



Field/Diaspora Notes

## Intellectual Encounters of Indonesian Students in Turkish Theology Faculties

*Türk İlahiyat Fakültelerinde Endonezyalı Öğrencilerin Entelektüel Karşılaşmaları**Perjumpaan Intelektual Mahasiswa Indonesia di Fakultas İlahiyat Turki***Mohammad Muafi Himam<sup>1\*</sup>** ; **Taufiq Ismail<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Department of Comparative Islamic Jurisprudence, STAI Al-Anwar Sarang Rembang, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>IMLA Institute for Islamic and Turkish Studies, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This Diaspora Notes reflects on the intellectual experience of Indonesian students enrolled in İlahiyat (Islamic Theology) faculties at Turkish universities. Drawing on a reflective survey of ten current students and alumni, as well as the positionality of both authors as İlahiyat graduates themselves, the notes examine how immersion in Turkish Islamic academia reshapes the ways Indonesian Muslim scholars read religious texts, negotiate religious authority, and understand Islam as a living intellectual tradition. Using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital as a light analytical lens, the notes trace the intellectual shocks, productive disorientation, and gradual reorientation that accompany the encounter between the pesantren-formed habitus of Indonesian students and the historicist, reflective epistemology that characterizes Turkish İlahiyat pedagogy. The notes argue that the İlahiyat experience generates a distinctive form of reflexive capital—intellectual, cultural, symbolic, and religious—that students carry back to Indonesia, though the reception of this capital is uneven and at times contested. Rather than presenting a policy blueprint, the notes close with a set of open questions about what Indonesian Islamic education can genuinely learn from Turkish İlahiyat without merely transplanting its institutional and political context.

**Keywords:** *İlahiyat; Indonesian students in Turkey; Islamic education; Bourdieu; diaspora; intellectual capital*

**Özet:** Bu Diaspora Notları, Türk üniversitelerinin İlahiyat fakültelerine kayıtlı Endonezyalı öğrencilerin entelektüel deneyimlerini yansıtmaktadır. On mevcut öğrenci ve mezunun düşünümsel bir anketiyle, aynı zamanda her iki yazarın İlahiyat mezunu olarak konumlanmasına dayanarak, Türk İslam akademisine dalmış olmanın Endonezyalı Müslüman akademisyenlerin dini metinleri okuma, dini otoriteyi müzakere etme ve İslam'ı yaşayan bir entelektüel gelenek olarak anlama biçimlerini nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğini incelemektedir. Pierre Bourdieu'nun habitus, alan ve sermaye kavramları hafif bir analitik mercekle kullanılarak, notlar Endonezyalı öğrencilerin pesantren temelli habitusunun Türk İlahiyat pedagojisini karakterize eden tarihselci, yansıtıcı epistemoloji ile karşılaşmasına eşlik eden entelektüel şokları, üretken yönelim bozukluğunu ve kademeli yeniden yönelimi izlemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *İlahiyat; Türkiye'deki Endonezyalı öğrenciler; İslam eğitimi; Bourdieu; diaspora; entelektüel sermaye*

**Abstrak:** Catatan diaspora ini merefleksikan pengalaman intelektual mahasiswa Indonesia yang terdaftar di Fakultas İlahiyat (Teologi Islam) di berbagai universitas Turki. Berlandaskan survei reflektif terhadap sepuluh mahasiswa aktif dan alumni, serta posisi kedua penulis sebagai alumni İlahiyat sendiri, catatan ini menelusuri bagaimana penyelaman dalam akademik Islam Turki membentuk ulang cara mahasiswa Indonesia membaca teks keagamaan, menegosiasikan otoritas agama, dan memahami Islam sebagai tradisi intelektual yang hidup. Dengan menggunakan konsep habitus, field, dan capital Pierre Bourdieu sebagai kerangka analisis yang ringan, catatan ini menelusuri guncangan intelektual, disorientasi produktif, dan reorientasi bertahap yang menyertai perjumpaan antara habitus berbasis pesantren mahasiswa Indonesia dan epistemologi historis-reflektif yang menjadi ciri pedagogi İlahiyat Turki. Catatan ini berargumen bahwa pengalaman İlahiyat menghasilkan bentuk modal reflektif yang khas—intelektual, kultural, simbolik, dan religius—yang dibawa mahasiswa kembali ke Indonesia, meskipun penerimaan modal ini tidak merata dan terkadang diperdebatkan.

