



## Epistemological Shifts in Contemporary Indonesian Islamic Thought: A Normative Critique of Localized Philosophical Discourses

Muhammad Salis Ridwan<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Masum<sup>2</sup>, Zainal Abidin<sup>3</sup>,  
Yuliia Leheza<sup>4</sup>, Jauharatul Maknuniah<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt

<sup>2</sup>Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Brunei Darussalam

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari, Banjarmasin, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Dnipro University of Technology, Dnipro, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine

<sup>5</sup>Department of Islamic Studies Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt

**Email:** [Muhammadsalistr@gmail.com](mailto:Muhammadsalistr@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [ahmad.masum@unissa.edu.bn](mailto:ahmad.masum@unissa.edu.bn)<sup>2</sup>,  
[zainalabidin67302@gmail.com](mailto:zainalabidin67302@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>, [legezajul@gmail.com](mailto:legezajul@gmail.com)<sup>4</sup>,  
[maknun.niahhh@gmail.com](mailto:maknun.niahhh@gmail.com)<sup>5</sup>

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### Abstract

The evolution of contemporary Islamic thought in Indonesia has been marked by a dynamic synthesis of classical Islamic traditions, modern philosophical trends, and local cultural realities. This article critically examines the epistemological shifts within this intellectual landscape, moving beyond descriptive accounts of prominent thinkers to offer a normative critique of the underlying frameworks. The study identifies a trajectory from a traditional text-centric *bayani* epistemology toward a unique, localized hybrid paradigm that systematically integrates rational-theological (*burhani*), contextual-hermeneutical, and spiritual-intuitive (*irfani*) orientations. While this epistemological pluralism has been instrumental in fostering intellectual creativity and religious moderation, the analysis reveals significant normative concerns, including the risk of intellectual fragmentation and a lack of methodological systematization. Using the principles of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a critical compass, the study evaluates the strengths of this intellectual model while also highlighting its limitations. The article concludes that the Indonesian case provides a valuable framework for understanding the potential and pitfalls of intellectual localization, arguing that the philosophical maturity of this hybrid approach depends on its capacity for rigorous, self-critical, and ethically grounded development.

**Keywords:** Epistemology, Islamic Thought, Indonesia, Normative Critique, Hermeneutics, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*

### Abstrak

Perkembangan pemikiran Islam kontemporer di Indonesia ditandai oleh sintesis dinamis antara tradisi Islam klasik, tren filsafat modern, dan realitas budaya lokal. Artikel ini secara kritis mengkaji pergeseran epistemologis dalam lanskap intelektual ini, melampaui deskripsi tentang pemikir terkemuka untuk menawarkan kritik normatif terhadap kerangka kerja yang mendasarinya. Studi ini mengidentifikasi

sebuah arah pergeseran dari epistemologi *bayani* yang berpusat pada teks tradisional menuju paradigma hibrida yang unik dan lokal, yang secara sistematis mengintegrasikan orientasi rasional-teologis (burhani), kontekstual-hermeneutis, dan spiritual-intuitif (irfani). Meskipun pluralisme epistemologis ini berperan penting dalam mendorong kreativitas intelektual dan moderasi agama, analisis mengungkapkan kekhawatiran normatif yang signifikan, termasuk risiko fragmentasi intelektual dan kurangnya sistematisasi metodologis. Dengan menggunakan prinsip-prinsip *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* sebagai kompas kritis, studi ini mengevaluasi kekuatan model intelektual inisambal juga menyoroti keterbatasannya. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa kasus Indonesia menyediakan kerangka kerja berharga untuk memahami potensi dan jebakan lokalisasi intelektual, dengan argumen bahwa kematangan filosofis pendekatan hibrida ini bergantung pada kemampuannya untuk berkembang secara ketat, kritis terhadap diri sendiri, dan berlandaskan etika.

