



Khazanah: Journal of Islamic History and Culture
ISSN: 2339-207x (print); 2614-3798 (electronic)
DOI: 10.15548/khazanah.v16i1.2410

HISTORICAL REVIEW: THE MODERATE RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF SHEIKH KHATIB MUHAMMAD ALI PADANG

Ahmad Fadil

Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia
ahmadfadil280522@gmail.com

Firdaus

Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia
firdaus@uinib.ac.id

Khilal Syauqi

Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia
khilal1980@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to examine the religious understanding of Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang through the moderate approach advocated by Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qardhawi. Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang contributed to the richness of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia, particularly in the Minangkabau region in the early 20th century. The research method used in this study is the historical research method. The author first searched for various sources related to the research. The next step was to critically analyze these sources in order to draw conclusions in the form of the author's interpretation, after which the paper was written. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang was an elder scholar who held moderate (*wasatiyyah*) views; although he belonged to the group of elder scholars, he accepted the ideas of the younger generation as well as those of the older generation. He occupies a middle ground between the ideas of the older and younger generations, as evidenced by the following manifestations of his moderation: 1. Openness toward modernist-reformist organizations such as SI (Syarikat Islam); 2. A balance between tradition and renewal; 3. The establishment of the Irsyadiyah Madrasah.

Keywords: Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali, Moderate, Minangkabau, Religious Beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

The theory of moderation has rarely been applied in the study of intellectual history, including studies of Minangkabau ulama and the influence of their ideologies, even though published works on the subject are abundant online.¹ Studies of intellectual history have been conducted by experts from various regions, including Minangkabau historians. All of these studies essentially show that Minangkabau ulama are divided into two schools of thought: the younger generation of reformers and the older generation who uphold tradition.

Minangkabau is one of the regions that has produced many learned religious scholars. A number of these scholars have contributed to the spiritual well-being of the community—a spiritual well-being that also helped bring renown to the region of West Sumatra in the past. As key figures in the development of Islam, these scholars are regarded as an educated class who enlighten the community by conveying and developing Islamic teachings.²

The role of ulama in Minangkabau is not limited to the religious sphere but extends to various aspects of life, such as education, social affairs, culture, and politics. Ulama in Minangkabau are known as agents of change capable of providing enlightenment through Islamic studies relevant to the needs of the community. A strong intellectual tradition—such as learning in suraus and traditional Islamic madrasahs—serves as the primary foundation for shaping the next generation, equipping them with both a deep understanding of religious knowledge and a broad social perspective.³

Minangkabau, with its strong blend of traditional customs and deep Islamic spirit, has a long history of producing influential Muslim scholars. The early 20th century in Minangkabau was marked by the emergence of an Islamic reform movement. The Young Generation, driven by a spirit of rationality and an emphasis on the Qur'an and Hadith, questioned various religious traditions deemed to lack a strong foundation. On the other hand, the Old Generation, as the guardians of tradition, tended to uphold existing practices.⁴

With the emergence of the Islamic reform movement, the practice of *rabitah* within Sufi orders became a point of contention between traditionalists and reformists. *Rabitah*, a spiritual method for connecting disciples with their *mursyid*, was questioned by more rationalist reformists regarding its validity. Similarly, the concept of Sufi orders was viewed by some as an obstacle to the purification of Islamic teachings. On the other hand, the Minangkabau customary inheritance system, which is matrilineal, also faced challenges from a more patriarchal perspective of Islamic *fiqh*. This debate reflects the tension between local traditions and the Islamic reform efforts that emerged in the early

¹ Examining various studies or works of intellectual history on Minangkabau ulama seems to invite us on a journey into the past—a past filled with the warmth of dynamic debates between the young and the old—so that, for the author, there exists a moderate group that upholds tradition while also embracing renewal. The body of intellectual history literature indicates that this theory was used only by M. Riyan Hidayat (2022) to understand the existence of a moderate or middle-of-the-road perspective, but it does not address the case of Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali of Padang.

² Dr. Febri Yulika and M. Hum, *Minangkabau Epistemology: The Meaning of Knowledge in Minangkabau Customary Philosophy* (ISI Padangpanjang, 2017).

³ Muhiddinur Kamal, "Empowering Local Preachers: From Conventional Da'wah to Professional Da'wah in Pasaman Regency, West Sumatra," *Jurnal Dakwah* 16, no. 2 (2015): 241–56.

⁴ KHAMZ Tuanku Kayo Khadimullah, *Toward the Enforcement of Islamic Sharia in Minangkabau: The Role of Sufi Scholars in Customary Reform* (Marja, 2024).

20th century in Minangkabau.⁵

Amid the significant dynamics of education- and social-based reform movements, traditional Islamic education in Minangkabau faced major challenges. A major transformation occurred following the introduction of the Western educational model in the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁶ The movement to modernize Islamic education continued to gain momentum as the authority and relevance of traditional institutions, such as the *surau*, began to be questioned in meeting the needs of the times. Azyumardi Azra even referred to this phenomenon as a form of “extinction” of the old scholarly tradition, which needed *to be upgraded* to meet the demands of the modern educational world.⁷

In this context, a number of Minangkabau reformers emerged, such as Sheikh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi (1855–1916), Sheikh Thaher Djalaluddin (1869–1956), Sheikh Muhammad Djamil Djambek (1860–1947)⁸, Haji Rasul or Abdul Karim Amrullah (1879–1949), Haji Abdullah Ahmad (1879–1949), Sheikh Ibrahim Musa Parabek (1882–1963), and Zainuddin Labai El-Yunusi (1905–1980). These figures were the driving forces behind the modernization of Islamic education in West Sumatra through the integration of rationality, innovative teaching methodologies, and the spirit of *ijtihad*.

