The Dynamics of Kitab Kuning Transmission and Islamic Literacy in Shaping Cultural Identity and Public Civility in Salaf Pesantren in East Java

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Abstract. This study synthesized the dynamics of *kitab kuning* transmission and Islamic literacy traditions in Salaf pesantren in East Java. A qualitative meta-synthesis was conducted on nine empirical studies selected purposively based on their relevance to the research questions. Data were analyzed through thematic synthesis using coding, categorization, and cross-study comparison. New Literacy Studies served as the overarching conceptual framework, complemented by perspectives on scholarly networks, *sanad/isnad*, pesantren historiography, *cultural capital*, *habitus*, *adab*, and Great and Little Tradition. The synthesis generated four themes across two research questions. RQ1 identified knowledge transmission networks and transformation and adaptation of transmission, showing that *kitab kuning* was sustained through teacher–student relationships, scholarly and alumni networks, traditional pedagogies, and textual mediation while adapting through pedagogical hybridization and digitalization. RQ2 identified literacy, identity, and ethical formation and social reproduction and public orientation, demonstrating that literacy practices supported the internalization of knowledge, *adab*, spirituality, and cultural identity, while extending into community engagement and broader social orientations. Overall, *kitab kuning* transmission was not limited to textual preservation but constituted a dynamic process of knowledge internalization and cultural reproduction. The findings positioned pesantren as living intellectual communities that maintained scholarly traditions through continuity, adaptation, and socially embedded literacy practices.

Keywords: *kitab kuning*, pesantren, knowledge transmission, Islamic literacy, cultural identity, public civility, qualitative meta-synthesis.

1 Introduction

Pesantren are Islamic educational institutions that play a vital role in preserving and transmitting Islamic scholarly traditions in Indonesia. In the context of Salaf pesantren, the “kitab kuning” occupies a central position as a source of learning for various Islamic disciplines and as a medium for the transmission of classical Islamic intellectual traditions. Through the study of the “kitab kuning”, pesantren not only maintain the continuity of religious knowledge but also transmit values, methodologies of thought, and scholarly ethics to generations of students [1], [2].

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The transmission of knowledge within the Islamic pesantren tradition cannot be separated from the scholarly networks connecting scholars from the Indonesian archipelago with centers of Islamic learning in the Middle East. Studies on the network of scholars between the Middle East and the Indonesian archipelago show that Javanese scholars and students who pursued their studies in Mecca and Medina later returned to the archipelago and served as *transmitters* of the intellectual and religious traditions from these centers of Islamic scholarship [1]. These networks were built through teacher-student relationships and chains *of isnad*, which enabled the continuity of knowledge transmission across generations [1].

In the context of pesantren, the continuity of this transmission is realized through the practice of studying the kitab kuning. The *sorogan*, *bandongan*, and *wetonan* methods are part of the pesantren's pedagogical tradition, passed down from generation to generation. In *sorogan*, students read the text individually in front of a kiai or ustadz and receive immediate corrections, whereas in *bandongan* or *wetonan*, the kiai reads and explains the text while the students listen and interpret its meaning. This approach not only serves to transfer knowledge but also fosters pedagogical, cultural, and spiritual relationships between the kiai and the students [3].

Empirical research at Islamic boarding schools in East Java shows that this practice remains an important part of the continuity of the "kitab kuning" tradition. Research at the Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic Boarding School shows that the "kitab kuning" learning system employs the *sorogan*, *wetonan*, and *bandongan* methods [4]. The boarding school has also developed the Amtsilati, Al-Miftah, Al-Fatih, and Bahtsul Masail methods to help students read, understand, and interpret "kitab kuning" texts, as well as to enhance their critical thinking skills.

Similar findings were observed in a study at the Sabilul Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School in Mojokerto [3]. The study showed that the *wetonan* method involves the kiai or ustadz reading, translating, and explaining the text, while the students listen and take notes on the explanations. This method was reported to increase students' interest in learning, their understanding of the text's content, and their skills in analyzing and interpreting the text [3]. Interestingly, *wetonan* serves not only as a mechanism for conveying knowledge. This study shows that the practice is also linked to the development of proper learning etiquette and *respect* for teachers, while simultaneously serving as a means of preserving pesantren traditions. At the same time, pesantren are adapting by incorporating discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and combining *wetonan* with *sorogan* and musyawarah to address contemporary learning needs [3].

The dimensions of the transmission and reproduction of scholarly authority are also evident in the Lirboyo pesantren tradition. This study shows that the study of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), along with the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods, serve as mechanisms for both the transformation of knowledge and the reproduction of religious authority [5]. *Bandongan* provides collective scholarly exposition, while *sorogan* allows for individual deepening of understanding through direct correction from the teacher. This process reinforces the continuity of the sanad and the legitimacy of the kiai in the transmission of religious knowledge [5].

On the other hand, the transmission of classical Islamic texts also reveals a broader dimension than mere mastery of the text. A study on *nadzam* literacy and *muḥāfaẓah* at

the Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic Boarding School shows that these practices serve as mechanisms for both the transmission of knowledge and the internalization of the boarding school's values and spirituality. Literacy activities carried out repeatedly and collectively contribute to the formation of communal identity and the spiritual awareness of the students [6]. This pattern indicates that "kitab kuning" literacy can be understood more broadly as a social practice, not merely a technical skill for reading texts. The *New Literacy Studies* (NLS) perspective, developed by Brian Street, views literacy as a social practice that varies according to space, time, and social context, and is linked to power relations and identity. NLS distinguishes between *autonomous* and *ideological* models of literacy, with the latter positioning literacy as a practice embedded in a community's epistemological and social principles [7].

This perspective is highly relevant for interpreting the "kitab kuning" tradition in pesantren, as the literacy practices that take place there are not entirely practices created locally. Street emphasizes that literacy practices often originate from outside the local community and bring with them broader skills, meanings, and interests. Therefore, the relationship between *local* and *distant* elements is crucial for understanding how a literacy practice is formed and reproduced [7]. In the context of the "kitab kuning," this perspective opens up the possibility of connecting broader networks of scholarly transmission with the ways in which these texts are practiced, interpreted, and passed down within pesantren communities.

A number of studies in East Java also show that the practice of "kitab kuning" literacy is not static. At the Fatihul Ulum Al-Mahfudz Islamic Boarding School in Jember, for example, "kitab kuning" instruction remains an important part of the boarding school and madrasah diniyah curricula, while the management of instruction demonstrates an integration between the Salafist educational system and more adaptive forms of learning [8]. This phenomenon demonstrates that the continuity of tradition does not always mean preserving the old forms in their entirety, but can occur through a process of adaptation to a changing educational context.

