Transcending Without Disconnecting: The Integrative Epistemology of *Ma'had Aly* Situbondo and Its Model of Endogenous Islamic Legal Reform

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Abstract: This article examines how *Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyyah* Situbondo, Indonesia develops an endogenous and tradition-rooted model of Islamic legal reform through an integrative epistemology that combines *bayānī* (textual), *taʿlīlī* (rational-causal), and *maqāṣidī* (teleological) approaches. The study aims to identify the epistemological principles and institutional mechanisms through which *Ma'had Aly* maintains continuity with classical *turāth* and *sanad* while restructuring legal reasoning to address contemporary socio-legal realities. Using a qualitative socio-legal and contextual-hermeneutic approach supported by Critical Discourse Analysis, the research investigates how interpretive authority is negotiated within pedagogical practices, curriculum design, and *baḥth al-masāʾil* deliberations. The findings show that *Ma'had Aly's* epistemic project is not a juxtaposition of interpretive tools but a coherent model of fiqh renewal grounded in the interplay between *fiqh al-nuṣūṣ* (textual reasoning), *fiqh al-wāqiʿ* (analysis of social reality), and *fiqh al-tanzīl* (contextual application). This triadic framework enables the institution to transcend rigid textualism while preserving normative legitimacy through sanad-based authority. The study further demonstrates that *Ma'had Aly's* integrative methodology constitutes a neo-traditionalist reform trajectory, facilitating a shift from *qaulī* and *ilḥāqī* reasoning toward a *manhajī* paradigm guided by *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. Building on these insights, the article proposes the "Integrative Manhaj of Epistemological Renewal" as a theoretical model explaining how *pesantren*-based higher learning institutions can generate internally legitimate and contextually adaptive jurisprudential reform. While recognizing limitations stemming from its single-case scope and the cultural specificity of *pesantren* epistemology, the study contributes to broader debates on Islamic legal reform in Southeast Asia by demonstrating the capacity of tradition-based institutions to produce transformative yet continuity-preserving legal reasoning.
Keywords: Contextual Hermeneutics, Islamic Legal Reform, *Ma'had Aly* Epistemology, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, *Manhajī* Methodology

Introduction

*P*esantren have long served as hereditary custodians of Islamic intellectual tradition by preserving the *turāth* and maintaining strong chains of scholarly transmission (*sanad*). However, the epistemological paradigm that dominates their *fiqh* learning—centered largely on *bayānī* or text-bound reasoning—has increasingly struggled to engage with the socio-cultural transformations that shape the lived realities of contemporary Muslim societies (Harefa, 2025; Supani et al., 2025). The authority of classical *mujtahidūn* is often treated as conclusive, leaving limited space for independent reasoning except under exceptional circumstances such as *ḍarūrah*. As a result, many legal formulations produced within traditional *pesantren* remain insufficiently responsive to modern socio-ethical challenges, partly due to the minimal incorporation of social sciences and humanities into their interpretive frameworks (Franklin, 2014; Karimullah, 2025). These conditions highlight the urgency of rethinking how *fiqh* epistemology can evolve while remaining rooted in the classical intellectual tradition.

Although earlier scholarship has richly explored the historical development, socio-cultural functions, and institutional configurations of *pesantren* (Bruinessen, 1990) (Dhofier, 1982), these works tend to adopt descriptive or anthropological lenses that do not adequately analyse internal epistemic transformation (Al-Turabi & Auda, 2025a; Masud, 2006). Recent studies acknowledge that institutions such as *Ma'had Aly* Situbondo have begun integrating higher-level uṣūl al-fiqh reasoning and structured legal deliberation (*baḥth al-masāʾil*) into their curriculum (El Muhammady, 2021; Othman, 2006; M. S. Taufiq & Fahruddin, 2023). Yet research on *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and contextual hermeneutics—although significant—originates largely outside the *pesantren* tradition and is often perceived as externally imposed rather than organically grounded (Sirry, 2010); (Aziz & Ma'arif, 2025; Muslih, 2017). This leaves a clear research gap regarding how Islamic legal epistemology can evolve endogenously within *pesantren*-based higher learning institutions through internally legitimate mechanisms (Z. U. Wahid et al., 2025).

