

The Intellectual Legacy of the Ulama of the Archipelago and Its Relevance to the Institutionalization of Islamic Civilization in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam

Arie Gifary

¹ Islamic University of Nusantara Bandung, Indonesia. E-mail: gifaryarie@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study seeks to reveal the epistemic continuity between the scholars of the Archipelago and the religious institutions of Brunei Darussalam in shaping Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia. This cross-border scholarly relationship is important to study because most previous research has focused more on the contribution of Nusantara scholars to the development of Islam in Indonesia and the Holy Land, while their role and influence on the dynamics of Islam in Brunei Darussalam has rarely received adequate scientific attention. This study analyzes the works and thoughts of three great Nusantara scholars—Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani, Syekh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi, and Syekh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi—and relates them to the institutional contributions of Brunei scholars, particularly the Mufti of the Kingdom, Pehin Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Awang Abdul Aziz bin Juned, in developing an Islamic value system through the philosophy of Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB). Using a qualitative approach and content analysis of classical works, scientific publications, and institutional documents, this study shows that Islamic civilization in Indonesia and Brunei is the result of a continuity of scientific sanad rooted in the traditions of adab, science, and wasathiyah. The intellectual heritage of the Nusantara scholars not only formed the epistemological basis of Islam in the archipelago, but also became a transnational bridge. The scholarly heritage of these scholars became the main foundation for the integration of scholarship and spirituality in Southeast Asian Islamic civilization. This finding reinforces the understanding that the continuity of the network of scholars in the archipelago and Brunei is a form of actualization of Islamic civilization rooted in scientific tradition, morality, and renewal.

Keywords: moderate Islam, Islamic education, Islamic civilization, Islamic culture, Indonesian scholars



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Introduction

The development of Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia is the result of a long interaction between networks of scholars, Islamic educational institutions, and religious authorities that have played a role in shaping the distinctive face of Islamic civilization in the Malay region, giving rise to a dynamic, contextual Islamic intellectual tradition that is deeply rooted in local values. In this context, Nusantara scholars such as Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani, Syekh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi, and Syekh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi were central figures in the transmission of Islamic knowledge from the Haramain to the Malay world. They were not only highly knowledgeable scholars, but also heirs to the chain of knowledge that maintained the continuity of the traditions of tafsir, fiqh, and tasawuf in the archipelago. They held a very important position as *transmitters of knowledge*, connecting the classical Islamic intellectual tradition from the Haramain with the social and cultural realities of the people of Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam (Azra, 2004). This process of knowledge transfer resulted in a form of Islam that was moderate, rational, and strongly rooted in the values of adab and ta'dib.

The works of Nusantara scholars, such as *Marāḥ Labīd li Kasyf Ma'nā al-Qur'ān al-Majīd* by Syekh Nawawi, *Izhār Zaghl al-Kādhībīn* and *al-Qaul al-Mufīd fī Bayān Mas'alah at-Taqālīd* by Sheikh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi, as well as *Kifāyah al-Mustafīd* and *Manhaj Dzawī an-Nazar* by Sheikh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi, demonstrate the breadth of insight and depth of methodology that influenced the Islamic scientific system in Indonesia. Through a network of students and continuous teaching, the thoughts of these scholars became the basis for the formation of a civilized, knowledgeable, and moderate Islamic character in the Malay world. The scholars of the archipelago built a cross-regional scientific network through their students who were spread across various Islamic education centers (Nuroh et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, their works became the main references in Islamic boarding schools and higher education institutions, while in Brunei Darussalam, the scientific values they brought were adapted into the country's religious system, particularly through the Royal Mufti Office of Brunei (Akmal & Kurniawan, 2022).

Studies on the influence of Nusantara scholars on the formation of Islamic civilization in Brunei Darussalam are still very limited. Most previous studies have focused on their contributions in Indonesia and the world of Islamic boarding schools, such as their role in strengthening Islamic boarding schools, the formation of Islamic curricula, and scholarly traditions in Mecca and Medina (Mubarak & Fauzi, 2021). The connection between the scientific traditions of Nusantara scholars and the development of Islamic civilization in Brunei Darussalam has rarely been studied in depth. In fact, this scientific relationship shows a pattern of *continuity of epistemic lineage*, namely the continuity of scientific sanad that transcends geographical and political boundaries. Furthermore, the epistemic continuity between the scholars of the archipelago and the scholars of Brunei is significant in understanding the construction of Malay Islamic civilization, which is a characteristic of Southeast Asian Islamic identity (Nuroh et al., 2023).

