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**THE QUEST FOR AN “INTEGRATED AND INTERCONNECTED”  
PARADIGM OF ISLAMIC STUDIES IN INDONESIA:  
A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT**

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**Abstract**

Method of Islamic studies has been a perpetually contested issue among scholars of Islam in both Western universities and Muslim academia as well. Taking the long-standing experience of Indonesian Islamic higher institution as a case study where contestations have been taking place, this paper aims at depicting the dynamic of Islamic studies from its early development to its contemporary and cutting-edge transformation. Drawing on Travelling Theory as its theoretical lens as well as employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its method for analyzing the available textual data, this paper argues that an integrated and interconnected paradigm—instead of dualistic or dichotomist ones—of Islamic studies has been increasingly predominant among those engaging in Indonesian Islamic scholarship

***Keyword:** Islamic higher education, Islamic studies, Integrated-Interconnected paradigm, M. Amin Abdullah*

### Introduction

Despite the increasingly growing appreciation among scholars to Indonesian Islam, the role of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals in shaping contemporary Muslim discourses has unfortunately received only marginal attention in their recent works.<sup>1</sup> With some exceptions, such as Carool Kersten's books entitled *Cosmopolitanism and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam* (2011)<sup>2</sup> and *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values*,<sup>3</sup> we hardly find any research that puts Indonesian Muslim intellectuals as an integral part of the discussion on Indonesian Islam and Muslim world as a whole. Accordingly, for Azyumardi Azra, a comprehensive research on contemporary Indonesian development in which intellectual history of contemporary Indonesian Islam as well as the dynamic and development of its significant socio-religious institutions were simultaneously researched altogether remains very rare.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, no one can deny the necessity of putting the role of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals within its wider context with, for instance, the rapid development of diverse Islamic educational institutions such as *pesantrens*, *madrasas* and Islamic colleges and Islamic universities as well. With regard to the role of Islamic higher education in Indonesia, it goes without saying that UIN (State Islamic University), IAIN (State institute of Islamic Studies), and STAIN (State Islamic College)—in addition to other private Islamic colleges and universities—have been playing a very decisive role in the increasingly growing contribution of Indonesian Islam in either its national context or wider sense—among both Muslim world and

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<sup>1</sup> Carool Kersten, "Indonesia's New Muslim Intellectuals," *Religion Compass*, 3/6 (2009): p. 971.

<sup>2</sup> I refer to Azyumardi Azra's book review on this book, "Intelektual Muslim Baru dan Kajian Islam," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2012, pp. 191-202.

<sup>3</sup> Carool Kersten *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> See his book review on Carool Kersten's *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values* (2015): Azyumardi Azra, "Kontestasi Pemikiran Islam Indonesia Kontemporer," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2016, pp. 175-184, 177.

worldwide as well. UIN/IAIN/STAIN has been playing its significant role since its early establishment to the present day in both intellectual circles as well as religious sphere.<sup>5</sup> With regard to the recently often-conflict occurrence, either religious-based conflicts or ethnic-based ones, UIN/IAIN/STAIN has been also long regarded as one of the most forefront proponents in promoting better relations and strengthening social cohesion between various religious communities in Indonesia.<sup>6</sup>

Carool Kersten puts it aptly when he says that the emergence of the so-called “Indonesian’s new Muslim intellectuals”,<sup>7</sup> “hybrid Muslim intellectuals”<sup>8</sup> or “cosmopolitan Muslim intellectuals”<sup>9</sup> cannot be undoubtedly put in isolation from the important role UIN/IAIN/STAIN has been playing. Azyumardi Azra has ever enthusiastically predicted that, with respect to the transformation of some IAINs to UINs, “UINs will have a far-reaching impact both on human resources development among Indonesian Muslims and on the direction of Islamic studies in Indonesia”.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, since the emergence of the so-called “integrated and interconnected” paradigm of Islamic studies proposed by M. Amin

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<sup>5</sup> Johan Meuleman “The Institut Agama Islam Negeri at the Crossroads: Some Notes on the Indonesian State Institutes for Islamic Studies,” in Johan Meuleman (ed.), *Islam in the Era of Globalization: Muslim Attitudes towards Modernity and Identity* (London-New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), p. 217 and John R. Bowen, “Intellectual Pilgrimages and Local Norms in Fashioning Indonesian Islam,” *REMMM*, 123, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Richard G. Kraince, “Islamic Higher Education and Social Cohesion in Indonesia,” *Prospects*, 37, (2007), pp. 345–356.

