From Trans-Regional to Intra-Regional: Expanding Azyumardi Azra's Scholarly Network Model through Madurese Tafsir Ulama

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Abstract. Studies of Nusantara ulama scholarly networks have long been dominated by Azyumardi Azra's trans-regional model, which traces the transmission of Islamic learning between the Haramayn and major archipelagic centers such as Aceh, Palembang, Banjar, and Patani. This model has not, however, been tested at the intraregional scale of a single island. This study addresses that gap by examining the intellectual genealogies of three Madurese tafsir ulama documented as having undertaken direct riḥlah 'ilmiyyah to the Haramayn: Syekhona Muhammad Kholil bin 'Abd al-Latif, Thoifur Ali Wafa, and Muhammad Munif Sayuthi. Employing a qualitative-historical approach grounded in Social Network Analysis, particularly Mark Granovetter's concept of the local bridge, this study triangulates a genealogical infographic held by the Lajnah Turats Ilmi Syekhona Muhammad Kholil, Thoifur Ali Wafa's published autobiography, and independent secondary scholarship, including Martin van Bruinessen's identification of Kholil as the shared spiritual and intellectual forebear of Nahdlatul Ulama's founding generation. The findings confirm that all three figures can be understood as local bridges connecting Madura's pesantren cluster with the Haramayn's global scholarly network. Beyond confirming the consistency of this pattern across different scale of analysis, the study identifies two structural features that are less visible at the trans-regional scale: layering, in which later bridges, Thoifur Ali Wafa and Munif Sayuthi, emerge already embedded within an earlier bridge's network through kinship or discipleship; and convergence, in which two ostensibly independent bridges are shown to share a direct connection to a common Meccan teacher, Muhammad Yāsīn al-Fadānī, who is independently documented as having drawn part of his own sanad from scholars connected to Kholil. This study argues for an expansion rather than a rejection of Azra's model, revealing structural complexity that become visible only when the unit of analysis is narrowed to a single island.

Keywords: scholarly network theory, intellectual genealogy, Madurese tafsir ulama, local bridge.

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U. Faruq et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference of Islamic Studies (ICONIS 2026) & 400th Anniversary of Shekh Yusuf Al-Makassari*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 1043,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6239-845-0_22

1 Introduction

Studies of the intellectual networks of Nusantara ulama have long been dominated by the research of Azyumardi Azra. This research successfully identified the scholarly network of Nusantara ulama in the 17th and 18th centuries, both vertically (teacher-student) and horizontally (fellow teachers, fellow students). This intellectual network was centered on the two cities of Mecca and Medina (al-Ḥaramayn) and connected the centers of Islamic learning at that time, spanning the far raches of the Malay world, from Aceh, Palembang, Banjar, Java, Makassar, to Patani. The basic characteristic of this intellectual relationship, both horizontal and vertical, was not defined by a rigid and formal hierarchical structure, allowing tachers and students to remain intellectually connected across geographical, ethinic, and sectarian boundaries[1]. This structural flexibility enabled intellectual networks to exted beyond territorial and doctrinal boundaries.

The theoretical roots of Azra's conception of the intellectual network can be traced back to social science theoriesformulated by early twentieth-century German sociology, such as Georg Simmel, Alfred Vierkandt, and Leopold von Wiese, who began conceptualizing social structure through the metaphor of a 'web' or 'network,' as a way of emphasizing the openness and flexibility of social structure that is continuously reshaped through the interactions of individuals and groups. This theory continued to transform until it was later synthesized into a more systematic social network analysis (SNA) methodology in the 1960s by Harrison White at Harvard [2]. Mark Granovetter, in his article, proposed social network analysis as a tool for linking the micro and macro levels of sociological theory. He illustrated this claim through the concept of 'bridge,' which connects two points in a network, and the 'local bridge,' one of the shortest paths connecting two clusters. connecting two clusters.According to Granovetter, a local bridge can only be formed by a weak tie, not by a strong one. However, he noted an exception in the case of small groups, stating that this is "unlikely in a social network of any size, though possible in a small group"[3].

