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# Islamic Legal Pluralism and Localized Ijtihad in Rural Indonesia: Negotiating Madhhab, Custom, and Multicultural Muslim Life

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**Abstract**

This ethnographic study examines how Islamic law is contextually reinterpreted within multicultural rural Muslim communities in Indonesia through negotiations between dominant Shāfiʿī doctrines, local customs, and plural legal reasoning. Focusing on Nganget Hamlet, East Java, the study addresses a gap in contemporary madhhab studies by exploring how everyday Muslim communities selectively appropriate cross-madhhab principles beyond formal juristic institutions. Using participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, the findings reveal three interrelated dynamics. First, inheritance disputes are commonly resolved through *musyawarah-mufakat* (deliberative consensus), reflecting a shift from rigid *farāʾiḍ* (Islamic inheritance rules) formulations toward *maṣlaḥah* (public benefit)-oriented reasoning that draws upon juristic flexibility recognized across Sunni madhhab traditions. Second, local rituals such as *sedekah bumi* (earth thanksgiving ritual) and *ruwatan desa* (village purification ritual) are legitimized as *ʿurf ṣaḥīḥ* (valid customary practice) through *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* (objectives of Islamic law) considerations, demonstrating how customary practices are accommodated within Islamic legal interpretation. Third, informal Islamic education functions as a space for transmitting pluralistic legal understandings in which multiple madhhab perspectives are pragmatically negotiated in everyday life. The study argues that Islamic law in rural multicultural contexts operates as a dynamic form of localized *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning) that continuously negotiates between normative Shāfiʿī authority and socio-cultural realities. Theoretically, this research contributes to debates on legal pluralism and comparative madhhab studies by positioning Fiqh Nusantara as an applied model of cross-madhhab adaptability grounded in *maqāṣid* (higher objectives of Islamic law), *ʿurf* (customary practice), and lived Islamic legal practice in Southeast Asia.

**Keywords: Fiqh Nusantara; Legal Pluralism; Comparative Madhhab Studies; Shāfiʿī Madhhab; Localized Ijtihad.**

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**Abstract**
Penelitian etnografis ini mengkaji bagaimana hukum Islam ditafsirkan kembali secara kontekstual dalam komunitas Muslim pedesaan multikultural di Indonesia melalui negosiasi antara doktrin mazhab Syāfiʿī yang dominan, adat lokal, dan ragam penalaran hukum. Berfokus pada Dusun Nganget, Jawa Timur, penelitian ini mengisi kekosongan dalam studi mazhab kontemporer dengan menelaah bagaimana masyarakat Muslim sehari-hari secara selektif mengadopsi prinsip-prinsip lintas mazhab di luar institusi fikih formal. Dengan menggunakan observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen, temuan penelitian menunjukkan tiga dinamika yang saling berkaitan. Pertama, sengketa warisan umumnya diselesaikan melalui musyawarah mufakat (kesepakatan deliberatif), yang mencerminkan pergeseran dari formulasi *farāʾiḍ* (aturan waris Islam) yang kaku menuju penalaran berbasis *maṣlaḥah* (kemaslahatan umum) yang memanfaatkan fleksibilitas yurisprudensi yang diakui dalam tradisi mazhab Sunni. Kedua, ritual lokal seperti *sedekah bumi* (ritual syukur atas hasil bumi) dan *ruwatan desa* (ritual penyucian desa) dilegitimasi sebagai *ʿurf ṣaḥīḥ* (adat yang sah) melalui pertimbangan *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* (tujuan-tujuan hukum Islam), yang menunjukkan praktik adat diakomodasi dalam interpretasi hukum Islam. Ketiga, pendidikan Islam informal berfungsi sebagai ruang transmisi pemahaman hukum yang pluralistik, di mana berbagai perspektif mazhab dinegosiasikan secara pragmatis dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa hukum Islam dalam konteks pedesaan multikultural beroperasi sebagai bentuk *ijtihad* lokal (penalaran hukum independen) yang dinamis dan terus-menerus menegosiasikan otoritas normatif mazhab Syāfiʿī dengan realitas sosial-budaya. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini berkontribusi terhadap perdebatan mengenai pluralisme hukum dan studi perbandingan madhhab dengan menempatkan Fikih Nusantara sebagai model terapan adaptabilitas lintas mazhab yang berlandaskan pada *maqāṣid* (tujuan utama hukum Islam), *ʿurf* (praktik adat), dan praktik hukum Islam yang hidup di Asia Tenggara.
**Keywords: Fikih Nusantara; Pluralisme Hukum; Studi Perbandingan Mazhab; Mazhab Syāfiʿī; Ijtihad Lokal.**

