

MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS AS PILLARS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN RIAU

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Abstract

Islamic education in Riau has a long history rooted deeply in the culture and traditions of Malay society. Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), as the oldest Islamic educational institutions, have played a strategic role in shaping the character, morals, and Islamic identity of the community. This study aims to examine the development of pesantren in Riau from historical, social, and cultural perspectives, as well as to analyze the differences between traditional and modern pesantren in addressing contemporary educational challenges. This study employs a library research method by collecting data from literature, journals, and other written sources. The results show that traditional pesantren focus on education based on classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) and spiritual values, while modern pesantren integrate religious and general curricula with the utilization of technology. This adaptation enables pesantren in Riau to preserve Islamic values while simultaneously functioning as relevant social institutions in the era of globalization. This study affirms that modern pesantren in Riau serve as an important pillar in strengthening Islamic education that is moderate, competitive, and rooted in local wisdom.

Keywords: pesantren, Islamic education in Riau, traditional, modern..

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in the Malay region of Riau has a long history that cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and religious dynamics of its society. The arrival of Islam through traditional institutions such as pesantren later developed into centers of religious learning as well as platforms for moral development. The existence of these institutions not only serves as a means for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as social institutions that strengthen the Islamic identity of the Malay Riau community.

Pesantren are among the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, playing an important role in shaping the character, morality, and religious outlook of society. In various regions, including Riau, pesantren have become educational centers that not only emphasize the mastery of religious sciences but also instill moral and social values that are deeply embedded in daily life. The development of pesantren in Riau progressed alongside the spread of Islam that entered through the trade routes of the Malacca Strait, making these institutions an inseparable part of the social and cultural history of the Malay Riau community.

In the context of Malay Riau society, pesantren not only function as places for learning religion but also as social institutions tasked with preserving traditions, customs, and Islamic values embedded in Malay culture. Pesantren serve as spaces of interaction between students (santri), religious leaders (kiai), and the community, where the educational process is not limited to the transfer of knowledge but also encompasses personality formation and the

strengthening of Islamic identity. Thus, pesantren exist as platforms for community development as well as moral fortresses amid the dynamics of changing times.

The role of pesantren in Riau becomes increasingly important when confronted with the challenges of modernization and globalization. These institutions are able to adapt to the developments of the era without losing their identity through the integration of traditional curricula based on classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) with modern curricula that incorporate general sciences. This educational model enables students to not only understand Islamic teachings deeply but also acquire skills and perspectives relevant to meeting the needs of contemporary society.

In addition to serving as educational centers, pesantren in Riau also act as agents of social change that contribute to community development. Many pesantren alumni later pursue careers as scholars, educators, community leaders, and figures who influence the direction of social and religious life. This role demonstrates that pesantren function not only as educational institutions but also as institutions that produce capable cadres for various aspects of life.

Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) play a crucial role in shaping the character and morality of the nation. Along with the development of education based on Islamic teachings, pesantren have emerged as strategic elements within society. As educational institutions, pesantren provide in-depth religious education services known as *tafaqquh fi ad-diin*. Initially, the orientation and educational methods of Islamic boarding schools focused on the training of *kiai*, who were responsible for conveying information and guidance related to Islamic teachings to the community. Moreover, pesantren also provide dormitory facilities for students so they can study religious knowledge intensively, creating a conducive learning environment for spiritual and intellectual development.

This article seeks to examine pesantren as pillars of Islamic education in Riau by highlighting their roles from historical, social, and cultural perspectives. Through this approach, it is expected that a clear depiction can be provided regarding how pesantren contribute to shaping the Islamic identity of Malay Riau society and their relevance in addressing the challenges of Islamic education in the modern era. Thus, this study not only emphasizes the historical dimension but also the sustainability of pesantren as Islamic educational institutions in Riau.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted using library research; thus, the method employed in the study is a literature study (library research). The specific characteristics used as the basis for developing research knowledge include the following: this study deals directly with presented data or texts, not with field data or eyewitness accounts of events; the researcher engages only with existing sources available in libraries or ready-to-use data, as well as the secondary data utilized. Library research is a type of study in which data are obtained through the collection, examination, and analysis of literature or relevant library materials such as books, journals, articles, and research reports as theoretical foundations or supporting data, without the need for collecting primary data in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Historical Development of Pesantren in Riau

1. The Arrival of Islam and the Early Emergence of Pesantren in Riau

Pesantren as Islamic educational institutions in Riau have a long history that cannot be separated from the arrival of Islam in the Malay region. The entry of Islam into Riau is closely related to the geographical conditions of the area, which consists largely of islands, making it easier for Arab, Persian, and Gujarati traders to reach this region. Trade became an effective medium in the past for conveying Islamic teachings, in addition to serving economic purposes.