However, in the study of the intellectual history of Minangkabau Islam, there is a significant gap that has not been extensively addressed: the lack of in-depth research on the religious views and thought of Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang. Yet, as a figure who lived during the surge of Islamic renewal in Minangkabau, Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang occupied a moderate position— —that allowed him to navigate the tension between Islamic traditionalism and modernism of that era. The scarcity of literature or academic studies on his religious views indicates a *research gap* in understanding the full spectrum of Islamic thought in West Sumatra during the transitional period from the 19th to the 20th century.⁹

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is an intellectual history that employs an intellectual approach to trace how Syekh Khatib Muhammad Ali’s religious views emerged, embraced ideas of renewal, yet still preserved old traditions. The method used is the historical method, which encompasses four stages: heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography.¹⁰ The first stage, heuristics, involves the process of collecting various historical sources. The primary sources for this study come from the written works of Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali, while secondary sources were obtained from supporting literature such as books, research reports, and relevant scientific journals.

⁵ Azyumardi Azra, *Surau: Traditional Islamic Education in Transition and Modernization* (Kencana, 2017).

⁶ Linda Herrera, “Education, Islam, and Modernity: Beyond Westernization and Centralization,” *Comparative Education Review* 48, no. 3 (2004): 318–26.

⁷ Azyumardi Azra, “The Network of Ulama: The Middle East and the Indonesian Archipelago in the 17th and 18th Centuries: The Roots of Indonesian Islamic Renewal,” (No Title), 2007.

⁸ Adlan Sanur Tarihoran¹ Nunu Burhanuddin, “THE THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF THE REFORMER SJECH M. DJAMIL DJAMBEK IN THE MINANG REGION,” n.d.

⁹ Zilfaroni, “Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Al-Fadani (1863–1936),” Minangkabau Figures Blog, March 16, 2023.

¹⁰ Dudung Abdurrahman, “Methods of Historical Research,” 1999.

The second stage, verification, involves selecting and testing the authenticity and validity of the collected sources through external and internal criticism. The third stage, interpretation, involves interpreting the verified data to explore and understand the facts regarding the religious thought of Syekh Khatib Muhammad Ali of Padang. The final stage, historiography, is the process of writing up the results of the historical research. At this stage, the results of the analysis are compiled into a scholarly work that systematically and objectively describes the historical dynamics of the religious thought of Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Forms of Religious Beliefs in Minangkabau

Religious thought has often served as the primary foundation for shaping social dynamics within a community, including in Minangkabau during the 19th and 20th centuries. One of the key figures who played a role in sparking change and social movements was Sheikh Ahmad Khatib. His ideas gave rise to three main groups: the Kaum Tuo, the Kaum Mudo, and the moderates. These three groups held opposing yet complementary viewpoints, fostering constructive debate within the Islamic scholarly tradition. The Kaum Tuo were known for their stance in preserving local traditions and customary values as integral to Islamic teachings, while the Kaum Mudo tended to be progressive, prioritizing reform in accordance with the pure teachings of Islam. Amid these two poles, the moderate group serves as a balancing force, striving to harmoniously unite elements of tradition and renewal. This phenomenon not only enriches the religious understanding of the Minangkabau people but also makes a significant contribution to the development of a more critical and comprehensive Islamic thought.¹¹

The author will briefly explain these three religious groups/schools of thought—as follows:

1. Traditional (Conservative) School of Thought

In modern religious discourse, conservatism is often understood as an approach to religion that tends to uphold “pure” doctrines as taught and practiced by the founders of the religion in the past. In the academic world, Azyumardi Azra defines conservatism as a way of thinking and behaving that strictly adheres to the teachings of sacred texts, which conservative groups regard as the most authoritative and correct sources.¹² Over time, conservatism has evolved into a new form known as neoconservatism. Although the meaning of this term has shifted, both terms still refer to a similar religious approach, namely one that prioritizes rigid, normative, and exclusive religious practices, both in mindset and action.¹³

Conservative groups tend to be textualists, disregarding the historical dimensions of religious teachings and rejecting contemporary issues perceived as having a whiff of modernity. They believe that true peace and comfort can only be achieved by returning to the religious teachings and practices of the past, while shunning all forms of reform

¹¹ M. Riyan Hidayat, “The Network of Minangkabau Ulama in the 19th–20th Centuries: A Critical Historical Analysis,” *ISAH 2022 (International Seminar on Adab and Humanities) 2022* (2022): 185–98.

¹² Azyumardi Azra, *Islamic Education: Tradition and Modernization Amid the Challenges of the Third Millennium* (Prenada Media, 2019).

