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OPERATIONALIZING KUNTOWIJOYO'S ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE: METHODS AND RELEVANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims to operationalize Kuntowijoyo's concept of the Islamization as science by examining its methodological framework and its relevance in the contemporary Indonesian context. Existing studies on Kuntowijoyo's thought have largely focused on its philosophical and epistemological dimensions, with limited attention given to its practical application as an operational methodological system. This article addresses this gap by analyzing five key methods proposed by Kuntowijoyo: transcendental structuralism, the analytic-synthetic method, the objectification method, the historical-empirical method, and the prophetic method (normative-transformative). Using a qualitative approach based on literature review, this study demonstrates that these methods can be operationalized in various socio-religious contexts in Indonesia, including the development of Islamic financial institutions, socio-religious movements, and community-based practices. The findings indicate that the Islamization of knowledge is not merely a normative or abstract project, but a methodological framework capable of transforming Islamic values into empirical and institutional forms. This study contributes to the development of Prophetic Social Science by offering a more applied and context-sensitive interpretation of Kuntowijoyo's thought, particularly in addressing the challenges of contemporary Indonesian society.*



Keywords: *Islamization as Science, Kuntowijoyo, operationalization.*

ABSTRAK: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengoperasionalkan konsep Islamisasi ilmu pengetahuan yang dikemukakan oleh Kuntowijoyo dengan mengkaji kerangka metodologisnya serta relevansinya dalam konteks Indonesia kontemporer. Selama ini, kajian terhadap pemikiran Kuntowijoyo cenderung berfokus pada aspek filosofis dan epistemologis, sehingga belum banyak mengulas penerapannya sebagai suatu sistem metodologis yang operasional. Penelitian ini mengisi celah tersebut dengan menganalisis lima metode utama yang ditawarkan Kuntowijoyo, yaitu strukturalisme transendental, metode sintetik-analitik, metode objektivikasi, metode historis-empiris, serta metode profetik (normatif-transformatif). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kelima metode tersebut dapat dioperasionalkan dalam berbagai konteks sosial-keagamaan di Indonesia, seperti dalam pengembangan lembaga keuangan syariah, gerakan sosial keagamaan, serta praktik-praktik berbasis komunitas. Hasil penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa Islamisasi ilmu pengetahuan tidak berhenti pada tataran normatif, melainkan berfungsi sebagai kerangka metodologis yang mampu mentransformasikan nilai-nilai Islam ke dalam bentuk empiris dan institusional. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam pengembangan Ilmu Sosial Profetik dengan menawarkan pembacaan yang lebih aplikatif dan kontekstual terhadap pemikiran Kuntowijoyo, khususnya dalam menjawab tantangan masyarakat Indonesia kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Islamisasi Ilmu, Kuntowijoyo, operasionalisasi.*

INTRODUCTION

The discourse on the Islamization of knowledge has long been a central theme in contemporary Islamic thought, particularly in response to the dominance of secular paradigms in modern science. Among Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, Kuntowijoyo offers a distinctive approach through his concept of the “Islamization of knowledge,” which emphasizes not only the integration of revelation and reason but also the transformation of knowledge into a socially operative framework. In recent years, scholarly attention to Kuntowijoyo’s thought and the broader project of Islamization of knowledge has continued to develop, particularly in relation to its epistemological and philosophical foundations¹. Several studies have explored the integration of Islam and science as well as the critique of secular paradigms that

¹ Ahmad Shidqi Mukhtasor and Jeihan Kamilla Rizal, “A Critical Assessment on Kuntowijoyo’s Pengilmuan Islam in Reference to Islamization of Knowledge Educational Philosophy.” *Forum Paedagogik* 13, No 2 (2022): 10 Articles, Pages 156-306, 2023; Roma Wijaya and M Riyan Hidayat, “Kuntowijoyo’s Islamic Epistemology and Its Implications in Islamic Thought,” *Al-Banjari: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 23, no. 1 (2024): 1-15.



dominate modern knowledge systems². In addition, other works have examined the application of Kuntowijoyo's epistemological framework in specific domains such as Islamic education and institutional culture³. These studies have contributed significantly to clarifying the conceptual dimensions of Kuntowijoyo's thought.

