

Kemas Abdullah Azhari's Role in Preserving Islamic Scientific Traditions in 20th Century Palembang: A Sustainable Development Perspective

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Abstract

Objective: This study explores the social contributions of Kemas Abdullah Azhari (1863–1939), a prominent Islamic scholar from Palembang, in preserving Islamic scientific traditions in the 20th century within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4: Quality Education. **Theoretical framework:** The research is grounded in Max Weber's theory of social action, particularly the typologies of traditional, charismatic, and bureaucratic authority, to understand the modalities through which Kemas Abdullah Azhari exerted influence in education, religious life, and social conflict resolution. **Literature review:** The literature review identifies a gap in historiographical sources that address localized Islamic scholarly traditions in Indonesia, particularly those passed on through oral transmission and community memory. **Methods:** A qualitative narrative method was employed, using document analysis, in-depth interviews with descendants and local figures familiar with the scholar's legacy, and ethnographic observation of cultural symbols and institutions related to Islamic education in Palembang. The study also incorporated oral traditions and manaqib treatises, which were transmitted intergenerationally in Pedatuan Village. To ensure data reliability, triangulation was applied throughout the research process. **Results:** Findings reveal that Kemas Abdullah Azhari played a pivotal role in advancing inclusive religious education and creating spaces for the dissemination of Islamic knowledge, aligning with the goals of SDG 4. His contributions ensured the continuity of Islamic scholarship through informal learning and community-based religious instruction, even in the face of colonial constraints and the absence of formal documentation. **Implications:** This has significant implications for both heritage preservation and contemporary Islamic education strategies. **Novelty:** The study's novelty lies in recovering an underexplored dimension of Islamic intellectual history in Sumatra

and highlighting the integration of local religious figures in achieving long-term sustainable educational development.

Keywords: kemas abdullah azhari, islamic scientific tradition, social action, sdgs 4, manaqib treatise.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary discourse on sustainable development, the role of religious and cultural figures in shaping educational and social values is gaining renewed scholarly attention. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: Quality Education, emphasize not only formal education but also the preservation and promotion of inclusive, equitable, and culturally relevant learning systems. Within this framework, the legacy of Kemas Abdullah Azhari (1863–1939), an influential Islamic scholar from Palembang, Indonesia, holds significant historical and educational value [1].

Despite the absence of formal written documentation such as manuscripts or published works, Kemas Abdullah Azhari's religious and intellectual influence persisted across generations through his fatwas, oral teachings, and community engagement. His role in sustaining Islamic scientific traditions during the colonial period represents a form of indigenous resilience and intellectual autonomy. This underscores the importance of investigating local religious authorities as agents of educational development, especially in the context of Islamic education and informal knowledge transmission [2].

This study is necessary to fill the gap in historical Islamic scholarship, particularly in Sumatra, where local scholars played key roles in religious education and community development but remain underrepresented in academic literature. By applying Max Weber's theory of social action, this research aims to uncover the multidimensional impact of Kemas Abdullah Azhari's social engagement—spanning religious instruction, social problem-solving, and cultural preservation [3].

Furthermore, the research aligns with SDG 4.7, which calls for the integration of cultural and ethical dimensions into education. Kemas Abdullah Azhari's efforts to maintain access to religious knowledge under colonial constraints contribute to this global goal, offering a model for community-based and culturally-rooted education. Understanding his legacy offers valuable insights into how traditional knowledge systems can support contemporary educational development and cultural sustainability. Thus, this research not only contributes to historical knowledge but also supports broader goals of sustainable, inclusive, and culturally grounded education systems [3].

The people of Palembang, part of the Malay community, have always shown the possession of knowledge that can be seen from the efforts of each individual to implement cultural heritage and traditions in their daily lives. This is reflected in the customs, rituals, and value systems that form the collective identity of Muslims in the region. Referring to Geertz's thought, the scientific tradition is not only limited to the academic realm, but encompasses the traditional knowledge, philosophy, and cultural practices that define the identity of the community [1][3].

The Malay community of Palembang, a characteristic of the consistency of the sustainability of scientific activities that spans generations, can be seen from the integration of house rooms and mosques as traditional educational institutions, while in the aristocratic group (children and relatives of the sultan) the use of the palace area. The teaching staff are local religious elites, alumni of Middle Eastern educational institutions, or have a sultan's license. The activities of the advanced phase include the writing of religious, literary, and historical teachings, as well as the transliteration of Islamic books. The result is a written work that can be disseminated and become a medium for knowledge transmission, which is not only for the local community but also for other communities [2][3].

Reviewing the history of Palembang, it is interesting to analyze the process of Islamization that influenced the cultural transformation of the local community before Islam. One of the important impacts of this Islamization was the use of the Arabic alphabet and vocabulary, which in turn formed narratives and produced literary works of various texts. Works, such as biographies of religious figures (sirah), local history of the region (date), hikayat, and fables (kalilah and dimnah), as well as works of philosophy and Sufism, are loaded with moral and ethical messages. These works are not only a scientific heritage passed down between generations, but also serve as a means of transmitting knowledge across time, shaping an open and progressive Palembang society, and supporting sustainable cultural transformation [3][4].

