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The Integration and Interconnection of Knowledge In Aceh: A Historical Perspective

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse the history of the integration of religious knowledge and general knowledge in Aceh. The focus of the analysis is on the classical period, the modern period, and the contemporary period. The research approach uses the historical method by conducting: Topic selection, namely the history of the integration-interconnection of religious and general sciences in Aceh; Source collection, namely collecting materials or literature sources related to the research subject; Verification, namely testing the authenticity and credibility of materials or sources; Interpretation, namely analyzing and synthesizing sources, and; Writing, namely writing the selected topic, the history of the internalization of knowledge in Aceh. This research is based on the concept of integration and interconnection of knowledge initiated by M. Amin Abdullah, with a focus on its application to religious and general knowledge in Aceh. The results of the study show that in the classical period, influenced by certain political forces, some educational institutions made philosophical Sufism a hardcore science, and others made theological studies a hardcore. In the modern and contemporary periods, madrasas made monotheism knowledge as a hardcore science.

Keywords: *Aceh, Islamic Educational Institutions, Scientific Integration-Interconnection, Scientific Hardcore*

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis sejarah integrasi keilmuan agama dan keilmuan umum di Aceh. Fokus analisis adalah pada periode klasik, periode modern, dan kontemporer. Pendekatan penelitian menggunakan metode sejarah dengan melakukan: Pemilihan topik, yaitu sejarah integrasi-interkoneksi keilmuan agama dan keilmuan umum di Aceh; Pengumpulan sumber, yakni menghimpun bahan-bahan atau sumber literatur terkait subjek penelitian; Verifikasi, yaitu menguji autentisitas dan kredibilitas bahan atau sumber; Interpretasi, yakni melakukan analisa dan sintesa sumber, dan; Penulisan, yaitu penulisan topik yang dipilih yakni sejarah internalisasi keilmuan di Aceh. Penelitian ini berlandaskan pada konsep integrasi dan interkoneksi keilmuan yang digagas oleh M. Amin Abdullah, dengan fokus pada penerapannya terhadap ilmu agama dan ilmu umum di Aceh. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan, pada periode klasik, dipengaruhi kekuatan politik tertentu, sebagian lembaga pendidikan menjadikan tasawuf filosofis sebagai *hardcore* keilmuan, dan sebagian lainnya menjadikan kajian teologis sebagai *hardcore*. Pada periode modern dan kontemporer, madrasah menjadikan ilmu tauhid sebagai *hardcore* keilmuan.

Kata Kunci: *Aceh, Integrasi-Interkoneksi Keilmuan, Lembaga Pendidikan Islam, Hardcore Keilmuan*

Introduction

The integration of knowledge has become a popular alternative in education to address the separation between secular and religious sciences (Ritonga, 2016: 118). In the past, the division of knowledge occurred not only between religious and secular sciences but also between religious knowledge and local cultural knowledge. The concept of knowledge integration, in its various forms, emerged several decades ago as a solution to the separation between modern Western sciences and religious sciences, gaining increased attention in the post-colonial era (Abdullah, 2003: 1–24). The concept of knowledge integration, now applied in the social sciences and education, originates from mathematics, specifically the integral formula in calculus introduced by Georg Friedrich Bernhard Riemann. This formula operates independently of differential systems. Mechanically, the integral method is well-suited for formulating relationships among various branches of knowledge. Historically, some thinkers even classified knowledge hierarchically, placing religious sciences above all others in terms of importance (Al-Farabi, 1968, p. 53). The classification of knowledge that ranks one field above others has been recognised to diminish interest in the study of general sciences. Therefore, knowledge integration can serve as a solution to eliminate notions of superiority or inferiority among different fields of knowledge.

The concept of integralism in Indonesia was introduced, among others, by Armahedi Mahzar in his work *Revolusi Integralisme*. (Mahzar, 2003). Mulyadhi Kartanegara, drawing inspiration from classical Muslim thinkers such as Ibn 'Arabi and Mulla Sadra, formulated the concept of Knowledge Integration (Kartanegara, 2005: 36). This concept successfully became the foundational framework for harmonizing the study of religious sciences and general sciences at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (Hakim, Kusmana, Suwito, & Arief, 2006; Kusmana, 2006: 51). Subsequently, M. Amin Abdullah at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta formulated the concept of Knowledge Integration and Interconnection by adopting the epistemological

framework developed by Imre Lakatos (Abdullah, 2007: 15). Studies on the integration-interconnection of knowledge initiated by M. Amin Abdullah have been extensively conducted. One such study is by Siswanto, which highlights how this concept emerged from concerns over the increasing divide between religious and secular sciences (Siswanto, 2024: 336). Mohammad Aristo Sadewa researched the development of education curriculum formulations in Indonesia and evaluated them from the perspective of knowledge integration and interconnection proposed by M. Amin Abdullah (Sadewa, 2022: 266). Musliadi researched the epistemological dimensions of the knowledge integration-interconnection concept developed by M. Amin Abdullah (Musliadi, 2014: 160). Research on knowledge integration in Aceh has been conducted by several scholars. A study on knowledge integration at the Faculty of Sharia, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, was carried out by Jakfar and his team (Jakfar, Ramly, Fuadi, & Sabil, 2019: 206). Rafidhah Hanum researched the implementation of knowledge integration in integrated Islamic schools (Hanum, 2019: 40). No research has yet explored the history of knowledge integration and interconnection in the field of education in Aceh from the perspective of M. Amin Abdullah's thought.

This article argues that the integration and interconnection of education in Aceh have existed since the establishment of the first educational institution there, the Zawiyah Cot Kala in Aramiah Bayeun, East Aceh, during the Peureulak Sultanate era. Although the concept of "knowledge integration and interconnection" was not yet known at that time, efforts to integrate secular sciences have long been underway and have continued throughout the history of Islam in Aceh. This process has been dynamic, adapting to social and political contexts. Moreover, the dichotomy of knowledge in Acehnese society occurred not only between religious and secular sciences but also between religious knowledge and the cultural sciences of the community.

