

THE TRANSFORMATION OF INDONESIAN ULAMA WRITING IN NEGOTIATIONS OF ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL AUTHORITY

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the doctrinal construction of the writing tradition in Islam, examine the historical dynamics of Indonesian scholars' writing traditions from the 19th to the 21st century, and identify structural and cultural factors influencing its development. This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources, including scholarly books, academic references, journal articles, and other relevant publications. Data analysis was conducted through content analysis, historical, and conceptual approaches to comprehensively understand the development of scholarly writing traditions. The results show that the Islamic writing tradition has a strong epistemological foundation through the concepts of *iqra'*, *al-qalam*, and the codification of knowledge (*tadwīn al-'ilm*), which encourage literacy culture and knowledge production. Historically, the writing tradition of Indonesian scholars developed significantly in the 19th century through transnational Islamic intellectual networks, experienced challenges during the colonial period due to changes in education systems and power structures, and transformed in the modern era through print and digital media. Supporting factors for this tradition include networks of scholars, Islamic boarding schools, educational institutions, and access to knowledge sources. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include colonial intervention, secularization of education, limited literacy culture, and changing patterns of information consumption in the digital era. This study confirms that the writing tradition of Indonesian scholars is dynamic and adaptive, requiring the strengthening of literacy ecosystems to sustain Islamic knowledge production in the future.

Keywords

Indonesian scholars, Islamic epistemology, Islamic literacy, knowledge transmission, Writing traditions.



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INTRODUCTION

The tradition of writing is one of the main foundations of the development of Islamic civilization because it is a means of transmitting, preserving, and advancing knowledge across generations. In the Islamic scientific tradition, the activity of reading (iqra') and writing (qalam) acquires strong theological legitimacy as enshrined in the first revelation of the Qur'an, so that literacy is not only understood as a technical skill, but also as part of the intellectual responsibility of Muslims in building and disseminating knowledge (Esposito, 2018; Saeed, 2016). This tradition develops through the role of scholars as producers as well as guardians of scientific authorities who document their ideas in the form of manuscripts, books, and scientific works that are references for various Islamic disciplines (Zaman, 2018). In Indonesia, the tradition of scholarly writing has developed since the 17th century through an intellectual network that connects the archipelago with Islamic scientific centers in the Middle East. Works in Arabic, Malay-Jawi, and regional languages show that manuscript culture is an important instrument in building scientific legitimacy while maintaining the continuity of Islamic intellectual traditions (Azyumardi, 2015; Farhrohman, 2024). However, the development of information technology has changed the pattern of production, distribution, and consumption of Islamic knowledge. The shift from manuscript culture to digital literacy has not only changed the medium of writing, but also raised new issues regarding how the intellectual authority of scholars is built, maintained, and negotiated in an increasingly open digital space.

Digital transformation has made the practice of Islamic literacy enter a wider and more dynamic knowledge ecosystem. The digitization of manuscripts, the development of electronic journals, digital repositories, social media, and various internet-based da'wah platforms have expanded people's access to Islamic sources. Based on data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the number of internet users in Indonesia has exceeded 200 million people, so that the digital space is the main arena in the formation of people's religious knowledge and opinions. These changes open up opportunities for scholars to disseminate Islamic works more widely, but at the same time present challenges to the mechanism for the formation of scientific authority that previously relied on scientific sanad, Islamic educational institutions, and the recognition of the academic community. In the digital ecosystem, the legitimacy of science is also influenced by the ability to utilize digital communication media, so that there is a negotiation process between traditional authorities and new forms of authority. Therefore, research on the

transformation of the writing tradition of Indonesian scholars is important because it is able to explain changes in the mechanism of production of Islamic knowledge as well as the dynamics of the formation of intellectual authority in the digital era.