The transmission of this knowledge shows that writing played an important role in building civilization, as exemplified by great figures such as Archimedes, Aristotle, and Plato. Their written works hold important knowledge and stories that continue to be passed on to the next generation. In this context, writing is not only a means of historical documentation, but a practice that strengthens the position of human beings in various aspects of life, both individually and collectively. Thus, writing also contributes to building the civilization of the nation and state, as well as giving birth to various sciences that have developed throughout the ages [4].

In line with that, Tarigan stated that the breadth of a person's knowledge, especially religious figures, is measured by writing skills, as well as the many written products of characters that are available and can be accessed freely. Tarigan's statement can be considered an indicator of the development of scientific transmission, especially in Palembang. Because Palembang has evidence of a large collection of scientific works produced by scholars and poets in the form of manuscripts and ancient manuscripts since ancient times this city has become a reference center for research on turrets (heritage) of Islamic science [5].

Furthermore, the implementation of research initiated by Palembang academics succeeded in identifying biographies, thoughts, and intellectual heritage, as well as the role and grouping of scholars based on their scientific classification. This classification contributes to enriching the treasures of religious knowledge in the community, including a local figure in Palembang Islam, Kemas Muhammad Azhary bin Abdullah bin Ahmad.

Kemas Muhammad Azhary (1811-1874 AD) bin Abdullah, nicknamed Azhari Tuo, was a local religious figure who played a role in maintaining the scientific tradition of Palembang. The indication of his role is as the person in charge of publishing and distributing the Mushaf Al-Quran printed with lithography technology (printed on stone), in 1848 in Village 3 Ulu Kampung Demang Jaya Laksana and 1854 in Kampung Pedatuan. The printing of the Qur'an (lithography) and its dissemination turned out to be earlier than the lithographic printing of the Qur'an from Singapore and Bombay [6].

Another indication can be seen from the inheritance and scientific network in the family, as well as socio-religious activities. He has a son, Kemas Abdullah Azhari, who is famous for owning socio-religious activities in the community. Above him, he was the son of Kemas Abdullah bin Ahmad, a scholar and community leader, while beside his uncle, Kemas Muhammad bin Ahmad, the author of books and writings entitled Nafahat al-Rahman fi Manaqib Ustazina al-Azham al-Samman and the Book of Bahr al-'Ajaib. Above him, his grandfather, Kemas Ahmad bin Ki Mas Abdullah, is the author of the book Hikayat Andaken Panurat [7].

In addition to Kemas Muhammad Azhary bin Abdullah bin Ahmad, there is also Kemas Muhammad Azhari bin Abdullah bin Asiquddin, known as Azhari Mudo. This scholar has an important role in the scientific tradition in Palembang because of its high productivity, reflected in his work in various Islamic disciplines, such as creed, monotheism, fiqh, Falak, and Sufism. These contributions succeeded in placing Azhari Mudo as one of the great scholars post-'Abd Şamad Falimbani [8].

His efforts in preserving scientific traditions are reflected in the formation of scientific networks in the family. For example, to his grandson, Kiai Haji Muhammad Zen Syukri, who became an important link between Javanese and Sumatran scholars. In addition, there is also a connection with Kiagus Muhammad Azhari (1860-1937 AD), who was titled Sheikh Muhammad Azhari or another nickname KHM Azhari Imam Al-Palembani. He was a scholar who mastered various disciplines of Islamic sciences, and the family relationship between the two as brothers-in-law. This shows the importance of building a scientific network [9].

The history of the Palembang scholars reflects the personal skills of the figures in building scientific networks and collaborating. The two figures mentioned earlier showed their high concern for Islamic practices exemplified by the community, as well as the consistency of maintaining the scientific tradition despite the challenges of the colonial government that sought to limit the development of science in the region [10].

From the history of the scholars, it shows the similarity of names among the names of the scholars involved in history (Palembang). The author seeks to identify by distinguishing the scholar from the figure to be explored in this paper [11]. As listed in the Table. 1, will present the names of Palembang scholars along with their nicknames as part of the Palembang tradition.

Table 1. List of Names and Nicknames of Ulama and Residences

Name	Nickname	Residence
Kemas Muhammad Azhari Al-Falimbani	Azhari Mudo	Kampung Soak Bato
Kemas Muhammad Azhari bin Abdullah	Azhari Tuo	Kampung Pedatuan
Kiagus Muhammad Azhari	Azhari Imam	Guguk Pengulon
Kemas Abdullah Azhari	Kiai Pedatuan	Kampung Pedatuan

The list of names of these scholars that are interesting for the author to explore is Kemas Abdullah Azhari bin Kemas Muhammad Azhari bin Abdullah, known by the nickname "Kiai Pedatuan". Another academic interest is the relevance of de facto terms that describe their scientific influence. This influence is proven, that his fatwa was used as a reference by bureaucratic scholars such as Raden Mustofa and the khatib penghulu Raden Haji Awang, and was recorded in the records of Haji Muhammad Asyiq.

However, using the term de jure, the absence of a written heritage in the form of a religious book by Abdullah causes his Islamic scientific thoughts to be not systematically documented. Another fundamental concern is the 'habit of charisma' of the scholar, considering that in the future, the messages of life and religious advice will be conveyed more through writing. On the other hand, the delivery of written messages has been carried out since ancient times (pre-history) using simple media such as leaves, clay, and papyrus [12].