## Introduction

Islamic law (Sharia) in Indonesia is generally understood within the doctrinal framework of the Shafi'i madhhab, which has historically shaped religious authority, legal interpretation, and religious practices among Muslim communities (Iskandar et al., 2025; Supani et al., 2025). However, in rural contexts, this doctrinal dominance does not operate in isolation; rather, it interacts dynamically with customary practices (*adat*), communal ethics, and educational processes (Ngazizah, 2025). This interaction produces forms of Islamic legal practice that are neither entirely textualist nor entirely *adat*-based but rather negotiated through social and pedagogical contexts (Rozikin et al., 2025). Nevertheless, many studies still view Islamic law as a fixed and universal normative system, leaving limited room for contextual interpretation (Faris LC, 2025). Classical fiqh literature tends to position law as a textual derivation rather than as an ethical framework that evolves within social practice (Faraz et al., 2024).

This tension between doctrinal authority and social practice has become increasingly evident in Indonesia's landscape of legal pluralism, where state law, customary law, and Islamic law coexist (Hariri & Babussalam, 2024; Isra et al., 2025; Manse, 2024; Riandi & Rusdiyah, 2025). While formal institutions often emphasize codification and

doctrinal consistency (Hodgson, 2025; Jakab, 2020; Marheni Muhammad, 2024), everyday legal practices in rural communities demonstrate a high degree of flexibility, integrated into social relations, cultural norms, and informal education systems (Levana & Sumiarti, 2025; Sahin, 2018). In this context, the Shafi'i madhhab remains the primary reference, but it is often reinterpreted through mechanisms such as consultation (*musyawarah*), custom (*ʿurf*), and public interest (*maṣlaḥah*), reflecting practices of legal pluralism and cross-school reasoning (Imawan et al., 2024; Levana & Sumiarti, 2025). These dynamics align with the concept of Fiqh Nusantara, which emphasizes the contextualization of Islamic law within local socio-cultural realities (Khoiri et al., 2025).

Within this framework, multicultural education plays a crucial yet under-explored role in the transformation of Islamic law. In Indonesia, multicultural education is recognized as a means of fostering tolerance and coexistence in a diverse society (Brauchler, 2022; Ichwan et al., 2024; Mariyono, 2024; Nattheeraphong & Jenks, 2025). However, its influence is not limited to formal institutions but is also present in informal educational spaces such as religious study groups, *madrasah diniyah* (supplementary Islamic schooling), and community-based learning, which play a significant role in shaping social ethics and legal understanding (Aziz & Huda, 2024; Hayyi et al., 2025; Siahaan, 2025; Ubaidillah, 2025). In these spaces, values such as deliberation, justice, and respect for differences are transmitted through dialogic learning processes and social experiences (Husain et al., 2024). Thus, multicultural education functions as a mediation arena where Islamic legal norms are interpreted and adapted within the context of social plurality.

Previous studies have tended to focus on the institutional and political aspects of Islamic law, such as legislation, codification, and the role of formal authorities (Alias et al., 2025; Fahimah et al., 2024; M. Ikhwan, 2025; Khairuddin & Fautanu, 2021). While making important contributions, this approach often overlooks the dynamics of Islamic law's transformation at the grassroots level, which unfolds through cultural practices and daily pedagogical interactions (Ardiyasa & Wastawa, 2025; Speidl, 2025; Wahyuningsih & Amboro, 2024). Some studies have begun to highlight the role of cultural reinterpretation and social participation in the formation of Islamic law (Mahmudulhassan et al., 2025; Sumiadi, 2025), but they remain descriptive and have not yet systematically integrated madhhab analysis with the frameworks of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, legal pluralism, and pedagogy. Unlike previous studies that primarily frame Fiqh Nusantara as cultural accommodation, this study analyzes it as a negotiated form of madhhab-based legal reasoning shaped through multicultural pedagogy.

