

KH ABDULLAH SYAFI'I AND THE HERITAGE OF BETAWI ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS: MODERNIZATION, TRADITION, AND DA'WAH (1910–1985)

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Abstract

KH. Abdullah Syafi'i (1910–1985) was a central Betawi scholar whose influence on Islamic education and urban da'wah in Jakarta remains understudied, particularly in relation to how his institutions navigated the intersection of pesantren traditions and educational modernization. Previous scholarship has largely focused on his biography or community activism, leaving a gap in explaining the structural transformation of Betawi-based Islamic



schools and their contribution to the development of urban pesantren in Indonesia. This study addresses that gap by analyzing Abdullah Syafi'i's educational initiatives, socio-religious leadership, and da'wah strategies within the broader evolution of modern Indonesian Islamic education. Employing a qualitative historical-sociological approach, the study draws on archival documents, institutional records, and selective interviews to trace the development of the As-Syafi'iyah educational network. The findings reveal that Abdullah Syafi'i introduced an integrated religious-general curriculum, strengthened mass da'wah through organized *majelis taklim*, utilized radio as a pioneering medium for Islamic outreach, and established orphan-based boarding schools as a model of urban social empowerment. The study argues that Abdullah Syafi'i represents a distinctive model of urban ulama who simultaneously preserved tradition and advanced modernization. His contributions expand the scholarly understanding of Indonesian Islamic education, offering an urban-based perspective on pesantren reform that challenges dominant rural and Java-centric frameworks.

Keywords: KH. Abdullah Syafi'i, Betawi Islamic Boarding Schools, Modernization, Historical Sociology, Socio-Historical Approach.

Abstrak

KH. Abdullah Syafi'i (1910–1985) adalah seorang Ulama Betawi yang pengaruhnya terhadap pendidikan Islam dan dakwah perkotaan di Jakarta masih kurang dipelajari, terutama dalam kaitannya dengan bagaimana lembaga-lembaganya menavigasi persimpangan tradisi pesantren dan modernisasi pendidikan. Beasiswa sebelumnya sebagian besar berfokus pada biografi atau aktivitas komunitasnya, meninggalkan celah dalam penjelasan transformasi struktural sekolah Islam yang berbasis di Betawi dan kontribusinya terhadap pengembangan pesantren perkotaan di Indonesia. Studi ini mengisi kesenjangan itu dengan menganalisis inisiatif pendidikan Abdullah Syafi'i, kepemimpinan sosial-agama, dan strategi dakwah dalam evolusi pendidikan Islam Indonesia modern yang

lebih luas. Menggunakan pendekatan historis-sosiologis kualitatif, penelitian ini mengacu pada dokumen arsip, catatan kelembagaan, dan wawancara selektif untuk melacak perkembangan jaringan pendidikan As-Syafi'iyah. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa Abdullah Syafi'i memperkenalkan kurikulum agama-umum yang terintegrasi, memperkuat dakwah massal melalui majelis taklim yang terorganisir, memanfaatkan radio sebagai media perintis untuk penjangkauan Islam, dan mendirikan pondok pesantren berbasis yatim piatu sebagai model pemberdayaan sosial perkotaan. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa Abdullah Syafi'i mewakili model khas ulama perkotaan yang secara bersamaan melestarikan tradisi dan menginisiasi modernisasi. Kontribusinya memperluas pemahaman ilmiah tentang pendidikan Islam Indonesia, menawarkan perspektif berbasis perkotaan tentang reformasi pesantren yang menantang kerangka konsep pesantren pedesaan dan Jawa-sentris yang dominan.

Kata Kunci: KH. Abdullah Syafi'i, Pondok Pesantren Betawi, Modernisasi, Sosiologi Sejarah, Pendekatan Sosio-Sejarah.

INTRODUCTION

KH. Abdullah Syafi'i (1910–1985) stands as one of the most influential Betawi scholars in shaping Islamic thought and practice in Jakarta during the 20th century (Estuningtiyas, 2021). His role transcended mere religious instruction, encompassing da'wah, education, and socio-religious reform through institutions such as the Majelis Taklim Al-Barkah and the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic College (Zakky & Makarao, 2023). However, despite his significant contributions, scholarly attention to Abdullah Syafi'i's intellectual legacy and its role in negotiating between traditional pesantren values and the demands of modern Islamic education remains limited. This gap invites further academic investigation into how his educational vision reflects broader transformations within urban Indonesian Islam. Understanding his influence is therefore crucial for situating Betawi Islamic reform within the larger

discourse of modern Islamic thought and socio-religious dynamics in Indonesia.

In the field of da'wah, Abdullah Syafi'i demonstrated notable innovation by utilizing radio broadcasting as a medium for religious outreach, an uncommon practice among Indonesian scholars of his era (Choirin *et al.*, 2023). This approach exemplifies an early form of *mass-mediated da'wah*, which scholars such as Choirin identify as a key feature of Islam's adaptation to modern communication technologies in Indonesia (Choirin *et al.*, 2023). His use of radio not only expanded the reach of Islamic teachings beyond local congregations but also positioned da'wah as a tool of social and ideological resistance amid the political tensions of the time. Moreover, the establishment of a women's taklim council, later institutionalized as the Taklim Council Contact Body (BKMT) under the leadership of his daughter, Prof. Dr. Tutty Alawiyah, reflects his commitment to inclusive religious empowerment, particularly among women and grassroots communities (Maarif *et al.*, 2025).

Abdullah Syafi'i's reputation as a scholar of religious moderation reflects his alignment with the broader concept of *wasathiyah*, a framework emphasizing balance (*tawazun*) and justice (*ta'adul*) in Islamic thought and practice, as articulated by Yusuf al-Qaradawi (2001). Within this paradigm, Syafi'i's approach illustrates how moderation operates not merely as a moral stance but as a pedagogical and institutional strategy. His educational model maintained the integrity of pesantren traditions, such as the study of classical texts (*kitab kuning*), adherence to Ash'ari theology, and respect for scholarly transmission (*sanad ilmiyyah*), while simultaneously integrating modern curricula and rational sciences to meet contemporary needs (Syihabudin & Najmudin, 2021). Thus, his work situates Betawi Islam within a dynamic continuum of traditionalism and reformism, offering a localized embodiment of *wasathiyah* in the context of Indonesia's evolving Islamic education.

Abdullah Syafi'i's intellectual legacy must be understood within the socio-religious context of the Betawi community, where Islam serves as both cultural identity and moral foundation. While Betawi scholars have historically contributed practical religious texts, particularly in *fiqh*, Syafi'i's prolific authorship, comprising 31 works on *aqidah*, *fiqh*, and *da'wah* (Basri, 2021), distinguishes him for systematically articulating an urban Islamic discourse responsive to modernity. This body of work not only reflects the vitality of Betawi Islamic scholarship during the Old and New Order eras but also provides a crucial entry point for analyzing how local ulama negotiated religious authority and modernization. Accordingly, his writings serve as a conceptual foundation for examining the continuity and transformation of Islamic thought in urban Indonesia, addressing the current research gap on localized expressions of Islamic intellectualism.