Based on this background, this study focuses on analyzing the intellectual heritage of the Nusantara scholars and its relevance to the institutionalization of Islamic civilization in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. This research seeks to trace the transmission of knowledge and the influence of the works of these scholars in the context of the formation of sustainable Islamic values, laws, and culture in these two countries. Through a qualitative approach and content analysis, this research is expected to contribute theoretically to the study of Malay Islam while strengthening the understanding of the continuity of Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia.

Since its establishment in 1961, the Office of the Mufti of Brunei has served as the highest religious authority in Brunei Darussalam, preserving the continuity of Islamic scholarship based on the Shafi'i school of thought. Under the leadership of Pehin Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Awang Abdul Aziz bin Juned, the royal mufti acts as a figure who combines classical textual authority with contemporary context. The principle of Malay Islam Beraja (MIB), which is the foundation of the Brunei state, emphasizes that Islam is not only a belief system, but also a moral and civilizational foundation that is integrated into social life (Pratama, 2023). This plays an important role in developing an Islamic legal and educational system based on the philosophy of Malay Islam Beraja (MIB).

The role of the royal mufti is not only normative but also intellectual, as he helps maintain the continuity of scholarly traditions originating from the ulama of the archipelago. This demonstrates the epistemological continuity between the intellectual heritage of the archipelago's ulama and the institutionalization of Islam in Brunei Darussalam. Thus, this study aims to show that Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia is the result of a synthesis between classical scholarly values and modern religious policies, both of which are rooted in the principles of moderation (*wasathiyyah*), discipline (*ta'dib*), and the etiquette of the scholar and the student (*adab al-'ālim wa al-muta'allim*).

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research type of study that emphasizes descriptive-analytical analysis of classical and contemporary texts relevant to the theme of the intellectual heritage of the Nusantara scholars and the institutionalization of Islamic civilization in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. This approach was chosen because the research object is conceptual, historical, and textual in nature, requiring an exploration of meaning, context, and epistemological relationships between scientific products (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research data sources are divided into two categories: *First*, primary sources, namely the works of Nusantara scholars such as: *Marāḥ Labīd li Kashf Ma'nā al-Qur'ān al-Majīd* and *Nihāyat al-Zain fi Irsyād al-Mubtadi'īn* by Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani. In addition, official documents such as Fatwa Mufti Kerajaan Brunei Darussalam: Kumpulan Fatwa 2000–2018 (Fatwa of the Mufti of the Kingdom of Brunei Darussalam: Collection of Fatwas 2000–2018) were used as the main source for examining the institutionalization of Islamic civilization in Brunei. *Second*, secondary sources: these include research results from reputable journal articles, books, and theses discussing the contributions of Nusantara scholars, the transmission of Islamic scholarship in Southeast Asia, and the religious system of Brunei Darussalam. Data was collected through documentation and literature studies.

Results and Discussion

The Role of Nusantara Ulama in the Formation of Islamic Civilization

Nusantara scholars held a strategic position in the formation of Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. They not only functioned as conveyors of religious teachings, but also as intellectual agents who instilled value systems, scientific structures, and social ethics in Muslim communities. Through their works, sanad, and networks of students, they built an Islamic civilization based on knowledge and manners, which became a hallmark of Islamic civilization in the Malay region.

This role originated from the strong tradition of *tafaqquh fi al-din* that developed in Islamic centers of learning in Mecca and Medina since the 18th century. Nusantara scholars who studied in Haramain then returned to their homeland, bringing with them the intellectual heritage of classical Islam and adapting it to the local socio-cultural context. This tradition gave birth to a form of Islam that is moderate (*wasathiyyah*), tolerant, and oriented towards the moral development of society. As explained by Nuroh et al. (2023), the transmission of knowledge by Nusantara scholars has become the main foundation for the emergence of traditional Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and Islamic madrasas in Brunei Darussalam.