From the perspective of comparative jurisprudence, there is a gap in the literature regarding how the Shafi'i madhhab, as the dominant tradition, interacts with local practices and other legal approaches in an empirical context. Although the flexibility of

*ʿurf* and *maṣlaḥah* has been acknowledged in the classical tradition, their application in contemporary practice through social and educational mechanisms remains under-explored. Consequently, the relationship between doctrinal authority, local practices, and pedagogical mediation has not yet been theoretically articulated in contemporary Islamic legal studies.

No research has yet comprehensively examined how Islamic law is transformed at the grassroots level through the interaction between multicultural education, legal pluralism, and madhhab-based reasoning in the context of rural Indonesia. This gap is threefold: (1) an empirical gap regarding the practice of Islamic law at the community level; (2) a theoretical gap regarding the integration of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, legal pluralism, and pedagogy; and (3) a doctrinal gap regarding the relationship between local practices and classical fiqh authorities.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyse how Islamic law is reconfigured through multicultural education in Nganget Hamlet, East Java, as a rural community that reflects the interaction between Islamic norms, customary traditions, and cross-cultural social relations. This study focuses on three main mechanisms of transformation: (1) dispute resolution through consensus-based deliberation; (2) the reinterpretation of local rituals within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*; and (3) the role of informal Islamic education in shaping a pluralistic understanding of law. Thus, this study not only provides an empirical contribution but also offers a new theoretical framework that integrates madhhabs, *maqāṣid*, and pedagogy in understanding the transformation of Islamic law in pluralistic societies.

## Methods

This study employs a qualitative design with an ethnographic approach situated within the socio-legal framework and the anthropology of Islamic law, with the aim of examining how Islamic law is practiced, negotiated, and transformed in everyday life. Within this framework, ethnography is not merely descriptive but also serves as an epistemological approach to understanding "law as lived experience"—that is, how the principles of Islamic law (fiqh) interact with social practices, cultural norms, and pedagogical processes (Schielke, 2023). This study combines a descriptive-interpretive approach with normative analysis, specifically using *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* as a framework for interpreting the alignment of local practices with the objectives of Islamic law. This approach situates the research within the realm of empirical fiqh, which bridges the gap between social reality and Islamic legal theory.

The research location is Nganget Hamlet, East Java, which was selected through purposive sampling because it has a religiously diverse population and strong traditions of

informal Islamic education, such as *madrasah diniyah* (Islamic religious school), TPQ, and *pengajian* (Islamic study circle). These characteristics make the location relevant for examining the interaction between the dominance of the Shafi'i madhhab, customary practices, and multicultural social relations. Field research was conducted over six months, involving 35 informants selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Selection criteria for informants included: (1) active involvement in religious practices, education, or community decision-making; (2) recognition as an actor possessing knowledge or experience related to Islamic legal practices; and (3) representation of variations in gender, generation, and social status. Informants included *kiai*, *nyai*, community leaders, teachers, youth, and the public, thereby enabling the exploration of diverse perspectives, including those regarding madhhab-based understanding and practices.

Data collection techniques included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis of village archives and religious manuscripts. Participant observation was conducted to observe ritual practices, educational activities, and deliberative forums in their natural context. In-depth interviews were used to explore how individuals understand, interpret, and apply Islamic legal norms in daily life. Meanwhile, document analysis is used to provide historical and normative context for the observed practices. This combination of methods allows for a comprehensive understanding of Sharia as both a normative and pedagogical system embedded in communal life.