However, most existing studies on Kuntowijoyo's thought tend to focus on its philosophical and epistemological foundations, such as the critique of secularism and the conceptualization of prophetic social science. While these studies are important, they often remain at a normative and theoretical level, with limited exploration of how his ideas can be translated into concrete methodological tools applicable to real social contexts. This study argues that Kuntowijoyo's framework should be understood not merely as a philosophical project, but as a set of operational methods that can be applied in analyzing and transforming social reality. In this regard, Kuntowijoyo proposes several key methodological approaches, including transcendental structuralism, the analytic-synthetic method, the objectification method, the historical-empirical method, and the prophetic method (normative-transformative). These methods provide a structured pathway for bridging Islamic values and empirical realities.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to systematically operationalize these five methods within the context of contemporary Indonesia. Rather than offering a general or abstract discussion, this study focuses on concrete examples and socio-religious practices, demonstrating how the Islamization of knowledge can function as a practical and transformative scientific framework. By doing so, this article not only fills the gap in existing literature but also responds directly to the need for a more applicable and contextually grounded model of Islamic social science in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach based on library research. The data sources consist of primary sources, namely Kuntowijoyo's original works including *Islam sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, dan Etika* (2006) and his relevant articles that explicitly formulate the five methods (transcendental structuralism, analytic-synthetic, objectification, historical-empirical, and prophetic method), and secondary sources comprising academic journal articles, book chapters, and dissertations that discuss or apply his thought in the Indonesian context.

² Achmad Reza Hutama Al Faruqi et al., "The Islamization Of Knowledge And Scientification Of Islam: Polemic In The Integretion Of Islam And Science," *EL-FIKR: Jurnal Aqidah Dan Filsafat Islam* 5, no. 1 SE-Articles (June 20, 2024): 17-36; Richo Bintang Mahendra, Muhammad Rizkita, and Ahmad Nurcholish, "Kuntowijoyo's Concept of Scientification of Islam and Its Relevance for Post-Secular Society: Konsep Saintifikasi Islam Menurut Kuntowijoyo Dan Relevansinya Bagi Masyarakat Pasca Sekuler," *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia* 7, no. 3 (2024): 398-409.

³ Ratna Hestiana and Syahrial Labaso, "Budaya Organisasi Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Dalam Epistemologi Kuntowijoyo," *Jurnal Pendidikan Madrasah* 9, no. 1 (2024): 97-108.



Data collection followed systematic steps: first, identifying and classifying Kuntowijoyo's methodological concepts from primary texts; second, locating secondary sources through keyword searches in Google Scholar, Scopus, and SINTA-indexed journals using terms such as "Kuntowijoyo", "Islamization of knowledge", and "prophetic social science"; third, screening documents for explicit discussion of at least one of the five methods; and fourth, compiling selected documents thematically.

Data analysis employed a thematic-interpretive method consisting of four stages: conceptual analysis of each method's theoretical foundations and epistemological assumptions; mapping each method onto concrete Indonesian socio-religious phenomena (e.g., zakat institutions, Islamic banking, Muhammadiyah's social practices) by selecting relevant empirical cases from the literature; applying an analytic-synthetic process to connect normative Islamic concepts derived from revelation with empirical realities; and synthesizing findings to evaluate how the five methods function collectively as a coherent system for the Islamization of knowledge in practice.

To ensure trustworthiness, source triangulation was applied by comparing interpretations across multiple secondary sources and cross-referencing with primary texts, complemented by informal member checking with two researchers familiar with Kuntowijoyo's work to confirm the accuracy of the operationalization steps.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kuntowijoyo's Critique of Modern Social Science

Kuntowijoyo advanced a incisive critique of modern Western epistemology and social science, which he regarded as undergoing a crisis of relevance and failing to humanize humanity.⁴ His analysis began with the birth of modern science during the Renaissance, the ensuing paradigm shift in Western thought, and the secularization of knowledge. This entailed a transition from theocentrism to anthropocentrism, the separation of religion from science, and the elevation of secularism to the status of a new religion.⁵ Western modernism originated in the rejection of theocentrism, whereby human reason was glorified and religion was denigrated. This gave rise to anthropocentrism, which positioned humanity as the supreme creator, executor, and consumer of its own products, as well as the ultimate arbiter of truth and ethics. As a consequence of this anthropocentric turn, differentiation occurred between religion and other sectors of life, including science, politics, economics, and law. Scientific truth came to be grounded in correspondence and coherence theories internal to science itself, rather than in revelation. This trajectory was further reinforced by intellectual currents such as

⁴ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2006).

⁵ K Armstrong, *Sejarah Tuhan: Kisah 4.000 Tahun Pencarian Tuhan Dalam Agama-Agama Manusia* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2014).



Darwinism, Freudianism, and Pragmatism. Consequently, secularism was adopted as a new religion and a guiding doctrine for its adherents.⁶

Kuntowijoyo also criticized and rejected the positivist claim that science is objective, neutral, and value-free. In his view, this claim constitutes an illusion that conceals underlying interests.⁷ He identified three primary interests that he contended are embedded in Western science: Orientalism, which represents Western cultural hegemony; economic interests; and military interests, as exemplified by nuclear science. Despite its purported objectivity, science has exceeded its proper bounds and transformed into a dominant force over humanity.⁸ In his formulation, humans create machines; then humans, having become machine-like, proceed to create literal machines. Human value is thereby reduced to that of a machine, serving merely as a source of wealth production. This stands in contrast to the Islamic paradigm, which rejects the subjective domination of science and upholds respect for the values held by the objects of its inquiry.