Azra's terminology of vertical andhorizontal relations in his research has a structural similarity Mark Granovetter's terminology of strong and week ties . Granovetter defines the strength of a tie as "an accumulation of the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy (mutual confiding), and reciprocal services that characterize the tie" [3]. In the context of intellectual interaction, a strong tie reflects direct and sustained teacher-student interaction *(talaqqī)* culminating in the granting of authority *(ijāzah)* to teach others, while a weak tie reflectsinteraction without deep personal attachment. This study does not strictly follow Granovetter's argument that "only weak ties can function as bridges," but only when neither party has another strong tie that could create an overlapping alternative path. He considers such a condition "unlikely in a social network of any size, though possible in a small group" [3].

The population of Madurese ulama who undertook a direct *riḥlah 'ilmiyyah* (scholarly journey in pursuit of knowledge) to the Haramayn is precisely a concrete example of such a 'small group.' The case of Syaikhona Kholil demonstrates this pattern empirically: his relationship to his teacher in Mecca, such as Shaykh Nawawī al-Bantanī, represents a strong tie, as doeshis relationship with K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, who was, in fact, Kholil's own direct student at Kademangan Pesantren, Bangkalan [4]. Both of these relationships constitute strong ties, yet neither negates the other's functioneach

can function as a bridge, as Kholil and Hasyim Asy'ari returned to different regions (Madura and Jombang), where they established their own scholarly communities.. Moreover, an examination of the subject index in the complete edition of Azra's work found no explicit discussion of a Madurese ulama network, indicating that Azra's transregional network model has yet to be examined at the intraregional level of Madura.

In this study, a local bridge is understood as a structural function, it serves as the sole pathway connecting Madura's local intellectual cluster to the global Haramayn (Mecca-Medina) network, rather than simply resulting from the weakness of the personal ties involved. The case of Madura, therefore, provides a concrete example of the exception anticipated by Granovetter It alsodemonstrates that applying Azra's netwrok model at the intraregional level affects not only geographical scale of the network, but also for the type of tie that can perform a bridging function.

Azra's explanation of the Haramayn network has, in fact, pointed toward this bridging function without explicitly naming it as such. He notes that the two most important mechanisms linking the network across generations and geographical boundaries are isnād,the chain of transmission in the science of Hadith and silsilah in Sufi orders [1]. Azra directly visualizes the resulting structure of the seventeenth-century core network as a collection of nodes connected by two explicitly distinguished types of line; solid arrows representing teacher-student relations, and dashed arrows representing acquaintance relations. This distinction anticipates the strong-tie/weak-tie typology, which ismade explicit and applied analytically in this study.

Azra identifies how cattered nodes became connected among ulama at the international and trans-regional level. However, his model has not yet been examined at a smaller, intraregional scale. Does the same mechanism remain scale-invariant when applied to Madura?The principal actors in Madura's intellectual network are Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan, Munif Sayuthi, and Thoifur Ali Wafa, all of whom studied directly in the Haramayn. Did they function as local bridges in Granovetter's sense, connecting the global intellectual networks of their teachers in the Haramayn with Madura's local intellectual cluster? This study therefore extends Azra's theory from the trans-regional to the intraregional scale and examines whether its structural logic also applies at a scale not adressed in the original study.

2 Method

This study employs a qualitative-historical approach combined with social network analysis (SNA), particularly Mark Granovetter's concept of the local bridge. This methodological approach is consistent with Azra's own method of tracing intellectual networks through biographical and archival reconstruction, rather than synchronic statistical analysis.

The selection of intellectual actors identified as local bridges in this article is limited to three Madurese tafsir ulama who undertook a direct *riḥlah 'ilmiyyah* to the Haramayn: Syekhona Muhammad Kholil bin 'Abd al-Latif of Bangkalan, Thoifur Ali Wafa of Sumenep, and Muhammad Munif Sayuthi of Pamekasan. Primary data consist of a genealogical infographic held by the *Lajnah Turats Ilmi* Syekhona Muhammad Kholil, Thoifur Ali Wafa's autobiography, and other relevant literature.

The conceptualization of network ties in this articles follows Granovetter's terminology, contextualized within the intellectual network and scholarly transmission of Madurese ulama. A tie is categorized as a strong tie when it reflects direct and sustained teaching between teacher and student *(talaqqī)* culminating in an *ijāzah,* that is, the transfer of scholarly authority to teach knowledge obtained from one's teacher. A weak tie, by contrast, is characterized by the lack of deep personal emotional attachment between individuals, yet it remains capable of connecting otherwise disconnected clusters. A tie is classified as a local bridge where three conditions are jointly satisfied: (a) a documented direct personal tie to at least one teacher residing in the Haramayn; (b) a return to Madura followed by the founding or leadership of an independent local institution; and (c) documentation, in independent secondary sources, that the figure served as a source of scholarly authority for those who did not themselves travel to the Haramayn [3].