Methods

This study adopts the historical method to thoroughly investigate the history (Kuntowijoyo, 1995) of the integration and interconnection between religious and general knowledge in Aceh. This approach enables a systematic reconstruction of past events and phenomena through structured procedures. The initial stage involves topic selection, focusing the research on the dynamics of integration and interconnection between religious and general knowledge in Aceh throughout history. This topic was chosen due to its relevance in understanding intellectual and educational development in the region. The next stage is source collection, which entails gathering all relevant materials or literature related to the research subject. These sources may include ancient manuscripts, archival documents, historical records, books, journals, and interviews with knowledgeable figures.

After collecting the sources, the next critical stage is verification. At this stage, each source is carefully examined to ensure the authenticity and credibility of the information. Both external and internal criticism are conducted to distinguish facts from opinions and to identify potential biases. Subsequently, interpretation follows, involving analysis and synthesis of the verified sources. The researcher explores meanings, interprets data, and seeks connections among various pieces of information to construct a coherent historical narrative. This interpretation is framed within the Integration-Interconnection of Knowledge concept developed by M. Amin Abdullah, serving as the main analytical lens to understand the studied phenomenon. Finally, the writing stage compiles all findings, analyses, and syntheses into a scholarly work that comprehensively presents the history of the integration and interconnection of religious and general knowledge in Aceh, grounded theoretically in M. Amin Abdullah's integration-interconnection concept.

Result and Discussion

Integration and Interconnection of Knowledge in the Classical Period

Educational institutions tend to resist integration with external cultures, including the surrounding educational systems and cultural contexts. These institutions are designed to influence culture rather than adapt to socio-cultural changes. Although education is bound to the socio-political system, educational institutions can sometimes dominate political power. Repressive political interventions in education may ultimately undermine political authority itself. Therefore, even in the modern era, states exercise great caution when internalising their ideology within the education sector (Sunarso, 2007: 27–28).

Following the arrival of Islam in Peureulak by the Sufi-merchant group led by Nakhoda Khalifah, the Zawiyah Cot Kala was established during the Aziziyah Dynasty period. This educational institution integrated the previous educational system, namely the Bhavan system, which accommodated students. Students began their studies at the zawiyah from an early age, where knowledge was taught both conceptually and contextually, with an emphasis on practice. The integration of Islamic educational content with Peureulak's culture proceeded smoothly because, during the Aziziyah Dynasty, religious instruction heavily emphasised philosophical Sufism and spiritual practice. This approach aligned with the community's cosmological worldview, allowing religious and cultural values to be learned simultaneously (Nasution & Miswari, 2017: 168–181).

During the Meurah Dynasty, a significant shift occurred in the educational system of Peureulak. Meurah Muhammad Amin, an alumnus of Zawiyah Cot Kala from the Aziziyah period, pursued further studies in the Middle East and adopted a more literalist religious approach. This experience led him to abandon the previously philosophical religious teachings he had received at Zawiyah Cot Kala. Upon his return, he sought to transform the educational system from one integrating philosophical culture and religion to a more literalist framework. He overhauled the educational philosophy of

Zawiyah Cot Kala, replacing the previous system based on philosophical Sufi tauhid grounded in *'ilm al-hudhūrī* (intuitive knowledge) with a theology centred on *ilm al-bayânī* (knowledge of sacred text doctrine) as its epistemological foundation. In this new theological system, rational reasoning or *ilm al-burhānī* was employed only to the extent that it aligned with the literal interpretation of sacred texts, an approach that could potentially generate paradoxes when assessed through rational analysis.

In the theological system analysed through Imre Lakatos' epistemology by M. Amin Abdullah, the sacred texts (Qur'an and Hadith) constitute the core (hardcore) of knowledge development. Philosophy functions as a protective belt, providing supporting arguments for this core. The outer ring includes jurisprudence (fiqh), constructed from legal verses in the sacred texts, as well as ethics (*'ilm al-akhlak*) and social transactions (*'ilm al-mu'amalah*), each derived respectively from ethical verses and life phenomena. In this paradigm, *'ilm al-hudhūrī* (intuitive knowledge). In Arabic, *hudhūrī* (حضورى) means "presence" or "about presence." In the context of Islamic epistemology, especially within philosophy and Sufism, *hudhūrī* refers to knowledge acquired directly, without any intermediary, representation, or concept. It's often translated as "direct knowledge" or "presential knowledge. is disregarded as speculative and subjective, while *'ilm al-tajrībī* (empirical knowledge). *Tajrībī* (تجريبى) in Arabic means "experimental" or "based on experience/experimentation." In the context of Islamic philosophy, particularly epistemology, *tajrībī* refers to the method of acquiring knowledge that relies on observation, experimentation, and empirical experience as its primary sources. It is not considered a primary source for knowledge construction but only as a means to reinforce sacred texts or establish rulings. This approach potentially leads to a theological knowledge system that is utopian, as all contexts must ultimately conform to literal interpretations of the texts.

The theological perspective stands in opposition to philosophical Sufi teachings, which explains the frequent religious conflicts in Aceh's history. During the Peureulak Sultanate era, the philosophical Sufism of the Aziziyah

Dynasty clashed with the teachings of the Meurah Dynasty (Miswari, 2024a: 55–94). During the Samudra Pasai Sultanate era, the theological teachings of Syarif Makkah stood in opposition to the philosophical Sufi doctrine embraced by Maharaja Bakoy (Miswari, 2022a: 40–60). During the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate era, the philosophical Sufi teachings of Hamzah Fansuri were in opposition to the theological doctrines of Nuruddin Ar-Raniri (Nasution, 2018).

In the philosophical Sufi doctrine, *‘ilm al-hudhūrī* (intuitive knowledge) constitutes the core (hardcore) of the integration-interconnection of the knowledge framework. Here, *‘ilm al-burhānī* (rational knowledge). *Burhānī* (برهاني) means "demonstrative" or "based on strong proof/argument." In the context of Islamic philosophy, particularly epistemology (the study of knowledge), *burhānī* refers to a method of acquiring knowledge that relies heavily on the power of reason (intellect) and empirical experience (observation and experimentation) to achieve valid and convincing truths. is employed to develop understanding derived from revelation (*kasyaf*), while the sacred texts or *‘ilm al-bayānī* (knowledge of sacred text doctrine). *Bayānī* (بياني) in Arabic means "explanatory," "clarifying," or "eloquent." *Bayānī* refers to a method of acquiring knowledge primarily through the interpretation and analysis of texts, particularly sacred texts, and through linguistic and rhetorical reasoning. serve as confirmation, integrated with rational reasoning.

