

FRESH IJTIHAD: RECONSTRUCTING ISLAMIC LEGAL REASONING THROUGH AMIN ABDULLAH'S INTEGRATION-INTERCONNECTION PARADIGM

Ahmad Fatih Syarofuzzaman* 

*Correspondence:

Email:
ahmadfatichsz@gmail.com

Author Affiliation:

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan
Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Article History:

Submission: February 02, 2026
Revised: April 25, 2026
Accepted: June 25, 2026
Published: June 30, 2026

Keywords: Fresh Ijtihad;
Amin Abdullah;
Integration –
Interconnection; Islamic
Epistemology; Islamic Legal
Reasoning.

Kata Kunci: *Fresh Ijtihad;*
Amin Abdullah; Integrasi-
Interkoneksi; Epistemologi
Islam; Penalaran Hukum
Islam.

Abstract

The complexity of contemporary issues calls for an *ijtihad* that integrates revelation, reason, empirical knowledge, and ethical considerations without compromising the normative authority of Islamic sources. This article examines Amin Abdullah's integration – interconnection paradigm as an epistemological framework for reconstructing contemporary *ijtihad* and, more specifically, asks how the paradigm can be translated into an operational model of Islamic legal reasoning. Employing qualitative library research with a philosophical – epistemological approach, the study critically analyzes Amin Abdullah's major works alongside relevant literature on Islamic epistemology, *ijtihad*, and contemporary Islamic legal thought. The novelty of the study lies in developing an operational interpretation of the integration – interconnection paradigm beyond its general call for interdisciplinary engagement. The analysis demonstrates that the spider – web model reconceptualizes *ijtihad* as an interconnected epistemological process involving revealed texts, classical Islamic sciences, modern sciences, social sciences, humanities, and contemporary human experience. This process operates through a dialogical interaction among *bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *'irfānī* modes of reasoning: textual – normative validation, rational – empirical inquiry, and ethical – spiritual reflection. The study concludes that such an epistemological configuration enables *ijtihad* to produce legal – ethical responses that remain grounded in revelation while being empirically informed, *maqāsid* – oriented, contextually responsive, and capable of addressing complex contemporary challenges.

Abstrak

Kompleksitas persoalan kontemporer menuntut *ijtihad* yang mampu mengintegrasikan wahyu, rasio, pengetahuan empiris, dan pertimbangan etis tanpa mengabaikan otoritas normatif sumber-sumber Islam. Artikel ini mengkaji paradigma integrasi-interkoneksi Amin Abdullah sebagai kerangka epistemologis untuk merekonstruksi *ijtihad* kontemporer, khususnya dengan mempertanyakan bagaimana paradigma tersebut dapat diterjemahkan menjadi model operasional penalaran hukum Islam. Penelitian menggunakan studi kepustakaan kualitatif dengan pendekatan filosofis-epistemologis melalui analisis kritis terhadap karya-karya utama Amin Abdullah dan literatur terkait epistemologi Islam, *ijtihad*, dan pemikiran hukum Islam kontemporer. Kebaruan penelitian terletak pada upaya mengoperasionalkan paradigma integrasi-interkoneksi melampaui gagasan umum tentang pentingnya pendekatan interdisipliner. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa model jaring laba-laba merekonstruksi *ijtihad* sebagai proses epistemologis yang saling terhubung antara teks wahyu, ilmu-ilmu keislaman klasik, ilmu pengetahuan modern, ilmu sosial, humaniora, dan pengalaman manusia kontemporer. Proses tersebut berlangsung melalui interaksi dialogis antara pola penalaran *bayānī*, *burhānī*, dan *'irfānī*: validasi tekstual-normatif, penalaran rasional-empiris, serta refleksi etis-spiritual. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa konfigurasi epistemologis tersebut memungkinkan *ijtihad* menghasilkan respons hukum-etis yang tetap berlandaskan wahyu, sekaligus berbasis bukti empiris, berorientasi *maqāsid*, kontekstual, dan responsif terhadap kompleksitas persoalan kontemporer.

INTRODUCTION

Entering the twenty – first century, the Muslim world faces increasingly complex and disruptive humanitarian challenges, ranging from environmental crises and medical bioethics to the digital technological revolution. Globalization has accelerated transformations in the social order and has consequently affected legal and economic life (Abdullah, 2012). Many of these global problems are not explicitly addressed in the two authoritative sources of Islamic law, the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Saeed, 2006). As a result, Islamic legal thought is often considered slow and hesitant in providing constructive responses to contemporary dynamics, so that the forms of *ijtihad* circulating in society often stop at the repetition of medieval classical texts (*turats*) without adequate dialogue with contemporary empirical realities. This condition makes Islamic law appear alienated from real human problems, revealed texts are read rigidly while social change moves rapidly. It indicates an epistemological crisis in which Muslim reasoning is locked within textual formalism and loses its moral – spiritual capacity to respond to the challenges of the age (Abdullah, 2012).

