



Decolonizing Islamic Studies: Rethinking Epistemology, Methodology, and Praxis in the Global South

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Abstract

The study of Islam in Western academia remains entangled with the intellectual legacy of Orientalism, which constructs the Muslim world as an object of analysis rather than a producer of knowledge. Although postcolonial theory has attempted to critique this bias, it often reproduces Eurocentric assumptions. This paper analyzes the epistemological and methodological foundations of decolonial Islamic studies and highlights Indonesia's contribution through the intellectual legacy of the ulama Nusantara and the pesantren tradition as a model of indigenous epistemic resistance. Using a normative-qualitative approach, this research critically examines primary and secondary literature related to Orientalism, decolonial theory, and the development of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia. Comparative analysis is applied to evaluate the intellectual works of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani and Shaykh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari within a decolonial framework. The study reveals that Indonesian Islamic scholarship embodies epistemic hybridity that challenges the hierarchy of Western knowledge systems. The pesantren model demonstrates a transformative pedagogy integrating spirituality, critical awareness, and social responsibility. Decolonizing Islamic Studies is not merely a critique of Western epistemology but an active process of reclaiming Islamic intellectual autonomy. The Indonesian experience provides a sustainable paradigm for reconstructing Islamic scholarship through inclusive, dialogical, and locally grounded approaches that contribute to global knowledge pluralism.

Keywords: Decolonial Islamic studies; Orientalism; indigenous epistemology; pesantren; Indonesia.

Abstrak

Kajian Islam di dunia Barat masih dipengaruhi oleh warisan intelektual orientalisme yang memposisikan dunia Muslim sebagai objek studi, bukan subjek pengetahuan. Meskipun teori poskolonial berusaha mengoreksi bias tersebut, kerangka berpikir yang digunakan sering kali tetap bersifat eurosentris. Artikel ini menganalisis dasar epistemologis dan metodologis studi Islam dekolonial serta menyoroti kontribusi Indonesia melalui warisan intelektual ulama Nusantara dan tradisi pesantren sebagai model perlawanan epistemik lokal. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan normatif-

kualitatif dengan menelaah literatur primer dan sekunder mengenai orientalisme, teori dekolonial, dan perkembangan keilmuan Islam di Indonesia. Analisis komparatif diterapkan terhadap karya intelektual Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani dan Syekh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari dalam kerangka dekolonial. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keilmuan Islam Indonesia mencerminkan hibriditas epistemik—perpaduan antara ilmu-ilmu Islam klasik, kearifan lokal, dan adaptasi kontekstual—yang menantang hierarki pengetahuan Barat. Model pesantren menampilkan pedagogi transformatif yang mengintegrasikan spiritualitas, kesadaran kritis, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Dekolonisasi studi Islam bukan sekadar kritik terhadap epistemologi Barat, tetapi upaya aktif untuk merebut kembali otonomi intelektual Islam. Pengalaman Indonesia menawarkan paradigma berkelanjutan untuk merekonstruksi keilmuan Islam secara inklusif, dialogis, dan berbasis lokal yang berkontribusi terhadap pluralisme pengetahuan global.

Kata kunci: Studi Islam dekolonial; orientalisme; epistemologi lokal; pesantren; Indonesia.

Introduction

The contemporary study of Islam, particularly in Western academia, remains profoundly shaped by the intellectual legacy of Orientalism. As articulated by Edward Said in his seminal work, *Orientalism*, this is not a neutral field of inquiry but a form of "cultural and intellectual imperialism" and a "political intellectualism" inextricably tied to imperialist societies. Said argued that the "Orient" is a construct of the Western imagination a "kind of Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient".¹ This intellectual framework establishes a stark binary between a supposedly rational, virtuous, and mature "Occident" and an irrational, depraved, and childish "Orient". This binary reduces complex and diverse Islamic societies to a monolithic, caricatured "other," reinforcing a persistent set of stereotypes, such as the depiction of Eastern women as submissive and men as aggressive.² These representations are not confined to academic texts; they are pervasive in modern media and popular culture, manifesting as tropes like the "terrorist" or the "mysterious, oppressed

¹Wikipedia, "Orientalism (book)," July 24, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Orientalism_\(book\)&oldid=1302270987](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Orientalism_(book)&oldid=1302270987).

