

## ***The Role of Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat as a Pillar for Training Ulama Based on Turoats and Modern Academics***

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### ***Abstract***

*This study aims to analyse the role of Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat in producing Islamic scholars based on the integration of classical texts and modern academic methodologies. The background of this study is based on the challenges of globalisation and the development of Islamic higher education, which demands the emergence of scholars who not only master classical texts (turats) but also have academic, methodological, and contextual competencies. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, while data analysis used data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing models. The results of this study indicate that Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat plays a strategic role as a pillar in producing scholar cadres through a turats-based learning system combined with a modern academic approach, such as the use of research methodologies, scientific writing, and a structured evaluation system. This integration is realised in the curriculum, learning process, and academic and character development. With this model, graduates not only have a deep understanding of fiqh and classical Islamic scholarship, but are also able to respond to contemporary issues in an argumentative and systematic manner. This study confirms that the integration of turats and modern academics is a relevant educational model in strengthening the cadre of scholars in the modern era.*

**Keywords:** *Ma'had Aly, cadre Ulama', turats, modern academics, Integration.*

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat dalam mencetak ulama kader yang berbasis pada integrasi kitab turats dan metodologi akademik modern. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada tantangan globalisasi dan perkembangan pendidikan tinggi Islam yang menuntut lahirnya ulama yang tidak hanya menguasai khazanah klasik (turats), tetapi juga memiliki kompetensi akademik, metodologis, dan kontekstual. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi, sedangkan analisis data menggunakan model reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat berperan strategis sebagai pilar pencetak ulama kader melalui sistem pembelajaran berbasis kitab turats yang dikombinasikan dengan pendekatan akademik modern, seperti penggunaan metodologi penelitian, penulisan karya ilmiah, dan sistem evaluasi terstruktur. Integrasi tersebut diwujudkan dalam kurikulum, proses pembelajaran, serta pembinaan akademik dan karakter. Dengan model ini, lulusan tidak hanya memiliki kedalaman pemahaman fikih dan keilmuan Islam klasik, tetapi juga mampu merespons persoalan kontemporer secara argumentatif dan sistematis. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi turats dan akademik modern menjadi model pendidikan yang relevan dalam penguatan kaderisasi ulama di era modern.

**Kata kunci:** *Ma'had Aly, Kader Ulama', Turots, Akademik modern, Integrasi.*

## A. Introduction

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has a strategic need for scholars who not only have a deep understanding of religious knowledge, but also intellectual capacity and the ability to respond to contemporary socio-religious issues in a contextual manner. Historically, Islamic boarding schools have been the main institutions for the transmission of Islamic knowledge through the teaching of classical texts, scholarly traditions, and the character building of students. However, the dynamics of globalisation, the development of science, and the complexity of the problems faced by the Muslim community demand a more structured, systematic, and integrated system for the regeneration of religious scholars with a modern academic approach. In this context, the presence of Ma'had Aly is a form of institutionalised higher education based on Islamic boarding schools that combines the turats tradition and the formal higher education system.<sup>1</sup>

Conceptually, Ma'had Aly is designed as a pesantren-based religious higher education institution whose main mandate is to train scholars through in-depth mastery of classical Islamic texts (turats) with an orientation towards tafaqquh fiddin. This institutional transformation reinforces the classical functions of pesantren, as emphasised by Dhofier,<sup>2</sup> namely that pesantren serve as centres for the transmission of knowledge, the reproduction of scholars, and the moral development of the community. Unlike traditional pesantren, Ma'had Aly adopts a formal curriculum structure, educational levels, academic evaluation systems, and strengthened scientific methodologies, thereby gaining legitimacy as nationally standardised higher education.

The modernisation of Islamic education, as stated by Azra,<sup>3</sup> emphasises that the integration of tradition and academic systems is a historical necessity for Islamic educational institutions to remain relevant amid changing times. This integration includes the development of a curriculum based on learning outcomes, the strengthening of research methodologies, academic culture, and quality-based institutional governance. With this approach, graduates are expected to not only possess classical scientific authority, but also analytical and methodological competencies in responding to contemporary religious issues in an argumentative manner.