Meanwhile, *‘ilm al-tajribī* (empirical knowledge) is often used allegorically. Adherents of philosophical Sufism hold that *kasyaf*. *Kasyaf* (كشف) is a significant concept in Islamic tradition, especially within Sufism (Islamic mysticism) and mystical philosophy (*‘irfanī*). Etymologically, *kasyaf* comes from the Arabic root meaning to unveil, to uncover, to reveal, or to disclose secrets. represents true knowledge, as the soul can unveil knowledge beyond the limits of reason or the senses. They argue that understanding sacred texts remains constrained by the capacity of reason. Notably, this perspective is supported by prominent Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā, Syihab al-Dīn

Suhrawardī, and Mulla Sadrā (Miswari, 2022b: 60). However, in the history of education in Indonesia, including Aceh, no tradition of philosophical inquiry treats *al-burhānī* (rational science) as the hardcore of knowledge. What exists is the study of '*ilm mantiq* (logic), which is oriented as a tool for the study of philosophical Sufism by the '*urafā* group, kalam theology by theologians, and jurisprudence by *fuqahā* (experts in Islamic law). *Urafā*' (عُرَفَاء) is the plural form of 'arif (عارف), an Arabic term that translates to "knower", "gnostic", or "one who possesses ma'rifah" (spiritual knowledge/gnosis). The philosophical knowledge system itself positions '*ilm al-burhānī* (rational knowledge) as its core (hardcore) (Madjid, 2020). In this context, sacred texts (*'ilm al-bayānī*), empirical knowledge (*ilm al-tajrībī*)—as in the sciences—and intuitive knowledge (*kasyaf urafā*) are analysed rationally as objects of knowledge. The philosophical tradition, or '*ilm al-burhānī*, flourished notably in Persia and Andalusia. Andalusian Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Rushd and Ibn Tufail developed philosophy based on Aristotelian thought, while Persian philosophers generally adhered more to Neoplatonic influences (Humaidi, 2019: 90).

At the onset of the Peureulak Sultanate during the Aziziyah Dynasty, Zawiyah Cot Kala in Aramiyah, Bayeun, centred on philosophical Sufism as the foundation for knowledge development. Although the educational institution remained relatively stable, major political shifts caused by conflicts between supporters of the Aziziyah and Meurah Dynasties influenced the learning philosophy at Zawiyah Cot Kala, making it integral to political leadership transitions. Meurah Muhammad Amin, the leader of Zawiyah Cot Kala, influenced by the literalist educational system of the Arab world, initiated educational reforms. He believed that an excessive focus on

philosophical Sufism could lead to misunderstandings culminating in pantheism, prompting him to eliminate religious practices perceived as containing elements of polytheism. These reforms not only succeeded educationally but also spurred rapid economic growth in Peureulak under the Meurah Dynasty, attracting merchants and scholars to Zawiyah Cot Kala

and other smaller zawiyahs. Graduates increasingly pursued further studies in the Middle East, reinforcing theological orientations and emphasis on Islamic jurisprudence, which subsequently shaped societal religious attitudes. While religious education remained central, Zawiyah Cot Kala also taught general sciences relevant to societal development. Within their integrated-interconnected system, however, *'ilm tauhid* (monotheology) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) remained the core of instruction. Some perspectives regard Zawiyah Cek Brek as an older institution offering primary and secondary education, whereas Zawiyah Cot Kala served as a higher education institution, with Zawiyah Cek Brek established during the reign of the second sultan of the Aziziyah Dynasty (Azzawiy, 2019: 159).

Although Zawiyah Cot Kala is identified as a higher education institution and Zawiyah Cek Brek as a secondary educational institution, this hierarchical scheme does not precisely correspond to the modern education system. Therefore, it is possible that Zawiyah Cot Kala was established earlier or concurrently with Zawiyah Cek Brek. Regardless of which institution was founded first, it is highly probable that both were established during the long reign of the second Sultan of Peureulak from the Aziziyah Dynasty, which lasted twenty-five years. Furthermore, there is a possibility that both Zawiyah Cot Kala and Zawiyah Cek Brek existed prior to the advent of Islam. If so, Islamic religious sciences were gradually integrated into the existing wisdom traditions. This integration likely proceeded smoothly due to significant similarities between pre-Islamic wisdom and the essential teachings of Islam from a philosophical Sufi perspective (Sa'dudin, 2018: 123–126).

Amiruddin explains that, as a primary and secondary educational institution, Zawiyah Cek Brek taught Qur'anic reading, tauhid (monotheology), ethics, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), Arabic language, Islamic history, and related subjects. The teaching methods employed included lectures, question-and-answer sessions, discussions, memorisation, and demonstrations (Azzawiy, 2019: 117). At that time, although the core

religious curriculum may resemble contemporary teachings, the approach differed significantly. Education encompassed not only religious sciences but also universal spiritual knowledge integrated with Islamic tauhid themes through an experiential method rooted in pre-Islamic spiritual beliefs. This integrative model emphasized the interconnection of spiritual dimensions, positing that above the souls of nature (vegetative, animal, and others) exists a Singular Absolute Spirit that grants existence to all souls. This principle formed the foundation of pre-Islamic spiritual teachings, aligning with the philosophical Sufism of early Islamic generations, as upheld by the Nahkoda Khalifah, a group of Sufi leaders.

In centralized coastal communities, moral education prioritized practical application over textual study. When the learning system was centralized in institutions like pondoks, resembling the pre-Islamic bhavan system, the primary focus was on shaping daily behavior. Universal moral principles such as justice, friendliness, tolerance, compassion, appreciation, and respect existed prior to Islam. Consequently, moral education before and after the advent of Islam shared many similarities, especially since the concept of distinctly Islamic ethics lacked sufficient reference at the time. Thus, Islamic moral values and pre-Islamic moral principles were seamlessly integrated into daily practices—such as solidarity, cooperation, mutual respect, helping one another, honoring elders, caring for the young, reverence for teachers, and various other forms of courtesy. These values were interconnected and collectively embedded in the everyday lives of students (Miswari, 2023a: 10)

In the early Islamic period, conceptual understanding of worship—now known as *fiqh*—had not yet been systematically studied; the teachings on worship underwent a prolonged transformation, with significant differences between pre-Islamic and Islamic rituals. Within the framework of integrative and interconnected knowledge, worship occupied the outermost position, even beyond the technical sciences deemed essential after secondary education. The core of this scheme rests on belief in the Absolute Being,

followed by the actualization of existential awareness in morality, and subsequently the acquisition of technical knowledge as life's provision. Mastery of skills for creative actualization, philosophically understood, entails an individual's engagement with the cosmic energy rhythm—an embodiment of the unity of natural souls derived from the energy of the Absolute Being (Yusriyah, 2015: 401).