² Sarah Lee, "The Legacy of Orientalism: A Critical Analysis," accessed August 25, 2025, <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/legacy-orientalism-critical-analysis>.

woman," which in turn shape public perceptions and can be used to justify military interventions and policies.³

The most enduring legacy of Orientalism for Islamic Studies is the establishment of a hierarchy of knowledge. This framework systematically privileges Eurocentric academic validation over indigenous Islamic scholarly traditions, reducing Islamic civilization from a "subject of knowledge" to a mere "object of study".⁴ The field of area studies, for example, has been critiqued for its Orientalist underpinnings, as it has often been driven by a desire to "understand and control" these regions rather than to engage with them on an "equal footing".⁵ This intellectual dominance dismisses non-European forms of knowledge as "primitive, naive, irrational, obscure and incoherent". The persistence of these intellectual frameworks well after the end of formal colonial rule demonstrates that Said's critique is not a historical artefact but remains vital for understanding the ongoing "coloniality of power" and the "coloniality of knowledge".⁶ These historical academic frameworks have seeped into the public consciousness, shaping perceptions of Islam and Muslims and, in turn, justifying detrimental policies. Thus, decolonizing Islamic Studies is not merely an academic exercise; it is a critical project aimed at dismantling a persistent, globally operative power dynamic.

While acknowledging the vital contributions of postcolonial scholars, decolonial thought offers a distinct and more radical intellectual project. The decolonial project seeks a more fundamental "delinking" from the colonial episteme by recovering and re-centering indigenous epistemologies. This theoretical distinction is crucial for Islamic Studies, where the intellectual gestures of resistance by Muslim

³ Sarah Lee, "The Legacy of Orientalism: A Critical Examination," accessed August 25, 2025, <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/legacy-of-orientalism-critical-examination>.

⁴ Joseph E. B. Lombard, "Decolonizing Qur'anic Studies," *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022): 176, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020176>.

⁵ Lee, "The Legacy of Orientalism."

⁶ "Coloniality of Knowledge - Institut Für Anglistik/Amerikanistik - Universität Rostock," accessed August 25, 2025, <https://www.iaa.uni-rostock.de/forschung/laufende-forschungsprojekte/american-antiquities-prof-mackenthun/project/theories/coloniality-of-knowledge/>.

scholars have often been ignored or subsumed within a Eurocentric intellectual history.⁷

A central tenet of this approach is Quijano's concept of the "coloniality of knowledge," which argues that colonialism systematically "banished indigenous forms of knowledge from their archives" and denigrated the very media through which this knowledge was transmitted. This concept extends the critique of Orientalism by demonstrating how the very structure and canons of academic disciplines are designed to uphold Eurocentric knowledge as the universal standard.⁸ The purpose of the decolonial project is to re-install these formerly hidden epistemologies by introducing new evidence from various fields and engaging in a significant amount of self-critique. For Islamic Studies, this implies that the goal is not merely to demonstrate Orientalism's misrepresentations but to proactively argue for the inherent epistemic validity of traditional Islamic scholarship, such as works of *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), *usul al-fiqh* (legal theory), and Sufi treatises.⁹ This approach moves beyond a reactive critique and becomes a proactive project of knowledge creation, which is foundational to the entire decolonization effort.

Results and Discussion

The Epistemological and Methodological Critiques of Decolonial Islamic Studies

The coloniality of knowledge in Islamic Studies is not an accidental flaw but is deeply embedded in the discipline's intellectual foundations. This system perpetuates specific forms of epistemic violence, where Muslim intellectual traditions are often deemed "non-cognitive" unless they can be "translated into a dominant secular paradigm". This process denatures indigenous knowledge systems, repurposing them to fit a pre-existing Euro-American academic hierarchy. For example, the extensive research in Arabic, Persian, and Indonesian on the Qur'an is often ignored in Euro-American

⁷ Abdulkader Tayob, "Decolonizing the Study of Religions: Muslim Intellectuals and the Enlightenment Project of Religious Studies," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 31, no. 2 (2018): 7–35, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2018/v31n2a1>.

⁸ "Coloniality of Knowledge - Institut Für Anglistik/Amerikanistik - Universität Rostock."