The purpose of this study is to clarify the epistemological principles and institutional mechanisms through which *Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyyah* Situbondo sustains classical scholarly authority while restructuring legal reasoning to address contemporary socio-legal realities. Specifically, the research identifies how the institution operationalises an integrative interpretive system that synthesises *bayānī* (textual), *taʿlīlī* (rational-causal), and *maqāṣidī* (teleological) approaches, and how these methods interact with curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and *baḥth al-masāʾil* deliberations (Saeed, 2006; Yusuf et al., 2024). In doing so, the study formulates a coherent analytical framework referred to as the Integrative *Manhaj* of Epistemological Renewal, which explains how reform can emerge from within the *pesantren* tradition rather than through external paradigms (Musahadi, 2013). These objectives provide clear indicators for evaluating the findings and ensure analytical coherence throughout the study.

The urgency and scholarly significance of this research lie in demonstrating that meaningful and legitimate Islamic legal reform can arise organically from tradition-based institutions when classical methodologies are critically reactivated to address contemporary ethical and social concerns (Yusuf et al., 2024). By analysing *Ma'had Aly* Situbondo as a living epistemic laboratory, the study contributes new theoretical clarity to ongoing debates on contextual *fiqh*, pesantren-based reform, and the evolution of Islamic legal epistemology in Southeast Asia (Addzaky et al., 2025; Umar et al., 2020). The findings show that the reconciliation of textual fidelity and contextual adaptability is not only conceptually possible but institutionally achievable within *pesantren* frameworks. This reinforces the broader argument that endogenous epistemic renewal remains viable when interpretive innovation is grounded in established scholarly norms, supported by institutional mechanisms, and legitimised through tradition-conscious methodologies.

Literature Review

The study of *pesantren* as traditional Islamic learning institutions has long emphasized their preservation of *turāth* and the authority of *sanad*, positioning them as key custodians of the *Shāfiʿī* legal tradition. Foundational works by Dhofier, Bruinessen, and Steenbrink document this intellectual continuity and highlight how pesantren structure their pedagogical and jurisprudential practices around hierarchical interpretive authority (Bruinessen, 1990; Dhofier, 1982). While these contributions are important for understanding the cultural and historical foundations of *pesantren*, they largely employ descriptive frameworks and provide limited analysis of the epistemic structures that shape the evolution of *fiqh* within these institutions (Addzaky et al., 2025; Riswadi & Amrullah, 2023).

At the conceptual level, classical uṣūl al-fiqh literature distinguishes between three major interpretive modes—*bayānī, taʿlīlī, and maqāṣidī*—each offering distinct epistemological functions (al-Hudawi, 2022). The *bayānī* approach privileges textual authority and strict adherence to naṣṣ; the *taʿlīlī* mode foregrounds causal reasoning (*ʿillah*) and analogical extension; while the *maqāṣidī* approach emphasizes ethical intentionality, justice (*ʿadl*), and public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) as guiding principles of legal interpretation (Wardani et al., 2023). Contemporary scholars such as Jasser Auda and Abdullah Saeed argue that an integrative use of these methodologies is necessary for responding to modern socio-legal complexities (Auda, 2008; Saeed, 2006; A. R. Wahid, 2025). However, these reform-oriented frameworks have primarily

emerged outside the *pesantren* milieu and often do not align seamlessly with the epistemic logic that governs traditional *fiqh* learning, leading to hesitancy among *pesantren* scholars regarding their adoption (Budiman et al., 2025; Syahputra, 2023).

Emerging research has begun to identify internal epistemic transformations within *pesantren*, pointing to an evolving methodological landscape. Musahadi observes increasing openness to comparative *fiqh*, multidisciplinary insights, and historically grounded reinterpretations at *Ma'had Aly* Situbondo (Firmansyah et al., 2025; Musahadi, 2013). Complementing this, Sulthon et al. map the shift from *qaulī* (citation-based) reasoning toward *ilḥāqī* (analogical) and *manhajī* (method-based) reasoning in the institution's legal deliberations, demonstrating the early contours of an endogenous epistemic transition (Sulthon et al., 2024; Yaqin et al., 2022a). Yet these studies remain preliminary and do not fully explain how such methodological synthesis is systematically constructed, legitimized, and operationalized within *pesantren* structures such as the curriculum, *baḥth al-masāʾil* forums, and interpretive hierarchies (Holis et al., 2025; Steenbrink, 1986).