Zawiyah Cot Kala functioned as a higher education institution integrating religious studies with various disciplines such as military science, philosophy, astronomy, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, politics, and engineering. Given the context of Peureulak at the time, prioritized technical fields included construction, architecture, carving arts, and shipbuilding. Shipbuilding was particularly crucial due to Peureulak's renowned high-quality Peureulak wood used in crafting vessels, necessitating skilled human resources to produce sturdy and aesthetically refined ships. Carving artisans played a vital role in embellishing the designs of ships, the sultan's palace, and residences of high-ranking officials, utilizing various types of quality wood. Graduates of Zawiyah Cot Kala, equipped with multidisciplinary expertise, held high social status and were highly valued by the community, often assisting in house construction and shipbuilding. Additionally, these highly educated alumni frequently established smaller zawiyahs and mentored numerous students who supported agricultural activities, a system still relevant in traditional society where the paddy fields and farms of the *teungku* (religious scholars) were cultivated by their students (Peuseunu, 1981: 10).

As an international trading hub, Peureulak heavily relied on agricultural and livestock production to meet the needs of merchants and sailors. Alumni of Zawiyah Cot Kala played vital roles not only in the economic sector but also in maintaining political stability within the sultanate; notably, one distinguished alumnus became the first sultan of the Meurah Dynasty. Nevertheless, the Aziziyah Dynasty placed strong emphasis on educational development and curriculum design. The core curriculum of

Zawiyah Cot Kala centred on philosophical Sufism, a belief system upheld by the palace rulers and derived from the teachings of Nahkoda Khalifah, a Sufi-merchant. Many alumni pursued further studies in Mecca, where they encountered a more theological and jurisprudential learning system. Upon returning to Peureulak, these alumni undertook the mission to purify local beliefs and practices deemed to contain elements of polytheism. Islamic education in Peureulak during the Aziziyah Dynasty positioned philosophical Sufism as the core (hardcore), while religious sciences and various other disciplines were integrated on an equal footing. Within the educational hierarchy, fields such as astronomy, agriculture, fisheries, and philosophy occupied the secondary circle, followed by religious studies. This arrangement did not imply the lesser importance of religious sciences but reflected the lack of systematic conceptualisation and references at the time, with ritual practices holding parity with agricultural knowledge. General education—including military science, philosophy, and engineering—was emphasised at the secondary level to fulfil the demand for skilled human resources in international trade, while medicine, literature, and metaphysics were studied at the higher level. Although some disciplines were taught at both levels, higher education focused on theoretical studies; for example, military science shifted from practical skills at the secondary level to intelligence and strategy concepts at the higher level, which were essential for Peureulak's defence as an international trading centre.

As a prominent kingdom of its time, medical knowledge held great importance in Peureulak. Medicine was a major concern for the court, catering to the needs of rulers, distinguished guests from various lands, merchants, and the general populace. Individuals renowned for deep scholarly expertise were generally trusted by society to also possess medical knowledge. Consequently, alumni of Zawiyah Cot Kala were proficient not only in military sciences but also in medicine. While each alumnus specialised in certain fields, all were, to some extent, multi-talented individuals. This was because, unlike modern higher education systems where disciplines are

studied separately, knowledge fields at that time were not compartmentalised by distinct individuals. Although divisions of disciplines (*filal*) existed akin to today's faculties, these were neither strictly segmented nor divided by specialisation as in contemporary academic programs. At Zawiyah Cot Kala, higher education encompassed medicine, literature, economics, arithmetic (*'ilm hisab*), and metaphysical studies. Literary studies focused not only on Arabic and Persian literature but also on Malay, equipping Peureulak's scholars with skills in writing allegories, histories, and poetry. Economic studies emphasised theoretical explorations across various economic fields, beyond mere technical aspects. Similarly, arithmetic covered comprehensive theoretical mathematics. This serious attention to general sciences played a crucial role in establishing Peureulak as a political and economic power, as well as a centre of Islamic scholarship in the Nusantara region, making it a key destination on intercontinental maritime routes of the era (Reid, 2005: 5).

Metaphysical studies at Zawiyah Cot Kala during the Aziziyah Dynasty were philosophically oriented, focusing on transcendental existence in line with their emphasis on philosophical Sufism as the core (hardcore) of knowledge. At this time, religious and general sciences held equal significance. However, under the Meurah Dynasty, a paradigm shift occurred: theological studies became the core (hardcore), with religious sciences—especially fiqh—positioned in the first outer circle as a protective system. Practical sciences were deemed more significant due to their tangible impact, thus occupying a more prominent position, while theoretical sciences were placed in the outermost circle because of their fewer concrete effects. This shift led to the relocation of the philosophical Sufi tradition from the Aziziyah Dynasty to Salasari Kingdom, where they migrated after being replaced by the Meurah Dynasty. Subsequently, Salasari, having gained control over much of northern Aceh, further developed the philosophical Sufi tradition in Pasai, marked by the establishment of Zawiyah Blang Peuria (Miswari, 2023b: 180).