The stagnation of legal reasoning is basically related to the restriction of *ijtihad*, which limited textual interpretation and prevented Islamic law from developing into a dynamic legal system (Joseph Schacht, 1964). Yet this stagnation is also rooted in a dichotomy of knowledge that sharply separates religious sciences from modern sciences. The continuing legacy of colonial education has contributed to the separation between religious and general curricula in many educational institutions (Azra, 1999). Consequently, there is an epistemological split between sciences regarded as sacred and sciences often associated with worldly, even secular, reasoning (Husain, 1994). In this context, it is necessary to recognize that religion and science are not mutually isolated entities. Ian Barbour maps the relation between science and religion into four models, one of which is integration (Barbour, 1990). Similarly, Mehdi Golshani calls for an Islamic interpretation of science through what he terms Islamic science (Golshani, 2004). Amin Abdullah also emphasizes that scientific disciplines must be interrelated to form an integrated pattern of thought, namely a comprehensive and fresh Islamic worldview (Abdullah, 2014).

In response to this dichotomous deadlock, Amin Abdullah proposes the integration – interconnection paradigm as a methodological breakthrough for reconnecting disciplines. This paradigm requires intellectual humility, namely the recognition that a single discipline does not monopolize truth but emerges through circular dialogue among various branches of knowledge (Abdullah, 2014). This idea is important because contemporary Muslim life is shaped by multiple forms of knowledge. A legal response to digital finance, for instance, requires not only textual understanding of *gharar*, *riba*, or *mal*, but also economic analysis, technological literacy, regulatory knowledge, and ethical reflection. Likewise, legal reasoning on environmental issues requires ecological science, public policy analysis, and *maqasid* – oriented reflection on human welfare and planetary sustainability (Abdullah, 2012). More fundamentally, this paradigm can be understood as a methodological foundation for fresh *ijtihad*, namely an effort to reread Islamic normative sources by involving contemporary knowledge, empirical realities, and ethical – philosophical reflection. Amin Abdullah explicitly situates fresh *ijtihad* within the future direction of Islamic religious sciences (Abdullah, 2014). In this article, fresh *ijtihad* refers to a renewed mode of Islamic legal reasoning that remains grounded in revelation while being open to interdisciplinary knowledge in diagnosing and understanding contemporary problems (Yusdani, 2022).

Several studies have discussed Amin Abdullah's integration – interconnection paradigm. Some examine the paradigm as an epistemological model in contemporary Islamic thought (Izudin, 2018). Sani discusses the paradigm by emphasizing dialogue among religious, scientific, cultural, and interreligious perspectives (Sani, 2023). Waston highlights its relevance to higher education in Indonesia, especially in overcoming the separation between religious and general sciences (Waston, 2016). Other studies focus on the implementation of the integration – interconnection paradigm in Islamic educational institutions and its relation to the spider – web model of knowledge (Haidar & Dzulfahmi, 2024). Meanwhile, discussions of fresh ijtihad, such as YUSDANI's work, explain fresh ijtihad as a way to renew Islamic legal reasoning in responding to modern social problems (YUSDANI, 2022). ZULHENDRA develops a similar discussion (Zulhendha, 2023). In a broader context, Jasser Auda's systems approach to *maqasid al – shariah* shows that Islamic law should be understood through openness, multidimensionality, purposefulness, and the interaction between legal norms and social realities (Auda, 2008). These works indicate that contemporary Islamic legal thought increasingly requires methodological renewal. Nevertheless, the relationship between Amin Abdullah's integration – interconnection paradigm and fresh ijtihad has not yet been sufficiently formulated as an operational framework of legal reasoning.

Based on this gap, this article argues that Amin Abdullah's integration – interconnection paradigm is not only relevant to the development of Islamic studies but also provides a methodological foundation for fresh ijtihad. The novelty of this article lies in its attempt to move the integration – interconnection paradigm from the level of epistemological discourse to the level of Islamic legal methodology. It proposes that fresh ijtihad requires a circular relation among bayani, burhani, and irfani epistemologies. Bayani reasoning preserves the textual and normative foundation of Islamic law. Burhani reasoning provides empirical, rational, and scientific analysis of contemporary realities. Irfani reasoning maintains an ethical, spiritual, and humanistic orientation. Through this circular relation, ijtihad can move beyond textual formalism without abandoning the authority of revelation. This article uses a qualitative method based on library research.

The primary sources are the works of Amin Abdullah. Secondary sources include accredited scholarly journals and Indonesian and English academic articles that examine Abdullah's thought in the context of philosophy of science and contemporary Islamic studies. The data were analyzed through descriptive and reflective procedures. Descriptive analysis was used to reconstruct the structure of Abdullah's key concepts and philosophical arguments from the selected primary texts. Reflective analysis was then conducted by examining the conceptual relationships, continuities, and tensions among his formulations of integration – interconnection, the spider – web model, and bayani, burhani, and irfani epistemologies, and by interpreting their methodological implications for fresh ijtihad.

