

# Political-Social Historiography of Islamic Education in Minangkabau: Transmission of Knowledge and the Concept of Talaqqī in the Formation of Scientific Tradition

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### Abstract

This study examines the political-social historiography of Islamic education in Minangkabau, focusing on the transmission of knowledge and the concept of talaqqī in the formation of the Islamic scholarly tradition in the Indonesian archipelago. The study aims to trace, reconstruct, and interpret the historical dynamics of Islamic education in Minangkabau within the context of socio-politics and the transmission of knowledge. This study adopts a qualitative approach with historiography and literature review. Through a historical-critical literature review approach, this study analyzes the dynamics of Islamic education from the 17th to the 20th century, starting from the traditional surau system to modern madrasahs such as Sumatera Thawalib and Diniyah School. The results of the study show that Islamic education in Minangkabau not only functions as a religious institution but also as a socio-political arena in shaping the intellectual awareness and Islamic identity of the community. The concept of talagqī becomes the epistemological foundation of knowledge transmission, which guarantees the authority and blessings of knowledge through the spiritual relationship between teacher and student. In the modern context, talaggi has been recontextualized into a system of values and scientific ethics that is relevant to the development of contemporary Islamic education. This study confirms that Islamic education in Minangkabau is a manifestation of the dialectic between tradition and modernity, as well as an integrative model of Islamic education based on sanad, spirituality, and rationality.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Islamic education in Minangkabau is one of the most interesting historical phenomena in the study of the historiography of Islam in the archipelago. Since the

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17th century, this region has been the center of the formation of a distinctive Islamic scholarly tradition, marked by the interaction between Minangkabau customs, Islamic law, and colonial modernity (Hidayat & Rohman, 2024; Saharman, 2018; Satria, 2019). In this historical dynamic, Islamic educational institutions such as surau and madrasahs functioned not only as places of religious instruction but also as social, political, and intellectual spaces that shaped the Islamic consciousness of the Minangkabau people. This phenomenon shows that the historiography of Islamic education in Minangkabau cannot be understood solely from an institutional perspective, but must be analyzed within a socio-political framework and the transmission of knowledge that connects teachers and students through the talaqqī system (direct learning from teachers who have scientific sanad). This talaqqī process is the main epistemological characteristic of classical Islamic education, which emphasizes the inheritance of knowledge through the moral and spiritual authority of the teacher, not just through texts. In the Minangkabau context, this practice functions as a mechanism for the transmission of knowledge, values, and Islamic identity, as well as the foundation for the emergence of a strong local Islamic intellectual tradition (Miswari, 2024; Saharman, 2017; Syahril & Wilvon, 2022; Yola et al., 2024).

Modern historiography often places Minangkabau Islamic education in two major streams: first, as a continuation of the Sufi Islamic tradition rooted in the surau system; and second, as a product of the reform movement (modernism) that developed since the early 20th century. In these two streams, the process of knowledge transmission has always been the main axis. In the Sufi tradition, knowledge transmission takes place through the spiritual relationship between mursyid –student, while in the modernist era, transmission shifted to an intellectual teacher–student relationship in a rational and textual form (Andoni, 2022; Hakim et al., 2020; Hidayat & Rohman, 2024; Maknun et al., 2025).

Great Minangkabau scholars such as Syekh Burhanuddin Ulakan, Syekh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (Haji Rasul), and Buya Hamka each represent different phases of knowledge transmission, yet they are intertwined. Syekh Burhanuddin (17th century) brought the Sufi talaqqī model from Aceh, through the Tarekat Syattariyah path, and adapted it to the egalitarian Minangkabau cultural context (Samad, 2024). Later, Sheikh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi (1860–1916) developed a transmission of knowledge based on tafaqquh fi al-din in Mecca and introduced a rational paradigm to his students in his homeland.