Data analysis was conducted using the thematic approach proposed by Braun and Clarke, which involves several stages: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of field notes and interview transcripts; (2) initial coding to identify units of meaning relevant to legal practice, educational processes, and normative reasoning; (3) categorization of codes into broader patterns; and (4) the formulation of main themes explaining the transformation of Islamic law. The theoretical frameworks of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, legal pluralism, and transformative Islamic pedagogy were employed both as an initial (a priori) framework in the coding process and as interpretive tools in analysing the emerging themes. Thus, the relationship between empirical data and the theoretical framework becomes explicit and analytically structured. To ensure validity and reliability, this study applies various forms of triangulation, namely data triangulation (observations, interviews, and documents), source triangulation (various categories of informants), and methodological triangulation. The member checking process was conducted by confirming initial findings with selected informants to ensure the accuracy of interpretations, while thick description was used to enhance the depth of the research context (Togtoga et al., 2024). Additionally, the researcher's reflexive stance was

addressed using reflexive journaling to identify and manage potential biases throughout the research process.

Research ethics were strictly adhered to. This study obtained ethical clearance prior to fieldwork, and all participants provided informed consent after receiving a full explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights as respondents. The study is also grounded in principles of academic ethics and Islamic ethical values, particularly *ʿadl* (justice) and *amānah* (trust), ensuring confidentiality and fair representation of participants.

Methodologically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic legal anthropology by offering a model of pedagogical-legal ethnography. Unlike studies of legal pluralism in Indonesia, which generally focus on institutional or doctrinal aspects, this approach emphasizes the role of informal education as a space of mediation where madhhab doctrines, local traditions, and ethical reasoning interact. Thus, this study provides a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the transformation of Islamic law in pluralistic Muslim societies, particularly in the Southeast Asian context.

## Result and Discussion

### Vernacular Constitutionalism in Islamic Inheritance Practices

Islamic inheritance law (*farāʾiḍ*) is traditionally regarded as one of the most rigid fields in Islamic jurisprudence, as it is based on shares that have been precisely defined in the textual sources (Hani, 2025). In the Shafi'i madhhab tradition, which is dominant in Indonesia, scholars such as al-Nawawī and al-Shīrāzī assert that the distribution of inheritance constitutes *ḥuqūq muqaddarah* (predetermined rights) that must be carried out when the conditions are met. However, ethnographic findings in Nganget Village indicate that these provisions are not always applied mechanically but are mediated through social processes rooted in deliberation and ethical considerations.

Field data show that inheritance disputes are generally resolved through *musyawarah mufakat*—a deliberative forum involving extended family members, religious leaders (*kiai* and *nyai*), and community figures. In one observed case, a dispute over agricultural land among three siblings initially referred to the *farāʾiḍ* distribution. However, through deliberation, an unequal redistribution was agreed upon, considering the contribution of one heir who had cared for the parents over the long term. In another case, the inherited assets were not immediately divided mathematically but were managed jointly and distributed gradually according to the economic needs of each party. In these various cases, the participants emphasized the principle that "harmony is more important

than a fair division of shares," indicating that social cohesion is regarded as a primary ethical value.

This practice can be analysed through Griffiths' theory of strong legal pluralism, in which informal norms can supplant formal law when they are better able to produce the desired social order (Hariri & Babussalam, 2024; Husain et al., 2024; Riandi & Rusdiyah, 2025). In the context of Nganget, consensus-based deliberation is not a form of rejection of Islamic law, but rather its vernacular articulation that integrates the text with social reality. Although Shafi'i fiqh emphasizes the strict implementation of *farāʾiḍ*, this tradition also recognizes the concepts of *ṣulḥ* (reconciliation) and *tasarruf al-wārith* (renegotiation among heirs after rights have been established), which open the door to agreement-based redistribution. Thus, local practices in Nganget can be understood as an adaptation of these principles, not as a complete deviation from the school's framework.

Normatively, the legitimacy of these practices depends on their alignment with the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*) (Razi & Ananda Prayogi, 2026). As al-Qaradawi has noted, legal flexibility is permissible if it upholds the principles of justice (*ʿadl*) and public interest (*maṣlaḥah*) and does not explicitly violate the provisions of the text (Shamsuddin, 2022). In the cases observed, the redistribution of inheritance was carried out through voluntary agreement without eliminating the rights of the heirs, so it can be considered to still fall within the framework of *maqāṣid* legitimacy. However, the limits of legitimacy must still be emphasized: such practices become problematic when they involve coercion, manipulation, or the deprivation of certain parties' rights, as this contradicts the principle of justice in classical Islamic jurisprudence.