There are several views regarding the history of the arrival of Islam in Riau. The first view states that Islam entered the region as early as the 7th century AD. Another opinion suggests that Islam only appeared during the era of the Melaka Sultanate in 1295 AD, although Sultan Melaka Parameswara embraced Islam in 1414 AD.

One of the earliest areas to encounter Islam in Riau was Kuntu Village in Kampar Kiri District, Kampar Regency. The spread of Islam in Kuntu Village was carried out by Burhanuddin Ulakan, an Islamic scholar and preacher from Ulakan Tapakis, Padang Pariaman, West Sumatra. Burhanuddin Ulakan later established a pesantren in Kuntu Village and taught Islamic teachings to the local community. This pesantren became one of the oldest Islamic educational centers in Riau.

2. The Development of Pesantren in Riau (1980s–1990s)

Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) are among the oldest educational institutions in national history and remain an important asset in the life of the community. As institutions of Islamic propagation (dakwah), pesantren play a major role in community development.

According to data in the book *Potensi Lembaga Pendidikan Islam di Daerah Riau* written by UU Hamidy (1994), in 1985 the number of pesantren in Riau—which also included the Riau Islands region—was 24 pesantren. By 1993, the number had increased to 53 pesantren, including three pesantren in the Riau Islands: Pesantren Miftahul Ulum (Tanjungpinang), Al Jabar (Batam), and Darul Falah (Batam).

During the 1980s–1990s, the facilities and infrastructure of pesantren were still inadequate. The conditions of school buildings and dormitories were not yet suitable for educational activities and student residence. Only a small number of pesantren had proper buildings, dormitories, and mosques that were well-constructed and comfortable for students.

3. Pioneering Pesantren in Riau

Several pioneer pesantren established in Riau include:

- a. Pondok Pesantren Dar el Hikmah Pekanbaru. Pondok Pesantren Dar el Hikmah was established under the Nur Iman Foundation Pekanbaru. The founding vision was formalized through a Notarial Deed dated 12 September 1987, Number 43, issued by Notary Tajib Raharjo, SH. The pesantren was founded by Syeikh H. Abdullah by endowing a plot of land measuring 4 hectares located on Manyar Sakti Street KM 18,

Simpang Baru Subdistrict, Tampan District, Pekanbaru City. At a meeting on 20 April 1991 attended by the entire board of the Nur Iman Foundation Pekanbaru and supporters from Jakarta, including Dr. H. Satria Effendi M. Zein and Drs. KH. Mahrus Amin, it was agreed and decided that this pesantren would bear the name “Dar el Hikmah.” The Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Riau Province granted approval for the establishment of Pondok Pesantren Dar el Hikmah Pekanbaru through an official letter dated 12 June 1991, Number WD/6-0/PP.03.2/1991, and permitted it to accept students in the 1991/1992 academic year. Subsequently, on 8 August 1991, the pesantren was officially inaugurated for operational use by the Mayor of Pekanbaru, H. Oesman Efendi, SH.