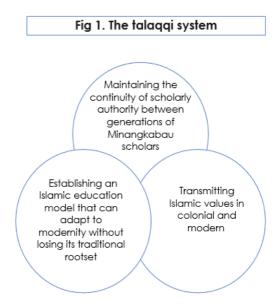
From the results of this transmission, a generation of reformist scholars emerged, such as Haji Rasul and Zainuddin Labay El Yunusy, who later founded Sumatera Thawalib and Diniyyah School, two institutions that changed the face of Islamic education in West Sumatra. This process marked an epistemological transition from Sufi talaqqī to intellectual-modern talaqqī, in which Islamic education was no longer purely spiritual, but also rational and social. This change did not occur in a vacuum, but in the context of colonial socio-political change and Islamic nationalism. In the early 20th century, the Dutch colonial government introduced a secular education system oriented towards colonial interests, so that Islamic education became a means of cultural resistance and a symbol of resistance for the Muslim community's identity. Thus, the system of knowledge transmission through talaqqī served a dual function: it preserved the authenticity of Islamic scholarship and became a tool for social mobilization for the liberation of society.

The concept of talaqqī in this context is not only interpreted as a process of knowledge transfer, but also as a transmission of values and epistemological authority. According to Al-Attas, talaqqī is the core of Islamic epistemology, which emphasizes the importance of the continuity of scientific authority through sanad

(isnad) and adab (ta'dīb). In Minangkabau history, this system has proven effective in maintaining the continuity of knowledge between generations of scholars and the community, even when the colonial system and educational modernization attempted to replace it with a secular Western model.

The historiographical approach in this study views that the Minangkabau Islamic education system must be analyzed not only through institutional dimensions, but also through the politics of knowledge that influence the way knowledge is produced, disseminated, and legitimized (Aldi & Barizi, 2025; Erasiah & Zein, 2024; Sanusi, 2020; Setiawan et al., 2024). In this case, talagqī and the transmission of knowledge became an arena where scientific authority was negotiated between traditionalist and reformist scholars and the colonial powers. Previous studies conducted by Azyumardi Azra, Taufik Abdullah, and Deliar Noer have highlighted the network of scholars and the role of Islamic education in the social transformation of Minangkabau. However, most of these studies have not highlighted in depth the epistemological and practical dimensions of talagqī as a mechanism for the formation of scientific traditions. Meanwhile, recent research by Mahyuddin and Luthfi has begun to reveal the relevance of talagqi in the context of Islamic educational reform, but has not yet directly linked it to the political-social historiography and transmission of knowledge between generations of Minangkabau scholars.

This study attempts to reconceptualize the historiography of Islamic education in Minangkabau by placing the transmission of knowledge and talaqqī as the main epistemological dimensions in the formation of local Islamic scientific traditions. Using a historical literature review and hermeneutic analysis approach, this study explores how the talaqqī system plays a role in:



This study is important because understanding talaqqī does not only mean understanding the mechanisms of classical Islamic teaching, but also understanding the social and political structure of knowledge in local Muslim communities. In the context of Minangkabau, which has the philosophy of "adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah" (custom is based on sharia, sharia is based on the Book of Allah), the practice of talaqqī symbolizes the integral relationship between religion and culture, between knowledge and practice, and between teachers and students.

Thus, this historiographical study aims to provide a new understanding of the role of Islamic education in Minangkabau, not merely as a formal institution, but as a historical process of transmitting knowledge and values that shaped Islamic scientific civilization in the archipelago. Through this perspective, the study is expected to enrich the discourse of Islamic education historiography with a more epistemological, social, and contextual approach, as well as offer a new analytical model in understanding the relationship between talaqqī, knowledge transmission, and the formation of scientific traditions in the Islamic world of Indonesia (Alfarid et al., 2022; Fajria & Fitrisia, 2024; Ritonga, 2024; Yola et al., 2020).