A related body of literature examines the pedagogical and institutional dynamics of *pesantren*, highlighting the role of instructional formats (bandongan & sorogan), collective reasoning practices, and the centrality of the *kiai* in maintaining epistemic discipline. Scholars such as Yaqin et al. and Gazali & Malik show that these institutional settings can function as arenas where textual authority and contextual considerations are negotiated (Gazali & Malik, 2009; Yaqin, 2021). Nonetheless, this line of scholarship has yet to articulate how such institutional mechanisms may cumulatively produce a coherent model of legal epistemology capable of balancing tradition with contemporary exigencies.

Finally, scholarship on Islamic legal reform—particularly within the *maqāṣid* and contextual hermeneutic traditions—provides relevant theoretical tools for understanding shifts in legal reasoning (Ni'ami & Bustamin, 2021). However, the majority of these frameworks have emerged from modern reformist discourses and often remain detached from the internal conceptual grammar of the pesantren (Akbar, 2021). This disconnect leaves open the question of how a *pesantren*-based institution might adopt, adapt, or transform such methodologies without undermining the normative foundations of *turāth* (Mir-Hosseini et al., 2022).

Taken together, existing literature reveals three critical gaps: *First, pesantren* studies rarely address the internal epistemic mechanisms through which *fiqh* evolves; *Second*, reformist legal theories lack grounding within *pesantren* epistemology; and *third*, no study has systematically analyzed how a pesantren-based higher education institution integrates *bayānī, taʿlīlī*, and *maqāṣidī* methodologies into a coherent epistemological system. This study addresses these gaps by examining *Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyyah* Situbondo as a paradigmatic case of endogenous epistemic reform and by proposing the *Integrative Manhaj of Epistemological Renewal* as a conceptual model for understanding how such reform emerges from within the *pesantren* tradition itself.

Method

This study employs a qualitative socio-legal and contextual-hermeneutic approach to analyze how *Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyyah* Situbondo constructs an integrative epistemology that synthesizes *bayānī*, taʿlīlī, and *maqāṣidī* interpretive frameworks while maintaining continuity with *turāth* and sanad (Umar et al., 2020). As a single-case inquiry, the research draws on data obtained through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis, targeting key epistemic actors including senior *kiai, asātidh*, and advanced *santri* selected through purposive and snowball sampling (Fairclough, 2013). Interviews were designed to elicit interpretive rationales and epistemological justifications, while observations in lectures and *baḥth al-masāʾil* forums enabled the researcher to examine the practical negotiation of textual authority, causal reasoning, and *maqāṣid-oriented* deliberation (Abou El Fadl, 2014). Documentary sources—ranging from classical *fiqh* texts to internal publications and institutional records—were analyzed to triangulate procedural, textual, and discursive data. All materials were examined using thematic analysis combined with critical discourse analysis, allowing the identification of epistemic patterns, institutional mechanisms, and interpretive shifts that underpin the emergence of the *manhajī*

framework (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024). A language-enhancement AI tool was employed solely to improve grammatical clarity and ensure native-level academic expression; all analytical judgments, interpretive reasoning, and methodological decisions were conducted manually by the researcher. Analytic validity was ensured through data triangulation, member checking, and reflexive memoing, while research ethics—particularly informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for *pesantren* cultural norms—were rigorously upheld throughout the study.

Results and Discussion

Epistemological Reconstruction of *Fiqh* at *Ma'had Aly* Situbondo: Transcending While Maintaining Continuity

The findings demonstrate that *Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyyah* Situbondo functions not merely as an advanced *pesantren*-based educational institution but as a significant centre for the epistemological reconstruction of *fiqh*. This reconstruction takes the form of *tajdīd muʾassal*, a mode of renewal deeply rooted in the classical Islamic tradition (*turāth*) while simultaneously enabling contextual responsiveness (Umar et al., 2020). Rather than abandoning inherited hermeneutical frameworks, *Ma'had Aly* reworks them from within, embodying the principle of "transcending without disconnecting." This orientation emerges as a response to two converging pressures: the perceived stagnation of purely *bayānī* reasoning in addressing contemporary socio-legal dilemmas and the need to retain legitimacy within a tradition-conscious scholarly community that remains deeply committed to *sanad* and madhhab continuity (Yaqin et al., 2022b). In this sense, *Ma'had Aly's* project already illustrates a key pattern in the data: epistemic reform is framed not as a break with orthodoxy, but as the fulfilment of orthodoxy under altered historical conditions.

