NEGOTIATING PURIFICATION AND LOCAL MEMORY: WRITING BACK THE HISTORY OF KYAI IMAM SYUHODO AND MUHAMMADIYAH WONOREJO, 1987–1995

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Abstract

National histories of Indonesian Islamic reform commonly describe Muhammadiyah's rural expansion as the diffusion of modernist ideas from urban organizational centers. This perspective obscures the contested local memories through which reformist institutions acquired legitimacy. This article examines the reconstruction of Kyai Imam Syuhodo's memory in Wonorejo, Central Java, between the tomb controversy of the 1980s and the establishment of Pondok Pesantren Imam Syuhodo in 1994–1995. It asks how Muhammadiyah's purification agenda negotiated a local heritage that simultaneously represented Qur'anic authority, saintly charisma, and courtly Islam. Employing historical research and critical oral history, the study triangulates organizational decrees, local publications, family documentation, material sites, and interviews with Muhammadiyah elders, descendants, mosque administrators, women leaders, and village residents. The findings show that Imam Syuhodo's institutional significance did not result from uninterrupted continuity. It emerged through contestation over pilgrimage practices, an episode remembered locally as involving arrests in 1987, and subsequent processes of sowan, deliberation, and islah. These negotiations preserved the tomb as a historical site while reinterpreting Imam Syuhodo as a Qur'anic educator compatible with Muhammadiyah's tajdid. The 1994 founding decree then stabilized this negotiated memory through a modern educational institution. The article argues that writing back local Islamic history requires treating oral traditions neither as transparent facts nor as disposable folklore, but as contested archives of authority. The case contributes to decolonizing Muhammadiyah historiography and demonstrates the contemporary relevance of local reconciliation and community-rooted education to SDGs 4 and 16.

Keywords: collective memory; local Islamic history; Muhammadiyah; purification; religious heritage

INTRODUCTION

The history of Indonesian Islam has frequently been written through national organizations, prominent scholars, political movements, and institutional centers. Such narratives are indispensable for explaining the development of Islamic modernism, but their scale can make rural communities appear to be passive recipients of ideas formulated elsewhere. Muhammadiyah, in particular, is often narrated through its establishment in Yogyakarta in 1912, the reformist thought of Ahmad Dahlan, national congresses, educational modernization, and the expansion of charitable enterprises (Nakamura, 1983; Noer, 1973). At the village level, however, reform was rarely a simple transfer of doctrine

from the center to the periphery. It involved negotiations with inherited religious authorities, kinship networks, sacred places, oral histories, and competing understandings of local Muslim identity.

Wonorejo, a rural village in Polokarto, Sukoharjo, offers a revealing case of this process. Residents associate the village's early Islamization with Kyai Imam Syuhodo, popularly known as Mbah Apil Qur'an. Community narratives portray him as an eighteenth-century Qur'anic scholar, the founder of a mosque and religious settlement, and a spiritual teacher connected to Pakubuwana IV of the Surakarta court. Written documentation from his lifetime is scarce, and several biographical claims remain unverified. However, the durability of these narratives is itself historically significant. Imam Syuhodo continues to inhabit the village's social landscape through the old mosque, the tomb complex, genealogical narratives, oral accounts, and the names of Muhammadiyah educational institutions.

Muhammadiyah's presence in the area developed in stages. Local organizational histories describe a reformist madrasa established in the 1920s, the legalization of Group Muhammadiyah Blimbing in 1928, and the formal recognition of the Blimbing Branch in 1953 (Basyar & Affandi, 2025; Sakti, 2009). These developments did not erase the memory of Imam Syuhodo. They created a new arena in which his meaning was contested. For some residents, his tomb and remembered charisma supported established practices of visitation and the search for blessing. For younger Muhammadiyah activists, excessive veneration threatened the exclusivity of divine worship and contradicted the organization's purification agenda. Oral accounts locate the sharpest phase of this contestation in the 1980s and remember an incident in 1987 in which activists were detained after being accused of damaging elements of the tomb site.