**Kata Kunci:** *İlahiyat; mahasiswa Indonesia di Turki; pendidikan Islam; Bourdieu; diaspora; modal intelektual*

## Context and Positionality

I write these notes from a position that is simultaneously inside and outside the experience I am trying to describe. I am Mohammad Muafi Himam, and I began my formal encounter with Islamic scholarship in a pesantren in rural East Java, where I spent six years studying the classical canon—the *kitab kuning* texts that have anchored Indonesian Islamic learning for centuries. Subsequently, I transitioned to Al-Azhar in Egypt, where I experienced the Arab-Islamic scholarly tradition in its metropolitan manifestation. Then Türkiye became the next chapter. In 2014, with a scholarship from Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar (YTB), I enrolled in the graduate program in Dinler Tarihi (History of Religions) at Bursa Uludağ University and completed my master's degree in 2018. I am now completing my doctoral studies at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya and serving on the faculty of STAI Al-Anwar Sarang Rembang.

My co-author, Taufiq Ismail, began his graduate studies at Uludağ University in 2013, bringing a background in Indonesian Islamic higher education. His reflections on the experience inform the analytical texture of these notes in ways that are both complementary and sometimes divergent from my own.

These notes are grounded in a survey of ten Indonesian students and alumni of Turkish İlahiyat faculties, conducted as part of a broader reflective research project. The survey combined structured questions with open essay prompts. Respondents are drawn from universities including Bursa Uludağ University, Ankara University, Marmara University, Necmettin Erbakan University, Atatürk University, Karadeniz Teknik University, İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, and Suleyman Demirel University. Their backgrounds are diverse: some originated from pesantren, others from general secondary schools, and some from Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions. Their study period extends from 2012 to the present, encompassing undergraduate through doctoral levels.

I must transparently acknowledge the limitations inherent to this position. As an insider within this community, I possess my own investments, potential blind spots, and loyalties. I may emphasize aspects of the experience that resonate with my own trajectory and underemphasize those that diverge from it. The survey is also limited in scope; ten voices cannot adequately represent the full diversity of Indonesian experience at Turkish universities, which encompasses students from various organizational affiliations, regions within Indonesia, and diverse personal orientations toward Islamic scholarship. These notes do not claim to be a comprehensive account. They are, as the genre requires, a set of situated reflections: partial, engaged, and honest about their partiality. All survey respondents

have been anonymized as R1 through R10. Direct quotations are used with their implicit consent, given in the context of an academic research project they agreed to participate in.

## Reflective Narrative



*Image 1. Uludağ University İlahiyat Faculty, Bursa. Copyright by Bursa Uludağ University, 2026*

### *Arriving in Another Islamic Classroom*

The first weeks inside an İlahiyat classroom are, for most Indonesian students, an exercise in productive disorientation. I recall participating in a seminar on innovative approaches to religious studies and acknowledging that the analytical and comparative methodologies I had developed at Al-Azhar University in Cairo varied considerably from those utilized in this context. At Al-Azhar, the primary perspective in the study of religion is attributed to Syahrastani, whose views were transliterated by Professor Mabad through his own scholarly work. In Bursa, although initially rooted in al-Biruni's perspective, Max Müller's viewpoint has come to dominate educators' statements.

This shift is not merely methodological. It is, in Pierre Bourdieu's terms, a field effect: the İlahiyat faculty operates according to rules of legitimacy, authority, and intellectual value that differ significantly from those of an Islamic university. Academic knowledge in the İlahiyat is validated differently: through historical evidence, philological precision, comparative methodology, and engagement with the full range of Islamic intellectual traditions, including those that Islamic education tends to treat with caution, such as Mutazilite rationalism, Shi'a thought, or certain strands

of Sufism. To participate in this field, the arriving Indonesian student must begin to acquire a new set of dispositions.

Among the respondents in our survey, this initial encounter with a different intellectual atmosphere was clearly evident. Seven out of ten described the İlahiyat faculty's teaching approach as either "more dialogic and reflective" or "more normative", with a significant number noting the sharp contrast with what they had experienced in Indonesia. R3, who arrived with a pesantren background, described the moment of encountering kalam, historically taught, as transformative: in that classroom, he was invited to ask not just "who is right?" but "why did they think this way?" For someone trained in a tradition where kalam is first and foremost a defensive tool, this reframing opened an entirely different relationship with Islamic intellectual history.