### **METHODS**

This study adopts a qualitative approach with historiography and literature review, which aims to trace, reconstruct, and interpret the historical dynamics of Islamic education in Minangkabau in the socio-political context and scientific transmission (Akem et al., 2025; Akmal et al., 2024; Baroud et al., 2024; Engkizar, Muslim, et al., 2025; Guspita et al., 2025; Ikhlas et al., 2025; Mustafa et al., 2025; Okenova et al., 2025) This approach is based on an interpretive paradigm, which understands social reality as a historical and cultural construction through the interpretation of meaning from various sources. The data sources for this study include primary sources such as manuscripts and original works by Minangkabau Islamic education figures (e.g., Aqidatul Awam, Kitab al-Manhaj al-Hamidiyyah, and the writings of Syekh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi), as well as secondary sources in the form of books, journal articles, and relevant academic works (Engkizar, Jaafar, et al., 2025; Htay et al., 2025; Ikhwan et al., 2023; Sabrina et al., 2022; Ummah et al., 2025). Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation studies, including inventory, classification, critical reading, and comparative analysis of attention to the principles of authenticity, with representativeness, and meaning. Data analysis was carried out critically and interpretively through heuristic, verification, interpretation, and historiography stages, using a thematic-hermeneutic approach. The concepts of knowledge transmission and talagqī became the main analytical framework, which examined how the surau education system in Minangkabau formed scientific authority through personal and spiritual relationships between teachers and students. To ensure data validity, this study applies source and theory triangulation, as well as the principle of historical empathy to avoid anachronism and maintain interpretive objectivity (Engkizar, Jaafar, et al., 2025; Faddhia et al., 2025; Febriani et al., 2023; Fitriani et al., 2023; Hilmi et al., 2024; Istiqamah et al., 2024; Khairunisa et al., 2025; Mutathahirin et al., 2022; Oktavia et al., 2024; Wati et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2024).

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

# Political-Social Dynamics in the Historiography of Minangkabau Islamic Education

Since its inception, Islamic education in Minangkabau has been inseparable from its surrounding social and political context. This region has been known as one of the leading centers of Islamic intellectualism in the archipelago since the 17th century. This strategic role was carried out by the surau institution, which was not only a place of worship but also functioned as a center for education and the transmission of religious knowledge. The presence of early figures such as Syekh Burhanuddin Ulakan was crucial in laying the foundations for the early structure of Islamic education, which was strongly influenced by Sufism. This Sufi tradition later became a strong religious and social foundation within Minangkabau society, forming the initial framework for their understanding and practice of Islam (Faslah & Fata, 2021; Khilal, 2023).

Entering the 19th century to the early 20th century, Islamic education in Minangkabau faced new and complex challenges and dynamics (mufti et al., 2025). The wave of Dutch colonialism brought Western influences to the realm of education, while on the other hand, the tide of Islamic renewal from the Middle East, particularly from Mecca and Egypt, also influenced the intellectual landscape. This situation triggered significant epistemological tensions between the Old Guard (traditionalists) and the Young Guard (modernists). These tensions went beyond mere theological differences; they touched on the core of views regarding methods of knowledge transmission and scholarly authority. The Old Guard firmly defended scientific authority based on sanad and talaqqī, emphasizing the continuity of the scientific tradition from teacher to student (Juharmen, 2020).

On the other hand, the Young Generation came up with ideas for reform that introduced the madrasah system and more rational and systematic educational methods. These innovations marked a paradigm shift in Minangkabau Islamic education, where the teaching and learning process was no longer limited to the traditional surau model, but began to adopt a more formal and institutionalized structure. The debate between these two groups reflects a deep intellectual struggle about how to maintain the authenticity of Islam while responding to the challenges of modernity. This dynamic also shows how Islamic education in Minangkabau is not static, but continues to adapt to the changing times and external influences.

These significant social changes had a direct impact on the historiography of Islamic education in Minangkabau. Education was no longer understood merely as a process of passing on religious knowledge, but also as an arena for the social and political reproduction of knowledge. In this context, education became an important medium for shaping identity and spreading ideas. The struggle between the Old and Young Generations, as well as interactions with colonial influences, gave birth to a new intellectual class in Minangkabau. Figures such as Haji Rasul, Abdul Karim Amrullah, and Buya Hamka are representatives of this intellectual generation who played a central role in modernizing Islamic education.

These new intellectuals, despite bringing Islamic reformist values linked to the global renewal movement, still maintain strong roots in the traditions of talaqqī and local scholarly etiquette. They have successfully combined modernity with tradition, creating a unique synthesis in Minangkabau Islamic education. The historiography of Islamic education in Minangkabau, therefore, reflects the complex interaction between tradition and modernity, locality and globality, as well as religious, social, and political dimensions that continue to shape the face of Islamic education in this region to this day.