This de facto and de jure phenomenon raises important questions about how the influence of Islamic scientific thought by the scholar can remain rooted and accepted by the community, even though it is not recorded in written form. To maintain this influence, there is an interest in analyzing the example of the social life of the scholar, Abdullah Azhari. This example is reflected in his various social actions, which are expected to provide important insights into understanding his influence and contribution to society [13].

For the sake of exploring Abdullah Azhari's social action, the author uses the theoretical framework of the social action typology of Max Weber's authority. This study is believed to provide a comprehensive understanding of Abdullah Azhari's well-preserved intellectual and social property while avoiding potential distortions or biases against the cleric's charisma. This research also explores Abdullah Azhari's social actions related to efforts to

achieve SDGs 4, namely quality education. This is tried by tracing Abdullah Azhari's efforts in opening access to inclusive and quality scientific transmission, especially during the colonial period in Palembang [14].

Thus, the main problems that need to be answered in this study are: (1) how did Kemas Abdullah Azhari's social actions contribute to preserving the Islamic scientific tradition in Palembang in the 20th century? and (2) how did Kemas Abdullah Azhari's social actions affect social relations between community groups in Palembang in the 20th century?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The preservation of Islamic scientific traditions has been a subject of growing interest, especially in regions where oral transmission and informal learning play central roles. In the Indonesian context, particularly in areas like Palembang, the intellectual legacy of local scholars has often been preserved through community practices rather than formal documentation. This has led to gaps in academic literature concerning the contributions of traditional Islamic figures such as Kemas Abdullah Azhari [15].

While studies of Islamic education in Indonesia often focus on pesantren systems or well-documented ulama, there remains limited attention to scholars whose influence was maintained through fatwas, oral teachings, and community leadership. Additionally, the relationship between such informal educational systems and contemporary development goals, particularly SDG 4, remains underexplored.

Social action theory provides a useful framework to understand how religious figures act as agents of cultural preservation and education within their societies. Through this lens, scholars like Kemas Abdullah Azhari are not merely spiritual leaders but also educators and community reformers. This review emphasizes the need to re-examine historical Islamic figures in light of global educational frameworks, especially those that stress inclusive, equitable, and culturally relevant education systems [15].

To strengthen the writing and facilitate the exploration of writing about Palembang scholars, it is necessary to review several previous studies that are relevant to the role of Kemas Abdullah Azhari in empowering the community. This study aims to provide a more focused and systematic direction. Some of the studies discussed include the contribution of scholars in advancing Islamic education, the influence of social actions in maintaining scientific traditions, and the dynamics of social relations between community groups influenced by the role of local religious elites [16].

In his book, Rahim reveals the important role of Kemas Abdullah Azhari, a scholar from Palembang, which is based on the views of Snouck Hurgronje. The results of Rahim's analysis showed that Snouck Hurgronje proposed Kemas Abdullah Azhari as a candidate for the chairman of the Palembang Residency *hoofdpenghulu* based on several criteria, such as deep religious ability and good reputation among the community. This proposal was submitted in a letter from the Resident of Palembang dated April 25, 1905. Abdullah Azhari, as understood, has extensive religious knowledge, obtained through Haramain's education, and is known as a figure who practices his knowledge so that he is emulated by the wider community. Abdullah Azhari's reputation became a strong basis for Snouck Hurgronje to choose him as a religious leader in the Palembang Residency [17].

Furthermore, Zulkifli's work provides an analysis of the classification of ulama in South Sumatra, from the 19th century to the early 20th century. During the sultanate in the 19th century, the ulama was divided into three typologies: first, sultanate ulama who functioned as teachers for the sultan and his family, as well as religious advisors in government; second, the ulama *penghulu* (bureaucrat) who is in charge of carrying

out religious activities and receiving salaries from the sultan; Third, free scholars who are respected by the community but do not receive a salary. In the colonial period, there was a change in structure, where ulama was recognized by residency in two typologies, namely penghulu ulama and free ulama, with additional assignments in the government. In this context, Zulkifli writes that Abdullah Azhari emerged as a religious figure in the early 20th century and acted as a free scholar, respected by the community without being tied to the bureaucratic structure of the colonial government [18]. By understanding Abdullah's role in Zulkifli's work, it can provide an overview of how Palembang scholars maintained and developed scientific traditions and strengthened community empowerment, in the South Sumatra region during the colonial period.

Next in Jeroen Peeters' work, it was concluded that Islamic scholars and intellectuals in the Palembang Residency were divided into two groups, namely the *tuo* and *mudo*. The *tuo* consists of traditional (conservative) scholars who practice Islamic teachings by the Qur'an and Sunnah through an interpretive approach, which is not rigid on literal texts. This group makes history a source of inspiration that needs to be preserved and tends to maintain and care for traditions that are rooted in society. Next as a counter group is the *mudo*. The *mudo* consists of young Islamic intellectuals and scholars who seek to introduce new and progressive elements in Islamic teachings. In the context of Peeters, Abdullah Azhari is grouped by the *tuo*, which is presented by Peeters through the analysis of socio-historical data related to religious activities in the Palembang Residency. This finding attracted the attention of the author to research the social action of Kemas Abdullah Azhari, which contributed significantly to the preservation of scientific traditions in Palembang in the 20th century AD [19].