Kuntowijoyo further contended that the analytical tools employed by Western social science frequently fail to adequately capture the dynamics and structures of Muslim societies.⁹ This failure stems from their divergent conceptual frameworks and inherent biases. First, he identified an inability to perceive static change, noting that many religious scholars and scientists remain entrenched in traditional perspectives or in Western theories that have lost relevance. Consequently, they fail to recognize the sociological transformation of Muslim communities from rural agrarian societies to urban ones. For instance, the role of the kyai as a cultural broker, a term coined by Clifford Geertz, has in rural areas been largely supplanted by bureaucrats, educators, and mass media in the modern era.¹⁰ Older analytical models, however, frequently overlook this shift. Second, he pointed to an incapacity to comprehend transcendental structures. Secular Western social science, by excluding the factors of revelation and God, fails to apprehend the deep structure of Islamic society, which is animated by the principle of tawhid. While Western scholarship may observe empirical phenomena on the surface, such as prayer or almsgiving, it remains unable to grasp the innate structuring capacity derived from faith that generates these social forms. Third, he identified the trap of myth and ideology. In the absence of a rigorous scientific framework derived from the Qur'anic paradigm, Muslims are often analyzed, or analyze themselves, through the lenses of myth, prelogical or magical thinking, or ideology. These perspectives remain subjective or politically motivated rather than grounded in objective, factual

⁶ Fahrur Rozi and Ahmad Fauzi, "Islamic Development from Kuntowijoyo's Prophetic Social Science Perspective," *West Science Islamic Studies* 1, no. 01 (2023): 50–63.

⁷ Irma Novayani, "Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan Menurut Pandangan Syed M. Naquib Al-Attas Dan Implikasi Terhadap Lembaga Pendidikan International Institute of Islamic Thought Civilization (ISTAC)," *Jurnal Muta'aliyah* 1, no. 1 (2017): 74–89.

⁸ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*.

⁹ Wijaya and Hidayat, "Kuntowijoyo's Islamic Epistemology and Its Implications in Islamic Thought."

¹⁰ Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (Routledge, 2013), 1–46.



science. Western social science tends to portray Islam solely as a historical or cultural phenomenon, thereby neglecting its potential as a scientific methodology for problem-solving. Kuntowijoyo's critique of modern social science did not conclude merely with a rejection of its claims to objectivity and value neutrality. Rather, it was directed toward the construction of an alternative scientific framework capable of bridging empirical reality and religious values. In contemporary discourse, Prophetic Social Science is understood as a synthesis of scientific method and religious dimension, domains that have long been separated in the Western intellectual tradition.

As a solution to these criticisms, Kuntowijoyo proposed Prophetic Social Science, a paradigm that not only explains social phenomena, as Western science does, but also seeks to transform them in accordance with ethical ideals.¹¹ These ideals are humanization, liberation, and transcendence. Kuntowijoyo's prophetic approach has subsequently been developed in applied studies, particularly in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses through a transformative social lens. This demonstrates that Prophetic Social Science does not remain at the level of epistemological critique, but advances toward an interpretive praxis that connects sacred texts with contemporary social problems.¹²

The Concept of Islam as Science in Kuntowijoyo's Thought

In Islam, the Qur'an occupies the primary position as the source of knowledge, guiding humanity in conducting worldly life and attaining well-being in this world and the hereafter.¹³ Three-quarters of the Qur'an consists of diverse narratives, ranging from stories of earlier prophets and past communities to events experienced by the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an was revealed gradually, with each verse addressing and guiding the Prophet in resolving problems arising within human society.¹⁴ In response to every societal issue, the Qur'an provides commentary and reflection from the divine perspective of God, the Creator of humanity.¹⁵ The Qur'an illustrates and recounts the experiences of previous peoples, the consequences they incurred, and the circumstances that followed those consequences. Kuntowijoyo explains, for instance, that the story of Pharaoh represents the most recognized account of tyrannical evil in early human history.¹⁶

¹¹ Angga Arifka, "From Prophetic Theology to Prophetic Social Science: : The Study of Kuntowijoyo's Thought," *Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Sosial* 8, no. 2 (2025): 206–21.

¹² Muhammad Alfreda Daib Insan Labib and Dadi Nurhaedi, "Implementation of Kuntowijoyo ' S Prophetic Social Sciences as an Approach to Reconstruct the Interpretation of The Qur'anic Verses of the Story of Ibrahim the Qualifications and Qualities of the Perfect Leader .," *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 18, no. 1 (2023): 167.

¹³ Mukhsin Mukhsin and Ilzam Hubby Dzikrillah Alfani, "Imam Shafi'i's Educational Thought And Its Implications For Contemporary Islamic Education," *Oasis : Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Islam* 9, no. 1 (October 2024): 34.

