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The Scientific Authority in Islam from the Perspective of 'Abd al-Majīd as-Ṣaghīr: The Ideal and Reality of Knowledge Production

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Abstract

This research aims to reveal the tug-of-war that occurs in the production of knowledge by scientific authorities in Islam between ideals and reality. Numerous studies have been conducted on the religious authority in Islam that generates Islamic knowledge, whether in the form of fatwas, decisions, or opinions. However, existing research has yet to highlight how idealism and reality interact in this production process in the contemporary era. The interplay between idealism and reality in knowledge production has not been thoroughly investigated. This study employs a qualitative method with a content analysis approach. The findings reveal that the efforts of Islamic scholarly authorities to ideally produce Islamic knowledge, as conceptualized by 'Abd al-Majīd as-Ṣaghīr, encounter various real-world challenges. These challenges include the minority status of Muslims, threats to personal safety from violent actors, a lack of public trust due to scholars holding executive government positions, and the presence of an undereducated community (bromocorah) at the village level. These conditions compel Islamic scholarly authorities to postpone the implementation of the ideal model (an-namūdhaj al-mithālī) and adopt various adaptive strategies. This article suggests that while Islamic scholarly authorities continue striving to realize their ideal model, the realities they face necessitate adaptation and delay in its implementation. This narrative illuminates an aspect that has not been extensively discussed in previous studies.

Keywords:

Islamic Scientific Authority; Islamic Knowledge Production; Ideal Model; Fatwa.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bagaimana tarik-ulur yang terjadi pada produksi pengetahuan oleh otoritas ilmiah dalam Islam antara keidealan dan realitasnya. Studi mengenai otoritas agama Islam yang memproduksi pengetahuan keislaman, baik berupa fatwa, keputusan, maupun pendapat, telah banyak dilakukan. Namun, riset yang ada selama ini belum menyoroti bagaimana keidealan dan realitas produksi tersebut di era kekinian. Tarik-ulur antara keidealan dan realitas dalam proses produksi pengetahuan ini belum pernah diungkap secara mendalam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan content-analysis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa upaya produksi pengetahuan keislaman secara ideal oleh otoritas ilmiah dalam Islam, sebagaimana yang digagas 'Abd al-Majīd as-Ṣaghīr, menghadapi berbagai kendala dalam realitasnya. Beberapa di antaranya adalah kondisi muslim yang minoritas, ancaman keselamatan jiwa dari aktor kekerasan, kurangnya kepercayaan masyarakat akibat ulama menjabat sebagai pejabat publik di tingkat eksekutif, serta kendala masyarakat kurang terdidik (bromocorah) di tingkat desa. Situasi ini memaksa otoritas ilmiah Islam untuk menunda model ideal (an-namūdhaj al-mithālī) dan melakukan berbagai bentuk adaptasi. Artikel ini memberikan implikasi bahwa meskipun otoritas ilmiah Islam terus berupaya mewujudkan model idealnya, realitas yang dihadapi memaksa mereka untuk menyesuaikan diri dan menunda penerapannya. Narasi ini mengungkap aspek yang selama ini belum banyak dibahas dalam studi terkait.

Kata kunci:

Otoritas Ilmiah Islam; Produksi Pengetahuan Keislaman; Model Ideal; Fatwa

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Introduction

Studies on Islamic religious authority that produce Islamic knowledge in the form of fatwas, rulings, and opinions have been extensively conducted. However, existing research has yet to emphasize the idealism and reality of this knowledge production in the contemporary era. Today, Islamic authority has transformed into various forms and has spread across different regions of the world. As a result, the challenges faced by these authorities differ from those encountered in the past, as do their methods of adapting to these challenges. In this context, 'Abd al-Majīd as-Ṣaghīr highlights the production of knowledge (al-Intāj al-ma'rifī) carried out by scientific authorities in Islam[1]. He observes that throughout Muslim civilization, Islamic scientific authority has been perceived as having numerous shortcomings. This perception affects the idealism of knowledge production, which often encounters obstacles in real-world conditions. Consequently, these authorities are compelled to adopt various forms of adaptation, leading to the postponement of the ideal model (an-namūdhaj al-mithālī) that is aspired to.

On the other hand, research on the production of Islamic knowledge in the contemporary era has been widely conducted in different parts of the world. In Western Europe, Bano found that Muslim scholars collectively attempt to draw parallels between Islamic moral, legal, and philosophical concepts and Western academic traditions. This contrasts with the colonial period, during which Islamic knowledge production was separated from modern knowledge[2]. Van Bruinessen demonstrates that Islamic knowledge production is a process of negotiation among various actors with differing interests[3]. This aligns with the research of Amiraux, who found that Kechat, a French scholar, served as a bridge among diverse groups in his mosque, including immigrant Muslims, native non-Muslims, academics, and government officials[4]. This emphasizes that the production of Islamic knowledge in Western Europe involves significant adaptation and negotiation. In Egypt, Scott notes that Ahmed Tayyeb, the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, strongly opposed the Muslim Brotherhood's attempt to take over Al-Azhar's role and authority. Nevertheless, they remained consistent in producing knowledge, particularly in the form of fatwas on sukuk (Islamic bonds)[5]. In Pakistan, Akram found that the fatwas issued by Pakistani

[1] As-Ṣaghīr uses this term, whereas other scholars commonly use religious authority, Islamic authority, ulama authority, etc. See 'Abd al-Majīd As-Ṣaghīr, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Muntakhab, 1994).