<sup>7</sup> Carool Kersten, “Indonesia’s New Muslim Intellectuals,” *Religion Compass*, 3/6 (2009), pp. 971–985.

<sup>8</sup> Carool Kersten, “Islam, Cultural Hybridity and Cosmopolitanism: New Muslim Intellectuals on Globalization,” *Journal of International and Global Studies*, 1 (1) (2009): 89–113.

<sup>9</sup> Carool Kersten, “Cosmopolitan Muslim Intellectuals,” *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 7, 1–2 (2011), pp. 105–136.

<sup>10</sup> Azyumardi Azra, “From IAIN to UIN: Islamic Studies in Indonesia,” in Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (eds.), *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Ilmuwan, 2011), p. 53.

Abdullah unquestionably originated and developed within the context of the above-mentioned transformation of IAIN to UIN,<sup>11</sup> it is right in this context that this paper will focus on the significant academic role M. Amin Abdullah has been playing. Based on his academic works, particularly his book *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi: Pendekatan Integratif-Interkonektif*, as well as making use of other previous researches; this paper aims at offering a critical account on that “integrated and interconnected” paradigm in terms of new trends of Islamic studies along with a brief historical background of Islamic higher education in Indonesia, as well as paying an account of its long struggle of transformation from IAIN to UIN.

### UIN/IAIN/STAIN: a Historical Glimpse

Long before the conversion of some IAINs to UINs and prior to the emergence of significant change within this Indonesian Islamic higher education, many scholars stated in various publications that it was actually not easy to put properly the academic position of UIN/IAIN among other Indonesian public/secular universities (PTUN). The difficulty, so that statement went on, was strongly rooted in the fact that historically IAIN had its own mission that was different from—if not was in opposition to—other Indonesian public/secular universities (PTUN). Its difference will be quickly apparent when we examine the historical mission of its establishment.

Historically speaking, IAIN was actually built not only to meet the academic necessities, as other public universities did, but also to respond to a wider range of problems intermingled among religious matters, ideology and politics simultaneously. It is why, in spite of its equal legal status compared to public/secular universities, but the way in which its students’ achievement measured, for instance, is by no means alike—not to say often quite different. In contrast to the academic parameters commonly used in final academic decision within public/secular universities (PTUN), within IAIN’s academic sphere, students’ moral behavior often/always constitutes

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<sup>11</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi: Pendekatan Integratif-Interkonektif* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2006), pp. v-ix.

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a very important aspect to bring into serious consideration in addition to their mere academic aspect.

As an educational institution with its Islamic-affiliated orientation, it is undeniable historical fact that IAIN was firstly established and regarded as an institution for Islamic propagation within Muslim societies. Yet, in the same time, it was also an academic institution with its academic mandate and scientific responsibility to pay similar attention. This double burden, in one hand, brought about long debate and remained a serious hindrance for the development of IAIN; but in another hand, in turn, it constituted a source for better dynamic of IAIN's future development. It is possibly not difficult to understand if we take into account the main purpose of its establishment for enhancing the quality of Islamic education through which Muslims can play better religious role within society.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, it should also bear in mind that the establishment of IAIN has long history and involves many Muslims intellectuals in bringing the idea down to earth. Satiman Wirjosandjojo, Mohammad Hatta, Muhammad Natsir, K.H.A. Wahid Hasyim, K.H. Mas Mansyur, and Abdul Kahar Mudzakkir were among the most important architects of IAIN's "embryo" previously named as the Foundation of Higher Islamic Boarding School (Yayasan Pesantren Luhur) or Higher Islamic College (STI/Sekolah Tinggi Islam) as their academic response for the backwardness in Indonesia Islamic education. Regardless its success in "producing devout and well-behaved Muslims", so Muhammad Natsir stated, for instance, the graduates of *pondoks* (traditional Islamic boarding schools) and *madrasahs* were "unfortunately very ignorant of social problems".<sup>13</sup>

Satiman Wirjosandjojo and Mohammad Hatta anchored their academic reason behind the notion on the necessity of STI establishment on the facts that *first*, compared to non-Muslim society, Muslim society, according to them, had ironically fallen very much behind in education;

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<sup>12</sup> Fu'ad Jabali and Jamhari (eds.), *The Modernization of Islam in Indonesia: An Impact Study on the Cooperation between the IAIN and McGill University* (Montreal and Jakarta: Indonesia-Canada Islamic Higher Education Project, 2003), p. x.