At the heart of this reconstruction lies a triadic epistemological architecture comprised of *fiqh al-nuṣūṣ*, *fiqh al-wāqiʿ*, and *fiqh al-tanzīl (Anshori & Abdurrahman, 2025)*. This structure represents both a pedagogical orientation and an institutionalised interpretive process that systematically links text, reality, and application. *Fiqh al-nuṣūṣ* centres the authority of canonical texts—particularly within the Shāfiʿī tradition—ensuring that all legal reasoning begins from a grounded textual foundation. However, unlike conventional *pesantren* patterns of *taqlīd qaulī*, the emphasis is not on rote repetition; textual interpretation is deliberately re-examined through the lens of *ʿillah* (legal rationale) and *maqāṣid* (legal purposes), thereby avoiding rigid literalism and enabling normative elasticity (Susilo et al., 2025). This confirms but also extends earlier observations that *pesantren* can move beyond strictly text-imitation models when uṣūl al-*fiqh* is activated as a living methodological resource rather than treated as a merely theoretical discipline (Arief et al., 2025).

Fiqh al-wāqiʿ, the second epistemic pillar, foregrounds the necessity of analysing socio-political and moral realities as an integral component of *ijtihād*. Observational data show that *Ma'had Aly* encourages multidisciplinary engagement—incorporating insights from economics, sociology, environmental studies, and gender analysis—to articulate a grounded understanding of contemporary issues (M. J. A. al-Hudawi et al., 2024; Kamali, 1990). This move marks a decisive departure from *pesantren* models that prioritise textual mastery over empirical literacy (Aminuddin, 2022). Theologically, this reflects an implicit recognition that legal validity in contemporary settings cannot be measured solely by textual proximity, but must also account for ethical consequences and social impact (Faiz, Dakhoir, et al., 2024). Thus, the pattern that emerges is one in which reality is not treated as a mere site of legal application, but as a constitutive element in the very formation of legal judgement.

The third pillar, *fiqh al-tanzīl*, connects textual and contextual analyses into actionable legal determinations. This stage incorporates tools such as *siyāsah sharʿiyyah* (public governance principles), *rafʿ al-ḥaraj* (alleviation of hardship), and *murāʿāt al-khilāf* (juristic plurality) (Baderin, 2017). Together, these pillars form a cyclical model that moves from normative anchoring to empirical engagement and then to practical deliberation—an epistemic cycle that modernises fiqh without severing its genealogical roots. In theoretical terms, this triadic structure operationalises what *maqāṣid* theorists such as Auda and Saeed propose at a conceptual level, but does so within a *pesantren* environment that carefully negotiates the

boundaries of acceptable innovation. The data therefore show that *Ma'had Aly* does not merely "apply" *maqāṣid*; it embeds *maqāṣid* within a procedural grammar that is intelligible to, and therefore defensible before, traditional *ulamā* (Kamali, 2017).

This epistemic reconstruction becomes even more apparent when contrasted with the three conventional models of legal derivation in *pesantren*: *qaulī*, *ilḥāqī*, and *manhajī* *(Johnston, 2007)*. The *qaulī* model, which emphasises verbatim citation of authoritative opinions, remains foundational as a marker of loyalty to the madhhab but proves insufficient for addressing contemporary legal challenges (Nyazee, 2022). The *ilḥāqī* model introduces analogical reasoning yet often fails to penetrate the deeper causal logic of rulings, leaving structural issues unaddressed. By contrast, *Ma'had Aly's* adoption of the *manhajī* approach signifies a methodological leap in which *uṣūl al-fiqh* becomes an active analytical tool rather than a static reference (Wafi, 2022). This shift foregrounds *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* as a guiding evaluative criterion, allowing *ijtihād* to expand while remaining internally regulated. Empirically, this confirms the possibility—often doubted in the literature—that a *pesantren*-based institution can institutionalise method-centred rather than text-centred reasoning without forfeiting its traditional legitimacy.