This conflict complicates celebratory accounts that present Muhammadiyah's local development as either a clean rupture with tradition or an entirely harmonious continuation of it. It indicates that the meaning of local heritage was negotiated through unequal claims to religious authority. The eventual retention of the tomb, the reinterpretation of Imam Syuhodo as a Qur'anic educator, and the use of his name for a modern pesantren were not automatic outcomes. They were produced through personal visits, deliberation, religious instruction, family mediation, and organizational decisions.

The original 1994 documents establishing the pesantren provide a material endpoint to this process: a memory previously associated with contested ritual space was formally incorporated into Muhammadiyah's educational structure.

Existing scholarship offers important contexts but does not fully explain this transformation. Studies of Muhammadiyah have examined modernism, education, organizational discipline, and accommodation with rural culture (Mulkhan, 2021; Nakamura, 1983; Noer, 1973). Research on local history has emphasized the historical agency of communities excluded from state-centered narratives (Abdullah, 1990; Kuntowijoyo, 2003; Purwanto, 2006). Memory studies explain how groups reconstruct the past in accordance with present identities and institutions (Assmann, 2008; Halbwachs, 1992; Nora, 1989). Nevertheless, few studies connect a contested memory of a local ulama, a purification dispute surrounding a tomb, reconciliation among village actors, and the creation of a modern Muhammadiyah educational institution.

This article, therefore, asks: How did contestation over the memory and tomb of Kyai Imam Syuhodo reshape the relationship between local religious heritage and Muhammadiyah's purification movement, and how was this negotiated memory institutionalized through the establishment of Pondok Pesantren Imam Syuhodo in 1994–1995? It argues that the pesantren's name condensed a negotiated settlement rather than an unbroken line of transmission. Through the processes locally known as sowan, musyawarah, and islah, Muhammadiyah actors and the custodians of local memory converted Imam Syuhodo from a contested object of sacralization into a shared reference point for Qur'anic education and public morality. This reconstruction did not eliminate disagreement, but it made institutional cooperation possible.

The argument also addresses the ICCL 2026 agenda of "Writing Back: Local Histories, Memory, and Heritage for Peaceful and Just Institutions." Writing back in this case does not mean accepting every local claim as historical fact. It means challenging the hierarchy that treats national archives as history while dismissing rural oral accounts as anecdote. A decolonizing historical practice must take local knowledge seriously while still examining its production, omissions, internal conflicts, and institutional uses (Smith, 2012). The Wonorejo case demonstrates that community memory can be both a source of exclusion and a resource for reconciliation. Its value as historical evidence can be assessed through

education offers a historically grounded, non-anachronistic point of connection with Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive quality education and Goal 16 on peaceful, inclusive, and accountable institutions (United Nations, 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Writing Back Local Islamic History

Indonesian historiography has long debated the relationship between national narratives and local historical experience. Abdullah (1990) argues that local history is not simply a smaller version of national history; it reveals social relationships and cultural categories that disappear when historical processes are viewed exclusively from the center. Kuntowijoyo's (2003) social history likewise redirects attention from political elites toward institutions, communities, and everyday transformations. Purwanto (2006) extends this criticism by questioning whether replacing colonial narratives with state-centered Indonesian narratives is sufficient when the voices and epistemologies of local communities remain subordinate.

These concerns overlap with the broader project of decolonizing methodology. Smith (2012) shows that the categories, archives, and claims of academic research are inseparable from relations of power. Decolonization, therefore, involves more than adding indigenous or local objects to existing academic frameworks. It requires attention to who defines a legitimate source, who interprets it, whose memory is preserved, and who benefits from the resulting narrative. Applied to Wonorejo, this perspective makes organizational files, family recollections, mosque architecture, tomb practices, and women's narratives relevant historical materials. It also demands caution: local memory is not homogeneous, and an official Muhammadiyah narrative may silence non-organizational or dissenting local voices just as a national narrative does.

Writing back must consequently work at two levels. First, it restores rural communities and the local ulama to a historiography dominated by nationally recognized institutions. Second, it reconstructs disagreement within the locality itself. The history of Imam Syuhodo cannot be reduced either to a heroic biography or to Muhammadiyah's institutional success. The historical problem is how different groups mobilized his

memory, how ritual and heritage became objects of contestation, and how one interpretation eventually became institutionally durable.