The continuity of this scientific sanad forms what is known as *the continuity of epistemic lineage*, which is the process of passing on knowledge and values from one generation to the next without interruption. This concept is clearly seen in the great works of Nusantara scholars such as Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani, Syekh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi, and Syekh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi, which are not only scientific references in Indonesia but are also taught in Brunei, Patani, and other Malay regions. Their works are not only used in Islamic boarding schools, but also serve as references for the development of Islamic education curricula and religious interpretations in Southeast Asia (Yusuf, 2022; Rohmana; 2023;). All three taught the importance of balance between knowledge and manners (*ta'dib*), which made Islam in the archipelago rational and civilized.

According to Amin and Siregar (2022), the *adab*-based Islamic education system introduced by these scholars influenced the way subsequent generations of scholars thought about the relationship

between text and context. They instilled the principle that knowledge must be accompanied by wisdom and morality in order to become the foundation of a civilized civilization. This principle was later inherited by religious institutions in Brunei Darussalam, including the Royal Mufti's Office (), which adopted the value of balance between knowledge, law, and ethics in religious decision-making (Akmal & Kurniawan, 2022).

Historically, the scholars of the archipelago have formed a cross-regional scientific network that functions as a channel for the transmission of Islamic intellectual thought in Southeast Asia. This network involves teacher-student relationships, the exchange of texts, and the delivery of manuscripts to various centers of learning in the Malay world. The influence of these scholars is also evident in the way Brunei Darussalam has built its Islamic scientific and legal structures. According to Akmal and Kurniawan (2022), Brunei's religious system, which is based on the philosophy of *Malay Islam Beraja (MIB)*, has adopted many scientific principles from the traditions of Malay-Nusantara scholars, especially in the aspects of adab, scientific sanad, and legal rationality. The Mufti of the Kingdom, Pehin Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Awang Abdul Aziz bin Juned, plays an important role in institutionalizing these values through fatwas and Islamic education based on *turats* (classical heritage) scholarship. Studies show that the intellectual relationship between Indonesian Islamic boarding schools and Brunei's religious institutions is not only cultural but also epistemological, as it involves the process of establishing transnationally recognized scientific authority.

This network of scholars then transformed into the social basis of Islamic civilization in the Malay region. The concept of Islamic civilization that was developed was not synonymous with political power, but with the institutionalization of scientific and moral values in society. This can be seen in the pattern of religious leadership in Brunei Darussalam, which places the mufti and fatwa institutions as guarantors of the moral and scientific stability of the people, as in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, which position the kiai as figures of manners and wisdom.

Thus, it can be understood that the scientific heritage of the Nusantara scholars contributed greatly to shaping the distinctive Islamic civilization in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. The role of the Nusantara scholars did not stop at the religious realm, but also became the main driving force behind the birth of an Islamic civilization with an ethical and scientific perspective in Southeast Asia. Their scholarship did not stop at the doctrinal level, but developed into a system of values and epistemology that supported the socio-religious structure. This confirms that Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia is the result of a dynamic dialogue between local traditions and transnational networks of scholars rooted in the principles of *knowledge, manners, and moderation*.

Contributions of Leading Scholars to Islamic Civilization

The development of Islamic civilization is the result of the persistent efforts and significant contributions of scholars who have devoted their lives to enriching knowledge, strengthening faith, and shaping a glorious Islamic civilization. Scholars not only act as inheritors of the teachings of the prophets, but also as scientists, thinkers, and reformers who make Islam a religion that balances reason and revelation. Through their work, teaching, and exemplary behavior, the Islamic world has achieved remarkable progress in various fields such as theology, law, philosophy, science, and education.

Among the leading scholars who made significant contributions to Islamic civilization: *First, Sheikh Nawaei al-Bantani*. Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani (1813–1897) was one of the most influential scholars in the archipelago in shaping Islamic scholarship in Southeast Asia. He was renowned as a scholar who wrote more than a hundred books covering various fields of knowledge, such as fiqh, kalam, history, tasawuf, tafsir-hadith, as well as Arabic language and literature. According to Firdaus and Imawan (2024), Sheikh Nawawi's works dominate Islamic scholarship in Islamic boarding schools because almost all areas of the boarding school curriculum refer to his works, to the extent that he is referred to as *the encyclopedia of Islamic Sciences*. In fact, thirty-four of the books he wrote are listed in *the Dictionary of Arabic Prientea Books* (Santosa and Aiman, 2022). The following are two of Sheikh Nawawi's most popular books: *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd li Kasyf Ma'nā al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, *Kitab Nihāyat al-Zain fī Irsyād al-Mubtadi'īn*.