However, despite a growing number of studies on Abdullah Syafi'i (Choirin et al., 2023; Zakky & Makarao, 2023), several critical gaps remain unaddressed. First, existing research tends to treat biographical, educational, and *da'wah* dimensions in isolation (Basri, 2021; Choirin et al., 2023; Zakky & Makarao, 2023), resulting in a fragmented understanding of how Syafi'i's religious thought integrates modernization, tradition, and *da'wah* within a coherent sociological framework. Second, prior studies have largely focused on institutional development and biographical narratives (Estuningtiyas, 2021; Simpatik et al., 2023), without examining how his pesantren network contributed to shaping the discourse of Islamic moderation in Jakarta during 1940–1980. Third, limited attention has been given to the interplay between Syafi'i's thought and the urban socio-political transformations of mid-20th century Jakarta, particularly how pesantren functioned as agents of *da'wah*, education, and community reform amid modernization pressures. This study, therefore, seeks to fill these gaps by offering an integrated historical-sociological analysis of Abdullah Syafi'i's intellectual and institutional legacy within the broader evolution of urban Islam in Indonesia.

Based on the identified research gaps, this study aims to analyze the role of KH. Abdullah Syafi'i in developing Betawi Islamic boarding schools through the integration of traditional pesantren values with the modernization of Islamic education during the period 1940–1980. Furthermore, it seeks to examine how Syafi'i's da'wah strategies and educational initiatives contributed to the preservation and strengthening of a moderate Betawi Islamic tradition within the socio-political context of Indonesia from the Old Order to the New Order era.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using historical-sociological methods ([Morgan, 2022](#)). The historical method is applied to trace the development of KH. Abdullah Syafi'i's life and work within specific socio-political contexts, namely the late colonial era, the Old Order, and the New Order. This approach allows for a contextual understanding of his educational and da'wah activities as responses to the changing historical circumstances of mid-20th-century Indonesia. Meanwhile, the sociological approach is used to analyze the broader social significance of his thought and practice, particularly in relation to the role of Islam as both a cultural identity and a social foundation within the Betawi community ([Galkin & Rassolova, 2023](#)). Through this combined framework, the study focuses on examining how Abdullah Syafi'i's ideas and initiatives contributed to the modernization of pesantren, the preservation of religious traditions, and the dynamics of Islamic da'wah between 1940 and 1980.

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive design using the four stages of the historical method: heuristic, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography ([Alian, 2020](#)). At the heuristic stage, the researcher systematically collected data from primary and secondary sources, including Abdullah Syafi'i's published works, archival documents from As-Syafi'iyah institutions, oral

histories from his students, as well as relevant government and media records from the 1940–1980 period. The source criticism stage involved evaluating the authenticity, reliability, and contextual validity of these materials by cross-referencing multiple sources and identifying potential biases or anachronisms, particularly in institutional archives and personal narratives. During the interpretation stage, Syafi'i's thoughts and practices were analyzed contextually through thematic categorization, focusing on da'wah strategies, educational modernization, and the articulation of Islamic moderation within the Betawi milieu. Finally, the historiography stage entailed synthesizing verified data into a coherent narrative that reconstructs Abdullah Syafi'i's role in shaping the trajectory of urban Islamic education and thought in Jakarta ([Erman, 2022](#)).

The subject of this research is KH. Abdullah Syafi'i (1910–1985), a charismatic Betawi scholar who played an important role in education, da'wah, and socio-religious empowerment of the people of Jakarta in the 20th century. The focus of the study lies in its work in developing the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic College as a model for integrating the tradition of pesantren with the modernization of education, maintaining the moderate Islamic style typical of Betawi, and giving birth to da'wah innovations through taklim and radio assemblies. The research also examines his social heritage, including orphan-poor boarding schools and women's empowerment, so that Abdullah Syafi'i is positioned as a central figure who bridges tradition, modernity, and the strengthening of urban Islamic communities.

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary data include archival materials from As-Syafi'iyah Islamic Colleges, recordings of Abdullah Syafi'i's lectures broadcast on As-Syafi'iyah Radio, and official documents concerning the establishment and development of his educational institutions ([Sulung & Muspawi, 2024](#)). Field observations were conducted at selected sites, namely the As-Syafi'iyah Jatiwaringin Orphan Boarding School, As-

Syafi'iyah Boys' and Girls' Islamic Boarding Schools, and As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University, chosen based on their direct institutional and historical linkage to Abdullah Syafi'i's educational network. These sites were observed to trace the continuity of institutional structures, curriculum implementation, and da'wah practices that reflect his enduring influence.

Participant selection for interviews followed purposive sampling, focusing on alumni, teachers, and administrators who had firsthand experience with or inherited Syafi'i's educational and da'wah legacy (Jamshed, 2014). To ensure the validity and reliability of findings, data triangulation was employed by cross-verifying information from interviews, archival documents, and field observations (Valenzuela & Shrivastava, 2002). This triangulated approach allowed the researcher to contextualize individual narratives within institutional developments and to corroborate historical evidence with lived experiences.

Secondary data comes from a variety of scientific literature and online sources (Sulung & Muspawi, 2024). Academic articles that discuss Abdullah Syafi'i's religious moderation, da'wah innovations through radio, socio-religious contributions, and literature on the tradition of Islamic boarding schools and Betawi scholars are important references. The website data includes news archives, the official website of the Islamic University of As-Syafi'iyah, and digital publications about the history and activities of the Islamic boarding school. Meanwhile, the biography book of Betawi scholars (Rahmah, 2018) and Azyumardi Azra's academic work on the network of Nusantara scholars became a theoretical reference in understanding Abdullah Syafi'i's position in the context of Indonesian Islam (Azra, 2013).

Data collection techniques were carried out through literature studies, interviews, field observations, and visual documentation (Sukmawati, 2023). Literature studies allow researchers to collect written data from scientific articles, books, documents, and online archives. Field observations are used to see firsthand the institutional practices of Islamic boarding schools

and the tradition of da'wah that are still ongoing. Meanwhile, visual documentation in the form of photographs, archives, and institutional publications is used to strengthen the validity of empirical data ([Arifin et al., 2016](#)).

Data analysis is carried out by combining historical analysis and content analysis ([Alvarez et al., 2020](#)). Historical analysis is used to trace Abdullah Syafi'i's work in the time trajectory of 1940-1980, while content analysis is used to interpret the ideas contained in his writings, lectures, and educational policies. Thus, this research is able to present a comprehensive understanding of how Abdullah Syafi'i integrates pesantren traditions, educational modernization, and da'wah strategies in shaping the face of moderate Betawi Islam.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Brief Profile of KH. Abdullah Syafi'i (1910–1985): Betawi Scholar, Educator, and Promoter of Da'wah

KH. Abdullah Syafi'i was born on August 10, 1910, in Kampung Bali Matraman, South Jakarta, to KH. Shafi'i bin Haji Sairan and Nona bint Sya'ari. Raised in a deeply religious environment, he began his early education within his family circle before studying under several prominent Betawi and West Java scholars, including Muallim Mushonif, Guru Abdul Majid, and Guru Marzuki bin Mirshod. He also studied with notable *habaib* figures such as Habib Husein Al-Attas, Habib Ali Kwitang, and Habib Salim bin Jindan ([Basri, 2021](#); [Azra et al., 2010](#)). Although he never pursued formal studies in the Middle East, Syafi'i gained recognition for his profound knowledge and scholarly authority within the Betawi intellectual tradition. As confirmed by an interview with the management of the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School ([As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025](#)), many of his teachers were local Betawi scholars, indicating a strong indigenous educational lineage.