¹³ Azra, *Surau: Traditional Islamic Education in Transition and Modernization*.

promoted by modernist groups.¹⁴ As a religious perspective, conservatism is not limited to a single religious tradition but exists across all religions, including within contemporary Islamic traditions in Indonesia.

In 1920, B.J.O. Schrieke, a Western author, referred to the Kaum Tua in his book as “de ouderwetsche orthodoxen,” meaning the old-fashioned or traditional orthodox. Generally speaking, the Kaum Tua can be understood as traditional scholars who adhere strictly to conservative traditions or strive to preserve long-standing practices. In accordance with conservative principles, these scholars typically view history or the past solely as a source of inspiration or something to be preserved. In many ways, they prefer to maintain the status quo—that is, long-standing practices within society. However, according to Martin Van Bruinessen, during the colonial period, the Dutch authorities were deeply concerned about various activities carried out by traditionalists, particularly those affiliated with Sufi orders.¹⁵ Consequently, supporters of the “kaum tuo” are often viewed as having a negative attitude toward reform and change. These traditionalists argue that the decline of the Muslim community stems from a tendency to distance oneself from the teachings of previous generations and to sever ties with their traditions. They also view efforts to keep up with the tide of change as a negative influence or a temptation from Satan originating in the Western world.

The Kaum Tuo, also known as the Khalafi (those who came later, or the subsequent era or generation), generally adhere to the Shafi’i school of thought, seeking to simplify matters for the general public—most of whom are considered unable to fully grasp these principles in depth. Therefore, they introduced the practice of taqlid as a means to unify society in both the practical aspects of life and the aspects of worship. This approach also aims to provide convenience to the majority of the public who lack the ability to delve deeply into religious studies to the point of understanding the evidence for each act of worship.¹⁶

2. The Concept of Modernism

Kaum Mudo is a term given by traditional scholars (Kaum Tuo) to a number of scholars on the West Coast of Malay Land, the island of Sumatra, and Egypt. This title arose because these scholars were considered to have introduced new elements into religious teachings. Kaum Mudo refers to a group of scholars with modern and progressive thinking. They reject a religious approach that favors blind imitation (taklid), as espoused by traditionalists. For them, religious understanding can be interpreted through the framework of ijtihad. In their religious practice, they emphasize the need to purify religious teachings so that they are in harmony with the primary sources, namely the Qur’an and the Sunnah.¹⁷

¹⁴ Abd Hannan and Zainuddin Syarif, “Conservatism vs. Moderation: The Contest of Contemporary Religious Thought Among Local Islamic Organizations in Madura, Indonesia,” *Fikrah: Journal of Aqidah and Religious Studies* 10 (2022).

¹⁵ S Lathief, “The Kaum Tua Movement in Minangkabau,” *Graduate School of IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah*, 1988.

¹⁶ Mami Nofrianti and Jamal Mirdad, “Religio-Intellectual Discourse of the 20th Century: The Dynamics of the Kaum Tuo and Kaum Mudo Movements in Minangkabau,” *Khazanah: Journal of Islamic History and Culture*, 2018.

¹⁷ Andri Ashadi, “Neomodernism versus Neotraditionalism: The Phenomenon of the Kaum Mudo and Kaum Tuo in Early 20th-Century Minangkabau,” *TAJID: JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AND THOUGHT* 16, no. 1 (2013).

The Mudo community is often labeled as “Wahhabi” because they strive to bring society closer to and in harmony with the teachings of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, based on their own perspectives and studies. They do this by guiding the community toward principles of faith and worship grounded in authentic evidence, without being bound by or merely following a single school of thought or specific opinion. Their intention is very noble: to restore the role of reason bestowed by Allah SWT and to purify acts of worship from additions that are considered to diminish the rewards established by the Prophet Muhammad SAW.¹⁸

3. Moderate Approach

At the 33rd Annual Conference of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), held September 24–26, 2004, at George Mason University Law School in Arlington, Virginia, USA, under the theme “Revisioning Modernity: Challenges and Possibilities for Islam,” various papers discussed efforts to critique and redefine the concept and identity of moderate Muslims. One paper, titled “Moderate Islam, Progressive Muslims, Democracy, and Post-Islamism,” emphasized that moderate Muslims are those who reject the use of violence as the basis of their ideology and struggle.¹⁹ Moderate Islam is a conceptual term that is not easy to define clearly. This is due to its nature as a highly *contested* concept—one whose meaning is the subject of debate—both within the Muslim community and among non-Muslim groups. Understanding of moderate Islam varies depending on who is approaching the concept and the context in which the term is interpreted.

Classical Islamic thought does not, in fact, explicitly recognize the term “moderate” in an sense. However, this term is often associated with a number of Arabic words such as al-tawassut (the middle path), al-wast (simplicity), al-qist (justice), al-tawazun (balance), and al-i’tidal (moderation). These terms are used by some Muslims to describe a pattern of religious practice that rejects violence as a solution to theological issues within Islam. Because moderation is relative and understood subjectively by many, it often becomes a source of debate, controversy, and bias. This term is also inextricably linked to various political and economic interests, further complicating its understanding. This makes it difficult to reach a definitive conclusion about what and who constitutes a moderate Muslim.²⁰

In the tradition of religious thought, the degree of religious moderation is interpreted in various ways, depending on each local context. Although moderation generally shares a similar conceptual framework, its application in various local contexts results in differing interpretations. Broadly speaking, moderation is understood as choosing a middle path that avoids the two extremes in religious thought. In the Islamic tradition, extremism is often identified as al-guluw, a term frequently used by Yusuf al-Qardhawi to refer to al-mutatarrif (extremists). Conversely, moderation is often referred to as al-wast, which means the middle path (middle way), reflecting balance and harmony

¹⁸ Saipul Hamdi, “The Deculturalization of Islam and Social Conflict in Wahhabi Da’wah in Indonesia,” *Jurnal Kawistara* 9, no. 2 (2019): 164–78.