**Kata kunci:** Hukum Keluarga Islam, Pluralisme Hukum, *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, ASEAN

## Introduction

The Republic of Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, presents a rich and complex intellectual landscape where Islamic thought has developed in continuous dialogue with diverse internal and external forces. Since the mid-twentieth century, Indonesian Muslim intellectuals have engaged in a profound intellectual project, mediating between the classical Islamic heritage, reformist currents from the Middle East, and the challenges posed by Western philosophy, secular ideologies, and the nation's indigenous pluralism. This engagement has not merely resulted in new interpretations of Islam but has fundamentally reshaped the very foundations of how knowledge is acquired, validated, and applied—in other words, it has led to significant epistemological transformations.

Existing scholarly work on this subject has often focused descriptively on the ideas of leading figures such as Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, Harun Nasution, and M. Quraish Shihab. While these studies are invaluable for mapping the intellectual history of the period, they rarely provide a critical, normative analysis of the epistemological frameworks that underpin these thinkers' contributions. Consequently, a gap remains in the scholarly discourse: the philosophical coherence, or lack thereof, of the "localized philosophical discourses" has not been systematically evaluated. This article seeks to address this lacuna by investigating the shifts in epistemology that have shaped contemporary Indonesian Islamic thought, with particular attention to how these shifts contribute to a distinctive local intellectual

tradition and how they can be critiqued from within the broader Islamic intellectual heritage.

## Methods

This study employs normative library research. Sources include the primary writings of leading Indonesian Muslim thinkers—specifically Harun Nasution, Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, M. Quraish Shihab, and M. Amin Abdullah—as well as secondary analyses from Indonesian and international scholars. The methodology is not merely descriptive but is designed to be analytical and evaluative, following a three-step process.

*First*, a Textual Analysis is conducted to examine the explicit and implicit epistemological assumptions embedded in the primary and secondary texts. This step involves identifying how each thinker defines the sources of knowledge, the criteria for truth, and the relationship between revelation, reason, and human experience.

*Second*, a Comparative Approach is utilized to contrast the epistemological frameworks of Indonesian Islamic thought with the established typologies of classical Islamic epistemology: the textual-legal (*bayani*), the rational-empirical (*burhani*), and the spiritual-intuitive (*irfani*).<sup>1</sup> This comparative step also considers the influence of contemporary Western hermeneutics and social sciences.

*Finally*, a Normative Critique evaluates the implications of these epistemological shifts. This evaluation is performed using two primary normative standards: a) the internal philosophical standards of the Islamic intellectual tradition, as exemplified by figures like al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd, and b) the ethical framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah* (the higher purposes of Islamic law).<sup>2</sup> This multi-layered critique aims to assess the philosophical rigor, methodological coherence, and fidelity of these new discourses to the core values of the

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Syarif, “Pendekatan Bayani, Burhani Dan Irfani Dalam Pengembangan Hukum Islam,” *Jurnal Al-Mizan* 9, no. 2 (2022): 169–87, <https://doi.org/10.54621/jiam.v9i2.430>.

<sup>2</sup> Arif Sugitanata, “Kritik Wacana Atas Transformasi Maqṣid Al-Syari‘ah Dalam Studi Islam Kontemporer,” *At-Ta’awun : Jurnal Mu’amalah Dan Hukum Islam* 4, no. 1 (2025): 1–42, <https://doi.org/10.59579/atw.v4i1.9296>.

Islamic tradition, thereby providing a comprehensive and ethically grounded assessment.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **The Triadic Framework: Dominant Epistemological Orientations**

Contemporary Indonesian Muslim intellectual discourse is characterized by three interrelated epistemological orientations. These frameworks reflect a concerted effort to adapt classical Islamic thought to the specific socio-political and cultural contexts of modern Indonesia.