[2] Masooda Bano, "Islamic Authority and Centres of Knowledge Production in Europe," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 11, no. 1 (2022): 20–35

[3] Martin van Bruinessen, "Producing Islamic Knoelwledge in Western Europe," in *In Producing Islamic Knowledge Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1–27

[4] Valérie Amiraux, "Religious Authority, Social Action and Political Participation; A Case Study of the Mosquée de La Rue de Tanger in Paris," in *In Producing Islamic Knowledge Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013), 27

[5] Rachel M. Scott, "The Ulama , Religious Authority ,and the State.," in *Recasting Islamic Law* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2021), 85–116

scholars contained contradictions[6]. Their efforts to avoid confrontation with the Taliban influenced knowledge production, resulting in biases. In Indonesia, Alkaf et al. discovered that scholars holding Islamic authority (Teungku, Tuan Guru, and Kiai), in addition to being religious elites, also played political roles.[7]

In addition to negotiating and adapting to society and rulers, they must also adjust to political party culture if they are part of it. As a result, the knowledge they produce may be used for political legitimacy or, at the very least, to maintain their authority. This phenomenon is common at both local and national levels. At the village level, Setiyani found that village kiai adapt to local culture to avoid societal rejection[8]. Their efforts to avoid confrontation help them maintain their authority. However, this bias can affect the idealism of the Islamic knowledge they produce.

Other research relevant to the production of Islamic knowledge by religious authorities has also been widely conducted. Arifin studied the independence of falak (Islamic astronomy) scholars,[9] highlighting that their independent nature can lead to various initiatives, including efforts to raise legal awareness in society, as found in Ahmatnijar's research[10]. Other studies by Utomo et al[11]. and Syafieh et al[12]. have examined efforts to maintain and strengthen scholarly positions. Additionally, research by Djakfar[13] and Zulkifli[14] has explored strategic roles beyond religion, including economics, society, and politics. However, their well-established traditional authority has faced challenges and disruptions with the emergence of new media, as noted by Turner[15]. Furthermore, the fragmentation of religious authority has been

[6] Muhammad Akram, "The Authority of Ulama and the Problem of Anti-State Militancy in Pakistan," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 42, no. 5 (2014).

[7] M. Alkaf, Muhammad Said, and Saiful Hakam, "The Authority of Ulama towards Politics: The Role of Teungku, Tuan Guru and Kiai in Nation Below the Wind," *Progresiva : Jurnal Pemikiran dan Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 02 (2022): 132–152

[8] Wiwik Setiyani, "The Exerted Authority of Kiai Kampung in the Social Construction of Local Islam," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 1 (2020): 51–76

[9] Jaenal Arifin, "Proses Penentuan Awal Ramadhan, Syawal, dan Dzulhijjah di Indonesia: Sinergi antara Independensi Ilmuwan dan Otoritas Penguasa," *Jurnal Penelitian* 13, no. 1 (2019): 37.

[10] Ahmatnijar, "Ulama Berbagi Otoritas: Fungsi dan Peran MUI Kota Padangsidimpuan dalam Meningkatkan Kesadaran dan Budaya Hukum Masyarakat," *Tazkir* 01, no. 2 (2015): 171–187.

[11] Sholeh Utomo, M. Fauzan, and Afif Anshori, " Pesantren's Kyai and the Fragmentation of Religious Authority in a Muslim Peripheral Territory ," *Proceedings of the 1st Raden Intan International Conference on Muslim Societies and Social Sciences (RIICMuSSS 2019)* 492, no. RIICMuSSS 2019 (2020): 56–59.

[12] Syafieh Syafieh, Muhaini Muhaini, and Suhaili Syufyan, "Authority and Ulama In Aceh: The Role of Dayah Ulama In Contemporary Aceh Religious Practices," *Jurnal Theologia* 33, no. 2 (2022): 151–178.

[13] Muhammad Djakfar, "Guarding Sharia Economy in Indonesia Optimization of Contemporary Ulama Authority and Local Wisdom," *El Harakah (Terakreditasi)* 19, no. 2 (2017): 209.

[14] Zulkifli, "The Ulama In Indonesia: Between Religious Authority and Symbolic Power," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 37, no. 1 (2013): 180–197.

[15] Bryan Turner, "Religious Authority and the New Media.," *Theory, Culture and Society* 24, no. 2 (2007).

reinforced by Abu Muslim's findings[16], while Al-Razi's research highlights distortions in the role of scholars.[17]

A review of previous studies on scientific authority in Islam reveals that existing research has overlooked the focus on the idealism and reality of Islamic knowledge production. This oversight obscures the ideal functions that Islamic scientific authority should fulfill, the ideal process that should be maintained in Islamic knowledge production, and the ideal model that should be conveyed and realized. In line with this, the present study is based on As-Ṣaghīr's perspective on scientific authority in Islam, particularly concerning the idealism of Islamic knowledge production. This idealism is crucial for further analysis regarding its real-world manifestations in different parts of the world. The key question that arises is: How do the idealism and reality of knowledge production by Islamic scientific authorities manifest in the contemporary era? This study aims to uncover the interplay between idealism and reality in the knowledge-production process of Islamic scientific authorities.

This study also reviews recent research on the production of Islamic knowledge by Islamic scientific authorities in Western Europe, Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia. The exploration of both idealism and reality contributes to the development of studies on Islamic scientific authority. Furthermore, examining these dimensions can spark greater interest among scholars of Islamic studies in investigating Islamic knowledge production more deeply. The discussions and dialectics surrounding this subject can lead to a broader understanding of the reality of Islamic knowledge production and its practical aspects, thereby enriching the various concepts of Islamic scientific authority explored by other researchers. The idealism and reality of Islamic knowledge production need further exploration to illustrate the efforts of Islamic scientific authorities in realizing the ideal model (an-namūdhaj al-mithālī) to enhance societal quality in ways that are more relevant to contemporary developments and the progress of civilization.

To substantiate its arguments, this study employs a qualitative research method using library research. The data sources include both primary and secondary sources. The primary data are derived from *Al-Fikr al-Uṣūlī wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulṭah al-'Ilmiyyah fī al-Islām: Qirā'ah fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm al-Uṣūl wa Maqāṣid asy-Syarī'ah by As-Ṣaghīr*, while the secondary data consist of research findings, documents, and books related to the subject under study. The data collection process follows three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To deepen the conclusion-drawing process, this study employs content analysis in data interpretation. Each methodological process and stage serves as a framework for substantiating the established arguments.