Previous research has highlighted several important dimensions of the Kitab Kuning tradition, namely the transmission of knowledge, pedagogical practices, textual literacy, teacher–student relationships, the internalization of values, identity formation, and adaptation to changing times. However, these dimensions are still more often studied in isolation. Studies on networks of ulama primarily explain the pathways and actors involved in the transmission of knowledge, while research on pesantren in East Java focuses more on teaching methods, the ability to read and understand the kitab, the cultivation of adab, spirituality, and pedagogical innovations. There have not been many studies that synthesize all of these dimensions to explain the relationship between the transmission of the "kitab kuning," literacy as a social practice, the formation of cultural identity, and public civility.

This gap is significant because the transmission of the "kitab kuning" is fundamentally not merely a matter of passing texts from one generation or place to the next. Transmission also encompasses the transfer of authority, ways of reading, ways of understanding knowledge, teacher–student relationships, values, and patterns of behavior that are subsequently reproduced through the daily practices of the pesantren. The con-

ceptual framework of this study utilizes the theory of ulama networks and the epistemology *of sanad/isnad* to analyze the historical dimensions of transmission, while the concepts of cultural capital and *habitus*, adab, and *the Great and Little Traditions* are used to understand how literacy practices can contribute to the formation of cultural identity and public civility.

Based on this argument, this study synthesizes existing research on the Kitab Kuning tradition in East Javanese pesantren to identify patterns of transmission, forms of literacy practices, mechanisms for the internalization of values and identity, and ways in which the tradition adapts to changing contexts. This study aims to answer two questions: (1) what is the history and route of transmission through which the "kitab kuning" entered and spread throughout the pesantren network in East Java; and (2) how does the "kitab kuning"-based literacy tradition contribute to the formation of cultural identity and public civility within pesantren communities?

2 Method

This study employs a qualitative meta-synthesis approach to integrate and interpret findings from qualitative research on the transmission of the "kitab kuning" and Islamic literacy practices in pesantren in East Java. This approach was chosen to identify patterns, similarities, variations, and conceptual relationships across studies without calculating statistical effect sizes [9]. The synthesis was conducted using the New Literacy Studies (NLS) as the primary conceptual framework, which views literacy as a social practice shaped by cultural context, social relations, values, and power [7]. An intellectual history perspective was used to understand the pathways, actors, and networks of "kitab kuning" transmission, while perspectives from the sociology of literacy and pedagogy were used to analyze literacy practices, the internalization of values, identity, and the adaptation of pesantren traditions.

The research data consist of 9 scholarly articles and academic studies that discuss pesantren, classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), the transmission of knowledge, literacy practices, the study of classical texts, values and etiquette, identity, and the adaptation of pesantren traditions to the empirical context of East Java. The studies were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the two research questions. Studies were included if: (1) they discussed pesantren or Islamic educational institutions relevant to the pesantren tradition; (2) they had a direct connection to the "kitab kuning" the transmission of knowledge, or text-based literacy practices; (3) they were set in an empirical context in East Java; and (4) they provided findings that contributed to RQ1 and/or RQ2. Studies that do not have an East Java context, are not substantively related to the research focus, or do not provide empirical findings were excluded from the corpus. Theoretical references and studies outside of East Java were used only as supporting sources and were not treated as units of analysis.

Data from each study were extracted using a coding matrix developed based on the research questions and conceptual framework. The information extracted included study characteristics, the pesantren context, the objects/traditions under study, actors and transmission mechanisms, literacy practices, scholarly authority, values and the

process of internalization, cultural identity, social dimensions, and forms of adaptation to change. The coding process then grouped the findings into several analytical domains, namely (1) genealogy and transmission, (2) literacy as a social practice, (3) cultural reproduction and identity, and (4) adaptation and public orientation. Each study was treated as a unit of analysis to enable cross-case comparisons and maintain traceability between the primary research findings and the synthesis results.

The data were analyzed using thematic synthesis to identify and interpret cross-study patterns. The analysis was conducted iteratively through three main stages: (1) *line-by-line coding* of relevant findings from each study; (2) grouping codes with similar meanings into *descriptive categories*; and (3) developing *analytical themes* through cross-study comparisons to identify convergent patterns, variations, and conceptual relationships [10].

The findings of the synthesis were then categorized based on two research questions. RQ1 yielded two themes that explain the pathways, actors, mechanisms, and transformations involved in the transmission of the "kitab kuning". RQ2 yielded two themes that explain the formation of cultural identity and orientation toward civilization through "kitab kuning" literacy practices. The final interpretation uses NLS as a conceptual framework, drawing on the theory of ulama networks, sanad/isnad, pesantren historiography, *cultural capital* and *habitus*, the concept *of adab*, and *the Great and Little Traditions* as analytical perspectives corresponding to the focus of each research question.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

3.1.1 Characteristics of the Included Studies

A total of 9 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis phase. These studies encompassed qualitative field research, case studies, evaluative qualitative studies, and literature reviews that examined the transmission, learning, literacy, transformation, and sustainability of the kitab kuning tradition in the context of pesantren. The characteristics of the analyzed studies are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Included Studies.

No.	Study	Year	Pesantren/Context	Design	Main focus relevant to synthesis
1	Qosim & Ma'arif	2023	PP Zainul Hasanain Genggong, Probolinggo	Qualitative descriptive case study	Transmission and Improvement of the Quality of Classical Islamic Text Education through *Sorogan, Wetonan, Bandongan*, as well as Amtsilati, Al-

					Miftah, Al-Fatih, and *Bahtsul Masail*
2	Mas'ud	2017	PP Tambakberas, Jombang	Mixed qualitative–quantitative study	The transmission *of al-Ḥikam*, congregational/alumnus networks, and religious-Sufi and social motivations in religious study groups
3	Mahmudi et al.	2024	Al-Fatah Putri Islamic Boarding School, Temboro, Magetan	Qualitative descriptive field study	Methods of knowledge transmission through Aroby, *commentary/exegesis* using Pegon, and Al-Miftah
4	Putra & Rofi'ah	2023	Pesantren context, Jombang	Qualitative case study	Challenges in Learning Classical Islamic Texts: Mastery of *the Nahwu–Sharaf*, Motivation, *Teacher-Centered* Approach, and the Need for Pedagogical Revitalization
5	Muttaqien et al.	2025	Madrasah Diniyah Taklimiyah PP Zainul Hasan Genggong	Qualitative case study	Integration of *nadzam* literacy, *muḥāfaẓah*, traditional evaluation, spiritual conditioning, and character building for santri
6	Aziz, Atmari & Gunawan	2025	PP Sabilul Muttaqin, Pungging, Mojokerto	Qualitative descriptive field study	The *wetonan* strategy in the study of classical Islamic texts, text comprehension, interest in learning, and analytical and interpretive skills
7	Ibrahim & Mukhsin	2025	PP Fatihul Ulum Al Mahfudz, Manggisan, Tanggul, Jember	Qualitative case study	Integration of the *sorogan, bandongan,* and *musyawarah* methods with modern approaches, *problem-solving*, technology, and digital applications
8	Sholahuddin & Anwar	2023	PP Al-Ma'ruf Kendal, Dander, Bojonegoro	Qualitative case study	Transitioning the traditional Islamic education model to a digital platform and to expand access for alumni and the community

9	Muzakki & Nisa'	2020	Darussalam Mekar Agung Islamic Boarding School, Madiun	Qualitative study; semiotic and deconstructive analysis	The transformation of the Salaf pesantren tradition, changes in relationships and authority, and *continuity and change* in the face of modernity

3.1.2 Transmission and Transformation

Knowledge Transmission Networks

The findings of this synthesis indicate that the transmission of classical Islamic texts in the analyzed studies occurs through teacher–student relationships, traditional teaching methods, scholarly networks, and the mediation of language and texts. These patterns were found across various pesantren contexts in East Java, although their forms and emphases differed across studies.