2.2 Collective Memory, Sites of Memory, and Institutionalization

Halbwachs (1992) conceptualizes collective memory as recollection produced within social frameworks. Groups do not merely preserve an unchanged past; they select and reorganize it in response to present identities. Assmann (2008) distinguishes communicative memory, which circulates through interpersonal recollection, from cultural memory, which is stabilized through texts, monuments, rituals, and institutions. Nora's (1989) concept of lieux de mémoire further explains how particular places become dense repositories of meaning when direct experience of the past has disappeared.

These concepts help distinguish the historical Imam Syuhodo from the Imam Syuhodo remembered by later communities. The tomb, mosque, family narratives, and title Mbah Apil Qur'an are not neutral containers of information. They are media through which the village repeatedly reconstructs religious authority. When Muhammadiyah activists challenged practices at the tomb, they were not only disputing ritual law. They were contesting who had the authority to define the site's meaning and the ulama associated with it. When the organization later used his name for a pesantren, it transferred memory from a contested sacred location into a formal educational institution.

The framework also avoids describing institutionalization as the straightforward "routinization" of an eighteenth-century charisma. The evidence does not establish a continuous organization or teacher-disciple succession from Imam Syuhodo to twentieth-century Muhammadiyah. What can be demonstrated is retrospective reconstruction: later actors selected features of his remembered identity—Qur'anic learning, moral discipline, and religious leadership—and rendered them compatible with tajdid. Institutionalization here means stabilizing that selected memory through decrees, organizational structures, curricula, buildings, and names.

2.3 Muhammadiyah, Purification, and Rural Negotiation

Early scholarship commonly framed Muhammadiyah as an urban modernist movement opposed to syncretic or traditional religious practices (Noer, 1973). Nakamura's (1983) study of Kotagede complicated this interpretation by demonstrating that Muhammadiyah was locally embedded in kinship, economic, and cultural networks.

Mulkhan (2021) similarly shows that rural Muhammadiyah communities can negotiate local traditions rather than uniformly reject them. These studies suggest that purification and cultural adaptation are not mutually exclusive strategies.

Wonorejo adds a specific mechanism to this literature. The organization's accommodation was not merely a pragmatic tolerance of local customs. It involved conflict over a heritage site, mediation by respected insiders, and the reconstruction of an ulama's symbolic identity. Purification did not simply retreat; it reshaped the acceptable form of remembrance. Local heritage was preserved, but some ritual interpretations were delegitimized. The resulting institution, therefore, embodied both continuity and asymmetry: Imam Syuhodo's name remained, while Muhammadiyah's Qur'an-centered interpretation gained organizational authority.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses historical research combined with critical oral history. Its evidentiary base consists of organizational decrees, local Muhammadiyah publications, a community history report, family and mosque documentation, material sites, institutional webpages, and ten interviews conducted between 2023 and 2026. The interviewees include senior Muhammadiyah leaders, descendants of Imam Syuhodo, the administrator of the Imam Syuhodo Grand Mosque, village elders, a former leader of the Blimbing 'Aisyiyah branch, the head of the Wonorejo 'Aisyiyah branch, and residents who preserve local narratives. Interviews were semi-structured and purposively selected based on institutional involvement, genealogical connection, or knowledge of local history.

The principal written sources for the final phase are the 1994 decree establishing the pesantren, its articles of association, personnel list, and the October 1994 report to Muhammadiyah's central leadership. The decree, issued by PCM Blimbing on 25 August 1994, ordered the establishment of a pesantren for the 1995/1996 academic year and formally named it Pondok Pesantren Imam Syuhodo Muhammadiyah Cabang Blimbing Daerah Sukoharjo (PCM Blimbing, 1994a). The October report documented preparations for opening the institution in January 1995 (PCM Blimbing, 1994b). Earlier

organizational milestones are reconstructed from the 1953 branch decree, the 2009 Suara Kauman historical edition, and a 2025 local history report based on PRM Wonorejo meeting records (Basyar & Affandi, 2025; Pengurus Besar Muhammadiyah, 1953; Sakti, 2009).