The significance of this biographical background lies in how it shaped Syafi'i's intellectual orientation. Rooted in local religious networks yet responsive to the challenges of modernity. His formation under local scholars exemplifies the localization of Islamic authority in 20th-century Jakarta, a dynamic that underpins this study's analysis of how Syafi'i integrated traditional *pesantren* values with modern educational reforms. Thus, his early life serves as a foundation for understanding the sociocultural and intellectual milieu that informed his later contributions to Betawi Islamic education and da'wah.

Since 1933 Abdullah Syafi'i began to develop educational institutions by establishing a madrasah and a small mosque with his wife, Hj. Siti Roqayah. From this initial step, the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic College was born, which in the 1940s developed from a simple madrasah to a complete educational institution from kindergarten to university ([Estuningtias, 2021](#)). In 1963 he founded the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic Education Academy (AKPI) which later transformed into the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University. According to the statement of one of the administrators, "In Jatiwaringin itself there are four institutions: traditional men's and women's boarding schools, orphan boarding schools, and UI Asyafi'iyah campuses, college campuses... The *pesantren* survived from 1978 until today it still survives, still flying its flag" ([As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025](#)). This institution is not only a center for formal education, but also gives birth to a model of integration of religious and public curriculum that is still carried out today.

In addition to developing education, Abdullah Syafi'i uses the media to preach. In 1967 he founded Radio As-Syafi'iyah as a means of da'wah as well as ideological resistance ([Choirin et al., 2023](#)), especially against communism during the Old Order. This is reinforced by the testimony of the interview: "*The first process we hear information from radio broadcasts... the center is indeed in Balimatraman with three fields of cultivation: da'wah, education, social*". With radio, his da'wah reached the wider community and became an ideological

stronghold of Muslims in Jakarta.

Abdullah Syafi'i also appeared as a critical scholar during the New Order period. He dared to oppose the policies of the Jakarta government that were considered detrimental to the people, such as the legalization of gambling, the localization of prostitution, and the policy of cremation of corpses. His life principle is *Qul al-haq walaw kana murran* (tell the truth even if it is bitter), which makes him respected by the wider community (Basri, 2021). Not only that, he also served as the Chairman of the Jakarta MUI, on a par with other national scholars (Table 1).

In addition to educating and preaching, Abdullah Shafi'i left behind more than 30 written works, including *Madarij al-Fiqh*, *Al-Dinu wa al-Masjid*, *Mu'jizat Sayyiduna Muhammad*, and *Al-Muwasalat al-Syafi'iyah al-Ta'limiyah*. These works affirm his views on the importance of integrating religious and general science (Basri, 2021). A source added that his greatest legacy is not only in the form of the physical building, but also the spirit of struggle: "*His greatest legacy is the assets that have been built from the beginning until now unchanged... The non-physical is the passion for the struggle of da'wah that does not stop, which means that it is not broken*" (As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025).

Abdullah Syafi'i died on September 3, 1985 at the age of 75 (Table 1). Since then, the struggle and institution that he built have been continued by his sons, especially Prof. Dr. Hj. Tutty Alawiyah, and are now run collectively by the big family of As-Syafi'iyah (Maarif et al., 2025). The legacy of KH. Abdullah Syafi'i was not only the establishment of a large Islamic university, but also the spirit of da'wah that emphasized concern for the poor, firmness in facing the rulers, and consistency in maintaining the tradition of Betawi scholars in the midst of Jakarta modernization.

Table 1. Timeline KH's life journey. Abdullah Syafi'i (Source: author's elaboration based on various sources)

Year	Milestones	Information
1910	Birth	Born in Kampung Bali Matraman, South Jakarta, from KH. Shafi'i bin H. Sairan and Nona bint Sya'ari.
1920–1930's	Education	He studied religion with Betawi scholars and habaib, such as Muallim Marzuki, Habib Ali Kwitang, and Habib Salim bin Jindan.
1933	The beginning of educational institutions	Established a small mosque with his wife Hj. Siti Roqayah, next to the pioneered madrasah. To be the forerunner of the Islamic As-Syafi'iyah College.
1940's	Madrasah grows	The small madrasah of As-Syafi'iyah developed into a modern multi-tiered Islamic educational institution.
1963	College	Established the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic Education Academy (AKPI), which developed into the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University.
1967	Preaching Through the Radio	Established Radio As-Syafi'iyah, used for da'wah and against the influence of communism.
1977–1978	Institutional expansion	Opening educational branches in Jatiwaringin: men's, girls' and girls' boarding schools, orphans, traditional, and UIA campuses.
1970–1980's	Socio-political activities	Become a critical scholar of the Jakarta government's policies (gambling, prostitution, cremation). Served as Chairman of MUI Jakarta.

Productive writing	Works	Produced more than 30 works, including Madarij al-Fiqh, Al-Dinu wa al-Masjid, Mu'jizat Sayyiduna Muhammad.
1985	Died	Died on September 3, 1985 at the age of 75. The struggle was continued by the family, especially Prof. Dr. Hj. Tutty Alawiyah.

Preserved Betawi Islamic Boarding School Tradition

Pesantren is one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. For the Betawi people, pesantren is not only a place to learn religion, but also a center for the transmission of Islamic culture, traditions, and identity. Since the 19th century, Betawi scholars and converts have had a central position in the social structure of society. They are respected as religious references as well as guardians of local values. This tradition continued until the 20th century, one of which was through the figure of KH. Abdullah Syafi'i (1910–1985) who founded the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic College and made it an icon of Islamic education in Jakarta (Zakky & Makarao, 2023).

Interview data indicate that the Islamic boarding schools under the As-Syafi'iyah network developed a distinctive Betawi *pesantren* tradition characterized by the integration of religious and general education. Students not only follow the formal curriculum at various levels, from kindergarten to high school, but are also required to attend afternoon religious instruction focusing on *fiqh*, *tauhid*, *hadith*, and *sirah nabawiyah* using *turath* (classical) texts. As one interviewee explained, “Traditional, the specialization is on the old books, *turots*—the yellow books. They are prepared to become future *kiai*.” This method, particularly the teaching of *kitab kuning* (yellow books) without diacritical marks (*harakat*), reflects the enduring pedagogical style of Betawi *pesantren*, which emphasizes

rote mastery, interpretive reading, and the transmission of classical scholarship.