These findings are also consistent with empirical studies in other regions. Research by Cammack in Lombok and Feener in Aceh shows that strict enforcement of inheritance laws often triggers social conflict, leading communities to seek more flexible alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (Cammack & Feener, 2012; Smith & Cubbage, 2024). In Nganget, community leaders view consensus-based deliberation as a preventive mechanism against family conflict and economic inequality. This process not only serves as a means of asset distribution but also strengthens social relations and trust among family members, as conceptualized by Galanter as "relational dispute processing."

The role of the *kiai* and *nyai* in this process reflects the concept of "interpretive communities" by Eickelman and Piscatori, where religious authority is shaped through dialogue and contextual interpretation (Nikulina et al., 2019; Setiyani, 2020). In practice, the *kiai* not only convey normative arguments but also frame them within an ethical narrative emphasizing harmony and social responsibility. This approach transforms the *musyawarah* into a pedagogical space where Islamic law is studied and negotiated

reflectively (Rahmah & Hanif, 2026), in line with Freire's (1970) concept of critical reflection in social praxis (Khandekar, 2021; Laperriere, 2018; Suzina & Tufte, 2020).

In relation to the research question—namely, how Islamic law is transformed through multicultural education—these findings indicate that *musyawarah mufakat* functions as both a legal and pedagogical mechanism. It not only resolves disputes but also transmits the values of legal pluralism, ethical reasoning, and a contextual understanding of fiqh into the lives of the community.

Conceptually, this sub-discussion offers a contribution in the form of the concept of "vernacular *maqāṣid*-based adjudication," a model in which local deliberative practices serve as a bridge between classical fiqh and social reality. This concept demonstrates that the Shafi'i madhhab's doctrine is not abandoned but rather reinterpreted through contextual social mechanisms.

Thus, the consensus-based deliberation in Nganget can be understood as a form of vernacular constitutionalism, in which valid legal norms emerge from the interaction between textual authority and social reality (Walker, 2008). Rather than weakening Islamic law, this practice revives its ethical dimension by adapting it to the context of a pluralistic society. This simultaneously demonstrates that a *maqāṣid*-based approach can serve as a foundation for contextual and sustainable Islamic legal reform (Hermawan et al., 2025).

### Ritual Reinterpretation as Legal-Cultural Hermeneutics

The second finding of this study concerns the reinterpretation of agrarian rituals such as *sedekah bumi* and *ruwatan desa* within the framework of living fiqh. Although in puritanical urban discourse these practices are often categorized as syncretic or even *bidʿah* (religious innovation), in Nganget Hamlet the rituals are reconstructed as ʿurf ṣaḥīḥ—that is, valid customs aligned with the objectives of sharia (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*). A local religious leader stated in an interview: "*Earth almsgiving is not shirk, but a form of gratitude to Allah for the harvest's bounty. If the intention is pure, it is part of social worship*." This statement indicates that the ritual's legitimacy is grounded in intention (*niyyah*) and ethical orientation, not merely the outward form of the practice.

Empirically, earth almsgiving is carried out through a series of activities that combine local traditions and Islamic elements, such as the recitation of *tahlīl*, communal prayers, and the distribution of agricultural produce to the community. The actors involved include religious leaders, traditional figures, youth, and farmers' families. In one observation, the ritual began with the recitation of Quranic verses (Q 11:61) associated with the concept of ʿ*umrān al-arḍ* (the prosperity of the earth), followed by a communal meal as a symbol of social solidarity. In this context, the ritual functions not only as a cultural

tradition but also as a pedagogical and theological space that transmits the values of gratitude (*shukr*) and ecological responsibility.

