

## **The Sociology of Knowledge in Pesantren: Sanad, Sorogan-Bandongan, and the Making of Intellectual Authority**

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### **Abstract**

*Pesantren* intellectuals played an important role in the history of Islamic civilization in the archipelago, acting as a place to preserve and develop Islamic science from the first kings in the modern period. This research uses qualitative methods with a sociology of knowledge approach. This approach is combined with a historical-sociological perspective. This combination allows the research not only to describe the practices of knowledge transmission but also to uncover the social structures and epistemological meanings that underpin the legitimacy of ulama and the intellectual networks of *Pesantren*. This research aims to provide a complete image of four main directions: The intellectual network of *Pesantrens*, the Intellectual discourse that is built, the mechanism of knowledge dissemination and the network of scholars are formed. First, the intellectual scope of the *pesantren* is understood as the history of institutions that combine the tradition of the golden book, practice sulfur and local social dynamics, thus creating unique Intellectual habits. Second, the Intellectual discourse of *Pesantrens* is carried out through research programs based on *Nadhir*, *Syarah* and *Hasyiah*, where the process of *Tarjih* and *Takhrij* encourages internal criticism while maintaining the authenticity of the *Sanad*. Third, the dissemination of knowledge occurs by the personal relationship between the methods of *Kyai* and *Santri*, *Bandongan*, *Sorogan* and *Halaqah*, strengthened by the *Sanad* Diploma; This model results in a structured and sustainable community of researchers. Fourth, the network of *pesantren* transcends geographical boundaries, formed by the activities of *Santri* in Islamic research centers in the Middle East and once again distributing new domestic knowledge and methods, creating a transnational network. Adaptive distribution and network models reinforce the role of considering maintaining the continuity of Islamic science and expanding its effects on a global scale.

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### **Abstrak**

Intelektual Pesantren memainkan peran penting dalam sejarah peradaban Islam di kepulauan, bertindak sebagai tempat untuk melestarikan dan mengembangkan sains Islam dari raja pertama di periode modern. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan sosiologi pengetahuan. Pendekatan ini dipadukan dengan perspektif historis-sosiologis. Dengan kombinasi ini, penelitian tidak hanya mendeskripsikan praktik transmisi ilmu, tetapi juga mengungkap struktur sosial dan makna epistemologis yang menopang legitimasi ulama dan jaringan intelektual pesantren. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan citra lengkap dari empat arah utama: Rangkaian intelektual pesantren, wacana ilmiah yang dibangun, mekanisme penyebaran pengetahuan dan jaringan ulama dibentuk. Pertama, ruang lingkup intelektual pesantren dipahami sebagai sejarah institusi yang menggabungkan tradisi buku emas, mempraktikkan sulfur dan dinamika sosial lokal, sehingga menciptakan kebiasaan ilmiah yang unik. Kedua, pidato ilmiah Pesantren dilakukan melalui



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program penelitian berbasis Nadhir, Syarah dan Hasyiah, di mana proses Tarjih dan Takhrij mendorong kritik internal sambil mempertahankan keaslian Sanad. Ketiga, penyebaran pengetahuan terjadi oleh hubungan pribadi antara metode Kyai dan Santri, Bandongan, Sorogan dan Halaqah, diperkuat oleh Diploma Sanad; Model ini menghasilkan komunitas peneliti yang terstruktur dan berkelanjutan. Keempat, jaringan pesantren melebihi batas geografis, dibentuk oleh kegiatan Santri di pusat-pusat penelitian Islam di Timur Tengah dan sekali lagi mendistribusikan pengetahuan dan metode domestik baru, menciptakan jaringan transnasional. Distribusi adaptif dan model jaringan memperkuat peran mempertimbangkan mempertahankan kesinambungan sains Islam dan memperluas efeknya pada skala global.

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**Keywords** Islamic boarding schools; Islamic intellectuals; The Yellow Book; Scientific Transmission; Ulama Network.

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## Introduction

*Pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School) as an Islamic educational institution in the archipelago has strong historical roots, which are thought to have begun with the arrival of Shaykh Maulana Malik Ibrahim in Gresik in the 14th century, who brought the tradition of the teacher-student system as the initial foundation of *pesantren* in Java.<sup>1</sup>

*Pesantren* intellectuals refer to generations of scholars and students who not only master classical texts, but also develop Intellectual discourses that are adaptive to local social contexts and global challenges.<sup>2</sup> As the center of Islamic civilization, *pesantren* serve a dual function: a conservator of the Yellow Book heritage and Sufistic practices as well as an agent of methodological innovation that responds to modernity.<sup>3</sup>

The intellectual scope of the *pesantren* includes the study of theology, *fiqh*, Sufism, and the Arabic language, which are held within the framework of the Yellow Book tradition and local culture, resulting in a distinctive Intellectual habitus.<sup>4</sup> The *pesantren* curriculum is centered on the yellow book—*nadhir*, *syarah*, and *hasyiah*—where students are invited to delve into the text through the process of *takhrij*, *tarjih*, and critical commentary, although it is still based on the authority of the *sanad*.<sup>5</sup>

The epistemology of *pesantren* relies on Intellectual *sanad*, which is a chain of teachers and students that guarantees the authenticity and integrity of knowledge, in contrast to the formal academic tradition of the campus<sup>6</sup>. Classical teaching methods such as halaqah, bandongan, and sorogan reinforce

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Misbah and Bahru Rozi, "Sejarah Pesantren Dan Tradisi Keilmuannya Di Jawa," *Al-Jadwa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 1, no. 2 (March 5, 2022): 83–96, <https://doi.org/10.38073/aljadwa.v1i2.796>.

<sup>2</sup> Rangga Satria, "Intelektual Pesantren: Mempertahankan Tradisi Ditengah Modernitas," *Turast: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian* 7, no. 2 (2019): 185, <https://doi.org/10.15548/turast.v7i2.1301>.

<sup>3</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, "Traditionalist and Islamist Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia," *The Madrasa in Asia*, 2019, 217–46, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048501380-010>.

<sup>4</sup> Satria, "Intelektual Pesantren: Mempertahankan Tradisi Ditengah Modernitas."

<sup>5</sup> Ririn Inayatul Mahfudloh, "Peran Sanad Keilmuan Dalam Pengembangan Pondok Pesantren," *Qomaruna* 1, no. 1 (2023): 23–30, <https://doi.org/10.62048/qjms.v1i1.7>.

<sup>6</sup> Abuddin Nata, "Pengembangan Epistemologi Kaum Intelektual Muslim," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Ta'dibuna* 12, no. 4 (2023): 350–82, <https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v12i4.14791>.

the pattern of intensive interaction between kyai and students, encouraging the transformation of knowledge orally and in writing.<sup>7</sup>

Diplomas as a symbol of Intellectual legalization play an important role in defining the level of scholars and networks of scholars who recognize each other's Intellectual competence.<sup>8</sup> Along with the times, some *Pesantrens* have begun to open up Intellectual discourse by incorporating elements of philosophy, modern Intellectual methodology, and contemporary studies to answer global issues.<sup>9</sup>

This reform of the curriculum reflects an intellectual dynamic that is not static, moving between the classical tradition and the demands of modernity. The knowledge of *Pesantrens* is not only limited locally, but also involves students studying in Makkah, Cairo, and Intellectual institutions in the Middle East, and then bringing new methods to the country. Arabic *Pegon*, as an example of the intellectual tradition of *pesantren* shows the adaptation of the Arabic writing system for the local language, becoming an important means in the development of da'wah and Islamic culture in the archipelago.<sup>10</sup>

The intellectual traces of *Pesantren* architects from the *Wali Songo* era to Javanese scholars in the 19th century show the sustainability and innovation of *pesantren* traditions. *Pesantren* plays the role of guardians of orthodox and heterodox thinkers, as well as being involved in current political and social issues. The "virtual *pesantren* model" is increasingly popular for online learning with local wisdom. *Pesantren* also participates in community economic empowerment and women's education. The creative economy of *pesantren* has great potential in local product innovation.