Scholars such as Azra, van Bruinessen, and Lukens-Bull have noted that Betawi *pesantren* occupy a unique position within Indonesian Islamic education, blending *Shafi'i* jurisprudential orthodoxy and *Ash'ari* theology with localized pedagogical practices. Within this context, As-Syafi'iyah's educational system exemplifies how Betawi *pesantren* adapted the *kitab kuning* tradition to coexist with modern schooling, thereby sustaining intellectual continuity while responding to urban educational demands. This balance between *turath* learning and general education underscores Abdullah Syafi'i's vision of harmonizing tradition and modernization in the Betawi Islamic milieu (Azra et al., 2010).

In addition to formal instruction, practical religious skills constitute a central component of the As-Syafi'iyah *pesantren* curriculum. Students are assessed not only on theoretical mastery but also through practical examinations in *da'wah*, *maharatul MC* (Master of Ceremony), *dhikr*, and *tahlil* recitations. As noted in an interview, "At the end of the lesson, there are theoretical and practical tests. The practice includes *maharatul da'wah*, *maharatul MC*, *dhikr wa tahlil*" (As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025). These activities reflect the continuity of the Betawi *majlis taklim* tradition, which has long served as the social and spiritual nucleus of the community's religious life.

Compared to *pesantren* in rural Java or other regions that typically emphasize classical textual study (*tafaquh fi al-din*) and ritual discipline, the Betawi-based As-Syafi'iyah model places greater emphasis on public religious performance and community engagement. This integration of *da'wah* training, leadership practice, and ritual facilitation prepares students to become active religious figures in urban contexts, an approach rarely institutionalized in *pesantren* outside Jakarta (Azra, 2010). Hence, these practices demonstrate Abdullah Syafi'i's innovative adaptation of *pesantren* education to the social realities of an urban

Muslim society, blending traditional religious competence with communicative and leadership skills essential for modern *da'wah*.

Another tradition that continues to live is the organization of religious and cultural celebrations, such as the Prophet's Birthday and Betawi Eid. This event is a place for community togetherness and cultural *da'wah* media. In the interview, it was stated, "if there is a Betawi Eid event, here there are many competitions... there is cuisine, there are typical Betawi activities" ([As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025](#)). In this way, *pesantren* not only produce *ulama* and *dai*, but also maintain the cultural identity of the Betawi people so that they are not uprooted from their traditional roots ([Miharja et al., 2019](#)).

On the other hand, the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School continues to develop a typical Betawi social tradition in the form of concern for the poor. KH. Abdullah Syafi'i established an orphan boarding school in 1978, which is still running with the *mukim* pattern. Orphan students are free of charge, all their needs are covered by the institution. This is in accordance with the characteristics of Betawi scholars who always devote themselves to the interests of small communities ([Basri, 2021](#)).

From this description, it can be seen that Betawi Islamic boarding schools, especially through As-Syafi'iyah, have succeeded in preserving a number of important traditions (Table 2): the teaching of the yellow book (*turats*), the practice of religious *amaliyah* such as *tahlil* and *da'wah*, the organization of cultural-religious celebrations, and social concern for orphans and poor people. This tradition is not just a legacy of the past, but also a pillar of the sustainability of Betawi Islamic identity in the midst of Jakarta's modernization ([Nurfaizah et al., 2025](#)).

Table 2. The characteristics of the Betawi Islamic Boarding School which are preserved and developed by KH. Abdullah Syafi'I (Source: Author's elaboration based on interview data)

Aspects of Tradition	Form of Implementation	Information
Teaching of the Yellow Book (<i>Turats</i>)	Using books without harakat (kitabul qudama), such as fiqh, sirah nabawiyah.	Characteristics of Betawi Islamic Boarding School; Producing students to become scholars.
Early Education	Students attend afternoon classes (Awaliyah, Wustho, Ulya) after formal school.	The curriculum includes jurisprudence, monotheism, hadith, the history of the Prophet, etc.
Religious Amaliyah	Practical tests: da'wah, MC, dhikr, tahlil, joint prayer.	Practice practical religious skills to engage in society.
Religious & Cultural Festivals	Prophet's Birthday, Betawi Eid, cooking and art competitions.	Cultural da'wah media as well as the preservation of Betawi identity.
Social Care	Orphan Islamic boarding school (established in 1978) with a mukim pattern, free education.	A form of concern for the poor; All the needs of students are borne by the pesantren.
Taklim Assembly	Routine open Islamic Teaching through the assembly forum and As-Syafi'iyah radio broadcasts.	The old Betawi tradition is used as a means of mass da'wah.

Modernization

KH. Abdullah Syafi'i (1910–1985) emerged as a Betawi scholar deeply rooted in the classical Islamic tradition, having studied under local teachers such as Muallim Marzuki and several *habaib*. Despite this traditional background, his educational perspective reflected an acute awareness of the changing urban context of Jakarta. He recognized that Islamic education needed to adapt to modern social realities and equip Muslims to engage effectively with contemporary challenges (Choirin et al., 2023). Through this awareness, Syafi'i developed an educational model that later came to represent a synthesis between the *pesantren* tradition and the modernization of Islamic schooling. Bridging the gap between classical religious learning and formal institutional education in an urban setting.

The steps of modernization began in 1933 when he founded a small madrasah and mosque in Matraman with his wife, Hj. Siti Roqayah. From this institution, the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic College was born which developed into a multi-level education network from kindergarten to higher education (Basri, 2021). In 1963 he founded the As-Syafi'iyah Academy of Islamic Education (AKPI), the forerunner of the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University (UIA). According to one of the administrators, in Jatiwaringin there are important branches: *"In Jatiwaringin itself there are four institutions: traditional male and female boarding schools, orphan boarding schools, and the UI Asyafi'iyah campus... The Islamic boarding school survived from 1978 until today it still survives"* (As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025).

The modernization of education initiated by KH. Abdullah Syafi'i is most clearly reflected in his integrated curriculum model. Rather than separating religious and general education, Syafi'i sought to combine the two within a unified institutional framework. Students at As-Syafi'iyah attend formal schooling, from kindergarten through senior high school, including special needs education (SLB), in the morning to noon, and continue with *diniyah*

(religious) classes in the afternoon, where they study *fiqh*, *tauhid*, *sirah nabawiyah*, the Qur'an, and *hadith*. As explained in an interview, "Formal schools are from elementary, junior high, and high school. Continuing in the daytime is *diniyah*... there are *fiqh*, *tauhid*, *sirah nabawiyah*, the Qur'an, *hadith*" (As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025).

This model aligns with broader currents of Islamic educational reform in 20th-century Indonesia, particularly the efforts to reconcile *turath*-based learning with modern pedagogical structures. However, unlike *Pesantren Modern Gontor*, which emphasizes intellectual discipline and modern boarding life with Arabic and English instruction or Islamic universities that institutionalize the dual curriculum within state-accredited systems (Azra et al., 2010). Syafi'i's approach localized modernization within the Betawi socio-cultural context. His system preserved traditional *pesantren* elements, such as *kitab kuning* studies and *sanad* transmission, while incorporating a formal schooling structure that granted students both state-recognized diplomas and local *diniyah* certificates. This synthesis demonstrates an adaptive form of modernization that remained grounded in Betawi religious identity while responding to the educational needs of an urban Muslim society.

