

The integration of knowledge at UIN Malang, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta: From dichotomy to a new paradigm

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Abstract

Islamic intellectual discourse has long been confronted by the problem of the knowledge dichotomy. As the most significant institutional response in Indonesia, the transformation of State Islamic Institutes (IAIN) into State Islamic Universities (UIN) was initiated as a civilizational project to demolish this dividing wall. Numerous studies have examined the models of integration born from this transformation in a particular manner. However, a comparative-dialectical analysis that places these various models within a single dialogical framework is still rare. This research aims to fill this gap by dissecting the paradigms of knowledge integration developed by three pioneer UINs: UIN Malang, UIN Yogyakarta, and UIN Jakarta. Using a qualitative library research method, this study deeply examines the primary works of the paradigms' originators and official institutional documents. The findings show the emergence of three distinctive epistemological architectures. First, the "Tree of Knowledge" paradigm of UIN Malang, which is hierarchical-processual, aims to form "Ulul Albab" scholars. Second, the "Spider's Web" paradigm of UIN Yogyakarta, which is non-hierarchical-dialogical, aspires to produce holistic scientists. Third, the knowledge integration model of UIN Jakarta, which is functional-contextual, emphasizes the application of Islamic and social sciences to answer the challenges of urban modernity. The synthesis of this analysis argues that these fundamental differences are not weaknesses but a collective strength. Through a complementary dialectic, the three together form the contours of a new paradigm of Islamic knowledge in Indonesia that is polyphonic and contextual.

Keywords: Epistemological Architecture; Islamic Education Paradigm; Knowledge Dichotomy; Knowledge Integration; State Islamic University

Abstrak

Diskursus intelektual Islam telah lama dihadapkan pada persoalan pelik mengenai dikotomi keilmuan. Sebagai respons institusional paling signifikan di Indonesia, transformasi Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) menjadi Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) diinisiasi sebagai proyek peradaban besar untuk meruntuhkan dinding pemisah tersebut. Berbagai studi terdahulu telah mengkaji model-model integrasi yang lahir dari transformasi ini secara parsial. Namun, analisis

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komparatif-dialektis yang secara komprehensif menempatkan berbagai model tersebut ke dalam satu kerangka dialogis masih sangat jarang ditemukan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengisi rumpang akademik tersebut dengan membedah paradigma integrasi keilmuan yang dikembangkan oleh tiga perguruan tinggi perintis: UIN Malang, UIN Yogyakarta, dan UIN Jakarta. Menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif kepustakaan, studi ini mengkaji secara mendalam teks-teks primer dari para arsitek paradigma tersebut beserta dokumen resmi institusi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan kemunculan tiga arsitektur epistemologis yang distingtif. Pertama, paradigma Pohon Ilmu UIN Malang yang bersifat hierarkis-prosesual guna membentuk cendekiawan berkarakter Ulul Albab. Kedua, paradigma Jaring Laba-laba UIN Yogyakarta yang bersifat non-hierarkis-dialogis demi melahirkan ilmuwan holistik. Ketiga, model fungsional-kontekstual UIN Jakarta yang menekankan aplikasi diskursus keilmuan Islam dan sains sosial untuk merespons tantangan modernitas urban. Sintesis analisis ini menegaskan bahwa perbedaan fundamental tersebut bukanlah kelemahan, melainkan wujud kekuatan kolektif komplementer yang membentuk paradigma pendidikan Islam polifonik dan kontekstual.

Kata kunci: Arsitektur Epistemologis; Dikotomi Keilmuan; Integrasi Keilmuan; Paradigma Pendidikan Islam; Universitas Islam Negeri

Introduction

The intellectual discourse within the Islamic world has for centuries been marked by a latent tension between the religious sciences (*al-‘ulūm al- dīniyyah*) and the general or rational sciences (*al-‘ulūm al- ‘aqliyyah*). This tension has given rise to an epistemological problem known as the dichotomy of knowledge a divide that not only constrains the scope of scholarly inquiry but also fosters a fragmented worldview among Muslims (Alawiyah, 2023). Historically, this dichotomy traces back to the decline of the Islamic Golden Age, where a rigid separation gradually emerged between religious jurisprudence and worldly empirical sciences, a divide that was later exacerbated by colonialism's introduction of secular Western educational models alongside traditional Islamic institutions (Awang et al., 2014). In Indonesia, the legacy of this dichotomy is deeply entrenched in the education system, manifested in an institutional dualism between public schools under the Ministry of Education and madrasas or pesantren under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. underscores how this dualism poses a significant challenge to the modernization of Islamic education, wherein Islamic educational institutions are often perceived as inferior seen as focused solely on otherworldly concerns and ill-equipped to respond to contemporary challenges dominated by science and technology (Azra, 2020). In his view, the problem of dichotomy pertains not only to curriculum but also to mentality and intellectual orientation, both of which inhibit the emergence of holistic Muslim thinkers.

As the most monumental institutional response to this challenge, the Indonesian government in the early 2000s initiated the transformation of State Institutes of Islamic Studies (IAIN) into State Islamic Universities (UIN) (Abdullah, 2006). This change was not merely a nominal shift; it constituted an ambitious intellectual project to dismantle the walls separating religious and general knowledge. The UIN institutions were mandated to serve as laboratories for developing an integrative and holistic paradigm of Islamic scholarship capable of engaging productively with modern scientific developments. Three institutions became pioneers and reference points in this grand project: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang (Khozin & Umiarso, 2019). However, it is vital to acknowledge that this transformation was not a strictly localized phenomenon; it was deeply interconnected with the broader international movement of the "Islamization of Knowledge" championed by global intellectuals such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the late 20th century (Al-Attas, 1999). These Indonesian institutions critically adapted these global philosophical currents, translating them into concrete institutional architectures suitable for the national context. Each, shaped by distinct historical backgrounds and socio-intellectual contexts, pursued its own unique formulation of an integration paradigm, marking a transition from mere reconciliation to the articulation of a new paradigm.

UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, under the leadership of Imam Suprayogo, explicitly formulated a paradigm encapsulated by the "Tree of Knowledge" metaphor. In this conception, (Suprayogo, 2006) asserts that the integration of knowledge must rest upon a robust spiritual foundation, with creed (*'aqidah*) and law (*shari'ah*) as the roots that sustain the entire edifice of knowledge. The paradigm aims to cultivate graduates characterized as *ulū al-albāb* intellectual professionals endowed with spiritual depth, moral excellence, breadth of knowledge, and professional maturity. This model emphasizes a hierarchical unity of faith, knowledge, and action, wherein science and technology are regarded as the "fruit" of a tree whose roots are divine values. UIN Malang's approach thus represents an integrative endeavor oriented toward character formation and spirituality as the basis for developing intellectuality (Khozin & Umiarso, 2019).

By contrast, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta driven by M. Amin Abdullah proposes a more fluid and non-hierarchical model termed the "integrative-interconnective" approach, employing the metaphor of a "web of knowledge." (Abdullah, 2006) critiques integrative models that still position the religious sciences as superior or as a static foundation for other sciences. Instead, he

proposes a dialogical, interconnective relationship in which no single discipline is central. All disciplines Islamic studies, the social sciences and humanities, and the natural sciences are mutually connected, responsive, and corrective within a dynamic network. This approach demands cross-disciplinary competence and epistemological openness to apprehend phenomena from multiple perspectives simultaneously, reflecting the more philosophical and plural intellectual temperament of Islamic thought in Yogyakarta (Muthohar et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta the first *UIN*, situated at the nation's political and intellectual center has developed an integrative model focused on dialogue among Islam, Indonesian-ness, and modernity. Although it lacks a single emblematic metaphor like Malang or Yogyakarta, the scholarly orientation of UIN Jakarta as reflected in the works of its intellectuals, including Azyumardi Azra is strongly characterized by the application of modern social sciences to the study of Islamic phenomena. Integration at UIN Jakarta is more pragmatic and contextual, seeking to render Islamic studies relevant to the social, political, and legal issues facing Indonesia amid globalization (Azra, 2020).

A number of prior studies have examined these integration models separately. For example, (Hidayat, 2020) in *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* provides an in-depth analysis of the curriculum based on the "Tree of Knowledge" paradigm at UIN Malang and its impact on graduate competencies. Another study by (Firmansyah, 2021), published in *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, explicitly validates the philosophical roots of M. Amin Abdullah's "integration-interconnection," concluding that Abdullah successfully synthesized post-structuralist philosophy with classical Islamic epistemology to create a framework highly relevant for contemporary academic discourse. Similarly, analyses of Islamic modernization at UIN Jakarta are well represented; for instance, Wahid (2019) empirically traces how UIN Jakarta's academic outputs and policy involvements have actively shaped the discourse on Islam and the state in Indonesia, proving the institutional efficacy of their contextual paradigm.

However, this literature mapping reveals a significant research gap. To date, comprehensive comparative-dialectical analyses of all three models within a single analytical frame remain scarce. Most studies stop at descriptive or philosophical analyses of a single model, without situating it in a "conversation" with other models that developed simultaneously across different *UIN* contexts (Muthohirin et al., 2025). Consequently, our understanding of the national landscape of knowledge integration remains partial. There has been no systematic effort to map points of convergence, divergence, and dialectical influence among the spiritually hierarchical "Tree of Knowledge," the

philosophically dialogical “Web of Knowledge,” and UIN Jakarta’s socio-contextual integration (Muthohar et al., 2023).

Accordingly, this study seeks to fill that gap. Specifically, it will analyze, compare, and place in dialogue the integration paradigms developed at UIN Malang, UIN Yogyakarta, and UIN Jakarta. The central question is: how do these three models with their conceptual and implementational differences collectively contribute to a shift in discourse from merely overcoming “dichotomy” toward formulating a “new paradigm” within the intellectual tradition of Islamic higher education in Indonesia? This study argues that, despite their differing metaphors and approaches, these initiatives together mark a fundamental epistemological leap. They move beyond defensive projects of “Islamization of knowledge” or “scientification of Islam” toward a more confident intellectual endeavor to construct an authentic, relevant, and contributive edifice of Islamic scholarship for human civilization. By comparatively mapping these three models, the study aims to offer a synthesis regarding the direction and future of the Islamic scholarly paradigm in Indonesia.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design to explore the epistemological architecture of knowledge integration at three leading State Islamic Universities (UIN) in Indonesia (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This methodological choice is specifically applied to uncover and critically examine the complex, meaning-laden intellectual paradigms constructed by these institutions without the need for empirical field data. By treating philosophical concepts and institutional narratives as the primary subjects of inquiry, this approach facilitates an in-depth, contextual interpretation of how the Islamic education paradigm is fundamentally conceptualized to resolve the knowledge dichotomy within higher education.

To ensure analytical depth, the data sources are systematically categorized into primary and secondary literature. Primary sources encompass foundational texts authored by the intellectual architects of each paradigm namely Imam Suprayogo (UIN Malang), M. Amin Abdullah (UIN Yogyakarta), and Azyumardi Azra (UIN Jakarta), alongside official institutional documents such as academic handbooks, statutes, and strategic plans. These primary texts are critically enriched by secondary sources, which include academic reviews, dissertations, and articles published in accredited scholarly journals like *Studia Islamika* and *Al-Jami'ah* that specifically analyze the higher education transformation and their respective models of knowledge integration.

Data collection relies on a rigorous systematic documentation method, proceeding through sequential stages of inventory, thematic classification, and strict evaluation. To establish data validity and trustworthiness, the study applies source triangulation by rigorously filtering the literature based on the author's academic authority, publisher credibility, and direct relevance to the research problem (Sugiyono, 2019). Subsequently, the data are analyzed using qualitative content analysis coupled with a comparative-dialectical technique. This analytical framework enables the researcher to systematically dissect the philosophical roots of each paradigm and place them within a dialogical synthesis, thereby revealing the robust collective contours of the contemporary knowledge integration paradigm in Indonesia (Flick, 2022).