<sup>13</sup> Fu'ad Jabali and Jamhari (eds.), *The Modernization of Islam in Indonesia*, p. 3.

*second*, the advancements of non-Muslims in education had resulted from their adoption of the Western education system. Therefore, there was a significant need to connect the Islamic education system to an international network as well as there was also a need to consider the local content of Islamic education. For them, the establishment of Islamic higher education, therefore, was aimed at answering these demands.<sup>14</sup>

Bringing above mentioned-initial motive of STI establishment as IAIN's embryo into practice is by no means an easy task. As it was commonly known, in its later development, Satiman Wirjosandjojo and Mohammad Hatta's notion to promote an inclusive religious understanding anchored and rooted in sociological, historical, and political experience within IAIN academic life faced various difficulties. Additionally, due to its status as a government-run institution or state-funded institution of higher learning, IAIN was undoubtedly also not immune to the political changes of the government itself, especially within Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA).<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, tension between "traditionalism" and the "modernism" frequently occurred. Nevertheless, through its long struggle for academic reform within IAIN academic life since 1970s, as exemplified and supported by towering figures such as Mukti Ali and Harun Nasution, that academic barrier was, to a certain extent, successfully transcended. In this regard, the following Abdullah Saeed's assertion is worthy to note:

Unlike the traditional Islamic institutions where the subject Islamic Studies is still taught strictly within the context of Islam and is insulated from any encroachment by modern social sciences, the IAIN has attempted to include these areas in almost all of its programmes. While it adopts a somewhat traditionalist approach to Islamic Studies, it goes beyond this to a considerable degree...

The reform project of the IAIN may be seen as an example of how an essentially traditionalist Islamic institution of higher learning is

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<sup>14</sup> Fu'ad Jabali and Jamhari (eds.), *The Modernization of Islam in Indonesia*, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Fu'ad Jabali and Jamhari (eds.), *The Modernization of Islam in Indonesia*, pp. 14-15.

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transformed into an institution with a modern outlook, able to successfully integrate both *shari'ah* and 'modern ethos'.<sup>16</sup>

Along with the efforts and ideas of both Mukti Ali<sup>17</sup> and Harun Nasution, supporting Richard G Kraince's assertion, Ronald A. Lukens-Bull also suggests that the early efforts of IAIN's reform were also strongly influenced by Fazlur Rahman. <sup>18</sup> This claim academically sounds understandable since, as we know, this well-celebrated Pakistani-American scholar had ever written a sub-chapter entitled "Some Remarks on Indonesia" when he shed light on the so-called "Contemporary Modernism" in one of his books, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of Intellectual Tradition*, following his visit to Indonesia. Comparing the development of Indonesian Islamic education with those of Pakistan and Turkey, Fazlur Rahman eventually affirmed:

I regard it as likely that, given time, opportunity, and facilities, Indonesian Islam, although currently and understandably heavily dependent on al-Azhar, will develop a meaningful indigenous Islamic tradition that will be genuinely Islamic and creative. Although the present state of affairs obviously needs much improvement, there are signs of hope for the future: the feverish educational and intellectual activity, although recent, appears to be heading in the right direction.<sup>19</sup>

Likewise, the crucial role of Mukti Ali and Harun Nasution in their struggle to reform IAIN's academic life cannot actually put in isolation from the important influence of Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University in

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<sup>16</sup>Abdullah Saeed, "Towards Religious Tolerance through Reform in Islamic Education: The Case of the State Institute of Islamic Studies of Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 27: 79, (1999), pp. 185-186, 189.

