soppeng is one of the districts in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. In this area there are several religious schools, one of which is the Yasrib Islamic boarding school. This school accommodates starting from the Madrasah Tsanawiyah/Junior High School, Madrasah Aliyah/Senior High School. Yasrib Islamic Boarding School in particular and schools in general in the realm of religious education in Soppeng, there are complex ideological dynamics between normative Islamic values and local cultural heritage. Religious schools, both in the form of madrasas and Islamic boarding schools, have been positioned as the main agents in shaping students' religious identities (Héliot et al. 2020). However, religious education does not take place in a vacuum, it continues to intersect with the social and cultural realities that shape the lives of local communities

(Saada and Magadlah 2021). In the context of the Bugis community, traditional music such as *Gendang Bugis* is an important element in the construction of spiritual and customary values, which often cause friction when faced with formal Islamic religious norms.

Contemporary phenomena show that the use of *Gendang Bugis* in religious learning activities or religious activities in schools is often problematized. Some religious schools avoid or even prohibit the use of musical instruments because they are considered incompatible with Islamic values or are suspected of being heretical practices (Sauri, Gunara, and Cipta 2022; Hasib 2024; Safliana 2018). On the other hand, indigenous communities and local cultural actors view *Gendang Bugis* as a sacred instrument that is integrated with Bugis spiritual values, including local Islamic expressions that have

undergone an acculturation process since centuries ago. This situation creates tension between two forms of symbolic legitimacy, formal religious legitimacy and local cultural legitimacy.

Previous studies have discussed a lot about the process of Islamization in education (Yilmaz 2022; Toker 2021), and the preservation of local culture in the context of the Bugis community (Soefarto and Nerawati 2023; Amin et al. 2015). On the other hand, the study of *Gendang Bugis* is often only placed in the domain of traditional music or cultural anthropology without associating it with formal educational institutions. Meanwhile, approaches to religious education in schools more often focus on curriculum, pedagogy, and morality (Gearon et al. 2021; Flensner 2020b; 2020a), not in the battle of cultural-religious representations articulated through symbols such as traditional music (Botti and Bianchi 2023; Seiple and Hoover 2021). This creates a blank space in the literature regarding how the representation of local culture is negotiated in religious institutions.

There is a serious gap in interdisciplinary studies that connect traditional musical symbols such as

Gendang Bugis with the dynamics of religious representation in formal education spaces. There have not been many studies that critically analysis how local cultural symbols undergo re-articulation in Islamic educational institutions, either as a form of adjustment, negotiation, or resistance to the hegemonic of Islamization. In fact, this context is very important to understand how subjects are educated ideologically and culturally through symbolic interactions in schools.

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing need to formulate a form of religious education that is not only normative but also contextual, inclusive, and rooted in local values. In the context of a Bugis society rich in symbolic heritage, the failure to recognize and accommodate local cultural symbols in religious education can result in identity tensions, erosion of meaning, and the delegitimization of tradition-based spiritual experiences. Therefore, it is important to analysis the battle of representation that occurs between the processes of Islamization and habitation in religious education.

Globally, discussions about religious education have now shifted towards a multicultural,

transformative, and context-based approach (Papakostas 2025; Putrawan 2025). This discourse shifts the focus from mere doctrinal to the formation of plural and intersubjective identities. At the local level, the discourse on *Islam Nusantara* and *Islam local* shows that Islam is not a single entity, but comes in a form that is hybrid, contextual, and articulated with local cultural values (Mahfud et al. 2021; Schmidt 2021). This study tries to stand between these two terrains between the discourse of global education and the local cultural reality of Bugis.

The uniqueness of this research lies in the intersection of analysis between traditional music, educational ideology, and cultural representation theory. Different from the previous study, this study does not only treat *Gendang Bugis* as an aesthetic object or cultural heritage, but as an ideological symbol that is contested in religious educational institutions. This research also offers a framework of *dual* articulation, namely how *Gendang Bugis* becomes a negotiating field between Islamic values and customs in the production of meaning in the educational space.

This research is based on a combination of Louis Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation, Stuart Hall's on cultural representation and articulation, and Talal Asad on the Islamic tradition as a discursive practice. Through this approach, researchers highlight how schools not only transmit knowledge, but also become ideological arenas that produce subjects and meanings through cultural symbols such as traditional music. The *Gendang Bugis*, in this context, becomes a semiotic field that is not neutral.