Result and Discussion

A. Result

This section presents an in-depth and comprehensive analysis serving as the empirical and theoretical heart of the study. Crucially, the findings detailed below are not solely derived from abstract philosophical texts but are deeply grounded in and validated by official institutional documents, including Academic Handbooks (*Buku Pedoman Akademik*), University Statutes (*Statuta Universitas*), and Strategic Plans (*Rencana Strategis/Renstra*) of each respective university. The incorporation of these formal policy documents confirms that the epistemological paradigms under review have transcended theoretical discourse to become institutionalized realities. To facilitate a clearer comparative understanding of the epistemological architectures analyzed in this study, the fundamental characteristics of each university's paradigm are summarized in Table 1 below, before delving into a detailed exposition.

Table 1: Comparative Overview of Knowledge Integration Paradigms

Key Analysis Points	UIN Malang	UIN Yogyakarta	UIN Jakarta
Paradigm Metaphor	Tree of Knowledge	Spider Web	Non-Metaphoric (Contextual)
Epistemological Structure	Hierarchical and Processual	Non-Hierarchical and Dialogical	Functional and Contextual
Core Objective/Output	<i>Ulul Albab</i> (Spiritual Professional)	Holistic Scientist (Border-Crosser)	Public Intellectual (Social Activist)
Foundational Architect	Imam Suprayogo	M. Amin Abdullah	Azyumardi Azra

The comparative summary provided in Table 1 illustrates the fundamental distinctions and shared objectives among the three universities. To gain a more

comprehensive understanding of how these paradigms are structured and institutionalized, the following subsections will deconstruct each model's epistemological architecture in detail. The analysis begins with the pioneering 'Tree of Knowledge' paradigm at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, exploring its historical roots and its systematic implementation in the modern educational context.

1. UIN Malang's "Tree of Knowledge" Paradigm: an epistemological architecture for civilization

The paradigm of scholarship developed at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang is not merely a reactive response to the knowledge dichotomy; it is a consciously and systematically designed civilizational project. To understand it comprehensively, one must move beyond treating it as a slogan and instead view it as a complete epistemological architecture a blueprint for forming the human person and, in turn, building the envisioned Islamic civilization.

a. Historical context and civilizational vision: Beyond a regional university

Grasping the depth of the "Tree of Knowledge" requires attention to its context of emergence. UIN Malang having transitioned from STAIN and later to UIN in the early 2000s articulated an ambitious vision under its pioneering rector, Imam Suprayogo. The aim was not merely to become an Islamic university on par with general universities, but to become "The Leading University," a center of Islamic excellence serving as a global reference (Suprayogo, 2006). This vision sprang from the concern that many Islamic higher-education institutions were caught between two extremes: institutions deeply rooted in classical Islamic tradition yet ill at ease with modernity (the traditional *pesantren* model), or institutions that adopted modern science wholesale without a robust spiritual foundation (the secular university model) (Abdullah, 2017).

The "Tree of Knowledge" was designed as a third way an organic synthesis oriented not just toward producing job-ready graduates, but toward building civilization. In its current institutional implementation, UIN Malang continues to uphold the core of the "Tree of Knowledge" model as proposed by Suprayogo. An examination of the university's recent Strategic Plans reveals that the paradigm remains the official philosophical bedrock. However, it is actively undergoing contextual adaptation to meet contemporary educational paradigms. Specifically, the implementation is now rigorously aligned with the demands of digital era and the Indonesian Ministry of Education's *Merdeka Belajar* (Emancipated Learning) policy framework. While the spiritual roots and normative trunk remain immutable, the institutional focus has expanded to ensure the resulting "branches" and "fruits" manifest as high digital literacy,

entrepreneurial agility, and global technological competitiveness, proving the paradigm's elasticity in facing modern disruptions.

b. A detailed deconstruction of the “Tree of Knowledge” metaphor: A pedagogical roadmap

The “Tree of Knowledge” functions as an intricately detailed pedagogical roadmap. Each of its components serves a specific role in forming the *ulū al- albāb* graduate profile. Drawing on a closer reading of its primary source (Suprayogo, 2006), the structure can be systematically unpacked into several interconnected components. The foundation begins with the Roots, which constitute the instrumental foundations every student must possess before engaging the core corpus of Islamic knowledge. These roots include languages (Arabic and English) functioning as civilizational gate keys; Arabic grants direct access to the classical Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*), while English enables global dialogue and technological uptake. Alongside language, philosophy is placed among the roots to equip students with the capacity for critical, logical, systematic, and radical thinking. Furthermore, natural and social sciences are construed as pathways to apprehend the divine laws operating in the cosmos (*sunnat Allāh*), forming the basis for a science informed by *tawhīd*. Finally, Pancasila serves as an affirmation of the Indonesian context, ensuring graduates understand and practice their religion within the framework of the nation’s philosophy (Khasanah, 2021).

Moving upward, the Trunk provides the normative axis and the civilizational identity of Islam. It is the principal corpus of Islamic studies that gives the tree its substance and direction. This core encompasses the Qur’an and Sunnah as the primary, supreme sources of Islamic value and knowledge, serving not merely as objects of study but as springs of inspiration and a comprehensive way of life (Hidayat, 2020). Furthermore, the *Sīrah Nabawīyyah* and Islamic history are positioned within the trunk to offer concrete exemplars and historical evidence of how Qur’anic and Prophetic values were operationalized in civilizational building. This section also incorporates Islamic thought, representing the rich intellectual heritage produced by Muslim scholars, which evidences the dynamism of Islamic intellection and provides an internal dialogue crucial for a deep comprehension of Islamic teachings (Raharjo, 2021).