¹⁴ Muhammad Abdel Haleem and M A S Haleem, "Understanding the Qur'an," 2010.

¹⁵ Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (Taylor & Francis, 2005).

¹⁶ Mahendra, Rizkita, and Nurcholish, "Kuntowijoyo's Concept of Scientification of Islam and Its Relevance for Post-Secular Society: Konsep Saintifikasi Islam Menurut Kuntowijoyo Dan Relevansinya Bagi Masyarakat Pasca Sekuler."



Similarly, the narrative of Prophet Salih, whose community killed his she-camel, exemplifies mass betrayal through conspiracies of disbelief. Through such examples, God provides humanity with guidance and a model for conduct, warning against repeating the downfall experienced by earlier communities and civilizations. When viewed in relation to the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an may be understood as a *Weltanschauung*, or worldview, applicable to both the present and the future. The Islamization of knowledge as conceived by Kuntowijoyo is not intended as a symbolic Islamization of Western science, but rather as an epistemological reconstruction that positions revelation as a source of values to be processed scientifically. In this framework, revelation is not treated as a closed dogma, but as a structure of values that must be examined and interpreted through social reality and human rationality.

In order to uncover and draw lessons from the events experienced by earlier communities as narrated in the Qur'an, an epistemological framework is required to formulate concepts and theories derived from the Qur'an. Accordingly, Kuntowijoyo developed several methods for the Islamization of knowledge, as outlined below.

Transcendental Structuralism

The first method underpinning the Islamization of knowledge is transcendental structuralism. Through this method, Kuntowijoyo conceptualizes revelation as a structure of values that is transcendental and fixed, whereas social reality is dynamic and historical.¹⁷ Revelation is not positioned as a product of human social reflection, but rather as a normative framework through which reality is interpreted and assessed. Kuntowijoyo asserts that the Qur'an provides a structure of values that must be tested within empirical reality, not the reverse.¹⁸ Through this approach, revelation serves as a source of epistemological orientation without negating the role of human reason and experience.

The operational procedure of this method can be summarized as follows: identifying key Qur'anic concepts such as *fuqara* (the poor), *mustad'afin* (the oppressed), *zhalimun* (the unjust), and *mufsidun* (those who cause corruption); understanding their normative meanings; testing these concepts within empirical reality; and subsequently deriving them into operative social concepts.

In the Indonesian context, transcendental structuralism offers a way to overcome this limitation by grounding social analysis in stable Qur'anic structures. This can be observed in the institutionalization of *zakat* as a socio-economic mechanism aimed at reducing inequality and promoting social justice¹⁹. The Qur'anic principles of wealth redistribution and collective responsibility are not

¹⁷ Muhammad Syihabuddin and Luthfi Nurul Huda, "Exploring Kuntowijoyo's Concept of Prophetic Leadership and Its Relevance in Indonesian Muslim Society," *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 18, no. 2 (2024).

¹⁸ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*, (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2006), 24.

¹⁹ Abdullah Ahadish Shamad Muis et al., "Zakat, Economic Growth, and Poverty Alleviation : An Artificial Neural Networks Analysis," *International Journal Of Zakat* 9 (2024): 56-70.



only upheld as moral imperatives but also function as structural foundations influencing economic behavior and public policy. Institutions such as Badan Amil Zakat Nasional reflect how these transcendental values are embedded within formal systems, shaping both individual actions and broader socio-economic arrangements²⁰. Thus, social practices are understood as manifestations of deeper Qur'anic structures, demonstrating the application of transcendental structuralism in the Indonesian context.

Analytic-Synthetic Method

The second method is the analytic-synthetic method, which functions to transform revelatory texts into social science concepts and theories. In the analytic stage, the Qur'anic text is deconstructed to identify the values, norms, social categories, and historical patterns contained within it. In the synthetic stage, these findings are systematically reconstructed into a conceptual framework relevant to contemporary realities. Kuntowijoyo asserts that the Islamization of knowledge requires a movement from text to context, and from normativity to objectivity.²¹ Through this method, the Qur'an is not merely read as a moral scripture, but also as a conceptual source for the development of social science. The procedural framework can be summarized as follows: the analytic framework involves deconstructing the Qur'anic text and identifying its embedded values, norms, social categories, and historical patterns. Subsequently, the synthetic framework entails reconstructing these findings and processing them into concepts, theories, and scientific paradigms.²²

In the Indonesian context, the prohibition of *riba* (usury) is not merely understood as a theological norm, but is critically analyzed as an economic system that contributes to the unequal distribution of wealth within modern capitalist practices²³. Through an analytical approach, the concept of *riba* is examined in relation to interest-based mechanisms in conventional banking, which tend to disproportionately benefit capital owners²⁴. Subsequently, through a synthetic approach, Islamic economic principles are integrated with contemporary financial systems, leading to the emergence of concrete institutional forms such as Bank Syariah Indonesia²⁵. This institution offers financing schemes that avoid fluctuating interest rates and instead operate on principles of equity and profit-sharing. Thus, Qur'anic teachings are not confined to normative interpretations, but are operationalized into empirical and applicable economic systems within society.