The concept of pesantren pedagogy has increasingly been discussed in recent scholarship, particularly with regard to its integration of "21<sup>st</sup> century skills" such as collaboration, critical thinking, and digital literacy.<sup>11</sup> Contemporary curriculum studies show that pesantren education is no longer confined to traditional modes of transmission but has begun to incorporate modern pedagogical approaches.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the ultra-conservative variant of Salafism within certain pesantren has tested their religious dynamics and complicated their relationships with other Islamic organizations, leading to intellectual contestation and debates on authority.<sup>13</sup>

The case study of Darussalam Gontor demonstrates Imam Zarkasyi's pioneering efforts in

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<sup>7</sup> Misbah and Bahru Rozi, "Sejarah Pesantren Dan Tradisi Keilmuannya Di Jawa."

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad Suhendra, "Transmisi Keilmuan Pada Era Milenial Melalui Tradisi Sanadan Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasaniyah," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 5, no. 2 (2019): 201–12, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v5i2.859>.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Jamaluddin, "Metamorfosis Pesantren Di Era Globalisasi," *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture*, 2012, 127–39, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v20i1.57>.

<sup>10</sup> Syekh Nawawi et al., "Intelektualisme Pesantren ; Studi Genealogi Dan Jaringan" 4, no. 1 (2024).

<sup>11</sup> Abdul Malik, "New Variants of Ultra-Conservative Islamic Schools in Indonesia: A Study on Islamic School Endeavor with Islamic Group Movement," *Power and Education* 16, no. 1 (2024): 14–28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17577438231163042>.

<sup>12</sup> Aghni Zakiatun Nabila et al., "21st Century Skills Development in Modern Pesantren," *Journal of Multidisciplinary Sustainability Asean* 1, no. 3 (2024): 11–17, <https://doi.org/10.70177/ijmsa.v1i3.1124>.

<sup>13</sup> Malik, "New Variants of Ultra-Conservative Islamic Schools in Indonesia: A Study on Islamic School Endeavor with Islamic Group Movement."

modernizing pesantren through curriculum and management reforms, positioning the institution as a model of Islamic education reform in Indonesia.<sup>14</sup> Yet, this should not obscure the equally significant contributions of other pesantren with different intellectual trajectories. For instance, Tebuireng in Jombang, founded by Hadratussyaikh Hasyim Asy'ari, became a center for the reproduction of ulama and the transmission of *kitab kuning* while also engaging with socio-political movements in the early Republic.<sup>15</sup> Pesantren Lirboyo in Kediri, by contrast, maintained a highly traditionalist orientation, emphasizing the authority of *sanad* and collective *bandongan* learning, which has produced generations of influential *kiai* and jurists.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Langitan in Tuban is renowned for preserving a strong chain of transmission in classical texts while simultaneously sending alumni into broader networks of Islamic preaching and organizational leadership.<sup>17</sup>

These cases illustrate that pesantren across the archipelago not only face contemporary challenges such as digital literacy and infrastructure development but also offer diverse models of intellectual reproduction, ranging from reformist modernism to traditionalist conservatism. Alumni networks from these pesantren, whether in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, or within Indonesia itself, continue to play an active role in shaping Islamic intellectual discourse, religious diplomacy, and even political engagement.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, *pesantren* education is increasingly attentive to new issues, including the political voice of students, the integration of female perspectives, the use of digital media, and sustainability initiatives such as organic farming and interfaith dialogue for tolerance.<sup>19</sup> Taken together, these variations highlight the importance of studying *pesantren* as plural and dynamic institutions that collectively contribute to the reproduction of Islamic intellectual traditions and the shaping of Indonesian Islamic civilization.

Despite this growing body of literature, further research is still needed to comprehensively map the evolving role of Islamic boarding schools in shaping Islamic civilization and to critically assess how pedagogical innovations intersect with global religious and intellectual networks. While previous studies have largely focused on institutional reforms, political engagement, or curriculum modernization, there has been insufficient attention to the epistemic dimension of *pesantren* pedagogy, particularly the sociology of knowledge embedded in *sanad* (chains of transmission) and the classical methods of *sorogan* and *bandongan* as modes of intellectual reproduction and authority. By analyzing these dimensions, this study contributes a novel perspective on how Islamic boarding schools not only preserve but also transform Islamic intellectual traditions in response to contemporary challenges.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

This research uses a qualitative approach with a sociology of knowledge perspective. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study is not on numbers or statistics, but rather on a deeper understanding of how *sanad* and the *sorogan-bandongan* method function as social mechanisms in the formation of Intellectual authority in Islamic boarding schools. This research uses a sociology of knowledge approach to examine how *sanad* and the *sorogan-bandongan* teaching method function in the construction of intellectual authority in Islamic boarding schools. This approach is combined with a historical-sociological perspective to trace the dynamics of Intellectual transmission across generations, as well as a hermeneutic-critical approach in reading primary Islamic boarding school texts. With this combination, the research not only describes the practice of Intellectual transmission but also reveals the social structures and epistemological meanings that support the legitimacy of Islamic scholars and Islamic boarding school intellectual networks.

### **Intellectual Scope of *Pesantrens***

#### ***Pesantren as a Center of Civilization***

*Pesantren* is the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia that emerged in the 14th century and continues to survive as the center of archipelago civilization.<sup>20</sup> The *pesantren* integrates Islamic teachings from the Middle East with local wisdom, making it a unique institution in Indonesian history.<sup>21</sup> The sustainability of the *pesantren* is supported by the tradition of the yellow book and the network of teachers and students that are intertwined across generations.<sup>22</sup>

As a center of civilization, *pesantren* not only focus on teaching *fiqh* and *tafsir*, but also become a repository of social, political, and economic knowledge based on the Islamic values of the archipelago<sup>23</sup>. The *pesantren* facilitated the production and reproduction of religious texts, making them a center for the circulation of culture and science.<sup>24</sup> Through the traditional curriculum, *pesantren* form intellectuals who are able to respond to the challenges of the times without ignoring The Intellectual *sanad*.<sup>25</sup>

*Khatib* of the *Raudlatut Thalibin Pesantren* emphasized that the communal and collegial traditions in the *pesantren* have produced influential scholars in the history of Islamic science in the archipelago.<sup>26</sup> The togetherness of students and *kyai* in worship and learning activities creates a dynamic intellectual

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<sup>20</sup> DM Herman, "Sejarah Pesantren Di Indonesia," *Al-Ta'dib* 6, no. 2 (2013): 145–58.