# Transmission of Knowledge and the Concept of Talaqqī in the Scientific Tradition

The transmission of knowledge in classical Minangkabau Islamic education is fundamentally based on two main principles: sanad al-'ilm (chain of knowledge) and talaqqī (direct meeting between teacher and student). This tradition is not merely a teaching method, but an epistemological foundation that is deeply rooted in the Islamic understanding of the authority of knowledge. The continuity of knowledge is seen as a chain that is directly connected from the Prophet Muhammad to contemporary scholars. In Minangkabau, talaqqī is more than just a transfer of information; it is a holistic process that includes the instillation of adab (ethics), character building, and the formation of a strong scientific identity in a student. The personal interaction between teacher and student in talaqqī ensures that the knowledge transferred is not limited to texts, but also includes values, deep understanding, and the spirit of scholarship itself (Hayat & Sesmiarni, 2025; Muhammad, 2025).

This practice of talaqqī can be clearly seen in the figure of Sheikh Burhanuddin Ulakan, one of the leading scholars in Minangkabau in the 17th century. He obtained his knowledge directly from Sheikh Abdurrauf Singkel in Aceh, who was also a student of scholars in Haramain (Mecca and Medina). This strong chain of knowledge ensured that the Sufism and fiqh taught by Sheikh Burhanuddin had high validity and authenticity, as taught in global Islamic centers of learning. Through this chain of transmission, profound Sufism teachings and systematic fiqh were successfully spread to the western coast of Sumatra, contributing greatly to the formation of the religious character of the Minangkabau people. The tradition of talaqqī established by Sheikh Burhanuddin was then continued by generations of his successor scholars who were spread across various surau in the Pariaman, Agam, and Tanah Datar regions, becoming the backbone of Islamic education in the area.

Entering the 20th century, Islamic education in Minangkabau underwent a significant methodological transformation. With the emergence of modern Islamic madrasas and schools such as Sumatera Thawalib and Diniyah School, initiated by reformers such as Haji Rasul and Zainuddin Labay El Yunusy, the teaching system began to adopt a classical model with a more structured curriculum. Although the methods of imparting knowledge underwent changes, the core values of talaqqī did not necessarily disappear. On the contrary, it underwent adaptation and persisted in the form of a deep teacher-student relationship, which was rich in spiritual and moral dimensions. The relationship between teachers and students was maintained with high respect, reflecting the essence of talaqqī itself.

Students, even though they study in a modern madrasah environment, continue to uphold the principle of ta'zhīm al-'ilm wa al-'ulamā' (respect for knowledge and scholars). This shows that methodological innovation does not erode respect for scientific authority and the virtue of scholars. In fact, many of them actively seek scholarly sanad through non-formal channels, such as attending halaqah (study circles), majelis taklim (religious gatherings), or even traveling to Mecca to seek knowledge. This search for sanad is clear evidence of a strong desire to obtain blessings and the validity of knowledge directly from the source, continuing a tradition that has been deeply rooted for centuries.

Thus, the tradition of talaqqī in Minangkabau has not disappeared or been erased by the tide of educational modernization. Instead, it has undergone a process of recontextualization, in which its essence has been adapted to the demands of the times without losing its fundamental values. Talaqqī has transformed into a unique scientific ethos, which successfully combines the rational dimension of modern educational methods, the spiritual dimension of the teacher-student relationship, and the moral dimension of instilling good manners. This has resulted in a distinctive Islamic education system in Minangkabau, which is able to provide continuity between tradition and modernity, as well as maintain the identity of Islamic scholarship amid social and political changes.

# Contextualization of Historiography: Education as an Arena of Political Knowledge

The historiography of Islamic education in Minangkabau is essentially a reflection of the political struggles that shaped it throughout history. Especially during the colonial period, Islamic educational institutions became a central arena for fierce ideological struggles. On the one hand, the Dutch colonial government systematically sought to introduce and impose a secular education system oriented towards Western values. These efforts were often accompanied by strategies to belittle and even portray traditional Islamic education as something ancient, irrelevant, and synonymous with backwardness. This narrative aimed to marginalize the role of Islamic education and erode the authority of the ulama in the eyes of the community.

