



Challenging Colonialism through Tarekat Syattariyah and Pesantren: The Conceptual Thought of Kiai Hasan Maolani, 1836–1842

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the educational contributions and intellectual legacy of Kiai Hasan Maolani, a prominent Islamic scholar who lived during the Dutch colonial era in Kuningan Regency, West Java. The research centers on his biography and his significant role as both a religious and educational figure, whose influence extended beyond regional boundaries, attracting students from Central and East Java. Employing a historical method that integrates heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography, this study utilizes both primary and secondary sources to reconstruct his educational activities. The findings reveal that Kiai Hasan Maolani founded Pesantren Lengkong, which emerged as a vital institution for Islamic religious education and intellectual development. Through this pesantren, he implemented a holistic educational philosophy encompassing key concepts such as the pursuit of knowledge (*thalabul 'ilm*), worship (*ibadah*), Islamic monotheism (*tawhid*), social cohesion through visits and religious networking (*silaturahmi* and *ziyarah*), charitable practices (*amal*), and spiritual struggle (*jihad*). The research concludes that Kiai Hasan Maolani's educational model not only shaped the intellectual character of his time but also laid the foundation for a resilient pesantren-based learning tradition in West Java.

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INTRODUCTION

The Dutch colonial administration in the Indonesian archipelago harbored deep animosity toward the religious elite, including prominent Islamic scholars such as Kiai Hasan Maolani (Bruinessen, 2020; Fatianda & Badrun, 2022; Jaelani, 2019). Although he was not directly involved in armed resistance against colonialism, Kiai Hasan Maolani was nevertheless perceived as a threat and was exiled to Manado under accusations of rebellion. Within the practice of Sufism, he was known as a devout follower of the Syattariyah order (Fathurrohman, 2019; Sakdiah, 2021; Shihab, 2009). His intellectual lineage is believed to be connected to several key figures in the Syattariyah tradition—ranging from Syekh Abdul Muhyi Pamijahan and Abdurrauf as-Sinkili to the figure of Ali ibn Abi Talib—based on evidence found in various manuscripts (Azra, 2002; Sari et al., 2024). This spiritual genealogy extends to Kiai Ikriman from the village of Wirarangan in Kuningan.

According to Rosidin's research, Kiai Hasan Maolani utilized the Syattariyah order not merely as a spiritual path but as an ideological framework of resistance against Dutch colonial rule. However, Rosidin's study primarily concentrated on the religious aspects of Kiai Hasan's affiliation with the Syattariyah and did not sufficiently explore his contributions to the field of education (Rosidin, 2019).

Another study by Nida Fadlan, conducted in 2015, examined a series of letters written by Kiai Hasan Maolani's students during his exile in Kampung Jawa Tondano, Manado, North Sulawesi. These letters were addressed to family members residing in Lengkong Village, Kuningan. Using textual criticism as a method within philological analysis, Nida produced a critical edition, translated the texts into Indonesian, and analyzed their contents. This research provided valuable insight into the journey and exile of Kiai Hasan Maolani as imposed by the colonial regime. However, it did not delve into the pedagogical dimensions of his teachings (Fadlan, 2020).

Meanwhile, Nina Lubis observed that *Fath al-Qarib* served as a significant source of inspiration for Kiai Hasan Maolani in understanding the meaning of jihad. In his interpretation, jihad was conceptualized as a form of resistance

against colonial oppression. The text *Fath al-Qarib* states that when non-Muslims enter or approach Muslim territories, jihad becomes a religious obligation. One manifestation of this responsibility is to prevent their incursion by any means available to Muslims. This study highlights the way in which Kiai Hasan Maolani conveyed the concept of jihad to his students (Lubis, [2007](#)). However, Lubis's research primarily focused on his religious role and did not offer an in-depth examination of his educational activities.

Another local scholar from Kuningan, Kiai Ma'ruf, also documented the biography and letters of Kiai Hasan Maolani written during his exile. Through a compilation of these letters, Kiai Ma'ruf emphasized several critical moral messages. Nevertheless, his work provided limited exploration of Kiai Hasan Maolani's life in Lengkong prior to his exile—particularly concerning his educational initiatives and teachings (Fadlan, [2015](#)).