²⁰ Evi Aninatin Ni'matul Choiriyah et al., "Zakat And Poverty Alleviation In Indonesia: A Panel Analysis At Provincial Level" 6, no. 4 (2020): 811-32.

²¹ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*.

²² Wijaya and Hidayat, "Kuntowijoyo's Islamic Epistemology and Its Implications in Islamic Thought."

²³ Anindya Aryu Inayati, "Pemikiran Ekonomi Islam M . Umer Chapra" 14, no. 2 (2013): 164-76.

²⁴ Yusfa Murteza and Jamal Aziz, "Implementasi Zakat Dan Penghapusan Riba Dalam Pemikiran Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi," *Al-Kharaj: Jurnal Ekonomi, Keuangan & Bisnis Syariah* 6 (April 2024): 3834-47, <https://doi.org/10.47467/alkharaj.v6i5.1286>.

²⁵ Novia Nengsih, "Peran Perbankan Syariah Dalam Mengimplementasikan Keuangan Inklusif Di Indonesia.Pdf," *Jurnal Etikonomi* 14, no. 2 oktober (2015): 221-40.



This demonstrates the application of the analytic-synthetic method in translating religious principles into concrete socio-economic practices.

Objectification Method

The third method, which constitutes a distinctive feature of Kuntowijoyo's thought, is objectification.²⁶ Objectification is understood as the process of translating subjective religious values into objective forms that can be universally accepted and appreciated by all people, without necessarily displaying formal religious symbols. Kuntowijoyo emphasized that the aim of the Islamization of knowledge is to present Islamic values in an objective form so that they may be experienced by all humanity, both Muslims and non-Muslims.²⁷ Thus, objectification enables Islamic values to function universally within the public sphere and social praxis. Through the methodological framework of transcendental structuralism and objectification, Kuntowijoyo sought to ensure that Qur'anic values can manifest objectively in social space without appearing in formal religious symbolism. Within this framework, Prophetic Social Science is constructed upon a trilogy of core values, namely humanization, liberation, and transcendence, serving as both ethical and scientific orientations in interpreting social reality.

The operational logic can be summarized as follows: spiritual values are transformed into moral values. For instance, the spirit of zakat, the value of tawhid, and ethical conduct are translated into systems of social justice, an ethics of anti-oppression, and public policy frameworks. In the Indonesian context, this is evident in the institutionalization of zakat through formal bodies such as Badan Amil Zakat Nasional, which manages the collection and distribution of zakat at a national level. The principle of wealth redistribution, rooted in Qur'anic teachings, is thus objectified into structured mechanisms aimed at poverty alleviation and social welfare²⁸. This transformation demonstrates how religious norms are not confined to private piety but are embedded within formal governance and socio-economic systems. As a result, Islamic teachings become part of an observable and operational public framework, reflecting the application of the objectification method in contemporary Indonesian society.

Historical-Empirical Method

In addition, Kuntowijoyo employed the historical-empirical method in the Islamization of knowledge. The Qur'anic narratives concerning past communities are understood not merely as theological accounts, but as social data embodying historical patterns. Kuntowijoyo explained that the Qur'an presents concrete examples of social structure, power relations, and their moral consequences, all of which are amenable to scientific analysis.²⁹ Through this method, Qur'anic

²⁶ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*.

²⁷ Kuntowijoyo.

²⁸ Irfan Syauqi Beik and Laily Dwi Arsyianti, "Measuring Zakat Impact on Poverty and Welfare Using CIBEST Model," *Journal of Islamic Monetary Economics and Finance* 1, no. 2 (2016): 141-60.

²⁹ Akhmad Fatoni and Silva Anggi Lestari, "Prophetic Structuralism: The Integration of Kuntowijoyo and Bourdieu in Literary Analysis," *Journal of Humanities and Sociocultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1-13.



narratives serve as a source of reflection for interpreting modern social problems, including tyranny, injustice, and dehumanization.

The operational procedure can be summarized as follows: Qur'anic narratives are understood as social data; patterns of oppression, disobedience, and their social consequences are identified; and these patterns are subsequently applied to contemporary contexts. The application of this method in Indonesia has the potential to strengthen the Indonesian Muslim intellectual movement.³⁰ The historical-empirical method, as proposed by Kuntowijoyo, emphasizes the understanding of Islamic teachings through historical processes and observable social realities. Rather than approaching religion solely through normative or textual analysis, this method highlights how Islamic values are manifested and adapted within specific socio-cultural contexts. In Indonesia, this can be observed in the persistence of communal religious practices such as *slametan*, which reflects the integration of Islamic teachings with local cultural traditions³¹. These practices are not merely ritual expressions, but represent historically rooted forms of social cohesion, mutual assistance, and religious meaning. The empirical dimension of such traditions demonstrates how Islam operates within lived experiences, shaped by historical interactions between religious doctrines and local cultures. Thus, Islamic teachings are understood not only as abstract principles but as dynamic realities that evolve through time and social practice, illustrating the application of the historical-empirical method in the Indonesian context.