The classroom is not the only arena. The experience of being a Muslim in Türkiye, navigating past mosques operated by the Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, and observing the institutionalization of religion within a society that is formally secular yet profoundly Muslim, serves as a form of ongoing education. The Diyanet model of managed religiosity, in which Islamic practice is officially regulated and theologically homogenized, is strange to the Indonesian eye. Indonesia's religious landscape is noisier, more contested, but in some ways more organic. Living inside the Turkish system raises questions for Indonesian students: what happens to Islamic learning when it is administered by the state? What is gained, and what is lost?



*Image 2. Indonesian İlahiyat students engaged in discussions and intellectual activities on campus. Photo by a member of the IMLA discussion forum, 2022.*

## *The Shock of Reading Differently*

Perhaps the most consequential intellectual shift that *İlahiyat* produces in its Indonesian students is a change in the way they read. This is not merely a matter of encountering new books, though the reading load is itself substantial, but of acquiring a different set of reading practices. In the *pesantren* tradition, the hermeneutical posture is primarily reverential: the text speaks, and the reader listens. The commentaries (*syarah*) are themselves authoritative voices, and the layering of interpretation across generations is what constitutes the tradition. Questioning a foundational text is not merely unconventional; it can be perceived as theologically perilous.

In the field of *İlahiyat*, the same texts are approached with what can only be described as scholarly reverence coupled with a critical perspective. The Qur'an is studied within its contextual framework: examining its historical circumstances, intertextual relationships with earlier religious traditions, and its reception among various communities over a period of fourteen centuries. This is not a sign of disrespect; rather, it represents a different form of respect that entails engaging with the text with sufficient seriousness to consider challenging questions about it. The same principle applies to *hadith*: the chains of transmission (*isnad*) are examined not solely as mechanisms of establishing authenticity, but also as social networks, as products of their historical context, and as records of how communities interpreted the Prophet's legacy under various circumstances.

Nearly all of the ten survey respondents characterized their experiences with *tafsir*, *kalam*, and the history of Islamic thought as formative. Eight reported that their experiences "altered the manner in which they interpret classical Islamic texts." The predominant description was a shift towards contextual-historical interpretation, a framing that eight respondents selected to describe the approach prevalent in their *İlahiyat* studies. R7, who studied at Ankara University at the doctoral level, put it with characteristic directness: the *İlahiyat* had trained him to "think more deeply-rooted and radical without being haunted by theological burdens." That formulation, without theological burdens, names the shift precisely. The Indonesian student who arrives with a *pesantren* habitus harbors specific concerns regarding the potential directions that critical thinking might take. The theological environment gradually endeavors to alleviate those anxieties without necessarily eroding the foundational faith.

*"İlahiyat mengajarkan saya bahwa iman dan akal tidak perlu saling menegasikan, justru harus berjalan berdampingan untuk menjawab tantangan zaman." — R3*

*["İlahiyat taught me that faith and reason do not need to negate each other; on the contrary, they must walk together to meet the challenges of the age."]*

I recognize this tension from my own years at Uludağ. When I commenced my study of the History of Religions, the academic discipline compelled me to analyze Christianity, Judaism, and other religious traditions not as deviations from the ultimate truth but as human religious endeavors deserving rigorous scholarly investigation. This was not a secular move. It was, paradoxically, a theologically enlarging one. The more I understood about how religious communities construct meaning, the more I came to see Islam not as a self-evident given but as a tradition of remarkable intellectual richness that had survived and grown precisely because it was capable of engaging with other traditions honestly.

Not all respondents experienced this shift smoothly. R5, studying tafsir at the doctoral level, described arriving with an expectation that İlahiyat would be "very open, liberal, and secular," and finding instead a tradition that was more complex, capable of rigor without necessarily affirming the secular assumptions that many outsiders project onto it. R6, one of our female respondents who arrived from a general secondary school background, described living in an environment with different madhabs (Islamic legal schools) as a source not of confusion but of curiosity: "it made me more open, and more curious about the differences." For individuals originating from environments where a sole madhab is presumed to be the evident and correct selection, encountering practiced pluralism constitutes an educational experience in itself.