A more controversial view was presented by Drewes, who classified Kiai Hasan Maolani as one of three prominent Javanese figures during the colonial era, alongside Mas Malangyuda and Nurhakim. Drewes described Kiai Hasan Maolani as a leader of the Akmaliah order and went as far as to label him a practitioner of “devilish rites,” accusing him of propagating doctrines considered deviant from Islamic orthodoxy. This perspective reinforced the colonial government's narrative aimed at discrediting resistance figures. However, the present study shifts the focus away from such polemics and instead concentrates on the educational ideas and legacies advanced by Kiai Hasan Maolani (Drewes, [1925](#)).

This study aims to illuminate the strategic contribution of Kiai Hasan Maolani to the development of Islamic education through the establishment of Pesantren Lengkong in Kuningan Regency, West Java—an aspect that has received relatively little scholarly attention. Previous studies have tended to emphasize his involvement in Sufism, particularly in the Syattariyah order, and his symbolic role in nonviolent resistance to colonialism. Yet, the pesantren he founded emerged as a significant center for the transmission of Islamic knowledge and produced numerous students from across Java.

Employing historical research methods—including heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography—this study specifically investigates Kiai Hasan Maolani's educational teachings. These encompass foundational concepts such as the pursuit of knowledge (*thalab al-'ilm*), religious devotion (*ibadah*), monotheism (*tauhid*), maintaining social bonds and visiting graves (*silaturahmi* and *ziyarah*), charitable acts (*amal*), and jihad. The findings of this research are expected to enrich the discourse on the history of local Islamic education and demonstrate that pesantren leaders like Kiai Hasan Maolani played a pivotal role in shaping Islamic intellectual identity during the colonial period.

METHOD

This study adopts a historical research method (Kuntowijoyo, [2013](#)). The heuristic stage, or the process of source collection, was carried out through a combination of literature review and interviews. This dual approach was selected due to the research's emphasis on collective memory—specifically, the recollections of a local community regarding a significant historical figure. Both methods served as primary sources for this study. The primary sources include religious texts authored by Kiai Hasan Maolani, such as *Fath al-Qarib*, as well as letters written during his exile in Manado. Secondary sources consist of scholarly books and studies related to the research topic.

During the heuristic phase, the researcher gathered relevant data on Kiai Hasan Maolani, including written records from his time in exile, religious treatises he authored, and academic literature addressing similar themes. Additionally, the researcher participated in the *haul*—a commemorative religious gathering—dedicated to Kiai Hasan Maolani, which was organized by his descendants. Interviews were also conducted with surviving family members who currently lead Pesantren Lengkong (Gottschalk, [2015](#)).

The second phase, source criticism, involved the verification and validation of the collected materials. At this stage, the researcher cross-examined contemporaneous sources with the results of oral interviews to assess their credibility. This cross-referencing process was essential for evaluating the reliability of secondary sources. Several books and studies were found to be unrelated to the main subject of inquiry—for instance, works that bore no direct connection to the educational contributions of Kiai Hasan Maolani—and were thus excluded from the analysis.

The third phase was interpretation, which entailed the critical analysis and contextual reading of the sources (Sulasma, [2014](#)). This involved comparing written documentation with oral testimonies from descendants of Kiai Hasan Maolani. In doing so, the researcher went beyond mere textual interpretation and engaged in a more nuanced, contextual critique of the sources. The insights gained from books were validated through interviews, allowing the researcher to construct a comprehensive understanding of past events—particularly in relation to Kiai Hasan Maolani's role in Islamic education. The final stage was historiography, the process of synthesizing and presenting the findings in written form. In this phase, all the collected and analyzed data were systematically organized into an academic narrative to support the central arguments of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Kiai Hasan Maolani

There are differing opinions regarding the birthdate of Kiai Hasan Maolani, although it is widely acknowledged that he was born in Kuningan. One of the letters sent from Manado states that he was born at 5:00 a.m. on Monday, May 21, 1782 CE, corresponding to the 8th of Jumadil Akhir, 1196 AH. However, according to Nina Lubis, he was born in 1779 CE or 1199 AH (Lubis, [2007](#)), while Mastuki and El-Saha suggest that his birth year was 1781 CE (Hambali, [2019](#)).