<sup>17</sup> The educational thought of Mukti Ali and his significant role in the renewal struggle of IAIN Sunan Kalijaga was well elaborated in Al Makin's article, "Pluralism in Islamic Education: a Study of Mukti Ali's Thoughts," in Rommel A. Curaming and Frank Dhont (eds.), *Education in Indonesia: Perspectives, Politics and Practices*, International Conference Book Series No. 4 (Yale Indonesian Forum-Faculty of Social Sciences, Yogyakarta State University), pp. 9-32.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, *Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia: Continuity and Conflict* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 45

<sup>19</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of Intellectual Tradition*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1982), pp. 128-129

Montreal, Canada where Mukti Ali and Harun Nasution graduated. According to Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, after completing his study and he returned home to Indonesia, for the sake of developing religious studies as an academic field and promoting religious tolerance, Mukti Ali initially developed comparative religious studies at the IAINs, especially at IAIN Yogyakarta. When he later served as minister of religious affairs (1971–1976), Mukti Ali conducted a serious change in Islamic education through curriculum reforms. It was during this tenure as minister of religious affairs he also appointed his fellow in Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill, Harun Nasution, as a Rector of IAIN Jakarta (1973–1984), where he radically run a number of curriculum reforms that were eventually adopted across the IAINs in Indonesia.<sup>20</sup>

Citing several previous researches conducted by some scholars like Azyumardi Azra, Abdullah Saeed, Mulyadi Kartanegara and Johan Meuleman, Ronald A. Lukens-Bull finally summarizes three important academic influences of Harun Nasution's contribution in IAIN's reform. *First*, Harun Nasution's insistence on the necessity of freedom of religious thought, in particular the ability to study all the *maddhabs*, along with his encouragement in using historical and sociological approaches in Islamic studies (*second*), and, *third*, designing general introduction course in Islamic Studies required for all students of IAIN. Affirming Johan Meuleman's claim, Ronald A. Lukens-Bull in conclusion states that, instead of establishing "centers of Islamic doctrine", the academic reforms introduced by Harun Nasution successfully established IAINs as "institutes for the development of religious sciences".<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, *Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia: Continuity and Conflict*, pp. 56-47.

<sup>21</sup> Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, *Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia: Continuity and Conflict*, pp. 48-49.



## **The Transformation of IAIN to UIN**

Notwithstanding previously mentioned momentous development within academic life of IAINs, particularly thanks to Harun Nasution and Mukti Ali's ideas, it is by no means academically satisfying and needs no any further enhancement and augmentation. Prior to the conversion of some IAINs to full-fledged universities, Johan Meuleman had yet an assertion to state that IAINs was actually at the crossroads.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the limited academic mandate offered to IAINs, so Azyumardi Azra argues, in turn only allowed them to deal with Islamic religious sciences.<sup>23</sup>

In the point of fact, in 1989, the Indonesian government ratified a new law on the National Education System (UUSPN or *Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional*) in which madrasas and all Islamic educational institutions were not only changed from being a religious education institution to a general school; but also the graduates of senior secondary madrasas (Madrasa Aliyah) were able to pursue their higher education to public or secular universities (PTUN).<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, given the fact that IAINs only offer religious disciplines, those who want to pursue their higher education in non-religious disciplines cannot attend IAINs. It is in this respect, supported by political opportunity following the dawn fall of President Soeharto in May 1998, the long idea of conversion from IAIN to UIN gains exactly its momentum.

According to Azyumardi Azra, there are at least three main rationales urging the transformation of IAIN to UIN. *First*, the long-standing dichotomy between the Islamic religious sciences and 'secular'

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<sup>22</sup> Johan Meuleman "The Institut Agama Islam Negeri at the Crossroads: Some Notes on the Indonesian State Institutes for Islamic Studies," in Johan Meuleman (ed.), *Islam in the Era of Globalization*, pp. 205-217.

<sup>23</sup> Azyumardi Azra, "From IAIN to UIN: Islamic Studies in Indonesia," in Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (eds.), *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, p. 45.