This research contributes to the development of interdisciplinary studies that combine ethnomusicology, cultural studies, and religious education. Practically, the results of this study can be an important input for religious education curriculum designers, educators, and policymakers to consider culturally-based approaches in education. Academically, this article opens up space for a re-reading of the role of music in educational institutions as not just entertainment or art, but as a form of ideological narrative.

This article aims to analysis the battle of representation between Islamic and tradition in the use of

Gendang Bugis in Islamic Boarding School. In particular, this study reveals how the *symbol of Gendang Bugis* is represented by educational actors, how symbolic negotiations and conflicts occur in religious learning practices, and what are the ideological consequences of these dynamics on the formation of students' religious and cultural identities.

B. Methods

The method in this study is carried out as shown in the following Figure 1.

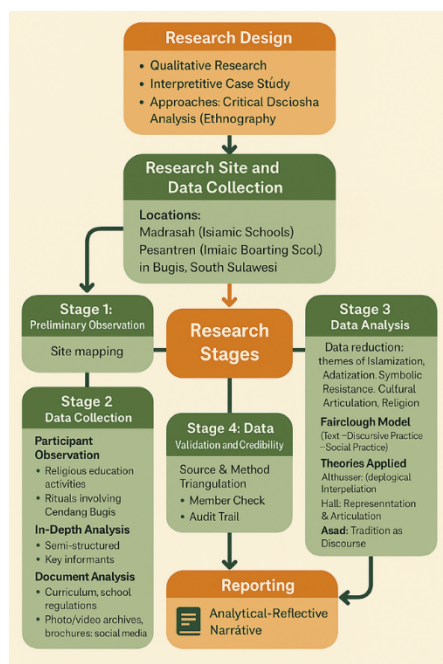


Figure 1. Methods

This study uses a qualitative design with an interpretive case study approach (McKerrell 2022; Eisner and Day, n.d.; Astor and Mayrl 2020). This

design was chosen to capture the dynamics of the symbolic meaning and representation of *Gendang Bugis* in the context of religious schools, which cannot be reduced to numerical data. Qualitative design leads researchers to delve deeply into the ideological, cultural, and religious dimensions that operate through musical practices and educational policies. The main focus is on the process of negotiating the meaning between the two ideological axes, namely Islamic and *tradition*. The approach used is critical discourse analysis (Critical Discourse Analysis/CDA) combined with symbolic ethnography (Dang 2025; Rosaliza, Asriwandari, and Indrawati 2023). CDA is used to dismantle power relations and ideologies that are articulated through educational and cultural discourses in religious schools. While symbolic ethnography helps interpret local symbols, rites, and musical practices as part of the Bugis community's meaning system. This approach allows for the simultaneous articulation between practice, text, and social context.

The research was conducted in several religious schools (madrasah and Islamic boarding school) in the

Bugis region, Soppeng, South Sulawesi, which are known to have involvement with local cultural practices. The research subjects include religious education teachers, traditional leaders and local artists, as well as students who are directly or indirectly involved in the use of *Gendang Bugis*. The location determination is carried out purposively, based on the intensity of interaction between cultural symbols and religious activities. The research stages start from (1) initial observation and location mapping; (2) field data collection through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies; (3) transcription and interpretation of symbolic discourse in the context of religious learning; and (4) thematic and articulative analysis of representational practices and symbolic conflicts. The research was conducted over 6 months to ensure sufficient engagement in the local social and cultural context.

The researcher conducted participatory observations in religious learning activities and school rituals involving *Gendang Bugis*. This technique is used to capture the practice of representation directly,

including gestures, body language, and symbolic responses from students and teachers. Observations were carried out openly, with official permission from the school, and accompanied by structured field notes. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, religious teachers, school principals, *Gendang Bugis* artists, traditional leaders, and students. The interviews are semi-structured, with open-ended question guides that allow for the exploration of the meanings and values associated with the use of *Gendang Bugis*. Each interview is recorded and transcribed for discursive analysis. Document studies were used to examine the religious education curriculum, school regulations, photo/video archives of the use of *Gendang Bugis*, as well as public narratives (brochures, school social media, cultural documentation). These documents are analysis to understand how symbolic representations are formalized and disseminated institutionally.