### **The Rational-Theological Episteme**

The rational-theological episteme is most prominently represented by the work of Harun Nasution. His project was a fundamental epistemological critique aimed at providing a new basis for understanding and studying Islam. Through this critique, Nasution sought to differentiate between the absolute, divine aspects of Islamic teachings and the relative, temporal ones, thereby creating an intellectual space for reform. His approach, rooted in the rationalist kalām tradition of the Mu‘tazilites, advocated for a rational approach to Islam as an antidote to the perceived stagnation and literalism of traditionalist scholarship.<sup>3</sup>

Nasution’s emphasis on the role of intellect (*akal*) as a crucial source of knowledge, alongside revelation, was a strategic move to intellectually re-arm Indonesian Islam. He argued that the intellect is the "epitome of human power" and holds a high position in Islam, which he believed empowered humanity to be an active and dynamic force rather than a weak, passive entity. Nasution further cemented his argument by linking the historical advancement of Islamic sciences in the early centuries to a period where Muslims held human reason in high regard and engaged critically with classical Greek philosophy and science.<sup>4</sup> This connection to a glorious intellectual past demonstrates that Nasution’s rationalism was not a simple adoption of Western ideas but a deliberate reconstruction of an indigenous burhani (rational-

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<sup>3</sup> Zayyadi, *Islamologi Harun Nasution*, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Zaid Hamdani and M Taufiq Rahman, "Rationalism in Harun Nasution’s Epistemology of Islamic Law," *Focus* 3, no. 1 (2022): 12–21.

empirical) tradition to address the perceived intellectual and societal decline of his time. This burhani reform, in his view, was a necessary step to restore the creative potential of the Muslim community.

### **The Neo-Modernist Episteme**

Developed by figures like Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid, the neo-modernist episteme represents a significant shift that synthesizes Islamic tradition with modern philosophical reasoning and pluralist values. This approach was born out of an intellectual anxiety over the "deadlock" of Islamic thought in Indonesia and aimed to stimulate a psychological breakthrough.<sup>5</sup>

Nurcholish Madjid's most controversial yet foundational contribution was his concept of "secularization" (*sekularisasi*), which he explicitly distinguished from "secularism" (*sekularisme*), a closed-off ideology he viewed as functionally similar to a new religion. For Madjid, secularization was a process of liberation from the historical baggage and superstitions that prevented Muslims from distinguishing between transcendental and temporal values.<sup>6</sup> By "secularizing" what is inherently worldly, he sought to prepare the Muslim mind for constant re-examination of truth in light of material, moral, and historical realities, a process he saw as a direct consequence of the principle of *tauhid* (monotheism).<sup>7</sup> This neo-modernist project was not about abandoning religion, but about re-engineering its relationship with society by shifting the intellectual focus from political and legal formalism to cultural and ethical relevance.

Abdurrahman Wahid echoed a similar sentiment. He viewed Islam as a source of universal ethics, emphasizing the welfare of society (*kesejahteraan masyarakat*) as the ultimate purpose of religious teachings. His call for the "indigenization of Islam" (*pribumisasi Islam*) was a core aspect of his epistemology, advocating for an approach that

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<sup>5</sup> Lukman Nulhakim, "Konsep Pemikiran Sekularisasi Nurcholish Madjid Sebuah Fenomenologi Agama," *Risalah, Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam* 6, no. 2 (2020): 257–72, [https://doi.org/10.31943/jurnal\\_risalah.v6i2.135](https://doi.org/10.31943/jurnal_risalah.v6i2.135).

<sup>6</sup> Cahaya Khaeroni, "Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005) (Gagasan-Gagasan Pembaruan Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer Di Indonesia)," *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 4, no. 02 (2021): 178, <https://doi.org/10.24127/att.v4i02.1464>.