FRESH IJTIHAD AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROJECT

The term fresh ijtihad in this article is an emic expression explicitly used by Amin Abdullah in formulating a renewed direction of contemporary Islamic thought. It is treated here as a technical concept rather than as an informal synonym for new or recent ijtihad. In this article, fresh ijtihad refers to a renewed mode of Islamic legal reasoning that seeks to respond to contemporary problems without abandoning the normative foundation of revelation (Abdullah, 2014, 2019). It does not mean producing fatwas that are merely new in form, nor does it imply a rejection of the classical Islamic legal tradition. Rather, fresh

ijtihad is an epistemological effort to reread Islamic normative sources through broader dialogue with contemporary knowledge, empirical realities, and ethical – humanistic concerns. In other words, fresh ijtihad works by connecting the past (al – turath) and the present (al – hadathah), not by discarding the classical tradition (Abdullah, 2014). In this sense, fresh ijtihad is not opposed to the tradition of *usul al – fiqh* but seeks to expand its intellectual horizon in the face of modern problems that are socially, scientifically, and technologically complex (Yusdani, 2022). The need for such renewal is also supported by broader debates on ijtihad in modern Islamic legal studies, especially the argument that ijtihad should not be understood as a closed historical practice. Ijtihad must remain a continuing intellectual activity within Islamic jurisprudence (Hallaq, 1984).

This understanding is important because contemporary Islamic legal issues often involve realities that cannot be adequately understood through textual reasoning alone. Problems such as environmental degradation, digital finance, public health, artificial intelligence, gender justice, and bioethics require not only the interpretation of religious texts, but also empirical diagnosis, social analysis, technological understanding, and moral reflection (Abdullah, 2012). Fresh ijtihad therefore requires a shift from a single mode of reasoning to an interconnected mode of reasoning. Textual arguments remain central because Islamic law derives its normative authority from revelation and from the interpretive tradition built around it. However, textual arguments must be brought into conversation with the findings of the social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, and contemporary ethical discourse so that legal reasoning can respond to the actual structure of modern problems (Auda, 2008). This is in line with Amin Abdullah's argument that Islamic studies must move from isolated disciplinary reasoning toward integrated and interconnected relations among religious sciences, natural sciences, social sciences, and cultural studies (Abdullah, 2014). In other words, Muslims should be able to connect *al – usul al – ma'rifiyyah* and *al – usul al – akhlaqiyyah* within multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches (Abdullah, 2019).

In this article, fresh ijtihad is understood as an epistemological project because its main concern lies in how Islamic legal knowledge is produced. The question is not only what the law regulates, but also how a legal conclusion is reached, what kinds of knowledge are involved, and how *maslahah* is verified in concrete human situations (Opwis, 2005). A fatwa may be textually valid, but it can remain socially ineffective or ethically problematic if it does not take into account the empirical structure of the problem being addressed. Conversely, empirical knowledge alone cannot become Islamic legal reasoning without being normatively directed by revelation and the objectives of *sharia* (Kamali, 2012). Therefore, fresh ijtihad requires a methodological balance between textual normativity, empirical accountability, and ethical purposiveness. In this regard, contemporary discussions of *maqasid al – shariah* and *maslahah* are important because they show that Islamic legal reasoning cannot be reduced to literal textual deduction, but must also consider purpose, consequence, public welfare, and the changing conditions of human life (Opwis, 2005).

This is where Amin Abdullah's integration – interconnection paradigm becomes significant. His critique of the separation between religious sciences and modern sciences provides an epistemological foundation for reconstructing ijtihad (Abdullah, 2012). Through the integration of *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* modes of reasoning, Islamic legal thought can avoid two extremes: rigid textualism that separates religious texts from lived realities, and uncontrolled rationalism that detaches legal reasoning from its normative foundation (Abdullah, 2012). *Bayani* reasoning preserves the authority of texts and the continuity of the Islamic legal tradition. *Burhani* reasoning allows contemporary problems

to be analyzed through empirical and rational investigation. Irfani reasoning preserves the ethical – spiritual orientation of law so that legal reasoning does not lose its concern for human dignity, justice, and moral transformation. The circular relation among these epistemologies enables Islamic legal reasoning to remain faithful to revelation while being responsive to scientific knowledge, social complexity, and ethical transformation (Sani, 2023).

Thus, fresh ijtiḥad is a call not only to reopen the gate of ijtiḥad, but also to reconstruct the epistemological structure of ijtiḥad itself. To illustrate the breadth of this reconstruction, Abdullah identifies several themes that need to be addressed in contemporary Islamic social thought, including the relation between text and interpretation, human dignity, Islam and modern science, contemporary ijtiḥad, women's fiqh, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, socio – political fiqh, universal da'wa, and civic da'wa. These themes show that fresh ijtiḥad is not limited to legal reform but is part of a broader effort to construct a new Islamic worldview that is responsive to social change and scientific development (Abdullah, 2014). It requires Islamic legal thought to move circularly among text, context, and ethical purpose (Hallaq, 1984). Within this framework, the integration – interconnection paradigm can be understood not only as an educational or curricular model but also as a methodological basis for contemporary Islamic legal thought. This article therefore positions Amin Abdullah's paradigm as a foundation for developing fresh ijtiḥad that is textually grounded, empirically informed, ethically oriented, and responsive to the complexity of modern human life (Abdullah, 2012). This means that fresh ijtiḥad requires the ability to distinguish and connect al – thawābit, namely relatively stable normative principles, with al – mutaghayyirat, namely changing historical and social realities (Abdullah, 2014). The task of contemporary Islamic legal thought is not to conflate the two, but to mediate between them through a responsible epistemological process. Such a formulation allows Islamic law to preserve its normative identity while avoiding epistemological isolation from contemporary sciences and human realities (Saeed, 2006).

FRAGMENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE CRISIS OF ISLAMIC LEGAL THOUGHT

The discussion of fresh ijtiḥad as an epistemological project leads to a more fundamental question: why does contemporary Islamic legal thought require epistemological reconstruction? The answer lies not only in the emergence of new legal problems, but also in the fragmented structure of knowledge that underlies how these problems are understood. Contemporary problems are rarely purely textual, theological, legal, social, scientific, or cultural. They often arise from the interaction among these domains. Therefore, when Islamic legal reasoning approaches modern problems through only one disciplinary lens, it risks reducing the complexity of reality and producing legal judgments that are normatively formal but empirically weak. In this sense, the crisis of Islamic legal reasoning is closely related to the crisis of fragmented knowledge (Abdullah, 2014).

In conventional modes of thought, religious knowledge, scientific knowledge, and cultural perspectives are often seen as separate domains that stand independently without mutually reinforcing relations. This view rests on the assumption that each domain has its own object of study, method, and orientation, and therefore need not be connected within a single epistemological framework. Amin Abdullah criticizes this separation by arguing that the relationship among Islamic religious sciences, natural sciences, social sciences,

and cultural studies requires integrated and interconnected patterns of dialogue. For Abdullah, religion cannot be reduced to belief and ritual alone. It also intersects with leadership, morality, social institutions, education, economics, symbols, arts, and cultural instruments. These fields are shaped by historical change and human experience and therefore cannot always be explained merely by direct reference to sacred texts (Abdullah, 2014). In this respect, scientific linearity and monodisciplinary reasoning may lead to religious understanding that has little contact with the context in which it is studied (Abdullah, 2014). Abdullah also argues that an atomistic pattern, in which scientific disciplines stand separately and remain unrelated to one another, will not form an integrated and comprehensive Islamic religious worldview (Abdullah, 2014). This condition produces an intellectual gap in which Muslims may live practically within the modern scientific world, while their moral and legal reasoning remains insufficiently mediated by contemporary knowledge and empirical realities (Rahman, 2017).

This epistemological fragmentation becomes especially problematic in Islamic legal reasoning. The classical Islamic legal tradition certainly possesses sophisticated interpretive instruments, including *qiyas*, *ijma'*, *istihsan*, *maslahah*, *'urf*, and *maqasid al-shariah*. Therefore, the problem is not that the classical tradition is intrinsically static. Rather, the problem emerges when legal reasoning is practiced in an overly internalistic manner, as if the structure of contemporary problems could be adequately understood only through inherited textual categories. In other words, contemporary Islamic thought requires intellectual tools that go beyond established disciplines such as *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh*, and *qawa'id fihiyyah*. Modern science, the social sciences, and contemporary humanities need to be integrated into the framework of Islamic thought so that religious reasoning can respond more appropriately to the complexity of contemporary life (Abdullah, 2014). Hallaq shows that pre-modern legal theory paid great attention to the literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. At the same time the Ash'arite theological postulate that human reason cannot fully grasp the reasons behind divine commands shaped important parts of Sunni legal theory (Hallaq, 2013). Such a tradition preserved the authority of revelation, but it also produced a hermeneutical caution that could limit the role of empirical and rational inquiry in legal reasoning.

At the same time, the *madhhab* tradition cannot simply be ignored. It has functioned as a central pillar in the formation of authority, continuity, and discipline within Islamic law. Therefore, every attempt to formulate a contemporary Islamic legal system must engage the classical legal legacy in one form or another. However, such engagement should not mean repeating inherited rulings without examining the empirical structure of new realities. Hallaq notes that the grip of positive legal doctrines on Muslim jurists and judges was strong enough to marginalize efforts to restate or change the law (Hallaq, 2013). In the modern period, this creates a tension between fidelity to legal continuity and the need to address social transformation. Islamic legal reasoning is therefore challenged to preserve its textual and juristic foundations while developing epistemological openness toward historical change, modern institutions, scientific knowledge, and human experience (Schacht, 1959).

One important hermeneutical response to this tension is Fazlur Rahman's double-movement method. The first movement proceeds from present problems to the socio-historical context of Qur'anic revelation in order to understand particular textual responses and identify their broader moral and social principles. The second movement brings these general principles back to contemporary circumstances through a careful analysis of present social realities (Rahman, 2017). Amin Abdullah's integration-interconnection paradigm complements this method by emphasizing the dialogue among

Islamic religious sciences, social sciences, natural sciences, and ethical – philosophical reflection in understanding contemporary problems (Abdullah, 2014, 2019). In practice, the double movement guides the interpretation from the historical context of revelation to contemporary application, while integration – interconnection provides the textual, historical, empirical, and ethical perspectives needed throughout this process.