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Syekhona Muhammad Kholil bin 'Abd al-Latif: Genealogy and Structural Centrality

K.H. Muhammad Kholil bin 'Abd al-Latif, son of Kiai Abdul Latif and Nyai Siti Khadijah, popularly known as Syekhona Kholil Bangkalan, was born Muhammad Kholil. Among his writings is a Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) that survives to the present day only in a manuscript form.[5] He was born in the village of Langgundih (now Kramat), Ujung Piring, Bangkalan, Madura, on Thursday, 25 May 1835, corresponding to 9 Safar 1252 AH, and died on Thursday, 29 Ramadan 1343 AH, corresponding to 23 April 1925.[6] He was the founder of the oldest pesantren in the region, Pondok Pesantren Syaichona Moh. Cholil. Many of his students (santri) subsequently foundedtheir own pesantren, including K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, founder of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, founder of Muhammadiyah.[7]

His intellectual journey, reconstructed by the Lajnah Turats from manuscripts and oral sources, shows that Syekhona Kholil's scholarly chain of transmission (sanad) was extensive. According to data presented in the infographic titled "Skema Guru dan Murid Syekhona Muhammad Kholil Bangkalan Madura" ("Scheme of the Teachers and Students of Syekhona Muhammad Kholil of Bangkalan, Madura"), his scholarly trajectory can be divided into three successive geographical periods: Madura period, Java period, and Makkah period.[5] During the early Madura period, he studied under local teachers, including 'Abd al-Latif bin Kiai Hamim of Bangkalan and Kiai Muqaddas bin Kiai Abdul Karim bin Kiai Abbas (Sembilangan, Bangkalan). During the Java period, his scholarly chain connected him to teachers such as K.H. Muhammad Nur (founder of Pondok Langitan, Tuban), K.H. Abdul Latif (Pondok Cangaan, Bangil) at Langitan, K.H. Abu Dzarrin bin Abi Husain (Tugu Winongan, Pasuruan), K.H. Arif (Pondok Darussalam, Kebon Candi, Pasuruan), K.H. Nurhasan bin Nur Khotim (Pondok Sidogiri, Pasuruan), and K.H. Abdul Bashar (Pondok Salafiyah Syafi'iyah, Banyuwangi). During the Makkah period, he studied under a substantial number of scholars residing in the Haramayn, including Sayyid Ahmad Zaini Dahlan of Makkah,

Ibrāhĭm al-Bājūrĭ of Egypt, Syekh Hasbullah al-Makkĭ, and Syekh Muhammad Nawawĭ al-Bantanĭ.[5]

This final tie is structurally decisive: it establishes a direct connection between Syekhona Kholil's intellectual genealogy as a Madurese exegete and the wider netweok of Middle Eastern ulama. Azra'sresearch independently confirms that Syekhona Kholil undertook a scholarly journey to Makkah and studied, among others, under Syekh Muhammad Nawawĭ al-Bantanĭ, alongside fellow Nusantara students who would later become major independent nodes and prominent: K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, founder of Pesantren Tebuireng and Nahdlatul Ulama, and K.H. Asnawi of Caringin.[1] Three students of a single teacher based in the Haramayn were thus able to form a Nusantara-wide scholarly network with three branches, each rooted in a different regional cluster. This isprecisely the branching pattern documented by at the trans-regional scale, now shown to operate identically at the scale of individual scholars who returned to their respective islands. Other students of Nawawĭ al-Bantanĭ included Syekh Mahfūẓ at-Tarmasĭ, Syekh Khaṭīb al-Minakabawĭ, Syekh Abdussattār al-Dahlawĭ, and Syekh Zainuddĭn Baḍāwĭ.[8]

Syekhona Kholil's role as a central hub, a a highly connected node, and a broker linking different clusters within the network,[7] is comparable to the Juynboll's common-link,[9] which corresponds, in Granovette's framework, to a bridge within the network of Madurese ulama.[3] The macro-scale Haramayn–Nusantara network identified by Azra and the micro-scale intraregional network of Madura might appear to represent separate levels of analysis. Applying Granovetter's concept of the bridge, however, reveals why the two can be unified: an ulama returning from the Haramayn functions precisely as a local bridge, a single node connecting the local intellectual cluster (the ulama-pesantren network of Java and Madura) to the global intellectual cluster (the Haramayn). Without this connecting node, the two clusters would otherwise remain disconnected.