<sup>7</sup> Nulhakim, "Konsep Pemikiran Sekularisasi Nurcholish Madjid Sebuah Fenomenologi Agama."

is responsive to the needs of the times while retaining the identity of classical tradition.<sup>10</sup> For Wahid, Islam's function in a pluralistic nation-state was not to serve as a specific form of governance but to be a universal social ethic that guides national life. He strategically employed Pancasila as a political tool that acts as a "guarantor" for Islamic life in Indonesia, demonstrating a pragmatic and contextual approach to faith and politics.<sup>8</sup> This epistemological choice represents a profound strategic shift away from the symbolic, utopian *bayani* politics of his predecessors toward a more functional, ethical, and pluralistic framework.

### **The Hermeneutical-Contextual Episteme**

This epistemological orientation, articulated by scholars such as M. Quraish Shihab and M. Amin Abdullah, marks an interpretive turn in Indonesian Islamic thought. These thinkers sought to make Islamic knowledge more relevant by engaging in contextual interpretation and dialogue with modern social sciences.

M. Quraish Shihab permits the use of hermeneutics in interpreting the Qur'an, arguing that its fundamental principles (*tafsir* and *ta'wil*) were already practiced by early Muslim scholars long before the emergence of the concept in the West. He views hermeneutics not as an alien concept but as a tool that, when properly applied within the traditional framework, can enrich the understanding of the Qur'an.<sup>9</sup> His *tafsir* (*tafsir al-Mishbah*) is fundamentally contextual, aiming to address contemporary social issues like gender and the role of technology in modern life.<sup>10</sup> By doing so, Shihab's approach seeks to liberate the Qur'an from rigid, de-contextualized readings, allowing it to remain a relevant guide for a dynamic society.

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<sup>8</sup> Syaiful Arif, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Diskursus Negara Islam: Pemikiran KH Abdurrahman Wahid," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 13, no. 1 (2020): 73–104, <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v13i1.189>.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Alwi HS, "Hermeneutika dalam Memahami Al-Qur'an Menurut M. Quraish Shihab," *Tafsir Al Quran | Referensi Tafsir di Indonesia*, June 28, 2021, <https://tafsiralquran.id/hermeneutika-dalam-memahami-al-quran-menurut-m-quraish-shihab/>.

<sup>10</sup> Achmad Luqman Tsani, "Kontekstualisasi Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Tentang Memaafkan Dalam Perspektif M. Quraish Shihab" (Skripsi, IAIN Kediri, 2023), <https://etheses.iainkediri.ac.id:80/id/eprint/9902>.

M. Amin Abdullah's work provides a broader philosophical foundation for this interpretive turn. He has consistently addressed what he describes as the "dichotomous view" of science and religion in Indonesian society, a separation he likens to "oil and water". His integration-interconnection approach is a conscious effort to build an "epistemology bridge" (*jembatan epistemologi*) that reunites various disciplines—including religious, social, and natural sciences—into a coherent whole.<sup>11</sup> He envisions this intellectual framework as a "spider web" concept map where all fields of knowledge are linked, fostering a dialogue that eliminates the artificial separation between religious and general education.<sup>12</sup> This represents a profound attempt to re-engineer the very structure of Islamic knowledge to make it both intellectually rigorous and socially useful in the face of modern challenges.

The following table provides a comprehensive overview of these key epistemological frameworks, consolidating the unique contributions of Indonesia's leading Muslim intellectuals.

Table 1. A comprehensive overview of the epistemological framework by a prominent Indonesian Muslim.

Intellectual Figure	Core Epistemological Approach	Key Philosophical Tenets	Primary Contribution to Indonesian Thought
<b>Harun Nasution</b>	Rational-Theological	Emphasis on reason ( <i>akal</i> ) as a source of knowledge; reformation of <i>kalām</i> tradition	Provided an intellectual foundation for a modern, rationalist Islam.

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<sup>11</sup> Waston Waston, "Pemikiran Epistemologi Amin Abdullah Dan Relevansinya Bagi Pendidikan Tinggi Di Indonesia," *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam* 17, no. 01 (2016): 80–89, <https://doi.org/10.23917/profetika.v17i01.2102>.