<sup>21</sup> Cholid Abdullah, "Tradisi Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Peradaban Muslim Nusantara," *Al-A'raf Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat* XI, no. 2 (2014): 18–38.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> <https://kemenag.go.id/opini/pesantren-dan-kebudayaan-nusantara-nrsuje?>.

<sup>24</sup> Abdullah, "Tradisi Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Peradaban Muslim Nusantara."

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> <https://jabar.nu.or.id/nasional/ketum-pbnu-jelaskan-pesantren-khas-peradaban-islam-nusantara-rltnU?>. Uploaded on May 12, 2025.

climate.<sup>27</sup> This model shows *pesantren* as a node of civilization that combines spirituality and rationality.<sup>28</sup>

The tradition of *bandongan*, *sorogan*, and *halaqah* is a method of transmission of classical knowledge that maintains the authenticity of *sanad* and encourages intellectual discourse.<sup>29</sup> Through a diploma, a student is recognized for his competence and connected to a network of local and global scholars.<sup>30</sup> This system ensures the continuity of *pesantren* civilization from the time of *Wali Songo* to the contemporary era.<sup>31</sup>

*Pesantren* also facilitates cross-disciplinary dialogue by introducing the study of Sufism, *kalam*, and *adab*, so as to help build a moral and ethical civilization of the community.<sup>32</sup> The classical works studied became the foundation of a moderate and inclusive socio-political discourse.<sup>33</sup> Thus, *pesantren* function as a laboratory for the formation of the character of the archipelago's Islamic civilization.<sup>34</sup>

During the colonial period, *pesantren* became the basis of intellectual resistance against the colonizers through fatwas and treatises, making it a center of civilization as well as a center of socio-political activities.<sup>35</sup> The kyai became community leaders who played a role in social mobilization and local cultural conservation.<sup>36</sup> This confirms the position of *pesantren* as the guardian of the archipelago's Islamic civilization and identity.

The development of modern *Pesantrens* includes elements of the national curriculum and digital literacy, expanding the scope of science while strengthening the global civilization network.<sup>37</sup> E-learning and online platforms are a new means for *Pesantrens* to disseminate knowledge without geographical boundaries.<sup>38</sup> This transformation affirms *pesantren* as a center of civilization that is adaptive to technological advances.

Women's *Pesantren* education expands the role of civilization with a special lodge for female students who educated holistic manner. They become agents of community change and strengthen

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<sup>27</sup> Dzulkifli Hadi Imawan Syarif Firdaus, "Ulama Nusantara Abad KE-19: Masa Penjajahan Dan Puncak Intelektual Haramain," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 10, no. 2 (2024): 95–113, <http://journal.um-surabaya.ac.id/index.php/Ah>.

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Hanif et al., "Pesantren Resistance To Indonesia'S National Curriculum To Defend Its Curriculum Model," *Revista de Gestao Social e Ambiental* 18, no. 7 (2024): 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n7-049>.

<sup>29</sup> Abdullah, "Tradisi Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Peradaban Muslim Nusantara."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Nurul Hak, "The Islamic Intellectual Network Between Nusantara And Central Asia In The 19th And 20th Century: An In-Depth Analysis Of Intellectual Traces, Genealogy And Knowledge Transfer," *Islamic History and Literature* 2, no. 2 (May 3, 2024): 92–107, <https://doi.org/10.62476/ihl22.92>.

<sup>34</sup> Yusno Abdullah Otta, "Dinamisasi Tradisi Islam Di Era Globalisasi: Studi Atas Tradisi Keagamaan Kampung Jawa Tondano," *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 10, no. 1 (2016): 85–114, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsr.v10i1.1153>.

<sup>35</sup> Mu'ammar, "Pilar-Pilar Peradaban Pesantren; Potret Potensi Dan Peran Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Peradaban," *Jurnal Madaniyah* VII, no. 2 (2014): 259–76.

<sup>36</sup> Fahmi Irhamsyah and Maria Ulfaj Anshor, "Kontribusi Gerakan Sosial Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)Dalam Isu Gender Dam Pemberdayaan Perempuan Di Indonesia," *The International Journal of PEGON* 11 (2023): 1–28.

<sup>37</sup> Nabila et al., "21st Century Skills Development in Modern Pesantren."

<sup>38</sup> Abdullah, "Tradisi Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Peradaban Muslim Nusantara."

gender inclusion. *Pesantrens* also support the economy through Islamic value-based businesses, such as cooperatives and organic farming.<sup>39</sup> *Hebitren* and IKRA Indonesia are examples of *pesantren* collaboration in advancing the welfare of the people.

The alumni network of *Pesantrens*, especially *Gontor*, creates a global community for intellectual exchanges between Indonesia and the Middle East. Research collaboration and conferences increase the role of *Pesantrens* in Islamic civilization. Alumni spread Islamic values, while the *Pegon* script showed creativity in education and *da'wah*. *Pesantren* gives direction to *fatwa* and ethics, so that it receives respect from the government and the community. *Kyai* and *pesantren* influence public policy, strengthening their legitimacy in shaping societal norms.<sup>40</sup>

Recent studies highlight the role of *Pesantrens* in *deradicalization*, using a network of clerics to counter extremist ideas. Moderate schools foster dialogue and *rahmah da'wah* to promote tolerant Islam. This initiative demonstrates the strategic importance of these schools in ensuring peace. In essence, *pesantren* serve as the heart of Islamic culture in the region, blending education, culture, economics, and intellectual diplomacy while continuing to grow and maintain traditional roots.<sup>41</sup> Its role as a center of civilization emphasizes the urgency of further research to strengthen the role of *pesantren* in the future.

### Epistemology and Intellectual Tradition

The Intellectual tradition of *pesantren* is based on *sanad ilmu*, a chain of teachers and students that ensures the authenticity of knowledge, as well as mastery of the disciplines of theology, *fiqh*, and Sufism<sup>42</sup>. The Sufistic approach of *kiai* and the classical study of the yellow book gave birth to a comprehensive Intellectual discourse, integrating rational and spiritual aspects.

*Pesantren* inherits classical Islamic epistemology that places *sanad* a chain of teachers and students as the foundation of the legitimacy of knowledge, so that every knowledge taught has a trace of authority until the Prophet PBUH. This concept is different from the modern academic paradigm, which focuses more on empirical validation and peer review.<sup>43</sup>

In the realm of *bayānī*, *pesantren* emphasizes literal and contextual interpretations of the yellow book, such as *nadhir*, *syarah*, and *hasyiah*, so that students are able to understand the original meaning of classical texts without ignoring the local context of the archipelago. The process of *takhrij* (tracing the origins of *sanad*) and *tarjih* (comparing the opinions of scholars) hones the analytical skills of students within the framework of traditional epistemology.

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<sup>39</sup> Mu`ammar, "Pilar-Pilar Peradaban Pesantren; Potret Potensi Dan Peran Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Peradaban."

<sup>40</sup> Abdullah, "Tradisi Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Peradaban Muslim Nusantara."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Sri Maryati, "Islamic Intellectual Traditions and Their Relevance to Educational Institutions in Indonesia," *Sustainable Jurnal Kajian Mutu Pendidikan* 6, no. 2 (2023): 643–49, <https://doi.org/10.32923/kjmp.v6i2.4077>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

As intellectual discourse progressed, the realm of *burhānī* began to be adopted by some contemporary *pesantren* that integrated rationality and Intellectual methods to answer the challenges of modernity, without letting go of the *sufistic* values ('*irfānī*) that animate spiritual knowledge.<sup>44</sup> This update is reflected in the literature on "*Burhānī* Epistemology," which shows an increase in rational thinking patterns in visionary *Pesantrens*.