Against this broader concern with reconnecting Islamic normativity and contemporary reality, Amin Abdullah offers three major critiques of the rigidity of conventional Islamic studies. First, conventional thought often associates religious knowledge solely with spirituality and belief, namely abstract dimensions of human life. Religion is understood as a field concerned with doctrine, ritual, and devotional practice derived from revelation and sacred texts. Such a view tends to diminish the role of religious knowledge and prevents it from contributing to a comprehensive understanding of lived reality. Second, science within this paradigm is perceived merely as a means of understanding the physical world and empirical phenomena through observation, measurement, and verifiable objective methods. Yet this narrow approach makes science less sensitive to more complex dimensions of life such as moral values, spirituality, and ethics. Third, culture in conventional frameworks is often seen as a relative construction limited to particular social groups. Although culture shapes human perspectives and interpretations of reality, it is often not recognized as an important element in the development of universal knowledge (Abdullah, 2014).

Based on these three points, Amin Abdullah argues for the importance of integrating religious knowledge and scientific knowledge to achieve a more complete and comprehensive understanding. Religious insight plays an important role in offering perspectives on moral values, ethics, and human life orientation, which can deepen the philosophical dimension of science. Conversely, science provides empirical foundations and critical approaches that can broaden and sharpen the understanding of religious teachings. In Abdullah's view, the collaboration between the two not only enables constructive dialogue but also enriches the way humans understand reality integrally (Abdullah, 2014). Abdullah also emphasizes the importance of integrating culture into this framework. This is based on the view that culture contains complex values, worldviews, and diverse forms of knowledge (Baidhaw, 2005).

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF AMIN ABDULLAH'S INTEGRATION-INTERCONNECTION PARADIGM

Amin Abdullah's integration – interconnection paradigm is rooted in his reconstruction of three epistemological modes in Islamic thought: bayani, burhani, and irfani. These categories were not developed separately but were strongly influenced by Muhammad Abid al – Jabiri's critique of Arab – Islamic reason. Abdullah adopts al – Jabiri's epistemological categories and reworks them for contemporary Islamic studies, especially to move Islamic scholarship beyond rigid disciplinary boundaries (Jauzaa & Ibrahim, 2025). Carool Kersten also notes that Abdullah adopts al – Jabiri's tripartite framework and connects it to modern philosophy of science, including the works of Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, and Imre Lakatos. In this respect, Abdullah's paradigm does not merely repeat al – Jabiri but transforms his epistemological critique into a broader project for interdisciplinary Islamic studies (Waston, 2016).

According to Amin Abdullah, the relationship among bayani, burhani, and irfani can appear in three different models: parallel, linear, and circular. The parallel model occurs when each epistemology operates separately without meaningful dialogue. In this pattern,

textual, rational—empirical, and intuitive—ethical forms of knowledge may exist simultaneously, but they do not correct or enrich one another. The linear model occurs when one epistemology is treated as the only legitimate source of truth while other forms of knowledge are marginalized. This model easily produces exclusivism, excessive truth claims, and methodological closure. Abdullah therefore proposes the circular model, in which each epistemology recognizes its own limits and becomes open to dialogue, correction, and enrichment from other epistemological traditions (Abdullah, 2012).

This circular model is crucial for fresh ijtihad. Bayani reasoning is necessary because Islamic legal reasoning must remain rooted in revelation, language, and the classical legal tradition. However, bayani reasoning alone can become rigid when it is isolated from empirical realities. Burhani reasoning is therefore needed to analyze the social, scientific, technological, and historical structures of contemporary problems. At the same time, irfani reasoning prevents legal reasoning from becoming merely technical or instrumental by preserving ethical, spiritual, and humanistic sensitivity. Through the circular relation among these three epistemologies, fresh ijtihad can avoid two extremes: textual formalism that neglects lived realities and uncontrolled rationalism that loses its normative foundation (Abdullah, 2012).

The integration—interconnection paradigm is further developed through Abdullah's concepts of *hadlarah al-nash*, *hadlarah al-'ilm*, and *hadlarah al-falsafah*. *Hadlarah al-nash* refers to the textual—normative foundation of Islamic knowledge; *hadlarah al-'ilm* refers to empirical and social sciences; and *hadlarah al-falsafah* refers to philosophical and ethical reflection. These three dimensions are not intended to erase disciplinary boundaries, but to create dialogical relations among them. For fresh ijtihad, this means that Islamic legal reasoning must not stop at textual validity alone. It must also involve empirical knowledge and ethical reflection to verify *maslahah*, understand contemporary realities, and formulate legal—ethical responses that are normatively grounded and socially accountable (Abdullah, 2012).

THE SPIDER-WEB MODEL AND THE OPERATIONAL LOGIC OF FRESH IJTIHAD

The integration—interconnection paradigm reaches its most concrete expression in Amin Abdullah's spider—web model of Islamic knowledge. This model should not be understood merely as an institutional design for Islamic higher education, but also as an epistemological map for connecting revealed texts, classical Islamic sciences, modern disciplines, and contemporary human problems. In this framework, Amin Abdullah's spider—web model begins with the Qur'an and the Sunnah, passes through the classical Islamic sciences, and expands into the modern social sciences and humanities to address contemporary issues. In this sense, the spider—web model represents an effort to overcome the fragmentary character of Islamic sciences and to build a more interconnected epistemology of Islamic knowledge (Siregar, 2014).