From this sturdy trunk grow various specialized branches, twigs, and leaves, representing distinct disciplines such as Medicine, Engineering, Economics, Psychology, and Law. What distinguishes these branches at UIN Malang is their integrated nature; they do not grow wildly or in isolation. Instead, they continuously draw nutrients from the Islamic values embedded in the trunk while being supported by the strong methodological roots. Consequently, the outcome is not merely standard Psychology or Economics, but Islamic

Psychology and Islamic Economics. Integration operates profoundly at the ontological, epistemological, and axiological levels of each discipline, rather than as a superficial addition of religious courses (Hakim, 2022). The apex of this entire epistemological process is the production of beneficial fruit, namely graduates who embody the *ulū al-albāb* profile. This ideal profile is articulated through four interrelated competencies: spiritual depth (*Quwwah Rūḥiyyah*) characterized by a God-consciousness that animates all activity through *dhikr*; moral excellence (*Quwwah Khuluqiyah*) reflecting integrity and ethical responsibility; breadth of knowledge (*Quwwah ‘Aqliyyah*) marked by interdisciplinary mastery and the capacity for *tafakkur* and finally, professional maturity (*Quwwah ‘Amaliyyah*), ensuring that knowledge translates into professional, righteous action that provides tangible solutions for society (Hidayat, 2020).



Figure 1: Tree of Knowledge

c. Institutional mechanisms: Translating philosophy into educational practice

The strength of the “Tree of Knowledge” paradigm lies in its capacity not to remain at the level of abstract ideas, but to be translated into structured institutional mechanisms that operate systematically. A central pillar of this architecture is the Ma’had al-Jāmi’ah, which functions not merely as a dormitory but as an “institutional womb” or “character laboratory.” During their first year, students undergo intensive inculcation of the paradigm's “roots” and “trunk” through a holistically designed program (Suprayogo, 2006). This encompasses daily language training in Arabic and English to master civilizational access, alongside an immersive Islamic studies program where students actively live the intellectual tradition through foundational texts (*kutub al-turāth*), Qur'anic recitation (*tahṣīn* and *tahfīz*), and devotional practices. Furthermore, character

formation is deeply forged through a monitored 24-hour communal life that instills discipline, independence, solidarity, and noble character (*akhlaq al-karimah*). The strict requirement that all students participate in the Ma'had serves as the most fundamental mechanism to ensure a shared epistemological foundation before they differentiate into their respective disciplinary branches (Raharjo, 2021).

Beyond the Ma'had, the spirit of integration is structurally carried forward into curricular design and academic culture at the faculty level. UIN Malang consciously avoids a superficial "verse-pasting" model where science courses are merely sprinkled with religious citations; instead, the integration pursued is highly substantive. For instance, a physics lecturer is encouraged to transcend mathematical formulas by inviting students to contemplate the regularity of natural laws as manifestations of divine grandeur. Supporting this substantive integration, Wahyudi (2023) notes that traditional pesantren pedagogical methods, including *halaqah* (study circles) and *bahtsul masā'il* (problem-discussion forums), have been revitalized within modern faculties to enrich academic discourse. Consequently, the paradigm's implementation proceeds comprehensively along three interconnected avenues: personal formation at the Ma'had, substantive curricular design within the faculties, and the cultivation of an enabling, interdisciplinary academic culture driven by specialized research centers (Sibawaihi et al., 2024).

2. UIN Yogyakarta's "Spider Webs" Paradigm: A dialogical epistemological architecture for holistic scholarship

Shifting to Yogyakarta, we enter an intellectual landscape shaped by its longstanding history as Indonesia's first State Islamic Higher Education institution (PTAIN) and by its location at the heart of a philosophically rich Javanese culture. UIN Sunan Kalijaga inherits a tradition of open and dialogical thought. The legacy of figures such as Mukti Ali, with his comparative-religion approach, habituated its academics from the outset to "look outward" and engage other intellectual traditions. This climate provided fertile ground for the emergence of the "Integration - Interconnection" paradigm or the "Spider Web of Knowledge" an ambitious epistemological project conceived by M. Amin Abdullah to address a fundamental problem at the heart of modern Muslim intellectual life (Abdullah, 2006).

a. Historical context and intellectual anxiety: Roots of integration-interconnection

Amin Abdullah's ideas did not arise in a vacuum. Intellectually, his epistemological framework is deeply indebted to both Western philosophy of science and progressive Islamic thought. As validated by Firmansyah (2021),

Abdullah critically appropriated the typologies of religion and science proposed by Western philosophers such as Ian G. Barbour and Thomas Kuhn. Simultaneously, he drew profound inspiration from contemporary Islamic reformists like Mohammed Arkoun, Hasan Hanafi, and Fazlur Rahman, who actively advocated for the critical deconstruction of classical Islamic epistemology. These diverse intellectual currents converged to shape his critical diagnosis and deep unease about the condition of Muslim scholars. He identifies symptoms of “epistemic schizophrenia” or a “split personality,” a state in which a scholar inhabits two separate mental worlds.”. Imagine a molecular biologist who, in the laboratory, works fully within Darwinian evolutionary theory, yet at home, when reading the Qur’an, holds to a literal creation narrative with no dialogical bridge between the two. These two compartments of knowledge coexist without speaking to one another, producing a scholar who is ritually pious yet epistemologically secular (Abdullah, 2006).

According to Abdullah, this condition arises from the arrogance of monodisciplinarity: both the arrogance of classical Islamic scholars who deem their *turāth* sufficient and look down on the social sciences and humanities as “Western products,” and the arrogance of secular scholars who dismiss religion as a private domain irrelevant to objective scientific inquiry. To break down these dividing walls, the proposed solution is not a new hierarchy such as the “Tree of Knowledge,” but rather an egalitarian dialogical network, metaphorized as a “Spider Web.”

b. A detailed deconstruction of the “Spider Web” metaphor: A non-hierarchical knowledge map

The “Spider Web” metaphor is key to understanding the entire project. Fundamentally different from a vertically organized tree with a single center (trunk), the web is horizontal, polycentric (with multiple centers), and derives its strength from the totality of connections among its nodes. In Amin Abdullah’s thought (Abdullah, 2014), these nodes or knowledge clusters can be systematically grouped into several interconnected domains. At the core are the Normative–Prescriptive Islamic Sciences, which represent the heart of religious normativity, namely the Qur’an and Sunnah as primary sources. Closely intertwined with this core are the Historical–Empirical Islamic Sciences, encompassing the historical products of Muslims’ engagement with normative sources such as *fiqh*, *kalam*, *taṣawwuf*, and Islamic history which comprise human interpretations bound by time and place. Furthermore, the web extends to the Social Sciences and Humanities (including sociology, anthropology, and psychology) as critical and empirical tools for understanding human society, alongside the Natural Sciences and Technology for comprehending the physical

universe (*sunnatullāh fī al-kawn*). Crucially, binding all these nodes together are Philosophy and Ethics, which serve as a “shared language” or “methodological bridge.” These provide the logic and instruments necessary to reflect on the assumptions, methods, and implications of each discipline across the clusters (Abdullah, 2014).