When the hardcore scholarly focus in Peureulak was on theological studies during the Meurah Dynasty, and Jeumpa, in a relatively close period, adopted the same system, then practically in Aceh—at least along the Malacca Strait route—only northern Aceh experienced a massive spread of philosophical Sufism, accompanied by the developmental progress of Samudra Pasai (Al-Attas, 2011: 32) Jeumpa, before Peureulak, indeed did not experience the spread of Islamic teachings (Miswari, 2023a: 10). During the height of Samudra Pasai's influence, Jeumpa experienced the development of Islamic religious education with a stronger tendency toward theological studies rather than philosophical Sufism. This was due to Syarif Hidayatullah, who, upon returning from the Middle East, found Pasai in crisis following Majapahit's attack. He then migrated to Jeumpa, which had already embraced Islam by that time. His arrival significantly intensified the spread of Islam in the region. The religious system propagated in Jeumpa reflected a middle path between theological orthodoxy and philosophical Sufism—a distinctive model mediating between the northern Aceh tradition, characterised by strong philosophical Sufism, and the more mainstream Islamic systems of the Middle East and Peureulak. This balanced approach was later brought by Syarif Hidayatullah to Demak and its surroundings, where it came into tension with the teachings of Syaikh Siti Jenar, which had previously taken root in Java (Anshori, 2015: 309).

At Zawiyah Blang Peuria, although some of its alumni developed purely philosophical or hybrid theological-philosophical views, the institution positioned philosophical Sufism as the core of its scholarly system. This system was safeguarded by the study of logic (*'ilm mantiq*), followed by religious sciences such as Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, and ethics. The next layer encompassed general sciences studied theoretically, while practical sciences like mechanics and engineering occupied the outermost circle. This structure indicates a shift from the dominance of philosophical Sufism during the Aziziyah Dynasty toward a greater emphasis on theological and practical

sciences, reflecting both societal needs and external educational influences, particularly from the Arab world.

The middle-path Islam brought by Syarif Hidayatullah to Demak gradually spread across Java. Beyond Syarif Hidayatullah, many other alumni of Zawiyah Blang Peuria were unable to pursue careers in Pasai due to its growing political instability, despite the continued operation of its educational institutions, which still produced prominent *'urafā* (sufi teacher) such as Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, Hasan Fansurī, and Saiful Rijal. In addition to Java and Malacca, a key destination for Zawiyah Blang Peuria alumni was Aceh Darussalam. Following the decline of Pasai, Aceh Darussalam emerged as a major centre of politics and trade. Within this sultanate, Fansur became a significant educational hub, where Hamzah Fansuri and many other scholars developed and propagated their teachings (Miswari, 2023c: 196–213). There are no satisfactory references confirming the formal existence of an Islamic educational institution in Fansur. However, education in Fansur placed philosophical Sufism at its core, while religious and general sciences were studied in an integrated and balanced manner. This approach reflected the needs of a cosmopolitan state like Aceh Darussalam during its golden age, where general sciences were essential to support the development of skilled and agile human resources. References to formal educational institutions in Aceh Darussalam only emerge with the establishment of Jami'ah Baiturrahman, located near the royal centre.

Jami'ah Baiturrahman was a higher religious education institution that systematically taught both religious and general sciences. Literary studies were a central focus, utilised to document the greatness of Aceh Darussalam and Sultan Iskandar Muda, significantly contributing to the sultanate's image and providing valuable historical sources for modern scholarship. In addition, Jami'ah Baiturrahman placed strong emphasis on natural sciences such as physics and biology, as well as medicine, mathematics, law, politics, agriculture, and military studies. As a major state, Aceh Darussalam required health experts to address epidemics and war-related injuries. Numerous

medical texts were produced during this period, demonstrating advanced knowledge of the medicinal properties of plants and animal anatomy, as well as the ability to formulate treatments.

In addition to medical science, military science was also well developed, as the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam deemed it necessary to conquer territories across Sumatra to liberate them from Portuguese colonial rule (Lombard, 2014: 123). Mastery of military science was indeed essential to deter Portuguese aggression in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. The military knowledge developed at Jami'ah Baiturrahman was supported by numerous military experts from the Ottoman Empire, which at the time was the world's leading military power. Turkish contributions made the Aceh Darussalam military the strongest in the archipelago during that period. Despite being one of the most formidable naval forces, the Portuguese were never able to outperform Aceh's fleet. Beyond the military sphere, cooperation between the Ottoman Empire and Aceh Darussalam extended to various other fields (Amiruddin, 2013: 70).

In Aceh Darussalam, agricultural science received significant attention to produce skilled human resources and enhance export commodities across expanding territories. This required diverse studies to match crop types with local climatic conditions. Agricultural, military, literary, and other general sciences developed integrally alongside religious disciplines such as Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, jurisprudence (fiqh), legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh), and Sufism. However, during the rise of Jami'ah Baiturrahman, ethical Sufism became more dominant, marking a decline in philosophical Sufism following the era of Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani. Consequently, the core (hardcore) of Jami'ah Baiturrahman's intellectual tradition was the theology of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. Surrounding this core were religious sciences such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and uṣūl al-fiqh. The next layer was occupied by literary studies, while the outermost circle comprised other general sciences (Nasution, 2017).

In the subsequent generation, scholarly development in the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam continued under the guidance of Shaykh Abdurrauf al-Singkilī, with Dayah Syiah Kuala emerging as the leading Islamic educational institution following Jami'ah Baiturrahman. Unlike Jami'ah Baiturrahman, which integrated general sciences, Dayah Syiah Kuala focused more intensively on religious disciplines, particularly Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). There are two possible reasons for the absence of general sciences at Dayah Syiah Kuala: *first*, Aceh Darussalam may have become less cosmopolitan, reducing the urgency for general education; *second*, Shaykh Abdurrauf al-Singkilī's expertise in fiqh likely influenced the curriculum's orientation. Nevertheless, general sciences, including technical knowledge, may still have been studied outside formal educational structures.

Religious tensions between jurists and followers of philosophical Sufism may also have contributed to the marginalisation of general sciences, with scholarly focus shifting toward the stabilisation of religious understanding. Shaykh Abdurrauf al-Singkilī made significant contributions to the revitalisation of Islam across the archipelago through his students, who returned to their regions to establish Islamic educational institutions, and through the dissemination of his writings. Through Dayah Syiah Kuala, his students, and literary works, the Malay language of Pasai—used as the medium of instruction and writing—spread widely, laying the foundation for what is now recognised as the Indonesian national language (Alfian, 2004: 11).