<sup>12</sup> Rapia Arcanita, "Diskursus Pemikiran Pendidikan M. Amin Abdullah Dan Relevansinya Dengan Pengembangan Pendidik," *Belajia Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* Vol. 8 No. 3 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.29240/belajea.v8i2.7451>.

		to counter stagnation.	
<b>Nurcholish Madjid</b>	Neo-Modernist	Distinction between <i>sekularisasi</i> (process) and <i>sekularisme</i> (ideology); <i>tauhid</i> as a principle of liberation.	Shifted the intellectual discourse from political formalism to cultural and ethical renewal.
<b>Abdurrahman Wahid</b>	Neo-Modernist/Cosmopolitan	<i>Pribumisasi Islam</i> (indigenization of Islam); Islam as universal social ethics rather than a state model.	Fostered religious pluralism and moderation within a democratic framework.
<b>M. Quraish Shihab</b>	Hermeneutical-Contextual	Permitted the use of hermeneutics within traditional <i>tafsir</i> and <i>ta'wil</i> frameworks.	Introduced a dynamic, contextual, and socially-responsive approach to Qur'anic interpretation.
<b>M. Amin Abdullah</b>	Integration-Interconnection	Overcoming the <i>dikotomi keilmuan</i> (dichotomy of knowledge); advocated for a holistic "spider web" epistemology.	Re-engineered the structure of Islamic knowledge to reconcile religious and general sciences.

## The Trajectory of Epistemological Shifts: From *Bayani* to Hybridity

The intellectual evolution of Islamic thought in Indonesia is not a simple linear progression but a complex, multi-layered process where older epistemologies persist, interact, and eventually coalesce with newer ones. This historical dynamic has led to the emergence of a unique, non-systematic intellectual landscape that can be described as a hybrid epistemology.

### Mapping the Intellectual Genealogy

Historically, Islamic scholarship in Indonesia was dominated by a *bayani* (textual-legal) epistemology.<sup>13</sup> This approach, prevalent in traditional *pesantren* scholarship, emphasized the authority of religious texts, particularly the Qur'an and Hadith, and the primacy of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*).<sup>14</sup> This tradition was, in a sense, a historical inheritance, reflecting the fikih-centric and conservative tendencies that had taken hold in the post-classical Islamic world. In this ecosystem, intellectual activity often moved within the constraints of textual reasoning and mazhabi (school-based) affiliations, leading to a tendency toward conservatism and a dualistic view of knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

The introduction of the burhani (rational-empirical) episteme was a direct response to this perceived stagnation. This intellectual current was championed by modernist reformers like Harun Nasution and organizations such as Muhammadiyah. They sought to revitalize Islamic thought by integrating reason and empirical evidence into the pursuit of knowledge, a move that challenged the supremacy of textual literalism. Simultaneously, the irfani (spiritual-intuitive) episteme, rooted in Sufi traditions and personal mystical experience, has long endured, particularly within the scholarly and community-based

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<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Syarif, "Pendekatan Bayani, Burhani Dan Irfani Dalam Pengembangan Hukum Islam."

<sup>14</sup> Aswandi Aswandi et al., "Epistemologi Dalam Konsep Islam: Epistemologi Bayani, Burhani, Dan 'Irfani," *Journal of Innovative and Creativity (Joecy)* 5, no. 2 (2025): 10605–12, <https://doi.org/10.31004/joecy.v5i2.1412>.

<sup>15</sup> Mahmud Arif, "Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam Kajian Atas Nalar Masa Keemasan Islam Dan Implikasinya Di Indonesia" (Thesis, UIN Suna Kalijaga, 2006), <http://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/14476><http://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/14476>.

traditions of Nahdlatul Ulama's *pesantren*.<sup>16</sup> This layered history means that the intellectual tradition has never been a clean break from one epistemology to another. Instead, each has persisted, leading to a complex intellectual genealogy.