¹⁹ Kamran A. Bokhari, “Moderate Islam, Progressive Muslims, Democracy, and Post-Islamism,” in *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Conference of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) Held On, 2004, 24–26*.

²⁰ John L. Esposito, “Moderate Muslims: A Mainstream of Modernists, Islamists, Conservatives, and Traditionalists,” *American Journal of Islam and Society* 22, no. 3 (2005): 11–20.

in thought and religious practice.²¹

One of the key values in Islamic teachings is moderation, which emphasizes a balanced approach or middle ground in thought and action, without resorting to extremism or fanaticism. This value teaches balance by avoiding extremism, both in the understanding and practice of religion. Moderation also emphasizes inclusivity, brotherhood, tolerance, peace, and presents Islam as a religion that brings mercy to all creation (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*). Through the approach of moderation, Muslims are known as *ummatan wasathan*—a community that loves peace and rejects all forms of violence. With this peaceful and welcoming face of Islam, Muslims have the primary mission of spreading peace and tolerance while distancing themselves from violence. This principle is reflected in the spread of Islam to various regions of the world, including Indonesia. Islam was spread by preachers, such as the Wali Songo on the island of Java, who utilized culture, education, and the arts in their *da'wah*. They also integrated Islamic teachings with local culture through processes of acculturation and contextualization, ensuring that Islamic values were well-received by the local communities.²²

B. Forms of Moderate Thought in the Thought of Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang

In the Minangkabau intellectual landscape, which is rife with debates between tradition and modernism,²³ Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang stands out as an elder scholar who is open to reform. He has successfully formulated an interpretation of Islam that avoids rigid dualism, instead offering a more widely accepted middle ground (moderate approach). The religious philosophy he espoused was a response to the complex challenges of the times, in which Islamic values were required to remain relevant within an ever-changing social context. The following explains some of Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang's moderate views:

1. Activist with Syarikat Islam (SI), a Modernist-Reformist Mass Organization

In addition to printing, one of the key innovations that shaped the development of Islam in Indonesia was the emergence of Islamic mass organizations (*ormas*). These organizations were the institutional manifestation of a strategy adopted by Muslims in the Dutch East Indies to maintain distance from the colonizers while simultaneously strengthening themselves by focusing on emancipation—which was initially non-political in nature—through educational initiatives and *da'wah* activities. This focus on education was driven by the colonial government's increasing educational efforts as part of its Ethical Policy. In addition to printing, one of the key innovations that shaped the development of Islam in Indonesia was the emergence of Islamic mass organizations (*ormas*). Islamic civil society organizations were the institutional manifestation of the strategy adopted by Muslims in the Dutch East Indies to maintain a distance from the colonizers while simultaneously strengthening themselves by focusing on emancipation—which was initially non-political in nature—through educational initiatives and *da'wah* activities. This focus on education was driven by the colonial

²¹ Masdar Hilmy, "Quo Vadis Moderate Islam in Indonesia? Re-examining the Modernism of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah," *MIQOT: Journal of Islamic Studies* 36, no. 2 (2012).

²² Mohammad Muchlis Solichin, "Moderate Islamic Education Within the Framework of Local Wisdom," *MUDARRISUNA Journal: Media for the Study of Islamic Education* 8, no. 1 (2018): 174–94.

²³ Azra, *Surau: Traditional Islamic Education in Transition and Modernization*.

government's increasing educational efforts as part of the Ethical Policy.²⁴

Islamic mass organizations classified as “modernist-reformist” and “traditionalist” play an important role in articulating various doctrinal and ideological positions. Thus, the existence of Islamic mass organizations also influences the categorization of Muslim groups in Indonesia. Since their emergence in the 1910s and 1920s, Islamic mass organizations have evolved into one of the key elements contributing to the process of Islamization of Indonesian society in the 20th century.²⁵ Their existence has shaped the current face of Islam in Indonesia, both in terms of institutional structures and the discourses they promote. The activities carried out by Islamic mass organizations have also succeeded in creating a critical mass that plays a role in capacity building. The educational systems they have developed, along with various other emancipatory initiatives, have been able to cultivate a larger pool of human resources, thereby expanding the organizations' support base through dialectical dynamics. As previously discussed, intellectual guidance, the direction of activism, and political leadership for Indonesia's Muslim community initially involved only a handful of people. However, this does not mean that influential figures no longer exist. The transformation of Islamic mass organizations into effective social movements still requires inspiration from charismatic leaders, one of whom was from the Sarekat Islam organization.