Furthermore, Ismail's research, which was published in the form of a book, about madrasahs during the Palembang Residency, found that the development of Islamic educational systems and institutions (madrasahs and public schools that combined education with the Qur'an) during the colonial period was more dominantly initiated by Traditional Muslims (*tuo*) than Modernist Muslims (*mudo*). These educational institutions include Madrasah Ahliyah Diniyah, Madrasah Al-Ihsan, Madrasah Arabiyah, Madrasah Qur'aniyah, as well as Muhammadiyah Schools and Madrasahs, and Nurul Falah. Of the seven institutions, only Nurul Falah School and Madrasah have a track record and contribution as well as an important role in Kemas Abdullah Azhari's scientific activities. The results of Ismail's research significantly inspired the author to explore Abdullah Azhari's social actions as part of practicing and caring for the sustainability of scientific traditions in Palembang [20].

Finally, Endang Rochmiatun's scientific work in his dissertation made an important contribution to understanding the classification of scholars during the sultanate and colonial period. Endang classified the division of the ulama into two groups, namely free ulama and bureaucratic ulama. Free clerics are independent religious figures and are not bound by intervention, the task of the colonial government. Their function is only as leaders of modernist Islamic organizations, managers of educational institutions, and providers of spiritual guidance through da'wah. Some of them have had the experience of studying in Mecca. On the other hand, bureaucratic scholars also studied in Mecca, but they carried out administrative duties under Islamic law and led religious activities in the community, with the structural position of the residency institution. Endang pointed out that bureaucratic scholars and scholars are free to produce religious writings, including books that discuss the disciplines of monotheism, fiqh, and Sufism. In this context, there are figures of Sheikh Muhammad Azhary bin Abdullah bin Ma'ruf and Shaykh Muhammad Azhari bin Abdullah [21].

Kemas Abdullah Azhari bin Muhammad Azhari is grouped by free scholars, although the written work has not been found. Based on information from

respondents, the work has not yet been published. The absence of written works and the lack of a detailed curriculum vitae raise the author's concern that the future contribution of scholars in the scientific tradition will be doubtful. This allows the author to further explore the process of forming scientific traditions built by scholars through the search for social actions.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach using a narrative method, aimed at analyzing the social contributions of Kemas Abdullah Azhari in preserving Islamic scientific traditions and fostering social cohesion among diverse community groups in Palembang during the 20th century. The narrative approach is appropriate for capturing the depth, complexity, and cultural significance of the subject's life and actions, particularly within a context where written documentation is limited, and oral traditions play a crucial role. The study is framed within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular emphasis on SDG 4: Quality Education, which promotes inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Kemas Abdullah Azhari's role in promoting informal and community-based Islamic education aligns with this goal, making his legacy relevant to contemporary efforts in sustainable educational development [22].

Data collection was conducted through multiple methods to ensure the richness and credibility of the findings. First, document studies were carried out to examine existing historical records, religious texts, and local archives related to Islamic scholarship in Palembang. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with descendants of Kemas Abdullah Azhari, as well as individuals who possess oral knowledge of his life, teachings, and influence. These participants provided valuable personal and cultural insights into the scholar's contributions. In addition, field observations were made at cultural sites, religious institutions, and educational centers associated with the Islamic scholarly tradition in Palembang. Particular attention was given to Kampung Pedatuan, a key location where Kemas Abdullah Azhari's teachings and stories (manaqib) have been preserved through oral transmission. These manaqib books, although not formally published, serve as significant cultural artifacts passed down through generations [22].

To enhance the validity and reliability of the data, the study applied triangulation techniques, combining data from documents, interviews, and observations to verify and corroborate key findings. This method ensures a comprehensive understanding of how Kemas Abdullah Azhari's social actions contributed not only to religious education but also to social integration, moral development, and the preservation of Islamic scientific heritage—all of which are integral to achieving the broader aims of sustainable development in education and culture.

Table 2. Summary of Research Methodology

Aspect	Description
Research Approach	Qualitative narrative method
Research Focus	Analyzing the social contributions of Kemas Abdullah Azhari in preserving Islamic scientific traditions and promoting social cohesion in 20th century Palembang
Theoretical Framework	Social Action Theory (Max Weber)
SDG Alignment	SDG 4 – Quality Education: Promoting inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning
Data Collection Techniques	1. Document Studies – Historical records, religious texts, and archives on Palembang's Islamic scholarship 2. Interviews – With descendants and individuals familiar with Kemas Abdullah Azhari's life and teachings

	3. Field Observations – At cultural, religious, and educational sites, especially Kampung Pedatuan
Cultural Sources	Oral traditions and manaqib (biographical stories), transmitted intergenerationally
Key Locations	Kampung Pedatuan, Langgar Azhariyah, educational institutions influenced by Kemas Abdullah Azhari
Data Validation	Triangulation – Combining documents, interviews, and observations to ensure credibility and reliability
Expected Outcomes	Understanding Azhari's role in religious education, social integration, moral development, and cultural preservation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Contribution of Kemas Abdullah's Social Action to the Islamic Scientific Tradition

In this section, Abdullah Azhari's contribution to the Islamic scientific tradition in Palembang during his lifetime will be analyzed. His actions not only reflect individual efforts in interacting with the surrounding environment but also have a significant impact on the transformation of science and influence social and academic dynamics in Palembang. His contribution is reflected in his active and innovative participation in teaching methods in knowledge transmission, acting as a pioneer in the development of scientific institutions, and exemplary goodness accompanied by the provision of services that are beneficial to the community [23]. The impact of this contribution is still felt today and plays a very important role in encouraging the progress of scientific activities of the people of Palembang.