Second, Sheikh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi. The contributions of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi (1860–1916) marked an important phase in the history of Islamic scholarship in the archipelago, particularly in terms of rationality and religious reform. He was known as a progressive and critical scholar who questioned religious practices that he considered deviated from the principles of tawhid and Islamic law. Rohmana (2019) places Sheikh Ahmad as a second-generation reformist figure after Muhammad 'Abduh, who spread the ideas of Islamic renewal from Egypt to Mecca. His rational and reformist ideas demonstrate an integrative effort between the purification of faith and the strengthening of scientific arguments based on reason (*ijtihad 'aqli*).

According to Rasi'in and Kultsum (2022), Sheikh Ahmad was a prolific scholar with no less than 49 scientific works discussing religious, social, and political themes. These works were written in Arabic and Malay and were widely distributed not only in Southeast Asia but also in the Middle East, such as Syria, Turkey, and Egypt. This shows the breadth of his intellectual network and his contribution to the dynamics of Islamic scholarship across regions in the fields of theology, fiqh, law, and other equally important contributions in the field of mathematics. Sheikh Ahmad's rational and contextual thinking also found relevance in the context of Brunei Darussalam. The principles of Islamic rationality and the concept of *maslahah* (public interest) developed by him are reflected in the way the Mufti's Office of the Kingdom of Brunei formulates fatwas that take into account the social context, without neglecting the basis of shar'i (Islamic law) texts (Akmal & Kurniawan, 2022). Thus, Sheikh Ahmad's ideas contributed to the development of a moderate Islamic legal epistemology in Brunei that is adaptive to changing times. Overall, the thoughts and works of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi form a conceptual bridge between classical Islamic intellectualism and the needs of modernity. He proved that *ijtihad* and rationality are not forms of Western value absorption, but rather an integral part of a living and dynamic Islamic civilization. His intellectual legacy shows that true Islamic reform is born from efforts to return to the basic principles of sharia while still leaving room for reason and contextualization.

Third, Sheikh Muhammad Mahfudz at-Tarmasi (1868–1920) was a central figure in the network of Nusantara scholars who emphasized the continuity of the classical Islamic scholarly tradition with the establishment of scholarly authority in the Malay-Nusantara world. Born in Tremas, Pacitan, East Java, and educated in Mecca for more than two decades, Sheikh Mahfudz was known as *al-Muhaddis an-Nusantari*, the first Indonesian hadith scholar to receive a teaching certificate for *Sahih al-Bukhari*, with the certificate itself being handed down directly from Imam al-Bukhari through a chain of 23 generations of scholars who had mastered Sahih Bukhari (Azizah & Istianah, 2022). This achievement not only demonstrates the depth of his knowledge but also his position within the global chain of Islamic knowledge transmission linking the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

As described by Firdaus and Imawan (2024), the sanad tradition established by Sheikh Mahfudz reflects the epistemological character of Islam, which emphasizes the validity of knowledge through intellectual and moral authority. Through works such as *Manhaj Dzawi an-Nazhar* and *Kifayah al-Mustafid*, he presented a scholarly style that emphasized methodological rationality, textual depth, and precision in understanding hadith and usul fiqh. The work *Manhaj Dzawi an-Nazhar bi Syarh Mandzumati 'Ilm al-Atsar*, for example, is a commentary on *al-Alfiyah al-Suyuthi* in the science of hadith, which describes the principles of sanad verification and matan validation. This book has become an important reference in various universities in Egypt, Morocco, and Mecca, demonstrating his international reputation as a hadith scholar recognized by the Islamic world (Azizah & Istianah, 2022).

From an Islamic education perspective, Mahfudz at-Tarmasi not only transmitted knowledge but also built a system of scientific legitimacy based on the values of adab and valid scientific sanad. This is evident in the involvement of his students—such as KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan—who later became pioneers of the Islamic reform movement in Indonesia (Fauzan, 2018). The tradition of sanad inherited by at-Tarmasi served as a mechanism of epistemic authority, in which the validity of knowledge was determined not only by the text, but also by the morality and integrity of the scholars who conveyed it.