When it was founded in 1912, Sarekat Islam (SI) was initially an organization that brought together Muslim merchants with the aim of building a social movement for the emancipation of Muslims in Indonesia. However, about a decade after its founding, SI evolved into a political party. As the first organization of its kind, the founding of SI marked a milestone in the effort to integrate Islam with nationalism—a discourse that continues to feature prominently in Indonesia's political landscape. Moreover, the SI also served as an early platform that provided organizational experience for the founding figures of other Islamic movements and political parties, such as Muhammadiyah, the Masyumi Party, and even groups that later became involved in the Darul Islam rebellion. In fact, a number of figures who would later become part of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) also gained their early political experience within the SI.²⁶

Given this significant role, SI stands as an example of how Islamic organizations can contribute to the formation of ideologies, leadership, and political movements that played a pivotal role in shaping Indonesia's social and political landscape in the 20th century. This demonstrates that the transformation of Islamic mass organizations into effective social movements requires not only institutional structures but also inspiration from figures who emerged through their experiences in organizations like SI. Founded amid colonial economic domination, the Sarekat Dagang Islam (SDI)—conceived by H. Samanhudi—served as a platform for resistance among indigenous merchants. With the arrival of HOS Cokroaminoto, the SDI evolved into the Sarekat Islam (SI), a political force capable of mobilizing the masses. The SI not only fought for economic interests but also demanded Indonesian independence. The SI's dynamic and inspiring struggle

²⁴ Karel Peter Leonard Gerard Kersten, *Islamizing Indonesia: A History of Islamic Civilization in the Archipelago* (Baca Publishers, 2018).

²⁵ Ahmad Zainul Hamdi, Moh Shofwan, and Agus Muhammad, “The Role of Moderate Islamic Organizations in Countering Violent Extremism: A Case Study of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah” (-, 2019).

²⁶ Muhammad Farih Fanani and Siti Maimunah, “The Communist Movement Within Sarekat Islam in Surakarta, 1918–1926 CE,” *Thaqafiyat: Journal of Islamic Language, Civilization, and Information* 20, no. 1 (2021): 65–81.

became a significant milestone in the history of the Indonesian national movement.²⁷

The success of the Sarekat Dagang Islam (SDI) of Surakarta in attracting the interest of various segments of society reached its peak in 1911, when the organization succeeded in recruiting HOS Cokroaminoto as a member. This educated aristocrat, who also had a background as a santri, brought a breath of fresh air to the SDI. With HOS Cokroaminoto's joining, the SDI not only grew stronger but also became more relevant to the aspirations of the broader public. The first Sarekat Islam Congress in Surabaya in 1913 marked a turning point for the organization. HOS Cokroaminoto's inspiring speech and the congress's decision to focus on the people's welfare and to avoid involvement in practical politics charted the course for the SI's future struggle.²⁸ The ideas of scholars such as Syekh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang also influenced the development of the SI, particularly in terms of renewing Islamic thought and strengthening religious values among its members.

Furthermore, Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang, a charismatic scholar from Minangkabau, has made a significant contribution to shaping the landscape of Islamic thought in the Indonesian archipelago. As a moderate figure amidst the complex intellectual dynamics of his time, Sheikh Khatib successfully harmonized the pure teachings of Islam with the demands of an ever-changing era. The influence of his thought is palpable in various aspects of societal life, including within the dynamics of religious organizations such as the Islamic Union. Through a moderate and inclusive approach, Sheikh Khatib helped shape the spirit of reform championed by the Islamic Union, the oldest Islamic mass organization in Indonesia. In an effort to preserve the religious traditions and values they upheld, the Kaum Tua scholars of Minangkabau initiated the formation of the Ittihadul Ulama Sumatera in 1921. Under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Sa'ad Mungka, this organization served as a platform for figures such as Sheikh Sulaiman ar-Rasuli, Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali, and Sheikh Abbas Qadhi to unite and advocate for their group's interests. However, following the death of Sheikh Sa'ad Mungka, the organization experienced a decline.²⁹

Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali, a traditional scholar with moderate views, was a key figure in bridging the differences between traditional scholars (Kaum Tua) and the modernist movement (Kaum Muda) in Minangkabau. What set him apart was his open-minded approach to religion and his acceptance of reform. This was clearly evident in his active involvement in the Islamic Union (Serikat Islam), a mass organization that at the time served as a platform for various groups, including traditional scholars. Through his participation in the Islamic Union, Sheikh Khatib Ali succeeded in drawing other traditional scholars to engage in broader political and social movements. Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali, a traditional cleric with moderate views, was a key figure in bridging the divide between traditional clerics (the "Elder Generation") and the modernist movement (the "Younger Generation") in Minangkabau. What set him apart was his open-minded approach to religion and his willingness to embrace reform. This was clearly evident in his active involvement in the Islamic Union (Serikat Islam), a mass

²⁷ Irpan Iskandar and Dede Wahyu Firdaus, "Deliar Noer's Thoughts on the Modern Indonesian Islamic Movement, 1900–1942," *Jazirah: Journal of Civilization and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2020): 17–40.

²⁸ Ihtasul Amal, Mohammad Romli Hidayatullah, and Maftuh Ajmain, "THE ROLE OF SAREKAT ISLAM IN THE INDONESIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT," *Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia* 2, no. 3 (2025): 5042–51.