- b. Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Kautsar Pekanbaru. Pondok Pesantren Al-Kautsar in Pekanbaru is a modern pesantren established on 2 May 1988 through the initiative of the Association of Parents of Gontor Students Riau (POSGORI), with an initial cohort of 8 students. The pesantren occupies approximately 2 hectares of waqf land developed under the Al-Kautsar Modern Islamic Boarding School Foundation of Riau. Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar, founded in 1988 on the initiative of POSGORI Pekanbaru, occupies 2 hectares of waqf land located on the eastern side of Pekanbaru City, endowed by the Muslim community, and developed under the Al-Kautsar Modern Boarding School Education Foundation with Deed Number 59 dated 17 January 1995. The pesantren is located on Hangtuah Ujung Street KM 6.5, Bencah Lesung Subdistrict, Tenayan Raya District, Pekanbaru City, Riau Province. Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar is supervised by Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, East Java; therefore, its educational curriculum follows that of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, while also adopting the curriculum of the Madrasah Tsanawiyah and Madrasah Aliyah under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The educational system of Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar is a classical boarding system integrating the Three Centers of Education and a full 24-hour coaching system. Its formal learning institution, KMI (Kulliyatul Mu'alliminal Islamiyah), is combined with the programs of Madrasah Tsanawiyah and Madrasah Aliyah. The curriculum implemented is a fully integrated curriculum from Pondok Modern Gontor and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The teaching staff at Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar consists of alumni of Pondok Modern Gontor, PM Al-Kautsar, and various domestic higher education institutions such as Darussalam Institute of Islamic Studies, Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University of Riau, and Islamic University of Riau, as well as international universities such as Al-Azhar University Egypt, UKM, and IIU Malaysia.
- c. Pondok Pesantren Teknologi Riau. Pondok Pesantren Teknologi Riau was established through the initiative of Prof. Dr. KH. Muhammad Tholchah Hasan (Minister of Religious Affairs of Indonesia for the period 1999–2001) and the Regional Government of Riau Province. They founded the Ummatan Wasathan Foundation in 2000 as its governing body. The establishment of Pesantren Teknologi Riau was driven by the desire to meet the nation's need for high-quality human resources in the mastery of science and technology, grounded in strong faith and piety. Through the initiative of the Ummatan Wasathan Foundation management, in the 2003/2004 academic year, the Ummatan Wasathan Madrasah Aliyah of Pesantren Teknologi Riau

was opened. The pesantren is located on East Route kilometer 22, Tenayan Raya–Pekanbaru, or Pasir Putih Ring Road kilometer 22.5, Pos Terkini Hamlet, Siak Hulu District, Kampar Regency.

- d. Pondok Pesantren K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. Pondok Pesantren K.H. Ahmad Dahlan is one of the oldest pesantren in Kuantan Singingi Regency. The pesantren was originally a Muhammadiyah Mu'allimin School established in 1963, and it became Pondok Pesantren K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in 1992 as an embodiment of the educational reform vision pioneered by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan.
- e. Pondok Pesantren Al-Munawwarah Pekanbaru. Pondok Pesantren Al-Munawwarah in Pekanbaru is one of the oldest and most prominent pesantren in the city of Pekanbaru, Riau, established in 1986 by the Syekh Burhanuddin Foundation.
- f. Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah Al-Islamy. Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah Al-Islamy is a religion-based educational institution initiated by Ustadz Abdurrahman Keken, Lc., MH, together with his father, Baharudin Husen, as the advisor of the Al-Imam Ibnu Hazm Foundation. In its early establishment in 2014, the foundation only aimed to provide education at the wustha (junior secondary school) level.

Differences Between Traditional Pesantren and Modern Pesantren

Pesantren were born and developed from the cultural womb of the Nusantara, adapting to the social conditions of society without losing their Islamic essence. The educational system in pesantren is deeply integrated with the rhythm of community life, making them institutions that not only teach knowledge but also instill noble values such as sincerity, humility (tawadhu'), discipline, and responsibility. However, the long history of pesantren has never been static. It moves, adapts, and even evolves to respond to the challenges of time. Social transformation, the advancement of knowledge, and increasingly complex societal needs have encouraged pesantren to present new forms in their educational implementation.

In this context, two distinct pesantren models have emerged prominently in Indonesia: traditional pesantren (salafiyah) and modern pesantren (khalafiyah). Traditional pesantren maintain an educational system based on kitab kuning, using methods such as sorogan, bandongan, and halaqah, combined with a paternalistic kyai-centered mentorship. Their orientation focuses on mastering classical Islamic scholarship (turats), morality, and spirituality. Meanwhile, modern pesantren introduce innovations by integrating religious and general education, equipped with more advanced learning facilities, national curricula, and even vocational or skill-based programs preparing santri for the modern workforce.