Studies of the writing tradition of Indonesian scholars have been carried out from various perspectives. Azyumardi (2015) shows that the intellectual tradition of Islam in the archipelago developed through a network of transnational scholars who produced a range of written works to transmit knowledge. Fathurahman (2021) explained that the archipelago's Islamic manuscripts are an intellectual heritage that has high historical value and needs to be preserved through digitization., (Feener (2019) shows that the development of digital technology has created a new space for the spread of Islamic discourse, so that the internet has become an important medium in the production and distribution of religious knowledge. Akbar & Abidin (2022)) explains that the modernization of education has changed Islamic written culture from a manuscript tradition to a more systematic modern academic publication. Meanwhile, emphasized that digital media has changed the relationship among producers, distributors, and users of religious knowledge, making the formation of religious authority increasingly dynamic. These various studies show that the writing tradition of Indonesian scholars continues to develop following changes in the media and the social context that surrounds it.

However, previous studies still have limitations. Azra's study focuses more on the intellectual networks of scholars, Fathurahman focuses on the conservation of manuscripts, Feener examines the phenomenon of digital Islam in general, Barton highlights the transformation of literacy in modern Islamic education, while Eickelman and Anderson emphasize the change in religious authority due to the development of digital media. Until now, there has not been much research that integrates these three dimensions comprehensively, namely manuscript culture as the basis for the formation of scientific authority, transformation towards digital literacy as a change in the medium of knowledge production, and the negotiation process of intellectual authority of Indonesian scholars in the context of information technology development. Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze the transformation of the writing tradition of Indonesian scholars from manuscript culture to digital literacy and explain how these changes affect the negotiation process of Islamic intellectual authority in contemporary society. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic literacy studies, Indonesian Islamic intellectual history, and the dynamics of scientific authority in the digital era.

METHOD

This type of research is qualitative research with a library research approach. This research aims to explain the phenomenon of "Negotiating Islamic Intellectual Authority: The Transformation of the Writing Tradition of Indonesian Scholars from Manuscript Culture to Digital Literacy" through an in-depth study of various literature sources related to the dynamics of the writing tradition of Indonesian scholars. Literature study is a research method that involves collecting, reading, studying, and analyzing relevant written sources to build a conceptual and historical understanding of a phenomenon (Zed, 2018). This study does not use the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach because the research does not aim to conduct a systematic literature selection based on a specific protocol, but rather to critically interpret literature sources to understand the construction of knowledge and socio-intellectual changes (Snyder, 2019). The research data are in the form of academic documents consisting of primary sources, such as manuscripts, classical books, tafsir works, and writings of Nusantara scholars, as well as secondary sources in the form of journal articles, academic books, research results, and philological works that discuss the intellectual tradition of Indonesian Islam. The literature used comes from Indonesian, English, and Arabic publications for the 2015–2023 period, while still utilizing classic works that have historical relevance.

Data collection was carried out by identifying literature in various academic databases, which was then selected for credibility, relevance, and theoretical contribution before being grouped according to the research theme. Data analysis uses content analysis techniques to identify themes, patterns, and meanings in the literature, then interpreted through historical and conceptual approaches to explain changes in the knowledge media and their implications for Islamic intellectual authority. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources by comparing various literature from different disciplines to produce a more comprehensive and credible interpretation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The transformation of the writing tradition of Indonesian scholars from manuscript culture to digital literacy reflects a fundamental change in the production, preservation, and dissemination of Islamic knowledge. These changes involve not only a shift from physical to digital media but also

a transformation of scientific authority, communication patterns, and access to religious knowledge.

Table 1 contains a summary of the analysis found by the researcher as follows

Table 1. The Transformation of Indonesian Ulama's Writing Tradition:

No	Dimensions of Change	From Manuscript Culture to Digital Literacy		Shift Characteristics
		The Era of Manuscript Culture	The Era of Digital Literacy	
1	Vehicles and writing media	Paper, palm leaves, daluang, tree bark; ink and kalam as the main writing tools	Digital screens, electronic documents, online databases (PDF, e-books, apps)	From a fragile physical medium to a virtual medium that can be duplicated infinitely.
2	Script and written language	Pegon Arabic, Malay/Jawi Arabic, classical Arabic with certain script rules	Unicode standardized Latin letters, digital Arabic fonts, automatic transliteration	Script standardization for cross-platform and search engine readability needs
3	The process of producing works	Handwriting (original manuscript/autograph) and copying (text) by students or scribes	Direct typing, word processing, and online editing collaboration	Production becomes faster but loses the physical trace of the author's creative process.
4	The system of authority and legitimacy of science	Scientific knowledge, oral/written diplomas, and teacher-student pedigree as guarantors of the validity of the text	Verification through institutional affiliation, digital certification, and online publication track record	Authority shifts from personal-genealogical chains to institutional-digital legitimacy
5	Reproduction and distribution of manuscripts	Repeated manual copying (manuscript copying), limited distribution through Islamic boarding school networks	Instant duplication, distribution via the internet, social media, and e-learning platforms	Distribution becomes massive, fast, cross-regional, and difficult to control centrally.
6	Preservation and preservation	Physical conservation of manuscripts, philology, and codicology as methods of text preservation	Digitization, online cataloging, and database creation of digital manuscripts	Preservation is shifting from the care of physical objects to the archiving of digital data.
7	Dissemination space and audience	Majelis taklim, halaqah, and the Islamic boarding school environment as the main learning spaces	Social media, YouTube, podcasts, and religious apps as new spaces for spreading knowledge	The audience expands from the santri community to a heterogeneous digital public.
8	Genre and form of work	The yellow book, sharia, hasyiah, and manuscripts with a standard classical scientific structure	E-books, online articles, social media threads, infographics, and religious audiovisual	The birth of a hybrid genre that combines classical scientific principles with

content	popular formats.	digital
<i>Source: Authors' analysis based on literature review (2026)</i>		

Explanatory Narrative

The tradition of writing among Indonesian ulama is a key pillar in the transmission of Islamic knowledge in the archipelago. Since the early days of Islam's spread, ulama have served not only as oral teachers but also as writers, producing thousands of manuscripts in Arabic, Pegon, and Malay scripts. These works, as confirmed by studies of Indonesian philology and codicology, represent traces of the intellectual, spiritual, and social life of Muslim communities at the time. The transformation of this tradition into today's digital literacy did not occur suddenly, but rather through a series of gradual shifts that can be mapped into several dimensions, as presented in the table above.

In the dimension of written media and vehicles, the most fundamental shift has occurred from the use of paper, daluang, and traditional physical media to electronic documents stored in digital databases. This change has significant consequences for the durability and accessibility of works. While physical manuscripts are vulnerable to damage due to age, tropical climates, and limited storage space, digital documents face different challenges: the sustainability of file formats and the reliability of long-term storage infrastructure. In this regard, efforts to digitize ancient manuscripts by various institutions, from libraries and museums to the Islamic boarding school commissions of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), demonstrate a collective awareness that preserving the intellectual heritage of ulama requires a dual strategy: physical conservation and digital media transfer.

The dimensions of script and written language have also undergone significant transformations. The Pegon script and Malay Arabic, once the primary medium for writing yellow books, now coexist alongside the standardized Latin script, Unicode, in the digital ecosystem. Codicological studies of Indonesian Islamic boarding school manuscripts show that these local scripts are not merely writing tools but also markers of scholarly identity and distinctive local wisdom. While the process of converting scripts to digital format has increased readability, it has also raised concerns about the erosion of classical script-reading skills among the younger generation of students. Consequently, a number of Islamic boarding schools are now integrating Pegon script reading training as part of their manuscript digitization curriculum.

The authority and legitimacy of scholarship is a crucial aspect of this transformation. In the manuscript tradition, the validity of a religious text relies heavily on the sanad (traditional chain of transmission), the teacher-student chain of transmission that ensures the continuity and authenticity of the teachings. Ijazah (certificate), whether oral or written, serves as a validating instrument that ties the author to the preceding scholarly tradition. In the digital era, this mechanism of authority has shifted, as the legitimacy of a work no longer rests solely on personal lineage but also on institutional affiliation, academic track record, and visibility within digital networks. This shift presents its own epistemological challenges, as evidenced by various studies on the intellectual traditions of Islamic boarding school scholars, which compare the scholarly patterns of early Islamic boarding schools with those of modern Islamic boarding schools that are more open to technology.