Integration of Islamic Science and General Knowledge

Islamic science and general knowledge are often seen as two separate domains. However, in practice, the two have a deep connection, especially in shaping people's perspectives on the world. Integration between the two is not only possible but crucial for the development of a more inclusive and dynamic scientific tradition. In Palembang, efforts to integrate Islamic knowledge and general knowledge in madrassas and schools managed by the Nurul Falah Association (PNF), began a policy implemented in 1937. During this period, in addition to teaching Islamic science, Madrasah Nurul Falah began to introduce general science lessons, especially Dutch and English, in classrooms. Thus, PNF realized a policy that combined the learning of Islamic science and general knowledge that developed at that time and incorporated it into the curriculum [24].

This policy carries the concept of flexible religious learning. Previously, religious learning was often considered to only be carried out in mosques/langgar using the cawisan method. However, in the policy implemented by PNF, as discussed in the study, religious learning is introduced in the classrooms of schools/madrasas. This approach provides wider access for students to acquire formal religious knowledge so that religious learning can be reached more effectively by students. Kemas Abdullah Azhari, apart from being a teacher, is also dedicated as a member of the Religious Teaching Supervision Commission at PNF. His coronation as a member of the council was based on a decree of his appointment as *Bestuursleden* from the *Commissie van Toezicht* (Commission for the Supervision of Religious Teaching in Schools) [25]. This decision was recorded in the results of the Nurul Falah Committee meeting on July 19, 1936 AD in Palembang, as seen in Figure 1.

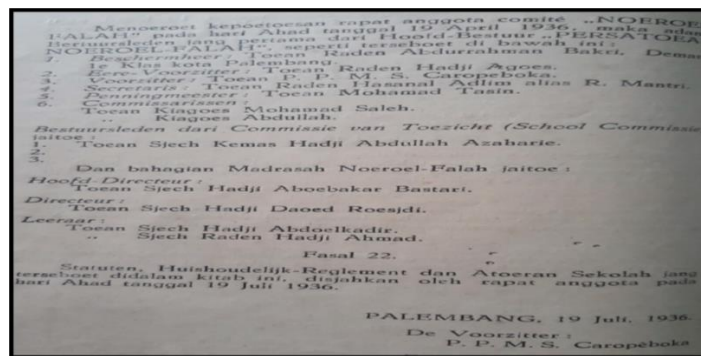


Figure 1. Decree on the appointment of Kemas Haji Abdullah Azhari as the Board of the PNF Religious Teaching Commission

Kemas Abdullah has an important role in the implementation of the policy, although he is not the main draftsman, his contribution is indicated by recommending and supporting all policy implementation. As a religious teaching commission in schools, its role is to make decisions, implement policies, and show commitment to the development of education that integrates Islamic science and general knowledge [26].

The scientific integration policy as previously analyzed was then adopted into the official educational curriculum in various formal educational institutions. This policy is not only applied in Islamic educational institutions but extends to educational institutions other than madrasas, especially in Palembang. The adoption of the curriculum with this pattern has been ongoing until now, although through a dynamic process, influenced by the socio-political authority of the Dutch colonial governments, Japan, and the era of Indonesian independence. Over time, the curriculum has undergone ups and downs and improvements in line with the changes in the social, political, and policy contexts that have developed in each period, and are a reflection of the influence of policies introduced by Kemas Abdullah Azhari in the past [27].

1. Pioneer of the Founder of Islamic Education Institutions

Kemas Abdullah Azhari has a vision, of Islamic education, which is the moral foundation of society. This commitment was shown by activities after completing their studies and returning to Pedatuan Village, which at that time did not have any religious institutions, both langgar, and mosques. Abdullah seemed to be unaware of procrastination, so he immediately scheduled teaching and learning activities that were held at the homes of the people of Palembang or his own home. The activity is carried out by imitating the learning tradition carried out by the local religious elite of other regions, with the cawisan method, and located in the garang rumah [28].

Efforts to preserve scientific traditions in Palembang, especially in Pedatuan Village, were initiated by Abdullah Azhari by pioneering the construction of langgar which was later called Langgar Azhariyah. The only educational institution that has a history and contribution to the people of Kampung Pedatuan, especially in the field of Islamic education, is Langgar Azhariyah as seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Langgar Azharyah, which Was Built by Kemas Abdullah Azhari Together with his Students, in 1327 H / 1909 AD

Abdullah Azhari's commitment as a pioneer of education in Kampung Pedatuan can also be proven through the information written in the *Manaqib* book. In the book, it is written that from the beginning, when Langgar was planned to be built with a two-level construction, the first level was designed to function as an educational institution. The main goal of this educational institution is to educate Muslim children so that they grow up to be religious and obedient to Allah's commands. SWT.

Langgar Kiai Pedatuan, now known as Mushola Azharyah, has become a symbol of the sustainability of Islamic education in the 12 Ulu Palembang Village area. Although the terms *cawisan* and *langgar* may no longer be so familiar, this tradition remains a hallmark of the region. This prayer room or langgar not only functions as a place of worship, but has also developed into a center of social and religious activities involving various groups of people, both young and old.