Proponents of the classical tradition argue that the focus on rationality can overlook the spiritual and *sanad* aspects, so *pesantren* teaching needs to be balanced between *bayānī*, *burhānī*, and '*irfānī*. This is supported by the study of *Ushūl al-Fiqh*, which combines reason and text. Intellectual *sanad* in *pesantren* builds public trust in kyai and plays a role in deradicalization. The *halaqah*, *bandongan*, and *sorogan* methods create dialogical learning. *Ijāzah* connects students with local and global scholars.

The tradition of *pesantren* develops through alumni, collaboration, and e-learning to face the challenges of Society 5. 0. *Pesantrens* such as Darussalam Gontor show how the tradition of classical scholars is managed in modern institutions with an integrated curriculum and a strong network. The Intellectual tradition of *pesantren* affirms the *pesantren* as a center of civilization that not only preserves the heritage of classical Islam, but also gives birth to intellectual innovations that are relevant to the development of the times and maintain the Islamic identity in the Nusantara.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Pesantren* Intellectual Discourse**

#### ***Kitab Kuning* and Traditional Criticism**

*Kitab Kuning* (the yellow books) dominate the *pesantren* curriculum, forming the frame of mind of students in understanding classical texts.<sup>46</sup> The process of *takhrij* and *tarjih* of the works of classical scholars gave rise to an internal critical methodology, albeit within traditional limits.

The yellow book is the foundation of the classical curriculum of *Pesantrens*, in the form of classical Islamic texts that contain disciplines such as *fiqh*, *tafsir*, hadith, and Sufism, printed on yellow paper without punctuation marks (*syakal*) so that it is often called the "bare book," as well as being the object of traditional criticism related to its learning methodology.<sup>47</sup>

The yellow books are studied in almost all *Pesantrens* in the archipelago as the main reference in understanding the classic *nash-nash*, confirming the authority of the *sanad* of the teachers and students that flow to the Prophet PBUH. Physically, these books are printed on low-quality paper that is easily

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<sup>44</sup> Anwar Ma'rufi et al., "Burhani Epistemology in The Scientific Development of Contemporary Pesantren," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 2 (2024): 301–14, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v5i2.937>.

<sup>45</sup> Ahmad Sulton, "The Educational Epistemology Of Traditional Pesantren," *TADRIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 17, no. 2 (2022): 380–94, <https://doi.org/10.19105/tjpi.v17i2.7044>.

<sup>46</sup> Satria, "Intelektual Pesantren: Mempertahankan Tradisi Ditengah Modernitas."

<sup>47</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning, Pesantren Dan Tarekat, Yogyakarta," *Gading Publishing*, 2012, 592.

damaged, with ink that fades quickly, so they require intensive care to maintain their sustainability.<sup>48</sup> The Intellectual tradition of *Pesantrens* emphasizes *takhrij* (tracking *sanad*) and *tarjih* (determining the opinion of the best scholars) as a form of internal criticism, which provides space for students to compare and analyze various opinions in the yellow book.<sup>49</sup> However, since the colonial and modern eras, the yellow book has been criticized as a symbol of rigid traditionalism, unresponsive to the development of contemporary science, and even seen as restricting access to new Intellectual disciplines.

Nurcholish Madjid criticized the lack of *tafsir* studies in *Pesantrens*, highlighting the dominance of *Jalalain tafsir* and the lack of diversity of *tafsir* texts such as *Tafsir al-Mizan* or *Tafsir al-Tabari*, which can narrow students' understanding. Other criticisms point to the often rote teaching methods of yellow books, where students copy and memorize without contextual discussion, so critical interactions are missed. Some scholars argue that the yellow book, despite its rich content, is often interpreted dogmatically by the kyai without involving a rational or empirical approach to modern science.<sup>50</sup>

The response to criticism in progressive *pesantren* combines textual criticism and interdisciplinary discussion. They integrate the yellow book with research methodologies. Some intellectuals are campaigning for the "whitening of the yellow book" to reprint the yellow book to make it easier to understand. The study of the "Treasures of the Yellow Book" emphasizes a critical appreciation of the yellow book. Some *Pesantrens* use digitization to provide search features and discussion forums.<sup>51</sup>

In the context of local culture, the text of the yellow book is often written in the *Pegon* script, which combines Arabic and Javanese characters. It is becoming less and less studied by the younger generation, sparking criticism of the loss of local membership. Universitas Islam Darussalam. The *halaqah* and *bandongan* methods are still maintained as a space for traditional criticism, where kyai interprets in oral texts. The students were asked to explore the meaning directly, although this discussion was sometimes poorly documented in writing.<sup>52</sup>

Overall, the traditional criticism of the yellow book highlights the need to maintain a balance between the preservation of *sanad* authority and methodological reform, so that *pesantren* remains relevant in facing the challenges of modern knowledge without losing its intellectual identity.

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<sup>48</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *The Pesantren Tradition: The Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of Traditional Islam in Java*, 1980.

<sup>49</sup> Mochammad Achsan Auza', "Pengkajian Kitab Kuning Sebagai Tonggak Keilmuan Di Pondok Al Utsmani Mochammad," *INTEGRATIA: Journal of Education, Human Development, and Community Engagement* 1, no. 2 (2023): 181–92.

<sup>50</sup> Ahmad Farhanudin and Muhajir Muhajir, "Peran Kitab Kuning Dalam Pembentukan Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam Dan Karakter Santri Pada Pesantren Tradisional (Studi Di Pondok Pesantren Bany Syafi'i Cilegon Dan Madarijul 'Ulum Serang)," *Jurnal Qathruna* 7, no. 1 (2020): 103–24.

<sup>51</sup> Mochammad Achsan Auza', "Pengkajian Kitab Kuning Sebagai Tonggak Keilmuan Di Pondok Al Utsmani Mochammad."

<sup>52</sup> Muhammad Ardiansyah, "Kitab Kuning Dan Konstruk Nalar Pesantren," *Al'adalah* 22, no. 2 (2021): 146–57, <https://doi.org/10.35719/aladalah.v22i2.18>.

## Modernity and Openness of Discourse

Some *Pesantrens* such as those compared to Iranian hauzah have adopted an open curriculum that incorporates contemporary philosophy and thought to address modern challenges.<sup>53</sup> This effort reflects the dynamics of intellectual discourse that is not static.

Modern *Pesantrens* combine elements of traditional Islamic education with modern methodologies and systems structured curriculum grading, institutional management, and learning quality enhancement so that they adapt to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>54</sup> The integration of information and communication technology in *Pesantrens* has improved the quality of education and the ease of da'wah through the use of LMS (Learning Management System), which facilitates the delivery of materials and assessments digitally.<sup>55</sup>

The study on the "Ideal *Pesantren* Curriculum in the Digital Era" emphasizes the importance of a balance between the yellow book and modern science, including the addition of subjects such as applied mathematics, foreign languages, and basic science<sup>56</sup>. The implementation of e-learning allows students to access materials anytime and anywhere, supporting independent learning and facilitating the repetition of lessons that have not yet been understood, especially in remote areas.