The validity of the data was tested by the source and method triangulation method, member check, and trail audit. Triangulation is carried out by comparing data from

observations, interviews, and documents. Member checks are carried out by asking the informant for clarification on the researcher's interpretation. Trail audits are used to document the thought process and analysis steps in a transparent and accountable manner. Data analysis was carried out through the following stages, (1) data reduction into key themes (Islamic and *tradition*, symbolic resistance, cultural articulation, religion); (2) discourse reading using the Fairclough model (text, discourse practice, and social practice); and (3) interpretation through the theoretical frameworks of Althusser (ideological interpellation), Hall (representation and articulation), and Asad (tradition as discourse). The results are framed in the form of analytical and reflective narratives.

This research upholds qualitative research ethics, including informed consent from all participants, ensuring identity confidentiality, and sensitivity to religious and customary issues. All personal data is encrypted and used for academic purposes only. The researcher also conducts critical reflection on his own position as an interpreter in complex symbolic and ideological contexts.

C. Result

***Gendang Bugis* as a Culture or a Threat to Fait**

The results of observation and document analysis show that most religious schools in the study area do not explicitly include *Gendang Bugis* as part of the official curriculum or activities of religious education. Based on the guidelines for extracurricular activities and religious guidance, no reference was found to the use of traditional music. However, through interviews with religious teachers, an ambivalent attitude emerged. Some state that *Gendang Bugis* is not suitable for spiritual activities, while others see it as part of the local culture that can still be interpreted religiously if used in the right context. There are two competing poles of dominant representation, namely the Islamization pole that sees *Gendang Bugis* as a traditional heritage that is not in accordance with the sharia, and the tradition pole that places it as a symbol of local spirituality that has undergone an Islamization process for a long time. The results of interviews with religious leaders that *Gendang Bugis* are considered a worldly art tool that can deflect the solemnity of

worship. Instead, local artists and traditional leaders emphasize that *Gendang Bugis* has long been used in religious activities such as the Maulid Muhammad SAW and *Tolak Bala* (prayer for protection), making it an integral part of local Islamic practices.

Some schools respond to this battle of representation with mediation strategies. They still use *Gendang Bugis* in commemoration of Islamic holidays or the opening of flash Islamic boarding schools, but with symbolic disguises. Musical instruments are not referred to as *Gendang Bugis*, but traditional rhythmic instruments. The function of *Gendang Bugis* was also changed, from an accompaniment to a traditional rite accompaniment to the chanting of prayers or religious poetry. This suggests a process of rearticulation, in which cultural symbols are re-represented in a religious frame that is considered legitimate.

Religious teachers and school administrators turn out to play an important role as representative actors. Some young teachers are more open and support the integration of local cultures as part of contextual learning methods. They consider that

Gendang Bugis can be a means of spiritual education based on local aesthetics, as long as the context of its use is controlled. However, there is also a group of senior teachers who hold normative religious interpretations and reject all forms of traditional art that are not based on Islamic texts.

Interviews with students reveal complex identity dynamics. Students who come from traditional families tend to have an emotional and spiritual attachment to *Gendang Bugis*. They call this musical instrument a village sound that is reminiscent of family traditions and joint prayers at home. However, they also admitted that they were afraid of being considered un-Islamic by teachers or schoolmates if they showed appreciation for traditional music. This shows how the battle of representation also touches on the formation of identity and social relations among students.

Islam Local and Curriculum

Informal activities such as art performances or commemorations of big days, *Gendang Bugis* is used as a means of performative value education. Observations show that the rhythm and form of *Gendang Bugis*

presentation are correlated with the values of politeness, discipline, and togetherness. The principal of one of the institutions stated that the *Gendang Bugis* was used not for entertainment, but to touch the soul of the child so that he remembered cultural and religious values. This shows that cultural practices are not always in opposition to religious education, but can be complementary. This can be seen as shown in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Traditional Music Practice in Schools
(Source: Rachmat 2025)

Although Islamic is the dominant discourse in school discourse, there are indications that the discourse of acculturation is still alive in the community, especially through artists, community leaders, and students' families. They build alternative narratives through out-of-school art performances, student parent forums, and local social media. This narrative

asserts that Islam is not synonymous with Arabization, and that religious expression can be present in a local form that is spiritually and historically meaningful. This means that the battle for representation is not only at the formal level of the school, but also takes place socially and symbolically outside the walls of the institution.

Religious school curricula do not explicitly endorse or prohibit the use of local cultural symbols. However, this space actually gives rise to a conflict of interpretation at the executive level. Some school principals choose to play it safe by not involving cultural elements in religious activities. While other schools are actively adapting and incorporating local symbols in the learning process. The absence of firm policies from the relevant ministries has also strengthened this ambivalence, while opening up space for ideological articulation that fights with each other.