Furthermore, Abdullah Syafi'i added elements of practical skills to *pesantren* education. Students are not only tested in theory, but also must pass *da'wah* practice. The interview said, "*at the end of the lesson... There are theoretical and practical tests. The practice is maharatul da'wah, maharatul MC, dhikr wa tahlil*". This shows modernization that combines religious knowledge with social skills, so that graduates are ready to appear as *dai* and leaders of the *ummah* in modern Jakarta society (As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025).

In the realm of infrastructure, Abdullah Syafi'i also innovated. The As-Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School not only functions as a traditional educational institution, but is equipped with university facilities, a large hall for community activities, and

da'wah radio ([Choirin et al., 2023](#)). Radio As-Syafi'iyah, which was established in 1967, has become a new medium in spreading da'wah. A source recalled, *"The beginning of the opening of the pesantren was gradual... The center is indeed in Balimatraman with three fields of cultivation: da'wah, education, and social. His preaching was through AM radio at that time"*. This is a tangible form of utilizing modern technology for Islamic education ([As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025](#)).

Abdullah Syafi'i's modernization can also be seen from the flexibility of the institution's management. After the boys' boarding school lost its mukim students, the system was changed to a day school-based school. According to the administrator, "The men's Islamic boarding school is now no longer used mukim system (students no longer living in boarding school), now, students go back to their home after school, and forth... finally changed direction to become an Asyafi'iyah school". This change shows the adaptation of pesantren to social dynamics and educational competition in Greater Jakarta ([As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025](#)).

The decline in the number of students living in boarding school in Ash-Syafi'iyah reflects the serious challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools in maintaining dormitory-based scientific traditions in the midst of social changes in urban society. The shift to a round-trip based school does show management flexibility, but at the same time reduces the characteristics of pesantren that has been emphasizing character formation through communal life. In the context of Greater Jakarta, the competition with other Islamic boarding schools that are still strong in maintaining the dormitory model, especially those that offer a combination of intensive and modern religious education, further emphasizes the dilemmatic position of Ash-Syafi'iyah. The challenge that arises is not only how to regain public interest in entrusting children in the mukim system, but also how to build an education model that is able to respond to the needs of pragmatic urban communities ([Budiyanto et al., 2022](#)), without losing the typical identity of the pesantren. This dilemma

is what puts Ash-Syafi'iyah in a difficult position: on the one hand, it is required to be adaptive to be relevant to the dynamics of the times, but on the other hand, it must maintain the image and tradition of pesantren as an institution that prints cadres of scholars and guardians of Islamic scientific heritage.

Even though it is modern, Abdullah Syafi'i still maintains the foundation of the Betawi Islamic boarding school tradition. He still teaches the book of turats, revives the taklim assembly, and maintains special religious amaliyah such as tahlil and maulid. The principle is summarized in the motto of *syafi'i mazhaban wa nasaban*, which is to adhere to the madhhab of Imam Shafi'i while continuing the family's struggle. With that principle, modernization does not mean abandoning tradition, but rather strengthening it to remain relevant.

Field observations indicate that the Putra As-Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School has undergone a structural transformation, shifting from a traditional boarding system to a formal educational format comprising junior high school, senior high school, *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), and *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA). The students—both male and female—remain actively engaged in academic and extracurricular activities that sustain the vitality of the As-Syafi'iyah educational complex. However, unlike the earlier period, the students are no longer residing on campus; instead, they attend classes during designated school hours and return home afterward.

Despite this change, the name “Putra Islamic Boarding School” continues to be used to refer to the main As-Syafi'iyah campus in Jatiwaringin, which also houses the tomb of its founder, KH. Abdullah Syafi'i. The site remains a symbolic and spiritual center of the institution. His successor, KH. Ainul Yaqin—Abdullah Syafi'i's son—is widely regarded as the key figure who continues his father's educational and da'wah mission. This continuity is visibly represented by banners and public symbols displayed throughout the Putra Islamic Boarding School campus ([As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025](#)).

The modernization of Islamic education initiated by KH. Abdullah Syafi'i can be analyzed through several dimensions that align with broader typologies of Islamic educational reform in Indonesia (Azra, 2013; Dhofier, 1999). As shown in Table 4, these aspects include: (1) the integration of religious and general curricula; (2) the establishment of formal educational levels ranging from kindergarten to tertiary education; (3) the inclusion of practical religious and *da'wah* skills; (4) the adoption of modern media, such as radio, as instruments for religious communication and education; (5) the implementation of flexible *mukim* and *non-mukim* systems; and (6) the preservation of traditional elements such as *kitab kuning* learning and *majlis taklim* activities.

Viewed through the framework of pesantren modernization typologies, Syafi'i's model represents a contextual adaptation that bridges *salaf* traditions with *khalaf* innovations. By maintaining classical scholarly methods while embracing modern structures and technologies, As-Syafi'iyah Islamic College exemplifies an urban Islamic education system capable of renewal without eroding its cultural and theological roots. This synthesis positions As-Syafi'iyah as not only a symbol of Betawi educational heritage but also a pioneering model of Islamic educational modernization in Jakarta.

Table 3. Modernization of Islamic Education KH. Abdullah Shafi'i and the transformation of the As-Shafi'iyah Islamic College (Source: Author's elaboration)

Aspects	Old Islamic Boarding School Tradition	Modern Innovation in the style of KH. Abdullah Syafi'i
Education	Focus on the yellow book (turats), traditional studies, the halaqah system.	Curriculum integration: formal school + afternoon diniyah (fiqh, tauhid, hadith, sirah).

		Students get two degrees (formal and diniyah).
The Santri System	Mukim students (live in full Islamic boarding schools).	The system is flexible: some are mukim (orphans, daughters), some are non-mukim (day schools) to adapt to the needs of modern society.
Learning Methods	Dominance of memorization and study of classical books.	Emphasis on theory + practice: students are tested in da'wah, MC, dhikr, tahlil, social skills.
Institution	Only Islamic boarding schools with one branch and a religious focus.	As-Syafi'iyah developed into an educational network: kindergarten, elementary, junior high, high school, Mts, MA, SLB, to As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University.
Da'wah Media	Da'wah through the taklim assembly, routine recitation.	Utilization of technology: Radio As-Syafi'iyah (1967) as a means of mass da'wah.
Social Activities	Community studies and local concerns.	Orphan boarding schools (free, mukim), social services for the poor, halls for community activities.
Religious Traditions	Maulid, tahlil, recitation of the Islamic classic books.	It is still preserved, but packaged with cultural celebrations (Eid al-Fitr, traditional competitions) as cultural da'wah.