Research conducted by Yanwar Pribadi on Madura's religious networks affirms that Syekhona Kholil was not merely a teacher to numerous students but structurally gave rise to successive generations of kiai and laid a strong foundation for the formation of the kiai-pesantren network.[10] Martin van Bruinessen likewise identifies Syekhona Kholil as the spiritual and intellectual forebear of numerous kiai in East Java and Madura, whose teachers, teachers' teachers, or earlier generations of their lineage had studied at his pesantren. All founders of Nahdlatul Ulama, are recorded as having studied directly under Kiai Kholil, including Kiai Wahab Hasbullah and Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari, both of whom received their education at his pesantren.[11] Pribadi also draws on the anthropologist Eric Wolf's concept of the cultural broker to describe the kiai as an actor who "links the local system to the larger whole." This definition is structurally equivalent to the concept of the bridge: a connecting actor who links two clusters, the ulama-pesantren network of Madura, the national ulama network through Nahdlatul Ulama, and the global ulama network (the Haramayn) all at once.[10]

Another independent studies further confirms the intellectual network of Madurese ulama. Soebahar's genealogical mapping of five major pesantren in Madura, Syekhona Kholil of Bangkalan, At-Taroqqi of Sampang, Banyuanyar of Pamekasan, An-Nuqayah of Sumenep, and Al-Amien of Sumenep, presents a chart of the intellectual network of

these five kiai. In each network,the uppermost node consistently serves as the point of origin for all subsequent genealogical branches and , is invariably an ulama of Makkah.[12] The consistency of this structural pattern across five independent pesantren networks in four different regencies indicates that, for Madura as a whole, the Haramayn functions not merely as biographical context for the scholarly trajectories of one or two individual ulama, but as the structural node anchoring nearly the entirety of Madura's kiai intellectual network.

3.2 Thoifur Ali Wafa: Genealogy and the Problem of Inherited Bridging

Thoifur bin Ali Wafa bin Muharrar, author of the tafsir *Firdaws an-Na'ĭm*, also served as the head of Pondok Pesantren As-Sadad, Ambunten, and as one of the teachers of the Naqsyabandiyah Mudzahriyah order.[13], [14] He was born on Monday night, 20 Sha'bān 1384 AH (1964), in Dusun Sumur, Desa Ambunten, Sumenep, East Java, Madura.[15] He was the son of K.H. Ali Wafa and Nyai Haji Mutmainnah binti Dzil Hija. His father was a native of Desa Sumur, Kecamatan Ambunten. K.H. Ali Wafa was a fifth-generation descendant of Syekh 'Abdul Kudus (Syekh Jinhar), a Ḥaḍramĭ scholar who settled in Sumenep in the tenth century AH. K.H. Thoifur's mother, Nyai Haji Mutmainnah binti Dzil Hija, came from Kecamatan Waru, Pamekasan, and was likewise descended from Syekh Abdul Bari, known as Agung Tamanuk, whose lineage extended to Sayyid Ahmad Baidhawi, known as Pangeran Katandur,[16] a seventeenth-century propagator of Islam in Sumenep,[17] and a descendant of Sayyid Jakfar Shadiq (Sunan Kudus).[15]

Thoifur's scholarly chain of transmission *(sanad)* connects to a number of major and influential ulama in both the Nusantara and in Makkah. Through his teachers in Java, his sanad links to central figures such as Syekhona Kholil of Bangkalan, K.H. M. Hasyim Asy'ari, and Syekh Nawawĭ al-Bantanĭ. During his studies in Makkah, he studied directly under globallyrenowned scholars, including Syekh Muhammad Yāsĭn al-Fadānĭ (*musnid ad-dunyā*), Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawĭ al-Mālikĭ, and Syekh Ismā'ĭl Utsman Zain. Accordinbto Thoifur's autobiography, Syekh Ismā'ĭl was the teacher with whom he interacted most extensively and for the longest period in Makkah, to the extent that Thoifur later wrote a biographical treatise in his honor.[15] Thoifur's father and first teacher, K.H. Ali Wafa, is independently recorded as having studied under Syekhona Kholil Bangkalan. Thoifur's father-in-law, K.H. 'Abdullah Zahrawi Schal, is likewise recorded as a direct descendant of Syekh Kholil Bangkalan.[15]