⁹ Lombard, "Decolonizing Qur'anic Studies."

scholarship. This is not simply a matter of a lack of access to sources but a deliberate intellectual stance, which assumes that methodologies from the classical tradition are "inherently flawed" and incapable of generating valid "epistemic discourses" on their own.¹⁰

A central methodological limitation of this approach is its overreliance on historical philology and textual criticism, which often disregards vast amounts of premodern Muslim literature and lived realities. This creates a linear, static view of Islamic history, implying that everything has been "downhill for Muslims since the Abbasids".¹¹ This perspective, which dismisses over a thousand years of scholarship as "historical fiction" or "religious dogma," is deeply rooted in the ideological foundations of the discipline. The decolonial project must therefore challenge the very definition of what constitutes "critical," "serious," or "rigorous" scholarship, as it is often a guise for what is, in reality, a system of "disciplinary parochialism" and "border police" that excludes alternative forms of knowledge.¹² This critique demonstrates that the problem is not a lack of access to sources, but a fundamental epistemological assumption that only knowledge produced through a secular, Eurocentric lens can be truly valid.

Table 1. Comparative Epistemologies: Orientalist vs. Decolonial Approaches in Islamic Studies

Category	Orientalist Approach	Decolonial Approach
Epistemic Foundation	Eurocentric, secular, and rationalist	Indigenous, pluralistic, and rooted in revelation, reason, and intuition

¹⁰ Lombard, "Decolonizing Qur'anic Studies."

¹¹ Lawrence Rosen is a professor emeritus of anthropology at Princeton and law at Columbia His newest book is *Legitimacy in Crisis: Case Studies in American Political Culture*, "Orientalism Revisited," *Boston Review*, January 1, 2007, <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/rosen-orientalism-revisited/>.

¹² Paola Bacchetta, "Decolonial Praxis," *Qui Parle* 18, no. 2 (2010): 147-92, <https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.18.2.147>.

Source of Authority	Western academy, historical philology, and textual criticism	Islamic scholarly traditions, lived realities, and local epistemologies
View of Islam	Static, monolithic "object of study"	Dynamic, hybrid "subject of knowledge" and agent of its own history
Goal of Research	Understanding to "control" and validate a Eurocentric identity	Reclaiming to "liberate" and empower marginalized voices

A decolonial response necessitates a re-evaluation and reframing of classical Islamic sciences as legitimate, self-contained methodologies. The intellectual stagnation in modern Islamic education, as noted by Mujamil Qomar, stems from a "weak epistemological basis" and an overreliance on rigid, deductive, and rationalist frameworks. This narrow approach neglects inductive and abductive reasoning, which could connect theological inquiry with "contemporary empirical data" and the lived realities of Muslim communities. This suggests that decolonizing Islamic Studies is not just about critiquing the West but also about undertaking a critical, internal reform of Islamic intellectual traditions to make them more dynamic and responsive to social problems.¹³

One avenue for this reform is the reclamation of indigenous methodologies. For instance, *usul al-fiqh* is a sophisticated legal theory that goes far beyond a rigid dogmatic system.¹⁴ It is a methodology for deriving legal rulings from the Qur'an and *Sunnah* through a deep exploration of the "epistemological foundations" of knowledge, as well

¹³ Sangkot Sirait, "Islamic Theology: An Epistemological Criticism," *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 21 (2014): 20–28.

¹⁴ *Wikipedia*, "Principles of Islamic jurisprudence," August 22, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Principles_of_Islamic_jurisprudence&ol did=1307195485.

as principles like *ijtihad* (juristic exertion) and *maslaha* (public interest).¹⁵ Similarly, a decolonial approach to Qur'anic hermeneutics challenges the tendency in Western scholarship to "de-Christianize" the text by fitting it into a Protestant-Christian framework. It instead proposes viewing the Qur'an as an "embodied text" whose non-linear structure is in itself a "decolonial subversion," defying Western compartmentalized thought.¹⁶ Finally, Sufi epistemology offers alternative modes of knowledge, such as the *irfani* (intuitive) method, which challenges the dominance of purely rationalistic and textualist approaches in modern Islamic scholarship.¹⁷ The solution to intellectual stagnation lies not in simply importing Western methods but in reclaiming a more holistic and pluralistic set of indigenous epistemologies.