This process of reinterpretation can be understood through Asad's concept of "authorizing practices," in which local actors actively reinterpret religious norms to gain legitimacy within their own cultural framework (Bettiza & Dionigi, 2015; Murat, 2025; Sherbini, 2026). The integration of the *tahlīl* recitation into harvest rituals demonstrates that local symbols are not eliminated but are gradually Islamized (A. Ikhwan et al., 2024). Feener refers to this phenomenon as "diacritical supplementation," that is, the enrichment of Islamic meaning through local symbols without undermining orthodoxy (Nasir, 2019). This aligns with Moosa's view that Sharia is a living moral tradition that is continually renewed through social experience (Curran, 2014).

From the perspective of Usul al-Fiqh, *ʿurf* is defined as a practice widely accepted by society and not contrary to the *nash* (Andriyaldi, 2022; Hassan & Batool, 2024). Scholars have established that *ʿurf* can serve as a legal basis if it meets the following conditions: (1) it is general in application (*ʿāmm*), (2) it is consistent (*muṭṭarid*), and (3) it does not contradict a *shar'i* text. In the Shafi'i madhhab, the role of *ʿurf* is relatively more limited compared to the Maliki or Hanafi schools, yet it remains recognized in specific contexts, particularly in *muamalah*. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah even asserts that *ʿurf* can be a legal consideration when it aligns with *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) (Shamsuddin, 2022). Al-Qaradawi (2006) also asserts that customs that support justice and ukhuwah can be accepted as a secondary source of law.

In the context of Nganget, the practice of earth almsgiving can be categorized as *ʿurf ṣaḥīḥ* because it meets the following criteria: it is widely accepted, is practiced consistently, and does not contain elements that explicitly contradict the principle of tawhid. Nevertheless, the limits of its legitimacy must still be clarified. This practice can only be considered valid if it does not contain elements of shirk, superstition, or the belief that the ritual possesses intrinsic power beyond the will of Allah. If the reinterpretation crosses this boundary, then it has the potential to be categorized as *ʿurf fāsid* (corrupt custom) from a fiqh perspective. Thus, the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* becomes crucial for assessing whether the practice genuinely yields public interest (*maṣlaḥah*) and upholds the value of justice (*ʿadl*).

The role of the *kiai* in this process exemplifies what Eickelman and Piscatori refer to as "interpretive communities," where religious authority is shaped through dialogue and the negotiation of meaning (Achmadin et al., 2024; Nikulina et al., 2019; Nu'man, 2025; Oukhouya Ali & Lamghari, 2025). A young informant stated: "We used to think it was just a common tradition, but after the *kiai* explained it, we understood it was part of gratitude and togetherness." This indicates that the reinterpretation of rituals is not only normative

but also pedagogical. Within Bourdieu's framework, these ritual practices shape a habitus that instils collective values such as solidarity and social responsibility. This also supports the argument that rituals are often more effective than formal education in fostering embodied piety (Bhimanpalli, 2025; Glisson, 2025; Jamil, 2019; Shilling, 2018).

On the other hand, this reinterpretation also faces challenges from young people exposed to Salafi discourse through digital media. They tend to criticize the rituals as a form of religious innovation. However, the community's response is not repressive but rather dialogical. Community leaders use arguments based on *maqāṣid* and social benefits to explain the legitimacy of these practices, reflecting the model of internal cultural mediation as proposed by An-Naʿim.

In relation to the research question—how Islamic law is transformed through multicultural education—these findings indicate that the reinterpretation of rituals functions as a hermeneutic mechanism that bridges texts, traditions, and social contexts. Rituals serve as a medium through which Islamic law is understood, taught, and negotiated within a framework of cultural pluralism.

These findings indicate that the reinterpretation of rituals cannot be understood merely as a form of cultural accommodation to Islam, but rather as a process of legal meaning-making that unfolds through a dialogue among fiqh authorities, social experience, and community needs. In this process, *ʿurf* functions not merely as a complement to legal practice, but as a hermeneutic medium that allows Sharia principles to be translated into local contexts without losing their normative legitimacy.

Conceptually, this sub-discussion offers a contribution in the form of the concept of "*ʿurf*-based legal-cultural hermeneutics," namely a model in which local ritual practices serve as a medium of integration between classical fiqh, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, and social reality. This model demonstrates that Islamic law is not merely normative but also interpretive and contextual.