²⁹ Djohan Effendi, *Renewal Without Dismantling Tradition: Religious Discourse Among the Younger Generation of NU During Gus Dur's Leadership* (Kompas Book Publisher, 2010).

organization that at the time served as a platform for various groups, including traditional ulama. Through his participation in the Islamic Union, Sheikh Khatib Ali succeeded in drawing other traditional ulama into broader political and social movements.³⁰

2. Division of Inheritance

From the late 18th century to the early 20th century, the distribution of inheritance according to Minangkabau customary law became the subject of a protracted debate. This issue not only sparked conflict between the ulama and the customary authorities but also created tension among the ulama themselves. This debate gave rise to three groups with differing viewpoints. The first group consisted of those who rejected Minangkabau customary inheritance norms because they were considered contrary to Islamic law. According to this group, customary rules were not in line with the principles taught in Islamic sharia and were therefore unacceptable.³¹

The second group rejects Islamic inheritance norms. They argue that applying Islamic law to the distribution of inheritances would threaten and undermine the customary norms that have long formed the foundation of Minangkabau society. The third group takes a moderate stance by seeking a middle ground. They propose a compromise between Islamic law and customary law regarding the distribution of inheritances. This approach aims to harmonize the two distinct legal systems so that both can be applied simultaneously without conflicting with one another. The debate over inheritance reflects the dynamic relationship between adat and Islam in Minangkabau, while also demonstrating how the community sought to navigate the social changes and evolving values of that era.³²

When a conflict arose between the traditional community and the ulama regarding the distribution of ancestral property in Muara Labuh—and similarly across nearly all of West Sumatra—Khatib Muhammad Ali successfully avoided the conflict by taking a middle ground. The regulation implemented by Khatib Muhammad Ali stipulated that property be divided into two categories: ancestral property and earned property, referred to as “high ancestral property” and “low ancestral property.” The distribution of “high ancestral property” was governed by customary law and considered waqf (endowed property), while “low ancestral property” was distributed according to Islamic inheritance law. This was one of his efforts, alongside other prominent Minangkabau scholars such as Sheikh Muhammad Jamil Jambek, Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah, and Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad, to reform harmful traditional customs, pioneer a moderate interpretation of Islam, and, to a greater or lesser extent, help shape the course of Minangkabau history around the 20th century.³³

3. Establishing the Irsyadyah Madrasah.

One of the leading traditional religious scholars active in the field of education was Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang (1861–1936). Despite his resistance to modernity in every way, he founded a madrasah that was modern for its time. Madrasah Irsyadiyah, the educational institution he founded—which has dozens of branches in

³⁰ Effendi.

³¹ UIN Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, “ANDEH SETIA: WOM IN SULIK AIA A,” 2021.

³² Nuzul Iskandar, “The Compromise Between Islamic Law and Custom in the Inheritance of High-Status Heirlooms in Minangkabau,” *Jisrah: Journal of Sharia Science Integration* 3 (2022): 483–95.

³³ Mas’oed Abidin and the Center for Islamic and Minangkabau Studies, “Encyclopedia of Minangkabau,” (No Title), 2005.

Central Sumatra—served as a model of how traditionalists responded to modern educational ideas. By understanding the “internal structure” of this madrasah, one can see that traditionalists did not automatically reject forms of modernity, particularly in the field of education. Change occurred without a shift in values.³⁴

The idea to establish Madrasah Irsyadiyah arose after Khatib Ali attended an important meeting of Sarekat Islam leaders in Surabaya. During that visit, he took the opportunity to study several religious schools that were flourishing in Java. At that time, modern religious schools were beginning to emerge, one of which was a school managed by Jam’iyyah al-Irsyad, an educational organization led by modernist figures.³⁵ Khatib Ali was inspired by the educational system implemented at Madrasah al-Irsyad. This system reflected a renewal in the world of Islamic education that blended religious values with a modern approach. The experiences and insights he gained during his visit to Java motivated him to bring a similar idea to his hometown. Upon arriving in Padang, Khatib Ali put this idea into practice by founding a madrasah named Madrasah Irsyadiyah. The naming of this madrasah was most likely influenced by al-Irsyad, which had been the primary inspiration for the educational concept he adopted. Thus, Madrasah Irsyadiyah became one of the important milestones in the history of modern Islamic education in the region.

The Irsyadiyah Madrasah has demonstrated one form of acceptance of educational modernization by traditional Minangkabau ulama. The shift from the halaqah system to a classroom-based format serves as strong evidence of this. Furthermore, according to Efendi (2016: 108), teaching methods—such as the use of textbooks written by local ulama and the implementation of an evaluation system—contribute to the modern character of the Irsyadiyah Madrasah itself. However, does this acceptance of modern educational forms indicate a comprehensive shift away from the traditional aspects of Khatib Ali’s legacy? To answer this question, we must examine the essential characteristics of the Irsyadiyah madrasah itself. The Irsyadiyah madrasah, better known as the Irsyadiyah School, was first established in 1923 in Parak Gadang, Padang.³⁶ Shortly after its founding, the school expanded by opening branches in various regions. In its early years, the Irsyadiyah Madrasah already had 11 branches spread across several areas. The first branch was established in Matur on December 25, 1924. Subsequently, the second branch opened in Kampung Tarandam, Padang, on July 10, 1925. The third branch was also established in the same location. On December 1, 1925, the fifth branch of Madrasah Irsyadiyah was established in Muaro Labuh, specifically in Koto Baru. Then, on August 28, 1926, another branch was opened in Bintuhan.