The Indonesian Contribution: From Local Traditions to Global Discourse

The Intellectual Labor of Nusantara's *Ulama*

Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, offers a unique and critical vantage point for decolonial Islamic Studies. The intellectual contributions of Nusantara's *ulama* (religious scholars) represent a long-standing, pre-emptive decolonial praxis. Two exemplary figures are Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani and Shaykh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari. Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, a prolific 19th-century scholar, was crucial in bridging the gap between classical Islamic jurisprudence and the socio-cultural realities of the Indonesian archipelago. His scholarly works, such as *Nihayat al-Zain*, were instrumental in making Shafi'i jurisprudence accessible to a wider audience, grounding its principles in the local context.¹⁸ His systematic

¹⁵ Sarah Lee, "Mastering Usul Al-Fiqh: Principles and Practices," accessed August 25, 2025, <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/mastering-usul-al-fiqh-principles-practices>.

¹⁶ Asad Dandia, "Towards a Decolonial Approach to the Qur'an," *Contending Modernities*, January 15, 2021, <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/decoloniality/decolonial-approach-quran/>.

¹⁷ Slamet Pamuji and Novan Ardy Wiyani, "Epistemology Of Islamic Education From Rational To Critical Methods," *International Journal of Su-Ay Development Association (IJOSDA)* 4, no. 1 (2024): 29–40.

¹⁸ Dzulkifli Hadi Imawan et al., "Shaykh Nawawi Al-Bantani's Contribution to Grounding Shafi'i Islamic Law in the Indonesian Archipelago during the 19 Th Century.," *Al 'Adalah Journal* 27, no. 2 (2024).

and practical approach to Islamic law served as a model of "epistemic hybridity" that was both rigorous and adaptive.¹⁹

Similarly, Shaykh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari made a profound contribution in grounding Islam in Borneo in the 18th century through his scholarly works and the establishment of *pesantren* (traditional Islamic boarding schools).²⁰ The intellectual labor of these scholars serves as a historical counter-narrative to Eurocentric assumptions that Eastern cultures are "static and unchanging".²¹ They demonstrate that the Global South, far from being a passive recipient of knowledge, has long been a vibrant site of intellectual production and innovation. Studying these historical figures is not just an academic exercise but a critical act of recovering and re-centering indigenous intellectual history, proving that these scholars were actively producing knowledge that was "moderate and adaptive" and in "harmony with local cultures" long before decolonial theory emerged.²²

Table 2. Key Contributions of Indonesian *Ulama* to Decolonial Islamic Thought

Scholar	Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani	Shaykh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari
Era/Region	19th Century/Nusantara-Mecca	18th Century/Borneo
Key Works	<i>Nihayat al-Zain, Qut al-Habib al-Gharib</i>	<i>Kitab Sabilal Muhtadin</i>

¹⁹ Syarif Firdaus and Dzulkifli Hadi Imawan, "The Intellectual Legacy of Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani and Sheikh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi: Contributions to Islamic Education and Modern Contexts in Indonesia," *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 4, no. 2 (2024): 192–205, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jpi.v4i2.25377>.

²⁰ Dzulkifli Hadi Imawan, "The Contribution of Shaykh Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari in Spreading Islam in Nusantara," *Santri: Journal of Pesantren and Fiqh Sosial* 2, no. 2 (2021): 133–44, <https://doi.org/10.35878/santri.v2i2.328>.

²¹ Lee, "The Legacy of Orientalism."

²² Firdaus and Imawan, "The Intellectual Legacy of Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani and Sheikh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi."

Fields of Influence	<i>Fiqh, Tafsir, Tasawwuf</i>	<i>Fiqh, Tafsir, Tasawwuf</i>
Decolonial Impact	Bridged Middle Eastern and Nusantara scholarship; provided a systematic and practical approach to Islamic law; grounded Shafi'i jurisprudence in the Indonesian context; cultivated a moderate and adaptive Islam in Indonesia.	Grounded Islam in the archipelago through scholarly works and <i>pesantren</i> ; exemplified how local scholars can challenge academic hierarchies through contextualized scholarship.