Thus, the reinterpretation of rituals in Nganget affirms the adaptive rationality of Sharia—its ability to accommodate cultural diversity without losing theological coherence. This finding reinforces the argument that ongoing Islamic legal reform must recognize cultural legitimacy as an inherent part of Sharia, not merely a peripheral element (Ahmed, 2025).

## Informal Islamic Pedagogy and the Formation of Pluralist Legal Ethics

Collectively, the findings of this study indicate that the transformation of Islamic law in rural Indonesia is not merely a sociological adaptation, but rather a structured process of normative reconstruction through communal practices, ritual reinterpretation, and informal Islamic pedagogy (Yanti et al., 2025). Consensus-based deliberation, ritual

reinterpretation, and informal Islamic education do not stand in isolation but form an integrated triadic system in producing, negotiating, and actualizing Islamic law in daily life (Hussain, 2025).

This study proposes a conceptual framework that can be formulated as "Pedagogical *Maqāṣidi*," namely a model of Islamic legal reasoning in which the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* are operationalized through a dialogical pedagogical process and communal ethical practices. Unlike classical approaches that place *maqāṣid* at the level of scholars' ijtihad, this model demonstrates how principles such as *ʿadl* (justice) and *raḥmah* (compassion) are internalized through social interaction and informal education.

Furthermore, these findings also reveal the existence of a form of community-based social ijtihad (communal *ijtihād*), in which the legal reasoning process is not monopolized by formal authorities but emerges through collective deliberation among *kiai*, *nyai*, and community members. This does not negate classical authority but recontextualizes it within the framework of interpretive communities as proposed by Eickelman and Piscatori, where legal authority is formed dialogically (Nikulina et al., 2019; Zhang, 2025).

Compared to the concept of social fiqh in Indonesia, which emphasizes the contextualization of Islamic law within social realities, this study offers a novel perspective by positioning pedagogy as the primary mechanism for legal transformation. While social fiqh tends to remain at the normative-conceptual level, this study demonstrates how Islamic law is concretely produced through educational practices, rituals, and deliberation.

Furthermore, previous studies on legal pluralism have generally focused on the relationship between state law, customary law, and Islamic law within an institutional framework (Hariri & Babussalam, 2024; Islam, 2025; Sani, 2020). This study shifts the focus to the micro-level—the production of legal meaning in daily life—thus demonstrating how local actors actively reinterpret fiqh within their social contexts (Sahin, 2018; Speidl, 2025).

The transformation of Islamic law identified in this study can be understood through three main dimensions. First, at the epistemological level, Islamic law shifts from a text-based normative system to a "living ethical discourse" rooted in *maqāṣid*. Second, at the methodological level, there is a shift from a deductive-textual approach toward dialogical reasoning that integrates *ʿurf*, *maṣlaḥah*, and *musyawarah*. Third, at the sociological level, legal authority shifts from formal institutions toward community networks based on social trust.

This three-tiered transformation directly addresses the research question: that multicultural education not only transmits Islamic law but also reshapes the ways in which that law is understood, interpreted, and practiced.

One of the key findings of this study is that pedagogy functions as a primary mechanism in the production of Islamic legal authority. Informal educational spaces such as *pengajian* and *madrasah diniyah* not only convey knowledge but also shape the interpretive capacities of the community. Through narrative-based learning, ethical reflection, and dialogue, individuals develop moral-legal competencies that enable them to participate in legal reasoning.

These competencies then contribute to the formation of local *fatāwā*, particularly regarding contextual issues such as interfaith relations and social practices (Gilani & Waheed, 2025; Moahmed Rasak & Fatmir Shehu, 2024; Schuz, 2025). In this regard, pedagogical authority functions as moral capital, where legal legitimacy is determined not only by formal credentials but by ethical integrity and social trust (Dulfer et al., 2023; Hasan, 2025; Herani & Angela, 2025; Molden et al., 2017; Needham, 2006).