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[16] Abu Muslim, "Pergeseran Otoritas Ulama Magetan Akibat Fragmentasi Media Dakwah Baru Yang Ekonomis," Islam Spiritualis 5, no. 1 (2019): 1–23.

[17] M F Al-Razi, "Digitalization of Religious Content: The Disruption of Ulama Authority in Indonesia," *Proceeding International Conference on Religion …* (2024): 921–929

Results and Discussion

Biography and Historical Context of 'Abd al-Majīd as-Ṣaghīr

'Abd al-Majīd as-Ṣaghīr is a contemporary Islamic thinker from Morocco. He is a lecturer in Philosophy and the History of Islamic Thought at the Faculty of Letters, Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco, and also teaches Creed and the History of Ilm al-Kalam at Dar Al-Hadith Al-Hasaniyya in Rabat. Additionally, he serves as an expert at the Moroccan Royal Academy and as the vice president of the Forum of Thinkers and Researchers Al-Hikma, an institution led by Taha Abdel Rahman. As-Ṣaghīr completed his thesis in the field of Sufism, specifically Maghribi Sufism, at his first university, earning a Master's degree with a thesis titled "The Darqawi Sufi School in Northern Morocco and the Immersion of Maghribi Sufi Thought." From this thesis, he produced two works: the first book, *Min Tārīkh at-Tasawwuf al-Maghribī: Isykāliyyah Ishlāh al-Fikr as-Ṣūfī fī al-Qarnain as-Sāmin 'Asyar li al-Mīlād, Ahmad ibn 'Ajībah wa Muhammad al-Harraq* (1988) (From the History of Maghribi Sufism: The Problem of Reforming Sufi Thought in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Ahmad ibn 'Ajībah and Muhammad al-Harraq), and the second, *At-Tasawwuf ka Wahyin wa Mumārasah: Dirāsah fī al-Falsafah as-Ṣūfiyyah 'inda Ahmad ibn 'Ajībah* (1999) (Sufism as Revelation and Practice: A Study on the Sufi Philosophy of Ahmad ibn 'Ajībah).

In the field of theology, as-Ṣaghīr has been a lecturer for many years at the Faculty of Letters and Humanities. He has conducted significant research in this field, including Al-Madkhal al-Hāmm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām (An Important Introduction to Theology), which was published in the Encyclopedia of Arab Philosophy, alongside a collection of articles compiled in his well-known book *Al-Fiqh wa asy-Syar'iyyah al-Ikhtilāf fī al-Islām: Murāja'ah Naqdiyyah li al-Mafāhīm wa al-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Kalāmiyyah* (2011) (Jurisprudence and the Legitimacy of Disagreement in Islam: A Critical Review of Theological Concepts and Terminologies).

In the field of philosophy, as-Ṣaghīr has also shown great interest and has conducted extensive research, particularly on Ibn Rushd and his relationship with Ibn Ṭarūs and Ibn Taymiyyah, as well as his studies on Ibn Khaldūn. In many of his academic works, he focuses on the history of Islamic thought, especially in the Islamic West, examining the conditions and reasons for its development and reconsidering the objectives of Islamic sciences along with the methodologies, readings, concepts, and values that have accumulated around them.

He argues that critical revision has been considered necessary since the early emergence of Islamic sciences in the first century of the Hijri calendar. This revision, in his view, is both necessary and a religious obligation, as there are many areas of turāth (Islamic intellectual heritage) that require reinterpretation. However, this critical reading must be scientific and objective, meaning it must be guided by clear, comprehensive, and non-selective rational principles that take into account the structure of the texts being examined and place them within their specific contexts. He emphasizes that skepticism towards the epistemological value of historical knowledge

has shaped Islamic culture and enabled the evaluation of knowledge, recognition of its figures, understanding of their objectives, and analysis of their intellectual concerns, regardless of discussions on historical circumstances and socio-political conditions.

According to as-Ṣaghīr, many scholars engaged in Islamic studies fail to understand the philosophical, religious, social, and intellectual history of the West. He argues that many proponents of so-called "new readings" of Islam manipulate the fact that contemporary Islamic scholars have neglected Western knowledge and its developments. On the other hand, as-Ṣaghīr views al-khuṣūṣiyyah (specificity) as an authentic Islamic demand, asserting that since the Qur'anic foundation, Islamic civilization has been a civilization of values and concepts rather than a civilization of images and forms.

As-Ṣaghīr advocates for the legitimacy of differing opinions and disputes, emphasizing the importance of not denying others their rights to such differences. He is one of the most committed proponents of intellectual engagement with contemporary works and projects, preparing critical readings and publishing them, including his academic works on 'Ābid al-Jābirī and 'Abdullah al-'Arawī. He is regarded as one of the staunchest defenders of the integrity, independence, and intellectual authority of thinkers. One of his books that reflects this stance is *Al-Khiṭāb al-Iṣlāḥī al-'Arabī baina Manṭiqi as-Siyāsah wa Qiyamu al-Mufakkir* (2011) (The Arab Reformist Discourse between the Logic of Politics and the Values of Thinkers).

In the field of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and uṣūl al-fiqh (Islamic legal theory), as-Ṣaghīr wrote his doctoral dissertation titled *Al-Fikr al-Uṣūlī wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulṭah al-'Ilmiyyah fī al-Islām: Qirā'atu fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm al-Uṣūl wa Maqāṣid asy-Syarī'ah* (Uṣūlī Thought and the Problem of Scientific Authority in Islam: A Study on the Origins of Uṣūl al-Fiqh and Maqāṣid asy-Syarī'ah). This dissertation explores *as-Sulṭah al-'Ilmiyyah fī al-Islām* (Scientific Authority in Islam), which will be further analyzed in this article.[18]

Due to his extensive contributions to Islamic thought, an International Symposium was held in his honor, recognizing him as a leading intellectual figure in Morocco. This symposium took place on February 21-22, 2018, in Kenitra, organized by Ibn Tofail University in collaboration with the Rawafid Center for Studies and Research in Moroccan Civilization and Mediterranean Heritage. The organizers sought to acknowledge his intellectual contributions and dedication over three decades, during which he produced numerous works on issues related to intellectual and scientific heritage, significantly influencing researchers and guiding them toward new intellectual horizons.[19]

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[18] Alislahmag.com, "At-Tahri Al-Islah," *Alislahmag.Com*, last modified 2024, https://alislahmag.com/index.php?mayor=contenu&mayaction=article&article_id=3213&idlien=189#.