### ***Books, Language, and the Making of a New Habitus***

Learning to think in Turkish is inseparable from learning to think in the İlahiyat way. Language is not a neutral container for ideas; it shapes the ideas themselves. Turkish Islamic scholarly vocabulary carries traces of Ottoman religious administration, Republican secularism, the reform movements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and contemporary efforts to reconcile Islamic learning with academic standards modeled on European universities. When an Indonesian student engages with Amin Abdullah's writings in the Indonesian context, for example, she is exploring the ideas of a scholar who has incorporated the philosophies of Gadamer, Ricoeur, and the Western hermeneutical tradition. When she examines the Turkish equivalents in Ottoman or contemporary Turkish, she is engaging with a distinct intellectual tradition: one that has traversed the bureaucratic rationality of the Diyanet, endured the challenging period of laicism's suppression, and ultimately experienced the re-legitimization of Islamic scholarship within academic institutions.

The reading demands of the İlahiyat are considerable. Several respondents observed the extensive quantity of texts and the expectation that students would engage not only with Arabic and Turkish sources but also with Western secondary literature on Islamic history and thought. This represents a distinct form of accumulation compared to the Pesantren's gradual and profound mastery of a confined canonical corpus. It is broader, more eclectic, and explicitly emphasizes comparison.

What it produces, in Bourdieusian terms, is a form of cultural capital that is simultaneously more internationally legible and, as we shall see, more difficult to convert back into the specific currencies that circulate in Indonesian Islamic contexts.

R10, who studied at Karadeniz Teknik University from 2012 to 2017, described a shift toward the Hanafi madhab and Maturidi theology as a result of sustained deep study. This shift was not ideological but intellectual: exposure to the textual and theological richness of the Hanafi tradition in its native environment rendered it freshly vivid. This is an example of habitus transformation. It demonstrates how habitus transformation occurs in its most natural form by expanding it. It involves grafting new intellectual dispositions onto the foundational structure provided by the pesantren.

For R9, who came from a general secondary school background and arrived at Uludağ with no formal pesantren training, the İlahiyat experience was more foundational. It is less a reformation of existing dispositions than a formation of new ones. The courses in tafsir, Islamic history, and psychology of religion furnished her with a comprehensive framework for understanding Islam, which her Indonesian general secondary education had not previously provided. This variation in baseline is substantial: the influence of the İlahiyat is not homogeneous, and the character of the transformation relies considerably on the prior knowledge and attributes that the student possesses.

### *The Question of Religiosity*

A question that haunts discussions of critical Islamic education, in Indonesia as elsewhere, is whether critical thinking weakens faith. The assumption behind the question is worth examining: it presupposes that faith is essentially a form of non-critical assent, and that the more one questions, the less one believes. The survey responses challenge this assumption in interesting ways.

Nine of ten respondents reported that their level of religiosity had either remained the same or grown stronger after their İlahiyat studies. Eight said they had become more open toward the plurality of Islamic thought. When asked about their spiritual practice after graduation, eight described it as having become more "personal," more "spiritual," or more "rational", with almost none describing a weakening of practice. Only one respondent reported feeling further from faith (R18 in the full survey dataset, hereafter referred to as a partial outlier).

Taufiq Ismail, my co-author and one of the respondents himself (R2), captured this paradox elegantly: he had arrived in Türkiye expecting the İlahiyat to be "very open, liberal, and secular," and instead found it leading him to a deeper spiritual awareness of the classical Islamic intellectual heritage. The expectation of secularization was, in his experience, reversed not into conservatism, but into a more historically grounded and personally owned faith.

*"Awal membayangkan studi İlahiyat di Turki akan sangat terbuka, liberal dan sekular. Sebaliknya justru membawa kesadaran spiritual pada khazanah klasik Islam." — R2*

*["At first, I imagined that İlahiyat study in Turkey would be very open, liberal, and secular. On the contrary, it brought me to a spiritual awareness of the classical Islamic heritage."]*

R8, who studied at Necmettin Erbakan University—one of the more explicitly Islamic Turkish universities—offered an account of a professor whose teaching embodied this synthesis. A senior professor of hadith, she recalled, taught with the methodical precision of classical pesantren learning (translating Arabic texts word by word, even with the traditional notation system), while remaining intellectually generous across madhab boundaries. When he commended the Shafi'i tradition of a particular prayer formula and cited his Indonesian student as an exemplar, he demonstrated not syncretism but scholarly expansiveness: the ability to learn from traditions other than one's own without relinquishing one's own foundational principles.