The sources do not carry equal evidentiary weight. The 1994 documents directly establish an organizational decision, date, name, and governance structure. By contrast, claims about Imam Syuhodo's eighteenth-century biography are mostly derived from oral tradition and later secondary sources. They are analyzed as remembered history unless corroborated by contemporary evidence. The reported 1987 incident also requires caution. No police or court record has yet been located; the article, therefore, treats the arrests as a convergent but still unverified oral recollection rather than a fully documented legal event. This distinction is essential to a decolonizing approach: respect for oral knowledge does not eliminate source criticism, and source criticism should not be used to silence memories simply because state documentation is absent (Thompson, 2000).

Table 1. Chronology, sources, and evidentiary status

Period/Event	Principal Source	Evidentiary Status
Late eighteenth–early nineteenth century: Imam Syuhodo as Qur'anic scholar, mosque founder, and teacher associated with Pakubuwana IV	Oral traditions, later local histories, secondary scholarship, mosque and tomb sites	Community memory with partial secondary corroboration; not fully verified by contemporary documents
1925–1928: reformist madrasa and formation of Group Muhammadiyah Blimbing	Suara Kauman historical edition and PRM Wonorejo local report	Organizational memory; original 1928 decree still requires archival confirmation
16 November 1953: formal recognition of Muhammadiyah Blimbing Branch	Muhammadiyah decree No. 1046/B and later organizational histories	Documented organizational milestone, subject to verification of the surviving archival copy
1980s–1987: dispute over tomb practices and remembered detention of activists	Interviews with senior leaders, descendants, and local residents	Convergent oral history; legal documentation not yet located

1994–1995: decree, preparation, and opening of Pondok Pesantren Imam Syuhodo	Original PCM Blimbing decree, articles of association, personnel list, and report	Direct documentary evidence

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Remembered Ulama and Muhammadiyah's Local Formation

In Wonorejo's collective memory, Kyai Imam Syuhodo is not remembered primarily through a written corpus. He is encountered through the title Mbah Apil Qur'an, accounts of the village's origins, the old mosque, the tomb, family genealogies, and stories of his relationship with the Surakarta court. Residents describe him as a Qur'anic scholar from the Kedu–Bagelen region who studied in the Jatisobo network before establishing religious life in Wonorejo. They also associate him with Pakubuwana IV, whom he is said to have instructed in religion. The mosque's upper room is remembered as a space where the ruler studied while traveling incognito. A later secondary account situates Imam Syuhodo within the intellectual environment of the Surakarta court. However, no contemporary manuscript has yet confirmed his direct contribution to Pakubuwana IV's Serat Wulangreh (Zada, 2003).

These limitations do not render the narratives historically irrelevant. They clarify the object of analysis. The article does not need to prove that every element of the story occurred exactly as remembered in order to examine the story's social force. The narratives elevate Wonorejo from an ordinary rural settlement to a place associated with Qur'anic knowledge and royal authority. The honorific Apil Qur'an establishes the Qur'an as the central marker of Imam Syuhodo's remembered identity. The mosque and tomb materialize this identity, while stories of royal deference reverse the usual hierarchy between court and village: the king is remembered as having sought guidance from a rural ulama. The memory, therefore, gives local society intellectual and spiritual agency that is commonly absent from metropolitan histories.

The development of Muhammadiyah entered this already meaningful landscape. Local organizational narratives trace reformist activities to a madrasa established at the

Wonorejo Grand Mosque around 1925. Teachers connected with Surakarta reportedly visited the village, and colonial authorities are remembered for closing the madrasa after deeming its gatherings politically suspicious. In response, local activists sought the protection and structure of Muhammadiyah. Group Muhammadiyah Blimbing was reportedly recognized under the Surakarta Branch on 23 November 1928, with the name Blimbing chosen in part because Wonorejo had become associated with colonial surveillance (Sakti, 2009). The surviving local narrative requires further verification from the original decree, but it establishes how the organization remembers its own anti-colonial formation.

Formal recognition as the Blimbing Branch followed in 1953 through Muhammadiyah decree No. 1046/B. This distinction between the 1928 group and the 1953 branch is important. It prevents the common error of presenting 1953 as Muhammadiyah's first arrival in the village. It also shows that the organization's local legitimacy developed through several decades of activism, kinship, teaching, and negotiation. Some early leaders, including Kyai Ahmad Zaini, were remembered as descendants or successors within Imam Syuhodo's religious genealogy. Organizational modernity and local lineage were therefore intertwined rather than mutually exclusive.