Da'wah Innovation of Abdullah Syafi'i

KH. Abdullah Syafi'i (1910–1985) was a Betawi scholar who made an important history in the development of Islamic da'wah in Jakarta. He is known as a figure who not only firmly maintains the scientific tradition of Islamic boarding schools, but also creative in finding new ways to answer the challenges of modernization, urbanization, and ideological struggles in his time. The da'wah method he developed combined the strength of tradition with modern innovation, making him a central figure in the Betawi da'wah movement in the 20th century (Syihabudin et al., 2025).

One of the characteristics of Abdullah Shafi'i's da'wah method is the development of the ta'lim assembly (Table 5). If previously the assembly was only a small forum in langgar or houses, he made it a forum for mass da'wah that could absorb thousands of worshippers from various walks of life (Maarif et al., 2025). The ta'lim council that he led in As-Syafi'iyah Matraman became a center for the development of the people, where people learned religion as well as received moral direction to face the challenges of the times. According to the interview, "*Da'wah is indeed a taklim assembly... through AM radio at the time*" (As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025). This shows that Abdullah Shafi'i did not stop at face-to-face, but expanded the reach of the assembly by utilizing radio. Radio As-Syafi'iyah, which was established in 1967, has become a new media that reaches the homes of pilgrims, making da'wah more inclusive and widespread (Basri, 2021).

Abdullah Syafi'i's courage in making the ta'lim assembly a forum for mass da'wah also gave birth to a movement that continued to the next generation. From this assembly tradition, BKMT (Taklim Council Contact Body) was born, which was pioneered by his daughter, Prof. Dr. Hj. Tutty Alawiyah, so that the typical Betawi recitation model was transformed into a national movement. Thus, Abdullah Syafi'i's innovation not only touched

local pilgrims, but also inspired the women's da'wah movement and the wider community in Indonesia (Maarif *et al.*, 2025).

The content of the ta'lim assembly of Abdullah Shafi'i is not limited to the study of the book, but also touches on the real problems of the ummah. During the Old Order period, the assembly became a tool against the influence of communism; while during the New Order period, he used it to criticize the policies of the Jakarta government, such as the legalization of gambling, the localization of prostitution, and the cremation of corpses. Thus, the ta'lim assembly is not just a ritual forum, but an arena of social and political moral struggle for Muslims (Syafi'ie & Asli, n.d.).

In addition, Abdullah Shafi'i also integrated da'wah into the formal education system of As-Syafi'iyah. Students not only learn religion in class, but are also trained to perform in public. In the interview it was stated, "*at the end of the lesson... There are theoretical and practical tests. The practice is maharatul da'wah, maharatul MC, dhikr wa tahlil*". This shows that Abdullah Shafi'i's da'wah method emphasizes theory and practical skills, so that students are ready to become dai and leaders of the ummah (As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025).

Abdullah Syafi'i's da'wah innovation can be understood through the lens of religious communication and cultural adaptation. Rather than rejecting local traditions, Syafi'i reinterpreted Betawi cultural expressions, such as the *Maulid Nabi*, *tahlilan*, and *Lebaran Betawi* celebrations, as effective vehicles for transmitting Islamic values. This approach resonates with da'wah innovation theories emphasizing *cultural continuity and communicative contextualization* (Azra, 2013). As highlighted in field interviews, "*If there is a Betawi Eid event, here there are many competitions... there is cuisine, there are typical Betawi activities*" (As-Syafi'iyah Administration, personal communication October 1, 2025). Through such events, Syafi'i positioned da'wah not merely as didactic preaching but as a participatory, community-centered process embedded within the cultural identity of the Betawi people.

This strategy reflects a dynamic reinterpretation rather than mere preservation of tradition. By sacralizing cultural practices within an Islamic moral framework, Syafi'i demonstrated how da'wah could operate as a medium of *religious acculturation*—bridging sacred teachings with social realities (Hefner, 2011). His establishment of the Yatim-Dhuafa Islamic Boarding School in 1978 further illustrates his commitment to *social da'wah*, expanding the meaning of religious propagation to include social welfare and empowerment for marginalized groups (Basri, 2021). In this sense, his model of da'wah represents a synthesis of *continuity* and *reinterpretation*, reaffirming traditional Betawi religiosity while transforming its expression to meet the moral and social challenges of an urbanizing Muslim society.

From the description above, it can be seen that the da'wah method of KH. Abdullah Syafi'i rests upon four foundational pillars (Table 5): (1) the *majlis ta'lim* as a center of mass da'wah that involves multiple social strata; (2) the use of modern media, particularly radio, to expand the reach and accessibility of religious messages; (3) the integration of educational and da'wah competencies aimed at producing trained preachers and educators; and (4) cultural and social da'wah grounded in Betawi traditions and social welfare concerns for marginalized groups.

These four pillars collectively illustrate Syafi'i's distinctive approach to *contextual da'wah*, which bridges classical pesantren traditions with the dynamic urban environment of mid-20th-century Jakarta. His ability to harmonize *religious authenticity* with *modern communicative strategies* demonstrates a form of *wasathiyyah* (Islamic moderation) that is both culturally rooted and socially responsive. This framework directly supports the study's broader aim, to analyze how Abdullah Syafi'i's integration of tradition and modernization contributed to the formation of a moderate Betawi Islamic identity and shaped the evolution of urban Islamic institutions in Indonesia.

Table 4. The innovation and characteristics of Da'wah, conducted by KH. Abdullah Syafi'I (Source: Author's Elaboration)

The Pillars of Da'wah	Form of Implementation	Information
Mass Ta'lim Assembly	Developing recitation from a small forum to a large assembly involving thousands of worshippers.	The assembly is a center for the development of the ummah, a space for strengthening faith, as well as an arena for the struggle against ideologies and policies that are detrimental to the ummah.
Modern Media (Radio)	Established Radio As-Syafi'iyah (1967) on the AM wave.	Da'wah reaches the wider community, becomes a means of resistance to communism, and expands access to religious knowledge.
Integration of Education & Skills	Students learn a formal curriculum + afternoon diniyah, plus da'wah practice exams (MC, dhikr, tahlil).	Graduates not only master religious theory, but are also ready to become dai and leaders of the ummah.
Cultural & Social Da'wah	Reviving Betawi traditions (maulid, tahlilan, Betawi Eid) and establishing an orphan boarding school (1978).	Da'wah is integrated with local culture and concern for the poor; making the pesantren a center of education as well as social services.

Social Role and Community Development

KH's concern. Abdullah Syafi'i towards the weak was realized through the establishment of the Orphan and Poor Islamic Boarding School in Jatiwaringin, Bekasi (Basri, 2021). This institution not only serves as a place of religious education, but also as a center for social development for orphans and poor people, so that they have the opportunity to get a proper education. Through the pesantren, Abdullah Syafi'i emphasized that Islamic da'wah is not only limited to the delivery of teachings, but also a social responsibility to raise the dignity of small communities. This is in line with the tradition of Betawi scholars who make pesantren as a center of education as well as a base of social service (Table 5).