### **Emergence and Contours of a Hybrid Epistemology**

Contemporary Indonesian thought is characterized by a synthesis of these three frameworks, leading to what can be termed a hybrid epistemology. This hybridity is not merely a sign of intellectual confusion but a productive response to the challenges of the postcolonial era. In a world marked by the legacy of Western intellectual hegemony, thinkers often face the risk of a "captive mind"—a state characterized by a fragmented view of the world, a loss of creativity, and an alienation from their own cultural and intellectual traditions.<sup>17</sup> Indonesian intellectuals, in their effort to reconcile their Islamic heritage with Western modernity, have successfully avoided this trap by forging a new path.

A prime example of this is the concept of hybrid Sufism, which seeks to balance the vertical dimension of spirituality (the pursuit of God) with the horizontal dimension of social and worldly concerns, such as the wise use of nature and engagement with local wisdom.<sup>18</sup> This fusion of the *irfani* and *burhani* approaches demonstrates a practical application of the hybrid model. Similarly, the work of M. Amin Abdullah in forging the "integration-interconnection" paradigm exemplifies a deliberate attempt to build a coherent framework that unites disparate disciplines.<sup>19</sup> This intellectual project, therefore, can be viewed as the creation of a "Third Space," a concept from postcolonial theory, where conflicting cultural and epistemological frameworks

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<sup>16</sup> Aswandi et al., "Epistemologi Dalam Konsep Islam."

<sup>17</sup> Hawasi Hawasi, "Epistemology And The Problem Of Cultural Hybridity In Muhammad Iqbal's Thought," *Kanz Philosophia : A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism* 5, no. 2 (2015): 99, <https://doi.org/10.20871/kpjipm.v5i2.137>.

<sup>18</sup> Suwito Suwito et al., "Hybrid Sufism for Enhancing Quality of Life: Ethnographic Perspective in Indonesia," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022): 8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7198>.

<sup>19</sup> Waston, "Pemikiran Epistemologi Amin Abdullah Dan Relevansinya Bagi Pendidikan Tinggi Di Indonesia."

meet productively to produce a new, integrated whole.<sup>20</sup> The Indonesian experience thus offers a compelling case study of how a postcolonial intellectual tradition can resolve internal fragmentation and create a unique model for intellectual reconciliation.

### **A Normative Critique of Localized Discourses**

The epistemological shifts in Indonesian Islamic thought, while yielding a distinctive and dynamic tradition, are not without their normative strengths and limitations. A critical evaluation is necessary to understand the full implications of this intellectual trajectory.

### **Strengths as a Model for Moderation**

The most significant strength of the Indonesian hybrid epistemology is its demonstrated capacity to foster religious moderation and tolerance. The move toward contextual and pluralistic frameworks has allowed Indonesian thought to integrate Islam with local values, such as Pancasila and democracy, making it a viable and attractive model for the broader Muslim world.<sup>21</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the textual-idealistic *bayani* paradigm, which is often described as utopian, sloganistic, and defensive. Political parties and movements adhering to this rigid framework have been critiqued for their inability to offer practical solutions to social problems and for their exclusive focus on the formal enforcement of Islamic law, which is often deemed less strategic in Indonesia's pluralistic context.<sup>22</sup>

The success of the neo-modernist and hermeneutical approaches lies in their shift from an epistemology of symbols to an epistemology of function. By de-emphasizing the need for a specific Islamic State or the rigid application of sharia and instead focusing on the universal ethics of Islam, they have created a functional and realistic model for social and political engagement.<sup>23</sup> This transition has made Islam a

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<sup>20</sup> Hawasi, "Epistemology And The Problem Of Cultural Hybridity In Muhammad Iqbal's Thought."

<sup>21</sup> John R. Bowen, "Intellectual Pilgrimages and Local Norms in Fashioning Indonesian Islam," *Revue Des Mondes Musulmans et de La Méditerranée*, no. 123 (July 2008): 37–54, <https://doi.org/10.4000/remmm.5323>.