As a continuation of the educational efforts that began with the establishment of the mosque, the next important step is to realize inclusive and sustainable Islamic education. This madrasah realizes this by continuing to focus on meeting the educational needs of children, especially from the underprivileged, who also inherited the spirit of the founder of Langgar to provide proper access to education to all groups of society. The education offered is not only limited to religious competence but also seeks to produce a generation of Muslims who are competent in various scientific fields.

MI Azharyah Palembang, which is located at Jl. K.H. Azhari, Kelurahan 12 Ulu Palembang with a Madrasah Statistical Number (NSM) 112167103045, as an educational institution. Starting from one madrasah and then developing other educational institutions under one roof, including Azharyah Junior High School, Azharyah High School, Azharyah Kindergarten, and Al-Qur'an Education Park, are under the management of the Azharyah Islamic Teaching Foundation (YPIA).

Ulul Albab Exemplary Model

According to Suprayogo, *ulul albab* refers to individuals who have wisdom (*dhikr*), deep understanding (*fikr*), and pious deeds that are reflected in the morals of *mahmudah*. Azis also explained that *ulul albab* is an individual who has four main personality traits, namely breadth of knowledge, the glory of *aqidah* and morals, and professional maturity (*maturity*).

Based on this explanation, it can be understood that *ulul albab* is a superior human figure compared to most other people, which is characterized by the possession of breadth of knowledge, the glory of *aqidah* and morals, and professional maturity. All of these characteristics are reflected in the figure of Kemas Abdullah Azhari, who is a real example in daily life.

a. Breadth of Knowledge

Evidence of the breadth of Abdullah Azhari's scientific treasure can be seen in the strengthening of the understanding of Islamic teachings which are associated with the context of tradition and local wisdom. As a scholar, Kemas Abdullah emphasized the importance of maintaining traditions, such as respecting guests, as well as the use of cultural symbols that have spiritual meaning. For example, the use of the Azhariyah langgar powder which is hit during prayer time, as well as the use of a water pool in front of the langgar which functions as a symbol of cleanliness and purity before entering a place of worship.

Kemas Abdullah Azhari ensures that every element of local tradition and wisdom is not only a symbol but an integral part of the spiritual and social life of the community. The impact of this is that the local community always maintains its cultural heritage while strengthening Islamic ukhuwah both inside and outside Pedatuan Village.

b. The Glory of Aqidah and Morals

Kemas Abdullah Azhari exemplifies the glory of aqidah by living a simple life. This is as written in the family inventory record,

"He has a simple nature in the way he dresses, he never wears bright or flashy colors, as well and his place of residence has never been made a house behind him by Kms H. M. Yunus [but] he has never been touched by him until the end of his life, he likes the fragrance of perfume and he does not like to denounce sour, salty, spicy or campa food that is not pleasing to his taste, he is silent and never refuses".

From the family inventory records, it can be concluded that Kemas Abdullah Azhari's example is simplicity in dressing, by not wearing flashy clothes and liking fragrances. Another simplicity is to stay away from greed and greed, which is reflected in the decision to stay in one house that is used as a gathering place for the family despite having two houses. In addition, he never denounced the food served. If the food available is not to his liking, he chooses to remain silent without giving negative comments [29].

Through these simple actions, Abdullah conveyed the message that simplicity in life must be reflected in an attitude that does not pursue luxury or fulfill worldly desires. Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of applying the values of sincerity and humility (tawadhu) as part of the aqidah. In the perspective of As'ariyah theology, sincerity is doing good deeds with the intention of Allah (lillah), without expecting praise from others. Meanwhile, in the view of Maturidiyah, tawadhu reminds the position of human beings as servants who have no power, because everything returns to the destiny of Allah SWT.

The application of aqidah which is in line with the theological teachings of As'ariyah and Maturidiyah is very dominantly embraced by Palembang scholars in the 19th to 20th centuries AD. These teachings are also in line with the characteristics of Islam in the archipelago.

Furthermore, Kemas Abdullah Azhari showed the glory of morality through a wise attitude, even though Indonesia was under pressure from colonial colonizers. One example of the wisdom exemplified was his willingness to receive the colonial government's award in the form of a silver star based on Besluit No. 13 dated August 24, 1927, even though he did not like the colonial government from the beginning. When receiving the award, Kemas Abdullah showed a firm attitude by keeping the star in his shirt pocket, not pinning it as other participants did. This attitude is a form of his statement that he does not need, let alone prioritize awards from the colonial government.

An analysis of the glory of aqidah and the exemplary morals of Abdullah Azhari shows that the ulama has a big role in the formation of the scientific branch of aqidah-akhlak education, which can be seen in the Azhariyah educational curriculum. His simple life, accompanied by his attitude and actions towards the community, (Kampung Pedatuan), as well as his firm attitude towards the colonial government, reflects the values of sincerity

and humility. This example provides a strong foundation for the teaching of aqidah and morals in the future.

c. Professional maturity

Abdullah Azhari exemplified his professional maturity through deliberations on the formation of the Islamic Religious Advisory Council (MPII), which was then trusted to serve as chairman. This appointment reflects recognition of leadership capacity and ability to make decisions in religious and community affairs. MPII itself plays a role in maintaining the unity and order of religious practices, which in turn shows that Abdullah Azhari has reached a level of professional maturity.