Regulatory strengthening of Ma'had Aly institutions is emphasised through Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs policies that set standards for pesantren higher education at the Marhalah Ula (M1), Marhalah Tsaniyah (M2), and Marhalah Tsalitsah (M3) levels. This

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Dhofier, *Tradisi pesantren: Studi tentang pandangan hidup kyai dan visinya mengenai masa depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan modernisasi menuju milenium baru* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2019).

regulation demonstrates the state's commitment to ensuring that the regeneration of Islamic scholars takes place in a systematic manner and is based on academic quality.<sup>4</sup> In this context, Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat has developed a vision of producing Islamic scholars who have the personality of santri, an entrepreneurial mindset, a global outlook, and good character through the integration of turats and modern academic systems.

A previous study indicates that Ma'had Aly contributes significantly to strengthening the transmission of classical Islamic scholarship while adapting to modern academic systems. Kamilah's study highlights Al-Qur'an and classical Islamic texts-based education management; Fauzi analyses strategies for training scholars through a strategic management approach; and Fawaid examines the implementation of the At-Turas Curriculum as an academic standard.<sup>7</sup> These studies reveal institutional transformation, curriculum strengthening, and the integration of traditional methods such as bandongan and sorogan with modern academic approaches.

However, research that specifically analyses the integration of traditional and modern academic knowledge as a model for the regeneration of Islamic scholars in the context of Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat is still limited. Most studies focus more on managerial aspects or traditional curricula in part, without comprehensively examining how epistemological and pedagogical integration between traditional Islamic knowledge and modern academic systems is constructed in everyday educational practices. This research gap underlies the urgency of this study.

This study presents a novelty in its integrative analysis of traditional and modern academic approaches as a strategy for training Islamic scholars in the context of Islamic boarding school higher education. This study not only describes the implementation of the curriculum or management system, but also examines the construction of institutional roles, learning models, evaluation systems, and methodological integration that shape the profile of adaptive and contextual ulama graduates. This approach is in line with the idea of integrating knowledge in Islamic education, which emphasises dialogue between classical traditions and modern methodologies.<sup>5</sup>

This study uses a qualitative approach with a single case study at Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat Lamongan.<sup>6</sup> Data collection techniques include interviews with key informants, namely: Ma'had Aly Mudir Manager, Deputy Mudir 1 and Deputy Mudir 2 Muhadir, DEMA Administrators, and Ma'had Aly students. A study of policy documents from the Ministry of

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Azra, *Pendidikan Islam*, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Creswell & Creswell, *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018).

Religious Affairs (KMA) from 2025 and the results of the submission of the Official Ma'had Aly Decree, as well as participatory observation of lecture activities, supported this research.

With that approach, based on the background and research gap, this article aims to: (1) describe the role of Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat as a pillar for producing Islamic scholars; (2) analyse the implementation of turats-based learning; (3) examine the application of modern academic systems; and (4) explain the integration of turats and modern academics in the process of producing Islamic scholars. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of Islamic higher education based on Islamic boarding schools, while in practical terms it can be a reference for the development of policies and education systems in strengthening the regeneration of Islamic scholars that is rooted in tradition and relevant to global dynamics.

## **B. Research Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth the role of Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat in integrating turats-based learning and modern academic systems for the regeneration of ulama. The case study method was chosen because it allows researchers to investigate contemporary phenomena in their real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident.<sup>7</sup> The primary data were collected through three techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants, including the Mudir Ma'had Aly, deputy mudirs, student council administrators, and active students; participatory observation of teaching-learning activities, bahtsul masail forums, and academic evaluation sessions; and documentation studies of institutional curricula, policy documents from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (KMA 2025), and student scientific writings. Secondary data were obtained from relevant academic literature on pesantren higher education and integration models of classical and modern Islamic scholarship.

Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification<sup>8</sup>. Data condensation included selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting all interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Data display was conducted in the form of descriptive matrices and narrative text to organize the findings systematically. Verification was carried out continuously throughout the research process to ensure the credibility of the conclusions. To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied triangulation of sources (comparing interview results from different informants), triangulation of techniques (cross-checking observational data with interview and documentary data), and member checking by having key informants review the

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<sup>7</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 15.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2019), 31–33.

interpreted findings. This systematic methodological framework ensures that the analysis of integration between turats and modern academics is both empirically grounded and rigorously validated.