During his studies in Makkah under the guidance of Syekh Ismā'ĭl Utsman Zain and within the local pesantren milieu, K.H. Thoifur developed an extensive network of scholarly relations. He had dozens of fellow students, among them prominent figures and kiai from across the Nusantara, spanning Madura, East Java, Banten, Banjar, and Makkah itself. On the other hand, Thoifur's own students likewise included influential figures, from the sons of his own teacher (Syekh Ismail Zain), and his brothers-in-law (the sons of K.H. Abdullah Schal), to major ulama such as K.H. Muhammad Kholil As'ad of Situbondo, along with a number of sayyid and regional kiai.[15]

The structure of Thoifur's network produces two genealogical structures at once: a scholarly genealogy and a genealogy of descent, the latter established through his

marriage to a granddaughter of Syekhona Kholil. Thoifur can independently be classified as a local bridge within the intellectual network, while at the same time, his scholarly network is also connected through marriage to Kholil's line of descent. As a local bridge, Thoifur maintained direct personal ties with his teachers residing in the Haramayn, and upon his return to his native land, he founded an independent institution operating under his own name and authority.

Yet unlike Syekhona Kholil, whose connection to the Haramayn network resulted from his own scholarly journey, Thoifur's position within that network is multilayered in relation to Syekhona Kholil: as the student of his father, who was himself a student of Syekhona Kholil; as a direct student of teachers in the Haramayn; and as a member Syekhona Kholil's line of descent through marriage.. Thoifur thus does not merely replicate Kholil's bridging function for a new generation. He is structurally embedded within the network first established through Kholil's bridging role, while simultaneously extending it through independent ties of his own..

3.3 Muhammad Munif Sayuthi: Genealogy and Convergent Bridging

K.H. Muhammad Munif Sayuthi was born in Pamekasan on 8 November 1958 and died in 2021.[18] He authored the tafsir works *Renungan Surah Yasin* and *Renungan Surah Al-Fatihah*, and served as the head of Pondok Pesantren At-Tauhid, Panempan, Pamekasan.[19] His scholarly trajectory followed a path structurally similar to Syekhona Kholil's, though compressed into two stages: an early Madura phase, studying at Pondok Pesantren Darul Ulum Banyuanyar (1968–1973), where he first studied tafsir under the guidance of K.H. 'Abdul Hamid Bakir, who was also a student of Syekh 'Alwi al-Mālikĭ, a scholar of Makkah. This wasfollowed by a brief period as a santri at Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri under the guidance of K.H. Cholil Nawawi,[20]the son of K.H. Nawawi bin Noerhasan bin Noerkhotim, who was himself a direct student of Syekhona Kholil Bangkalan.[21]

Munif Sayuthi is remembered as a dedicated student who pursued knowledge across various pesantren in the Nusantara. Among his teachers wasK.H. Abdul Jalil. He also studiedat Pondok Pesantren Sarang under the guidance of K.H. Zubair, father of K.H. Maimun Zubair. He later continued his studies under K.H. Mahfudz of Termas and K.H. Masduki of Lasem. He subsequently pursued his education in Makkah for approximately eleven years, from 1977 to 1988.[18] During this period, he studied under prominent scholars such as Syekh Amin Quthbi, Syekh Hasan al-Yamani, Syekh Zaini Buyan, Syekh Muhammad Yāsĭn bin 'Ĭsā al-Fadānĭ, and Syekh Muhammad Amin al-Harari. He also spent approximately one year at Dār al-'Ulūm, an institution led by Syekh Muhammad Yāsĭn bin 'Ĭsā al-Fadānĭ in the Jarwal district of Makkah, where he deepened his study of various Islamic disciplines, including fiqh, hadith, and the Qur'an. This trajectory demonstrates the deep roots of his scholarly chain of transmission in the ulama of the Nusantara.[20]