An innovative breakthrough when he served as chairman was the early determination of Ramadan and Shawwal by combining two methods legally according to the science studied at Haromain, namely the method of observing the hilal (rukyah) and the scientific calculation of the movement of the sun (hisab). This innovation aims to create harmony among the people of Palembang who experience differences in determination at the beginning of the months of Ramadan and Shawwal. This approach shows that Abdullah Azhari has a progressive mindset, is solution-oriented, and tries to unite the people in carrying out worship despite the challenges when implementing it [30].

The Effect of Kemas Abdullah's Social Actions on Relations Between Community Groups

Abdullah Azhari's social actions had a significant impact on inter-group relations in Palembang, even the impact continues until now. Some of these influences include:

1. Increasing Social Solidarity

Increasing social solidarity to strengthen togetherness, mutual trust, and support between individuals, across groups, and ethnicities. Abdullah Azhari's social action aims to unite different community groups (ethnicities) and play a role in creating social solidarity. This starts from simple but useful activities for the common good, such as gathering in organizations to form the ulama. Its activities are not only aimed at enriching Islamic treasures but also awakening the nation's identity. This reason is the basis and rationality for uniting separate (ethnic) groups [31].

Some concrete examples of Abdullah's social actions to increase social solidarity are (1) involving the community in scientific activities based on local wisdom that have an impact on the construction of teacher-student relationships, (2) encouraging the community to play an active role in organizations, and (3) introducing and instilling a love for Islamic culture [32].

The following will be presented in Table 2, regarding the students of Kemas Abdullah Azhari who were successfully collected through inventory records and interviews with families. The data shows the ethnic diversity and origin of the student's residence which reflects the diversity between Palembang community groups and is part of Abdullah's efforts to build social solidarity.

Table 3. List of Kemas Abdullah Azhari Students

Student's Name	Ethnic Tribes	Residence
M.Asyiq	Melayu Palembang	3 Ulu Palembang
Alwi Bahsin	Sadah ba alawi	13 Ulu Palembang
Aqil Munawar	Sadah ba alawi	13 Ulu Palembang

Husin Bahrok	Sadah ba alawi	9/10 Sei.Aur Palembang
Abdul Holiq	Unknown	7 Ulu Tangga Raja Palembang
Kgs. Abu Bakar	Melayu Palembang	7 Ulu Palembang
Hasyim	Unknown	10 Ulu Palembang
Abdul Qodir	Unknown	11 Ulu Palembang
Abdurohman	Unknown	Sungai Goren Palembang
Husin Bandung	Unknown	2 Ulu Palembang
Hasanudin	Unknown	15 Ulu Palembang
Kms. Mahmud	Melayu Palembang	3 Ulu Palembang
M.Amin Azhari	China	Jaya Laksana Palembang
Usman Tohir	Unknown	4 Ulu Palembang
Kemas Rosyad	Melayu Palembang	5 Ulu Palembang
Kemas Ateh	Melayu Palembang	5 Ulu Kedukan Darat Palembang
Kemas Mas Cek	Melayu Palembang	10 Ilir Palembang
Kemas H. Idrus	Melayu Palembang	15 Ilir Palembang
Masagus Abdurahman	Melayu Palembang	22 Ilir Palembang
Sayyid Ahmad bin Salim	Sadah ba alawi	8 Ilir Palembang
Masagus Mascik Azhari	Melayu Palembang	Tidak ditemukan
Abdurroni	Unknown	Karang Anyar Palembang
Kemas Alwi Azhari	Melayu Palembang	12 Ulu Pedatuan Palembang
Abu Bakar Alkaf	Sadah ba alawi	8 Ilir Palembang
Kemas M. Zaini Aziz	Melayu Palembang	5 Ulu Palembang

2. Changes in Social Structure

In the pre-independence period, the social actions of local elites, including Abdullah Azhari, played a role in formulating, and some even succeeded in changing the social order of society. Their actions not only influenced religious practices but also contributed to building bridges between diverse groups, so that the cooperation changed the social structure of society, Abdullah's social actions were dominant in changing the social structure of the field of education (scientific tradition), considering education as his scientific concentration [33].

The transformations that are part of the change in the social structure in the scientific tradition are: (1) the shift in the authority of classical scholars who were previously considered the exclusive holders of Islamic science and knowledge and (2) an education system that adapts to the needs of the community, indicated by presenting a curriculum that is relevant to social needs and increasing access to the acquisition of knowledge and knowledge that has an impact on educational achievements. Quality as stated in SDGs 4 [34].

The reality of the obstacles faced by the people of Palembang to obtain quality education at that time was that the education system was more beneficial to the colonial authorities and made it difficult for the local community (indigenous) to obtain optimal education. Increasing access to education in the community was initiated by PNF and started from the collective policy recommendation of Abdullah Azhari as a member of the religious teaching commission. Until mid-November 1938, PNF had operated two educational institutions that showed significant development in terms of its system and institutions. Furthermore, PNF managed non-formal educational institutions for women by establishing the organization *Persatuan Noer Iboe* (PNI) in 1938. The PNI's initial activities included dauroh Islamiyah, reading courses, cooking training, and handicrafts, all of which stemmed from Abdullah Azhari's policy recommendations [35].

Bureaucratic Authority Figures

In this context, Abdullah Azhari showed his bureaucratic authority as the Board of the Religious Teaching Supervision Commission in PNF. Its role is not only limited to administrative management but also formulating changes in the governance of the Islamic education system. By referring to bureaucratic authority, the scholar succeeded in integrating the Islamic learning method, which was previously considered inappropriate, only to be applied by the method of *cawisan* in mosques or *langgar*, into the formal education system in classrooms.