The genealogical lineage of Kiai Hasan Maolani traces back to Syarif Hidayatullah, also known as Sunan Gunung Jati. A key source from his paternal line is a manuscript written by Hasan Mugni, which records Kiai Hasan Maolani as the twelfth-generation descendant of Sunan Gunung Jati through the line of Pangeran Pasarean. He was born to Lukman and Nyai Lukman, both natives of Lengkong Village. On his maternal side, Kiai Hasan Maolani also descended from nobility, with a lineage traced back to the legendary Prabu Siliwangi (Ma'ruf, [1990](#)).

Kiai Hasan Maolani married Nyai Murtasimah, who was also from Lengkong. Their union was blessed with eleven children: Hasan Imrani, Mu'minah, Maimunah (Ruqoyah), Imamudin (Hasan Thuba), Azamuddin, Muhammad Hakim, Nasibah, Marhamah, Muhimah, Absori (Nur Hamid), and Ahyar. Of these, only six had descendants—namely Imrani, Mu'minah, Maimunah (Ruqoyah), Imamudin, Absori (Nur Hamid), and Ahyar. Most of their descendants continue to reside in and are buried in Lengkong Village, except for Imrani, who was buried in Cikaso Village, Kramatmulya Subdistrict, Kuningan; Mu'minah in Karangmangu Village, Kramatmulya Subdistrict, Kuningan; and Imamudin in Tanjungsari, Purwawinangun Village, Kuningan Subdistrict (Ma'ruf, [1990](#)).

Throughout his life, Kiai Hasan Maolani was revered as a distinguished Islamic preacher in the Kuningan region. From birth, he was perceived to have a profound spiritual connection to Islam. Panembahan Dako, a religious leader in Lengkong, welcomed his birth by proclaiming that the newborn bore the "signs of prophethood." Research by Tisnawerdaya portrays him from an early age as compassionate toward all of God's creatures, both human and animal. He often retreated to sacred sites such as Goa Bojong Lengkong and Mount Ciremai for spiritual seclusion and was known to fast regularly (Tisnawerdaya, [1975](#)).

Kiai Hasan Maolani was a patient and wise teacher who treated all his students equally, regardless of their intellectual abilities. Beyond his religious duties, he was deeply engaged in community empowerment efforts, particularly in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, and animal husbandry. He even donated large plots of land stretching from Sembungrugul Hamlet to Pacanan across the Cisanggarung River for the benefit of the community and the spread of Islamic teachings. Portions of this land were also endowed to a Chinese Muslim convert and to residents of Karangtawang Village for use as a burial ground (Bahri, [2020](#)).

His daily spiritual practices included completing the recitation of the Qur'an every Friday, reading *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt* daily, and reciting *Ratib al-Haddad*, *Haikal*, and *Wird al-Ayyām*. His exemplary moral character and devotion earned him deep affection from the community. His religious movement, particularly his teachings and practices of the Syattariyah order, gained widespread support. Martin van Bruinessen has noted that such Sufi movements played a significant role in mobilizing anti-colonial sentiment and resistance in various regions of Indonesia, including Java (Bruinessen, [2020](#)).

In addition to physical religious sites, Kiai Hasan Maolani left behind intellectual legacies, most notably the manuscript *Fath al-Qarib*, believed to have been written in *Pegon* script using both Javanese and Sundanese languages.

He also left a collection of letters addressed to his family during his exile in Kampung Jawa, Tondano, North Sulawesi (Bahri, [2023](#)).

Nina Lubis's research indicates that Kiai Hasan Maolani encouraged his students from various regions to resist Dutch colonial rule. As evidence of his spiritual legacy, KH Endun presented *hijib* (amulets containing Arabic script on special paper) believed to have been used for protection. Certain domesticated animals kept by his followers were also believed to enhance their spirit of resistance against colonial forces (Lubis, [2007](#)).