Muhammadiyah gradually reorganized religious transmission through regular tabligh, schools, youth organizations, women's activities, and social services. Madrasah Tsanawiyah Muhammadiyah Blimbing, founded in 1985, represented an important institutional step toward formal education. 'Aisyiyah activities expanded women's participation in religious teaching and childhood education, while Hizbul Wathan and other youth groups developed organizational discipline. These institutions altered the location of authority: religious knowledge increasingly circulated through committees, curricula, associations, and schools rather than solely through personal relations with a kyai. However, Imam Syuhodo's remembered authority remained available as a language through which this change could be explained locally.

This availability did not guarantee consensus. The same memory could authorize different practices. Residents who emphasized saintly charisma viewed the tomb as a place of prayer, remembrance, and blessing. Reformist activists selected the identity of

Qur'anic scholar while rejecting practices they associated with supernatural mediation. Both positions appealed to the same ulama, but they constructed different Imam Syuhodos. The ensuing disagreement demonstrates why collective memory should be analyzed as a field of contestation rather than a body of inherited information.

4.2 The Tomb Controversy and Competing Claims to Heritage

Oral accounts from Wonorejo describe a prolonged controversy surrounding practices at Imam Syuhodo's tomb during the 1980s. Some visitors treated the pilgrimage as an expression of respect for an ulama who had introduced Islamic learning to the area. Community members associated the site with ancestral continuity, blessing, and the moral debt owed to the village's religious founder. For younger Muhammadiyah activists shaped by a stricter discourse of purification, the same practices appeared to blur the boundary between honoring an ulama and assigning sacred efficacy to a human being or place.

The controversy should not be reduced to the familiar binary of "traditionalist" versus "modernist." The custodians of the tomb did not necessarily reject the Qur'an, and Muhammadiyah activists did not uniformly seek to destroy local history. The conflict concerned the permissible social form of remembrance. Questions about structures around the grave, bodily gestures, invocations, and the language of blessing became questions about who could define the village's Islamic past. The tomb was simultaneously a burial place, a family inheritance, a historical monument, a ritual space, and a symbol in a struggle over religious authority.

Senior interviewees recall that the dispute intensified and culminated in an incident in 1987. According to K.H. Muh. Ghufron and K.H. Yunus Muhammad: several activists were detained after being accused of damaging elements considered part of the tomb's cultural or historical site (M. Ghufron, personal communication, April 18, 2026; Y. Muhammad, personal communication, February 12, 2026). The available thesis materials do not include a police report, court record, or contemporary newspaper account. The exact legal classification, number of detainees, and sequence of events cannot, therefore, be treated as settled facts. Nevertheless, the convergence of accounts from senior actors makes the incident an important component of local social memory.

The memory of detention reveals how theological disagreement became entangled with heritage protection and state authority. From the activists' perspective, changing the tomb environment was described as an attempt to prevent practices that are inconsistent with tawhid. From the perspective of other residents, it threatened a physical inheritance that preserved Imam Syuhodo's place in village history. The state's remembered intervention added a third claim: the site could be regulated as cultural property rather than solely as a religious space. The controversy thus involved overlapping normative systems—Muhammadiyah's purification discourse, family and communal custodianship, and official authority over heritage.

The conflict also exposes a weakness in triumphalist organizational history. Muhammadiyah did not simply enter a receptive village and modernize an uncontested Qur'anic tradition. Its reform agenda generated real friction, and the organization's eventual dominance cannot be explained only by doctrinal persuasion. It depended on its ability to rebuild relations with families and elders whose legitimacy could not be replaced by bureaucratic authority. In this sense, the tomb dispute was a crisis of institutional rootedness.

At the same time, the episode shows why decolonizing history cannot romanticize every inherited practice. Local memory contained unequal claims and internal exclusions. Younger activists regarded themselves as correcting practices that compromised Islamic monotheism, while older custodians understood themselves as defending gratitude, ancestryand historical continuity. The historian's task is not to declare one memory authentic and the other false. It is to reconstruct how these positions emerged, how each authorized action was taken, and how the conflict changed the institutional meaning of Imam Syuhodo.