Prophetic Method (Normative-Transformative)

All of the aforementioned methods ultimately converge toward a single overarching objective: the formation of Prophetic Social Science, as conceptualized by Kuntowijoyo. Within this framework, scientific knowledge is not regarded as neutral, but as inherently value-laden, requiring ethical and transformative orientations. Kuntowijoyo asserts that social science must operate within the prophetic principles of humanization (*amar ma'ruf*), liberation (*nahi munkar*), and transcendence (*tu'minuna billah*), which are rooted in Islamic teachings³². Consequently, the Islamization of knowledge reaches its practical culmination in Prophetic Social Science, a discipline that not only interprets social reality but also actively directs it toward justice and human dignity.

In the Indonesian context, this methodological framework finds concrete expression in the social practices of Muhammadiyah, particularly through its philanthropic, educational, and humanitarian initiatives. Studies have shown that Muhammadiyah plays a significant role in disaster management, healthcare services, and social welfare programs, reflecting its commitment to social

³⁰ Wasisto Raharjo Jati et al., "From Intellectual to Advocacy Movement: Islamic Moderation, the Conservatives and the Shift of Interfaith Dialogue Campaign in Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 26, no. 2 (2022): 472-99.

³¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion Of Java* (London: The University Of Chicago press Chicago and London, 1976), 11-15.

³² Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*, 92.



transformation³³. For instance, the establishment of Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center demonstrates how faith-based values are operationalized in disaster response and humanitarian assistance. These practices embody the principles of humanization through social services, liberation through empowerment and crisis response, and transcendence through religious motivation and ethical commitment.

Therefore, the methodology of the Islamization of knowledge holds strategic relevance for Indonesia as an effort to construct a form of social science that is grounded in revelatory values, responsive to local socio-cultural realities, and oriented toward social transformation. This approach not only critiques dominant positivistic paradigms but also offers a methodological alternative in which knowledge functions as an instrument of ethical engagement and social change³⁴. In this sense, Prophetic Social Science is not merely a normative religious discourse, but the logical consequence of an epistemological framework that positions revelation as a structure of values and society as the field of scientific praxis. Thus, Islam is not only to be understood, but to be lived and actualized as a transformative force in shaping a just and dignified social order.

This relevance becomes more evident when examined through concrete social practices within Indonesian Islamic organizations. Thus, Muhammadiyah does not merely function as a religious organization, but as a living representation of Prophetic Social Science, wherein Islam operates not only as a normative framework but as a methodological foundation for social transformation in contemporary society.

The Relevance of Prophetic Social Science in the Contemporary Context

Prophetic Social Science as conceived by Kuntowijoyo is not merely a theological discourse.³⁵ Rather, this concept constitutes a serious epistemological proposal aimed at reconstructing the edifice of scientific knowledge in the midst of a humanitarian crisis and the erosion of human values, consequences of modernity and the intellectual stagnation of the Muslim community. Kuntowijoyo offered a resolution to these problems through the integration of revelation and rationality for the purpose of social transformation. The implementation of Kuntowijoyo's conceptual framework within Islamic social science engenders a fundamental paradigm shift, moving from a defensive-apologetic stance toward a scientific-objective orientation. This transition begins with a reorientation from the Islamization of knowledge to the Islamization of knowledge as conceived by Kuntowijoyo, which stands in contrast to the framework proposed by Naquib Al-

³³ H Latief, *Melayani Umat* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2013), 116-136, <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=SVdjDwAAQBAJ>.

³⁴ A Fauzia, *Faith and the State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia*, Brill's Southeast Asian Library (Brill, 2013), 139, <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=QUYyAQAAQBAJ>.

³⁵ Arditya Prayogi, "Reviewing the Idea of Islamic Ethical Paradigm of Prophetic Science Thinking Kuntowijoyo," *Al-Nizam: Indonesian Journal of Research and Community Service* 1, no. 1 (2023): 31-44.