<sup>24</sup> Azyumardi Azra, "Reforms in Islamic Education: A Global Perspective Seen from the Indonesian Case," in Charlene Tan (ed.) *Reforms in Islamic Education: International Perspectives* (New York-London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 65-66.

sciences can no longer be maintained, since that dichotomy has only brought about negative consequences for Muslim life. *Second*, Indonesian Muslims should play a greater role in almost all walks of life. However, due to the low quality of human resources within Muslim societies, they accordingly perform their unsatisfactory roles. Therefore, preparing all branches of knowledge within the programs of IAIN academic life constitutes an undeniable necessity. *Third*, the continuing decrease of prospective students as a result of *madrasahs* transformation into ‘public schools’ with an Islamic character as previously explained.<sup>25</sup>

Keeping in mind that there is actually no dichotomy of knowledge in Islam, Azyumardi Azra goes on explaining that at a philosophical level, the necessity of IAIN’s transformation to UIN is basically anchored on the notion of reintegration of Islamic religious sciences and “non-religious” sciences which is then—at least in UIN Jakarta—conducted at three level: *at the philosophical and epistemological levels; at the level of the curriculum; and at the level of faculty and academic programs.*<sup>26</sup>

In a slightly different way, but in a more sophisticated academic endeavor, M. Amin Abdullah explicates that spirit of reintegration of Islamic religious sciences with other sciences by using the metaphor of the “spider’s web of science” in which diverse disciplines are always in mutual connectedness, interact each other actively and dynamically. In other word, the types of relations between those various disciplines as well as their scientific methods have integrative and interconnective patterns, as this paper will explore in detail in the subsequent part.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Azyumardi Azra, “From IAIN to UIN: Islamic Studies in Indonesia,” in Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (eds.), *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> Azyumardi Azra, “From IAIN to UIN: Islamic Studies in Indonesia,” p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi: Pendekatan Integratif-Interkonektif* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2006), p. 107.

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## **The Epistemology of M. Amin Abdullah's and Its Position among New Trends in Islamic Studies**

As the history of humankind has come into contact with remarkable changes in managing and enhancing the quality of human life along with the extraordinary development in science in very wide disciplines, the way in which Islamic studies conducted should be accordingly adopted various approaches.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising if “in recent years there has been an increasingly growing trend towards the use of new disciplinary approaches in the understanding of various religion-influenced phenomena in Muslim societies”. In addition, “the field of Islamic studies now encompasses a wide variety of disciplines, including those of anthropology, sociology, political science, economics, and the more interdisciplinary fields of gender studies and area studies”.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, as already mentioned above, it should be kept in mind that the emergence of new approaches in Islamic studies within UINs has actually a long history and it, in some extent, is nothing but a continuation of efforts observed since 1970s. Moreover, regardless of its later development, it is also important to bear in mind that, within the context of UIN/IAIN/STAIN academic life, as interestingly highlighted by Azyumardi Azra, Islamic studies had spent a long-standing religious constraint and academic controversy amidst its academia.<sup>30</sup>

According to him, with its two fundamental tasks—both academic role and social role—that have not always gone hand in hand, we can possibly bring to light to four phases of Islamic studies within UIN/IAIN/STAIN academic life. In the first decades of IAIN development,

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<sup>28</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, “Religion, Science and Culture: An Integrated, Interconnected Paradigm of Science,” *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 52, no. 1 (2014), p. 182;

<sup>29</sup> Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory, “Introduction,” in Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (eds.), *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, p. v.

<sup>30</sup> Azyumardi Azra, “From IAIN to UIN: Islamic Studies in Indonesia,” in Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (eds.), *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, pp. 50-52.

the so-called *substantive and normative* approach focusing on *shari'ah* (Islamic law) and *aqidah* (Islamic faith) was its dominant approach. While in the second phase, a *normative-idealistic* approach was dominantly employed in which Islamic studies tended to be focused on a particular religious school (*madhhab*). And, thanks to the efforts of Nurcholish Madjid, Harun Nasution, and Mukti Ali, a *non-madhhabi* approach to Islamic studies in which Islam was studied from various perspectives was gradually and even predominantly employed in the third phase. Last, but not least, in the *fourth phase*, we witness the great shift of Islamic studies *from a normative approach to a historical, sociological, and empirical* approach.