Among the most renowned students of Abdurrauf al-Singkilī were Daud Rumī, Jalaluddin Tursanī, Abdul Muhyī, and Burhanuddin Ulakan. Daud Rumī later established a dayah in Lamnyong, Banda Aceh; Jalaluddin Tursani succeeded Abdurrauf al-Singkilī as the mufti of the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam. Abdul Muhyī returned to West Java, where he founded an Islamic educational institution, while Burhanuddin Ulakan went back to West Sumatra and established an Islamic educational institution there (Azra, 2014). Under the influence of Abdurrauf al-Singkilī's teachings, which

emphasized fiqh, many of his students became scholars with deep expertise in Islamic jurisprudence. Following Dayah Syiah Kuala, Dayah Peunayong emerged as a prominent educational centre in Aceh Darussalam. Subsequently, Dayah Tanoh Abee in Seulimum, Aceh Besar, led by Shaykh Idrus Bayan from Baghdad, gained renown for its extensive collection of scientific works, attracting researchers and philologists to this day. Another significant institution was Dayah Kuta Karang, led by the mufti of the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam during Sultan Ibrahim Mansur Syah's reign. Other notable dayahs included Dayah Lam Dirah, Dayah Lam U, Dayah Rumpet, Dayah Kemangan, Dayah Cumbok, Dayah Pantee Geulima, and Dayah Tiro. Dayah Tiro also possessed a comprehensive library housing classical manuscripts hundreds of years old. Unlike earlier educational institutions, those established after Jami'ah Baiturrahman primarily focused on religious studies. General sciences were only reintroduced into Islamic education following modernisation during the Dutch colonial period (Iswardi, 2018: 109–121)

Integration of Education in the Modern Period

The modernisation of education in Indonesia began with the Dutch Colonial Government's policy reforms. Before the implementation of the Ethical Policy, colonial education was primarily designed to produce administrative personnel to serve their capitalist system. Political pressure in the Netherlands compelled the colonisers to revise their approach to governance in Indonesia, including the enactment of the Ethical Policy, which expanded access to education. As a result of this policy, the number of intellectuals in Indonesia significantly increased (Niel, 1984: 61). The expansion of intellectualism led Muslim traditionalists to view colonial educational institutions as producing individuals detached from religious values. While some traditionalists acknowledged positive aspects of Dutch-style education, they insisted that Islamic teachings must also be incorporated to achieve balance. Additionally, some Dutch-educated alumni recognized their shortcomings in religious knowledge, resulting in a

categorical alliance between certain traditionalists and educated individuals under the shared identity of modernist Muslims.

Modernist Muslims in Indonesia, including in Aceh, also emerged due to economic issues. For example, the Sarekat Islam, established in Java, arose as a response to the colonial government's excessive favouritism toward Chinese traders and the discrimination faced by Muslim merchants (Noer, 1996: 114). In Aceh, the modernisation of Islam was also linked to economic factors; however, its development was more focused on advancing education. Among the earliest modern Islamic educational institutions established in Aceh was Madrasah Khairiyah, founded by Tuanku Raja Keumala. The establishment of this institution stemmed from Tuanku Raja Keumala's aspiration to revive the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque as a centre for knowledge development in Aceh, reminiscent of its prominence during the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam's golden era. Muhammad Saman Siron, a scholar with profound knowledge, was appointed as the institution's leader. Madrasah Khairiyah initially received permission from the Colonial Government because its curriculum was limited to religious sciences such as the Qur'an, Hadith, fiqh, sirah, and other religious subjects. Over time, however, general sciences such as mathematics, geography, history, and other secular subjects were introduced (Miswari, 2024c: 48–71).

Religious and general sciences were integrated within the educational system of Madrasah Khairiyah. This integration of religious and secular knowledge was unique to the modern Islamic education system of that period. In contrast, traditional education systems, dating back to Dayah Syiah Kuala, show no evidence of general sciences being taught, focusing exclusively on religious studies. Besides Madrasah Khairiyah, several other madrasahs were established, including Madrasah Iskandar Muda founded by Teuku Panglima Polem Muhammad Daud in Lampakuk; Madrasah Sa'adah by Daud Beureueh in Pidie; Madrasah Al-Muslim by Abdurrahman Meunasah Meucap in Matangglumpangdua; Madrasah Sakinah by Abdul Hamid in Samalanga; Madrasah Ahlusunnah Waljamaah by Sayid Husin Syihab in Idi;

Perguruan Islam Seulimuem by Abdul Wahab; and Jadam by Shaykh Ibrahim in Montasik, among others. All these madrasahs integrated both religious and general sciences in their curricula (Sulaiman, 1997: 42–44).

The establishment of madrasahs often faced opposition from traditionalist groups due to the use of desks, perceived as imitating Dutch Christian school systems, and the inclusion of secular subjects such as mathematics and history, which were suspected of being based on Christian theology. To address this, Tuanku Raja Keumala, leader of Madrasah Khairiyah under colonial supervision, employed a strategy of re-labeling to circumvent prohibitions on teaching secular sciences. He renamed economics as '*ilm iqtisad*, biology as '*ilm hayat*, mathematics as '*ilm hisab*,' politics as '*ilm siyasah*, and history as '*ilm tarikh*. This tactic not only successfully introduced secular subjects into the madrasah curriculum but also alleviated traditionalists' concerns over the infiltration of *ileumē kaphe* (infidel sciences) (Miswari, 2024c).

The strategy employed by Tuanku Raja Keumala yielded significant advantages in achieving the desired educational objectives. Fundamental concepts of secular sciences taught under the guise of religious knowledge were reconstructed to align with an Islamic paradigm. For example, biology, originally based on evolutionary theory, was reinterpreted within an Islamic framework by adopting creationism as its foundation. Similarly, history, which traditionally emphasises empirical data, was reframed to focus on moral lessons (*ibrah*). This pedagogical strategy reflects the integration and interconnection between secular sciences and religious knowledge within a single curriculum. For instance, religious studies incorporating '*ilm tarikh* (history) oriented toward *ibrah* were integrated with empirical-rational methodologies from secular history. The empirical-rational method sharpens the scientific approach, while the faith-based *ibrah* orientation fosters an integrative learning model combining rationality and faith. This approach characterizes modernist scholars, who critique histories lacking rationality and reconstruct historical methodology to be more rational.