The spider—web model consists of four interconnected layers. The innermost layer contains the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the normative and ethical core of Islamic knowledge. The second layer consists of classical Islamic disciplines, such as *kalam*, philosophy, Sufism, *hadith*, history, *fiqh*, *tafsir*, and Arabic linguistic sciences. The third layer includes theoretical disciplines from modern scholarship, such as sociology, hermeneutics, philology, semiotics, ethics, phenomenology, psychology, history, anthropology, and archaeology. The fourth and outermost layer consists of applied contemporary issues, including religious pluralism, science and technology, economics,

human rights, politics and civil society, cultural studies, gender, environmental issues, and international law (Haidar & Dzulfahmi, 2024). These layers show that Islamic knowledge is constructed through a multilayered relation among text, tradition, empirical knowledge, and applied human problems.

In the context of contemporary *ijtihad*, the spider – web model functions not only as a map of knowledge but also as an operational logic of Islamic legal reasoning. The first layer provides the normative foundation, because *ijtihad* must remain rooted in revelation. The second layer provides the juristic and interpretive instruments developed within the Islamic intellectual tradition. The third layer provides empirical, social, historical, and scientific tools for understanding the structure of contemporary problems. The fourth layer indicates the actual field in which *ijtihad* operates, namely modern issues that cannot be adequately addressed by inherited formulations alone. Therefore, fresh *ijtihad* requires movement across these layers rather than confinement to a single layer (Suharto, 2018).

For fresh *ijtihad*, the movement across these layers can be formulated into five connected methodological steps. First, the problem is identified by examining its social, historical, scientific, and ethical dimensions. Second, *bayani* reasoning is used to examine relevant Qur'anic verses, *hadith*, classical juristic opinions, legal maxims, and principles of *usul al – fiqh*. Third, *burhani* reasoning is used to understand the actual conditions of the problem through relevant fields such as economics, medicine, sociology, environmental studies, technology, or public policy. Fourth, *irfani* reasoning is used to consider the ethical and spiritual implications of the proposed legal response, particularly in relation to justice, human dignity, and moral responsibility. Fifth, the findings are brought together through *maqasid al – shariah* and *maslahah* to formulate a legal – ethical response that is based on Islamic sources, supported by empirical knowledge, and relevant to contemporary society. These steps are interconnected rather than strictly linear, since new empirical findings or ethical considerations may require earlier interpretations and conclusions to be reconsidered (Abdullah, 2012).

Contemporary legal problems often involve facts that cannot be disclosed through textual analysis alone. Environmental degradation, public health, digital finance, artificial intelligence, and bioethical questions require empirical diagnosis before legal judgment can be responsibly formulated. In this sense, the third layer does not replace revelation or classical jurisprudence but helps determine the actual nature of the problem. This is similar to the function of *tahqiq al – manat* in *usul al – fiqh*, namely the process of verifying whether a legal cause, condition, or context is actually present in a particular case. Without such empirical mediation, Islamic legal reasoning may remain formally valid but practically ineffective (Abdullah, 2012; Auda, 2008).

This operational logic also sharpens the meaning of *maslahah* in contemporary *ijtihad*. *Maslahah* should not be treated as an abstract moral claim, nor should it be reduced to technical measurement alone. Rather, it must be based on empirical data, be publicly accountable, and be normatively justified. Felicitas Opwis shows that *maslahah* has played an important role in contemporary Islamic legal theory as a principle for legal change and public welfare (Opwis, 2005). Jasser Auda's systems approach further strengthens this point by arguing that *maqasid* – oriented legal reasoning must consider openness, multidimensionality, interrelatedness, and purposefulness in order to respond to complex realities (Auda, 2008). Thus, in fresh *ijtihad*, *maslahah* is verified through a circular relation among revelation, empirical knowledge, ethical reasoning, and social consequences (Zaprukhhan, 2018).

The operation of these five steps can be illustrated through the case of digital lending. In the first step, the problem is defined by examining how a digital platform connects

fund providers and borrowers, structures the contract, determines fees and repayment obligations, assesses creditworthiness, and manages late payments (Piskin & Kus, 2019). At the bayani stage, these practices are examined through relevant Islamic legal principles concerning *riba*, *gharar*, mutual consent, contractual clarity, the ethics of debt, and the prohibition of harm. The burhani stage then investigates how the platform actually operates through financial, technological, legal, and social analysis. This stage requires attention to the transparency of digital contracts, the calculation of charges, the distribution of risks, consumer protection, and the regulatory problems surrounding online lending (Tan, 2023). Research on Islamic peer – to – peer lending in Indonesia also shows that the level of indebtedness, the scale of financing, and governance practices are important factors in assessing the potential failure of such platforms (Muhammad et al., 2021).