In the dimensions of the production process, reproduction, and distribution of works, the digital transformation brings extraordinary acceleration. While manual copying of manuscripts requires time, precision, and specialized expertise from scribes and senior students, the process of text production in the digital era can be done instantly through word processing software and disseminated within seconds via the internet. This convenience, on the one hand, expands the reach of Islamic preaching and scholarly knowledge, but on the other hand, raises new issues related to the validity and accuracy of content, given that not all religious materials circulated online undergo adequate editing and scholarly verification processes that apply in the classical manuscript tradition.

In the realm of preservation and conservation, the philological and codicological approaches that have been the primary methods for saving manuscripts are now being enriched with data-driven digitization and cataloging techniques. Programs for digitalizing ancient manuscripts, establishing online manuscript databases, and Islamic boarding school-based digital library initiatives are concrete manifestations of the convergence between traditional philological methods and contemporary information technology. These steps are considered strategic for preserving the intellectual treasures of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, which have been scattered across various Islamic boarding schools, mosques, and the private collections of Islamic scholars, while also expanding research access for the current generation of researchers.

Finally, the transformation in the dimensions of dissemination space and genre of works demonstrates how the writing tradition of Islamic scholars is adapting to the new media ecosystem. While Islamic study groups (Majelis Taklim) and Islamic boarding school halaqah (Islamic boarding school) were once the primary venues for disseminating knowledge through the reading and study

of yellow books, now social media, video channels, and religious apps have become equally important dissemination spaces. This has given rise to new genres, such as audiovisual da'wah content, online Islamic articles, and book summaries in infographic format, which combine classical scholarly principles with the demands of concise and visual digital readability. This phenomenon illustrates that the writing tradition of Indonesian Islamic scholars has not completely abandoned its classical scholarly roots, but rather is reconfiguring its form to address the literacy challenges of contemporary society, without losing the essence of authority and the depth of scholarship that characterize it.

Overall, the transformation of the Indonesian ulama writing tradition from manuscript culture to digital literacy can be understood as a dialectical process of adaptation, not a total replacement. Classical scholarly values, such as the importance of sanad (chain of transmission), meticulous copying, and in-depth analysis in the yellow books, remain normative references. At the same time, the formats and media of delivery continue to evolve with technological developments. The success of this transformation going forward depends heavily on the ability of Islamic institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), to integrate digital literacy without sacrificing the depth of scholarly traditions that have been built up over centuries.

Discussion

Doctrinal Construction of the Writing Tradition in Islam as the Epistemological Basis of Ulama Literacy

The writing tradition in Islam is rooted in a doctrinal framework that positions literacy as the foundation of knowledge production. Writing is understood not merely as a technical activity but as an epistemological practice integrated with religious teachings. This perspective shapes the intellectual orientation of Muslims, who regard texts as the primary medium for preserving, developing, and transmitting knowledge (Hallaq, 2018).

Theologically, the first revelation, *iqra'*, marks the beginning of Islamic literacy. Beyond reading, it represents a cognitive process of interpretation, reflection, and meaning-making, providing the epistemological basis for the development of a text-centered intellectual tradition (Saeed, 2016). These findings indicate that Islamic literacy extends beyond reading and writing skills. It constitutes an intellectual practice that integrates the understanding of revelation and reality, making writing a manifestation of religiously grounded epistemological values (Berkey, 2017). Likewise, the symbolism of the qalam in the Quran highlights writing as a means of preserving and

transmitting knowledge. Through documentation, knowledge is systematically reproduced and safeguarded across generations (Cook, 2020).