From the findings of the field, a new form of cultural representation emerged that can be referred to as local Islam or aesthetic-communal Islam. This is reflected in the use of *Gendang Bugis* with Islamic lyrics, in the structure of activities that follow religious rhythms (Celebration of the

Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW), but still maintain the local artistic form. This pattern cannot be categorized simply as Islamic or *tradition*, but as a form of dual articulation, in which religious and cultural values merge and negotiate each other's space of meaning. The following is an overview of the activity in figure 2.



Figure 2. Bugis drums in the Celebration of the Birthday of Muhammad PBUH (Source: Rachmat. 2024)

Religious schools as educational institutions can no longer be understood monolithically as the sole purveyor of normative Islam. On the contrary, it becomes a battleground for discourse where local symbols such as *Gendang Bugis* become an arena for articulation, negotiation, and even resistance to the formalization of religious values. This research indicates the importance of formulating religious

education policies that are more contextual, multicultural, and locally-sensitive. Cultural symbols are not just aesthetic heritage, but important instruments in the formation of religious awareness and students' communal identity.

Discussion

Religious Schools as a Battle of Representation

The findings of this study confirm that religious schools are not a neutral space in the educational process, but rather an ideological battle arena between the power of Islamic and tradition representation. As Althusser put it, (Hartley 2022; Schröder and Leibenath 2025; Pais and Costa 2020; Kong 2017; Sianipar 2021), schools as *the Ideological State Apparatus* indirectly reproduce the dominant ideology that, in this context, reinforces the normative form of Islam. *Gendang Bugis*, as a symbol of local culture, becomes a contested object in the production of meaning, whether it will be absorbed, rejected, or reformulated within the institutionalized Islamic framework.

Through a symbolic ethnographic approach, *Gendang Bugis* can be read not only as a

musical instrument, but as a medium of spiritual communication, a transcendent space former, and a guardian of collective memory (Allo et al. 2024). Talal Asad in (Milerski and Zieliński 2023) states that Islam is not a single tradition, but rather a discursive practice that is bound by historical and cultural contexts. Therefore, the meaning of *Gendang Bugis* in the framework of local Bugis spirituality is a manifestation of a localized form of Islam, not deviant, but historical and legitimate as an embodied religious practice.

Gendang Bugis, when played in the classroom, is not only a form of entertainment or art, but serves as an *affective pedagogy* teaching the values of order, social cohesion, sacredness, and spiritual expression through a performative medium. Richard Schechner places performance as a social practice that constructs values and ideologies (Deriu 2020). In this context, *Gendang Bugis* offers an educational model based on affection, togetherness, and embodied knowledge, as an alternative to religious education that is too textual and abstract.

This research also highlights the gap in cultural policy in religious

education. The absence of clear directions regarding the integration of cultural symbols has led to symbolic tensions at the executive level. On the one hand, teachers are required to form religiously devout students, on the other hand they live in cultural communities that have strong local spiritual values. This tension results in fragmentation of meaning, conflicts between actors, and dilemmas in determining which is Islamic and which is cultural.

This study concludes that religious schools in Bugis society operate as contested ideological spaces where islamic and tradition discourses continuously negotiate power and meaning. Framed within Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus, schools reproduce dominant religious ideologies while simultaneously accommodating localized cultural expressions such as *Gendang Bugis*, which functions not only as a musical tradition but as an embodied form of spiritual pedagogy. Following Asad's perspective of Islam as historically contingent, the integration of *Gendang Bugis* into religious education reflects a legitimate localized Islamic practice that bridges doctrinal faith with Bugis

cultural identity. Moreover, in alignment with Schechner's performance theory, *Gendang Bugis* serves as affective pedagogy fostering moral formation, social cohesion, and spiritual sensitivity beyond textual learning. Yet, the absence of clear cultural policy exacerbates tensions among educators, creating dilemmas in balancing religious orthodoxy with cultural legitimacy. Ultimately, religious schools emerge as dynamic arenas of ideological articulation where local practices resist, adapt, and renegotiate hegemonic religious narratives while preserving cultural continuity.

Dual Articulation: Between Islamic and Tradition

Referring to the concept of *articulation* from Stuart Hall, the results of this study show that *Gendang Bugis* is not only constructed in the opposition relationship between Islam and customs, but also undergoes a double articulation process. Some schools rearticulate this symbol by giving it a new meaning, Islamizing the aesthetic and rhythmic function of the drum through changing its context, content, and even naming. This proves that culture is not completely defeated by

religious ideology, on the contrary, (Canavan and McCamley 2021) argues that both are involved in symbolic negotiations and the formation of more contextual forms of religious expression.