The teacher–student relationship as the primary mechanism of transmission

The relationship between the kiai or ustadz and the santri is a consistent element in the transmission of the kitab kuning. At the Zainul Hasanain Genggong Islamic Boarding School, the kiai serves as both a leader and a teacher, while the teaching staff comes from a network of Salafist boarding schools such as Lirboyo, Sarang, and even Yemen. The process of studying the kitab kuning takes place through *sorogan, wetonan,* and *bandongan*. This pattern of transmission based on direct interaction is also evident at the Sabilul Muttaqin Islamic Boarding School in Mojokerto. In the *wetonan* practice, the kiai reads the text aloud while the santri listen and take notes. The study shows that this practice is linked to an improved understanding of the book's content as well as the santri's ability to analyze and interpret the text.

At the Fatihul Ulum Al-Mahfudz Islamic boarding school, the direct relationship between teachers and students is most evident in the *sorogan* method. Students read or attempt to understand a text in front of the teacher, who then observes, asks questions, and corrects any errors in their reading. This method is applied individually and involves the active participation of the students. Therefore, these studies reveal two main forms of pedagogical relationships in the transmission of religious texts: collective transmission through the teacher's instruction to groups of students, such as in *bandongan* and *wetonan sessions*, and individual transmission through direct interaction, such as in *sorogan*.

Traditional Methods as the Infrastructure of Transmission

Sorogan, bandongan, and *wetonan* have emerged as recurring methods in various studies. At Genggong, these three methods are part of the Kitab Kuning learning system preserved in Salaf pesantren. A similar pattern is found at Fatihul Ulum Al-Mahfudz. In addition to *sorogan* and *bandongan*, this pesantren also employs *munaqosah* and other forms of instruction in the study of the Kitab Kuning.

Meanwhile, research at Sabilul Muttaqin specifically shows that *wetonan* is conducted through the reading of classical Islamic texts by a kiai or ustadz in front of the students. In practice, the students follow along with the reading using the same text and take notes on the explanations provided. These cross-study findings indicate that traditional methods remain a key component in the transmission of classical Islamic texts, whether through individual or collective learning.

Transmission through scholarly and social networks

The transmission of the kitab kuning also takes place through networks that extend beyond direct interactions in the classroom or halaqah. In Genggong, the instructors come from several *pesantren salaf*, including Lirboyo and Sarang, and there are also instructors from Yemen. This network is also evident in the *al-Ḥikam* study sessions in Tambakberas, Jombang. The participants in these study sessions come from various regions of East Java, including Bojonegoro, Tuban, Lamongan, Gresik, Surabaya, Sidoarjo, Malang, Pasuruan, Probolinggo, Lumajang, Ngawi, Madiun, Nganjuk, Kediri, and Tulungagung. These findings indicate that the transmission of religious texts does not occur solely within the physical boundaries of the pesantren. Study sessions serve as a space connecting the pesantren with participants from various regions, thereby allowing the knowledge conveyed through these texts to reach a broader community.

Language, script, and literacy tools

In addition to social relationships and teaching methods, the transmission of classical Islamic texts is also carried out through linguistic mediation and teaching materials. A study at the Al-Fatah Putri Temboro Islamic Boarding School shows that the school uses the Aroby program, with Arabic as the primary language in the process of transmitting knowledge. At the same time, *the commentary on the texts* (*syarah kitab* or *ngesai)* is conducted in Javanese using the Pegon script. This process is supported by the Al-Miftah method to help students read the texts in accordance with Arabic grammatical rules. The use of Al-Miftah indicates that the transmission process relies not only on mastery of the texts themselves but also on the students' ability to access them. This method was designed to aid in the reading of the texts through summaries of *nahwu–sharaf* rules and the use *of nadzam* as part of the learning process. Therefore, several studies have shown that language, script, and pedagogical tools are integral to the transmission mechanism, particularly when the classical Islamic texts require specific linguistic and grammatical skills.

Table 2. Summary of Findings for Theme 1 (Knowledge Transmission Networks)

Patterns of Findings	Forms of Findings	Supporting Studies
Teacher–student transmission	Kiai/ustadz read, explain, guide, and correct	Qosim & Ma'arif (2023); Aziz et al. (2025); Ibrahim & Mukhsin (2025)
Traditional pedagogical transmission	*Sorogan, bandongan, wetonan, munaqosah*	Qosim & Ma'arif (2023); Aziz et al. (2025); Ibrahim & Mukhsin (2025)

Scholarly/social networks	Networks of teachers from other Islamic boarding schools; inter-regional congregations	Qosim & Ma'arif (2023); Mas'ud (2017)
Linguistic/textual mediation	Arabic, Javanese, Pegon, *syarah/ngesai*, Al-Miftah	Mahmudi et al. (2024)

The transmission of classical Islamic texts in East Java pesantren occurs through a network that combines teacher–student relationships, traditional pedagogical methods, scholarly and social networks, as well as linguistic mediation and literacy tools.

Transformation and Adaptation of Transmission

The findings of this study indicate that the transmission of the Kitab Kuning in pesantren is not a static process. In addition to preserving traditional methods, a number of pesantren have implemented pedagogical adaptations, integrated modern teaching methods, utilized technology, and expanded the scope of transmission through digital platforms. These adaptations take various forms, ranging from modifications to teaching methods within the pesantren to changes in the media used to convey knowledge to the broader community.

Adaptations in Learning Methods

One form of adaptation observed is the development of teaching methods that remain rooted in pesantren traditions but are tailored to the students' learning needs. At the Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic Boarding School, the *sorogan, wetonan,* and *bandongan* methods are supplemented with approaches such as Amtsilati, Al-Miftah, Al-Fatih, and *bahtsul masail*. The use of these methods is intended to help students read and understand classical Islamic texts while developing their ability to delve deeper into religious issues. Findings regarding the adaptation of methods are also evident at the Fatihul Ulum Al-Mahfudz Islamic Boarding School in Jember. This boarding school combines the *sorogan, bandongan,* and *musyawarah* methods with a *text-based study* approach and *problem-solving-based* lectures. Research indicates that this integration is designed to strengthen students' understanding of classical texts while developing skills relevant to modern education.