Munif Sayuthi's intellectual transmission is analytically significant to this study beyond his status as the third documented case of a direct *riḥlah 'ilmiyyah*. One of his teachers in Makkah was Syekh Muhammad Yāsĭn bin 'Ĭsā al-Fadānĭ, whom he studied under at the Dār al-'Ulūm ad-Dĭniyah.. Syekh Muhammad Yāsĭn bin 'Ĭsā al-Fadānĭ was

recognized among Nusantara students in Makkah as a major hub of scholarly transmission (*musnid al-dunyā*) because of the extensive reach of his chain of transmission. In particular, Al-Fadānī studied under 500–700 scholars and had thousands of students who received their sanad from him, leading him to be described as "a renewer of the science of isnad."[8] This fact is also independently documented in Thoifur Ali Wafa's own list of teachers.[15]

This shared tie is not, in itself, a striking finding. Syekh Muhammad Yāsīn bin ʻĪsā al-Fadānī taught a large number of Nusantara students throughout his career, making him a shared teacher for Thoifur Ali Wafa and Munif Sayuthi. Hewas active in Makkah during the mid-twentieth century. Although Syekh Muhammad Yāsīn bin ʻĪsā al-Fadānī did not study directly under Syekhona Kholil, his scholarly sanad was connected to Kholil through who had themselves studied under him.22] One example is the sanad and ijāzah chain for Sunan Abī Dawūd, which he obtained from K.H. Ma'sūm bin Ahmad al-Lāsimī and K.H. Tubagus Ahmad Bakri bin Sayyid al-Bantanī, both of whom held their sanad from Syekhona Kholil.[23]

Viewed through the lens of network theory, the structural position of these two figures, Thoifur Ali Wafa and Munif Sayuthi, closes what had originally been an open triad. Munif Sayuthi is connected to Syekhona Kholil's network through Syekh Muhammad Yāsīn bin ʻĪsā al-Fadānī. Thoifur Ali Wafa is connected to Syekhona Kholil's network in two ways: through his teacher, who was also his father, and through his marriage to a descendant of Syekhona Kholil. Munif Sayuthi and Thoifur Ali Wafa are, moreover, connected directly to one another through al-Fadānī, who independently holds a scholarly sanad linking him to Syekhona Kholil. Rather than forming three separate local bridges from Madura to disconnected points inthe Haramayn, this network contains at least one direct connection between two of the three bridging figures themselves.

3.4 Degree, Multiplexity, and Convergence: What Changes When the Model Is Rescaled

Read together, these three cases show that Azra's trans-regional model, when rescaled to the intraregional level of a single area, reproduces its core structural logic, individuals who studied directly under teachers residing in the Haramayn and returned to establish local institutions, while also revealing two structural features that are not emphasized in Azra's trans-regional cases. The case of Munif Sayuthi, however, requires a revision of this thesis. What emerges is not merely three local bridges extending from Madura and intersecting at a single point in Makkah, but a more complex topological structure: a closed path (cycle), in the graph-theoretic sense, a route that begins and ends at the same node without repeating any intermediate node or connecting edge.[24]

The first layer is the one identified in Thoifur Ali Wafa's intellectual trajectory: the first local bridge emerges through the intellectual network of Thoifur Ali Wafa's father, who was a student of Syekhona Kholil, and through Thoifur Ali Wafa's marriage to a granddaughter of Syekhona Kholil. The second layer is Thoifur Ali Wafa's own intellectual journey, through which he became a student of Syekh Muhammad Yāsīn

bin ‘Ĭsā al-Fādānĭ. The case of Munif Sayuthi shows that this layering extends beyond kinship ties and is not confinedto a single pathway. Munif Sayuthi is linked to Syekhona Kholil’s network through two independent routes: first, through his teacher at Sidogiri; and second, through his teacher in Makkah, Syekh Muhammad Yāsĭn bin ‘Ĭsā al-Fadānĭ. As recorded in his own work *al-’Iqd al-Farĭd*, Syekh Muhammad Yāsĭn bin ‘Ĭsā al-Fadānĭ obtained part of his own scholarly sanad, including the sanad for Sunan Abĭ Dāwūd, from K.H. Ma’sūm bin Ahmad al-Lāsimī and K.H. Tubagus Ahmad Bakri, two ulama whose sanad likewise connects back to Syekhona Kholil.

The convergence within the intellectual networks of Munif Sayuthi and Thoifur Ali Wafa through their shared teacher, al-Fadānĭ, indicates that al-Fadānĭ was more than a bridge connecting Madurese students. He had himself received sanad from Syekhona Kholil’s network and subsequently transmitted that chain back to Munif Sayuthi and Thoifur Ali Wafa. The resulting structure is therefore not simply a bridge but forms a cycle: knowledge originating in Madura flowed outward through the earlier generation of Syekhona Kholil, was received and further transmitted by a great musnid in Makkah, and eventually flowed back into Madura through two independent pathways. Figure 1 summarizes this cyclical structure, situating the three local bridges and their intermediary ties within a single schematic representation.