Attas and subsequently developed by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi.³⁶ Indeed, Al-Attas himself critiqued al-Faruqi's approach, characterizing it as primarily an exercise in labeling secular scientific findings with Qur'anic verses, and as fundamentally reactive in nature, proceeding from context to text. By contrast, Kuntowijoyo's Islamization of knowledge is proactive, moving from text to context. In this framework, Islam, as embodied in the Qur'an and Sunnah, is positioned as a paradigm for interpreting reality rather than merely as a means of corroborating scientific discoveries with scriptural verses.³⁷

The Development of Islamic Social Science in Indonesia

The development of Islamic social science in Indonesia necessitates a departure from mythopoeic modes of thought, characterized by prelogical or magical reasoning, as well as from ideological frameworks, toward the stage of science.³⁸ At the scientific stage, Islam is no longer perceived merely as an instrument of political identity or as a set of normative doctrines, but rather as a methodology for problem-solving that is objective and factual.³⁹ One of the most essential components in this developmental process is objectification, through which internal values, whether normative or subjective, are translated into objective categories that can be rationally accepted by all individuals.⁴⁰ For instance, the obligation of zakat is not only propagated as a religious duty but is objectified into the concept of wealth redistribution or social welfare provision that is economically logical. This represents the transformation of spiritual values into moral values, parallel to translating the spirit of zakat into social justice or economic equity. This approach prevents the domination of religion while simultaneously presenting Islam as *Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin*, a mercy to all creation.

Relevance for Islamic Higher Education

Contemporary Islamic higher education institutions face the challenge of a dichotomy between religious sciences and secular sciences, which often operate in isolation from one another. Kuntowijoyo proposed the concept of integralization, wherein revelation is positioned as the measure of truth and subsequently processed through human reason into a novel scientific synthesis applicable to contemporary contexts.⁴¹ This stands in contrast to secular science, which tends to separate religion from science and elevates human reason as the supreme authority

³⁶ Farah Ahmed, "An Exploration of Naquib Al-Attas' Theory of Islamic Education as Ta'dib as an 'Indigenous' Educational Philosophy," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50, no. 8 (July 2018): 786–94; Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1998).

³⁷ H Mahfud Junaedi and Mirza Mahbub Wijaya, *Pengembangan Paradigma Keilmuan Perspektif Epistemologi Islam: Dari Perennialisme Hingga Islamisme, Integrasi-Interkoneksi Dan Unity of Sciences* (Prenada Media, 2020).

³⁸ Vedi R Hadiz, *Social Science and Power in Indonesia* (Equinox Publishing, 2005).

³⁹ M Zainal Abidin, "Paradigma Islam Dalam Pembangunan Ilmu Integralistik: Membaca Pemikiran Kuntowijoyo," 2016.

⁴⁰ Kuntowijoyo, *Islam Sebagai Ilmu: Epistemologi, Metodologi, Dan Etika*.

⁴¹ Mukhlisina Lahuddin and Ahmad Romadhon, "Reconstruction of the Islamic Science Paradigm: Comparative Study of Kuntowijoyo and Ziauddin Sardar's Perspectives," in *Proceeding of International Conference on Islamic Education (ICIED)*, vol. 8, 2023, 403–18.



in various domains. Kuntowijoyo advocated for the reunification of divine revelation, comprising both *qawliyyah* verses and those derived from prophetic tradition, with the findings of human reason, encompassing *kauniyyah* verses pertaining to nature and *insaniyyah* verses concerning humanity, a process he termed dedifferentiation. For Islamic higher education institutions, this implies that curricula should not maintain a rigid separation between faculties of religious studies and general sciences. Rather, they should cultivate interdisciplinary dialectics in which revelation constitutes a legitimate epistemological foundation for the construction of grand theory.

The relevance of Prophetic Social Science is also evident in efforts to counteract radicalism among university students.⁴² Radicalism frequently emerges from rigid, textualist interpretations, exclusivist attitudes, and isolation from social reality. This contrasts with the approach implemented at Serang Raya University, where students are encouraged to develop critical, moderate, and inclusive modes of thinking. Prophetic Social Science teaches that Islamic truth must be objectively tested within social reality rather than imposed emotionally, thereby preventing blind fanaticism.⁴³ Islamic higher education institutions are furthermore expected not merely to reproduce classical disciplines such as Fiqh, Tasawwuf, and Kalam, but to develop these fields into social theoretical concepts, to research and interpret the Qur'an through sociological methodologies, and consequently to generate novel concepts within social science.

Challenges and Opportunities for Implementing Prophetic Social Science in the Contemporary Era

Despite offering a robust paradigm, the implementation of Prophetic Social Science encounters significant cultural and structural obstacles.⁴⁴ The continued dominance of positivist and secularist paradigms within the global academic establishment remains deeply entrenched, with transcendental values frequently dismissed as unscientific and biased according to mainstream standards. The methodological difficulty of transitioning from normative to theoretical frameworks constitutes a substantial challenge for Indonesian Muslim scholars. Many Muslim academics struggle with theory building from the Qur'an, specifically in translating normative Qur'anic concepts into measurable empirical indicators. A prevalent practice involves merely appending Qur'anic verses to scientific findings rather than constructing original theoretical frameworks derived from the Qur'an's own structure.⁴⁵ Furthermore, conservative groups persist in rejecting the desacralization of religious thought and the application of rational-critical

⁴² Mukhsin Mukhsin et al., "The Implementation of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education in the Families of Primary School-Age Children in Putrajaya, Selaawi Garut," *Dinamika Ilmu* 24, no. 2 (December 1, 2024): 197–219, <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v24i2.9008>.