The educational model developed by Madrasah Khairiyah was adopted by many other modernists, such as Abdurrahman Meunasah Meucap at Al-Muslim, Daud Beureueh at Madrasah Sa'adah, Sayid Husin Syihab at Madrasah Ahlussunnah Waljamaah, among others. The core of the scholarly system in these madrasahs was the science of tauhid, which in practice took a technical form through the study of tauhid texts, tafsir, and hadith. The protective belt consisted of religious sciences such as fiqh, ethics-tasawuf, Arabic language, and other religious disciplines. The outermost circle comprised secular sciences, presented under the guise of Islamic sciences. Integration of knowledge occurred through the teaching of secular sciences framed as Islamic disciplines. This educational model continued into higher education at the Normal Islam Institute in Bireuen (Alkaf, 2020). This educational institution was established as an outcome of the commitment to knowledge development in Aceh by Muslim scholars affiliated with the Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh (PUSA), led by Daud Beureueh (Fatianda et al., n.d.: 190–201). The Normal Islam Institute itself was the precursor to Jamiah Ar-Raniry in Banda Aceh, which was initially administratively supervised by IAIN Sunan Kalijaga in Yogyakarta. The integration and interconnection of knowledge systems in Madrasah Khairiyah and other Acehese madrasahs during that period closely resembled the system implemented at MAN Insan Cendikia. The latter can be regarded as a special program by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, succeeding the MAPK program, which successfully produced Muslim scholars proficient in both Islamic sciences and secular knowledge, with strong leadership qualities (Aryati & Khoiri, 2022: 130–145).

After independence, madrasahs—being the most typical educational institutions demonstrating the integration and interconnection of religious and secular knowledge—were supervised under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In contrast, traditional educational institutions had not yet incorporated secular sciences into their curricula. In madrasahs, starting from the lowest level—diniyah—then ibtidaiyah, tsanawiyah, aliyah, up to

jamiah (higher education), secular sciences such as mathematics, physics, biology, geography, sociology, economics, and others were taught alongside religious sciences including Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, Aqidah, Akhlak, and more (Zainuddin, 2021: 27–49). However, the integration and interconnection between secular and religious sciences did not occur systematically. Each discipline was studied separately according to scheduled learning times. Only recently have religious themes begun to interconnect with secular topics, such as in fiqh lessons related to sociological issues and Qur'an-Hadith studies linked to physics theories. Nevertheless, the integration of secular material into religious subjects was not embedded from the curriculum design stage; the interconnection occurred only at the instructional content level. Only a few modern madrasahs, such as MAN Insan Cendikia, have formulated an integrated curriculum model. Generally, secular subjects taught in madrasahs remain unconnected to religious themes, and religious education itself lacks a systematic and in-depth approach as found in traditional institutions. Religious teaching materials tend to present only conclusive religious studies. This issue has been partially addressed by some modern pesantrens at the tsanawiyah and aliyah levels, which incorporate supplementary religious instruction within religious studies. For example, in fiqh classes, students not only use ministry-recommended textbooks but also study classical texts in aqidah and fiqh.

Modern pesantrens have the advantage of instilling habitual worship practices, as students remain under supervision twenty-four hours a day. In some modern pesantrens, religious textbooks are studied superficially, with the primary focus on classical texts in tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and others. Additionally, modern pesantrens offer supplementary religious subjects such as '*ilm nahwu* (Arabic grammar), '*ilm tasfir* (morphology), '*ilm imsa*', '*ilm imla*', '*ilm al-mahfudhat* (memorisation), '*ilm al-balaghah* (rhetoric), and more. Although modern pesantrens emphasise secular sciences—often outperforming general schools—religious sciences remain the priority. Within this knowledge integration network, tauhid, taught through Aqidah

Akhlaq and Qur'an-Hadith courses, serves as the core (hardcore) discipline. Other religious sciences, including fiqh and Islamic cultural history, along with pesantren-specific sciences like *'ilm nahwu*, *'ilm tasfir*, and *ilm al-balaghah*, form a protective belt. Secular sciences constitute the outermost layer (Miswari, 2024b: 41–66).

Contemporary Integrations of Knowledge

The system of knowledge integration and interconnection in Aceh has recently exhibited distinctive characteristics, marked by the accommodation of secular sciences within traditional educational institutions. This accommodation began in several traditional institutions toward the late twentieth century. Initially, traditional institutions that incorporated secular sciences by establishing formal educational bodies faced opposition from peers in other traditional institutions, who viewed this as contaminating the purity of religious sciences by allotting space to knowledge inherited from infidel colonisers. However, over time, an increasing number of traditional institutions have established formal educational institutions, with some founding middle and high schools (SMP and SMA) and others founding madrasahs at the tsanawiyah and aliyah levels. Moreover, some traditional institutions have even established higher education institutions (Nasution et al., 2019).

Many traditional educational institutions now establish formal schools such as SMP and SMK instead of madrasahs, due to their more concise curricula and shorter study durations. They often prefer SMKs because of their focus on mastering specific skills, which aligns better with the practical goals of formal education. Entrepreneurship programs are especially favoured, as they are seen to offer greater economic opportunities for graduates, reflecting traditional religious leaders' concern for economic dimensions. In the integration and interconnection of knowledge within traditional institutions that accommodate secular sciences, fiqh remains the core (hardcore) of study, a tradition dating back to the era of Sheikh Abdurrauf Al-Singkili. Although tauhid or aqidah constitutes the core of their

religious belief, fiqh serves as the main focus in educational and scholarly activities, even as these institutions adopt secular sciences as a strategy to preserve their tradition (Nasution et al., 2019). In the protective belt layer are religious sciences such as tauhid, akhlak, and several other fields. The next layer comprises additional religious disciplines, including tafsir, hadith, sirah, and others. The outermost layer is occupied by secular sciences as taught in general schools.