These differences cannot simply be understood as distinctions between the "conservative" and the "progressive." Both models possess strong ideological, historical, and sociological foundations. The existence of these two types of pesantren is crucial to study, as they both play strategic roles in the national education system and in shaping a peaceful, moderate, and inclusive Indonesian Islam. Amid youth identity crises, moral degradation, and value-based challenges brought by globalization, pesantren serve simultaneously as agents of change and guardians of values. Thus, understanding the differences between traditional and modern pesantren is not an attempt to polarize them, but rather an academic and practical effort to observe the dynamic transformation of Islamic education rich with meaning and values:

a. Traditional Pesantren (Salafiyah)

Traditional pesantren, also known as pesantren salafiyah, represent the earliest form of Islamic education systems deeply rooted in the Nusantara for centuries. They are widely found in rural areas or the outskirts of cities and continue to serve as institutions that preserve classical Islamic scholarship in its most authentic form. Pesantren salafiyah not only function as places to study religion but also as centers of spiritual nurturing and character formation through simple living, emotional closeness with the kyai, and distinctive teaching systems.

One of the most prominent characteristics of traditional pesantren is their strong emphasis on kitab kuning (kutub al-turats) as the core of their curriculum. These texts are classical Islamic works written in unvowelled Arabic, covering disciplines such as fiqh, tauhid, tafsir, hadith, tasawuf, and akhlaq. Mastery of kitab kuning serves as a primary indicator of a santri's academic progress. It is not uncommon for a santri who has mastered several classical texts to be considered equivalent to a graduate of formal Islamic higher education.

Daily life in traditional pesantren unfolds in a simple and self-sufficient environment. Santri typically live in modest small dormitories with limited facilities, managing their daily needs independently. This lifestyle is not merely a physical condition but is also a form of character education instilling sincerity, patience, discipline, and resilience. Simplicity is regarded as a means of drawing closer to Allah while shaping strong mental and spiritual fortitude. From a curriculum perspective, traditional pesantren do not follow the national formal education system. There are generally no general subjects such as mathematics, science, or foreign languages. The primary focus remains the deep study of Islamic sciences derived from classical texts. Nevertheless, many alumni of pesantren salafiyah demonstrate strong intellectual and spiritual capacities, becoming influential figures in various sectors including religious, social, and political fields.

Thus, traditional pesantren serve not only as educational institutions but also as centers for preserving Islamic culture and community development. Amid an ever-changing world, pesantren salafiyah continue to demonstrate that steadfastness in tradition and noble values remains relevant and essential for shaping individuals who are knowledgeable, ethical, and virtuous.

b. Modern Pesantren (Khalafiyah)

Modern pesantren, or pesantren khalafiyah, represent renewed forms of pesantren education that integrate Islamic studies with the national general education system. Emerging as a response to modernization and global demands, these pesantren address the community's need for Islamic educational institutions that not only strengthen spirituality and religious sciences but also prepare santri to face developments in knowledge, technology, and socio-economic life.

Philosophically, modern pesantren do not eliminate the spiritual essence of pesantren as institutions of moral and Islamic scholarly development. However, their educational approach is more systematic and structured, similar to formal schools. Within them exists a combination of inherited Islamic values and contemporary

educational approaches based on the national curriculum, modern teaching methods, and professional institutional management.

One of the main characteristics of modern pesantren is the integration of religious and general curricula. Santri study disciplines such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and aqidah, alongside general subjects like mathematics, science, technology, English, and entrepreneurship. The curriculum follows national standards set by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, allowing graduates of modern pesantren to possess a balanced mastery of religious knowledge and general sciences.

Sultan Syarif Kasim II: A Prominent Educational Figure in Riau

1. Biography of Sultan Syarif Kasim II

Yang Dipertuan Besar Syarif Kasim Abdul Jalil Saifuddin, or Sultan Syarif Kasim II, was born in Siak Sri Indrapura, Riau, on December 1, 1893, and passed away on April 23, 1968, in Rumbai, Pekanbaru, Riau, at the age of 74. He was the 12th sultan of the Sultanate of Siak Sri Indrapura as well as the last ruler of the Siak Sultanate before the Malay kingdom officially integrated into the territory of Indonesia.

His father, Sultan Assyaidin Hasyim I Abdul Jalil Syaifuddin, died in 1908. Because Syarif Kasim II was still underage and pursuing his education in Batavia, he was enthroned as the Sultan of the Siak Indrapura Kingdom on March 13, 1915, with the title Sultan Assyaidis Syarif Kasim Sani Abdul Jalil Syaifuddin, at the age of 21.