Historically, this principle is reflected in the rich tradition of scholarly writing across Islamic disciplines. Ulama functioned not only as educators but also as authors whose works became authoritative references, strengthening their epistemic authority within the Islamic intellectual tradition (Zaman, 2018). This doctrinal foundation was institutionalized through *tadwīn al-'ilm*, the codification of knowledge into systematic texts. Such codification established scientific disciplines with clear methodological foundations, enabling the continuity and verification of knowledge (Hallaq, 2018).

In Indonesia, *tadwīn al-'ilm* is reflected in the manuscript tradition of *pesantren*, where religious knowledge was systematically documented while incorporating local intellectual and cultural contexts (Mushodiq et al., 2026). These findings suggest that the Islamic writing tradition is closely linked to the relationship between revelation, texts, and scholarly authority. Revelation provides the source of knowledge, texts function as its medium, and scholars bridge normative teachings with social realities through writing (Feener, 2019).

Writing also embodies an ethical dimension in Islam, as it is regarded as a form of enduring charity that benefits society. This belief motivates scholars to produce written works as part of their intellectual and social responsibility (Esposito, 2018). Therefore, writing represents both an epistemic and moral practice, integrating intellectual inquiry with ethical values in the production and dissemination of knowledge (Hooker, 2018). Conceptually, the Islamic writing tradition forms an integrated system that combines revelation, reason, and social interaction in knowledge production. Knowledge develops collectively through scholarly networks that facilitate the exchange and reproduction of ideas (Kuswandi et al., 2024).

Overall, the doctrinal foundation of the Islamic writing tradition establishes a strong epistemological basis for Muslim literacy. The integration of *iqra'*, the symbolism of the *qalam*, and the tradition of *tadwīn al-'ilm* confirms that writing remains a central pillar of the Islamic knowledge system across historical and social contexts (Khadijah et al., 2021)

Historical Dynamics of the Writing Tradition of Indonesian Ulama (19th–21st Centuries)

The historical development of the Indonesian ulama writing tradition has not progressed linearly but has unfolded in phases of growth, disruption, and transformation shaped by social, political, and technological contexts. From a historiographical perspective, these changes reflect the

interaction between knowledge production and social structures, where writing functions as a collective scholarly practice within intellectual networks (Feener, 2019).

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the writing tradition experienced a productive period supported by transnational scholarly networks connecting Indonesian ulama with the Haramain. These networks encouraged intellectual exchange and produced numerous works that contributed to the wider Islamic intellectual heritage (Saini, 2024). Evidence shows that Indonesian ulama produced works in fiqh, tafsir, and Sufism using Arabic and Malay-Jawi. These languages served not only as scholarly standards but also as bridges linking local and global Islamic intellectual traditions (Fathurahman, 2017). This productive phase was largely sustained by transnational scholarly networks that strengthened intellectual authority while facilitating the circulation and continuity of Islamic knowledge (Zaman, 2018).

During the colonial period, however, this tradition experienced disruption due to educational reforms and colonial political policies. The introduction of secular education shifted scholarly orientation from religious traditions toward a modern epistemological framework (Ricklefs, 2018). As a result, the production of scholarly works declined, while colonial intervention limited access to intellectual networks and scholarly resources, weakening the continuity of the writing tradition (Bruinessen, 2017). This disruption illustrates how changes in political power directly influenced knowledge production by reducing the ulama's central role within the evolving educational and social system (Sirozi, 2017).

In the twentieth century, the writing tradition entered a phase of modernization marked by the emergence of modern Muslim intellectuals who adopted more systematic and contextual approaches through modern educational institutions (Ariyadi et al., 2025). Writing media also shifted from manuscripts to printed books and academic journals, allowing wider dissemination of knowledge and closer integration with the modern academic system (Feener, 2019). At the same time, writing styles evolved from normative to more analytical and contextual forms, while the use of Indonesian expanded public access to Islamic scholarship (Hefner, 2019). In the twenty-first century, the writing tradition entered the digital era, where knowledge is produced and disseminated through digital articles, blogs, and social media, significantly expanding its audience (Muhtar & Manan, 2025).