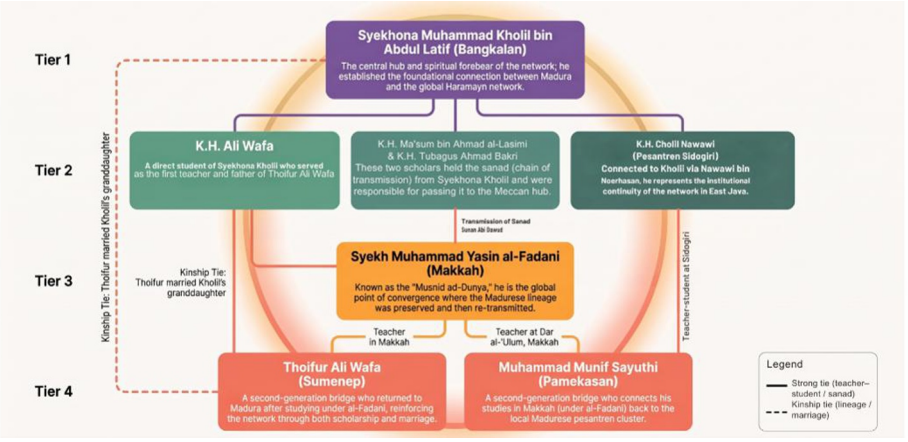


Fig. 1. Schematic representation of layering and convergence in the intellectual network of Madurese tafsir ulama.

The diagram synthesizes the genealogical data discussed in Section 3: Syekhona Muhammad Kholil bin 'Abd al-Latif as the network's foundational node; the intermediary ties of K.H. Ali Wafa, K.H. Cholil Nawawi, and K.H. Ma'sum bin Ahmad al-Lasimi/K.H. Tubagus Ahmad Bakri; the convergence point at Syekh Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani in Makkah; and the resulting local bridges, Thoifur Ali Wafa and Muhammad Munif Sayuthi. Solid lines denote strong ties (teacher–student relationships or documented sanad transmission); the dashed line denotes a kinship tie (marriage). Diagram conceptualized by the authors and rendered with the assistance of

an AI-based visualization tool; all nodes and relationships were verified by the authors against the sources cited in Section 3.

As Figure 1 makes explicit, the network's four tiers distinguish the layering that embeds Thoifur Ali Wafa and Munif Sayuthi within Syekhona Kholil's prior network from the convergence through which their independently documented ties to al-Fadani close into a single cycle.At the trans-regional scale examined by Azra, individual bridges, such as the pathway of as-Sinkīlī, rooted in Ibrāhīm al-Kuranī and extending through a wider circle that included al-Kuranī and others, also exhibit structural overlap.[1] Yet, as far as can be traced from the available data, this overlap is parallel in character: several students share the same teacher, but the pattern does not return to its geographic point of origin. Whether this reflects a genuinely different structural characteristic between the trans-regional and intraregional scales, or simply the limited resolution of Azra's data, which was not designed to detect such a pattern, cannot be fully resolved by this study. Nonetheless, the emergence of a cycle at the much smaller and denser Madurese scale suggests that such pattern is, at minimum, more readily detectable within a small and tightly interconnected population of ulama, where a scholarly pathway is more likely to return to its point of origin than in a large network dispersed across an entire archipelago.

Granovetter's framework continues to accommodate this finding without requiring any fundamental revision. The status of local bridge remains defined by its function, connecting an otherwise disconnected local cluster to a wider network, regardless of whether the tie performing that function is structurally new, layered onto another bridge, or, as shown here, part of a cycle that returns to its point of origin.[2] What this study adds to Azra's account is not a revision of the underlying mechanism, but a demonstration that, at the intraregional scale, the mechanism operates within a network small and dense enough for its bridges to become visible not only as part of an overlapping structure, but also as potentially forming closed paths that, by their nature, remain undetactable at the trans-regional scale.