This form of adaptation does not merely involve adding new methods but also shifts the focus of the learning process. In *the study of texts* at Fatihul Ulum, for example, instruction emphasizes the students' understanding of the text rather than simply covering as much material as possible. This method was developed from a combination *of sorogan* and *bandongan*, and is supplemented with analyses *of nahwu* and *sharaf*, as well as exercises in reading and directly comprehending the text.

Integration of Traditional and Modern Methods

In addition to methodological modifications, several studies indicate the integration of traditional systems with modern approaches. At Fatihul Ulum Al-Mahfudz, traditional methods are not eliminated but are implemented alongside approaches that are more oriented toward the active engagement of students. The *musyawarah* method, for example, is used to discuss *Fath al-Qarib*, *nahwu*, *sharaf*, and *balaghah*, drawing on

various texts as sources of discussion. This integration is also evident in the use *of problem-solving-based* lectures. Unlike, where lectures tend to be teacher-centered, this approach is designed to engage students in the learning process and in solving problems related to the material.

These findings indicate that the adaptation of classical Islamic text instruction can occur through hybridization—that is, by preserving the methods traditionally used in pesantren while incorporating approaches that foster more active student engagement and understanding.

The Use of Technology in the Pesantren Environment

Transformation is also evident through the use of information technology in the pesantren education system. At Fatihul Ulum Al-Mahfudz, the pesantren's development is marked by the integration of Salafiyah education with technology and modern educational systems. The use of technology is manifested, among other things, through a parent-student app, computer lab facilities, and a digital system for administration and monitoring student progress. In the context of studying classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), this technology has become part of the broader educational environment. Thus, the adaptation of technology occurs not only in the media used to study these texts but also within the overall ecosystem of pesantren educational management.

A more pronounced form of transformation was observed at the Al-Ma'ruf Islamic Boarding School in Kendal, Dander, Bojonegoro. This study reveals a shift from the traditional model of religious text study—previously led by kiai and attended by students within the boarding school—to learning that is accessible to the general public via YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. This transformation was influenced by the leadership of the kiai, the trend of information modernization, and encouragement from students and alumni. These findings demonstrate that digitization has expanded the reach of knowledge transmission. Knowledge that was previously confined to the physical space of the pesantren can now be disseminated to a wider audience through digital media.

However, this process has not been universally accepted. The same study found that some people hold conservative views, believing that the existing educational model does not need to be changed. Therefore, digital transformation in Islamic boarding schools is taking place alongside a balancing act between preserving tradition and the demands for change.

Abraar's study identified further forms of transformation through the use of digital fiqh applications in several Islamic boarding schools, including Tebuireng, Lirboyo, Sidogiri, Gontor, and the Al-Falah Ploso. Digitization offers benefits such as broader access to classical references, greater efficiency in *bahtsul masail*, and increased interest in traditional texts. However, the study also found changes in transmission patterns. Some students are increasingly relying on digital applications rather than direct guidance from teachers. The study reports a tendency toward textual understanding without the guidance of a kiai, while the practice *of sorogan* is beginning to be sidelined and the figure of the "digital ustadz"—who gains influence through social media—is emerging. Another finding from the study indicates that changes in media are also linked to changes in communication patterns between students and kiai. Access to

YouTube, online articles, and digital discussion forums allows students to obtain information without always having to interact directly with their teachers. Thus, digitization has produced two concurrent patterns: on the one hand, it expands access and accelerates the pursuit of knowledge; on the other hand, it alters interaction patterns and transmission mechanisms that were previously centered on direct relationships between teachers and students.

Table 3. Summary of Findings for Theme 2 (Transformation and Adaptation of Transmission)

Patterns of Findings	Forms of Adaptation/Transformation	Supporting Studies
Pedagogical adaptation	Amtsilati, Al-Miftah, Al-Fatih, *bahtsul masail*	Qosim & Ma'arif (2023)
Method integration	*Sorogan, bandongan, musyawarah* + *study text* and *problem solving*	Ibrahim & Mukhsin (2025)
Technology integration	Digital applications and technology-based education systems	Ibrahim & Mukhsin (2025)
Digital expansion	YouTube, Facebook, Instagram; access to the public and alumni	Sholahuddin & Anwar (2023)
Digital access	Access to classical references and the efficiency of *bahtsul masail*	Abraar (2025)
Transmission reconfiguration	Reduced reliance on direct guidance; the emergence of "digital ustadz"	Abraar (2025)

The transmission of the *kitab kuning* has undergone a transformation through pedagogical adaptation, the integration of traditional and modern methods, the use of technology, and the expansion of access via digital platforms. However, this transformation has also been accompanied by changes in the patterns of teacher–student interaction and the mechanisms of scholarly authority.

3.1.3 Cultural Identity and Public Civility

Literacy, Identity, and Ethical Formation

The results of the synthesis indicate that the practice of Kitab Kuning literacy in the analyzed studies is not only related to the ability to read and memorize texts but also encompasses repetition, comprehension, habituation, and the internalization of values. Several studies specifically link these practices to character development, moral and spiritual values, and the sustainability of the pesantren's scholarly identity.

Literacy as a practice of repetition and mastery of texts

One form of literacy identified is the practice *of taqrîr,* or the recitation of memorized *nadzam*. At the Madrasah Diniyah Taklimiyah Pondok Putri Pusat Zainul Hasan Genggong, *the taqrîr of the nadzam Safînatun Najâh* is performed before teaching and learning activities begin. This practice is not only intended to reinforce memorization but is also used as part of a fiqh literacy program and to familiarize students with clas-

sical texts. In the same study, *the nadzam* is not treated merely as material to be memorized. Students are guided to understand the text and the values it contains. Therefore, this literacy practice encompasses the relationship between memorization, comprehension, and familiarity with classical Islamic texts.

Literacy as the internalization of values

The most consistent finding in Genggong's study is the connection between Kitab Kuning literacy and the formation of values. The fiqh literacy program is designed not only as an academic activity but also as a means of strengthening the character of santri. Memorizing *nadzam* is said to have cognitive, spiritual, and moral dimensions, and is intended to ensure that santri not only master the text but also inherit the values and scholarly etiquette of Islam. The study also shows that literacy activities serve as a bridge between the values and struggles of the *masyayikh* and the lives of today's students. The selection of *Safînatun Najâh*, a work by the pesantren's founder, holds symbolic value in relation to the scholarly tradition of the Salaf; the analyzed study reveals that classical Islamic text literacy can function both as a learning practice and as a means of instilling values.