<sup>22</sup> Dr Muhammad Azhar, "The Epistemology of Islamic Political Thought in Indonesia," *International Journal of Applied Sociology*, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Arif, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Diskursus Negara Islam."

more adaptive and resilient force in Indonesia's thriving civil society and democracy.<sup>24</sup> The very pragmatism of this localized approach has produced a tangible and successful outcome: an intellectual tradition that is both rooted in faith and capable of promoting social harmony and justice.

### **Limitations and Challenges**

Despite its strengths, the Indonesian intellectual project faces significant normative challenges. A central critique is the risk of intellectual fragmentation and a lack of methodological systematization.<sup>25</sup> The absence of a coherent, universally accepted epistemological paradigm means that the intellectual landscape, while dynamic, can be prone to incoherence. Unlike the classical Islamic intellectual tradition, which was built on systematic philosophical foundations, contemporary Indonesian thought often remains pragmatic rather than methodologically rigorous. This intellectual state is not static; it is an "on going process and formation" still seeking an ideal model.

There is also a concern that this approach may lead to an over-dependence on Western hermeneutical frameworks, which could, in turn, risk diluting normative Islamic principles.<sup>26</sup> While thinkers like M. Amin Abdullah advocate for the integration of modern science, critics question whether this integration can occur without a corresponding loss of fidelity to the foundational, theological truths of the tradition. This inherent tension between contextual relevance and normative preservation is a key vulnerability of the hybrid approach. The intellectual fragmentation and the risk of a "captive mind" described in postcolonial theory remain a real and present danger for this intellectual tradition.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jeremy Menchik, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316344446>.

<sup>25</sup> Azhar, "The Epistemology of Islamic Political Thought in Indonesia."

<sup>26</sup> Mulyadi Hermanto, "Rekonstruksi Epistemologi Keilmuan Islam," Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanuli Selatan, n.d.

<sup>27</sup> Hawasi, "Epistemology And The Problem Of Cultural Hybridity In Muhammad Iqbal's Thought."

### ***Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a Normative Compass**

The re-emerging discourse on *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (the higher purposes of Islamic law) offers a potential solution to the normative critiques of Indonesian epistemology. Positioned as a "flexible bridge" between divine values and the aspirations of modernity, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* can serve as a robust, universal ethical framework to ground the localized and pluralistic discourses.<sup>28</sup>

It provides a means of evaluating new approaches based on their ability to achieve the ultimate objectives of Islamic law, which include the preservation of religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*), life (*hifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*hifẓ al-'aql*), lineage (*hifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*hifẓ al-māl*).<sup>29</sup> This framework can act as a normative compass, ensuring that innovations and contextual adaptations do not stray from the core ethical principles of the tradition. Its application is not limited to legal theory; it is used as a critical tool in diverse fields, from Islamic economics and finance<sup>30</sup> to the reconciliation of Islamic law with local customs, such as Dayak inheritance traditions, to promote peace and harmony.<sup>31</sup>

However, the use of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* is not without its own set of debates. The discourse is critiqued for being a rhetorical tool that can be used to legitimize liberal agendas or state policies, suggesting that it can be a tool of ideological convenience rather than a genuine analytical framework.<sup>32</sup> For the Indonesian intellectual tradition, the ongoing debate about the use of *Maqāṣid* represents the critical next step in its philosophical development. The intellectual maturity of the hybrid epistemology will be measured by its ability to employ *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a rigorous and self-critical tool to navigate the complexities of modernity without losing its normative foundation.

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<sup>28</sup> Sugitanata, "Kritik Wacana Atas Transformasi Maq?"

<sup>29</sup> Syufa'at Syufa'at, "Implementasi Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah Dalam Hukum Ekonomi Islam," *Al-Ahkam* 23, no. 2 (2013): 143, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2013.23.2.20>.