Digitalization has transformed not only writing media but also scholarly authority and patterns of knowledge consumption, enabling new actors to participate in the production of Islamic

discourse (Nilan, 2019). This digital transformation has democratized Islamic knowledge production. While classical authority depended on established scholarly lineages, digital platforms now allow broader participation. Although this expands intellectual engagement, it also increases the spread of unverified religious information, requiring contemporary ulama to strengthen their scholarly presence in digital spaces (Azka & Awang, 2026).

Following the Reformasi era, the writing tradition experienced significant revitalization through the expansion of Islamic higher education institutions, including IAIN and UIN. The growth of accredited journals and international academic participation has encouraged a shift from normative writing toward more critical, comparative, and research-based scholarship without abandoning the foundations of Islamic knowledge (Syarip et al., 2026).

Overall, the historical trajectory reveals a balance between continuity and transformation. While Islamic epistemological values remain the foundation of scholarly writing, its forms, media, and orientations continue to adapt to changing social, political, and technological contexts. Consequently, the sustainability of this tradition depends on integrating classical scholarship with contemporary academic methodologies to ensure its continued relevance (Lukens-Bull, 2018). In conclusion, the historical dynamics of the Indonesian ulama writing tradition demonstrate that the interaction of intellectual networks, political structures, and technological change has shaped its development. The evolution of actors, media, and scholarly orientations confirms that this tradition remains adaptive to changing social contexts.

Structural and Cultural Factors Influencing the Rise and Fall of Indonesian Ulama's Writing Tradition

The ebb and flow of the writing tradition of Indonesian ulama is inseparable from the complex interaction between structural and cultural factors that shape the ecosystem of knowledge production. The writing tradition is not only a product of the individual ulama's capacity but is also influenced by the surrounding social, institutional, and cultural conditions. From a sociology of knowledge perspective, the production of written works reflects the relationship between actors, structures, and value systems within society (Siregar & Muhaimin, 2025).

One structural factor supporting the development of the writing tradition is the existence of a global network of scholars connected to centers of Islamic scholarship. This network facilitates the exchange of ideas, the transfer of methodologies, and the distribution of written works across regions, thereby strengthening the intellectual productivity of Indonesian scholars (Zafrullah &

Wati, 2026).

Empirical findings indicate that this network functioned as a transnational space for knowledge reproduction. The mobility of scholars to the Haramain not only broadened their scholarly horizons but also strengthened academic legitimacy, resulting in increased production of written works in various Islamic disciplines (Islam et al., 2025).

In addition to global networks, educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a crucial role as a structural basis for maintaining the tradition of writing. Pesantren function not only as institutions for transmitting knowledge but also as spaces for the production and reproduction of Islamic texts through the study of classical texts (Lukens-Bull, 2018). In practice, the Islamic boarding school environment fosters a literacy habitus that encourages students to engage in reading, copying, and writing religious texts. This tradition demonstrates that the sustainability of writing practices is highly dependent on an educational system that consistently supports a culture of literacy (Purcel, 2020).

Another structural factor is the scientific language used in the production of scholars' written works. The use of Arabic and Malay-Jawi enabled integration with the global Islamic intellectual tradition while facilitating local adaptation in the dissemination of knowledge (Gafur et al., 2025). On the other hand, there are structural factors that hinder the development of the writing tradition, one of which is colonial intervention in the education system. Changes in educational orientation during the colonial period led to a shift from a religious-based scientific system to a secular one, which resulted in a decline in the production of written works by scholars (Azzahra et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the secularization of modern education has also contributed to the fragmentation of knowledge, separating religious knowledge from general knowledge. This condition affects the structure of knowledge production and diminishes the role of scholars in producing scientifically integrated written works (Ramdani, 2024). From a cultural perspective, literacy culture in a society is a crucial factor determining the level of writing productivity. Low levels of reading and writing in some social contexts limit the production of scientific works, despite the availability of human resources (Kholili & Mu, 2025). Changing information consumption patterns in the digital era are also a cultural factor influencing writing traditions. The dominance of digital media encourages literacy practices that are rapid and fragmented, thereby reducing interest in in-depth, systematic writing (Rahman & Mala, 2025).