At the irfani stage, the preliminary legal assessment is examined in relation to justice, human dignity, moral responsibility, and the position of financially vulnerable borrowers. The analysis considers whether digital lending provides fair access to financing or instead exploits urgent financial needs, creates harmful debt dependence, or applies unfair collection practices. These normative, empirical, and ethical findings are then brought together through *maqasid al – shariah* and *maslahah* to assess the purposes, benefits, and social consequences of the transaction (Auda, 2008). In this framework, *maslahah* cannot be invoked solely based on of economic convenience but must remain normatively justified and responsive to the actual conditions of the people affected by the legal decision (Opwis, 2005). The result is therefore not a general judgment that all forms of digital lending are either permitted or prohibited. Its legal – ethical status depends on the substance of the contract, the basis and proportionality of its charges, the transparency of information, the distribution of risks, and the protection of borrowers. A digital lending platform may be considered acceptable when it avoids prohibited contractual elements and provides transparent, fair, and responsible financing, while exploitative charges, unclear contracts, and weak ethical governance require a different legal assessment (Alshater et al., 2022).

This illustration shows how the spider – web model can help fresh *ijtihad* avoid two opposing weaknesses. On the one hand, it prevents textual formalism, namely the tendency to assume that inherited textual categories are sufficient to solve all contemporary problems without empirical investigation. On the other hand, it prevents unrestricted rationalism, namely the tendency to detach Islamic legal reasoning from its normative foundation in revelation and the juristic tradition. By connecting *hadlarah al – nash*, *hadlarah al – 'ilm*, and *hadlarah al – falsafah*, fresh *ijtihad* can remain faithful to Islamic normativity while being open to scientific knowledge, social complexity, and ethical responsibility (Haidar & Dzulfahmi, 2024)..

In this context, the relevance of fresh *ijtihad* can be seen in the transformation of women's *fiqh*. Abdullah argues that contemporary discussions of women should not be limited to biological issues, but must also involve sociological, anthropological, psychological, political, legal, and cultural perspectives. This example shows how fresh *ijtihad* expands Islamic legal thought by connecting textual interpretation with changing social realities. In addition, the ethical orientation of fresh *ijtihad* can be strengthened through Abdullah's emphasis on *al – karamah al – insaniyyah*, or human dignity. He criticizes older forms of theological and legal reasoning when they become trapped in speculative debates and fail to respond to concrete human problems such as poverty, health, education, corruption, abuse of power, sectarian violence, and social injustice. Another implication of fresh *ijtihad* is the shift from polemical debate to dialogical

reasoning. Abdullah distinguishes dialogue from debate (*jadal*). Dialogue is not intended to defeat the other, but to seek truth, justice, and solutions to shared human problems. This dialogical orientation strengthens the ethical dimension of fresh *ijtihad* in plural societies. On this basis, fresh *ijtihad* must be directed toward the protection of human dignity and the transformation of social life (Abdullah, 2014). Fresh *ijtihad*, therefore, is a reconstruction of how Islamic legal knowledge is produced, validated, and applied in contemporary life. Through the spider–web model, Islamic law can become textually grounded, empirically accountable, ethically oriented, and responsive to modern human problems (Abdullah, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This article affirms that Amin Abdullah's integration–interconnection paradigm is a vital methodological foundation for fresh *ijtihad* as a response to the stagnation of Islamic law. Through the spider–web metaphor, this paradigm dismantles the dichotomy of knowledge by requiring circular dialogue among revealed texts (*hadarah al-nash*), science (*hadarah al-'ilm*), and ethics (*hadarah al-falsafah*). Its main implication is an epistemological shift from a single entity to interconnected entities, in which science is no longer merely a supplement. Still, it becomes an equal *burhani* partner for validating *maslahah*. Through these elements, fresh *ijtihad* can be understood as a reconstruction of Islamic legal reasoning through an interconnected epistemology. This approach preserves the authority of revelation, engages empirical knowledge, and directs legal reasoning toward ethical transformation and public welfare. Therefore, Amin Abdullah's contribution lies not only in proposing integration–interconnection as a paradigm of Islamic studies, but also in opening the possibility of a more responsive, accountable, and humanistic model of contemporary Islamic legal thought. Fresh *ijtihad* thus offers legal products that remain textually grounded in Islamic normativity while also being scientifically accountable and humanistic in responding to the challenges of modernity.

This study is limited to a conceptual reconstruction based on selected published works of Amin Abdullah and relevant secondary literature. It does not examine the practical application of the integration–interconnection paradigm within actual fatwa institutions or test the proposed five–step framework through empirical fieldwork. The discussion of digital lending serves only as an analytical illustration of how the framework may operate, rather than as a comprehensive case study or an authoritative legal ruling. Future research may examine actual fatwa deliberations and the involvement of experts from different disciplines to evaluate the practical applicability of this framework.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, M. A. (2012). Bangunan Baru Epistemologi Keilmuan Studi Hukum Islam Dalam Merespon Globalisasi. *Asy-Syir'ah: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah Dan Hukum*, 46(2). <https://doi.org/10.14421/AJISH.V46I2.42>
- Abdullah, M. A. (2014). Merajut Paradigma Filsafat Islam Keindonesiaan: Fresh Ijtihad Memperjumpakan Ulum al–din dan Sains Modern dalam Keilmuan Keagamaan Islam untuk Pembangunan Bangsa. In *Filsafat Islam: Historitas dan Aktualisasi*. FA Press.
- Abdullah, M. A. (2019). *Fresh Ijtihad: Manhaj Pemikiran Keislaman Muhammadiyah di Era Disrupsi*. Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Alshater, M. M., Saba, I., Supriani, I., & Rabbani, M. R. (2022). Fintech in Islamic Finance Literature: A review. *Heliyon*, 8(9). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e10385>