<sup>30</sup> Necmeddin Güney, "Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'a in Islamic Finance: A Critical Analysis of Modern Discourses," *Religions* 15, no. 1 (2024): 114, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010114>.

<sup>31</sup> Syaikhu Syaikhu et al., "The Maqashid Sharia Construction on Inheritance in Dayak Ngaju Customs within the Tumbang Anoi Agreement," *El-Mashlahah* 13, no. 2 (2023): 181–202, <https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v13i2.7375>.

<sup>32</sup> Sugitanata, "Kritik Wacana Atas Transformasi Maq?"

Table 2. The application of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah* (the objectives of Islamic law) in various domains of contemporary life.

Domain of Application	Core Application of Maqāṣid	Specific Maqāṣid Focus
<b>Law/Jurisprudence</b>	Harmonizing Islamic law with social justice and democracy in a pluralistic context.	<i>Hifẓ al-nafs</i> (preservation of life), <i>hifẓ al-‘aql</i> (preservation of intellect), and <i>hifẓ al-nasl</i> (preservation of lineage/community).
<b>Economics/Finance</b>	Establishing ethical and informed solutions for modern Islamic finance.	<i>Hifẓ al-māl</i> (preservation of property), with an emphasis on <i>maslahat</i> (public interest).
<b>Socio-Cultural</b>	Reconciling Islamic law with indigenous customs (e.g., Dayak inheritance law).	<i>Hifẓ al-nasl</i> (preservation of community harmony) and social justice.
<b>Education</b>	Developing a holistic and integrated education system that overcomes dichotomies.	<i>Hifẓ al-dīn</i> (preservation of religion) and <i>hifẓ al-‘aql</i> (preservation of intellect).

## Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that contemporary Islamic thought in Indonesia has undergone significant epistemological shifts, moving from a text-centric *bayani* dominance toward a dynamic and pluralistic hybrid paradigm. This intellectual evolution, championed by key figures such as Harun Nasution, Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, M. Quraish Shihab, and M. Amin Abdullah, has systematically integrated rationalism, hermeneutics, and spiritual insights to create a uniquely Indonesian tradition. The emergence of this hybrid

epistemology is a productive response to the challenges of modernity, multiculturalism, and postcolonial intellectual life.

While these shifts have yielded considerable strengths, particularly in fostering religious moderation and contextual relevance, they also raise important normative concerns. The absence of a single, coherent philosophical paradigm risks intellectual fragmentation, and the reliance on contextual adaptation could lead to a dilution of normative Islamic principles. However, the re-emergence of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a critical framework provides a potential solution to this dilemma, offering a universal, ethical compass to guide intellectual development and ensure fidelity to the higher purposes of the divine law. The Indonesian case thus stands as a vital and ongoing experiment in the localization of Islamic thought, demonstrating both the profound potential and the inherent challenges of such an endeavor.

This article contributes to the academic discourse on Islamic epistemology by offering a normative critique of a specific regional intellectual tradition. By analyzing the Indonesian intellectual landscape as a "successful hybrid epistemology," the study provides a compelling case study of a productive response to the "postcolonial captive mind" dilemma. It introduces *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a robust, internal critique mechanism that can ground and evaluate localized intellectual discourses. This analysis expands the understanding of Islamic epistemology beyond its classical typologies, highlighting how it adapts and transforms in response to modern socio-political realities.

The epistemological frameworks and their critiques identified in this study offer a valuable blueprint for other Muslim-majority societies grappling with similar challenges of modernism, democracy, and pluralism. The Indonesian model demonstrates that an effective and moderate Islamic discourse requires a self-critical, methodologically-grounded epistemological framework that can balance fidelity to tradition with openness to contextual realities. The successes and failures of the Indonesian intellectual project provide concrete lessons for developing a resilient and adaptive Islamic thought that is both authentic and capable of contributing constructively to a diverse and democratic world. The continued and critical engagement with *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* is a vital area for future intellectual development in this regard, offering a pathway toward achieving philosophical maturity.

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