As with his birthdate, there are also differing views regarding the date of his death. Three main versions exist: first, that he passed away on April 29, 1874, as suggested by Drewes, Mastuki El-Saha, and Nina Lubis; second, that he died on April 30, 1874, based on letters from exile and the testimony of Abu Abdullah Hadziq; and third, that he died in 1883, corresponding to 1300 AH, as inscribed on his gravestone.

The Conceptual Thought of Kiai Hasan Maolani

The Educational Role of Kiai Hasan Maolani

The educational movement conceptualized by Kiai Hasan Maolani can be traced through his teachings and the advice embedded in the letters he wrote to his family during his exile. These letters encompass core principles such as the pursuit of knowledge, devotion in worship, and scholarly references. They reveal his profound dissatisfaction at being unable to provide direct religious education to his descendants and followers. His religious reflections, expressed through these teachings, affirm that Kiai Hasan Maolani was a highly influential Islamic scholar whose presence was deeply felt in society, while simultaneously refuting Dutch colonial accusations that he propagated heretical teachings. The educational concepts articulated in his letters include the following:

The Concept of Seeking Knowledge

Kiai Hasan Maolani possessed a strong desire to directly educate his family and descendants in Islamic knowledge. However, given the limitations imposed by his exile, he conveyed his counsel through written correspondence. He deeply wished for his kin to attain a comprehensive understanding of Islam. In his view, knowledge is a divine light bestowed by God to guide His servants away from error. Neglecting the honor due to knowledge, he asserted, is a form of disbelief that can lead to disaster in both worldly and spiritual matters (Junaidi, [2018](#)).

He stressed the importance of studying various branches of Islamic knowledge, including the Qur'an, tafsir (*exegesis*), Arabic grammar, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Sufi orders (*ṭarīqah*), and Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*). However, he also insisted that such learning must be accompanied by righteous behavior in everyday life. He warned against arrogance in scholarship, advocating instead for humility.

To him, the pursuit of knowledge is deeply tied to a Muslim's effort to better understand their Creator. For this reason, he sought to model exemplary conduct for his descendants, offering religious advice despite the distance and circumstances that separated them. His humility is apparent in his repeated reminder that any assertion of knowledge should always be supported by relevant evidence (Fadlan, [2015](#)).

The Concept of Worship ('*ibadah*)

Islamic jurists agree that acts of worship fall into two categories: '*ibādah maḥḍah* (pure or ritual worship) and '*ibādah ghayru maḥḍah* (non-ritual worship). Kiai Hasan Maolani emphasized the necessity of performing both forms of worship consistently for the sake of Allah. '*ibādah maḥḍah* refers to ritual practices directly prescribed by God and taught by the Prophet, reflecting the vertical relationship between humanity and the Divine—such as the declaration of faith (*shahāda*), prayer (*ṣalāt*), fasting (*ṣawm*), and recitation of the Qur'an. In contrast, '*ibādah ghayru maḥḍah* includes social acts like charity (*ṣadaqah*), kinship ties (*ṣilāt al-raḥim*), and marriage, all of which strengthen interpersonal bonds while drawing one closer to God (Rahmawati et al., [2025](#)).

In his letters, Kiai Hasan Maolani urged a balance between these two categories. Beyond ritual worship, he encouraged his descendants to cultivate empathy and social responsibility. His moral teachings emphasized the necessity of both obligatory and supererogatory (*sunnah*) acts of devotion, such as monotheism (*tawḥīd*), prayer,

voluntary fasting, Qur'anic recitation, social bonding, visiting graves, and almsgiving—all integrated into daily life, both prior to and during his exile.

