

**Onderwerp: Essay Interfaith Conferences Yogyakarta 20-22 juni 2023  
Essay Partnership Muhammadiyah Karangajen Yogyakarta**  
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## I. Interfaith Conferences

At the invitation of the Netherlands-Indonesia Consortium for Muslim-Christian Relations, I visited Yogyakarta June 18-25, 2023. The [NICMCR](#) is a non-governmental network of universities and social organizations in the Netherlands and Indonesia, consisting of Islamic and Christian scientists, religious leaders and professionals. The invitation was a result of my commitment to facilitating interfaith citizenship activities for Al Ummah Primary School in Enschede. Travel costs were reimbursed by the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta, which was represented at the conferences.

The conferences took place at Universitas Islam Negeri Yogyakarta ([UIN](#)) and Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana Yogyakarta ([UKDW](#)), respectively Islamic and Christian universities. The conferences at the UIN, International Conference on Scripture for Peace and Humanity, took place on June 20-21, 2023 and had the following themes: Scriptural Reasoning, Contextualist Approach, Social Reception. The central theme of the conference at the UKDW on June 22, 2023 was Decolonizing Religion. See attachments at the bottom of this section for programs and speakers by clicking on the images.

The speakers and topics were diverse. Attention was paid to Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (pesantrens), which are attended by 22% of the students and therefore play a role in the education of students and the interpretation of the Quran in relation to hermeneutics, semantics and semiotics. There is an 'Indonesian variant' of religious experience, just as a local variant influenced by cultural characteristics is also visible to a greater or lesser extent in other Islamic countries. My conclusion is that the experience of Islam on the pesantrens is linear, but as a result of the diversity that characterizes Indonesian society, there is also flexibility and broad acceptance of diversity. Indonesia has six 'accepted religions'. This in itself is broad and 'open minded', but smaller local religious interpretations and older animistic customs are excluded. See attachment at the end of this section by clicking on the image.

A second central theme was gender issues and the role of Muslim women in Europe and Indonesia. Example case was a study into women's circles in Scotland and freedom of choice in clothing (hijab vs niqab). In addition, Islamic Feminism and Islamic Reform, Patriarchy, etc. were discussed. Similar themes were then discussed from Christian, Hindu and Buddhist perspectives. Smaller lectures took place simultaneously with a choice of 60 papers presented by students. I attended a lecture about local influences on Lombok. This study addressed the scope for these local influences in relation to social cohesion and maintaining a balance between individual interests and group interests and national interests with a view to a safe, peaceful and prosperous society. We also looked at how local traditions such as Si Tou Timou Tou can contribute to tolerance. See attachment at the bottom of this paragraph by clicking on the image.

The situation in Indonesia differs from the Netherlands in that, in addition to large urban conglomerations, there are also remote communities. Both societies are characterized by a high degree of diversity. The historical bond between the Netherlands as a colonizer and Indonesia as a colony was also discussed, with attention to religious colonization by the Netherlands. Examples of this are the restrictions imposed on Indonesians when it comes to taking up public positions or availing themselves of education, as long as they did not convert to Christianity. This can be seen as a lesson for the current influence of Islam on daily life or rather: the desired influence of politicians through the use of Islam. With the exception of Aceh, Indonesia has no Islamic law.