On the other hand, this latest trend, so Azyumardi Azra goes on explaining, instigates controversies and debates among IAIN academia and brings the issue of IAIN's double tasks—as both academic institution and social-religious institution—back to academic debate. In addition, the western-rooted origin of this new trend which is, in certain degree, in opposition to that of the old trends with its traditions of Middle Eastern universities, finally brought about suspicion among some Muslim academic circles. Yet, one cannot other than agree with Azyumardi Azra's claim that, it is through the combination of this new trend along with the tradition of Middle Eastern universities, "IAIN may produce a distinct tradition of Islamic studies".<sup>31</sup>

Eventually, shedding light on the so-called "integrated and interconnected" paradigm of science in Islamic studies proposed by M. Amin Abdullah would possibly lead us to capture another latest development in Islamic studies within UIN/IAIN/STAIN academic sphere. As one of the towering figures in the effort of IAIN's transformation to UIN, M. Amin Abdullah<sup>32</sup> elaborates vividly this "integrated and interconnected"

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<sup>31</sup>Azyumardi Azra, "From IAIN to UIN: Islamic Studies in Indonesia," in Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (eds.), *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, p. 52.

<sup>32</sup> To grasp comprehensively one's idea we actually need to pay a close attention to his/her academic background. However, due to limited space, I finally leave this academic necessity. One of article which is worthy to read is Al Makin's article, "Teladan Intelektual-Pemimpin yang Berkarakter" in Moch Nur Ichwan and

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paradigm in almost his scientific works especially in his book entitled *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi: Pendekatan Integratif-Interkonektif* or *Islamic Studies in University: Integrative and Inter-Connective Approach*.

Throughout this book M. Amin Abdullah maintains that in this increasingly changing and complicated world, all branches of science—religious sciences (not excluding Islamic sciences or *ulum al-din*), social sciences, humanities, natural sciences)—undoubtedly can no longer stand alone in solving human problems. Once a certain science claims itself as capable and self-sufficient in solving any human issue or social problem, this scientific claim will actually lead it to narrow-mindedness or a kind of “scientific fanaticism” and myopic worldview as well. Accordingly, cooperation, mutual understanding, reciprocal criticism, and shared collaboration among all branches of science are undeniable scientific necessity and are unquestionably needed in contemporary human life.<sup>33</sup>

He keeps on illustrating in his introductory note of his aforementioned book that *epistemologically*; the “integrated and interconnected” paradigm constitutes his academic effort and scientific response towards some continuously “unanswered” question as well as “inherited” difficult problems within a long history of Islamic civilization. The scientific problem resulted from dichotomist belief regarding religious sciences vis-à-vis secular sciences or Islamic education vis-à-vis secular education that has been regrettably long perpetuated by two different ministries: Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) and Ministry of National Education (MONE).

In *axiological* sense, M. Amin Abdullah’s paradigm is an academic effort to offers a new worldview of Muslim scholars along with the spirit of academic openness, dialogue, cooperation, and transparency. While *ontologically*, it is expected that, regardless of the existing diverse disciplines,

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Ahmad Muttaqin (eds.), *Islam, Agama-Agama dan Nilai Kemanusiaan: Festschrift untuk M. Amin Abdullah* (Yogyakarta: CISForm-State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga, 2013), pp. 249-278.

<sup>33</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi: Pendekatan Integratif-Interkonektif* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2006), p. viii.

this paradigm would eventually open a more possible interdisciplinary cooperation among all branches of science.<sup>34</sup>

M. Amin Abdullah's appeal for terminating that treacherous dichotomy and putting forward a more integrated approaches in Islamic studies instead, is particularly well elaborated in his book chapter "Etika Tauhidik sebagai Dasar Kesatuan Epistemology Keilmuan Umum dan Agama: Dari Positivistik-Sekularistik ke Teoantroposentrik-Integralistik" – or "*Tauhidik* Ethic as Foundation for Epistemological Unity of General and Religious Sciences: From Positivist-Secularist Approach to Theo-Anthropocentric and Integral Approach".<sup>35</sup> Throughout this article he not only explains in details the danger of positivist-secularist paradigm of science for human life but also proposes a new program on the integration of scientific epistemology he later calls as "spider's web of Theo-Anthropocentric and integral science".

He reiterates it overtly in his article on "academic design of IAIN development to UIN"<sup>36</sup> when he says that the conversion of IAINs to UINs is actually a scientific project and should be seriously focused on expiring that dualistic worldview. In addition, so he argues, this "integration project" should not unquestionably be put in isolation from the requirement of interdisciplinary approaches, interconnectedness as well as mutual sensitivities among various disciplines and constantly maintained.