This methodological shift is accompanied by a sustained commitment to *ḥifẓ al-naṣṣ* (preservation of textual integrity) coupled with *taʿdīl al-wāqiʿ* (reconstruction of reality) under an ethical framework (Bashori, 2017). This produces an interpretive orientation known as *manhaj tawassuṭ*, a moderate and dialogical method that situates classical orthodoxy and contemporary adaptation in a mutually reinforcing relationship. Instead of positioning itself along a binary spectrum between "orthodox" and "liberal" tendencies, *Ma'had Aly* epistemically synthesises elements of both within a *maqāṣid*-centric logic that prioritises ethical utility, coherence, and contextual equity (Arif et al., 2022). In doing so, it subtly challenges portrayals of *pesantren* as either rigidly conservative or naively progressive, suggesting instead that reform can proceed through carefully curated internal negotiations over method and authority.

The epistemic reconstruction at *Ma'had Aly* has generated diverse scholarly and intra-*pesantren* reactions, revealing the centrality of power, authority, and religious capital in shaping reform trajectories (Sulthon et al., 2024). Conservative circles express concern that expanding context-based reasoning risks diluting textual authority or shifting normative power from divine revelation to social sentiment. Progressive constituencies, by contrast, welcome this approach as a tactical form of *tajdīd manhajī* capable of addressing stagnation in Islamic legal thought. Field data show that within the *pesantren* community itself, the dominant stance is neither outright rejection nor uncritical embrace; rather, there exists a balanced commitment to preserving the constraints of *uṣūl al-fiqh* as epistemic boundaries while allowing methodological innovation through structured internal dialogue (Anshori & Abdurrahman, 2025). This dynamic indicates that *Ma'had Aly's* reformist project is sustained not by a collapse of traditional authority, but by its recalibration—authority is retained, yet required to justify itself through methodologically coherent reasoning.

This epistemological evolution is further strengthened through a *multimanhaj* pedagogical structure that combines classical techniques—such as *bandongan* and *sorogan*—with modern instructional practices, including case-based learning, legal seminars, and *maqāṣid*-oriented textual analysis (Athambawa, 2025; Wibisono & Roeslan, 2025). These methods cultivate *santri* who are not merely competent in textual interpretation but also attuned to the ethical, social, and environmental dimensions of legal issues (Fathorrahman et al., 2024). A strong emphasis on *salāmah al-istidlāl* (soundness of legal reasoning) and *ṣuḥḥat al-manṭiq al-uṣūlī* (correctness of uṣūlī logic) ensures that new interpretations remain disciplined and accountable, preventing speculative or ideologically driven readings (Kazemi-Moussavi & Mavani, 2023; Majid & Zukhruf, 2024). These findings collectively show that pedagogy in *Ma'had Aly* is not a neutral backdrop, but a key mechanism through which epistemic reform is normalised, internalised, and reproduced.

In sum, the findings position *Ma'had Aly* as a dynamic epistemological laboratory within the *pesantren* landscape—one in which tradition and innovation are not antagonistic but mutually constitutive. The reconstructed *fiqh* epistemology at this institution exemplifies how classical Islamic legal thought can be revived, expanded, and operationalised in contemporary contexts through endogenous methodologies

(Faiz, Nasution, et al., 2024). Theoretically, this section fulfils the first research objective by clarifying the epistemological principles and internal mechanisms that sustain classical authority while enabling structured legal transformation. It also extends existing scholarship by providing a concrete, empirically grounded example of how *bayānī, taʿlīlī, and maqāṣidī* modes can be synthesised into a coherent system without undermining the normative foundations of *turāth*. This provides the empirical basis upon which the subsequent sub-section formulates the *Integrative Manhaj of Epistemological Renewal* as a generalisable model for *pesantren*-based legal reform.