The Concept of *Tawḥīd* (Divine Unity)

Tawḥīd, or the oneness of God, forms the core principle of Islam. The dual declaration of faith (*shahāda*) marks one's entry into Islam and affirms God's absolute sovereignty over all creation (Imron, [2021](#)). In his letters, Kiai Hasan Maolani referred to this doctrine as the "*Kalimat al-Islam*" (Islamic Declaration). He underscored that the essence of the *shahāda* lies in the phrase *lā ilāha illā Allāh*—"There is no god but Allah." This declaration entails the servant's exclusive acknowledgment of God's right to be worshipped. He also emphasized the importance of constant remembrance (dhikr) of God (Fadlan, [2015b](#)). Kiai Hasan Maolani believed that reciting the *kalimat al-tahlīl* secures divine mercy and protection from poverty, ultimately granting the believer a noble status at life's end. It was, to him, the essential spiritual provision for death and a means of purification and repentance in preparation for meeting the Creator.

Ṣalāt (Ritual Prayer)

Ṣalāt serves as a tangible expression of one's belief in God's oneness. As taught directly by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), it involves the utterance of monotheistic declarations and requires strict adherence to prescribed times. Hence, *ṣalāt* is often regarded as a measure of a Muslim's discipline and time management (Mauludi, [2020](#)). In his letters, Kiai Hasan Maolani stressed the absolute obligation of *ṣalāt*. He refused to pardon his children for neglecting prayer, as he regarded it as the foremost religious duty. In one letter, he sternly admonished a child who had abandoned *ṣalāt*, even threatening disavowal:

"If Marhamah refuses to perform *ṣalāt*, then she must do as I do. My father forbade me from ever neglecting the five daily prayers. If I refuse to do so, I will not pray for her."

This firm stance illustrates his compassionate yet uncompromising approach, highlighting the centrality of *ṣalāt*. He could not accept that a family member claim allegiance to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) while abandoning prayer—the very act that will first be accounted for on the Day of Judgment.

Voluntary Fasting (*Ṣawm al-Sunnah*)

Fasting symbolizes an intimate bond between the servant and the Divine. In Islamic tradition, fasting holds a special status because only God determines its spiritual merit. Consequently, even the sin of ostentation (*riyā'*) does not compromise the sincerity of fasting. Al-Hilal notes that fasting plays a crucial role in cultivating piety, as it guards the soul from spiritual transgression (Al Hafiz et al., [2023](#)). Kiai Hasan Maolani encouraged voluntary fasting according to each individual's capacity. He viewed it as a means of drawing closer to God and seeking forgiveness for sins. In one letter, he wrote:

"I plan to fast on Thursday as an act of repentance, a plea for forgiveness, and as penance for major and minor sins. It is my way of following the righteous, the devout, the warriors, the patient, and the saints across the East and West."

Recitation of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is a divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), confirming his prophethood and completing prior scriptures. It serves as the foundational guide for human life and social relations. According to Kiai Hasan Maolani, the Qur'an's pre-eternal nature (*qadīm*) affirms its existence before its physical revelation, beyond letters and words, as part of God's omnipotence. He interpreted the verb *tanazzala* (to descend), found in various Qur'anic verses, as indicating the progressive revelation of the Qur'an as a spiritual essence. He upheld the Qur'an as the highest source of Islamic law—superior to *ḥadīth*, consensus (*ijmā'*), and analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), which he viewed only as explanatory derivatives.

Kinship Ties and Grave Visitation

In addition to devotion to God, Kiai Hasan Maolani emphasized human beings' role as social beings. He urged his descendants to uphold social ties (*ṣilāt al-raḥim*), following the Prophet's example. Linguistically, *ṣilāt al-raḥim* refers to nurturing fraternal relationships. Islam calls for kindness even toward those who have wronged us. He viewed kinship

maintenance as both obligatory and commendable. It could be manifested through various means, such as giving gifts, visiting, greeting, or other lawful and beneficial gestures (Fadlan, [2015b](#)). He believed it promotes happiness, strengthens community bonds, and prolongs life.

Additionally, he advocated *ziyarah qubūr* (grave visitation) as a form of spiritual reflection. According to Jamhari, this practice, widespread in Indonesia, carries both theological and sociological significance. Kiai Hasan Maolani recommended weekly visits—especially on Fridays—prioritizing the graves of one’s parents. When physical or logistical barriers existed, he permitted symbolic visitation through prayer (Fadlan, [2015a](#)).