[19] Khalid At-Tauzani, "Nadwah Dauliyyah Fi Al-Qanitrah Tuhdi A'malaha Li Al-Mufakkir Al-Maghribi Abd Al-Majid As-Saghir," *Hiba Zoom* (Rabat, February 24, 2018), https://www.hibazoom.com/article-78113/.

As-Ṣaghīr's intellectual framework is notably comprehensive, given his extensive engagements in Islamic intellectual discourse across various disciplines, including Sufism, theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, and *uṣūl al-fiqh*. His scholarship introduces fresh perspectives in each field he has explored. One of his key contributions is his analysis of Scientific Authority in Islam, where he examines the contestation of authority between scholars (ulama') and rulers, highlighting the efforts of Islamic scholars to maintain their intellectual independence.

Scientific Authority in Islam

The most valued authorities in Islam are Allah, the Qur'an, and the Prophet Muhammad. The successors of the Prophet after his passing were the khulafā' ar-rāshidūn[20]. Like the Prophet, they held two forms of authority: political and scholarly[21], assisted by other ulama'. After the era of the khulafā' ar-rāshidūn, the caliphs were considered less competent in "scholarly" matters and were primarily seen as political authorities. Meanwhile, scholarly authority was subsequently held by the ulama'. Ideally, the caliphs and the ulama' should have ensured a stable political and social climate to guide society along the right path. However, in reality, tensions frequently arose between these two authorities, often leading to the control of the ulama' by the caliphs[22]. This concern motivated as-Ṣaghīr to address the issue in his work.

As-Ṣaghīr examines how rulers (i.e., political authorities) such as caliphs, sultans, emirs, and governors sought to take control over legal authority, which had traditionally been held by the ulama' (fuqahā'). He critiques the Islamic caliphate system, which granted rulers the right to fulfill the mission of being "the Prophet's successor in safeguarding religion and worldly politics." According to as-Ṣaghīr, this dual mission—protecting both religion and politics—was often carried out arbitrarily, with caliphs frequently making legal decisions while disregarding the ulama', who were the rightful holders of scholarly authority[23]. Rulers were tempted to dominate both scholarly and political realms, controlling procedural legal concepts, monopolizing their interpretation and application, and sidelining the ulama' who were responsible for explaining and interpreting Islamic knowledge.[24]

This ethical and intellectual concern is reflected in the establishment of the science of uṣūl al-fiqh by Islamic jurists. This discipline contributed to shaping the concept of

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[20] Khaled Abou el Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name. Islamic Law, Authority, and Women* (Oxford: Oneword, 2001).

[21] Fazlur Rahman stated that in the early phase of Islam, particularly during the first century of the Hijri calendar, there were only two recognized measures of scholarship among the ulama (in the sense of the companions or the *tabi'in* who possessed authority in Islamic knowledge), namely hadith and fiqh. *See*, Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 104, https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/I/bo3632939.html.

[22] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *"The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority", Dalam Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

[23] As-*Ṣaghīr*, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah*, 153–154.

[24] Zulkifli, "The Ulama In Indonesia: Between Religious Authority and Symbolic Power."

"scientific authority" in Islam. It is important to emphasize that, in reality, there is no singular, universally recognized religious authority binding all segments of the Muslim community. Islamic religious authority is pluralistic, as it is based on recognition and support. A religious leader in Islam is someone who has gained widespread acknowledgment and backing. Consequently, they must engage in a contestation of legitimacy regarding their ability to issue fatwās or legal rulings.

Religious authority is a qualification generally associated with religious professionals, but it should not be equated with or reduced to the personal leadership or status of religious scholars and other religious professionals[25]. Religious authority can also be linked to bodies of knowledge, institutions, legal and ethical matters, material issues, and significant events. Over time, the authority of the ulama' has extended beyond religious (spiritual) concerns to encompass contemporary issues relevant to the Muslim community[26]. In other words, the presence of the ulama' is highly meaningful due to their strategic and multifaceted role. Besides their primary duty as guardians of faith, they also function as advisors to the community on various aspects of life, including politics, social relations, family matters, health, and economics.

Furthermore, in connection with this role, the ulama' are responsible for providing guidance and solutions to social conflicts and issues arising within society. In many regions, they are regarded as consultants on both spiritual-religious and worldly matters. Consequently, in the eyes of the people, particularly in rural areas, the ulama' continues to wield significant influence over the Muslim community. [27]

Thus, scientific authority in Islam should be viewed as a sociological phenomenon rather than a theological construct, as religious authority is shaped by the dynamic interplay between religious belief systems and social realities[28]. These conflicts occur in the public sphere, where individuals can exchange ideas, share information, and advocate for their interests in an open and democratic manner[29]. Given the complexity of scientific authority in Islam, there is a need to develop a unique categorization distinct from Weberian classifications[30]. However, this article does not aim to explore that subject. Instead, we will further discuss the dialectical relationship between the ulama' and society, as well as their interactions with political authority, as

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[25] Sunier and Buskens have their own categorization, rejecting the limitation of religious authority solely to religious scholars, as this could eliminate important aspects found in Islamic knowledge, which is produced through a process of discursive tradition. *See*, Thijl Sunier and Léon Buskens, "Authoritative Landscapes: The Making of Islamic Authority among Muslims in Europe: An Introduction," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 33, no. 6 (2022): 1–19.

[26] M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1993), 375.