In addition, Abdullah Syafi'i has an important contribution in building a network of Betawi scholars. He grew up from an environment rich in scientific sanad, and then expanded the network of da'wah and education to the national level (Syafi'ie & Asli, n.d.). Abdullah Syafi'i's work shows how a local scholar is able to go beyond the boundaries of his territory and influence the discourse of Indonesian Islam. His presence was paralleled with other national scholars, such as KH. Ahmad Dahlan or Prof. Dr. Hamka, even though Abdullah Syafi'i was fully educated in the country. The network he built through Islamic boarding schools, taklim assemblies, and universities strengthened the position of Betawi scholars in the national arena (Table 5).

Furthermore, Abdullah Syafi'i seeks to build an urban Islamic society that is religious, educated, and independent. Through education at the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic College, he prepared a generation of Muslims who were able to integrate religious science and general science, so that it was relevant to the needs of Jakarta's modernity. His preaching through radio, taklim assembly, and written works function to instill religious values in the midst of the rapid urbanization process (Choirin et al., 2023). Meanwhile, social activities such as women's empowerment through BKMT and concern for orphans and poor people show her

vision of an inclusive and empowered Islamic society. Thus, Abdullah Syafi'i's social role not only preserves the tradition of the Betawi Islamic boarding school, but also transforms it into a driving force for socio-religious change in urban Jakarta.

Table 5. The role of KH. Abdullah Syafi'i in the social and community development field (source: author's elaboration)

Aspects	Summary
Orphans & Dhuafa Islamic Boarding School	Established in Jatiwaringin, Bekasi; It functions as a religious education institution as well as a social development center for orphans and poor people.
The Social Meaning of Da'wah	Da'wah not only conveys teachings, but also social responsibility to uplift the dignity of small communities.
Tradition of Betawi Scholars	Making the pesantren a center of education as well as a base for community social service.
Betawi Ulama Network	Expanding the network of da'wah and education to the national level; aligned with national scholars such as KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Prof. Dr. Hamka.
National Influence	Strengthening the position of Betawi scholars in the discourse of Indonesian Islam even though all their education is taken domestically.
Urban Islamic Society	Forming a religious, educated, and independent society through the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic College, radio, taklim council, and written works.
Women's Empowerment	Supporting the role of women through BKMT, led by Prof. Dr. Tutty Alawiyah, to increase the religious and social capacity of mothers.

Islamic Boarding School Transformation	The Betawi Islamic Boarding School not only preserves traditions, but also becomes a motor of socio-religious change in modern Jakarta.
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KH. Abdullah Syafi'i in the Theoretical Frame

Research on KH. Abdullah Syafi'i can be positioned as a complement to previous studies that have discussed the modernization of Islamic education, the social role of scholars, da'wah strategies, community development, and the relationship between tradition and modernity. Steenbrink emphasized that the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia took place through the process of integrating traditional Islamic boarding schools with the formal school system, giving birth to a hybrid model that was able to survive in the modern era (Steenbrink, 1990). In this context, Abdullah Syafi'i's work enriches the study with concrete examples in urban areas, namely how the As-Syafi'iyah Islamic College combines the early curriculum with tiered formal education, thus showing the relevance of the theory of modernization of Islamic education in the Betawi social space.

Furthermore, this study also complements the theory of the social role of scholars as stated by Geertz (1976) and Dhofier (1982). Geertz identifies the kiai as a central figure of Javanese society who functions as a religious teacher as well as a moral leader (Geertz, 1976), while Dhofier emphasized the role of Islamic boarding school scholars as social agents who maintain the continuity of tradition (Dhofier, 1982). Abdullah Syafi'i presents a new dimension in this framework, namely how scholars in the middle of a big city like Jakarta not only maintain traditions, but also play a role as a driver of modern communities, build orphan boarding schools, and manage mass ta'lim assemblies that reach thousands of worshippers. Thus, this study expands the scope of the theory by showing that the role of scholars is not limited to rural areas or traditional Islamic boarding schools, but is also relevant in the midst of urban modernity.

From the aspect of da'wah, Azra's theory (2010) emphasizes the importance of strategies that are in accordance with the socio-political context and the use of modern media (Azra et al., 2010). Abdullah Shafi'i showed the real practice of this theory through the establishment of Radio As-Syafi'iyah in 1967, which was used as a means of da'wah against communism and voiced criticism of the policies of the New Order. This research complements previous studies by emphasizing that da'wah is not just a religious communication, but also a means of socio-political struggle that utilizes modern technology to expand the reach of the influence of scholars (Choirin et al., 2023).

Abdullah Syafi'i's contribution is also in line with the theory of community development as put forward by Freire (1970). Freire emphasized critical education that frees society from oppression through awareness, indirectly, he also highlighted the importance of empowerment and social justice in building community (Farag et al., 2022). Through orphan pesantren, concern for the poor, and social involvement of As-Syafi'iyah, Abdullah Syafi'i presents a concrete example of how pesantren function as an agent of urban community empowerment. Thus, this research enriches the discourse on community development in the perspective of Islam in the archipelago.

Finally, this research also complements the theory of tradition and modernity as explained by Giddens (1991) and Hefner (2009). Giddens sees tradition as a source of identity that needs to be negotiated in the modern era (Giddens, 2023), while Hefner emphasizes Islamic education as a bridge between religiosity and modernization (Hefner, 2009). Abdullah Syafi'i showed how Betawi traditions, such as maulid, tahlilan, and Betawi Eid, are not only maintained, but also used as a means of cultural da'wah that strengthens the identity of the people while opening up space for modern innovations such as radio and universities. This research confirms that the negotiation of tradition and modernity in Indonesian Islam can run harmoniously through the role of visionary scholars.

Thus, research on KH. Abdullah Syafi'i not only describes the work of a Betawi scholar, but also makes an academic contribution that enriches previous theories about the modernization of Islamic education, the social role of scholars, contextual da'wah strategies, community development, and the relationship between tradition and modernity ([Hermawan & Murjoko, 2025](#)). This position makes the research relevant as well as important in the study of contemporary Indonesian Islam.

Research on KH. Abdullah Syafi'i has a number of advantages that distinguish him from other scholarly studies in the archipelago. First, this study provides a new perspective on the modernization of Islamic education in urban areas. If many previous studies have emphasized pesantren in rural areas ([Nurwahidin, et al., 2023](#)). Research on Abdullah Syafi'i shows that Islamic boarding schools in Jakarta are able to survive and develop by integrating traditional education (diniyah, yellow book) with a formal education system that is tiered to tertiary. This finding strengthens the view of Steenbrink (1994), but provides a new dimension in the form of concrete application in the midst of large-scale urbanization ([Steenbrink, 1994](#)).

Second, this study emphasizes that the role of ulama is not limited to the religious realm alone, but also as social movers, agents of change, and protectors of the community. Abdullah Syafi'i succeeded in presenting pesantren as a community center, by establishing orphan pesantren, providing free education, and making As-Syafi'iyah a public space for the community. These findings expand on [Geertz's \(1976\)](#) and [Dhofier's \(1982\)](#) theories about the social role of scholars, adding that urban scholars have a dual function: to preserve tradition while responding to the challenges of modernity.