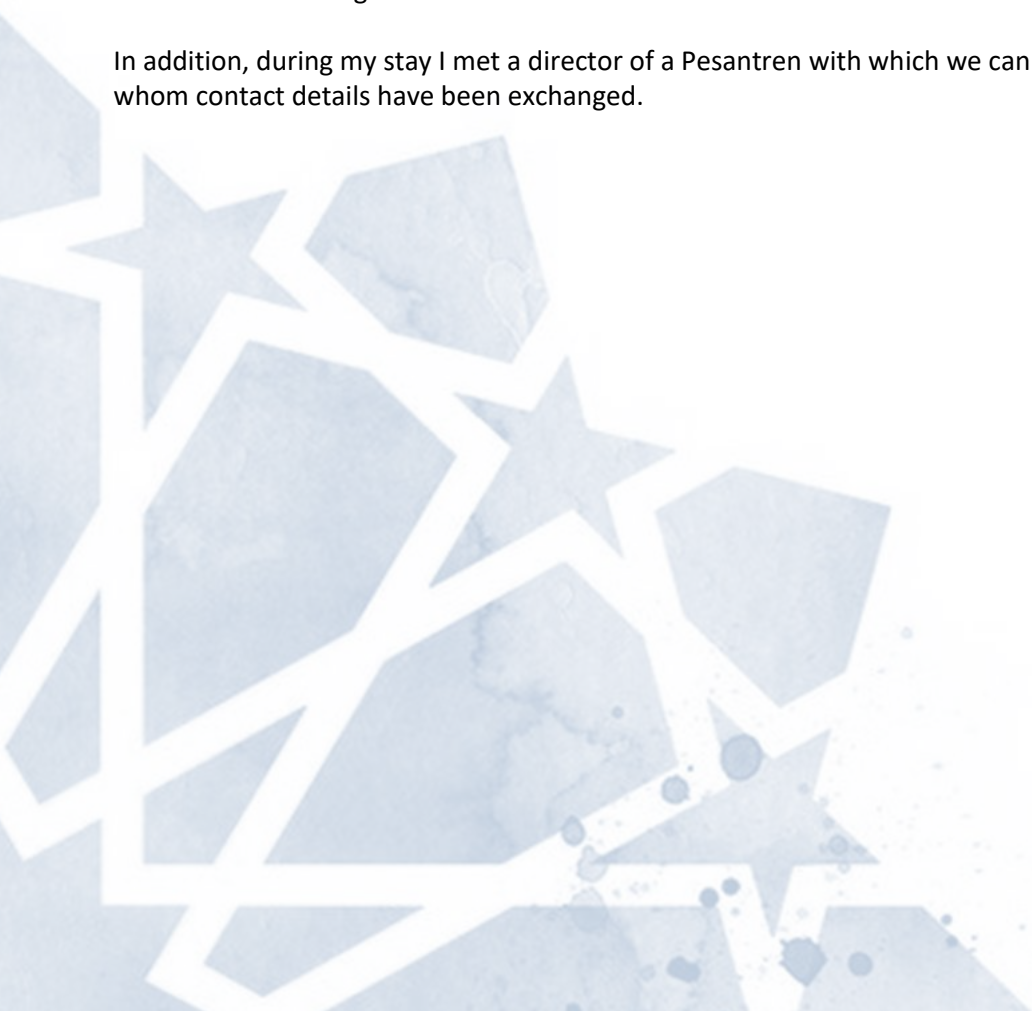
## II. School visit and collaboration

Through an Indonesian parent of my school, I came into contact with an Islamic primary school in Yogyakarta (not a pesantren), [Sekolah Dasar Karangkejèn](#), who wanted to contact another Islamic school in Europe. I visited the school on June 19, 2023; I was given a tour of the school, attended presentations by school employees and gave a presentation myself. See attachment at the bottom of this paragraph by clicking on the image.

The possibilities for collaboration were then discussed. Objectives of the collaboration are: to promote cultural understanding through cultural exchange, to help improve school performance in human capital development, especially in the areas of academic and co-curricular activities, to work together to develop the potential of our students, to have a close promote relationships between students and teachers, provide opportunities to improve the skills, efficiency and productivity of our teachers, students and staff, promote and keep Islamic principles alive, strengthen the bond between Muslims in Indonesia and the Netherlands. In practice, it will mean organizing online meetings between students from groups 8 and the corresponding classes in Indonesia: students practice their English, learn about cultural differences. We also discussed the joint organization of Quran recitation events in, for example, the month of Ramadan. There is a lot of attention for singing in Indonesian schools; there are also possibilities here. A physical exchange is more difficult to organize, but we would find this very valuable and would like to explore the possibilities for this, if contact continues and both parties continue to see the added value of this.

The school is affiliated with the Indonesian [Muhammadiyah Organization](#). This is a movement that is described as conservative and rigid (Haidar, 2015) and, for example, is strongly opposed to syncretism and also supports conversion therapy in schools, although there are different views within the movement. So I had the prejudice that the school could be fairly strict in teaching (narrow identity) and disciplined. In practice, this only indicated the headscarf obligation for girls and women and the school uniform for both students and teachers. At the same time, men and women worked together and the employees showed an open vision towards those who think differently. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly. Children were allowed to talk over each other, or at least they did, and laughed without anything being said immediately. There were also regular lessons, Quran lessons, music lessons, mixed classes and the school has a batik room where children can make batiks themselves. We have drawn up a cooperation agreement to ratify the intention of collaboration and agreed that we will organize a first online meeting between the teachers involved from both schools after the summer holidays.

In addition, during my stay I met a director of a Pesantren with which we can start a similar collaboration and with whom contact details have been exchanged.



### III. Other activities

Besides the conferences and contacts with the partner school, I visited mosques, a Buddhist temple, a museum, a kampung and a volcano (Merapi). The lectures in the Buddhist temple (Mendut Buddhist Monastery) and the kampung (Kampoeng Percik, Salatiga) were also aimed at interreligious dialogue. What was special about the kampung was that old Javanese traditions were studied and honored here. These were compared with how local traditions in the Netherlands found or still find their way into institutionalized religions.

Conversations took place in small settings between Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and followers of local religions.

### IV. Impression