4.3 Sowan, Islah, and the Negotiation of Religious Memory

Oral testimonies emphasize that a single doctrinal decree did not resolve the dispute. It was gradually managed through interpersonal mechanisms embedded in Javanese Muslim social life. Interviewees use the terms sowan, musyawarah, and islah to describe visits to elders, deliberation among organizational actors, and reconciliation with members of Imam Syuhodo's extended family. K.H. Muh. Ghufron is repeatedly remembered as an important mediator who could move between Muhammadiyah

leadership, the descendants of Kyai Ahmad Zaini, and residents attached to the tomb's inherited meaning.

Sowan was politically significant because it recognized an authority that formal organizational procedure alone could not command. By visiting elders and family custodians, reformist actors acknowledged that the memory of Imam Syuhodo was not Muhammadiyah property. Musyawarah enabled competing interpretations to be articulated without requiring either party to surrender its entire moral vocabulary. Islah then named the repair of damaged relationships, not merely agreement on the legal status of a ritual. These mechanisms demonstrate that local reconciliation worked through social recognition as much as through theological argument.

The settlement remembered by interviewees preserved the tomb as a historical site and a place of prayer for the deceased, while discouraging practices that were interpreted as seeking supernatural benefits from the buried ulama. This was not a neutral compromise. Muhammadiyah's interpretation of acceptable remembrance gained increasing institutional authority. However, the organization did not remove Imam Syuhodo from public memory. Instead, it intensified a selective representation of him as a hafiz, Qur'anic teacher, moral guide, and pioneer of Islamic education.

This selection altered the relationship between purification and heritage. Purification no longer required historical erasure; it operated by redefining which aspects of the past counted as authentic Islamic heritage. The title Mbah Apil Qur'an became particularly useful because it joined local affection with Muhammadiyah's scriptural orientation. Memories of saintly power became less prominent in official narratives, while Qur'anic literacy, education, and tawhid moved to the foreground. The resulting figure could command respect across constituencies without authorizing every practice previously associated with his tomb.

Such reinterpretation is better described as negotiated memory than harmonious continuity. Harmony suggests that no serious conflict occurred, while rupture implies that modernism eliminated the local past. Neither captures the Wonorejo process. Negotiation acknowledges that the past was preserved through alteration. It also directs attention to actors frequently missing from official narratives: descendants, mosque caretakers,

elderly residents, and women's leaders who carried memory through family instruction, early childhood education, and community religious activities.

The reconciliation also had institutional consequences. It allowed Imam Syuhodo's name to move beyond the contested tomb and become usable within a modern educational project. This transition did not empty the name of local meaning. It reorganized that meaning around a future-oriented institution. Collective memory became a means of connecting organizational modernization to a village history whose authority Muhammadiyah could not simply manufacture.

4.4 The 1994–1995 Institutionalization of Negotiated Memory

The strongest documentary evidence in the case concerns the founding of Pondok Pesantren Imam Syuhodo. On 25 August 1994, PCM Blimbing issued Decree No. 194/SK—PC/I.A/1.a/1994. The decree referred to the need for a Muhammadiyah pesantren, guidance from Muhammadiyah's central leadership, and a branch deliberation with elders and community members. It ordered the institution to begin in the 1995/1996 academic year and approved its articles of association and management structure (PCM Blimbing, 1994a).

Importantly, the 1994 decree establishes not only the date, official name, purposes, and institutional structure of the pesantren, but also explicitly connects the choice of the name Imam Syuhodo with the historical and religious significance of the figure for Wonorejo. This documentary evidence is important because it demonstrates that the naming of the institution was not merely a retrospective attribution constructed through later oral memory. Rather, the decision to use Imam Syuhodo's name was already articulated at the moment of institutional formation. The decree can therefore be read alongside oral testimonies and local historical accounts to clarify how an inherited religious memory was consciously incorporated into Muhammadiyah's educational project. The timing remains significant: Imam Syuhodo's name became institutionally productive after a period in which the same figure had been at the center of contestation over ritual practice and religious heritage.