A few months after the establishment of the branch in Bintuhan, a new branch was opened in Kepala Curup, Bengkulu, on January 25, 1927. Shortly thereafter, on June 28 of the same year, Madrasah Irsyadiyah opened a branch in Pasar Curup, also located in the Bengkulu region. The next expansion took place in Gunung Dempo. A few years later, in 1931, Irsyadiyah opened a branch in Muko-Muko, Bengkulu. Two years after that, specifically on March 15, 1933, a new branch was established in Tapan, Pesisir Selatan. The widespread presence of Madrasah Irsyadiyah demonstrated its important

³⁴ Harmonedi Harmonedi, “Islamic Education Within the Framework of Traditionalism: A Study of the Irsyadiyah Madrasah,” *Murabby: Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 1 (2018): 12–23.

³⁵ Darno Efendi, “Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali’s Ideas on Islamic Education,” *Bukittinggi: Postgraduate Program, IAIN Bukittinggi*, 2016.

³⁶ Pramono. (2024). The Irsyadiyah and Moral Messages for Alumni. *Minang Journal*.

role in the development of Islamic education at that time. Abdul Mun'im Khatib Ali, the son of Khatib Ali, played a role in the management of Madrasah Irsyadiyah and provided a number of important details regarding the madrasah's existence, including its branches. In his work titled **Sya'ir Irsyadiyah** (1936), he described the rapid growth of the Madrasah Irsyadiyah, which became one of the leading religious schools of its time.

Khatib Ali's success in advancing traditional religious education through a modern approach is evident in the existence of 11 branches of Madrasah Irsyadiyah. This serves as clear evidence of Khatib Ali's significant contribution to the field of Islamic education. This madrasah successfully blended traditional values with modern teaching methods, making it one of the leading educational institutions of its time. However, like other religious educational institutions that often revolve around the figure of a religious scholar, the survival of Madrasah Irsyadiyah was heavily dependent on Khatib Ali. His passing in 1936 marked a significant turning point for the madrasah. After his passing, the Irsyadiyah Madrasah gradually faded into obscurity, demonstrating just how crucial Khatib Ali's personal role was in maintaining the institution's stability and success.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali Padang was a key figure in the intellectual history of Minangkabau Islam who was able to bridge the divide between traditionalism (Kaum Tua) and modernism (Kaum Muda) through a moderate religious approach (wasathiyyah). His moderate views are reflected in three main aspects: his openness toward modernist-reformist organizations such as Syarikat Islam; his ability to balance tradition and renewal in addressing socio-religious issues; and his role in founding Madrasah Irsyadiyah as an educational innovation that blends traditional values with a modern learning system. These findings indicate that a moderate stance is not a passive position, but rather a dynamic synthesis that allows Minangkabau Islam to adapt to modernity without losing its traditional roots.

The implications of this study confirm that moderation can serve as a relevant model of religious practice for contemporary Islamic discourse in Indonesia, particularly in negotiating the relationship between traditional heritage and the spirit of renewal. This study also contributes to enriching the historiography of Indonesian Islamic thought by highlighting intellectual figures who have received little attention thus far but have had a significant influence in the fields of theology, education, and socio-religious movements.

The limitations of this study lie in the scarcity of primary sources directly written by Sheikh Khatib Muhammad Ali, as well as the fragmentary nature of archival data regarding his intellectual network. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct a comparative study between Sheikh Khatib's moderate thought and that of other Minangkabau reformist scholars, as well as to trace the influence of his legacy on the development of education and the Islamic movement in West Sumatra in the subsequent period.

REFERENCES

- Abdurrahman, Dudung. "Metode Penelitian Sejarah," 1999.
- Abidin, Mas' oed, and Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Minangkabau. "Ensiklopedi Minangkabau." (*No Title*), 2005.
- Amal, Ihlusul, Mohammad Romli Hidayatullah, and Maftuh Ajmain. "PERAN SAREKAT ISLAM DALAM PERGERAKAN NASIONAL INDONESIA." *Jurnal*