R4, who pursued doctoral studies at Uludağ University, characterized his interactions with scholars specializing in Sufism and tafsir as the most transformative element of his tenure in Türkiye. This was not due to their introduction to mystical practices; rather, it was their demonstration that the critical and spiritual dimensions are not mutually exclusive. His approach to religion after the İlahiyat became, as he expressed, more adaptable and flexible while maintaining spiritual rootedness.

This is, I believe, one of the most significant contributions of İlahiyat: the demonstration that rigorous academic inquiry into Islamic texts, history, and theology is compatible with, and may even enhance, religious commitment. The pesantren tradition recognizes this as well; in its own manner, the eminent scholar-saints of Islamic history were both meticulously learned and profoundly pious. However, the İlahiyat explicitly articulates this compatibility and demonstrates methodological self-awareness in ways that numerous Indonesian institutions have not yet fully articulated.

### ***Returning with Uneasy Capital***

What happens to the intellectual and symbolic capital accumulated in Turkish İlahiyat when it is brought back to Indonesia? The answers from our respondents suggest a picture that is more ambiguous than either triumphalism or despair.

Regarding symbolic capital, the situation has markedly improved in recent years. Eight out of ten respondents indicated that their Turkish degree considerably enhanced their recognition within Indonesian academic and pesantren communities. Most described community responses to their ideas as fairly open or very positive. The esteem associated with studying abroad, particularly in a Muslim-majority nation such as Türkiye, renowned for its Ottoman intellectual legacy, holds significant influence within Indonesia's Islamic public sphere. Attaining the status of a "Türkiye graduate"

(*lulusan Turki*) opens opportunities, sparks interest, and confers often bestows a measure of esteemed scholarly credibility.

However, symbolic capital is not solely additive. Several respondents observed a more complex reception: the ideas they conveyed were not consistently appreciated as valuable contributions. R7, who studied at Ankara University, described the combination of stronger recognition and a very positive community response, but also flagged that the tradition of critical inquiry he had absorbed was not universally valued; in some circles, it was seen as too questioning, too historicist, and insufficiently deferential to established religious authorities. R8, one of our respondents who received her *İlahiyat* education in a more normative pedagogical environment, noted that the concept of "moderate Islam" promoted by Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs remains a subject of debate among many Indonesian Muslims; some perceive openness and critical thinking as imported concepts that are incompatible with genuine Islamic practice.

There is also the issue of institutional compatibility. The intellectual capital gained in the *İlahiyat* is tailored for a particular type of academic setting: one that emphasizes historical methodology, comprehensive comparative analysis, and reflective engagement with tradition. Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions provide an environment that accommodates this type of scholarship; however, they are also subject to significant pressures advocating for normative standards, doctrinal orthodoxy, and community accountability. The returning student is not entering a neutral space; she is entering a domain with its own regulations, and those regulations may not entirely acknowledge her acquired skills.

R7 offered perhaps the most direct articulation of this challenge: Indonesian university students tend to be familiar with contemporary Islamic discourse but are poorly grounded in the classical sources. His prescription is a curricular reform focused on genealogy, working back to primary sources and understanding the intellectual genealogy of contemporary Islamic thought, rather than consuming contemporary arguments without their roots. This is a project that *İlahiyat* graduates are, in principle, well equipped to pursue. Whether they find institutional support for it is another question.



*Image 3. Indonesian İlahiyat students' activities at PCINU Türkiye religious organization. Photo taken by author, 2016.*

### ***What Indonesia can Learn***

The question of what Indonesian Islamic education can learn from the Turkish İlahiyat model was taken seriously by our respondents, even as they qualified their answers with important caveats. The intellectual strengths of the İlahiyat model, including its historicism, textual rigor, and ability to balance critical inquiry with religious commitment in a productive manner, are genuinely appealing to educators who aim for Indonesian Islamic higher education to cultivate graduates capable of engaging with the complexities of contemporary Muslim life.