A report dated 20 October 1994 informed the central leadership that preparations were underway for the pesantren to begin in January 1995 (PCM Blimbing, 1994b). The articles of association identify the institution as Pondok Pesantren Imam Syuhodo

Muhammadiyah Cabang Blimbing Daerah Sukoharjo. They define its purpose as forming Muslim students who are knowledgeable, faithful, pious, morally upright, capable in Islamic learning, intellectually accomplished, and independent. Its governance included a council of kyais, directors, curriculum officers, administrative units, development committees, and school leadership. This organizational design combined the symbolic vocabulary of the pesantren with Muhammadiyah's legal-rational administration.

The documentary evidence therefore establishes a direct institutional connection between Imam Syuhodo's remembered religious significance and the formation of a modern Muhammadiyah educational institution. At the same time, the documents should not be treated as self-sufficient explanations of the entire historical process. They establish what the organization formally decided and how it articulated the significance of the name, while interviews and local historical accounts illuminate the social negotiations, memories, and conflicts that preceded the decision. The evidence is strongest when these sources are read in relation rather than collapsed into a single narrative.

The pesantren did more than commemorate an individual. It converted communicative memory into cultural memory in Assmann's (2008) sense. Stories previously transmitted through families, mosque communities, and elders were stabilized by a legal name, an organizational charter, a curriculum, a management structure, and a physical campus. The name would later be extended to other Muhammadiyah educational institutions, expanding Imam Syuhodo's identity from a village ancestor into a regional educational brand. This later development falls beyond the article's 1995 boundary, but it demonstrates the durability of the institutional choice.

Institutionalization also changed the spatial organization of memory. The tomb remained a place associated with death, ancestry, and ritual regulation. The pesantren became a place associated with youth, disciplined learning, leadership, and the future. The two sites represented different but connected modes of remembering. Muhammadiyah did not abandon the first; it shifted the center of public legitimacy toward the second. The remembered ulama became less an object from whom blessing was sought and more a name under which education was organized.

This shift should not be interpreted as the complete transfer of personal charisma into bureaucratic authority. The historical continuity is too fragmented for such a claim. Nor should it be celebrated as the final victory of modernism over tradition. The pesantren drew legitimacy from a local memory that remained larger than Muhammadiyah's official interpretation. Its significance lies precisely in this duality: it was a modern organizational institution whose local credibility depended on an inherited figure that the organization had previously contested.

The educational institution, therefore, represented a practical settlement between temporal orientations. Local heritage gave the project historical depth, while Muhammadiyah's administrative system gave memory organizational durability. The name Syuhodo enabled the pesantren to speak simultaneously of origin and reform. It domesticated neither side completely; rather, it created a structure in which a selected form of the past could authorize a modern educational future.

4.5 Writing Back, Decolonizing Archives, and the Relevance to SDGs

The Wonorejo case contributes to writing back local history by revising two macro-narratives at once. First, it challenges the view that Muhammadiyah's rural growth was a linear diffusion of modernist doctrine. Local expansion was shaped by memories and authorities that preceded the organization. Second, it challenges the claim that Islamic modernism necessarily destroyed local heritage. Muhammadiyah actors in Wonorejo contested ritual practices while retaining the ulama, tomb, mosque, and historical name through selective reconstruction.

A decolonizing approach changes the status of local sources in this reconstruction. Oral accounts are not used merely to add color to an organizational chronology already established by written documents. They disclose the conflict, emotional stakes, and mechanisms of reconciliation that the formal decrees omit. Conversely, organizational archives prevent oral narratives from becoming an undifferentiated heroic story. The 1994 decree confirms institutional action and explicitly documents the historical and religious significance attached to the choice of Imam Syuhodo's name. Reading these materials against one another reveals both community agency and the ways in which institutional memory was deliberately constructed.

The approach also resists the assumption that local knowledge is singular. The tomb

controversy produced competing local epistemologies. Descendants, ritual visitors, reformist youth, organizational elders, mosque administrators, women educators, and state authorities did not attach the same meaning to the site. Writing back must preserve this plurality rather than replace a national Muhammadiyah history with a local Muhammadiyah triumph. The most valuable contribution of oral history is therefore not simply confirmation of the organization's story, but access to disagreement over what the community's Islamic past should mean.