In addition, Sheikh Mahfudz's role also had transnational resonance with the context of Brunei Darussalam. The principles of sanad and scientific authority that he developed were in line with

religious practices in Brunei, which were based on the continuity of knowledge from previous scholars (*salaf al-shalih*) and the legitimacy of scholars in the kingdom's religious structure. This tradition then became the epistemological foundation () for the institutionalization of fatwas and Islamic education under the authority of the Mufti of the Kingdom of Brunei, which emphasizes the authenticity of the sources of teachings and the continuity of scientific sanad.

Thus, Sheikh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi presented an Islamic scientific paradigm based on three pillars: sanad as the basis of epistemic legitimacy, adab as the moral foundation, and methodological rationality as an intellectual instrument. These three pillars are characteristic of Islamic civilization in the Archipelago and Brunei, which rejects the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, between spirituality and rationality. Sheikh Mahfudz's intellectual legacy affirms that Islamic scholarly authority is determined not only by academic ability, but also by the integrity of the chain of transmission and the continuity of the scientific tradition that shapes the deep-rooted and adaptive Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia.

Fourth, Sheikh Muhammad Mahfudz at-Tarmas. Sheikh Muhammad Mahfudz at-Tarmasi (1868–1920) was a central figure in the network of Nusantara scholars who emphasized the continuity of the classical Islamic scholarly tradition with the establishment of scholarly authority in the Malay-Nusantara world. Born in Tremas, Pacitan, East Java, he studied in Mecca for more than two decades. Sheikh Mahfudz was known as *al-Muhaddis an-Nusantari*, the first Indonesian hadith scholar to receive a teaching certificate for *Sahih al-Bukhari*, with the certificate itself being handed down directly from Imam al-Bukhari through a chain of 23 generations of scholars who had mastered Sahih Bukhari (Azizah & Istianah, 2022). This achievement not only demonstrates the depth of his knowledge, but also his position in the chain of global Islamic knowledge transmission that connects the Middle East and Southeast Asia. As described by Firdaus and Imawan (2024), the sanad tradition established by Sheikh Mahfudz reflects the epistemological character of Islam, which emphasizes the validity of knowledge through intellectual and moral authority. Through works such as *Manhaj Dzawi an-Nazhar* and *Kifayah al-Mustafid*, he presented a scholarly style that emphasized methodological rationality, textual depth, and precision in understanding hadith and usul fiqh. The work *Manhaj Dzawi an-Nazhar bi Syarh Mandzumati 'Ilm al-Atsar*, for example, is a commentary on *al-Alfiyah al-Suyuthi* in the science of hadith, which describes the principles of sanad verification and matan validation. This book is an important reference in various universities in Egypt, Morocco, and Mecca, demonstrating his international reputation as a hadith scholar recognized by the Islamic world (Azizah & Istianah, 2022). In addition, Sheikh Mahfudz's role also has transnational resonance in the context of Brunei Darussalam. The principles of sanad and scientific authority that he developed are in line with religious practices in Brunei, which are based on the continuity of knowledge from previous scholars (*salaf al-shalih*) and the legitimacy of scholars in the kingdom's religious structure. This tradition then became the epistemological foundation for the institutionalization of fatwas and Islamic education under the authority of the Mufti of the Brunei Royal Family, which emphasizes the authenticity of the sources of teachings and the continuity of scientific sanad. Thus, Sheikh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi presented an Islamic scientific paradigm based on three pillars: sanad as the basis of epistemic legitimacy, adab as the moral foundation, and methodological rationality as an intellectual instrument. These three pillars are characteristic of Islamic civilization in the Archipelago and Brunei, which rejects the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, between spirituality and rationality. Sheikh Mahfudz's intellectual legacy affirms that Islamic scholarly authority is determined not only by academic ability, but also by the integrity of the chain of transmission and the continuity of the scientific tradition that shapes a deep-rooted and adaptive Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia.

The Influence of the Archipelago's Ulama Scientific Network on Islamic Civilization in Brunei Darussalam

The scientific network of Nusantara scholars has played a strategic role in shaping the character and direction of Islamic civilization in the Malay region, including in Brunei Darussalam. This influence is not only seen in the realm of Islamic theology and law, but also in the education system, religious structure, and scientific culture of Brunei society. Through intellectual relationships established since

the sultanate era, the Nusantara ulama have become a bridge connecting the classical Islamic scientific tradition of the Middle East with the Malay socio-cultural context.