The model of *Pesantrens* that are integrated with formal schools is growing, producing graduates who understand religion as well as science, economics, and technology. The "*Pesantren Ciencias*" initiative at SMA Trensains Tebuireng Jombang combines science and technology in the curriculum without sacrificing traditional values. In the Era Society 5.0, the digitization of *Pesantren* education is important to create adaptive students. The openness of pesantren to external input enriches evaluation and increases internal improvements. Some progressive *Pesantrens* also teach Islamic philosophy and contemporary issues.<sup>57</sup>

The *halaqah* forum now also utilizes digital platforms for interactive discussions, research collaborations, and webinars, expanding the reach of discourse to *Pesantrens* outside Indonesia.<sup>58</sup> The Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy study program in several *Pesantrens* has responded positively to the student community, although the challenges of logic and in-depth analysis require innovative teaching

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<sup>53</sup> Habibullah Bahwi, "Peran Intelektual Pesantren Indonesia Dan Hauzah Iran," *KARSA: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 20, no. 1 (2012): 140–51, <http://www.ejournal.stainpamekasan.ac.id/index.php/karsa/article/view/58>.

<sup>54</sup> Abul Hasan Al Asyari, "Tantangan Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren Di Era Modern," *Risalatuna: Journal of Pesantren Studies* 2, no. 1 (2022): 127, <https://doi.org/10.54471/rjps.v2i1.1572>.

<sup>55</sup> Ummu Sholihah, "Peran Ict Dalam Modernisasi Pendidikan Pondok Pesantren," *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 10, no. 1 (2012): 15, <https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v10i1.399>.

<sup>56</sup> Mukhamat Saini, "Pesantren Dalam Era Digital : Antara Tradisi Dan Transformasi," *Tasamuh: Jurnal Studi Islam* 16, no. 2 (2024): 342–56, <https://doi.org/10.25124/cosecant.v2i2.18657.2>.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Mohamad Yasin Yusuf, "Pesantren Sains: Epistemology of Islamic Science in Teaching System," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 23, no. 2 (2015): 283, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.23.2.280>.

strategies.<sup>59</sup> Cross-religious dialogue in *Pesantrens* also increases social tolerance through seminars and collaboration. Modernity in *pesantren* shows its ability to adapt without losing tradition.

## Intellectual Transmission

### Sanad and Personal Bonds

The transmission of knowledge in *Pesantrens* takes place through diploma *sanad* and personal ties of *kyai-santri*, creating a close-knit and mutually supportive Intellectual community.<sup>60</sup> The *bandongan*, *sorogan*, and *halaqah* methods affirm the continuity of tradition. Overall, *sanad*—the chain of Intellectual transmission from teacher to student to the Prophet ﷺ—became the foundation of the legitimacy of knowledge in *Pesantrens*, while the personal bond between *kyai* and students strengthened the continuous cohesion of the Intellectual community.

*Sanad* in *pesantren* serves as a guarantee of the authenticity of knowledge, where each *ijāzah* connects students with teachers, to return to the author of classical manuscripts.<sup>61</sup> This tradition ensures that the teachings passed on have authority that is recognized by the community.<sup>62</sup> The personal bond of *kyai-santri* is created through the *halaqah*, *bandongan*, and *sorogan* methods, where students sit around *kyai* for reading, explanation, and discussion of the yellow book. This pattern of intensive interaction fosters a closeness that facilitates the transfer of spiritual and ethical values, not just textual knowledge.<sup>63</sup> In the *sanad* tradition, the *ijāzah* becomes a letter of authorization after the student shows mastery of the material, marking an increase in Intellectual status and the right to teach. The receipt of *ijāzah* also strengthens the network of scholars, because each *ijāzah* recipient is recognized as part of the global Intellectual community.<sup>64</sup> Personal bonds are emotional and normative, where students learn not only from the content of the book but also examples of attitudes, behaviors, and spirituality of *kyai*. *Kiai* acts as a father figure for students, guiding them in worship, morals, and daily life.

The Intellectual *sanad* at the Al-Hasaniyah *Pesantren* shows that the transmission of knowledge through the *sanad* route affirms the moral responsibility of teachers and students in maintaining the purity of teachings.<sup>65</sup> Personal bonds in this *pesantren* are closely established thanks to the tradition of *musyahadah* (direct vision) in night recitation.

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<sup>59</sup> Darmawati H, "Persepsi Komunitas Pesantren Terhadap Program Studi Aqidah Dan Filsafat Islam," *Sulesana* 15, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>60</sup> Juraid Abdul Latief, "Pesantren: Peran Dan Kontribusi Dalam Melahirkan Intelektual Islam Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Kreatif Online* 9, no. 1 (2021): 16–22, <http://jurnal.fkip.untad.ac.id/index.php/jko/article/view/767>.

<sup>61</sup> Suhendra, "Transmisi Keilmuan Pada Era Milenial Melalui Tradisi Sanadan Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasaniyah."

<sup>62</sup> Mahfudloh, "Peran Sanad Keilmuan Dalam Pengembangan Pondok Pesantren."

<sup>63</sup> Didiit Ruhdiyanto et al., "Peran Kiai Dalam Pembinaan Akhlak Santri Di Pondok Pesantren Pagelaran III," *JIIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 7, no. 3 (2024): 2638–44, <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v7i3.4037>.

<sup>64</sup> Alfi Qonita Badi'ati dan Ahmad Shofi Muhyiddin, "Pesantren and Islamic Transmission (Sanad) of Science," *Proceeding of Iconie IAIN Pekalongan*, 2021, 1–10.

<sup>65</sup> Suhendra, "Transmisi Keilmuan Pada Era Milenial Melalui Tradisi Sanadan Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasaniyah."

The study "The Role of Intellectual Sanad in the Development of *Pesantrens*" noted that *sanad* is not just a document, but a social capital that creates trust and social legitimacy between *kyai*, students, and the wider community. Personal bonds strengthen this social capital by forming a solidarity network that supports cooperation and knowledge exchange.<sup>66</sup>

In *Pesantren salaf*, *sanad* is strictly guarded until it reaches *mu'allif*, ensuring that classical knowledge remains intact. The personal relationship between *kyai* and students is the basis of the strength of the *pesantren*. *Sanad* allows students to follow in the footsteps of the *kyai* to Islamic studies centers in the Middle East. Personal ties support the exchange of methodologies and Intellectual discourses that are reintroduced in *pesantren*. The *sanad* research shows the documentation of the *ijāzah* and the reading notes, showing the commitment of the *pesantren* to academic accuracy.<sup>67</sup> Personal bonds are also reflected in the tradition of joint *mujahadah* and spiritual mentoring after the *ijāzah*.

In the modern context, the digitization of *sanad* with e-learning platforms facilitates *ijāzah* verification and ensures the openness of Intellectual networks. Even so, the core of personal bonds is still maintained through regular face-to-face meetings, even though they are scheduled online. Intellectual *sanad* also plays a role in the deradicalization program, where the moderate line of science is accompanied by a diploma from an established *kyai* rejecting extremist beliefs. Personal bonds support the process of resocializing students who are persuaded by radical ideas through the guidance of *kyai* and the *pesantren* community.<sup>68</sup>

In modern *Pesantrens*, some institutions combine traditional *sanad* with formal certification from the ministry, strengthening the professional recognition of students in the wider community. Nevertheless, the classical *sanad* and the personal bond of *kyai-santri* are still maintained as the main source of Intellectual authority. *Sanad* and personal bonds form the Intellectual habitus of the *pesantren*, where students grow in a collective Intellectual culture that upholds respect for science and its teachers. This tradition makes *pesantren* science not only a collection of texts, but also a shared life experience.