⁴³ Eri Murniasih, Utang Ranuwijaya, and Ummu Habibah, "Islam Sebagai Ilmu Dan Doktrin Dalam Mencegah Munculnya Faham Radikalisme Pada Generasi-Z," *AL-AFKAR: Journal for Islamic Studies* 7, no. 4 (2024): 1606–22.

⁴⁴ Kelik Wardiono, "Prophetic: An Epistemological Offer for Legal Studies," *Journal of Transcendental Law* 1, no. 1 (2019): 17–41.

⁴⁵ Masudul Alam Choudhury, *Absolute Reality in the Qur'an* (Springer, 2016).



approaches to religious texts. Conversely, apologetic factions remain preoccupied with retroactively validating modern scientific discoveries through superficial verse matching, without conducting rigorous research. Such approaches ultimately impede scientific progress itself.⁴⁶

Notwithstanding these challenges, contemporary conditions present significant opportunities for the reception and development of Prophetic Social Science. The failure of modernism to adequately address ecological crises, economic inequality, and spiritual vacuum creates receptivity toward alternative paradigms. Western science, with its anthropocentric orientation, has precipitated dehumanization. Prophetic Social Science offers the pillar of transcendence, reorienting knowledge toward God and restoring the spiritual foundation absent from secular science in its effort to rehumanize humanity. Postmodern critiques of modernity's grand narratives similarly create space for dedifferentiation, namely the reintegration of religion and science previously forcibly separated by secularism. This affords momentum for Prophetic Social Science to gain recognition as legitimate discourse within the scientific community, wherein religion is no longer positioned as antagonistic to science but rather as an ethical partner.⁴⁷ The concept of objectification further enables Islamic values to enter public discourse and state policy without exclusive Islamic labeling. The successful mainstreaming of Islamic banking, founded upon the prohibition of *riba*, demonstrates that knowledge originating from revelation, when properly objectified, can furnish universal solutions. Within the Indonesian context, Prophetic Social Science holds strategic relevance, particularly in the development of Islamic education and social science in higher education institutions. A growing body of research indicates that the prophetic paradigm effectively strengthens the integration of knowledge, Islamic values, and students' social awareness without becoming ensnared in the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences.⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Kuntowijoyo's concept of the Islamization of knowledge is not merely a normative or philosophical project, but can be systematically operationalized through five interconnected methodological approaches: integrative, transcendental structuralism, objectification, historical-empirical, and prophetic methods. Each of these methods provides a concrete analytical framework that enables Islamic values to be translated into empirically grounded and socially relevant knowledge, particularly within the Indonesian context.

⁴⁶ Abidin, "Paradigma Islam Dalam Pembangunan Ilmu Integralistik: Membaca Pemikiran Kuntowijoyo."

⁴⁷ Ilyas Supena, "Integration of Islamic Sciences and Secular Sciences Through Spiritualization and Humanization Approaches," *Hikmatuna: Journal for Integrative Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2022): 1-15.

⁴⁸ Richard G Kraince, "Islamic Higher Education and Social Cohesion in Indonesia," *Prospects* 37, no. 3 (2007): 345-56.



Unlike previous studies, which predominantly emphasize the epistemological and philosophical dimensions of Kuntowijoyo's thought, this research advances the discussion by offering a detailed operationalization of his methodological framework. By mapping each method into practical analytical steps and demonstrating its application in Indonesian socio-religious realities, this study fills a significant gap in the existing literature. The inclusion of concrete cases, such as the praxis of Muhammadiyah in disaster relief, healthcare services, and humanitarian advocacy, further illustrates how prophetic social science can function as a transformative paradigm that bridges normative Islamic ethics and empirical social action.

Furthermore, this study highlights that the relevance of Kuntowijoyo's framework lies in its capacity to respond to contemporary challenges in Indonesia, including the dichotomy between religion and science, the dominance of secular paradigms, and the need for socially engaged knowledge production. By integrating transcendental values with empirical analysis, the Islamization of knowledge emerges not as an abstract intellectual agenda, but as a dynamic and context-sensitive approach to knowledge production.

In this regard, the primary contribution of this study is twofold: first, it provides a structured and operational model for applying Kuntowijoyo's methodological framework; and second, it situates this model within the concrete socio-historical context of Indonesia, thereby demonstrating its practical relevance. Future research may further expand this framework by applying it to specific disciplines or conducting field-based studies to strengthen its empirical grounding.

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