Within this expansive web, a complex issue such as “poverty” can no longer be viewed solely through the isolated lens of *fiqh al-zakāt*. Instead, its analytical “threads” must be drawn toward the sociology node on social stratification, the economics node on fiscal policy, the hadith-studies node on work ethic, and even the nutrition-science node regarding the effects of food insecurity. Ultimately, a holistic understanding can emerge only from the dynamic synthesis of these interconnections.

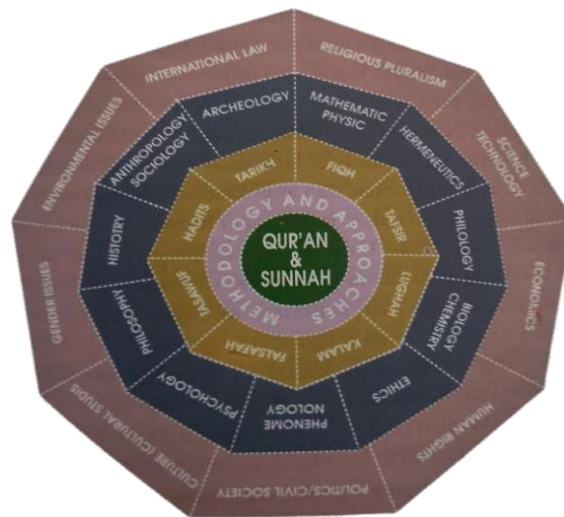


Figure 2: Spider Web

c. Epistemological structure: “Border-Crossing” methodology and critical partnership

To weave the “threads” of interconnection, this paradigm requires a new scholarly ethos and working methodology an integrative-dialogical epistemology anchored by two foundational pillars. The first pillar is the methodological imperative of “Border-Crossing.” In this framework, a scholar can no longer remain a “frog-in-a-well” specialist mastering only a single narrow field; instead, they are required to possess “dual competence” or, at minimum, methodological literacy in other relevant disciplines (Abdullah, 2006). For example, an Islamic legal scholar (*faqīh*) cannot be satisfied merely with competence in *uṣūl al-fiqh*; they must also be able to read and employ data from legal anthropology or rural sociology to ensure their fatwas are relevant and just. Conversely, an anthropologist researching Muslim communities must be capable

of a hermeneutical reading of the key texts that shape the community's worldview (Assegaf, 2020).

Complementing this individual competence is the second pillar, "Critical Partnership," which governs the macro-relations among the disciplines themselves. In this egalitarian framework, "partnership" signifies that all disciplines are treated as equal participants invited into dialogue, while "critical" ensures that no single discipline is immune to rigorous critique. Through this bidirectional dialogue, findings from the social sciences may be utilized to challenge established religious interpretations that demonstrably produce social injustice. Likewise, the ethical frameworks and transcendental values of religion are actively employed to critique materialistic or positivistic assumptions within the social or natural sciences. Ultimately, this methodology creates an academic ecosystem that is mutually testing and mutually enriching (Prasetyo, 2020).

d. Institutional implications and curricular implementation: Building a dialogical ecosystem

These theoretical ideas are rendered meaningful through concrete institutional and curricular implementation. At UIN Sunan Kalijaga, the integration paradigm is realized through several interconnected mechanisms. The primary manifestation is the pioneering of interdisciplinary study programs, most notably the graduate-level Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS). Within this institution, students from diverse undergraduate backgrounds ranging from theology to sociology, anthropology, and international relations share the same academic space (Maksum, 2021). They employ diverse theoretical tools to analyze complex issues such as communal conflict, religious pluralism, and interfaith dialogue, effectively turning CRCS into a living laboratory where the "Spider Web" is collectively woven. Furthermore, this paradigm is structurally embedded through a university-wide, cross-disciplinary core curriculum. By mandating courses such as Philosophy of Science, Logic, and Ethics for students across all faculties, the university provides a shared methodological toolkit (Hefner, 2009). This shared language enables students from disparate disciplines to comprehend each other's foundational assumptions and scholarly procedures, thereby constructing robust dialogical bridges.

Beyond the classroom, this dialogical ecosystem is amplified through scholarly journals acting as arenas for global dialogue. The flagship journal, *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, is deliberately positioned as an international showcase for the integration-interconnection paradigm. By explicitly encouraging and prioritizing manuscripts that utilize interdisciplinary approaches to Islamic studies, the journal transcends its role as a mere

publication venue; it becomes an active arena where international scholars participate in weaving the "Spider Web of Knowledge" (Abdullah, 2014). Ultimately, these structural efforts are sustained by an academic culture that fundamentally values openness, critical questioning, and rigorous intellectual debate. A multitude of forums including seminars, public lectures, and student discussion groups (*halaqah 'ilmiyyah*) consistently explore themes at the intersection of religion, science, and the social humanities. This dynamic, fluid, and open ecosystem constitutes the true intellectual spirit of UIN Sunan Kalijaga (Lubis & Hamdi, 2019).

3. UIN Jakarta's integration paradigm: Public intellectualism at the heart of urban modernity

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta presents an integration model forged not in an isolated ivory tower but amid the bustle of Indonesia's political, social, and intellectual epicenter. Its scholarly paradigm did not arise from a single, consciously crafted metaphor; rather, it grew organically out of a rich historical trajectory and intensive engagement with issues of modernity. This is a context-social integration paradigm an intellectual project to render Islam a relevant and functional force at the heart of urban modernity.

a. Historical and Philosophical Foundations: From Rationalism to Azra's Integration Project

Unlike Malang or Yogyakarta, the knowledge paradigm at UIN Jakarta does not have a single, declared name or metaphor. It is generally understood as an effort to integrate Islamic and general sciences, but with a very strong tendency towards socio-political contextualization and modernization. To understand the architecture behind it, we must see it as a process of intellectual evolution culminating in the integration project pioneered by Azyumardi Azra.