Thus, *sanad* and personal ties are the two main pillars of the transmission of *Pesantrens*, which together maintain the continuity and authenticity of Islamic knowledge in the archipelago and strengthen local and global ulema networks.

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<sup>66</sup> Mahfudloh, "Peran Sanad Keilmuan Dalam Pengembangan Pondok Pesantren."

<sup>67</sup> Nurul Hak et al., *Melacak Transmisi Keilmuan Pesantren* (Yogyakarta: Semesta Aksara, 2021), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/57669/>.

<sup>68</sup> Mahfudloh, "Peran Sanad Keilmuan Dalam Pengembangan Pondok Pesantren."

## Historical Footprint and Global Network

*Pesantren*, as an Islamic educational institution in Indonesia has long historical roots, starting from the 15th century.<sup>69</sup> One of the early examples is the Ampel Denta *Pesantren* in Surabaya, which was founded by Sunan Ampel. He not only taught religious knowledge, but also instilled the noble values of civilization in the students. One of his students, Sunan Giri, continued this tradition in Gresik, making the *pesantren* a center for Islamic intellectualism and development in the eastern region of the archipelago.<sup>70</sup>

*Walisongo's Role in the Spread of Islam*, *Walisongo* plays an important role in the spread of Islam in Indonesia through cultural and educational approaches. They established *Pesantrens* as a means of da'wah and education, which later developed into influential Islamic Intellectual centers in various regions of the archipelago. Transmission of Knowledge Through Sanad in One of the characteristics of *pesantren* is the system of Intellectual transmission through *sanad*, which is a chain of teachers that is connected to the Prophet ﷺ. This tradition ensures the authenticity and authority of the science taught, as well as forming a vast and trusted Intellectual network.

The Global Network of Islamic Scholars in terms of Islamic Sciences studied in *Pesantrens* has a global network, because it involves interaction with scholars from various countries.<sup>72</sup> This creates a multicultural tradition in the *pesantren* and an inclusive and tolerant worldview. The Role of *Pesantrens* in Islamic Civilization, *Pesantrens* not only function as educational institutions, but also as the center of Islamic civilization in Indonesia. They contribute to shaping society's social, cultural, and spiritual values, as well as being a bulwark of defense against negative influences from outside.<sup>73</sup>

The Influence of *Pesantrens* in the Colonial Period, *Pesantrens* were often located in remote rural or remote areas. However, they still play an important role in maintaining their Islamic identity and local culture, as well as being the center of resistance to colonialism.<sup>74</sup> Over time, *Pesantrens* began to open themselves up to change and modernization. They integrate general sciences into the curriculum, as well as adopt information technology to improve the quality of education and expand the reach of da'wah.

*Pesantrens* and globalization, *Pesantrens* face new challenges and opportunities. They strive to

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<sup>69</sup> Muhammad Idris Usman, "Pesantren Sebagai Lembaga Pendidikan Islam (Sejarah Lahir, Sistem Pendidikan, Dan Perkembangannya Masa Kini)," *Jurnal Al Hikmah* XIV, no. 1 (2013): 101–19.

<sup>70</sup><https://unkafa.ac.id/merawat-pesantren-merawat-rumah-indonesia-dan-peradaban/>. Uploaded on May 12, 2025.

<sup>71</sup> Suhendra, "Transmisi Keilmuan Pada Era Milenial Melalui Tradisi Sanadan Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasaniyah."

<sup>72</sup> Fawaidah hasanah Fawaidah, "Lingkaran Keilmuan Ulama Pesantren Abad 17-18 (Analisis Buku Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad 17-18 Karya Prof. Azyumardi Azra)," *Tafhim Al-'Ilmi* 14, no. 2 (2023): 310–20, <https://doi.org/10.37459/tafhim.v14i2.6456>.

<sup>73</sup> Muhammad Idris Usman, "Pesantren Sebagai Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Al Hikmah* 14, no. 1 (2013): 101–19.

<sup>74</sup> Agus Agus Susilo and Ratna Wulansari, "Sejarah Pesantren Sebagai Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," *Tamaddun: Jurnal Kebudayaan Dan Sastra Islam* 20, no. 2 (2020): 83–96, <https://doi.org/10.19109/tamaddun.v20i2.6676>.

maintain Intellectual traditions while adapting to the times, including collaborating with international educational institutions and sending students to study abroad. The role of *pesantren* alumni in the Islamic world in *Pesantren* alumni often continue their studies in the Middle East and other countries, then return to Indonesia with new knowledge and experience. They play a role in strengthening global Intellectual networks and enriching the intellectual traditions of *Pesantrens*.<sup>75</sup>

*Pesantren* is known as a center for the study of the yellow book, which is the classic Islamic literature that is the main reference in various Islamic disciplines.<sup>76</sup> Through this study, *pesantren* maintain and develop a rich and profound Islamic intellectual heritage. The contribution of *pesantren* in national education, *pesantren* makes a significant contribution to Indonesian national education.<sup>77</sup> They not only educate students in the religious field, but also equip them with relevant skills and knowledge to face the challenges of the times.

The social network of *pesantren* is not only about religious science, but also creates a strong social network. The relationship between kiai, students, and the community builds social capital for a harmonious community. *Pesantrens* also play a role in deradicalization with moderate and inclusive education, as well as developing economic empowerment programs such as skills training and cooperatives.<sup>78</sup> This shows the role of *pesantren* in improving the welfare of the people holistically.

The future of *Pesantrens* in the digital era, *Pesantrens* are faced with the challenge of staying relevant and adaptive.<sup>79</sup> By utilizing information technology and strengthening global networks, *pesantren* can continue to contribute to the development of Islamic science and civilization in Indonesia and the world.

## Conclusion and Theoretical Implications: Reframing Pesantren Epistemology in the Age of Society 5.0

*Pesantrens* in Indonesia are centers of Islamic education that emphasize the teaching of religious sciences and ulema networks. The relationship between kiai and students, as well as the Intellectual *sanad* that connects the kiai with the teacher to the Prophet ﷺ maintain the authenticity and authority

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<sup>75</sup> Nurul Hak et al., *Genealogi Dan Jaringan Keilmuan Pesantren Modern: Di Banten, Jawa Tengah Dan Jawa Timur*, Semesta Aksara, 2023.

<sup>76</sup> Nurul; Maharsi Hak, *Melacak Transmisi Keilmuan Pesantren Studi Atas Kajian Kitab Kuning, Hubungan Kiai-Santri Dan Genealogi Pesantren Salafiyah Di Jawa Barat* (Jakarta: Direktorat Pendidikan Diniyah Dan Pondok Pesantren Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, 2022).

<sup>77</sup> Herman, "Sejarah Pesantren Di Indonesia."

<sup>78</sup> Nia Indah Purnamasari, "Konstruksi Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren Tradisional Di Era Global: Paradoks Dan Relevansi," *EL-BANAT: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2016): 73–91, <http://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/susi/index.php/elbanat/article/view/2883>.