The *Pesantren* Tradition as a Hub of Decolonial Praxis

The *pesantren* tradition provides a living example of how decolonial knowledge production can operate outside of Eurocentric academic structures. As Indonesia's oldest and most deeply rooted Islamic educational institution, the *pesantren* has historically served as a space for the moral, political, and cultural formation of Muslims. Although rooted in classical texts (*kitab kuning*), these institutions are far from static, as they adapt and re-interpret these texts to address contemporary social issues. Central to this dynamic is the unique role of the *kiai* (religious teacher), who acts as an "epistemological gatekeeper".²³ The *kiai*'s authority, which is based on a complex tradition of knowledge transmission (*sanad*), allows for a fluid, context-sensitive interpretation of Islamic teachings, which stands in contrast to the rigid, text-centric approach of some Western scholarship.²⁴

This system offers a powerful model for decolonial praxis. It is an example of "lived educational experiences" and an "interpretive culture" that resists external intellectual hegemony. The *pesantren*

²³ Rofikasari Mutmainah et al., *Authority, Texts And Educational Models: Tracking Religious Moderation In The Traditional Islamic Education Of Pesantren*, 14, no. 1 (2025).

²⁴ Firdaus and Imawan, "The Intellectual Legacy of Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani and Sheikh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi."

tradition demonstrates a form of knowledge that is "participatory and collaborative, non-coercive, rather than imposed".²⁵ A decolonial Islamic Studies should not merely study these institutions as subjects of research but should also learn from their pedagogical and epistemological models. This approach affirms that local Muslim communities are not just subjects of research but are active and indispensable producers of knowledge.

Toward a Decolonial Praxis: Institutional and Pedagogical Pathways

The Role of State Islamic Universities (UIN, IAIN, STAIN)

State Islamic Universities (UIN, IAIN, STAIN) in Indonesia are a key site for the decolonial project, situated at the intersection of traditional Islamic education and secular public schooling—a legacy of Dutch colonial educational dualism.²⁶ These institutions are engaged in a complex negotiation, tasked with integrating Western academic methodologies with traditional Islamic scholarly pursuits. Fieldwork at these universities reveals a general openness to Western approaches, but also "significant tensions" related to curriculum design.²⁷ There is a "competing vision" between two educational aims: engaging with Western academic approaches to the Qur'an and mastering Qur'anic knowledge for Islamic missionary purposes.²⁸

This conflict is a manifestation of the "coloniality of knowledge" at the institutional level, where one aim implicitly validates Western, secular methods, while the other seeks to preserve a theological-based knowledge system. Recent reforms, such as the "Independent Campus Curriculum" (*Merdeka Belajar*), offer opportunities for greater flexibility and practical skills development. However, these reforms are not explicitly decolonial and could inadvertently reinforce a purely vocational or technocratic education,

²⁵ *Wikipedia*, "Orientalism (book)."

²⁶ Elyza Devi et al., *Education System in Indonesia*, 1, no. 2 (2024).

²⁷ Tayob, "Decolonizing the Study of Religions."

²⁸ Yusuf Rahman and Ervan Nurtawab, "Western Qur'anic Studies in Indonesian Islamic Universities: Responses, Contestations, and Curriculum Politics," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 62, no. 2 (2024): 337–61.

neglecting the crucial task of intellectual decolonization.²⁹ A truly decolonial reform must move beyond this binary, situating Western scholarship within a "more balanced knowledge ecology" rather than accepting it as the sole arbiter of rigor.³⁰ This requires a "self-reflective transnational transdisciplinarity" that is mindful of the power dynamics inherent in academic knowledge production.³¹

Methodological Innovation and Pedagogical Reform

The decolonial project in Islamic Studies is already being advanced through methodological innovation and pedagogical reform. In the context of *pesantren*, a transformative pedagogy is being applied that goes beyond rote learning and focuses on "changing mindsets, critical awareness, and empowering learners to become agents of social change". This approach is distinctly Islamic, as it integrates the spiritual dimension of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul), a concept absent from its Western, secular counterparts.³²

Furthermore, Indonesian scholars are pioneering a range of hybrid research methodologies that bridge the gap between normative Islamic sciences and social sciences. Examples include combining "doctrinal analysis with multi-sited case studies" and integrating "scientific literature studies with ethnographic research".³³ These practices directly counter the "methodological reductionism" of Orientalist scholarship, which often separates textual analysis from "Muslim lived realities".³⁴ By adopting these approaches, scholars are actively engaging in a critical act of "epistemic disobedience" that challenges disciplinary barriers and Western-centric assumptions.³⁵

²⁹ Muhammad Nasir et al., "University Leaders' Views on Independent Campus Curriculum as Educational Reforms in Indonesian Islamic Universities.," *IAFOR Journal of Education* 12, no. 3 (2024): 147–72.