However, on the other hand, the ulama and Minangkabau intellectuals did not remain silent. They actively seek to rewrite and reclaim the narrative of Islamic education history, not as a symbol of backwardness, but as a manifestation of the intellectual emancipation of Islam in the archipelago, which has long had a rich scholarly tradition. In the context of this struggle, the tradition of talaqqī (direct meetings between teachers and students) has become a powerful symbol of epistemological resistance against the hegemony of colonialism of knowledge. Talaqqī emphasizes that valid knowledge does not solely originate from formal institutions controlled by the colonizers, but also from spiritual authorities inherited through an unbroken chain of scientific transmission (Engkizar et al., 2024; Monlinia et al., 2024; Mutathahirin et al., 2020).

The talaqqī relationship also clearly shows how Islamic education in Minangkabau played a very important socio-political role. Through this system, a generation of scholars emerged who not only studied religious knowledge but also became fierce independence fighters and Muslim intellectuals who were critical of colonial power and Western knowledge hegemony. They not only taught in mosques and madrasas, but also shaped public opinion, raised nationalist consciousness, and provided an intellectual foundation for the struggle against colonialism. Islamic education, thus, became an unshakable bastion of cultural and intellectual defense.

In addition, the tradition of talaqqī also had a significant impact in strengthening social solidarity among scholars, especially through transnational scientific networks. The close relationship between Minangkabau scholars and scholars in Haramain (Mecca and Medina), for example, shows how this process of knowledge transmission played an important role in the formation of a global Islamic consciousness that transcended geographical boundaries. Minangkabau scholars were not only recipients of knowledge from global Islamic centers of learning, but they also played an active role as contributors to Islamic civilization in the Malay-Archipelago world.

This contribution was not limited to the dissemination of religious knowledge, but also included the development of thought, the writing of Islamic works, and the formation of a distinctive religious character. This talaqqī network ensured that Islamic education in Minangkabau remained connected to the mainstream of global Islamic thought, while enriching the local intellectual heritage with outside perspectives. Thus, the historiography of Islamic education in Minangkabau is a story of how the scholarly tradition was able to adapt, resist, and develop in the face of various challenges, while also becoming a driving force for social and political change.

# The Relevance of Talaqqī to Contemporary Islamic Education

In the context of modern Islamic education, which tends to be pragmatic and oriented towards cognitive outcomes, the tradition of talaqqī presents a profound reflection on the meaning of authenticity and sustainability in scholarship. Modern education systems often place too much emphasis on intellectual aspects alone, measuring success through academic achievement and analytical skills. As a result, the spiritual and moral dimensions—which are the core and spirit of the talaqqī tradition—are often marginalized or even neglected. In fact, talaqqī teaches that knowledge is not only to be understood rationally, but also to be internalized and practiced. In this regard, the historiography of Islamic education in Minangkabau offers a comprehensive integrative model, which unites the dimensions of reason ('aql), heart (qalb), and action ('amal) in a single educational process.

This integrative model teaches that ideal education must be able to balance intellectual development with spiritual purification and character building. Knowledge obtained through reason must be internalized by the heart so that it gives birth to wisdom and spiritual sensitivity. Then, this deep understanding is manifested

in concrete actions (amal) that are beneficial to oneself and society. This approach is very relevant to overcoming the moral and spiritual crises that often plague modern education, where science seems to be detached from human and divine values. By reviving the spirit of talaqqī, modern Islamic education can rediscover its identity as an agent for shaping the whole person, not merely a machine for producing workers.

As a concrete example, the learning methods in traditional surau (mosques) in Minangkabau emphasize the internalization of values through uswah hasanah (role models) from teachers and scholars. Students learn not only from the words of their teachers, but also from their behavior, ethics, and way of life. In addition, the tradition of rihlah ilmiah (journeys in search of knowledge) is also an important practice that teaches independence, perseverance, and direct experience in the pursuit of knowledge. This model of education, centered on exemplary behavior and experience, can be a valuable inspiration in developing character- and spirituality-based Islamic education in today's digital age.

Thus, the concept of talaqqī not only has historical value as part of the intellectual heritage of the past. More than that, it also has strong epistemological and pedagogical relevance for the transformation of contemporary Islamic education. Talaqqī offers a framework for understanding the nature of knowledge and the learning process holistically. It also provides a pedagogical foundation for designing learning methods that are not only effective in transferring knowledge, but also in shaping the personality, morality, and spirituality of students. By re-adopting the spirit of talaqqī, Islamic education can produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also noble-hearted and virtuous.