Enhancing Methodology and Revitalising Tradition: The Epistemological Evolution of *Fiqh* at *Ma'had Aly* Situbondo

The results further indicate that *Ma'had Aly's* reconstruction of *fiqh* is accompanied by a deeper methodological evolution that transforms conventional modes of legal derivation into a coherent interpretive system anchored in the *manhajī* paradigm (Ismail et al., 2024). This transformation did not arise in an ideological vacuum; rather, it emerged from the institution's internal diagnosis that purely *qaulī* and *ilḥāqī* reasoning had reached their limits in addressing contemporary socio-legal complexity (Djalal et al., 2021). In contrast to earlier *pesantren* models—where textual recall often overshadowed analytical engagement—the *manhajī* turn reflects a deliberate repositioning of method as the primary determinant of legal validity (Beloushi, 2015; Gruica, 2025). This shift resonates with Azra's observation that Islamic legal authority is increasingly tied to epistemic competence rather than mere textual reproduction, yet the *Ma'had Aly* case extends this insight by demonstrating how such competence is institutionally cultivated within a *pesantren* framework (Azra, 2019).

Within this paradigm, the *bayānī, taʿlīlī, and maqāṣidī* methods are not isolated interpretive tools but sequential and interdependent stages of a unified epistemic process. Empirical evidence indicates that the *bayānī* method remains foundational, securing fidelity to *Shāfiʿī* textual authority and safeguarding *ḥifẓ al-naṣṣ* as a non-negotiable anchor of legitimacy (Auda, 2008; Faizi & Ali, 2024). Yet unlike conventional *pesantren* practice, where the *bayānī* approach often functions as the endpoint of inquiry, *Ma'had Aly* repositions it as the analytical starting point. This reconfiguration arises from the recognition that textual determinacy alone cannot resolve contemporary legal dilemmas—particularly those shaped by new economic arrangements, digital contexts, and evolving social ethics (Dai, 2025). Thus, the *bayānī* approach here is not abandoned but reoriented, illustrating how inherited epistemic structures can be reactivated rather than discarded.

The *taʿlīlī* component adds interpretive depth by interrogating the causal logic (*ʿillah*) and socio-historical assumptions embedded within classical rulings (Aminuddin, 2022; Elston, 2022). The data show that *baḥth al-masāʾil* participants are systematically trained to uncover normative trajectories and distinguish rulings rooted in enduring values from those contingent on medieval socio-economic contexts (Benali et al., 2025; Kasim et al., 2024). This analytical shift supports but also nuances earlier scholarship suggesting that *pesantren* lack a culture of legal causation; the *Ma'had Aly* case challenges this claim by demonstrating that causal reasoning can be institutionalised when supported by structured methodological scaffolding (Ahmed, 2012; Mappasessu, 2025). Here, *taʿlīl* operates not as a speculative rationalism but as a disciplined, tradition-consistent mechanism that bridges textual legacy with contemporary exigencies.

The *maqāṣidī* dimension culminates the sequence by evaluating proposed rulings against ethical aims such as justice (*ʿadl*), dignity, public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), and social equilibrium (Aminuddin, 2022; Elston, 2022). Unlike some modernist approaches where *maqāṣid* risks becoming detached from the textual tradition, *Ma'had Aly* deliberately grounds its *maqāṣid* usage within a turāth-based grammar to prevent interpretive drift (Ali et al., 2024; Rohman, 2018). This finding both supports and extends Auda's systems-based *maqāṣid* theory: while Auda emphasises structural interdependence among *maqāṣid* components, *Ma'had Aly* demonstrates how such interdependence can be operationalised within a pesantren by embedding *maqāṣid* into routine pedagogical and deliberative practices (Al-Turabi & Auda, 2025b; Syahnan, 2010). The data thus provide evidence that *maqāṣid* can function not as an abstract principle but as a regulatory mechanism that shapes interpretive outcomes while preserving normative continuity.

Institutionally, this methodological evolution is reinforced through pedagogical mechanisms that normalise epistemic transformation. The revitalisation of *baḥth al-masāʾil* into a deliberative arena—requiring arguments to demonstrate *salāmah al-istidlāl* and *ṣuḥḥat al-manṭiq al-uṣūlī*—reveals that authority in *Ma'had Aly* is not merely inherited but earned through methodologically coherent reasoning (Wimra et al., 2023). Senior *kiai* play a dual role: they safeguard epistemic boundaries while legitimising innovation through evaluative approval (Muslihun, 2018). This dynamic aligns with Nasuha's analysis of pesantren authority as a negotiated rather than unilateral structure, but the present study extends that analysis by showing how such negotiation is embedded in routine interpretive procedures rather than exceptional debates ((Mu'afi & Sugiri, 2025; Nasuha, 2014; Yasid, 2002). The methodological creativity observed in *Ma'had Aly* is thus not a rupture from tradition but a recalibration of authority relations within it.