2. Education of Sultan Syarif Kasim II

From childhood until the age of 12, Syarif Kasim was educated within the palace environment. He received traditional royal education encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual formation. His father, a sultan strongly grounded in Islamic principles and committed to improving the welfare of his people, wished for Syarif Kasim to succeed him with comprehensive knowledge and strong Islamic values.

In 1904, at the age of 11, Syarif Kasim was sent to Batavia to study Islamic sciences under Sayed Husen al-Aidit. He later pursued studies in Law and Constitutional Studies at the Beck en Volten Institute under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Snouck Hurgronje. During his time in Batavia, he interacted with prominent Indonesian national movement figures, especially those from the Sarekat Islam circle.

3. Sultan Syarif Kasim II's Contributions to Education

Sultan Syarif Kasim II was deeply aware of the importance of education as the foundation of societal progress. Therefore, he sought to enlighten his people by establishing several schools in Siak. As a nationalist leader, he expressed much of his anti-colonial sentiment through the field of education.

a. Establishment of Schools

Sultan Syarif Kasim II founded several educational institutions, including:

- 1) Hollandsch Inlandsche School (HIS): A Malay-language school open to all social classes, unlike Dutch HIS schools which only accepted students from specific social groups.

- 2) Madrasah Taufiqiyah al-Hasyimiah (established in 1917): The first elementary-level school in Riau combining Islamic religious subjects with nationalist values and general sciences.
- 3) Latifah School (founded in 1926): Established by Sultan Syarif Kasim II's consort, Sarifah Latifah, this was the first school exclusively for girls in Riau.
- 4) Madrassatoen Nisa' (founded in 1933): Another educational institution dedicated to female students.

b. Scholarship Program

Sultan Syarif Kasim II awarded scholarships to outstanding students, enabling them to pursue further studies in Medan and Batavia. Several young people from Siak continued their education outside the region with full financial support from the kingdom.

c. Religious Development

Under his rule, Sultan Syarif Kasim II established a Kadi Besar (Chief Religious Judge) in the capital and appointed Imam Wilayah (regional imams) in every district. He restored the palace left by his father and built a new mosque on the site of the old one originally constructed by his grandfather, Sultan Syarif Kasim I.

4. Struggles and Service for Indonesia's Independence

Sultan Syarif Kasim II was a staunch supporter of Indonesia's independence movement. Shortly after the proclamation of independence, he declared the Sultanate of Siak as part of the Republic of Indonesia and donated his wealth amounting to 13 million guilders (equivalent to 151 million guilders or €69 million in 2011, valued at more than 1 trillion rupiah today) to the new republic.

At the handover ceremony at Gedung Agung, Yogyakarta, he presented his royal crown along with assets worth 13 million guilders as financial support for the newly established Indonesian government. He also persuaded other rulers in East Sumatra to support the republic.

5. Honors and Commemoration

For his immense contributions to the nation, his role in supporting independence, advancing education, and resisting colonialism, the Indonesian government awarded Sultan Syarif Kasim II the title of National Hero along with the Bintang Mahaputra Adipradana based on Presidential Decree No. 109/TK/1998 dated November 6, 1998.

His name is memorialized through several institutions in Riau:

- a. Sultan Syarif Kasim II International Airport, Pekanbaru (formerly Simpang Tiga Airport)
- b. Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University of Riau (UIN SUSKA Riau)
- c. The airport became notable as the first location where Sultan Syarif Kasim II made his inaugural landing and inauguration in 1943 alongside Tengku Agung Sultanah Latifah and Dutch administrators.

6. Legacy and Exemplary Values

Sultan Syarif Kasim II left behind profound values that continue to inspire educational development in Riau and Indonesia, including:

- a. Commitment to education: Viewing education as the fundamental key to national progress.

- b. Nationalistic spirit: Fighting colonialism through intelligent educational strategies
- c. Social justice: Providing educational access to all social classes
- d. Service to the nation: Donating nearly all his wealth for Indonesia's independence
- e. Promotion of women's education: Supporting the establishment of female-only schools
- f. His people respected him not only because of his royal status, but because his words were aligned with his actions. He supported the Republic of Indonesia not only through proclamations or political statements but through concrete sacrifice, donating immense wealth to the state. Likewise, he cared for his people not merely through speech but through real efforts such as establishing schools to educate them.