Its initial foundations were indeed laid by the great thinkers of IAIN Jakarta. First, Harun Nasution, through his "rationalist revolution," provided the "theological permission" for the academic community to freely use reason and philosophy in studying Islam (Barton, 1995). Second, Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) and the "Ciputat School" circle provided the "sociological vision" with his idea of substantive modernism, which encouraged Islam to engage with issues of modernity such as democracy and pluralism.

Upon this intellectual foundation, Azyumardi Azra emerged as the main architect who pioneered and concretely conceptualized the model of knowledge integration for UIN Jakarta. For (Azra, 2020), the transformation of IAIN into UIN was not merely an administrative change, but rather a moment to fundamentally revitalize Islamic studies. Integration, in his vision, was not merely about

reconciling verses with science at an abstract level, but rather a project to systematically integrate Islamic studies with the theoretical and methodological tools of modern social sciences (Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science) (Hefner, 2009).

Azra's vision was to transform the tendentiously inward-looking IAIN, which focused on internal religious issues, into an outward-looking UIN. This new university was designed to make socio-political-national issues its primary object of study, by making Islam a critical and relevant analytical perspective. Religious knowledge, in this project, must be functional and transformative; it must be able to provide ethical answers and practical solutions to real problems such as corruption, gender inequality, religious intolerance, and development challenges. This is the project of "grounding" universal Islamic values into the concrete context of modern- urban Indonesian society, which became the hallmark of UIN Jakarta's paradigm (Sibawaihi et al., 2024).

b. Epistemological structure: Critical functionalism and the double-movement hermeneutic

UIN Jakarta's distinctive epistemology is integrative-functional and critical-applicative. Unlike Malang, which emphasizes the individual's internal unity, or Yogyakarta, which emphasizes unity among disciplines, Jakarta focuses on the unity of text and context, and of theory and social praxis.

1. Principle of critical functionalism

The validity of a thought or religious interpretation is measured not only by its coherence with classical texts (*turāth*), but also by its implications and functions within society (*maṣlaḥah ʿāmmah*). The key question is not merely "What does the Qur'an say about X?" but also "How can our understanding of X realize justice and public good in twenty-first-century Indonesia?" This approach treats the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, political science) not as "secondary knowledge" but as necessary analytical instruments for critically apprehending "context" (Hasan, 2018).

2. Double-movement methodology

Methodologically, many UIN Jakarta thinkers drawing on Fazlur Rahman apply the hermeneutic of "Double Movement." This is a two-step interpretive process. The First Movement proceeds from a present problem back to the past to grasp the historical context of revelation (Qur'an or Hadith) and to distill its universal moral principle or *ratio legis*. The Second Movement brings that universal principle back to the present to craft new, context-relevant answers. For instance, regarding women's leadership, the First Movement analyzes the socio-political context at the time relevant verses were revealed to extract the universal principle namely just and competent leadership. The Second Movement applies

this principle to modern Indonesia, yielding a robust theological justification for women's leadership in the public sphere (Sirry, 2020).

c. Institutional and curricular implications: A laboratory of urban Islamic modernity

This paradigm manifests tangibly in UIN Jakarta's academic structures and culture, profoundly shaped by its location at Indonesia's "center."

1. The determinative role of urbanity

Being in Jakarta affords unmatched access. First, Proximity to Power and Discourse: Students and faculty have direct access to the national library, government bodies, embassies, and international NGOs. Research on public policy, international relations, and civil-society dynamics becomes a daily staple rather than an isolated pursuit. Second, The Role of Public Intellectuals: Located in the national media capital, its academics frequently serve as quoted experts offering Islamic perspectives on pressing issues. This fosters a tradition of "public intellectualism," where scholarship is measured by its capacity to enlighten and influence public discourse (Fealy & White, 2008). Third, A Cosmopolitan Atmosphere: As a metropolis, Jakarta is a meeting point of diverse ethnicities, classes, and ideologies. This plural, cosmopolitan environment naturally shapes more open, tolerant outlooks among students and faculty highly conducive to developing modernist Islamic thought.

2. A Curriculum oriented to social praxis

Particularly within faculties such as Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), Economics and Business (FEB), and Law (FSH), curricula are explicitly designed to equip students with robust tools of social analysis. Courses like "Sociology of Religion," "Islam and Democracy," "Gender and Politics in Islam," and "Islamic Development Economics" exemplify efforts to integrate the Islamic corpus with contemporary social theory. Research centers such as the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) form a backbone producing high-quality empirical research whose reports frequently inform policymakers (Hefner, 2009).

3. International journals as showcases of thought

Scopus-indexed journals such as *Studia Islamika* and *Ahkam* function not only as publication outlets but as UIN Jakarta's primary "windows" for projecting an Indonesian Islam that is moderate, democratic, and modernist to the global academic community. These journals consistently publish studies reflecting the university's hallmark of functional-critical integration (Hasan, 2018).

B. Discussion

1. Comparative analysis of epistemological architectures: Metaphors, hierarchies, and contexts

Having systematically dissected the epistemological architectures of the three leading State Islamic universities, it becomes evident that their fundamental divergences reflect a remarkable intellectual richness rather than mere administrative discrepancies. To move beyond a descriptive understanding, a comparative analysis must evaluate how these institutions conceptualize the ontological and epistemological relationship between divine revelation and the so-called secular sciences. UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang builds its paradigm upon the "Tree of Knowledge," a model that is inherently hierarchical and processual (Suprayogo, 2006). Within this framework, revelation functions as the supreme, immovable trunk that fundamentally guides, nourishes, and constraints all other academic branches. This structure implies a unidirectional flow of ethical and normative validation; the natural and social sciences are validated by how well they reflect the divine values rooted in the trunk. Consequently, the axiological endpoint of this paradigm is highly focused on individual character formation, aiming to cultivate the *ulū al-albāb* a holistic spiritual-professional who seamlessly integrates continuous spiritual remembrance (*dhikr*) with rigorous intellectual contemplation (*fikr*) in every professional act (Khozin & Umiarso, 2019).