[27] Djakfar, "Guarding Sharia Economy in Indonesia Optimization of Contemporary Ulama Authority and Local Wisdom."

[28] Rumadi, "Islam Dan Otoritas Keagamaan," *Walisongo* 20, no. 1 (2012): 25–54.

[29] Jürgen *Habermas*, "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society," *Polity Press*, last modified 2015, http://rbdigital.oneclickdigital.com.

[30] Max Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," *Berkeley Publications in Sociaty and Institutions* 4, no. 1 (1958): 1–11.

mentioned earlier. This intricate dialectical relationship creates opportunities for a reduction in certain ideal functions that scientific authority in Islam should possess, leading to the potential for knowledge production to contain specific biases over time.

The Ideal Function of the Need for Scientific Authority in Islam

In his book, As-Ṣaghīr emphasizes several key aspects regarding the necessity of scientific authority. We refer to what As-Ṣaghīr envisions as the "ideal functions" that, according to him, should be applied to scientific authority in Islam. When this ideal is realized, it is possible that the production of Islamic knowledge will no longer be biased. Some of these ideal functions include the following:

First, scholars (ulama) should be able to apply uṣūliyah knowledge in their duty or obligation to explain the law (tabyīn) directly[31]. Additionally, they should also be capable of managing both legislation and politics[32]. It is widely agreed that the role of scholars is to clarify legal matters. However, there is debate regarding their involvement in legislative and political management.

At the very least, such involvement has the potential to bring them into contact with the state. Regarding this intersection between scholars and the state, in 1840, Tocqueville[33] condemned Islam for not only presenting religious doctrine but also prescribing certain social and political regulations. He disqualified Islam from playing any role in modern democratic societies. This harsh criticism stemmed from his opposition to Christian clergy cooperating with or entering the government. He stated, "I respect the clergy in the church, but I would always place them outside the government if I had any influence over affairs." In all of this, his goal remained clear: he sought to preserve, strengthen, and even revive the influence of religion in democratic societies.[34]

Historically, Islamic teachings have not only conveyed moral or legal guidelines but have also engaged in legal, social, and political management, as practiced by Prophet Muhammad. His teachings and practices have been documented in texts, and the effort to interpret these texts is essentially an effort to understand his teachings. It is therefore, reasonable that those who control the interpretation of these texts are scholars, as they are the scientific figures qualified to comprehend them.

Issues surrounding the control of textual interpretation have arisen in Egypt since 1971, reaching a peak in the 1980s when the Supreme Constitutional Court emerged as the institution responsible for adjudicating the constitutionality of laws related to Islamic Sharia principles. However, there was significant public tension in Egypt over

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[31] As-*Ṣaghīr*, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah*, 191.

[32] As-Ṣaghīr, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah*, 206–207.

[33] Charles Alexis Clérel de Tocqueville adalah seorang filsuf dalam bidang politik dan sejarah dari Prancis. Ia terutama terkenal dengan karyanya *Democracy in America* (terbit dalam dua jilid: 1835 dan 1840). *Lihat,* James T Schleifer, "Democracy in America : Some Essential Questions," *A Journal of Ideas, Institutions, and Culture* 3, no. Fall 2014 (2014), https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/677733.

[34] Schleifer, "Democracy in America : Some Essential Questions."

whether judges in the Supreme Constitutional Court were the most appropriate individuals to determine what constituted sharia and what did not, given that, unlike Al-Azhar scholars, they were not trained in Islamic jurisprudence. This tension escalated when the court decided to interpret the "principles of Islamic sharia" in a manner that minimized the number of Islamic texts binding on the judiciary. As a result, some people felt that Al-Azhar scholars should have a formal role in discussing sharia and should be involved in determining the constitutionality of laws related to sharia.[35]

The desire of some individuals for Al-Azhar to have a greater role in legislative management aligns with findings indicating that many Muslims in the Middle East and other parts of the Islamic world prefer religion to play a meaningful and deeper role in the legal system, institutions, and state policies. Williamson et al. contextualized this finding, showing that support for incorporating religion into the public sphere does not necessarily mean that Muslim religious leaders involved in politics will gain greater religious authority. On the contrary, these religious leaders are more likely to be seen as authoritative when they position themselves as apolitical judges commenting on technical religious matters rather than as politicians advancing a religious political agenda[36]. In this regard, Al-Azhar, under the 2014 constitution, was officially designated as the legitimate representative of Islam in providing opinions within Egypt's constitutional framework[37]. This provided the institution with the opportunity not only to directly explain legal matters but also to participate in constitutional legislative management, making it the closest entity to fulfilling this ideal function.

Second, a scholar should be able to contribute sharp insight to correct concepts and establish "the authority of terminology." Scholars should have the right to define the meanings of specific terms and concepts. This stems from the tendency of rulers to "employ" scholarly concepts for their own benefit. Perhaps the most dangerous concepts in scientific and uṣūliyyah discourse are those related to obedience (ṭā'ah) and consensus (ijmā'), which can be used as tools to restrict people's movements, control their speech, and limit their actions—similar to how jurisprudential schools of thought (madhhabs) have been utilized. Therefore, the studies conducted by some uṣūl al-fiqh scholars on the concepts of obedience and consensus aim to reject and eliminate any authoritarian attempts to exploit these concepts[38]. This function serves as an effort to free scholarly concepts and terminologies from distortion and misdirection. Such corrective efforts also aim to purify existing knowledge products from the various shackles of political interests.

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[35] Scott, "The Ulama , Religious Authority ,and the State."

[36] Scott Williamson, "Preaching Politics : How Politicization Undermines Religious Authority in the Middle East," *Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 2 (2023): 555–574

[37] Scott, "The Ulama , Religious Authority ,and the State."

[38] As-Ṣaghīr, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah*, 207.