Islamic in the context of schools is not only doctrinal, but also symbolic (Yaşar 2020). The rejection of *Gendang Bugis* in some educational institutions is not based on epistemological analysis, but rather on forms of symbolic normalization in which the sound of the *Gendang Bugis* is considered alien to the sanctity of the religious educational space. This normalization is in line with what Foucault calls the practice of bodily discipline (Westerink 2020), that is, the control of aesthetic expression that is not in accordance with institutional formalism (Mills, Denison, and Gearity 2020).

On the contrary, tradition emerged as a form of symbolic resistance from the local community to the dominance of a single religious interpretation (Utomo 2018; Khurosan and Yuliatin 2020). In this context, *Gendang Bugis* is not only used, but *cared for* through non-formal teaching, community-based commemoration of holidays, and

music training by local artists. This strategy forms a *cultural counter-public* (Jackson and Kreiss 2023; Mahadeo 2024), that is, an alternative public space outside official institutions, which allows hybrid cultural expressions and religiosity to continue to survive in the midst of the homogenization of religious values by the state and educational institutions (Abduh, Jayadi, and Dunakhir 2021; Jayadi, Abduh, and Basri 2022).

The subjects (teachers and students) in this study experienced identity ambivalence. On the one hand, they are associated with the demands of formal religiosity, on the other hand, they remain emotionally and historically connected to local cultural symbols (Abduh et al. 2022). This process shows that religious identity is not singular (Haddad 2020), but it is formed through the tug-of-war between institutional interpellation and everyday life experiences (Hefner 2021). These results enrich discussions about religious education that not only educate the intellect and heart, but also the body and symbolic space inherent in tradition.

These results make an important contribution to the formulation of a locality-based religious education

model. Education cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context in which it is located. In a society like the Bugis, silencing local symbols like *Gendang Bugis* means removing an important part of the collective spirituality. Religious education should not be an engine of identity uniformity, but an articulate space that embraces a plurality of historically and culturally valid forms of religious expression.

Thus, this study emphasizes the need to reorient the paradigm of religious education from a homogenization approach to an articulate and contextual approach. Islamization should not be interpreted as a cleansing of local elements, but rather a reinterpretation of Islamic values in a living cultural framework. The Bugis drum is proof that spirituality can be present in sound, vibration, and rhythm as a formula that creates an alternative path to purity and value education through culture.

E. Conclusion

This study reveals that the use of *Gendang Bugis* in religious schools is not just an aesthetic phenomenon, but contains a complex ideological dimension and is loaded with a battle

of meanings between two main poles, namely Islamic and tradition. On the one hand, religious education institutions tend to carry normative forms of Islam that standardize religious symbols in the framework of Arabization and purification of values. On the other hand, the Bugis people through symbols such as *Gendang Bugis* offer a narrative of local spirituality that has undergone a process of historical Islamization, but remains firmly rooted in traditional cosmology. It is this tension that forms a dynamic field of representation, full of negotiation, resistance, and rearticulation.

Conceptually, this research offers a new framework for understanding religious education as a field of cultural articulation and power. Symbols such as *Gendang Bugis* should be seen not only as decorative or folkloric elements, but as a vehicle for the formation of meaning involving interpretation, collective memory, and power relations. Thus, religious education needs to be developed in a more dialogical direction, which allows for an encounter between Islamic values and local cultural values in an equal and mutually enriching manner.

The practical implication of this study is the importance of reformulating religious education policies that are more open to local cultural expressions. The religious curriculum must accommodate forms of cultural representation that do not substantially contradict Islamic values, but instead strengthen the spiritual depth of the learners. Neglect of local symbols such as *Gendang Bugis* has the potential to erode the affective and historical dimensions of religious education, as well as distance students from their cultural roots and collective identity.

In the academic context, this research contributes to the development of interdisciplinary studies between ethnomusicology, cultural studies, and religious education, emphasizing the importance of reading traditional musical symbols as an ideological locus in the educational process. Thus, the conclusion of this study is that *Gendang Bugis* in religious schools is the meeting point of the symbolic conflict between Islamic and tradition, which basically represents a battle over the authority of knowledge, interpretation, and spiritual legitimacy. However, it is precisely in this tension

that space opens up for the birth of a more fluid, plural, and contextual expression of Islam that makes religious education not a space for purification, but an arena for learning living and dialogical meaning.

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