Nusantara scholars are known to have a distinctive educational system that emphasizes a balance between naqliyah (revelation transmission) and 'aqliyah (rationality), as applied in the traditions of Islamic boarding schools, surau, and madrasah. This tradition includes the teaching of classical Islamic texts, the methods of halaqah (), sorogan, and bandongan, as well as the cultivation of morals and manners through the principle of ta'dib. A similar educational model was later adopted in Islamic educational institutions in Brunei, especially in curricula rooted in the traditions of Shafi'i fiqh, Sunni Sufism, and Malay-Islamic cultural values.

The scholarly relationship between the scholars of the archipelago and Brunei was established through the transmission of knowledge, networks of sanad, and the mobility of students and scholars between regions, particularly through Islamic study centers in Mecca and Medina. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, many Brunei scholars studied under teachers affiliated with the Nusantara network of scholars in Haramain. This signifies an epistemological continuity that places Brunei as an integral part of the Malay Islamic scholarly system (Pratama, 2023).

According to Nuroh et al. (2023), the character of Islam in Southeast Asia is built on two main principles, namely ta'dib (moral formation through knowledge) and wasathiyyah (moderation). These two principles are the legacy of the Nusantara scholars, which has been internalized in their education system and scientific works. Brunei then adopted these principles in its religious institutions and national education system. One concrete manifestation of this influence is the establishment of the Office of the Mufti of Brunei, which functions as the religious authority in determining Islamic law and safeguarding the moral values of society. Through this institution, scientific values rooted in the traditions of the Nusantara scholars continue to be preserved, while also forming the foundation of Brunei's Islamic civilization, which is moderate, civilized, and oriented towards the development of science.

The influence of Nusantara scholars on Islamic civilization in Brunei is also evident through the transmission of scientific works and classical religious texts that are widely used in Brunei's Islamic educational institutions. The works of great scholars such as Tafsir Marah Labid by Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani and Kifayah al-Mustafid by Sheikh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi are important references in the teaching of tafsir, fiqh, and hadith in various madrasas and religious institutions in Brunei. These works not only enrich Brunei's intellectual heritage, but also instill a scientific paradigm that emphasizes the integration of knowledge, faith, and manners. Through these texts, the values of moderation (wasathiyyah) and balance between religious and worldly knowledge are rooted in Brunei's Islamic education system, which is now regulated by the Islamic Studies Department of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (KHEU, 2021).

In addition to written works, the influence of the archipelago's scholars is also reflected in Brunei's approach to law and religious fatwas. The strong Shafi'i fiqh tradition in the archipelago, especially as developed by scholars such as Ar-Raniri and Nawawi al-Bantani, forms the basis for the formation of legal istinbath methodology in Brunei's religious institutions. The position of Mufti of the Kingdom of Brunei, for example, applies a pattern of istidlal (deduction) oriented towards maqasid al-shari'ah (the objectives of Sharia) and the values of public interest, in line with the scientific character of Nusantara scholars who prioritize ethics, local wisdom ('urf), and social manners. Thus, it can be said that the scientific network of the Nusantara scholars has not only influenced the conceptual level, but also religious practices and public policy in Brunei. This legacy strengthens Brunei's position as one of the authentic heirs of Malay Islamic civilization, which is based on the values of science, morals, and a balance between tradition and modernity.

Institutionalization of Knowledge through the Office of the Mufti of Brunei

The role of the Mufti of Brunei, especially under the leadership of Pehin Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Awang Abdul Aziz bin Juned, reflects the continuity of the scholarly tradition of the Nusantara ulama. As the royal mufti, he emphasized the importance of balance between nas (text) and maslahat (context of benefit) in legal decision-making. This approach is in line with the thinking of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib

al-Minangkabawi, who emphasized the rationality of *ijtihad* and criticism of blind *taqlid*, as well as the teachings of Sheikh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi on the importance of sanad and scientific caution in issuing fatwas (Akmal & Kurniawan, 2022).