<sup>79</sup> Faizatul Ulya and Khoirun Nikmah, "Upaya Pesantren Dalam Menjaga Tradisi Sanad Keilmuan Di Era Society 5.0," *Jurnal Mudarrisuna: Media Kajian Pendidikan Agama Islam* 14, no. 1 (2024): 18, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jm.v14i1.20668>.

of the knowledge taught.<sup>80</sup>

The network of Islamic scholars is not only limited to Indonesia, but is also connected to Islamic Intellectual centers in the Middle East, such as Mecca, Medina, and Cairo. Many kiai and students continue their studies at *Haramain* and Al-Azhar, then return to Indonesia to teach and establish *pesantren*, thus expanding the ulema network. For example, *Pesantren Modern Darussalam* Gontor in Ponorogo, East Java, has established a partnership with Al-Azhar University in Egypt. This partnership allows for the exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as expanding the Intellectual network of *Pesantrens* to a global level.<sup>81</sup>

Large *Pesantrens* such as Tebuireng, Lirboyo, and Langitan became Intellectual centers that produced many influential scholars by teaching religious science and forming a wide Intellectual network. The tradition of recitation of the yellow book connects students in the network. *Pesantrens* also played a role in the formation of religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Wathan in Lombok, which established many madrasah. Overall, *pesantren* form an influential Intellectual network in Indonesia and contribute to the development of inclusive and tolerant Islamic science, and need to be supported as an Intellectual center.<sup>82</sup>

Alongside domestic transformations, *pesantren* are increasingly embedded within transnational Islamic intellectual circuits. The global ulama network once mapped by Azra through the Malay–Hijaz–Cairo connection has now expanded into new arenas of exchange—Middle Eastern alumni communities, global academic collaborations, and virtual learning ecosystems.<sup>83</sup> Gontor alumni networks in the Middle East, for example, function not only as communities of religious diplomacy but also as transnational knowledge brokers who mediate between classical Islamic scholarship and modern disciplines. “Comparatively, *pesantren* like Tebuireng and Lirboyo maintain a traditionalist structure but have extended their influence through digital da’wah, international conferences, and cross-institutional research projects.<sup>84</sup> These networks reaffirm that *pesantren* act as nodes within a broader Islamic epistemic system—what<sup>85</sup> would call an “intelligent infrastructure of knowledge,” balancing between sacred transmission and algorithmic circulation. Thus, the *sanad* of contemporary *pesantren* must be understood not only as a religious chain but also as a social network of trust, recognition, and

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<sup>80</sup><https://an-nur.ac.id/blog/jaringan-keilmuan-di-nusantara-sejarah-peran-dan-dampaknya.html?>. Uploaded on May 12, 2025

<sup>81</sup> Abdul Qodir, “Transmisi Keilmuan Univeritas Al-Azhar Mesir Dan Pondok Pesantren Di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Tamaddun : Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.24235/tamaddun.v9i1.7280>.

<sup>82</sup> Herman, “Sejarah Pesantren Di Indonesia.”

<sup>83</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins Of Islamic Reformism In Southeast Asia: Networks Of Malay-Indonesian And Middle, University of Hawai'i Press* (Hawai: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

<sup>84</sup> Dhita Purwaningtyas and Muhamad Syauqillah, “Indonesian Transnational Community in the Middle East: The Case of Gontor Alumni Association,” 2020, 432–43, <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.6-11-2019.2297301>.

<sup>85</sup> Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, PublicAffairs, vol. 5, 2019, [@Public\\_Affairs](http://www.publicaffairsbooks.com).

symbolic capital.<sup>86</sup>

This transnational expansion has important sociological implications. *First*, it shows that pesantren are not isolated “traditional” institutions but dynamic agents within global Islamic knowledge flows. *Second*, it reveals how local epistemologies engage with global modernity, producing hybrid forms of Islamic intellectualism that are both rooted and cosmopolitan. Finally, this dynamic contributes to Indonesia’s cultural diplomacy, projecting pesantren as models of moderate, dialogical Islam that integrate tradition, modernity, and sustainability.<sup>87</sup>

This study has demonstrated that the pesantren, as an indigenous Islamic educational institution, continues to evolve epistemologically and sociologically in response to the challenges of Society 5.0 and global ideological shifts. The traditional epistemology based on sanad, ijazah, and textual transmission has not disappeared but has been recontextualized through digital infrastructures, research-oriented pedagogy, and global scholarly interactions. This transformation indicates an epistemological shift—from a model of personal authority to a model of networked legitimacy, where Islamic knowledge is validated through both traditional chains and digital-social networks of trust and recognition.

From a theoretical perspective, this shift invites a new framework for understanding pesantren within the sociology of knowledge. Rather than viewing pesantren merely as custodians of tradition, they must be conceptualized as “epistemic communities”.<sup>88</sup> That mediate between sacred knowledge and modern rationality. In this sense, pesantren represent a hybrid epistemology—anchored in classical Islam but open to rational, empirical, and technological dimensions. Such hybridity challenges the binary distinction between “traditional” and “modern” Islam often found in Western discourse.<sup>89</sup>

Theoretically, this article contributes to the ongoing debate on Islamic epistemology and globalization by proposing that sanad—traditionally understood as a genealogical chain, should also be seen as a social and digital network that adapts to global transformations. Integrating Bourdieu’s concept of social capital and Castells’ network society, pesantren can be analyzed as institutions that produce not only religious authority but also symbolic capital in the global Islamic knowledge economy.<sup>90</sup><sup>91</sup> This conceptual innovation positions pesantren as agents of epistemological negotiation,

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<sup>86</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, The Forms of Capital. ” in Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education., ed. J. G. Richardson, Greenwood Press (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

<sup>87</sup> Firman Noor, “Pesantren, Sustainability, and Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia,” Journal of Islamic Studies, 2021.

<sup>88</sup> Peter M Haas, “Epistemic Communities Introduction,” International Organization 46, no. 1 (1992): 1–35, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706951>.

<sup>89</sup>Azra, The Origins Of Islamic Reformism In Southeast Asia: Networks Of Malay-Indonesian And Middle.

<sup>90</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “THE FORMS OF CAPITAL,” The Sociology of Economic Life, Third Edition, 2018, 1–543, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494338>.

<sup>91</sup> Mariana C. Castells, The Rise of The Network Society, ed. Mariana C. Castells, Wiley Blackwell, vol. I (Totowa, NJ: Humana Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-60327-951-2>.

capable of transforming global knowledge into local wisdom and vice versa.

Practically, these findings have three major implications:

1. For Islamic Education: Policymakers and educators should strengthen digital literacy in pesantren without compromising adab and sanad ethics. Hybrid learning systems and digital halaqah can enhance the accessibility of classical texts while maintaining intellectual authenticity.
2. For Deradicalization and Ideological Resilience: The pesantren's moderate epistemology provides an effective framework for countering extremist narratives. Embedding critical reasoning and socio-digital awareness in pesantren curricula can nurture balanced Islamic intellectuals who combine spirituality with civic responsibility.
3. For Cultural Diplomacy: The expansion of pesantren networks across the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Western academia constitutes a form of Islamic cultural diplomacy. It projects Indonesia's model of Islam Nusantara—tolerant, dialogical, and sustainable—on the global stage, strengthening Indonesia's role as a soft power in promoting peace and pluralism.<sup>92</sup> The epistemological transformation of *pesantren* in the digital era signifies more than institutional adaptation; it represents a broader reconfiguration of Islamic civilization itself. *Pesantren* stand not only as guardians of tradition but also as architects of intellectual modernity, ensuring that Islamic knowledge remains living, ethical, and dialogical in an age of technological and ideological acceleration. Future research should deepen this analysis by employing network ethnography or digital hermeneutics to map how *pesantren* negotiate authority and knowledge in the era of artificial intelligence and post human epistemologies.