Literacy and Character Development

The relationship between the study of classical Islamic texts and character development is also evident in studies examining the integration of literacy and traditional assessment. Findings from a study of the Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic boarding school indicate that the integration of *nadzam* literacy, tradition-based assessment, and spiritual practices forms an educational process that encompasses intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. In this study, the pesantren is not merely viewed as a place for the transfer of knowledge but also as an environment that shapes students to be knowledgeable, civilized, and spiritually grounded.

These findings regarding character development expand upon the results of previous studies on the challenges of learning classical Islamic texts. Research at the Tarbiyatunnasyi'in Islamic Boarding School in Pacul Gowang, Jombang, found that barriers to learning are not only related to mastery *of nahwu–sharaf* but also to students' motivation, limitations in teaching methods, and the boarding school's learning environment. Thus, success in learning the classical Islamic texts depends not only on mastery of the material but also on pedagogical conditions that support student engagement in the learning process.

Other findings, such as the dimension of identity, are evident primarily through the selection of texts and literacy practices that connect students with the history of the pesantren. At Genggong, *Safînatun Najâh* was chosen not only for its content on fiqh but also because it holds symbolic value as a work of Salaf scholarship and is associated with the pesantren's founder. The practice of memorizing *nadzam* then serves as a link between the values of *the masyayikh's* struggle and the lives of santri today. This finding indicates that, in some pesantren contexts, literacy in classical Islamic texts is not separate from the institution's history. The texts studied can simultaneously serve as markers of the continuity of the pesantren's scholarly tradition.

Table 4. Summary of Findings for Theme 1. (Literacy, Identity, and Ethical Formation)

Patterns of Findings	Form of Practice	Reported Results	Supporting Studies
Repetitive literacy	*Taqrîr* and memorization of *poetry*	Strengthening memorization and familiarity with classical texts	Muttaqien et al. (2025)
Textual understanding	Memorization accompanied by text comprehension	Mastery of knowledge goes beyond memorization	Muttaqien et al. (2025)
Value internalization	Traditional literacy practices and evaluation	Moral, spiritual, and scholarly values	Muttaqien et al. (2025)
Character formation	Integration of literacy, evaluation, and spiritual cultivation	Development of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions	Muttaqien et al. (2025)
Cultural continuity	The use of texts with symbolic value for Islamic boarding schools	The relationship between the traditions of the *masyayikh* and the lives of santri	Muttaqien et al. (2025)
Pedagogical conditions	The study of religious texts in the context of the pesantren environment	Motivation, methods, and environment all influence the learning process	Putra & Rofi'ah (2023)

The practice of *kitab kuning* literacy in the study analyzed encompasses the processes of repetition, mastery and understanding of the text, habituation, and the internalization of values. In certain contexts, this practice also serves to connect students with the values, etiquette, and continuity of the pesantren's scholarly tradition.

Social Reproduction and Public Orientation

The findings of this study indicate that the transmission of the *kitab kuning* does not stop within the internal environment of the pesantren. Several studies show that this transmission has expanded through alumni, congregants, the surrounding community, and digital spaces, allowing the knowledge acquired within the pesantren to be passed on and applied in the broader social context. At the same time, this expansion also reflects changes in the patterns of relationships between pesantren, the community, and sources of religious knowledge.

Continuity of learning through alumni networks

One form of continuity in transmission is found in the relationship between the pesantren and its alumni. A study on the study *of al-Ḥikam* at Tambakberas shows that alumni continue to study this text even after they are no longer in the pesantren's educational environment. Study sessions at Bahrul Ulum Tambakberas are held regularly and attended by alumni as well as members of the community surrounding the pesantren. This continuity is not limited to alumni attendance at the study sessions. The research indicates that alumni are committed to continuing to study and delve deeper into the text even though they have their own busy lives. The pesantren also provides a space for alumni to continue this learning process. Thus, the transmission of classical

Islamic texts in this context extends beyond the students' formal education phase through the ongoing relationship between the pesantren and its alumni.

Expanding from the pesantren community to society at large

The transmission network was also found to extend to communities outside the pesantren environment. The *al-Ḥikam* study sessions in Tambakberas were attended by participants from various regions of East Java, including Bojonegoro, Tuban, Lamongan, Gresik, Surabaya, Sidoarjo, Malang, Pasuruan, Probolinggo, Lumajang, Ngawi, Madiun, Nganjuk, Kediri, and Tulungagung. These findings demonstrate that spaces for the transmission of classical Islamic texts can serve as venues for cross-regional gatherings, not limited to students residing at the pesantren. A similar pattern is observed at the Al-Ma'ruf Kendal Pesantren in Bojonegoro. This pesantren not only strives to improve the quality of education for its students but also organizes Islamic education programs for the surrounding community and the residents of Kendal Village in general. These activities are aimed at enhancing the role of Islamic boarding schools within the community while simultaneously strengthening public acceptance of their presence.

These studies appear to indicate a pattern of outward orientation—that is, an educational orientation in Islamic boarding schools that is directed not only toward current students but also toward alumni and the broader community.

Alumni serve as a bridge between pesantren knowledge and social life

The Ringinagung and Lirboyo Islamic boarding schools in Kediri demonstrate the continuity of *al-Ḥikam* study sessions for alumni, which are linked to the application of the book's teachings in social life. These study sessions are designed to ensure that alumni continue to understand the book's teachings and can implement them in their social lives as a guide and source of guidance. These findings indicate a connection between post-graduation learning and the application of knowledge in social life. Thus, alumni serve as a key channel through which knowledge from classical Islamic texts moves from the pesantren educational environment into broader society.

Digitization and the Expansion of Religious Public Spaces

The expansion of knowledge transmission has also undergone a transformation as Islamic boarding schools have entered the digital realm. A study on the Al-Ma'ruf Islamic Boarding School demonstrates the shift from a traditional "kitab kuning"-based educational model to *a digital platform*. This transformation is linked to the boarding school's need to adapt to social changes and enhance its role within the community. On the other hand, this study shows that the digitization of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) opens up broader access to Islamic literature and increases public participation in acquiring religious knowledge. However, these changes have also given rise to new patterns in the distribution of religious authority.

The popularity of religious figures in the digital space is influenced not only by the depth of their knowledge but also by factors such as digital strategies, app design, and content distribution via social media. These findings indicate that the public sphere in

which knowledge transmission takes place has expanded. Transmission no longer depends entirely on physical presence at the pesantren but can occur through digital media.