Almsgiving (*Ṣadaqah*)

Ṣadaqah reflects social awareness and facilitates closeness to God. Islam strongly encourages charitable acts as righteous deeds that enhance societal welfare and solidarity. It is among the three deeds whose reward continues even after death. Kiai Hasan Maolani consistently encouraged his descendants to give *ṣadaqah*, even before his exile. He sometimes made it a condition for offering prayers on their behalf (Fadlan, [2020](#)). He advised giving regularly—ideally once a week, especially on Fridays. As the Prophet taught, even a single date given sincerely has immense merit. He also cautioned against the risk of ostentation, urging sincerity.

Scholarly References

Kiai Hasan Maolani was widely respected in Lengkong Village for his deep scholarship. His letters frequently cite authoritative religious texts. He had memorized numerous Qur’anic verses and at least 59 prophetic traditions and referenced over 37 classical Islamic texts from various disciplines (Fadlan, [2015b](#)). Winarto notes that a scholar’s intellectual breadth is reflected in the richness of their sources. Although political imprisonment restricted his access to physical books, Kiai Hasan Maolani relied on memorized classical works. As Suryadi explains, political detainees were often arrested without warning and had no time to bring personal belongings (Suryadi, [2007](#)). Nevertheless, he remained humble in citing his sources. He wrote to his descendants:

“My position is only to remind my children and grandchildren. Cite the evidence from ḥadīth, consensus, and analogy, for this is not my revelation, but that of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). I merely follow and imitate. Your prayer is ‘ihdinā al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm’—may God guide you to the straight path.”

The books he cited include *Inna Awla*, *Tasrifan*, *Asrar Yusuf*, *Mafatih*, *Kitab Sarf*, *Kitab Madkhal*, *Samarqandi*, *Kalimah Shahadah*, *Miftah*, *Tilimsani*, *Zubad al-Bayr*, *Ghayat al-Maram*, *Ma’rifat al-Nikay*, and *Azkiya*. However, many of these titles remain difficult to identify due to title overlaps and limited bibliographic information.

Jihad

Kiai Hasan Maolani’s discourse on jihad was rooted in the jurisprudential framework of *Fath al-Qarib*, a legal text he referenced extensively. He differentiated between *jihad aṣghar* (minor struggle) and *jihad akbar* (major struggle), the latter referring to the internal struggle against one’s base desires. According to Nina Lubis, the teachings of *Fath al-Qarib* were among the reasons Dutch colonial authorities viewed him as a threat (Lubis, 2007). One passage reads:

“If non-believers enter or approach an Islamic territory, then jihad becomes a personal obligation (*fard ‘ayn*) upon Muslims. The people of the land are required to repel them by any means available to the Muslim community.”

This passage reveals Kiai Hasan Maolani’s awareness and concern for the colonial subjugation of his people. His calls to jihad were disseminated both through his written works and his religious teachings.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms the pivotal role of Kiai Hasan Maolani as a prominent Islamic scholar who significantly contributed to religious education in the Kuningan region. His educational philosophy encompasses a comprehensive range of concepts, including the pursuit of knowledge, acts of worship, monotheism (*tawḥīd*), prayer (*ṣalāt*), voluntary fasting, Qur’anic recitation, kinship ties and grave visitation, almsgiving, scholarly references, and jihad. Under contract number 01854/SP3/KP/LPPM/UNINDRA/XI/2024 dated November 25, 2024, the research team would like to express sincere gratitude to Universitas Indraprasta PGRI Jakarta for its generous financial support throughout this project. Appreciation

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Future research is encouraged to undertake a more in-depth examination of Kiai Hasan Maolani's original manuscripts and letters through philological and hermeneutical approaches, in order to enrich scholarly understanding of the historical context, linguistic style, and embedded values of Islamic education. Additionally, comparative studies between Kiai Hasan Maolani's educational thought and that of other Islamic scholars from the same period are essential for mapping his distinct contributions to the broader history of local and national Islamic education.

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