### **Epistemological Shifts in Pesantren in the Era of Society 5.0**

The epistemological transformation of pesantren in the Society 5.0 era manifests through hybrid learning models that combine traditional halaqah with digital literacy initiatives. Several pesantren, such as Tebuireng and Gontor, have integrated media production and online halaqah platforms as part of their curriculum.<sup>93</sup> This represents a shift from oral-authoritative knowledge to participatory knowledge networks, marking a new phase in Islamic intellectual transmission. In parallel, pesantren respond to ideological crises such as radicalism and moral disorientation by promoting civic religiosity and cultural diplomacy rooted in the ethics of sanad and community learning.

The epistemological foundation of pesantren, historically rooted in sanad (chains of transmission) and ijazah (authorization of knowledge), has long served as the backbone of Islamic

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<sup>92</sup> Noor, "Pesantren, Sustainability, and Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia."

<sup>93</sup> R. W. Hefner, "Islamic Education in the Digital Age," *Comparative Education Review* 64, no. 4 (2020).

intellectual authority in Indonesia.<sup>94</sup> Traditionally, this authority was sustained through sorogan and bandongan—pedagogical methods emphasizing direct interaction between kiai and santri, ensuring both mastery of text and internalization of moral discipline. However, in the context of Society 5.0—an age characterized by digital interconnectivity, automation, and the blurring of boundaries between human and technological agency—these epistemic structures are undergoing significant transformation.

Recent studies show that pesantren are reinterpreting their pedagogical logic to accommodate digital modes of learning without abandoning the ethos of adab and sanad.<sup>95</sup> The integration of online halaqah, digital kitab repositories, and hybrid learning models reflects a transition from what Berger and Luckmann<sup>96</sup> describe as “socially constructed reality” into a digitally mediated epistemic field. This shift signifies that sanad is no longer confined to personal and spatial proximity but can also operate through virtual networks of authority and trust. In other words, pesantren knowledge is adapting to what Castells calls “network society,” where legitimacy is negotiated through both traditional hierarchies and algorithmic visibility.<sup>97</sup>

This epistemological transformation does not merely modernize pesantren but reshapes its sociology of knowledge. The once-closed circle of transmission (halaqah) now coexists with digital platforms that democratize access to Islamic knowledge while simultaneously challenging conventional notions of kiai authority. Several pesantren, such as Gontor, Tebuireng, and As’adiyah, have initiated programs on digital literacy, media production, and research-based learning to align with the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These changes signal a paradigmatic shift from text-centered to context-centered epistemology, allowing pesantren to remain relevant while maintaining their intellectual authenticity.

**Table I.**  
**The Intellectual Transmission and Scholarly Networks of Contemporary Pesantren in Indonesia**

No.	Pesantren	Geographical Scope & Orientation	Core Scholarly Focus	Modes of Knowledge Transmission	Intellectual & Ulama Networks
1	Darussalam Gontor, Ponorogo	National-International; Reformist-Modernist orientation	Integrative curriculum: Islamic sciences, general sciences, language studies	<i>Bandongan, sorogan, halaqah, modern classroom, digital learning</i>	Alumni networks in Middle East and Southeast Asia; Islamic diplomacy and interfaith forums

<sup>94</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai Dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia*, 8th ed. (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011).

<sup>95</sup> D Wahid, “Pesantren and Digital Islam in Indonesia,” *Studia Islamika* 29, no. 1 (2022).

<sup>96</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin Book (New Zealand: Penguin Book, 1966), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315775357>.

<sup>97</sup> Castells, *The Rise of The Network Society*.

2	Tebuireng, Jombang	National; Moderate–Traditional orientation	<i>Hadith, fiqh, national leadership, socio-religious reform</i>	<i>Bandongan, musyawarah kitab, modern teacher-student mentoring</i>	Networks with NU, universities, and Islamic thinkers; historical link to KH Hasyim Asy'ari's sanad
3	Lirboyo, Kediri	Regional–National; Traditionalist orientation	<i>Deep fiqh, ushul fiqh, and tasawuf</i>	<i>Classical sorogan and bandongan with preservation of kitab kuning</i>	Strong local–national <i>sanad</i> networks; influential in NU's juristic debates
4	Langitan, Tuban	Regional; Conservative–Sufi orientation	<i>Tafsir, tasawuf, and ethical formation (akhlaq)</i>	<i>Bandongan and talaqqi emphasizing adab al-‘alim wa al-muta‘allim</i>	Inter-pesantren and trans-Javanese networks; spiritual lineage to earlier ulama
5	Sidogiri, Pasuruan	National; Entrepreneurial–Traditional hybrid	<i>Fiqh, muamalat, Islamic economics, community empowerment</i>	Combination of <i>halaqah</i> , business education, and digital pesantren platform	Alumni network promoting Islamic microfinance and community development
6	Darul Ulum, Rejoso Jombang	National; Integrative–Academic orientation	<i>Ulum al-din, tafsir, and Islamic modern thought</i>	<i>Bandongan, formal schooling (madrasah + university), and research-based learning</i>	Collaboration with public universities and MUI networks; bridging traditional and modern scholarship
7	Modern Pesantren Al-Amien, Prenduan	National–International; Progressive orientation	<i>Tarbiyah Islamiyah, leadership, linguistic excellence</i>	Hybrid system: <i>halaqah, classroom, digital maktabah</i>	International alumni network, active in Muslim community education abroad

## Conclusion

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) played a crucial role in the development of Islamic civilization in the Indonesian archipelago, serving not only as venues for the transmission of classical Islamic knowledge but also as spaces of intellectual production rooted in the Islamic scholarly tradition through the sanad system, which traces its links to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This system ensured the authority and authenticity of the knowledge passed down from teacher to student, while the network of pesantren scholars was formed through cultural and intellectual connections with international centers of Islamic learning, such as the Haramain and Cairo.

Pesantren became part of a dynamic global Islamic network, while maintaining their local character within the Indonesian archipelago. Despite facing the challenges of modernity and globalization, pesantren have survived and adapted without losing their identity. Their moderate approach and openness to modern knowledge make them inclusive and relevant institutions. As preservers of knowledge and builders of character, pesantren play a crucial role in Islamic education in Indonesia and shape the future of a civilized Muslim community.

The study contributes to Islamic education and sociology of knowledge by theorizing pesantren as epistemic communities that mediate between local religious traditions and global digital culture. For Islamic Studies, this offers a model of “connected traditionalism”, a framework explaining how knowledge, authority, and identity are reproduced through digital sanad and global ulama networks. Practically, this research highlights the potential of pesantren in advancing Indonesia’s Islamic cultural diplomacy, emphasizing moderate, dialogical, and sustainable values in the global arena.

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