In one of his fatwas, Dr. Abdul Aziz bin Juned (Office of the Mufti of the Kingdom, 2018) stated that "legal decisions must be based on the wisdom of the Sharia and take into account the interests of the people so that religion becomes a blessing for all of life." This view shows that the practice of Islamic scientific in Brunei is not only normative but also contextual, in line with the principle of wisdom that characterizes the scholarship of the Nusantara ulama.

This system of scholarship shows that religious authority in Brunei is based on scientific and moral legitimacy, not merely political power. According to Pratama (2023), the relationship between scholars and religious institutions in Brunei is a concrete manifestation of a living and sustainable Islamic civilization (*living civilization*), where science, law, and morals are integrated in social harmony. This strengthens Brunei's position as a model Islamic country that integrates classical values with religious modernity.

The institutionalization of knowledge through the Office of the Mufti of Brunei does not stop at the realm of fatwas and law, but continues in the form of mainstreaming Islamic scientific values into the national education system. The fatwas and religious policies issued by the Office of the Mufti serve as guidelines for Islamic educational institutions, both at the elementary and secondary levels, to instill the values of *ta'dib*, *hikmah*, and *wasathiyyah* in the learning process. Thus, the continuity between scientific authority and educational practice has become a hallmark of Brunei's Islamic civilization, where knowledge is not only conceptual but also brought to life in the culture of learning and character building of the nation.

Integration of Scientific Values in Brunei's Islamic Education System

The Islamic education system in Brunei Darussalam reflects the country's success in integrating classical Islamic scientific values into the modern education system. Since the establishment of the Islamic Studies Department under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Brunei has affirmed its educational orientation based on three main principles, namely faith, knowledge, and charity. According to Feriansyah (2021), Brunei's Islamic education system is built on the intellectual heritage of Malay-Nusantara scholars who emphasize a balance between spirituality, rationality, and morality. Education is not only aimed at producing knowledgeable individuals, but also civilized individuals who understand the meaning of knowledge as a path to character building and social welfare.

This view is in line with the concept of *ta'dib* put forward by Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud (1998), that the essence of Islamic education is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but the formation of knowledgeable and moral human beings. This principle of *ta'dib* is systematically implemented in Brunei's Islamic education curriculum through the alignment of religious and general knowledge. The curriculum structure applied by the Islamic Studies Department shows continuity with the scientific tradition of the Nusantara scholars, particularly in terms of the integration of *naqliyah* (revelation) and *'aqliyah* (rational) knowledge.

According to et al. (2024), the intellectual network between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei has created a mutually influential Malay Islamic scientific ecosystem, especially in the fields of Islamic education and law. This network enables the transmission of scholarly values and teaching methodologies from Islamic boarding schools and madrasas in the archipelago to Islamic educational institutions in Brunei. Therefore, it is not surprising that Brunei's Islamic education system displays a moderate, balanced, and *adab*-oriented character, similar to the educational traditions of the archipelago's scholars.

This connection is also evident in educational practices at higher education institutions such as the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Islamic Studies and the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Tahfiz al-Qur'an, which apply a *tafaqquh fi al-din* (deepening of religious knowledge) approach using modern methods based on research and critical analysis. According to Marjuni (2024), this integrative pattern illustrates the paradigm of Islamic education in Southeast Asia, which is based on the principle of *wasathiyyah* (moderation)—that is, a synthesis between tradition and modernity,

between text and context. Through this approach, Brunei's education system displays epistemological continuity with the tradition of the Nusantara ulama, which emphasizes a balance between knowledge and manners, as well as between thought and practice.

Thus, the integration of scientific values in Brunei's Islamic education system not only strengthens the nation's scientific foundations but also expands the influence of the Malay- n Islamic civilization of the archipelago in a global context. As emphasized by Herwansyah et al. (2024), Brunei's success in maintaining an Islamic education model based on manners and morality shows that the values inherited from the scholars of the archipelago remain relevant in shaping a modern Islamic civilization rooted in wisdom and humanity.