Third, this study shows innovations in da'wah strategies that are rarely reviewed in the context of Betawi scholars. Abdullah Syafi'i has been using radio media since 1967, long before da'wah through television and digital media developed. This shows the awareness of the importance of mass communication in shaping

religious opinion, as well as being a tool against communist ideology and criticizing the policies of the New Order government (Choirin *et al.*, 2023). These findings enrich the contextual da'wah theory put forward by Azra (2010), with concrete evidence on how local scholars use technology for the benefit of da'wah and ideological resistance (Azra *et al.*, 2010).

Fourth, this study also found that Abdullah Syafi'i developed a cultural da'wah model while preserving Betawi traditions such as maulid, tahlilan, and Betawi Eid. This tradition is not only maintained, but revived as a da'wah medium that strengthens the Islamic identity of the local community. These findings are in line with Giddens (1991) and Hefner's (2009) concept of negotiation between tradition and modernity, but provide empirical evidence that scholars are able to make tradition an effective instrument in dealing with social change (Giddens, 2023; Hefner, 2009).

Finally, this study shows that KH. Abdullah Syafi'i left an intellectual legacy in the form of more than 30 writings that integrated religious thought with institutional ideas (Basri, 2021). This is interesting because many Betawi scholars are known through lectures and oral traditions, while Abdullah Syafi'i is also prolific in writing works that strengthen his intellectual legitimacy. Thus, this research fills the gap in the literature by presenting a complete figure of Betawi scholars: an educator, dai, social leader, cultural preservationist, and at the same time a prolific writer.

Research on KH. Abdullah Syafi'i enriched Indonesian Islamic literature by showing that Betawi scholars have an important contribution to the modernization of education, da'wah strategies, community development, and the preservation of traditions (Humaidi, 2023). The advantage of this research lies in its ability to display the figure of Abdullah Syafi'i as a figure who bridges tradition and modernity, as well as strengthening Islamic boarding schools as a center for education, da'wah, and community strengthening in the midst of Jakarta's urbanization.

Research on KH. Abdullah Syafi'i, although made an important contribution in understanding the role of Betawi scholars in education, da'wah, and community development, still had a number of limitations. First, this research still relies more on local sources, both in the form of interviews with the As-Syafi'iyah Management and internal institutional records. This makes the study tend to be descriptive-appreciative and less critical in comparing the work of Abdullah Syafi'i with other scholars in Indonesia who face similar contexts, such as KH. Ahmad Dahlan with Muhammadiyah or KH. Hasyim Asy'ari with a traditional Islamic boarding school.

Another limitation is the lack of exploration of aspects of the acceptance of the wider community outside the Betawi community. Although Abdullah Syafi'i had a great influence in Jakarta, this study has not touched much on how his ideas were received, debated, or even transformed in other regions of Indonesia. As a result, the understanding of the national significance of his thinking has not yet been fully explored.

In addition, this study has also not explored the analysis of Abdullah Syafi'i's writings. In fact, he left behind more than 30 works that have the potential to open deeper insights into his thoughts in the fields of fiqh, education, da'wah, and social institutions. The focus of more research on the aspects of da'wah and educational praxis has made his written intellectual heritage have not received adequate academic attention.

Methodologically, this research still lacks the use of interdisciplinary approaches. The analysis carried out is more dominant in the aspects of history and social description, while the dimensions of anthropology, communication, and critical education theory can still be explored more deeply to strengthen the understanding of the context and relevance of their work.

Based on these limitations, further research can be directed to several things. First, a comparative study between KH. Abdullah Syafi'i and other scholars who also modernized Islamic education, so that the general pattern and uniqueness of the As-Syafi'iyah

model can be seen. Second, a more in-depth analysis of Abdullah Syafi'i's writings is very important to reveal his thoughts systematically, not only through social and educational practices. Third, research with a cultural and communication anthropology approach can show how Abdullah Syafi'i's da'wah shaped the identity of the Betawi community as well as influenced the construction of urban Islamic culture in Indonesia. With this suggestion, the research on KH. Abdullah Shafi'i is expected not only to stop at his biographical description and social work, but also to develop into a critical-comparative and interdisciplinary study that places Abdullah Shafi'i in the mainstream of the history of Islamic education and the ulema movement in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that KH. Abdullah Syafi'i made a pivotal contribution to Betawi Islamic education by integrating pesantren traditions with modern institutional reforms. Between 1940 and 1980, he developed an educational model that enabled Islamic schools to adapt to Jakarta's rapid urban transformation while preserving Ash'ariyah theology, Shafi'iyah jurisprudence, and Betawi cultural identity. His integrated curriculum, expansion of majlis taklim networks, and support for women's participation—later institutionalized through BKMT—demonstrate how moderation (*wasathiyyah*) was operationalized through education, da'wah, and community empowerment.

Syafi'i's da'wah strategy combined verbal preaching, practical writing in more than thirty fiqh and creed manuals, and social action, strengthened by the innovative use of Radio As-Syafi'iyah. This medium broadened the reach of his message and positioned him as a critical yet balanced voice during the ideological tensions of the Old and New Order periods. His educational institutions—from pesantren to modern schools and eventually As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University—reflect a sustained effort to harmonize classical scholarship with modern

organizational systems.

The findings indicate that Syafi'i's legacy extends beyond institutional development. He established a model of moderate, culturally rooted, and socially responsive Islam that shaped Betawi religious life and elevated the influence of Betawi scholars nationally. For contemporary scholars, his example underscores the importance of contextual da'wah, intellectual engagement with earlier scholarship, and active participation in social and cultural issues. The study concludes that pesantren must continue systemization, regeneration, and modernization to remain competitive and relevant in today's educational landscape.

Future research is encouraged to further explore the intellectual and spiritual legacy of KH. Abdullah Syafi'i, particularly through an in-depth study of his written works and unpublished manuscripts. While this study has examined his contributions in the domains of education, da'wah, and religious moderation, a comprehensive textual analysis of his books and treatises could reveal the underlying theological arguments, hermeneutical methods, and pedagogical principles that shaped his thought. Such research would not only enhance understanding of Syafi'i's scholarly orientation but also provide a more nuanced perspective on the transmission of Islamic knowledge within the Betawi intellectual tradition.

Moreover, comparative studies could be undertaken to situate KH. Abdullah Syafi'i's intellectual legacy within the broader context of Indonesian and Southeast Asian Islamic thought. This may include examining his influence on subsequent generations of scholars, the continuity of his educational model in contemporary Islamic institutions, and the reception of his ideas in the discourse of Islamic moderation (*wasathiyah*). By extending the investigation to these dimensions, future scholars can enrich the academic literature on Indonesian Islam and contribute to a deeper appreciation of how local religious figures have shaped the synthesis between tradition and modernity.

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