Contemporary Islamic Education

Contemporary Islamic education is an educational concept oriented toward relevance to the demands and dynamics of modern development. This concept emphasizes the importance of integrating Islamic values with technological advancement and the needs of modern society. Islamic education is developed based on the teachings and fundamental principles derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and it functions as a comprehensive process of human development (ri'ayah), encompassing physical, intellectual, linguistic, behavioral, social, and spiritual aspects toward achieving a complete and meaningful life.

In the present context, contemporary Islamic education is carried out in a planned and systematic manner to optimize learners' potential in accordance with Islamic principles. The integration of Islamic values into modern education plays a crucial role in shaping learners' character and personality, balancing intellectual and spiritual elements, thus enabling the emergence of a morally upright generation capable of facing global challenges.

The goals of contemporary Islamic education should align with the objectives of national education as stated in the Indonesian National Education System Law of 2003, Article 1 Paragraph (2). The law affirms that education is to be administered based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, rooted in religious values and national culture, and adaptable to the dynamics and demands of changing times.

The Number of Modern Pesantren in Riau

The City of Pekanbaru, as one of the regions in Riau Province, is currently experiencing rapid development and progress. Along with this growth, there is an increasing need for high-quality human resources (SDM), both in terms of general knowledge and religious understanding. Efforts to produce human resources who possess a balance between intellectual and spiritual abilities can be realized through an integrated educational system. One form of education that combines general and religious values is the modern pesantren. The presence of modern pesantren plays an important role as a place for the development of scientific knowledge as well as the deepening of Islamic values, and it also functions as a medium for character formation based on religious teachings. Thus, modern pesantren are expected to produce qualified and ethical human resources, and to serve as a moral safeguard against the negative impacts of globalization and moral decline.

Below is one example of a modern pesantren in Riau:

1. Quantitative Growth of Pesantren in Riau

The quantitative growth of pesantren in Riau has been quite encouraging. According to data from the Regional Office (Kanwil) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) of Riau Province, the number of pesantren in Riau has shown significant growth from year to year. In 2017, Riau had 176 pesantren, and by May 2023 the number had increased to 451 pesantren.

The Governor of Riau, Syamsuar, stated that at the beginning of his term (February 2019), the number of pesantren in Riau was only 276, and this number has continued to rise each year. Other data also shows that around four years prior to 2023, the number of pesantren in Riau was still in the 200s, but later developed to more than 400.

2. Improvement in the Quality of Modern Pesantren

The increasing development of pesantren in Riau Province is driven by improvements in the quality of infrastructure and physical facilities. Physically, many pesantren have undergone significant transformation, such as the availability of modern facilities including computers, laboratories, and other supporting equipment. Pesantren are also increasingly being managed through formal legal entities, and the number of educational programs offered has grown, while still upholding Islamic values and the tradition of studying kitab kuning.

In terms of infrastructure and facilities, the condition of pesantren in Riau today has significantly improved compared to the 1990s. Modern pesantren in Riau now offer various flagship programs such as:

- a. Applied technology programs (such as at Pesantren Teknologi Riau)
- b. Tahfidz Al-Qur'an programs
- c. Arabic and English language learning
- d. Computer and science laboratories
- e. Entrepreneurship skills
- f. Integration of the Kemenag curriculum with the pesantren curriculum

CONCLUSION

Islamic education in Riau has strong historical roots through the existence of pesantren as the oldest educational institutions that play an important role in shaping the moral, intellectual, and Islamic identity of the Malay community. From the early period of the arrival of Islam to its modern development, pesantren in Riau have demonstrated significant adaptive capacity in responding to social dynamics and the challenges of globalization. Traditional pesantren continue to maintain their scholarly character through the study of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) and spiritual formation, while modern pesantren integrate general and religious curricula supported by technology and more professional educational management.

Important figures such as Sultan Syarif Kasim II also contributed greatly to the advancement of education through the establishment of schools, the provision of scholarships, and the commitment to equal access to education. The transformation of pesantren in Riau is further reflected in the rapid increase in the number of pesantren over the past two decades, along with the strengthening of infrastructure quality and the development of flagship programs in modern pesantren.

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