- Intelek Insan Cendikia* 2, no. 3 (2025): 5042–51.
- Ashadi, Andri. “Neomodernisme versus Neotradisionalisme; Fenomena Kaum Mudo Dan Kaum Tuo Pada Awal Abad 20 Di Ranah Minang.” *TAJDID: MAJALAH ILMU PENGETAHUAN DAN PEMIKIRAN KEAGAMAAN* 16, no. 1 (2013).
- Azra, Azyumardi. “Jaringan Ulama: Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII: Akar Pembaruan Islam Indonesia.” (*No Title*), 2007.
- . *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*. Prenada Media, 2019.
- . *Surau: Pendidikan Islam Tradisi Dalam Transisi Dan Modernisasi*. Kencana, 2017.
- Bokhari, Kamran A. “Moderate Islam, Progressive Muslims, Democracy, and Post-Islamism.” In *33rd Annual Conference of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) Held On, 24–26, 2004*.
- Burhanuddin, Adlan Sanur Tarihoran1 Nunu. “PEMIKIRAN TEOLOGI PEMBAHARUAN SJECH M. DJAMIL DJAMBEK DI RANAH MINANG,” n.d.
- Efendi, Darno. “Gagasan Pendidikan Islam Syekh Khatib Muhammad Ali.” *Bukittinggi: PPs IAIN Bukittinggi*, 2016.
- Effendi, Djohan. *Pembaruan Tanpa Membongkar Tradisi: Wacana Keagamaan Di Kalangan Generasi Muda NU Masa Kepemimpinan Gus Dur*. Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2010.
- Esposito, John L. “Moderate Muslims: A Mainstream of Modernists, Islamists, Conservatives, and Traditionalists.” *American Journal of Islam and Society* 22, no. 3 (2005): 11–20.
- Fanani, Muhammad Farih, and Siti Maimunah. “Gerakan Komunis Dalam Sarekat Islam Di Surakarta Tahun 1918-1926 M.” *Thaqafiyat: Jurnal Bahasa, Peradaban Dan Informasi Islam* 20, no. 1 (2021): 65–81.
- Hamdi, Ahmad Zainul, Moh Shofwan, and Agus Muhammad. “Peran Organisasi Islam Moderat Dalam Menangkal Ekstremisme Kekerasan: Studi Kasus Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah.” -, 2019.
- Hamdi, Saipul. “De-Kulturalisasi Islam Dan Konflik Sosial Dalam Dakwah Wahabi Di Indonesia.” *Jurnal Kawistara* 9, no. 2 (2019): 164–78.
- Hannan, Abd, and Zainuddin Syarif. “Konservatisme vs. Moderatisme: Kontestasi Pemikiran Keagamaan Kontemporer Di Kalangan Ormas Islam Lokal Di Madura, Indonesia.” *Fikrah; Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah Dan Studi Keagamaan* 10 (2022).
- Harmonedi, Harmonedi. “Pendidikan Islam Dalam Bingkai Tradisionalisme: Studi Terhadap Madrasah Irsyadiyah.” *Murabby: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 1 (2018): 12–23.
- Herrera, Linda. “Education, Islam, and Modernity: Beyond Westernization and Centralization.” *Comparative Education Review* 48, no. 3 (2004): 318–26.
- Hidayat, M. Riyan. “Jaringan Ulama’ Minangkabau Abad 19-20: Sebuah Analisis Historis Kritis.” *ISAH 2022 (International Seminar on Adab and Humanities) 2022* (2022): 185–98.

- Hilmy, Masdar. "Quo-Vadis Islam Moderat Indonesia? Menimbang Kembali Modernisme Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah." *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 36, no. 2 (2012).
- Iskandar, Irpan, and Dede Wahyu Firdaus. "Pemikiran Deliar Noer Mengenai Gerakan Islam Modern Indonesia 1900-1942." *Jazirah: Jurnal Peradaban Dan Kebudayaan* 1, no. 1 (2020): 17–40.
- Iskandar, Nuzul. "Kompromi Hukum Islam Dan Adat Dalam Kewarisan Pusaka Tinggi Di Minangkabau." *Jisrah: Jurnal Integrasi Ilmu Syariah* 3 (2022): 483–95.
- Jambi, U I N Sultan Thaha Saifuddin. "ANDEH SETIA: WOM IN SULIK AIA A," 2021.
- Kamal, Muhiddinur. "Pemberdayaan Dai Lokal Dari Dakwah Konvensional Menuju Dakwah Profesional Di Kabupaten Pasaman, Sumatera Barat." *Jurnal Dakwah* 16, no. 2 (2015): 241–56.
- Kersten, Karel Peter Leonard Gerard. *Mengislamkan Indonesia: Sejarah Peradaban Islam Di Nusantara*. Penerbit Baca, 2018.
- Khadimullah, KHAMZ Tuanku Kayo. *Menuju Tegaknya Syariat Islam Di Minangkabau: Peranan Ulama Sufi Dalam Pembaruan Adat*. Marja, 2024.
- Lathief, S. "Gerakan Kaum Tua Di Minangkabau [The Kaum Tua Movement in Minangkabau]." *Pascasarjana IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah*, 1988.
- Nofrianti, Mami, and Jamal Mirdad. "Wacana Religio-Intelektual Abad 20: Dinamika Gerakan Kaum Tuo Dan Kaum Mudo Di Minangkabau." *Khazanah: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam*, 2018.
- Solichin, Mohammad Muchlis. "Pendidikan Islam Moderat Dalam Bingkai Kearifan Lokal." *Jurnal MUDARRISUNA: Media Kajian Pendidikan Agama Islam* 8, no. 1 (2018): 174–94.
- Yulika, Dr Febri, and M Hum. *Epistemologi Minangkabau: Makna Pengetahuan Dalam Filsafat Adat Minangkabau*. ISI Padangpanjang, 2017.
- zulfaroni. "Syekh Khatib Muhammad Ali Al-Fadani (1863-1936)." blogger tokoh minangkabau, March 16, 2023.