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. The Role of Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat in Producing Islamic Scholars

The results of the study indicate that Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat carries out the function of producing Islamic scholars through a structured curriculum design that places fiqh, ushul fiqh, tafsir, hadith, and scientific tools as the core curriculum. This structure not only affirms the position of turats as an epistemological foundation, but also demonstrates the existence of a systematised learning system based on measurable outcomes. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the view that the transformation of Islamic boarding schools towards higher education does not eliminate their traditional character, but rather strengthens their academic legitimacy.<sup>9</sup> The curriculum at Ma'had Aly does not stop at mastery of texts, but is directed towards the ability to analyse istinbath law and understand ikhtilaf ulama, so that students are trained to become argumentative and methodological scholars.

From an institutional perspective, the vision of 'producing Islamic scholars with a santri personality, an entrepreneurial mindset, rahmatan lil 'alamin, and a global outlook' shows that cadre development is no longer understood narrowly as the reproduction of textual scholars, but rather as the formation of intellectual scholars who are responsive to social change. Conceptually, this is in line with the idea of modernising Islamic education, which emphasises the integration of tradition and modern academic systems so that Islamic educational institutions remain relevant in the midst of globalisation.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat positions cadre development as a process of intellectual and social transformation, not merely the transmission of classical knowledge.

The pesantren culture, which emphasises the cultivation of character, manners, and spirituality, is a distinguishing dimension compared to general higher education. Boarding school life shapes an intellectual habitus based on discipline, respect for teachers, and the internalisation of Sufi values. In the perspective of contemporary Islamic education studies, the formation of religious character is an integral element in producing the moral authority of scholars in society.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the success of regeneration is not

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<sup>9</sup> Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning and Pesantren in Indonesia: Continuity and Change in a Tradition of Religious Learning," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 171, no. 1 (2015)

<sup>10</sup> Hefner, "Islamic Schools, Social Movements, and Democracy in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 2 (2019): 273–300

<sup>11</sup> Rohman & Hairuddin, "Integrating Classical Islamic Scholarship and Modern Higher Education System in Indonesian Ma'had Aly," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 1 (2022): 1–20

only measured by academic competence but also by the ethical and spiritual legitimacy of graduates.

Extracurricular activities such as muhadharah, khatib training, bahtsul kutub, and the production of fiqh content on social media indicate that cadre development is carried out in an applied and contextual manner. This practice expands the space for student actualisation from the classroom to the digital public sphere. This transformation reflects the institutional adaptation of Islamic boarding schools to social changes and developments in information technology.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the role of Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat in producing Islamic scholars is comprehensive: epistemological, methodological, and sociological.

## 2. Implementation of Turats-Based Learning

The results of the observation show that turats-based learning is carried out systematically through the study of classical texts as the main reference in developing a framework for Islamic legal thinking. This finding reinforces the argument that turats functions as an epistemological reservoir that shapes systematic and methodological thinking patterns in the scholarly tradition of the ulama.<sup>13</sup> Turats is not positioned as merely a historical text, but as a dynamic source in the construction of scholarly authority.

The learning methods bandongan, sorogan, musyawarah, and bahtsul masail demonstrate the continuity of the classical pesantren tradition with a dialogical approach. The tradition of sanad transmission and careful reading of texts is maintained, but enriched with critical discussion. Studies on pesantren pedagogy show that these methods are effective in building depth of textual analysis while shaping argumentative reasoning.<sup>14</sup>

The bahtsul masail forum serves as a space for integrating texts and social realities. Mahasantri formulate current issues, explore references from the turats, and then compile them into systematic and contextual analyses. This model is in line with the contextual approach in contemporary Islamic studies, which emphasises dialogue between classical texts and modern realities.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the implementation of turats at Ma'had Aly shapes scholars who have both textual depth and contextual acuity.