Expanded access and the emergence of epistemic tensions

Although digitization has expanded access, a study on the Al-Ma'ruf Islamic Boarding School also identified new challenges. Digital access can enable students and the community to obtain information without always receiving direct guidance from teachers. This situation has the potential to shift the traditional model of knowledge transmission, which previously emphasized direct relationships, the chain of transmission (sanad), and scholarly guidance. The study also noted the emergence of *a* trend toward *"instant* learning"—the consumption of material through short videos, book summaries, and digital content that prioritizes speed of access. This shift is seen as potentially undermining the learning process, which previously relied on patience, proper conduct, and teacher guidance.

Therefore, the expansion of public space through digitization has yielded ambivalent findings: access to knowledge has become more widespread, but at the same time, challenges have emerged regarding patterns of knowledge transmission and scholarly authority that were previously centered on the teacher–student relationship.

Table 5. Summary of Findings for Theme 2. (Social Reproduction and Public Orientation)

Pattern of Findings	Form	Supporting Studies
Alumni continuity	Alumni continue to follow and study the scriptures after leaving the pesantren	Mas'ud (2017)
Community expansion	The religious study sessions are attended by people from various regions of East Java	Mas'ud (2017)
Public outreach	Religious education was extended to the community surrounding the pesantren	Sholahuddin & Anwar (2023)
Social application	The content of the texts is intended to be applied in the social lives of alumni	Mas'ud (2017)
Digital expansion	Distribution via digital platforms and broader access to literature	Sholahuddin & Anwar (2023); Abraar (2025)
Epistemic tension	Changes in teacher–student relationships and the emergence of *instant learning*	Abraar (2025)

The transmission of classical Islamic texts has expanded from the internal spaces of Islamic boarding schools to alumni networks, the wider community, and digital spaces. This expansion enables the continuity and distribution of knowledge within a broader social context, but digitization also brings about changes in patterns of transmission and scholarly authority.

Overall synthesis. Among the studies analyzed, the transmission of the *kitab kuning* in East Java's *pesantren* demonstrates both continuity and transformation. The teacher–student relationship and traditional pedagogical practices remain an important part of knowledge transmission, while new pedagogical approaches and digital technology expand the forms and scope of transmission. At the same time, *kitab kuning* literacy is

linked to the internalization of values, character building, and cultural continuity, while alumni networks, communities, and digital spaces expand its social reach beyond the pesantren environment. However, this digital expansion also reveals changes in patterns of authority and learning that were previously mediated directly by teachers.

3.2 DISCUSSION

3.2.1 Transmission and Transformation of the Kitab Kuning

The findings indicate that the transmission of the Kitab Kuning in East Java's pesantren occurs through the continuity of teacher–student relationships, traditional learning methods, scholarly networks, and mechanisms of knowledge authority, while simultaneously adapting to pedagogical and technological changes. These findings suggest that the continuity of the Kitab Kuning is not merely a process of textual preservation but rather the continuity of a transmission system capable of maintaining the core elements of the tradition while adapting its learning media and strategies.

Transmission Networks and Institutional Pathways

The first finding indicates that the transmission of the Kitab Kuning primarily takes place through the teacher–student relationship and the pesantren institution. *Sorogan, bandongan,* and *wetonan* not only function as learning techniques but also provide spaces for interaction where texts are read, translated, explained, corrected, and understood under the guidance of a teacher. Thus, knowledge of the Kitab Kuning in the pesantren context is not entirely tied to the text as a standalone object but is transmitted through the relationship between the text, the teacher, and the students [3], [9], [4].

This pattern can be explained through the perspective of the ulama network, which views the transmission of Islamic knowledge as part of an intellectual network connecting teachers, students, and various centers of learning [1], [11]. In the context of East Java, the presence of teachers and scholarly connections to other pesantren indicates that pesantren do not develop as completely isolated units but are part of a broader network of knowledge transmission. This perspective helps explain that the continuity of the kitab kuning depends not only on the existence of the texts but also on the sustainability of the social networks that enable these texts to be passed down and studied.

The concept of sanad/isnad deepens this understanding by grounding the legitimacy of knowledge in the continuity of the chain of transmission. Within this framework, the teacher–student relationship is not merely pedagogical but also serves an epistemological function, as it enables the processes of receiving, correcting, and validating knowledge to take place directly [1]. Therefore, *sorogan* and *bandongan* have a broader significance than mere teaching methods; both preserve a form of transmission that links mastery of the text with scholarly authority and guidance.

This pattern is consistent with Dhofier's perspective on pesantren as institutions that maintain the continuity of scholarly traditions through the relationships between kiai, santri, and the classical Islamic texts [2]. In this context, the classical Islamic texts serve as part of the *kutubut turats*, linking pesantren education to the broader intellectual heritage of Islam. Thus, the continuity of transmission lies not only in whether the texts

are still used, but also in whether the social and pedagogical structures that support their transmission are still maintained.

Adaptation and Digital Transformation of Transmission

The second theme indicates that the continuity of transmission does not mean preserving all practices in an unchanged form. The synthesis reveals the integration of new methods, more contextual pedagogical approaches, and the use of digital technology. The use of *Amtsilati, Al-Miftah, Al-Fatih, bahtsul masail, study texts,* and *problem-solving* indicates that pesantren are adapting to contemporary learning needs [8], [4]. This pattern is best understood as "continuity through adaptation"—that is, the continuity of tradition through a process of adaptation [12].

Digitization represents the most significant form of adaptation because it not only changes the medium of learning but also has the potential to transform the relationship between texts, teachers, and students [13]. Digital access allows students to obtain religious texts, translations, references, and materials more quickly and extensively. However, access to texts is not always synonymous with the transmission of authorized knowledge. The processes *of talaqqi*, correction, interpretation, and validation—which previously took place through the teacher–student relationship—may diminish when knowledge is acquired directly from digital platforms. This aligns with findings showing that the use of digital fiqh applications can expand access to classical references and support *bahtsul masail*, but at the same time, there is a tendency for some students to rely more on these applications than on direct guidance from teachers [13], [14]. The emergence of the "digital ustadz" also indicates that digitization can create new spaces for the formation of religious authority. Thus, the digital transformation of the media is not merely a modernization of media but can be understood as a reconfiguration of knowledge authority.

However, the synthesis does not suggest that technology automatically replaces traditional teaching methods. On the contrary, there is potential for coexistence between tradition and technology. In agreement with the view that technology can expand access and support learning, while teachers continue to play a role in providing context, interpretation, correction, and validation [13]. Therefore, continuous adaptation is not a choice between tradition and modernity, but rather a process of negotiation regarding how technology can be used without disrupting the relational and epistemological structures that characterize the transmission of the Kitab Kuning.

3.2.2 Cultural Identity and Public Civility through the Kitab Kuning

The findings of this synthesis indicate that the practice of "kitab kuning" literacy does not end with the mastery of Islamic knowledge, but continues in the social life of the pesantren through habit formation, memorization, interaction with teachers, evaluation, and daily life practices. From the perspective of New Literacy Studies, this indicates that literacy is a social practice shaped by values, culture, social relations, and institutional contexts [7]. Therefore, the formation of identity and social orientation must be understood through the practices that accompany the process of studying the classical Islamic texts, not merely through their textual content.