The traditional group, although accommodating secular sciences, continues to prioritise tradition in education, a principle that contrasts with that of the modernist group. While both emphasise religious sciences, modernists place greater focus on secular knowledge, driven in part by their desire to compete with secular groups, especially in professional fields such as economics and politics. Aware of their lagging position, modernists prioritise educational reform. Madrasahs, which lag behind schools in secular sciences and behind traditional groups in religious knowledge, strive to close the gap on both fronts. Programs like MAPK, which successfully produced graduates competitive in professional fields without neglecting religious sciences, have now been replaced. Consequently, initiatives such as MAN Insan Cendekia (IC) aim to become educational institutions that integrate science, technology, and Islamic religious knowledge, focusing on eliminating the dichotomy between them. The integration-interconnection program at MAN IC has been well implemented, supported by a strong philosophical foundation reflected in its curriculum and intensive teaching-learning processes. For example, in MAN IC Aceh, the integration of knowledge is evident in Qur'an-Hadith lessons analyzing verses about Allah's greatness and the Qur'an's nobility. By aligning the Qur'an with exact sciences such as mathematics, this integration demonstrates significant potential for further development (Anggreni, 2019). Scientific evidence is then presented through discoveries such as the finding of Pharaoh's corpse, celestial bodies' movements, and others. For example, in fiqh lessons on funeral rites, the command to expedite burial is linked to scientific findings that after twenty-

four hours, a corpse may release harmful viruses to humans. In practice, collaboration between religious and science teachers is common; for instance, after a religious teacher, such as one teaching Aqidah Akhlak, explains Islamic ethics like the prohibition of LGBT, a science teacher will discuss the medical risks associated with LGBT behaviour (Armawati, 2024).

Regarding the knowledge integration and interconnection scheme at MAN-IC, it follows a system identical to the “spider web” model formulated by Amin Abdullah. The Qur’an and Sunnah constitute the hardcore knowledge, systematised with methodological sciences. The next layer comprises religious sciences such as fiqh, tafsir, and tarikh. The subsequent layer includes secular sciences like history, mathematics, and physics. The outermost layer consists of practical sciences such as technology, political science, economics, and others.

Comparative Analysis Between Periods

The history of education in Aceh reveals a long trajectory marked by intellectual dynamism and social transformation. From the classical through the modern to the contemporary period, each era presents a distinctive approach to the integration of religious and secular knowledge, inseparable from the surrounding political, social, and cultural contexts. During the classical period, education developed within a strong spiritual cosmological framework. Institutions such as Zawiyah Cot Kala and Blang Peuria served as centres of knowledge that blended Islamic teachings with local wisdom traditions, particularly through philosophical Sufism. In this era, *‘ilm al-hudhūrī* was regarded as the primary source of truth, supported by reason and sacred texts. Education was holistic, encompassing not only religious sciences but also secular fields such as agriculture, medicine, and engineering. However, internal and external dynamics—especially the influence of literalist theology from the Middle East—shifted this orientation toward a more scriptural and legalistic approach.

Islamic education in Aceh has evolved through classical, modern, and contemporary periods, each reflecting changing approaches to integrating religious and secular knowledge within their social and cultural contexts. The classical period emphasised holistic education rooted in spiritual cosmology and intuitive knowledge, blending Islam with local wisdom. The modern era, spurred by colonial challenges and reformist efforts, saw the rise of madrasahs like Madrasah Khairiyah pioneering the adaptive integration of secular sciences with religious studies, despite resistance from traditionalists. In the contemporary period, this integration has become more systematic and conceptual, exemplified by institutions like MAN Insan Cendekia, which apply holistic, interdisciplinary curricula that harmonise science and faith. Even traditional institutions increasingly adopt such models while retaining fiqh as their scholarly core, thus bridging the gap between tradition and modernity.

Table 1: Comparison of Three Historical Periods of Knowledge Integration in Aceh

Aspect	Classical Period	Modern Period	Contemporary Period
Focus of Knowledge	Philosophical Sufism / Theology	Theology and General Sciences	Systematic Integration
Hardcore of Knowledge	Intuitive Knowledge / Theology	Theology	Qur'an and Sunnah
Educational Institutions	Zawiyah Cot Kala, Blang Peuria	Madrasah Khairiyah, Normal Islam Institute	MAN IC, Modern Pesantren
Integration Model	Cultural and Conceptual	Partial and Adaptive	Systematic and Thematic
General Sciences	Developed at higher levels	Selectively adapted	Methodologically integrated
Philosophy and Sufism	Dominant at the beginning, later marginalized	Marginalized	Revitalized in some institutions
Religion-Culture Relation	Symbiotic	Syncretic with caution	Analytical and Critical
Educational Goals	Spiritual insight and social ethos	Modernist awareness, colonial response	Professionalism and Rational Faith

These three periods demonstrate that Islamic education in Aceh is dynamic and continuously adaptive. While the classical era emphasised philosophical and transcendental education, the modern period became more

functional and responsive, and the contemporary era is moving toward an integrative and systematic model. Aceh's long intellectual history shows that the integration of religious and secular knowledge is not merely a theoretical ideal but a practical necessity to cultivate generations rooted in spiritual heritage yet resilient amid social change.

Conclusion

In the traditional period, the integration and interconnection of knowledge in Acehnese educational institutions were divided into two main approaches. The first centred on philosophical Sufism as the hardcore knowledge, as seen in the Aziziyah Dynasty of the Peureulak Sultanate, educational institutions in Salasari, Zawiyah Blang Peuria of Samudra Pasai, and institutions in Fansur. The second approach focused on theological studies as the hardcore, exemplified by the Meurah Dynasty of the Peureulak Sultanate, Jamiah Baiturrahman, and Dayah Syiah Kuala in Kutaraja. In the modern and contemporary periods, modern educational institutions have positioned the study of tauhid (Islamic monotheism) as their core discipline.

Islamic education in Aceh has historically shaped a dynamic epistemological system, negotiating between philosophical Sufism, bayani theology, and modern sciences. Its theoretical implication calls for an integrative curriculum development approach that is not merely syncretic but systematic, adopting Imre Lakatos's "hardcore-protective belt" model translated into educational structures. This challenges the longstanding dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge and opens opportunities for forming an Islamic educational paradigm that is simultaneously rational, transcendent, and contextual.

Practically, this study encourages Islamic educational institutions to design integrative curricula that systematically unite religious and secular knowledge, rather than teaching them in parallel. Teachers should be trained to connect religious content with science and social studies, such as integrating Qur'anic verses with biology or ethics with public health. Madrasahs and pesantrens are urged to move beyond avoiding secular

knowledge and instead critically and functionally Islamize it. Governments and educators can use the Aceh model as a reference for developing a contextual, relevant Islamic education system focused on character building and skill development.

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