Respondents proposed several specific curricular directions. R7 advocated for reform rooted in genealogy, aiming to anchor contemporary Islamic discourse in its classical sources. R10 underscored the significance of comprehending local Islamic intellectual figures, including Hadratussyaikh Hasyim Asy'ari, Ahmad Dahlan, and others who have engaged with colonialism, modernity, and tradition within the Indonesian context. R8 pointed to the modeling of religious moderation as the practical application of İlahiyat's inclusive epistemology, while acknowledging that its implementation in Indonesia requires sensitivity to existing communal structures. R3 articulated a vision of curriculum that would restore the classical texts (*turats*) not as items to be memorized but as living dialogue partners, such as "how did Imam al-Ghazali respond to the anxieties of his age? How did Syekh Nawawi Banten respond to colonialism?"

But the caveats are equally important. R3, whose reflections on İlahiyat are among the most comprehensive within our dataset, explicitly states: what ought not to be imported is the disconnection of İlahiyat from grassroots religious communities, such as mosques, pesantren, tarekat networks, the relationships between students and their kiai, and the living chain of Islamic learning that renders Indonesian Islam not only intellectually vigorous but also spiritually embodied. In Türkiye, the Department of Theology functions within a government-regulated religious framework that has occasionally caused a separation between scholarly Islamic studies and popular Islamic practices. To fully adopt the Department of Theology model, as R3 cautioned, could risk cultivating "an academically advanced Islam that may lack its social and spiritual essence."

R7, studying in Ankara, included a more specific caution: the exclusivism and closedness observed in some Turkish İlahiyat environments outside the major research universities are not worth importing to Indonesia. The pinnacle of Turkish Islamic scholarship, in his perspective, is demonstrated by traditions characterized by meticulous genealogical analysis and a reaffirmation of primary sources. The worst is a scholastic narrowness that mistakes institutional prestige for intellectual breadth.

The political context also matters. Turkish İlahiyat exists in a specific relationship to the Turkish state; one that has oscillated between suppression under high Kemalism and rehabilitation under more recent governments. The Diyanet's role as both employer and theological authority for Turkish Islamic graduates creates dependencies and constraints that have no direct equivalent in Indonesia. Amit Bein's work on the Ottoman ulema and the Turkish Republic traces how İlahiyat was reconstituted after the destruction of the Ottoman religious establishment; a history that has no counterpart in Indonesia's quite different colonial and post-colonial trajectory (Bein, 2011). M. Hakan Yavuz's analysis of Islamic political identity in Turkey introduces an additional dimension: the utilization of Islamic education as a strategic resource within Turkey's political conflicts constitutes a context that Indonesian policymakers should exercise caution in replicating without careful reflection (Yavuz, 2003).

## Conclusion

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These notes have delineated a series of intellectual transformations that transpire when Indonesian students engage with the Turkish İlahiyat academic environment. These transformations are genuine, impactful, and are predominantly perceived as enriching. They encompass a transformation in how Islamic texts are interpreted, shifting from a primarily normative and reverential engagement to a more historical, contextual, and critically conscious approach. Furthermore, there is a notable shift in the relationship to religious authority, evolving from deference

to a more reflective form of engagement. Additionally, for most respondents, there is a deepening of religious commitment. Finally, there is the acquisition of intellectual and symbolic capital, whose value is substantive yet unevenly distributed when recontextualized within Indonesia.

The role of the *İlahiyat* encompasses disrupting the existing habitus that Indonesian students possess, especially the *pesantren*-derived habitus characterized by textual reverence, institutional loyalty, and theological defensiveness. It aims to promote the development of a new habitus that integrates critical distance, historical consciousness, and methodological reflexivity. This is not a comfortable process, and not all students navigate it in the same way. But for those who navigate it successfully, what emerges is a form of Islamic intellectual agency that, in the best sense, is more mobile: capable of engaging a wider range of interlocutors, more confident in its own reasoning, and less dependent on inherited authority for its legitimacy.

What Islam ultimately signifies for these returning students, as R3 eloquently expressed, is a "perahu dalam mengarungi lautan kehidupan"—a vessel for navigating the ocean of life. While the imagery is traditional, its implications are not: a vessel that traverses the sea must be robust, yet it must also be responsive to wind and current. It cannot be a monument on land.

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