Synthesis: Islamic Civilization as a Bridge between Nusantara and Brunei

Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, is the result of dynamic interactions between classical scholarly traditions and religious modernity. This study shows that Islamic civilization in the Malay region is not merely a reproduction of Middle Eastern teachings, but is the result of the creative adaptation of the scholars of the archipelago to local social and cultural realities. Through monumental works such as *Marāḥ Labīd* by Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani, *Kifāyat al-Mustafīd* by Syekh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi, and *Izhar Zaghl al-Kādhībīn* by Syekh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi, a scientific system was formed that bridges the gap between text and context and integrates rationality and spirituality (Firdaus & Imawan, 2022; Akmal & Kurniawan, 2022). These works not only serve as guidelines for Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, but also as references for educational institutions and religious authorities in Brunei Darussalam.

The concept of Islamic civilization in this context can be understood as a civilization based on knowledge and manners, where knowledge functions not only as a means of thinking but also as a vehicle for the moral and social formation of society. As emphasized by Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud (1998), the core of Islamic education is *ta'dib*, which is the process of forming civilized human beings through knowledge. This principle resonates with the philosophy of Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB) in Brunei Darussalam, which makes Islam the moral foundation of the state and the source of social ethics (Feriansyah, 2021). Thus, both Indonesia and Brunei present a face of Islam that is rooted in classical scientific values, yet remains open to the renewal of the times and the challenges of modernity.

Furthermore, Islamic civilization in both countries functions as a transnational epistemic bridge connecting the *pesantren* tradition in Indonesia with the formal religious system in Brunei. According to Marjuni (2024), *the continuity of epistemic lineage* is an important factor in maintaining the authenticity of Islamic teachings in this region. The Nusantara network of scholars acts as a link between the *turāth* tradition (classical heritage) and the modern context of Southeast Asia, giving rise to an adaptive, inclusive, and contextual Islamic knowledge system. This view is in line with the findings of Herwansyah et al. (2024) that the Malay-Islamic intellectual network forms a civilizational space that brings together scholars from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei in a *living intellectual tradition*.

In the context of Brunei, this scientific heritage is institutionalized through the Office of the Mufti of Brunei as an institution that combines scientific and moral authority in the establishment of Islamic law. The fatwas issued by Pehin Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Awang Abdul Aziz bin Juned emphasize the importance of balance between *nas* (sharia texts) and *maslahat* (social context) in determining law. Akmal and Kurniawan (2022) note that this approach reflects methodological continuity with Nusantara scholars such as Syekh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi and Syekh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi, who emphasized the rationality of *ijtihad* and scientific caution (*tahqiq*) in fatwas. This process demonstrates how *ijtihad* and *hikmah* are used as basic principles in maintaining a balance between sharia and the social reality of Brunei society.

Conceptually, the scholarly relationship between the scholars of the archipelago and Brunei Darussalam confirms that Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia is interdependent and organic. It has not only produced great thinkers, but also shaped the collective mindset of the people, which places harmony, knowledge, and morals as the foundation of religious life. According to Nuroh et al. (2023), the traditions of *sanad*, *adab*, and *wasathiyah* form the epistemological foundation that allows Islam to survive as a moral and intellectual force amid global change. Thus, Islamic civilization functions as

an intellectual and civilizational bridge between Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam—not only in terms of history, but also in terms of intellectual, social, and spiritual structures. This synthesis confirms that the scholarship of the Nusantara ulama does not stop at geographical boundaries, but continues to live on in contemporary institutions, education systems, and religious policies that reinforce Islam as a civilized and scholarly religion.

Conclusion

This study shows that Islamic civilization in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam is the result of the continuity of the scholarly network of the Nusantara ulama, who have played an important role in shaping the character and direction of Islamic civilization in the Malay region. The pesantren tradition, the scientific sanad system, and the monumental works of scholars such as Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani, Syekh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi, and Syekh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi became the main foundations in building an Islamic education and legal system oriented towards science, manners, and benefit. This scholarly legacy did not stop in Indonesia, but also influenced the formation of Brunei's Islamic civilization, particularly through institutions such as the Royal Mufti's Office and the Islamic Studies Office, which integrated classical Islamic scholarly values into national policies and education systems. This interconnectedness demonstrates that Malay Islamic civilization is transnational and organic, bridging text and context, tradition and modernity, as well as spirituality and rationality. Thus, Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia functions as an epistemic and moral bridge that brings together Islamic scholarship, education, and culture in a *living* civilization ecosystem. The legacy of the Nusantara scholars has proven to remain relevant and is an important reference for the development of Islamic education and the formation of a civilized society in the modern era.

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