Analytically, turats-based learning has an impact on the competence of students in reading classical texts independently, understanding madhhab differences, and compiling

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<sup>12</sup> Isbah, "Pesantren in the Changing Indonesian Context" (2020)

<sup>13</sup> Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning and Pesantren in Indonesia" (2015)

<sup>14</sup> Tan, "Educative Tradition and Islamic Schools in Indonesia" (2014)

<sup>15</sup> Hefner, "Islamic Schools, Social Movements, and Democracy in Indonesia" (2019)

legal arguments systematically. Scientific authority in Islamic tradition is largely determined by mastery of turats framed within a valid methodology.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Implementation of Modern Academic Systems

The results of the study indicate that the modern academic system is implemented through a learning outcome-based curriculum, a credit system, and structured evaluation. This demonstrates the adoption of quality-based higher education management principles in Islamic boarding schools.<sup>17</sup> This transformation confirms that Islamic boarding schools can adapt to national higher education standards without losing their traditional identity.

The student-centred learning approach is applied through discussions, presentations, and research-based assignments. This model is in line with global trends in Islamic education that encourage active student participation in the knowledge construction process.<sup>18</sup> This shift shows the evolution of pesantren pedagogy from a transmission model to a dialogical-critical model.

MATAKULIAH DASAR		
NO	MATA KULIAH	KITAB RUJUKAN
8	Bahasa Indonesia	Bahasa Indonesia Untuk Perguruan Tinggi, Siti Ansoriyah
9	Bahasa Inggris	Jago Kuasai Bahasa Inggris, Hara Atqya.

  

MATAKULIAH KONSENTRASI		
NO	MATA KULIAH	KITAB RUJUKAN
12	Pengantar Perekonomian Sunan Drajat	Korelasi Catur Pitutur Sunan Drajat dengan Visi Perekonomian Pondok Sunan Drajat, Murobbi Binnur
13	Fiqh Mumalah Kontemporer	al-Mu'amalah al-māliyah al-Mua'shirah, Wahbah Zuhailfi.
14	Pengantar Perekonomian Islam	al-Iqtishād al-Islāmī Madkhal wa Manhāj, Tsā 'Abduh.
15	Matematika Ekonomi	Matematika Ekonomi, Shofian Assauri
16	Akuntansi Syariah	Akuntansi Syariah Di Indonesia, Sri Nur Hayati
17	Manajemen Keuangan Syariah	Manajemen Keuangan Syariah, Hamdi Agustin
18	Manajemen Keuangan Internasional	Manajemen Keuangan Internasional, Mudrojat Kuncoro
19	Manajemen Perekonomian Sunan Drajat	Manajemen Perekonomian Sunan Drajat, Anas al-Hifni
20	Pasar Modal Syariah	Pasar Modal Syariah, Alexender Hery
21	Regulasi Undang-undang Perekonomian di Indonesia	Kompilasi Hukum Ekonomi Syariah, Pusat Pangkalan Hukum Islam dan Masyarakat Madani.
22	Enterprenership	al-Taṭbīq al-'Amāfi
23	Praktikum Perekonomian Sunan Drajat	Magang

From the explanation of the curriculum structure above, it can be concluded that the lecture material at Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat, which concentrates on Fiqih Al Iqtishodiyah, has implemented a modern academic system from its reference books and

<sup>16</sup> Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning and Pesantren in Indonesia" (2015)

<sup>17</sup> Rohman & Hairuddin, "Integrating Classical Islamic Scholarship" (2022)

<sup>18</sup> Tan, "Educative Tradition and Islamic Schools in Indonesia" (2014)

in its learning process, the modern academic system is implemented through the use of scientific discussion methods, paper presentations using PPT or Canva media in front of the class, structured assignments, and evaluations based on written and oral examinations. Students are required to periodically compile scientific papers that refer to research methodology rules because in research and community service, Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat already has a forum for publishing scientific articles, namely ALWAJIZ for research articles and ITSAR for community service articles. The results above indicate that this implementation cultivates critical, analytical, and systematic thinking skills in examining Islamic issues. In the discussion, this signifies a transformation in learning patterns from mere knowledge transmission to a process of knowledge construction that is dialogic and argumentative.