The case has a restrained but meaningful relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals. It would be anachronistic to claim that actors in 1987 or 1994 pursued the SDGs, which were adopted in 2015. The historical relevance lies in the type of social process documented. The establishment of a community-rooted educational institution aligns with SDG 4's emphasis on inclusive, quality education. The mechanisms of deliberation, reconciliation, recognition of local stakeholders, and institutional accountability correspond with SDG 16's concern for peaceful and inclusive institutions (United Nations, 2015).

The connection is not that education automatically resolves religious conflict. Rather, the pesantren became possible after the contested memory of Imam Syuhodo had been reorganized into a form capable of supporting cooperation. History suggests that strong institutions cannot be built solely through bureaucratic design. They require legitimacy among communities that possess their own memories, moral languages, and custodial claims. Recognizing these claims while subjecting them to open deliberation is part of what makes an institution locally sustainable.

For contemporary Muhammadiyah institutions, the implication is equally direct. Preserving the 1994 documents, digitizing local organizational records, recording multiple oral testimonies, and documenting the tomb and mosque are not antiquarian activities. They are practices of institutional transparency. They enable later generations to understand that their institution emerged from negotiation rather than inevitability. Such knowledge can temper triumphalism and strengthen the capacity to address future conflicts over religious heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

The transformation of Kyai Imam Syuhodo's memory in Wonorejo was neither a straightforward survival of eighteenth-century charisma nor a complete modernist rupture with local tradition. It was a contested historical process in which religious authority, local heritage, and organizational reform were continuously renegotiated. During the 1980s, the tomb became an arena in which different groups disputed the legitimate meaning of religious remembrance. Oral accounts of the 1987 incident preserve the depth of this conflict, although contemporary legal documentation has not yet been located. Subsequent practices of sowan, musyawarah, and islah helped repair social relationships while redefining acceptable forms of remembrance.

Through these negotiations, Muhammadiyah did not erase Imam Syuhodo from local memory. Instead, it selectively emphasized aspects of his remembered identity that could support tajdid, particularly Qur'anic literacy, religious teaching, moral leadership, and education. This reconstruction enabled the same name, previously associated with a contested ritual site, to become the foundation for a modern educational institution. The 1994 decree is particularly significant because it explicitly connects the choice of the name Imam Syuhodo with the historical and religious significance of the figure for Wonorejo**.** The naming decision was therefore not merely a retrospective attribution constructed through later oral memory; it was already articulated as an institutional choice at the moment of the pesantren's formation. The decree and the institution's opening in 1995 consequently transformed a locally transmitted and contested memory into a more durable cultural and organizational form.

The Wonorejo case revises macro-historical accounts of Muhammadiyah by demonstrating that rural reform was not simply a linear diffusion of modernist doctrine from organizational centers. It was produced through encounters with local authority, inherited religious memory, conflict, mediation, and institutional negotiation. The case also clarifies the meaning of writing back. Restoring local voices does not require treating oral memory as transparent historical fact. Rather, it requires recognizing oral traditions, material sites, family recollections, women's educational work, and organizational archives as different forms of evidence that can interrogate one another. Their tensions

reveal not only what communities remember, but also how historical knowledge and institutional legitimacy are constructed.

The Wonorejo experience further suggests that religious heritage can contribute to peaceful and inclusive institutions when it is neither uncritically sacralized nor forcibly erased. Its institutionalization through education offers a historically grounded contribution to contemporary discussions of SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive institutions. This connection should not be understood anachronistically: the historical actors examined in this study did not act according to the contemporary SDG framework. Rather, the Wonorejo case demonstrates how community-rooted education, social reconciliation, and recognition of local historical legitimacy can contribute to the formation of durable institutions.

This study nevertheless has several limitations. The 1987 incident remains primarily supported by convergent oral testimony because contemporary police, court, or newspaper documentation has not yet been located. The original documentary evidence for the 1928 and 1953 organizational milestones also requires further archival verification. In addition, the study remains centered largely on Muhammadiyah and community actors connected to the institutional history of Imam Syuhodo. Future research should therefore seek further documentation of the 1987 controversy, verify the earlier organizational decrees, and incorporate testimonies from residents outside Muhammadiyah to recover perspectives that remain underrepresented in the historical record.

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