These findings suggest that digital transformation not only offers opportunities for knowledge distribution but also challenges the quality of written work. Younger generations tend to be more active as consumers of information than as producers of knowledge in the form of scholarly works (Nilan, 2019). Furthermore, changes in the structure of scholarly authority have influenced scholars' writing traditions. The shift from traditional scholars to modern academics reflects a change in the mechanisms of knowledge legitimacy, with scholarly work increasingly produced within formal educational institutions (Khalid et al., 2025). Another equally important cultural factor is the influence of the social reward system on writing activities within the Indonesian Muslim community. In classical times, scholars who produced prolific writings received high social recognition and broad scholarly legitimacy. However, in the modern era, this reward system has shifted toward a more formal academic achievement orientation, such as academic degrees and publications in reputable international journals. While this situation has encouraged standardization of the quality of scholarly work, it has also created a gap between the rich writing tradition of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and formal academic demands that emphasize methodological aspects. The tension between these two reward systems needs to be optimally bridged to channel potential scholars' intellectual potential into the production of widely recognized knowledge (Fuadi et al., 2026).

Efforts to strengthen the writing tradition of Islamic scholars also require attention to the dimensions of the publishing and distribution ecosystem of Islamic scholarly works. Limited access to credible publishers, minimal financial support for the publication of Islamic scholars' works, and the lack of effective distribution networks are structural barriers that are often overlooked. Strengthening this ecosystem requires synergy between Islamic educational institutions, the government, and the private sector in building a publishing infrastructure that supports the intellectual productivity of Islamic scholars. Furthermore, intergenerational mentoring programs that connect experienced senior Islamic scholars with a digitally literate younger generation can be an effective cultural strategy to regenerate the writing tradition and ensure its relevance in the contemporary era (Pratama & Kurniawan, 2025).

Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the ebb and flow of the writing tradition of Indonesian ulama is influenced by a combination of structural factors, such as scholarly networks, educational institutions, and language systems, and cultural factors, such as literacy culture and changing information consumption patterns. The interaction between these factors indicates that the

sustainability of the writing tradition is highly dependent on the ability to adapt to social and technological changes.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of Indonesian scholars' writing tradition from manuscript culture to digital literacy occurs across media, scripts, languages, production, authority, distribution, preservation, dissemination, and genres. This shift is not merely technical, but also material, linguistic, social, and epistemological. Traditional media such as paper, palm leaves, and *daluang* have increasingly been replaced by digital documents, while Pegon and Arabic-Malay/Jawi scripts are gradually shifting toward Unicode-based Latin writing. Digitalization improves accessibility, searchability, and dissemination, yet it also risks weakening younger generations' ability to read classical scripts. Therefore, manuscript digitization needs to be balanced with literacy programs in Pegon and Arabic-Malay/Jawi to preserve the intellectual heritage of pesantren.

The most significant change lies in scientific authority, where traditional legitimacy based on *sanad*, diplomas, and genealogical transmission is now complemented by institutional affiliation, digital certification, and online publication. Digital platforms accelerate the production, reproduction, and circulation of Islamic knowledge through websites, social media, podcasts, religious apps, e-books, and infographics, expanding audiences beyond pesantren communities. Historically, the writing tradition of Indonesian scholars has always adapted to theological, social, political, and technological changes, from the manuscript networks of Haramain scholars to print culture and today's digital ecosystem. Overall, this transformation is dialectical rather than substitutive: core values such as *sanad*, textual accuracy, and engagement with classical texts remain important, while media and dissemination continue to evolve. Its sustainability depends on strengthening literacy culture, scholarly networks, manuscript preservation, and digital innovation.

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