Third, scholars must purify textual evidence (dalālah) from state authority. One way to achieve this is by maintaining distance from politicians. Early jurists sought to assert the status and influence of their knowledge after recognizing the negative impact of political exploitation on scholarly concepts and methodologies. They sought to control these concepts and prevent their misuse[39]. According to As-Ṣaghīr, the desire of jurists, in many cases, to maintain "distance" from rulers reflects the scholars' vigilance toward politicians. This aligns with findings from academic research, which indicate that scholars perceived as politically affiliated will weaken their reputation as unbiased religious experts, as their religious interpretations may be seen as politically motivated. As a result, Muslims become less likely to trust politically aligned scholars as authorities in guiding their religious beliefs and practices[40]. According to As-Ṣaghīr, such political motives need to be purified by scholars in the process of Islamic knowledge production.

Fourth, rejecting the "defeated sultan" (sulṭān)[41] and fahwā al-khiṭāb—where the unspoken meaning is stronger than the spoken. As-Ṣaghīr mentions some jurists who preferred to use implication, wordplay, and indirect criticism of political authority. Sometimes, legal scholars' critiques of ruling sultans were indirect criticisms of the suffering endured by scholars due to the caliph's tyranny—an effort to avoid direct confrontation with those in power. According to As-Ṣaghīr, this was due to the logical nature of uṣūliyyah and the various levels of jurists' relationships with reality, necessitating concealment rather than disclosure[42]. In practice, this political authority can also manifest as a political activist movement, such as the Taliban, which has networks of members, sympathizers, and armed militias. Scholars in Pakistan (and India) have sometimes indirectly criticized and played with words in addressing the Pakistani Taliban movement. These scholars condemned acts of violence without explicitly naming the Taliban as perpetrators. To appear "balanced," they also criticized government military actions against the Taliban[43]. Expressing a clear meaning in discourse (khiṭāb) in an explicit manner could have negative consequences for them, though obscuring the ideal model may also have its drawbacks.

Fifth, scholars must critique and evaluate political authority while avoiding becoming "sultan's jurists" (fuqahā' al-sulṭān), who are regarded as false scholars[44]. The category of faqīh al-sulṭān can extend beyond individual jurists to include certain

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[39] As-Ṣaghīr, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah*, 219.

[40] Williamson, "Preaching Politics : How Politicization Undermines Religious Authority in the Middle East."

[41] As-Saghir uses this wording to indicate that the Sultan is the defeated party in relation to the Caliph.

[42] As-Ṣaghīr, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah*, 232.

[43] Akram, "The Authority of Ulama and the Problem of Anti-State Militancy in Pakistan."

[44] As-*Ṣaghīr*, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah*, 245–246.

institutions. Al-Azhar came closest to this category when the 2012 Egyptian Constitution granted it a formal role, stating that Al-Azhar scholars must be consulted on matters related to sharia. The Muslim Brotherhood, as the ruling party, and then-President Mohamed Morsi, a prominent Brotherhood figure, expected Al-Azhar to endorse their sukuk policy[45]. However, Al-Azhar remained steadfast in its stance to critique and evaluate this policy, affirming its position as an independent scholarly authority rather than a jurist serving the sultan or president.

The above discussion illustrates the challenges of achieving these ideal functions for scientific authority in Islam. Additionally, historical and contemporary realities show that scholars have frequently engaged in adaptation and negotiation efforts to avoid direct confrontation with rulers or society. Consequently, their Islamic knowledge production has often prioritized practical realities over ideal models.

Reality: Adaptation and Postponing the Ideal Model

The history of confrontation between politicians and scholars, and through the experience of interaction with society, according to as-Ṣaghīr, eventually encouraged scholars to adapt to new situations, postpone the ideal model (*an-namūdhaj al-mithālī*), and prioritize reality (al-wāqi'ī) due to urgent needs arising from changing social and political conditions[46]. Jurists then attempted to "apply" uṣūlī principles and their effective means to customs and align them with the needs of political realities and emerging events without exaggeration as much as possible while affirming their scholarly authority—even when invoking ḍarūrah (necessity) in these situations. This included reducing prohibitions as much as possible and minimizing their harms.

It is important to note that throughout these various forms of application or "adaptation," Islamic scholars have strived to maintain, as much as possible, a cautious distance from political figures. Their allegiance to politicians, in general, has remained conditional, allowing them to critique and demand changes when opportunities arise and when there is a strong presumption of bringing about rājiḥah (superior benefit)[47]. This adaptation reflects the negotiating stance of jurists in their scholarly activities with various circles, not only with politicians but also with society. Such an approach tends to steer away from the true objectives (maqāṣid) and the ideal model. It is crucial to further analyze how this adaptation has unfolded in various parts of the world, including Western Europe, Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia.

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[45] Sukuk refers to bonds in Islam, whereas interest-bearing bonds do not comply with Islamic law. Sukuk adheres to Islamic principles because it is based on the concept of asset monetization, which involves unlocking cash from an asset. Bondholders have a tangible interest in the investment and, as a result, can earn returns in the form of rent, which is permitted under Islamic financial law. See, Scott, "The Ulama , Religious Authority ,and the State."

[46] As-Ṣaghīr, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah*, 251–253.

[47] As-Ṣaghīr, *Al-Fikr Al-Uṣūlī Wa Isykāliyyah as-Sulthah Al-'Ilmiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Qirā'atu Fī Nasy'ati 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl Wa Maqāshidi Asy-Syarī'Ah*, 280.

In Western Europe, the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR)[48] received a fatwa inquiry from a female convert to Islam, asking whether she should divorce her non-Muslim husband. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the President of ECFR, opined that the woman had the right to maintain her marriage, while Faisal Maulawi, the Vice President of ECFR, opposed Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi's opinion, arguing that such a stance had never been found among other jurists.

ECFR then issued a final declaration in the form of an official fatwa presenting two opposing views: first, the prohibition of continuing the marriage, and second, allowing the marriage to continue if the husband does not prevent the wife from practicing her religion and if the wife hopes that her husband will eventually convert to Islam. The reasoning behind this was to prevent women from rejecting Islam upon realizing that converting would require them to separate from their husbands and leave their families[49]. This fatwa demonstrates a postponement of the ideal model by concealing an ideal model between two conflicting views. They adapted by considering the reality that the wife would find divorce distressing.