Conversely, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta employs the "Spider Web" metaphor, which presents a radically different, non-hierarchical, and dialogical structure (Abdullah, 2014). This paradigm consciously dismantles the vertical superiority of religious texts over empirical sciences. Instead, revelation is positioned as one essential dialogue partner among many at an egalitarian epistemological roundtable. In this web, religious interpretations are constantly tested, challenged, and enriched by empirical findings from the social and natural sciences, as well as by rigorous philosophical inquiry. The goal here is not merely to produce pious professionals, but to forge the "Holistic Scholar" a critical, interdisciplinary thinker who possesses the methodological agility to cross disciplinary borders, thereby avoiding the "epistemic schizophrenia" that plagues much of modern Muslim academia (Abdullah, 2006).

Meanwhile, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta diverges from both by operating without a single, emblematic spatial metaphor. Its scholarly tradition is best characterized as a "Public Intellectualism Paradigm" that is profoundly functional and contextual (Hasan, 2018). Unlike Malang's focus on the individual's internal spiritual unity or Yogyakarta's focus on interdisciplinary methodological unity, Jakarta emphasizes the unity of text and context, and of

theoretical knowledge and social praxis. Through the hermeneutic of the double-movement, revelation is analyzed to extract universal ethical principles (maqāṣid), which are then rigorously applied as practical solutions to contemporary socio-political problems (Sirry, 2020). Thus, UIN Jakarta is unapologetically committed to producing the "Public Intellectual" a scholar-activist capable of employing socio-religious tools to actively engage public discourse, advocate for policy changes, and drive social transformation within the complexities of urban modernity (Azra, 2020).

2. *Engaging the literature: Agreements, disagreements, and the "what else" element*

A critical evaluation of these models necessitates placing them in direct dialogue with existing scholarly literature to establish the "what else" element of this research. This study explicitly aligns with and expands upon the findings of Muthohar et al. (2023) , who argue that institutional and methodological diversity significantly enhances the overall resilience and adaptability of the national Islamic higher education system. By mapping these three institutions, this research validates the premise that the transformation from IAIN to UIN was not a monolithic state project, but a dynamic intellectual evolution capable of generating diverse, context-specific epistemological responses to modernity. Furthermore, this analysis confirms the philosophical assertions made by Firmansyah (2021) regarding the efficacy of Amin Abdullah's integration-interconnection model, agreeing that a non-hierarchical, border-crossing methodology is imperative for contemporary Islamic studies to survive in an increasingly interconnected academic world.

However, this study fundamentally disagrees with the underlying assumptions frequently perpetuated in fragmented, isolated case studies such as the highly localized evaluations conducted by Hidayat (2020) on UIN Malang or Wahid (2019) on UIN Jakarta. While such studies provide valuable descriptive data, they inherently tend to view these institutional paradigms as isolated, mutually exclusive, or even competing educational projects. Previous literature often falls into the trap of evaluating one model's superiority over another based on rigid traditionalist or modernist metrics. This comparative analysis aggressively challenges that fragmented narrative. By placing these three distinct architectures within a single dialectical framework, this study demonstrates that they are not competing rivalries. Instead, they represent distinct, necessary facets of a broader national epistemological awakening. Furthermore, this study argues that the Indonesian experience offers a critical corrective to the broader international "Islamization of Knowledge" movement (Muthohirin et al., 2025). While global frameworks often advocated for a top-down, ideologically driven

Islamization of pre-existing disciplines, the Indonesian UIN models particularly Yogyakarta's dialogical web and Jakarta's contextual pragmatism demonstrate a more organic, bottom-up integration that respects the autonomy of the empirical sciences while maintaining deep ethical engagement.

3. Complementary dialectics: Mutual remediation of institutional vulnerabilities

Recognizing these paradigms as part of a collective intellectual ecosystem requires a dialectical analysis of their mutual vulnerabilities and how they serve as correctives for one another. No single epistemological architecture is flawless when applied to the complexities of the modern world. UIN Malang's "Tree of Knowledge," with its highly structured, hierarchical nature and strong emphasis on normative foundations, inherently risks devolving into dogmatism and intellectual rigidity (Prasetyo, 2020). If the "trunk" of revelation is perceived as absolutely static, the institution risks becoming a closed epistemic system, insufficiently open to external philosophical critique or disruptive scientific paradigms. Here, the paradigms of Yogyakarta and Jakarta offer vital, life-saving correctives. Yogyakarta's critical-dialogical spirit demands that Malang's Islamic trunk not be accepted blindly as dogma, but be continuously interrogated and forced into dialogue with contemporary scientific thought (Abdullah, 2017). Simultaneously, Jakarta's problem-solving orientation draws the "fruit" of Malang's tree toward tangible social relevance, ensuring that spiritual depth translates into concrete societal solutions rather than isolated, individual piety.

Conversely, UIN Yogyakarta's "Spider Web," characterized by its highly fluid, non-hierarchical, and egalitarian nature, faces its own distinct epistemic perils. Without a defined center, this model risks descending into epistemic relativism, where all truth claims are viewed as equally valid, or eclecticism, where methodologies are blended without a clear, unifying synthesis (Assegaf, 2020). It can easily become overly theoretical, trapping scholars in endless interdisciplinary debates that are detached from the pressing realities of the Muslim ummah. To counterbalance this, Malang's robust normative foundations provide the necessary spiritual anchor, reminding scholars that however free and expansive the dialogue becomes, it must remain grounded in clear spiritual-normative roots (Hakim, 2022). Furthermore, Jakarta's functional pragmatism demands that Yogyakarta's intricate theoretical webs ultimately "catch" real-world problems and deliver actionable solutions.