Habitus and Cultural Identity

The first finding indicates that the study of classical Islamic texts can serve as a mechanism for the formation of cultural capital and *habitus*. Mastery of the texts, language, reading methods, and Islamic knowledge acquires value within *the* pesantren *field* and becomes cultural capital that is subsequently internalized through repeated practice [15]. Findings regarding *taqrîr*—or the repetition of memorized *nadzam*—at Genggong demonstrate that knowledge is acquired through a process of repetition and habituation [4]. These practices not only enhance mastery of the material but also connect students with classical texts and the values embodied in the struggles of *the masya-yikh*. Similarly, *sorogan, bandongan,* and *wetonan* do not merely transfer knowledge but build pedagogical relationships that allow intellectual and moral dispositions to form through repeated experience.

From Bourdieu's perspective, this process demonstrates that *cultural capital* does not operate on an individual basis [15]. Knowledge capital gains meaning through the institutions and social practices that enable santri to internalize the ways of thinking and acting that are valued within *the* pesantren *field*. Santri thus not only learn what is known but also how to become a learned person according to pesantren norms. This process contributes to the formation of cultural identity. A santri's identity is not merely an administrative status as a pesantren student but develops through engagement in literacy practices, scholarly disciplines, teacher–santri relationships, and adaptation to pesantren life. The "kitab kuning" serves as one of the key markers of this epistemic and cultural community.

The "Great Tradition" and "Little Tradition" perspectives help explain how that identity takes on a local form [16]. The Kitab Kuning, as part of *the Great Tradition*, carries a textual and transregional Islamic intellectual heritage; however, when studied in East Javanese pesantren, this heritage interacts with the local language, customs, educational system, and social practices. The identity of the pesantren is therefore not the result of a literal reproduction of the text, but rather the result of an encounter between the continuity of classical Islamic tradition and the localization of scholarly practices within Javanese culture.

Adab and Public Civility

The second theme indicates that the internalization of knowledge from the Kitab Kuning has a normative dimension that cannot be fully explained through the concept *of habitus*. The concept of adab is used in this study as an emic perspective to understand how the dispositions that are formed are oriented toward certain values, particularly in relation to teachers, knowledge, and peers. Thus, Bourdieu explains how dispositions are formed, while the concept *of adab* helps explain the normative orientation of those dispositions [15].

Findings regarding Genggong indicate that the study of religious texts is directed not only toward mastery of the text but also toward the transmission of scholarly values and etiquette [4]. Memorization *of poetic verses*, assessment, and the practice of learning are linked to discipline, integrity, responsibility, and respect for knowledge. Findings regarding *sorogan* also indicate that the structure of learning can serve as a space for cultivating patience, perseverance, and respect for teachers. This aligns with the

perspective that etiquette is not merely taught as normative material but is learned through the educational practice itself [6], [4].

These values then have the potential to be carried into the broader social sphere. Pesantren alumni can serve as educators, preachers, or social activists, while the pesantren's involvement in the community expands the space for the actualization of the values acquired during their education [5]. However, this relationship must be carefully defined. The research synthesis does not provide a basis for asserting that the study of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) causally results in *public civility*. What is more justifiable is the existence of a sequence linking mastery of the texts, habituation, internalization of values, character formation, and social orientation.

Therefore, *public civility* in this study is best understood as an orientation toward civility rooted in the values and practices of pesantren, rather than as a universal measure of "politeness" [17]. This perspective also allows the concept of public civility to remain within the Islamic epistemological context that underpins the kitab kuning tradition. In this process, the concepts of the Great and Little Traditions become relevant for explaining how values derived from the broader Islamic scholarly tradition take concrete form through local pesantren practices [16].

3.3 Integrated Theoretical Synthesis: From Knowledge Transmission to Cultural Reproduction

A synthesis of the two research questions reveals that the transmission of the *kitab kuning* and the formation of cultural identity are two interrelated dimensions in the continuity of the pesantren tradition. RQ1 demonstrates how knowledge of the Kitab Kuning is preserved through the teacher–student network, the continuity of the sanad, pedagogical mechanisms, and the pesantren institution, while RQ2 demonstrates how this knowledge gains meaning through literacy practices, acculturation, and pesantren life, thereby contributing to the formation of *cultural capital*, *habitus*, cultural identity, and adab orientation. This demonstrates that the transmission of the "kitab kuning" does not stop at the continuity of the text but encompasses the reproduction of knowledge, values, and the accompanying social practices.

This relationship can be understood through the New Literacy Studies (NLS) as a conceptual framework for research. NLS views literacy as a social practice that takes place within specific cultural and institutional contexts and is shaped by social relations, values, and structures of authority [7]. In the context of pesantren, the activities of reading, translating, memorizing, explaining, and discussing religious texts cannot be separated from the teacher– student relationship, the rules of pesantren life, and the accompanying customs [18]. Therefore, the way knowledge is transmitted plays a crucial role in determining how that knowledge is subsequently understood, internalized, and reproduced.

In terms of transmission, Azra's perspective on the network of ulama, the concept *of sanad/isnad*, and Dhofier's historiography of pesantren demonstrate that the kitab kuning are preserved through the interplay of knowledge, authority, and institutions [1], [2]. The network of teachers and students ensures the continuity of knowledge; *the sanad* provides epistemological legitimacy; and the pesantren provides the institutional

structure that enables this process to continue across generations [14]. Thus, the transmission of the "kitab kuning" is not merely a transfer of information, but a process of knowledge reproduction that preserves scholarly authority and legitimacy.

In the next dimension, the transmitted knowledge gains social life through the process of internalization. Bourdieu's perspective helps explain that mastery of Islamic texts and knowledge can function as *cultural capital* that holds value within *the* pesantren *field* [15]. Through repeated learning and practice, this knowledge can be internalized into dispositions or *habitus*. Thus, there is a conceptual relationship between the "transmission of knowledge" in RQ1 and the "internalization of knowledge" in RQ2: knowledge transmitted through networks and institutions is not merely stored as information but is brought to life through social practices.

The concept of adab clarifies the normative dimension of this process. While *habitus* explains the formation of dispositions through repeated social experiences, *adab* explains the orientation regarding how that knowledge and those dispositions are manifested in relationships with teachers, knowledge, and peers. Respect for teachers, discipline, patience, responsibility, and appreciation for knowledge are not merely conveyed as normative knowledge but are shaped through educational practices and daily life. Thus, the transmission of texts can also be understood as the transmission of norms and ways of life.