Research culture is strengthened through the requirement to write scientific papers and hold open munaqasyah. This practice reflects the integration of modern academic traditions into the Ma'had Aly education system, as discussed in studies on Islamic education reform in Indonesia.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the integration of turats and modern scientific methodologies strengthens the academic credibility of graduates. The digitisation of academic administration demonstrates the professionalisation of institutional governance. This adaptation is an important indicator in the transformation of Islamic education to be nationally and globally competitive.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4. Integration of Turats and Modern Academia in Ulama Cadre Development**

The findings indicate that the integration of turats and modern academia is central to the educational paradigm at Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat. Fiqh and Ushul Fiqh learning uses classical texts as a normative basis, while modern scientific methodology serves as an analytical tool. This integrative approach is in line with the discourse on the renewal of Islamic studies, which emphasises dialogue between tradition and modernity.

This study also found that in Fiqh learning, students are guided to understand the structure of Islamic law comprehensively, starting from arguments, qawaid fihiyyah, to comparative opinions (fiqh muqaran). Meanwhile, in Ushul Fiqh, emphasis is placed on understanding the principles of istinbath, the concepts of dalalah, qiyas, istihsan, and maqashid al-syari'ah. Integration occurs when ushul fiqh theory is used as a tool for analysis in solving actual fiqh problems through a modern academic approach. Mudir Ma'had Aly Dr. KH. Zainul Musthofa, M.HI added his plan to regenerate scholars with the latest Ma'had Aly scientific concentration, namely Fiqh al-Iqtishod (Economic Fiqh)

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<sup>19</sup> Isbah, "Pesantren in the Changing Indonesian Context" (2020)

<sup>20</sup> Hefner, "Islamic Schools, Social Movements, and Democracy in Indonesia" (2019).

at Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat. It will be implemented through strengthening the foundations of classical fiqh muamalah books that are studied in depth, then combined with a contemporary economic analysis approach. The turats books that discuss the chapters of al-buyu', al-riba, al-syirkah, al-ijarah, and al-qardh are used as the main references in understanding the basic principles of Islamic transactions and economic systems. However, learning does not stop at textual understanding, but continues with contextual analysis of modern economic practices such as Islamic banking, fintech, and digital financial systems. This shows that the turats serve as a normative basis, while modern academia becomes an instrument of contextualisation. Moreover, the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School Foundation already has a laboratory in economics under the auspices of Sunan Drajat Economics, namely BMT Sunan Drajat, TOSERBA Sunan Drajat, TORASERA, Samudra Salt Factory, and Hajj and Umrah Travel.

The bahtsul masail forum and thesis writing are concrete spaces for this integration. Students not only read classical texts, but also contextualise them in current issues. This model shows that turats serves as a normative foundation, while modern academia becomes a tool for systematic analysis.<sup>21</sup>

The development plan for the Fiqh al-Iqtishod concentration demonstrates an integrative orientation between classical fiqh muamalah and contemporary economic analysis. This approach reinforces the relevance of fiqh in responding to modern social dynamics.<sup>15</sup> Overall, the integration of turats and modern academia at Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat is an educational paradigm that unites traditional authority and modern methodological robustness. This model has the potential to become a reference for the development of Islamic religious higher education based on pesantren that is adaptive, contextual, and globally competitive.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat developed a model for training Islamic scholars through the systematic integration of traditional knowledge and modern academics into the pesantren higher education structure. This integration is evident in the curriculum, which places classical texts as the epistemological foundation, while also adopting a learning outcomes-based system, credit system, scientific research methodology, and professional academic management. This model shows that turats is not positioned as a static heritage, but rather as a normative-dynamic source that is contextualised through modern methodological approaches.

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<sup>21</sup> Rohman & Hairuddin, "Integrating Classical Islamic Scholarship" (2022).

The teaching of Fiqh and Ushul Fiqh at Ma'had Aly Sunan Drajat develops argumentative and contextual legal reasoning skills through the *bandongan*, *sorogan*, *musyawarah*, and *bahtsul masail* methods, combined with scientific discussion and academic writing. The modern academic system strengthens the analytical skills, research culture, and scientific legitimacy of graduates, so that the ulama cadres produced have scientific authority based on *turats sanad* as well as modern methodological competence. Thus, the integration of *turats* and modern academia becomes an educational paradigm that not only maintains the continuity of tradition but also ensures the relevance of ulama in responding to contemporary socio-religious challenges.

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