Beyond its impact on her relationship with her husband, this issue also has psychological implications for her children. Additionally, they considered the broader implications for other European women who might be interested in converting to Islam. Forcing them to divorce could discourage their intention to embrace Islam. This postponement of the ideal model is quite logical, given the minority status of Muslims in Europe. ECFR itself emphasized that it applied the framework of minority jurisprudence (fiqh al-aqalliyyāt). Furthermore, it is unrealistic to expect ECFR to play a role in legal and political management, considering that the political and legal authorities there are not only non-Muslims but also do not yet recognize Muslims as significant actors. The situation differs when looking at another Islamic scholarly authority that has existed for thousands of years as an Islamic educational and knowledge institution in a Muslim-majority country—Al-Azhar in Egypt.

In Egypt, Al-Azhar faced a challenge when the Muslim Brotherhood took control of the government in 2011. This government sought to legitimize the sukuk (Islamic bond) project. In December 2012, Al-Azhar rejected the Sukuk project on the grounds that it was inconsistent with Shariah and posed a threat to national sovereignty, primarily because the program allowed foreigners to own Sukuk. Al-Azhar proposed that only Egyptian citizens be permitted to own them. In February 2013, the sukuk bill was revised to accommodate Al-Azhar's objections. Provisions were included to

[48] The European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) was established in London in March 1997 at the initiative of The Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE). *See,* Alexandre Caeiro, "Transnational Ulama, European Fatwas, and Islamic Authority: A Case Study of the European Council for Fatwa and Research," in *Producing Islamic Knowledge: Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013), 121–141

[49] Caeiro, "Transnational Ulama, European Fatwas, and Islamic Authority: A Case Study of the European Council for Fatwa and Research."

prohibit state-owned assets from being used as guarantees and to ensure that a Shariah committee would oversee implementation.

The provision also stipulated that foreigners would not have the right to own Sukuk. On April 11, 2013, Al-Azhar finally approved the law allowing the state to issue sukuk but stated that some articles passed by the Shura Council needed amendments. Al-Azhar argued that a timeframe for sukuk should be set and rejected the issuance of bonds for religious endowments lasting more than twenty-five years. Al-Azhar also objected to Article 20 of the sukuk law, which granted the president and finance minister the final say on whether sukuk conformed to Shariah[50]. Al-Azhar's stance on the Sukuk issue illustrates its commitment to upholding its role as an "Islamic scholarly authority."

In addition to its duty of clarifying legal rulings (tabyīn), Al-Azhar also has the capability to influence constitutional legislation, especially after the enactment of the 2012 Constitution, which granted Al-Azhar a more formal role by stating that Al-Azhar scholars must be consulted on matters related to Shariah. The 2014 Constitution further formalized Al-Azhar as the primary reference for Islamic affairs. Nevertheless, Al-Azhar maintained its distance from the Muslim Brotherhood politicians, refrained from using ambiguous rhetoric or indirect criticism, and outright refused to become a Faqīh Sulṭān (royal jurist) or Faqīh President. Al-Azhar affirmed its position as the producer of Islamic knowledge free from particular biases, remaining the strongest authority in Egypt. This is a situation that would be unlikely in a country with numerous diverse Islamic authorities engaged in violent conflict—such as Pakistan.

In Pakistan, Islamic authorities are highly diverse, including Deobandi, Ahl-i-Hadith, Barelwi, Shia, the Taliban, and Al-Qaeda. Religious violence frequently occurs, from shootings to suicide bombings, exacerbating tensions in the country and reinforcing the fact that no single Islamic authority dominates. In such conditions, scholars from various factions, in their fatwas, often issue indirect criticism without explicitly naming violent groups. They also employ "wordplay" to appear balanced and to avoid direct confrontation with violent actors. According to Akram, this is because they secretly support these violent groups[51]. However, in some cases, scholars who opposed terrorism or disagreed with violent actors were found murdered or targeted in bomb attacks. The motive of preserving one's own life may be a factor in delaying the ideal model in their fatwas.

In 2005, a prominent Barelwi scholar, Munib al-Rahman, issued a fatwa against terrorism and suicide attacks, particularly in Pakistan. His fatwa was endorsed by 58 leading scholars from various religious factions, including Deobandi, Ahl-i-Hadith, and Shia. The fatwa focused on the question of killing innocent civilians during terrorist attacks. The fatwa stated:

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[50] Scott, "The Ulama , Religious Authority ,and the State."

[51] Akram, "The Authority of Ulama and the Problem of Anti-State Militancy in Pakistan."

> Carrying out suicidal attacks, bomb blasts, and killing innocent Muslims by firing sprees in mosques or public meetings, and considering these acts jihad is unlawful (*haram*), and to do so with religious conviction and expectation of reward (in the hereafter) in infidelity (*kufr*). However, if someone kills a Muslim or non-Muslim citizen for being overwhelmed by anger or enmity or some other psychological reason, it would be a matter of grave sin [thought not infidelity].[52]

This fatwa emerged as Pakistan's military operations continued, with the scope of operations against militants increasing and their activities expanding into the country's urban centers. Upon closer examination, this fatwa consists of two categories: first, it is considered kufr (disbelief) when killing innocent people; second, it is considered a major sin if the killing occurs due to hostility. Does this refer to hostility towards the military? If so, this fatwa employs wordplay to create the impression of a balanced judgment—on the one hand, criticizing violent actors in the name of religion, while on the other, criticizing the government for provoking anger and hostility.