Therefore, students of Faculty of Islamic Law (*Syari'ah*), for instance, should also learn new subjects on contemporary humanities, new social sciences like hermeneutics, cultural and religious studies, human rights, gender studies, etc. To support his argument on the necessity of such interdisciplinary approach, M. Amin Abdullah quotes Ebrahim Moosa's notion in which he said that "the study of religion will suffer if its insights

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<sup>34</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, pp. vii-ix.

<sup>35</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, pp.92-114.

<sup>36</sup> "Desain Pengembangan Akademik IAIN Menuju UIN: Dari Pendekatan Dikotomis-Atomistik ke Integratif-Interkonektif," in M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, pp. 361-405.

do not take cognizance of how the discourses of politics, economics, and culture impact on the performance of religion and vice versa".<sup>37</sup>

Along the lines of his call for applying interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches in Islamic studies; M. Amin Abdullah's "integrated and interconnected" paradigm of science could be probably regarded as its embodiment and accurately represents those various disciplines of science. It is not surprising, therefore, when he proposes his notion regarding the necessity of distinguishing between the "normative" aspect of Islam and its "historical" ones along with employing interdisciplinary approach, he borrows, for instance, Fazlur Rahman's religious thought, and then compares as well as appropriates it with those of Karl R. Popper, Thomas S. Kuhn and Imre Lakatos' social thoughts simultaneously.<sup>38</sup>

According to M. Amin Abdullah, by distinguishing the so-called "normative Islam" from "historical Islam" and uses both concepts as tools of analysis, Fazlur Rahman actually makes his best effort to preserve the "unchangeable" normative aspect of Islam while in the same time remains critical to certain aspects of historical Islam which is changeable and open to any development. Keeping this in mind, all kinds of Islamic sciences—*ilm Kalam*/theology, *fiqh*/Islamic jurisprudence, philosophy as well as *tasawwuf*/Sufism—are deemed nothing but human products in which Muslim scholars should not make them as—to follow Fazlur Rahman's phrase—"prisoners of their own principles".<sup>39</sup>

For that reason, while quoting Fazlur Rahman's critical observation on overwhelming trend in Islamic studies in which dominated by—according to Fazlur Rahman—"the habit of writing commentaries for their own sake and the steady dwindling of original thought" as well as "the rise of a type of scholar who was truly encyclopedic in the scope of his learning but had little new to say on anything"; appropriating Karl R. Popper's notion, M. Amin Abdullah puts forward the following question: "Why do

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<sup>37</sup>M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, pp. 399-400.

<sup>38</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, p. 30.

<sup>39</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, pp. 27-28.

we often find so many things dealing with ‘the context of justification’ within Islamic sciences and hardly find anything within its ‘context of discovery’?”

Repeating Thomas S. Kuhn’s analytical tool, he also puts forward a question: “Why does the Islamic discourse tend to preserve boldly its ‘normal sciences’ rather than seek for scientific inquiry towards ‘revolutionary science’?” And, employing Imre Lakatos’ critical social thought, he again asks: “Why do most discussions of Islamic sciences often focused only on its preserved and impossibly falsified ‘hard core’ instead of creative discussion on its ‘protective belt’ which is undoubtedly open to falsification and criticism?”<sup>40</sup>

By borrowing Imre Lakatos’s expansion of Karl Popper’s theory of falsification, M. Amin Abdullah finally concludes that the main divisions of science do not lie on independent theories but on its research programs instead, in which each program has its own multiple theories. He goes on explaining that any research program actually has always two components: *hard core* and *protective belt*. While the *hard core* component consists of core values; the *protective belt* constitutes values later developed from their core along with its supporting hypothesis. It is the components existing within this *protective belt* which are open to be critiqued, falsified and revised; while the core values (*hard core*) remain constantly protected. Nevertheless, since Imre Lakatos’ notion of non-falsification which necessarily means dogmatism, in case of certain condition in which the values within that *protective belt* fail to respond to the existing changes, the research program is inevitably should be re-conducted.<sup>41</sup>

According to M. Amin Abdullah, despite Fazlur Rahman did not give any clear-cut answer to the question whether Islamic sciences can build certain research program in which various theories potentially compete each other or no, he, however, gave us direction by which the trajectory of research program in Islamic sciences should be reconstructed and reformulated. He keeps on stating that what so-called “normative Islam” in

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<sup>40</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, pp.30-31.