## Synthesis: Tradition, Modernity, and the Sustainability of Scientific Identity

The political-social historiography of Islamic education in Minangkabau clearly shows that the process of knowledge transmission has never been static or isolated. On the contrary, it is a dynamic entity that continuously adapts to the ever-changing social, political, and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, in every phase of its transformation, Islamic education in Minangkabau has always managed to maintain its strong roots in the universal basic values of Islamic scholarship. This flexibility allows Islamic education to remain relevant and contribute significantly in every era. The tradition of talaqqī, as the core of the method of knowledge transmission, has served as a solid bridge, connecting the past with the present, uniting the wisdom of traditional surau with the modern university system, and integrating the values of scientific sanad with the demands of the modern curriculum (Albshkar et al., 2024).

The role of talaqqī as a bridge is fundamental. It not only ensures the continuity of the chain of knowledge, but also enables constructive dialogue between rich traditions and modern innovations. On the one hand, it ensures that the knowledge taught remains authentic and has a strong foundation from generation to generation. On the other hand, it does not hinder the entry of new ideas and methodologies that are relevant to the times. Thus, Islamic education in Minangkabau is able to avoid the trap of stagnation on the one hand, and loss of identity on the other, through intelligent and sustainable adaptation.

Thus, the sustainability of Islamic scientific identity in Minangkabau can be understood as the result of a rich and productive dialectic between tradition and modernity. It is not a mutually exclusive conflict, but rather a process of mutual enrichment. The Minangkabau scholars, with their wisdom and foresight, succeeded in constructing an Islamic education system that was not only open to modernization but also able to integrate it without sacrificing the spiritual essence and morality of scholarship. They understood that modernization was not a threat but an opportunity to strengthen and expand Islamic preaching (Febriani et al., 2020; Zulmuqim, 2017)

The education system they built was able to filter and adapt positive elements of modernity, such as the classical system, structured curriculum, and more rational teaching methods, while still maintaining the core values of the talaqqī tradition, such as sanad, adab, and deep teacher-student relationships. The result is a unique educational model that is capable of producing intellectuals who are not only proficient in general knowledge, but also strong in religious understanding and noble character. This is a very valuable intellectual heritage.

This intellectual legacy is not only a historical record to be proud of, but also a source of inspiration that needs to be continuously studied, understood, and revived in the development of Islamic education in the archipelago in the future. The integrative model offered by Minangkabau Islamic education provides valuable guidance on how to face contemporary challenges, maintain the authenticity of Islamic scholarship, and adapt to the demands of the times. By understanding the dialectic between tradition and modernity, Islamic education in Indonesia can formulate more effective strategies to produce a generation of Muslims who are qualified, competitive, and strong in character, relevant to the national and global context.

### **CONCLUSION**

Islamic education in Minangkabau is an integral part of the social and cultural project that shapes the collective identity of Muslims in the archipelago, rooted in the surau system that places scholars at the center of the transmission of knowledge and spirituality. This system functions as an arena for the production of knowledge and symbolic power, growing in the dialectic between tradition and modernity, spirituality and rationality, as well as local and global authority. The concept of talaqqī bridges the gap between classical scholarly authority and the demands of modern rationalization, ensuring the continuity of authentic knowledge and preserving the dimensions of scholarship and ethics. The transmission of knowledge in Minangkabau is dynamic, shifting from traditional surau to madrasah and modern Islamic schools, demonstrating the adaptation of scholars without losing their roots in spirituality and scientific sanad, as well as integrating classical heritage (turāth) with renewal (tajdīd). From a socio-political perspective, Islamic education in Minangkabau also functions as a means of emancipation and epistemological resistance to the colonialism of knowledge, building an autonomous Islamic knowledge system rooted in the tradition of talaqqī. The talaqqī network also formed a transnational network of scholars connecting Minangkabau with Islamic centers of learning in the Haramain and Egypt, giving birth to a distinctive form of Islamic scholarship in the archipelago that combined Sunni orthodoxy with modern rationality, thereby strengthening Minangkabau's position as an important axis in the intellectual history of Malay-Indonesian Islam. Thus, Islamic education in Minangkabau reflects the convergence of history, socio-politics, and Islamic epistemology, and serves as a manifestation of the spiritual and intellectual struggle to build a rooted and competitive Islamic civilization in the archipelago.

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