- Abdullah, M. A. (2012). *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi: Pendekatan Integratif-Interkoneksi*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Abdullah, M. A. (2014). Religion, science and culture: An integrated, interconnected paradigm of science. *Al-Jami'ah*, 52(1).
- Auda, Jasser. (2008). *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach*. International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- A – Zahro Jauzaa, N., & Ibrahim, R. (2025). Scientific Integration of Perspectives M. Amin Abdullah (Integrative – Interconnective Approach). *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.31943/AFKARJOURNAL.V8I1.1023>
- Azra, A. (1999). *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru*. Logos Wacana Ilmu.
- Baidhaw, Zakiyuddin. (2005). *Pendidikan Agama Berwawasan Multikultural*. Erlangga.
- Barbour, I. (1990). *Religion in Age of Science*. Harper San Francisco.
- Golshani, M. (2004). *Melacak jejak Tuhan dalam Sains : Tafsir Islami atas Sains*. PT Mizan Pustaka.
- Haidar, P. B., & Dzulfahmi, A. A. (2024). Spider Web, Integration – Interconnection Perspective Amin Abdullah. *DAYAH: Journal of Islamic Education*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.22373/JIE.V7I1.21653>
- Hallaq, W. B. (1984). Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed? *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800027598>
- Hallaq, W. B. (2013). *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni Usul al-Fiqh*. Cambridge University Press.
- Husain, S. S. (1994). *Menyongsong Keruntuhan Pendidikan Islam*. Gema Risalah Press.
- Izudin, A. (2018). PARADIGMA INTEGRASI – INTERKONEKSI: Analisis Epistemologi Pemikiran Keislaman M. Amin Abdullah Ahmad Izudin. *Jie*, 4, 103 – 122.
- Joseph Schacht. (1964). *An introduction to islamic law*. Oxford University Press. <https://balaiyanpus.jogjapro.go.id/opac/detail-opac?id=23386>
- Kamali, M. H. (2012). *Maqasid al-Shariah, Ijtihad and Civilisational Renewal*. The International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- Muhammad, R., Hanun, A. K., & Fakhrunnas, F. (2021). The Determinants of Potential Failure of Islamic Peer – to – Peer Lending: Perceptions of Stakeholders in Indonesia. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business* , 8(2), 981 – 992. https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/landing/article.kci?arti_id=ART002685790
- Opwis, F. (2005). Maslaha in Contemporary Islamic Legal Theory. *Islamic Law and Society*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568519054093699>
- Pişkin, M., & Kuş, M. C. (2019). Islamic Online P2P Lending Platform. *Procedia Computer Science*, 158, 415 – 419. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2019.09.070>
- Rahman, Fazlur. (2017). *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Saeed, Abdullah. (2006). *Interpreting the Qur'ān: Towards a Contemporary Approach*. Routledge.
- Sani, A. (2023). Jalan Baru Kebenaran dalam Epistemologi Integrasi dan Interkoneksi Muhammad Amin Abdullah. *ISME : Journal of Islamic Studies and Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(1). [https://doi.org/10.61683/isme.vol11.2023.41 – 50](https://doi.org/10.61683/isme.vol11.2023.41-50)
- Schacht, J. (1959). Islamic Law in Contemporary States. *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/837455>
- Siregar, P. (2014). Integrasi Ilmu – ilmu Keislaman Dalam Perspektif M. Amin Abdullah. *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 38(2). <https://doi.org/10.30821/MIQOT.V38I2.66>
- Suharto, T. (2018). Pemetaan Ayat – Ayat al – Qur'an tentang Rumpun Ilmu Agama dalam Perspektif Paradigma Integrasi – Interkoneksi. *Intizar*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.19109/INTIZAR.V24I1.2188>

- Tan, D. (2023). Demystifying The Proliferation of Online Peer – to – peer Lending in Indonesia: Decoding fintech as a regulatory challenge. *Asian Journal of Law and Society*, 10(3), 376 – 400. <https://doi.org/10.1017/als.2022.21>
- Waston. (2016). Pemikiran Epistemologi Amin Abdullah dan Relevansinya Bagi Pendidikan Tinggi di Indonesia. *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 17(01). <https://doi.org/10.23917/PROFETIKA.V17I01.2102>
- Yusdani. (2022). Islamic Law and Contemporary Challenges from Fresh Ijtihad Point of View. *Jurnal Hukum Islam*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.28918/jhi.v20i1.5991>
- Zaprul Khan. (2018). Maqasid Al – Shariah in the Contemporary Islamic Legal Discourse: Perspective of Jasser Auda. *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, 26(2). <https://doi.org/10.21580/WS.26.2.3231>
- Zulhendra, J. (2023). Fresh Ijtihad sebagai Upaya dalam Meretas Tertutupnya Pintu Ijtihad: Studi Perkembangan Hukum Islam pada Masa Kontemporer. *Al-Qanun: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pembaharuan Hukum Islam*, 26(1).