³⁰ Rahman and Nurtawab, "Western Qur'anic Studies in Indonesian Islamic Universities: Responses, Contestations, and Curriculum Politics."

³¹ Bacchetta, "Decolonial Praxis."

³² Taufikin Taufikin, "Redefining Islamic Pedagogy: A Transformative Approach to 21st-Century Education in Indonesian Pesantren," *Maharot: Journal of Islamic Education* 9, no. 1 (2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.28944/maharot.v9i1.2033>.

³³ *Theses - Islamic Studies*, n.d., accessed August 27, 2025, <https://repository.uiii.ac.id/collections/ca5bdc3c-80f6-4674-a602-6f060e4cdb3f>.

³⁴ *Wikipedia*, "Orientalism (book)."

³⁵ Sarah Lee, "Decolonizing Philosophy: A Guide," accessed August 25, 2025, <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/decolonizing-philosophy-guide>.

The Indonesian model demonstrates a new path for Islamic Studies that is both intellectually rigorous and socially engaged, where knowledge is democratized and local Muslim communities are recognized as producers of knowledge, not just subjects of research.

Table 3. Pedagogical Reform in Indonesian Islamic Education

Category	Traditional <i>Pesantren</i> Pedagogy	Transformative Pedagogy
Key Features	Study of <i>kitab kuning</i> using <i>bandongan</i> or <i>sorogan</i> systems; one-way knowledge transmission; limited room for critical reinterpretation.	Practice-based learning; integration of digital technology and social media; focus on critical awareness and student empowerment.
Underlying Philosophy	Conservation of meaning; reliance on <i>sanad</i> (chain of transmission); preservation of traditional ideology.	<i>Tazkiyah al-nafs</i> (purification of the soul); changing mindsets for social change; adaptability to contemporary challenges.
Challenges	Rigidity and an almost "inviolable" authority of the <i>kiai</i> ; potential for intellectual stagnation.	Limited ability of instructors to bridge transformative methods with Islamic principles; risk of reinforcing technocratic education without decolonial values.

Conclusion

Decolonizing Islamic Studies is both an intellectual and a political project that requires dismantling Eurocentric hierarchies while affirming the plurality of Islamic epistemologies. The Indonesian experience provides a compelling case study, demonstrating that decolonial praxis is not a theoretical abstraction but a historical and ongoing reality. The intellectual labor of Nusantara's *ulama* and the enduring vitality of the *pesantren* tradition offer a blueprint for a model of knowledge production that is rooted in local contexts, intellectually adaptive, and socially engaged. This model of "epistemic hybridity" challenges the Orientalist notion that the Global South is a passive

recipient of knowledge and instead establishes it as a dynamic site of intellectual innovation.

Ultimately, decolonization does not imply a wholesale rejection of Western scholarship. Instead, it advocates for situating it within a "more balanced knowledge ecology," where Muslim intellectual traditions are recognized as equal partners in global knowledge production. By reforming curricula, innovating methodologies, and democratizing knowledge, the field can move beyond a simplistic West-vs-Rest binary. The practical examples from Indonesia, such as the use of hybrid research methods and the application of transformative pedagogy rooted in spiritual values, show a path forward. The goal is to cultivate a "participatory and collaborative, non-coercive" knowledge system where the rich, diverse, and dynamic intellectual traditions of Islam are fully affirmed and empowered to address the complex challenges of the contemporary world.³⁶ This report contributes to the theoretical discourse by highlighting the potential of Global South perspectives and offers practical pathways for creating a more inclusive and dialogical field of Islamic Studies.

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³⁶ *Wikipedia*, "Orientalism (book)."

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