Finally, UIN Jakarta's paradigm of "Public Intellectualism," with its intense focus on socio-political issues and proximity to the centers of national power, risks succumbing to excessive pragmatism, secularization, and political co-optation (Hasan, 2018). A scholar-activist who is entirely absorbed in policy

advocacy and social engineering may gradually lose the spiritual depth and critical theological distance required to offer a genuinely Islamic critique of modern power structures. This vulnerability is significantly mitigated by integrating the intense moral and spiritual formation cultivated in Malang's Ma'had system, which supplies the necessary integrity to resist the corrupting temptations of power (Raharjo, 2021). Additionally, Yogyakarta's deep philosophical tradition offers the reflective, theoretical tools that enable scholar-activists to not merely ride the currents of public discourse, but to fundamentally deconstruct and critique the underlying materialistic assumptions of those currents. This entire system of mutual checks, balances, and epistemological correctives is visually summarized in the figure conceptual below.

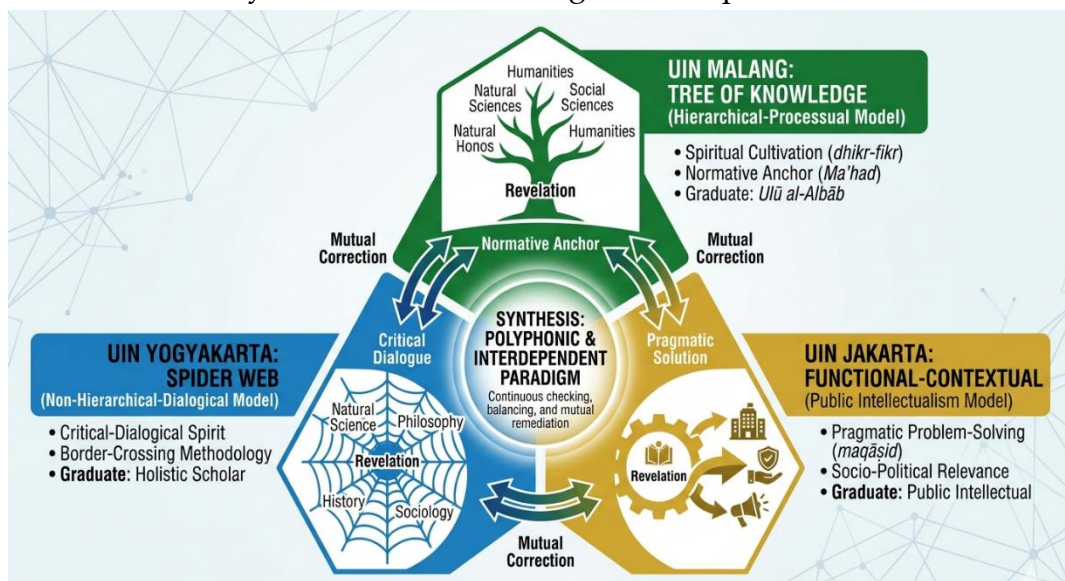


Figure 3: The Complementary-Dialectical Framework of Islamic Knowledge Integration in Indonesia.

4. *Synthesis: The contours of a new polyphonic paradigm in digital era*

As illustrated in Figure 3, the structural relationship among the three pioneer UINs is not linear or hierarchical. Instead, it constitutes a dynamic circular ecosystem where distinct epistemological nodes representing UIN Malang, UIN Yogyakarta, and UIN Jakarta mutually interact through continuous feedback loops. The framework demonstrates that Malang's spiritual grounding, Yogyakarta's critical dialogue, and Jakarta's pragmatic solutions are not isolated projects but rather interdependent forces. By weaving these diverse threads into a complementary-dialectical structure, the overall ecosystem generates a powerful, stabilizing synergy collectively positioned at the center as a "Polyphonic Paradigm," capable of providing a holistic blueprint for navigating modern civilizational complexities (Sibawaihi et al., 2024).

The synthesis of this dialectical discussion further reveals that the journey "from dichotomy to a new paradigm" within Indonesian Islamic higher education does not culminate in the creation of a single, monolithic, universally applicable model (Muthohar et al., 2023). Rather, the true "new paradigm" is fundamentally polyphonic and interdependent. It is a dynamic, complex intellectual ecosystem where multiple epistemological architectures flourish simultaneously, continuously checking, balancing, and mutually correcting one another. This polyphonic paradigm exhibits several defining characteristics that are highly relevant to the contemporary global landscape. First, it is decidedly post-secular; it explicitly rejects the Enlightenment-era separation of objective knowledge from transcendental value and spirituality, proving that rigorous scientific inquiry can coexist synergistically with deep religious conviction. Second, it is deeply contextual. The resilience of these models lies in their ability to respond to the specific, evolving challenges of the modern world. In the current Digital Era, characterized by the hyper-integration of cyber and physical spaces, artificial intelligence, and rapid socio-technological disruption, this polyphonic paradigm proves highly elastic (Sibawaihi et al., 2024). Malang's structural depth ensures ethical human-centricity amidst technological acceleration; Yogyakarta's border-crossing agility allows scholars to navigate the complex, interdisciplinary nature of modern disruptions; and Jakarta's pragmatic functionalism ensures that Islamic scholarship directly addresses the novel socio-political inequalities generated by this new societal era. Ultimately, this complementary-dialectical framework transforms the diversity of methodological approaches from a source of institutional fragmentation into the greatest collective strength of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia, providing a robust blueprint for navigating the complexities of modern civilization.

Conclusion

The institutional transformation of State Islamic Universities (UIN) in Indonesia has successfully transcended the historical epistemic dichotomy between religious and general sciences by cultivating an interconnected, polyphonic paradigm comprising three distinct epistemological architectures. This research demonstrates that the hierarchical-processual "Tree of Knowledge" at UIN Malang provides deep spiritual and normative grounding, the non-hierarchical-dialogical "Spider Web" at UIN Yogyakarta ensures rigorous philosophical and cross-disciplinary agility, and the functional-contextual model at UIN Jakarta drives the practical application of these sciences to address complex socio-political realities. Rather than functioning as fragmented or competing systems, these diverse frameworks interact in a complementary

dialectic that mutually corrects inherent weaknesses such as rigidity, relativism, or excessive pragmatism thereby forming a dynamic and highly relevant intellectual ecosystem. Ultimately, the future vitality of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia depends not on the dominance of a single monolithic framework, but on the sustained, collaborative dialogue among these diverse models as they collectively navigate the complexities of modern civilization, particularly within the disruptions of the Digital era.

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