<sup>41</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, p. 47



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Fazlur Rahman's sense is actually parallel and equivalent to what Imre Lakatos calls as "hard core" of any branch of science; while Fazlur Rahman's concept of "historical Islam" equals to Imre Lakatos' concept of "protective belt" in which science or system of knowledge is open to any critique and possibly re-questioned, reexamined, reformulated and reconstructed a new.<sup>42</sup>

In other word, as Carool Kersten correctly puts, it is M. Amin Abdullah's appreciative discussion of Fazlur Rahman, Charles Adams, and Richard Martin's critiques and even the more radical view of Mohammed Arkoun that leads him an alternative route into the work of those aforementioned philosophers of science. He also keeps on arguing that "the main lesson he takes from them is that even the assumed objectivity of the natural sciences is situated and influenced by the ethos of the researchers involved". In addition, M. Amin Abdullah shows us that Imre Lakatos' concept of "hard core" (which equates Fazlur Rahman's concept of "normative Islam") and "protective belt" (Fazlur Rahman's "historical Islam") of research programs can be effectively employed in Islamic studies.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, M. Amin Abdullah's paradigm is probably well summed up in his public lecture during his membership inauguration of Indonesia Academy of Science (AIPI), September 3, 2013 ago, in which he stated that "an interconnected and integrated paradigm of scientific knowledge (*takamul al-'ulum; izdiwaj al-ma'arif*) is necessary for the study of religion and especially the study of *'ulum al-din* in the present, let alone in the future".<sup>44</sup>

He strongly suggests that neglecting the necessity of interconnected and integrated paradigm of scientific knowledge will, in turn, have much more dangerous implications and consequences both in the social order, in

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<sup>42</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>43</sup> Carool Kersten, "Islamic Post Traditionalism: Postcolonial and Postmodern Religious Discourse in Indonesia," *Sophia*, Dec. 2015, Vol. 54, Issue 4, p. 486.

<sup>44</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, "Religion, Science and Culture: An Integrated, Interconnected Paradigm of Science," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 52, no. 1 (2014), p. 199

culture, and in the spheres of local, regional, national and global politics. For that reason, M. Amin Abdullah overtly concludes that “linearity of religious knowledge will only result in learners having a myopic view of life despite the reality of an increasingly religious society, one which is not simple as before, but rather is incredibly complex, as complex as life itself”.<sup>45</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

Regardless of the contributions of many towering figures in the development of Islamic studies in UIN/IAIN/STAIN’s academic life, I cannot other than agree with those who have high regard on the significant systematic-epistemological contribution of M. Amin Abdullah’s integrated and inter-connected paradigm of Islamic studies. Therefore, despite the enduring diverse research approaches in Islamic studies exercised within UIN/IAIN/STAIN academic circles is unquestionably far from being academically exhaustive; yet, it is not an exaggeration to state that it is due to his epistemological contribution that the increasingly academic consciousness among UIN/IAIN/STAIN’s scholars and researchers on the necessity of integrated academic worldview along with the need of inter-connected approaches in Islamic studies, in some extents, augments a new hope for a better enhancement in the near future.

We expect that those various approaches would inevitably provide a new tradition of Islamic studies. Quoting Azyumardi Azra’s assertion, there is little doubt that if this new trend is continuously well maintained and persistently supported, “its development could be a ‘perfect’ combination of the two great traditions of Islamic studies developed in the Middle East and in the West. The end result is clear: the emergence of a distinctive Indonesian tradition of Islamic studies.”<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, due to diverse academic backgrounds of UIN/IAIN/STAIN’s students, both in undergraduate and graduate program,

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<sup>45</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, “Religion, Science and Culture,” p. 199.

<sup>46</sup> Azyumardi Azra, “From IAIN to UIN: Islamic Studies in Indonesia,” in Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (eds.), *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, p. 54.

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in which, for certain students, disciplines of humanities as well as basic Islamic sciences are almost unfamiliar terrains, M. Amin Abdullah's paradigm is oftentimes too hard to be brought down to earth. Accordingly, in certain case, "integrated and interconnected paradigm of Islamic sciences" is often misunderstood as simply mixing the Qur'anic verses or the sayings of the Prophet with, and embed them in, the theories of natural or social sciences within certain topics of scientific discourse.

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