In addition, Abdullah Azhari also encouraged collaboration between general science and religion and recommended changes to the education system that adapt to the needs of the community. This shows the use of bureaucratic authority in increasing access and equality in education and creating relevant curricula, which is interpreted as an effort to accommodate the social needs of the community within the framework of the bureaucratic system [36].

Thus, Abdullah's bureaucratic authority not only impacts practical changes in education but also reflects a structured authority that can be used to adapt to the dynamics of society.

Charismatic Authority Figures

In this context, Abdullah Azhari shows charismatic authority, by stimulating the community to play an active role in the organization. In addition, the figure exemplifies the figure of *Ulul Albab*, a figure who has a breadth of knowledge and is willing to transmit and disseminate to the community. His example is shown in his role as an agent of change who succeeds in shifting the authority of traditional figures, assuming single ownership of knowledge, and opening up wide access to the acquisition of knowledge [37].

In another context, Abdullah shows charismatic authority in the possession of a valid creed, noble morals, and professional maturity in carrying out leadership duties. These three aspects further strengthen the charismatic authority in society. As a result, the *congregation* (followers of the scholar) Abdullah not only followed the teachings based on social obligations but also because they believed in personal glory and moral integrity [38].

Traditional Authority of Figures

In the context of traditional authority, Abdullah Azhari's role is shown by his involvement in transmitting Islamic knowledge to the community based on local wisdom, starting from the establishment of the Azhariyah Mosque and its attributes [39]. Through this action, Abdullah not only strengthens the religious dimension in society, but also maintains the preservation of cultural values inherited from generation to generation, and strengthens the social structure of society. Thus, traditional authority is not just power or influence, but the activity of behavior preserves the values and principles that society has accepted from generation to generation and provides stability and a sense of security in the face of changing times [40].

Analysis

The social actions of Kemas Abdullah Azhari serve as a compelling example of how religious leadership can influence educational transformation, cultural preservation, and social structure. His initiatives in early 20th-century Palembang were not isolated acts of teaching but represented a broader vision of educational integration and community empowerment, deeply aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) — ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. Azhari's integration of Islamic and general knowledge, particularly through his involvement with Madrasah Nurul Falah and the establishment of Langgar Azhariyah, demonstrated a pioneering effort in curriculum reform. His support for bilingual education (Islamic and secular sciences) during the colonial era challenged the exclusivity of Western-style education and opened wider access to learning for indigenous communities.

Max Weber's typology of social action provides a useful lens through which Azhari's authority can be classified. His traditional authority is evident in his rootedness in local wisdom and religious customs. His charismatic authority emerged from his personal piety and moral conduct, earning community respect that extended beyond formal power. As a member of the Religious Teaching Supervisory Commission, he exercised bureaucratic authority to institutionalize educational reform and expand female access to learning through initiatives like Persatuan Noer Iboe.

Furthermore, Azhari's influence restructured inter-ethnic relations in Palembang. His students came from various ethnic backgrounds, proving his success in fostering intergroup solidarity and inclusive religious learning. His ability to unite diverse communities through shared Islamic values and education affirms his role as both a cultural and social unifier. In essence, Kemas Abdullah Azhari's life and work exemplify how indigenous Islamic scholarship can support the localization of global educational goals, promote cultural sustainability, and reshape social order through transformative leadership grounded in faith, humility, and intellectual vision.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social actions of Kemas Abdullah Azhari, a prominent 20th-century Islamic scholar from Palembang, made a profound and lasting contribution to the preservation of Islamic scientific traditions. His influence extended beyond religious instruction, shaping the educational and social fabric of the local community in a sustainable and inclusive manner. One of his most tangible legacies is the integration of religious and general education within the curriculum of schools and madrasas—an approach that continues to be implemented in Palembang and surrounding regions. Institutions such as Langgar Azhariyah, along with both formal and informal educational initiatives inspired by it, serve as evidence of the scholar's vision to create spaces for continuous knowledge development. His commitment to education grounded in *aqidah* (creed) and *akhlak* (ethics), infused with sincerity and humility, has inspired generations of learners. His actions not only preserved Islamic scholarly traditions but also fostered a culture of lifelong learning rooted in local wisdom. Kemas Abdullah Azhari's social contributions were also instrumental in shaping the social structure of Palembang society. As a member of the Religious Teaching Supervisory Commission under the colonial government, he successfully implemented inclusive and collaborative education policies. These policies aligned with the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), by expanding access to quality education for all, including the empowerment of women during a time of limited opportunity. Furthermore, his efforts toward reforming Islamic education to be more responsive to societal needs marked a significant step in the modernization of education in the region. In the context of contemporary Palembang, his legacy highlights the importance of integrating religious and social values within the education system. This integration is crucial to nurturing individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also socially responsible, capable of manifesting local cultural values in everyday life.

Thus, the work of Kemas Abdullah Azhari offers a timeless model for achieving educational sustainability within an Islamic and culturally grounded framework.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the research design, data analysis, and manuscript writing. The first author led the fieldwork and interviews. The second author supported the theoretical analysis. The third author contributed to SDGs contextualization. The fourth author assisted in literature review and translation.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest

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