In June 2008, the Dar al-Ulum Deobandi Seminary issued a statement: "Islam rejects all forms of unjust violence, breach of peace, bloodshed, murder, and looting, and does not permit them in any way." According to Akram, this merely reflects Islamic ethical values. The criticism is also not directed explicitly at any particular group. A more recent fatwa came from the leader of Jami'at Ulama-e-Islam, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, a Deobandi scholar, who stated: "We cannot say that those who killed scholars, including Maulana Hassan Jan, and those who attacked me and other learned scholars are mujahideen." However, in the same meeting, he also urged the government to reconsider its cooperation policy with the United States in the Afghan war.[53]

This latest fatwa demonstrates the use of wordplay to create an impression of balanced judgment and to minimize confrontation with violent actors. If we analyze the three fatwas above, they all employ indirect criticism, avoiding explicit mention of violent groups (choosing concealment over disclosure). Furthermore, some fatwas appear to maintain a balance between their stance on violent actors and on the government or military, aiming to avoid further confrontation. The country's conditions also make it difficult for Islamic scholarly authorities from various factions to produce ideal Islamic knowledge without obstacles, let alone engage in legislative and political management. The state seems to disregard the role of Islamic scholarly authorities and neglects their fatwas. This situation would be different if Islamic scholarly authorities were in synergy with or even held positions as state or regional political officials, as seen in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, particularly in Aceh, in 2002, a government regulation concerning the Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama (MPU) was issued, providing a platform for Teungku (Islamic scholars) as holders of Islamic authority to issue fatwas and influence

[52] Akram, "The Authority of Ulama and the Problem of Anti-State Militancy in Pakistan."
[53] Akram, "The Authority of Ulama and the Problem of Anti-State Militancy in Pakistan."

government policies. Among the decisions made were the prohibition of Salafi study groups in 2014 and the rejection of Salafi preachers. In Java, in 2019, Ma'ruf Amin, a kiai holding the highest position in the Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama, was elected as Indonesia's Vice President, demonstrating the strong position of kiai in Indonesian politics. In Lombok, Tuan Guru Bajang Zainul Majdi, who also led the Islamic organization Nahdlatul Wathan, was elected as governor for two consecutive terms (2008–2013 and 2013–2018).[54]

Such phenomena are not unusual in Indonesia and indicate that Islamic scholars, in addition to being religious elites, also serve as political elites. Holding a political elite position may facilitate legislative and political management efforts, including protecting religious rituals and traditions and safeguarding Islamic faith (aqidah)[55]. However, this position also risks opposition from the public due to a lack of trust[56], requiring them to adapt and postpone the ideal model. Meanwhile, in legal explanations (tabyin) and other Islamic knowledge production, there is potential for political bias and vested interests.

There is also a risk that they may employ scientific and usuli concepts such as consensus (ijma') and obedience in ways that serve political interests. The greatest potential risk is that they may unknowingly become faqih sultan (court scholars), even if they officially hold executive government positions. However, when they reach the highest levels of leadership—such as president, governor, regent, or mayor—they are no longer just faqih sultan but both sultan and faqih at the same time. At this level, maintaining distance from political authority is no longer applicable because the roles of scholar and politician are merged into a single individual. As a result, efforts to purify religious arguments from state influence become extremely difficult (though we refrain from calling it impossible).

At the local (village) level in Indonesia, there are kiai kampung (village scholars) who interact directly with the community, ranging from educated individuals to *bromocorah* (drunkards, gamblers, or those with behaviors that contradict religious and societal norms)[57]. Additionally, some communities still strongly uphold traditions that are sometimes considered contrary to Islamic law. Kiai kampung strives to adapt more smoothly to its surroundings to gain community acceptance. This includes exercising caution in forming opinions and issuing fatwas by opting for concealment over disclosure, indirect criticism, and wordplay to avoid direct confrontation. Consequently, they are compelled to postpone the ideal model due to these realities.

[54] M. Alkaf, Muhammad Said, and Saiful Hakam, "The Authority of Ulama towards Politics: The Role of Teungku, Tuan Guru and Kiai in Nation Below the Wind."

[55] M. Alkaf, Muhammad Said, and Saiful Hakam, "The Authority of Ulama towards Politics: The Role of Teungku, Tuan Guru and Kiai in Nation Below the Wind."

[56] Williamson, "Preaching Politics : How Politicization Undermines Religious Authority in the Middle East."

[57] Setiyani, "The Exerted Authority of Kiai Kampung in the Social Construction of Local Islam."

Conclusion

The ideal production of Islamic knowledge by scientific authority in Islam, as envisioned by As-Ṣaghīr, has faced several obstacles in real-world conditions. These challenges include the status of Muslims as a minority, threats to personal safety from violent actors, and a lack of public trust stemming from scholars holding executive public offices—such as president, governor, or regent/mayor (not merely as faqīh sultan but as both sultan and faqīh simultaneously). Additionally, there is the challenge posed by an uneducated rural population, which can sometimes be associated with criminal behavior. These conditions have compelled scholars to postpone the ideal model (an-namūdhaj al-mithālī) and adapt by concealing rather than revealing their views, employing indirect criticism, and using wordplay to avoid direct confrontation. Nevertheless, Al-Azhar in Egypt comes closest to the ideal model described by As-Ṣaghīr. This is supported by its majority-Muslim environment, its status as the highest and sole Islamic scientific authority, its role as the primary reference for Islamic constitutional matters in the 2014 Constitution, and its consistent distancing from political actors during that period.

This article suggests that, despite their various forms and limitations, Islamic scientific authorities have consistently endeavored to realize the ideal model (an-namūdhaj al-mithālī). However, real-world conditions have necessitated adaptations and the postponement of this model. Existing research has yet to fully uncover this reality. That said, we acknowledge that this study has not thoroughly explored the specific forms of adaptation from the perspective of uṣūl al-fiqh. Therefore, this article advocates for further research that investigates the production of knowledge in the form of fatwas issued by contemporary Islamic scientific authorities, employing various uṣūl al-fiqh methodologies—such as principles, discourse, and concepts—to comprehensively capture the processes and forms of adaptation. By doing so, a more complete and nuanced portrayal of Islamic knowledge production can be achieved.

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