The significance of this cycle potentially extends beyond the boundaries of the Nusantara archipelago. A number of contemporary scholars around the world, including Sayyid Muhammad bin ʻAlawī al-Mālikī, Syekh ʻAlī Jum'ah, Habib Sālim al-Syāṭirī, and Habib ʻUmar bin Ḥāfīẓ, are reported to hold a scholarly sanad tracing back to Muhammad Yāsīn al-Fadānī.[25] Through al-Fadānī, Syekhona Kholil's position thus functions not only as a central node for the ulama of Java and Madura, but potentially connects indirectly to the contemporary global network of Islamic scholarship.

4 Conclusion

This study examines whether Azyumardi Azra's model of the Haramayn intellectual network, developed to explain the trans-regional transmission of Islamic learning across the Nusantara archipelago, continues to explain the dynamics of network when rescaled to the intraregional level of a single island. Based ondocumented genealogies of three Madurese tafsir ulama who undertook a direct *riḥlah ʻilmiyyah* to Makkah —

Syekhona Muhammad Kholil bin ‘Abd al-Latif, Thoifur Ali Wafa, and Muhammad Munif Sayuthi — this study finds that the core mechanisms identified by Azra at the transregional scale operate identically in structual terms at the intraregional scale of Madura. All three figures satisfy this study’s operational definition of a local bridge in Granovetter’s sense: each maintained a direct personal tie to at least one teacher residing in the Haramayn, returned to establish or lead an independent local institution, and is independently documented in secondary scholarship as a source of scholarly authority for those who never undertook their studies in Makkah. This finding is further confirmed by Martin van Bruinessen, who describes Syekhona Kholil as the spiritual and intellectual influence on numerous kiai in East Java and Madura, whose teachers, teachers’ teachers, or earlier generations of their lineage received their education at his pesantren.

Beyond this confirmation, the study reveals two structural features that become particularly apparent at the intraregional level but are less visible in Azra’s trans-regional cases. The first is layering, whereby a local bridge may develop within the network established by an earlier bridge. This can occurthrough kinship, as the ties of Thoifur Ali Wafa’s father and father-in-law to Syekhona Kholil, or through a teacher-student relationship, as with Munif Sayuthi’s teacher at Sidogiri. The second is convergence, wherebyThoifur Ali Wafa and Munif Sayuthi, although appearing to represent independent local bridges, both are connnected to the same Meccan teacher, Muhammad Yāsīn al-Fadānī, who, as he recordes in his own work *al-’Iqd al-Farīd*, derived part of his scholarly sanad from ulama connected back to Syekhona Kholil.

These findings suggests that Madura’s connections to the Haramayn did not develop along parallel, non-intersecting lines, but instead partially converged and even mutually reinforced one another within Makkah itself. Neither feature contradicts Granovetter’s framework;both can be understood within it. The Madura case demonstrates that a relatively small and interconnected network, consisting of three individuals from a single island rather than dozens spread across an archipelago, makes such layering and convergence directly observable in ways that are not possible at the transregional scale.

This study has three limitations that directly affect the scope of its claims. First, this article examines only three of the Madurese tafsir ulama included in the broader research from which it draws, selected specifically because they undertook a direct *riḥlah ‘ilmiyyah* to the Haramayn. Other tafsir ulama who were indirectly connected to the Haramayn network through their teachers’ sanad may exhibit different, or even more layered, structural patterns that are not captured here. Second, this study relies on genealogical reconstruction drawn from biographical compilations, a single institutional infographic, a single published autobiography, and secondary scholarship, rather than exhaustive archival verification of every documented connection. Where sources conflict or are incomplete, this study follows the most well-supported account, although transmission errors in the underlying sources cannot be entirely ruled out. Third, and most significantly, this is a single-island case study. It is therefore remains unclear whether the patterns of layering and convergence identified here are characteristic of Madura’s scholarly ecology, which is dense, intermarried, and geographically compact, or whether they would recur on other Nusantara islands with

comparable pesantren networks. This remains an open empirical question this study cannot answer.

Future research might productively extend this analysis in two directions: first, by incorporating other Madurese tafsir ulama beyond the scope of this study, to examine whether layering and convergence remain detectable among figures whose connections to the Haramayn are more mediated than direct. Second, it could apply the same intraregional framework to another single-island case or region within the broader Nusantara network, such as Lombok, Banjar, or the sultanates of the Malay Peninsula, to determine whether the structural features identified in Madura represent a general feature of intraregional Islamic scholarly networks, or, instead, a pattern specific to the density of Madura's own pesantren ecology.

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