The main analytical contribution of this study is the identification of a triadic model of Islamic law formation, consisting of:

1. Consultation: as a procedural mechanism for producing legal decisions based on consensus and *maṣlaḥah*.
2. Ritual Reinterpretation: as a hermeneutic process that integrates local culture into the framework of Islamic law through *ʿurf*.
3. Informal Pedagogy: as the epistemological and ethical foundation for the transmission and internalization of Islamic law.

These three elements form an integrated system within which Islamic law is continually reconstructed. This synthesis directly answers the research question that the transformation of Islamic law occurs through the dynamic interaction between deliberation, cultural practices, and education (Abdal-Haqq, 2002; Horowitz, 1994).

This research is not merely descriptive but also presents Fiqh Nusantara as a normative model of Islamic legal pluralism rooted in *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, *ʿurf*, and cross-madhhab adaptability (Riandi & Rusdiyah, 2025). From the perspective of Uṣūl al-Fiqh, the legitimacy of this model is supported by the recognition of *ʿurf* as a secondary source of law, as well as the principle of *maṣlaḥah* as the basis for legal flexibility.

Although the Shafi'i madhhab serves as the dominant framework, practices in Nganget demonstrate selective adaptation that also aligns with the more accommodating approaches of the Maliki and Hanafi schools toward local customs. Thus, Nusantara Fiqh can be understood as a contextual, cross-school synthesis, not as a deviation from classical tradition.

Methodologically, this study distinguishes between descriptive and normative dimensions. Descriptively, this study outlines how Islamic law is practiced in local contexts. Normatively, these practices are evaluated using the frameworks of maqāṣid al-syarīʿah

and uṣūl al-fiqh to assess their legitimacy and boundaries. This dual approach ensures epistemological consistency while enabling a critical analysis of the findings.

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic law in rural Indonesia operates as a normative system that is pedagogically mediated, culturally embedded, and ethically oriented. The transformations occurring are not deviations from Sharia, but rather a rearticulation of its objectives within a pluralistic social context. By positioning Islamic law as a system that is simultaneously legal, moral, and pedagogical, this study makes an important contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic legal studies. In this regard, Fiqh Nusantara emerges not only as an empirical reality but also as a normative project that integrates law, culture, and education within the framework of maqāṣid-based legal pluralism.

## Conclusion

This study aims to analyse how Islamic law is transformed through the process of multicultural education in the context of rural Muslim communities in Indonesia. By addressing research gaps related to the limited studies that integrate grassroots practices, madhhab-based reasoning, and informal pedagogy, this study demonstrates that Sharia not only undergoes practical adaptation but is reconceptualized as a living and adaptive moral ecosystem shaped through the interaction between communal practices, cultural interpretations, and educational processes. Substantively, this study fills three major gaps. First, at the empirical level, this research demonstrates that Islamic law operates dynamically in the daily practices of society, transcending formal institutional frameworks. Second, at the theoretical level, this research integrates the frameworks of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, legal pluralism, and transformative pedagogy into a coherent analysis. Third, at the doctrinal level, this study demonstrates that the authority of the Shafi'i madhhab is not static but is reinterpreted through contextual practices and inter-school interactions.

Conceptually, this study offers three main contributions. First, the concept of Pedagogical *Maqāṣidi*, an epistemological model in which the objectives of Sharia are operationalized through a dialogical pedagogical process. Second, the concept of communal ijtihad, which asserts that the production of legal knowledge can emerge from collective deliberation within a community. Third, the interpretation of Fiqh Nusantara as a normative model of Islamic legal pluralism grounded in *maqāṣid*, *ʿurf*, and cross-madhhab adaptability. In line with the research objectives, these findings confirm that multicultural education functions not merely as a supportive context but as a constitutive mechanism in the transformation of Islamic law, shaping both legal epistemology and practice. This indicates a shift from textual formalism toward a legal approach that is more ethical, contextual, and grounded in social experience. Further research needs to examine the

dynamics of this model in cross-regional contexts, long-term social change, and its interaction with formal madhhab authorities and digital puritanism, to affirm that the vitality of Islamic law lies in its ability to actualize the values of justice and public interest in a pluralistic and dynamic society.

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