Redfield's perspective on the "Great Tradition" and "Little Tradition" further helps explain how this process of reproduction takes place within a local context [16]. The Kitab Kuning carries the broader intellectual heritage of Islam as part of *the "Great Tradition*," while its learning practices take concrete form through the customs, language, pedagogy, and social life of the pesantren as the local context. The interaction between the two demonstrates that the continuity of tradition does not necessarily occur through a static, form of reproduction. Rather, tradition can be preserved through localization, adaptation, and negotiation in response to social change.

This becomes increasingly important in the context of digitalization. The findings of RQ1 indicate that technology expands access to texts and sources of knowledge, but at the same time transforms the relationship between texts, teachers, students, and sources of authority. These changes in the medium of transmission have implications for the internalization process in RQ2 because the way knowledge is acquired can influence learning experiences and the formation of cultural authority. Thus, digitization should be understood not only as an innovation in learning technology but also as part of a shift in the literacy ecology that can influence how traditions are reproduced.

Based on this overall synthesis, this study proposes that the continuity of the Kitab Kuning tradition occurs through two interrelated mechanisms: transmission and internalization. Transmission ensures the continuity of knowledge through networks, chains of transmission (*sanad*), teachers, and institutions, while internalization allows this knowledge to become part of the santri's dispositions, identity, values, and social orientation. The survival of the *Kitab Kuning* from one generation to the next, therefore, depends not only on the continuity of its teaching but also on the pesantren community's ability to maintain the practices and values that keep this knowledge meaningful.

Theoretical Contribution

Theoretically, this synthesis links the perspectives of knowledge transmission and cultural reproduction in understanding the sustainability of the kitab kuning. The transmission perspective explains how knowledge is preserved through networks, sanad, teachers, and institutions, while the *cultural reproduction* perspective explains how that knowledge gains social life through *cultural capital*, *habitus*, *adab*, and the process of localizing traditions.

Based on this relationship, the interpretive model of this study can be formulated as follows:

Knowledge Transmission → Knowledge Internalization → Cultural Reproduction → Cultural Identity → Social Orientation

This model positions NLS as a conceptual framework that explains literacy as a social practice [7]. The perspectives of Azra, sanad/isnad, and Dhofier—particularly—explain the transmission mechanisms in RQ1, while Bourdieu (1986), the concept of adab, and the Great–Little Tradition [1], [15], [16] help explain cultural internalization and reproduction in RQ2. This model is not intended to represent a causal or linear relationship, but rather an interpretive framework to illustrate the interconnection between the two dimensions of findings generated through meta-synthesis.

Implications of the Synthesis

The main implication of this synthesis is that the sustainability of the Kitab Kuning tradition cannot be sufficiently guaranteed merely through the preservation of texts or the inclusion of Kitab Kuning materials in the curriculum. Such sustainability also depends on the maintenance of the ecosystem of transmission and internalization that ensures the Kitab Kuning continues to hold epistemological, cultural, and social significance for santri. Therefore, pedagogical innovation and digitization can contribute to the continuity of this tradition to the extent that they expand access and support learning without undermining the relational, epistemological, and ethical functions that underpin the transmission of knowledge in pesantren.

Ultimately, this synthesis demonstrates that the *kitab kuning* is not merely something that is passed down, but something that is continually kept alive. It is passed down through a network of teachers and institutions, studied through literacy practices, internalized through habit and life in the *pesantren*, and reproduced in social identity and orientation. Thus, the continuity of the "kitab kuning" is more accurately understood not as the preservation of texts, but as the reproduction of a living intellectual and cultural tradition.

4 CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the continuity of the *kitab kuning* tradition in Salaf pesantren in East Java was shaped by an interconnected process of knowledge transmission, knowledge internalization, and cultural reproduction. The findings demonstrated that the *kitab kuning* tradition was not maintained merely through the continued teach-

ing of classical Islamic texts, but through the social and institutional practices that enabled knowledge, values, and scholarly traditions to be transmitted and reproduced across generations.

In response to RQ1, the study found that *kitab kuning* transmission was sustained through teacher–student relationships, *sanad/isnad*, scholarly networks, pedagogical practices, and pesantren institutions. At the same time, this transmission was not static. Traditional mechanisms of transmission were increasingly accompanied by pedagogical adaptation and digitalization, which expanded access to Islamic knowledge while also introducing changes in teacher–student relationships, patterns of authority, and the ways in which texts were accessed and studied.

In response to RQ2, the findings showed that *kitab kuning* functioned beyond its role as a source of religious knowledge. Through literacy practices and everyday pesantren life, knowledge was internalized through repeated learning, habituation, and social interaction. This process contributed to the formation of *cultural capital*, *habitus*, cultural identity, and *adab*-oriented dispositions. The findings further indicated that these values could extend beyond the pesantren environment through social interaction, community engagement, and the broader social orientation of pesantren graduates. However, the synthesis did not establish a direct causal relationship between *kitab kuning* learning and public civility.

The findings from both research questions demonstrated that knowledge transmission and cultural formation should not be treated as separate processes. Rather, the continuity of the *kitab kuning* tradition could be understood through the interpretive sequence of knowledge transmission → knowledge internalization → cultural reproduction → cultural identity → social orientation. This sequence did not represent a linear or causal model, but illustrated how transmitted knowledge could acquire meaning through literacy practices and become embedded in the cultural and social life of pesantren.

The main contribution of this study was therefore its conceptualization of *kitab kuning* continuity as more than the preservation of texts. The findings positioned it as the reproduction of a living intellectual and cultural tradition, in which textual knowledge, scholarly authority, literacy practices, values, and identity were continuously negotiated within changing social and technological contexts. From this perspective, maintaining the *kitab kuning* tradition required not only preserving its textual corpus but also sustaining the educational, relational, and ethical ecosystem through which the tradition remained meaningful to successive generations of *santri*.

This study was subject to several limitations. The synthesis was restricted to studies that met the predetermined inclusion criteria and therefore depended on the availability, methodological characteristics, and depth of the primary studies. Differences in research design, pesantren context, and research focus also limited the generalizability of the findings to pesantren beyond the selected geographical context. In addition, the relationship between *kitab kuning* literacy, cultural identity, and public civility should be interpreted as an emerging conceptual pattern rather than a causal relationship.

Future research should therefore examine these relationships through empirical studies involving broader geographical contexts and diverse pesantren traditions. Particular attention should be given to how *kitab kuning* knowledge is transformed into *habitus*,

how *adab* is expressed in social practices, and how digitalization reshapes scholarly authority and teacher–student relationships. Such research could further test and refine the interpretive model proposed in this study.

Overall, this study demonstrated that the future of the *kitab kuning* tradition depended not only on whether its texts continued to be taught, but also on whether the knowledge, values, relationships, and practices surrounding those texts continued to be transmitted, internalized, and lived.

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