Pedagogical reform further consolidates this recalibration. Traditional formats—*bandongan* and *sorogan*—are retained to preserve textual genealogies, yet they are strategically supplemented with dialogical learning, interdisciplinary case analysis, comparative fiqh seminars, and collaborative research (Fahmi, 2024; Hanafi, 2012). These innovations cultivate epistemic reflexivity and interpretive agility among *santri*, equipping them to recognise the ethical, environmental, and socio-political dimensions that shape legal reasoning (Alfani et al., 2025; Amrullah & Mutholingah, 2025). Importantly, documentary analysis shows that the integrative methodology extends beyond the classroom, shaping internal fatwa production and institutional publications (Rosyidah et al., 2025; Yaqin et al., 2022c). This diffusion pattern indicates that the *manhajī* shift is not confined to curricular spaces but animates the institution's broader epistemic culture.

This epistemological evolution holds significant implications for Islamic legal reform more broadly (Saepullah, 2019). Unlike reformist models that rely on external theoretical imposition, *Ma'had Aly* demonstrates a pathway through which methodological renewal can be internally generated within a tradition-focused framework (Marjuni & Raya, 2021; Yahya, 2024). By synthesising *bayānī, taʿlīlī*, and *maqāṣidī* approaches within the boundaries of *turāth*, the institution offers a replicable model for *pesantren* seeking to revitalise *fiqh* while maintaining epistemic authenticity (Faisol, 2018). This finding challenges assumptions in the literature that substantive reform must arise from external intellectual movements, showing instead that pesantren possess internal capacities for epistemic transformation when method is foregrounded as the axis of legal reasoning (M. Taufiq et al., 2025)

In this light, *Ma'had Aly* Situbondo emerges as an instructive example of how tradition-based institutions can develop sophisticated interpretive systems capable of navigating the tension between preservation and transformation (Supani et al., 2025). The institution's methodological creativity, coupled with pedagogical restructuring and disciplined epistemic regulation, demonstrates that meaningful reform does not require abandoning tradition but re-engaging it with conceptual clarity and contextual intelligence (Yaqin, 2021). The analysis in this section directly fulfills the second research objective by illustrating how the integrative methodology of *Ma'had Aly* provides the empirical foundation for the *Integrative Manhaj of Epistemological Renewal*—a theoretical model that captures how classical Islamic legal thought can be reactivated to address modern socio-ethical problems while preserving its normative foundations.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyyah* Situbondo has developed an internally grounded model of Islamic legal reform by integrating *bayānī, taʿlīlī*, and *maqāṣidī* reasoning into a coherent epistemological system. The findings show that the institution's triadic framework—*fiqh al-nuṣūṣ, fiqh al-wāqiʿ*, and *fiqh al-tanzīl*—functions as a disciplined mechanism through which classical authority, empirical awareness, and ethical purposiveness are systematically reconciled. This synthesis reveals the deeper pattern that legal renewal in *pesantren* becomes possible when methodological reasoning rather than textual reproduction becomes the axis of *ijtihād*. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in identifying how epistemic continuity and methodological innovation can co-exist without undermining

the normative foundations of *turāth*, thereby offering an empirically grounded account of how Islamic legal thought evolves within tradition-based institutions.

The study formulates the Integrative *Manhaj* of Epistemological Renewal as a conceptual model that captures this endogenous reform process and provides a transferable framework for *pesantren*-based legal education across Indonesia. Beyond its theoretical contribution, the research offers practical insights for curriculum development, institutional capacity-building, and the revitalisation of *baḥth al-masāʾil* as a site of disciplined methodological negotiation. While limited to a single institutional case, the findings invite comparative inquiries into how varying *pesantren* cultures, leadership styles, and epistemic commitments shape the dynamics of legal reform in Southeast Asia. Ultimately, this study affirms that meaningful Islamic legal renewal can emerge from within the tradition itself when classical methodologies are critically reactivated to meet the ethical and socio-legal challenges of contemporary Muslim life.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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