

The Attasian Legacy in Indonesia: From Intellectual Network to Islamic Activism

L'héritage attasien en Indonésie : du réseau intellectuel à l'activisme islamique

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Introduction

The development of Islamic thought in post-New Order Indonesia has been characterized by dynamic and often intense interactions, shaped by the political openness that followed the collapse of authoritarian rule in 1998. This climate has profoundly influenced political, social, and religious discourses, enabling the emergence and contestation of diverse voices ranging from conservative to progressive. In the early 2000s, intellectual groups and movements such as Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL - Liberal Islam Network), Islamic Post-traditionalism, Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM - the Muhammadiyah Young Intellectuals Network), and the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilizations (INSISTS) actively contributed to public discourse on Islam. Among these, INSISTS and its associated networks, founded around 2003 by students of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas who studied at International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), based their vision on the concepts of de-Westernization and the Islamization of knowledge as articulated by al-Attas (Van Bruinessen 2013b: 45). INSISTS emerged as a direct response and antithesis to the

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secularism, liberalism, and pluralism promoted by the Liberal Islam Network and positioned itself as an ideological counter to other progressive Islamic groups like JIMM and Post-traditionalists (Ali 2005). However, over the past two decades, while progressive and liberal Islamic movements have gradually lost their influence in the public sphere, INSISTS and its networks have continued to exert considerable intellectual influence, attracting widespread attention and building a substantial audience.

Al-Attas was one of the most important thinkers in the Malay world. He is widely known for his ideas of Islamization of science and de-Westernization which have gained wide influence in Malaysia, Indonesia and beyond. In this regard, al-Attas' influence shaped both the tradition of thought and the followers or supporters of his ideas. M. Afifi al-Akiti, Hisham Hellyer, Adi Setia, Ahmad Murad Mohd Noor Merican, and Ramon Harvey refer to al-Attas' tradition of thought as Attasian (M. Afifi al-Akiti and Hisham Hellyer 2010; Adi Setia 2010, 2012; Ahmad Murad Merican 2021; Harvey 2023). Meanwhile, Peter Liliy, Aidulsyah and Mizuno refer to Attasian in the context of his followers or al-Attas' school (Lilly 2024; Aidulsyah and Mizuno 2020). Moreover, al-Attas' ideas have been further developed and institutionalized by his dedicated students and followers through what we refer to as "the Attasian Network," which serves as a foundation for both intellectual engagement and activism among his direct disciples as well as others inspired by his thought. Al-Attas' ideas were transmitted mainly from Malaysia to Indonesia by his students who studied directly with him during the ISTAC period and also the Raja Zarith Sofiah Centre for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science, and Civilization (RZS-CASIS) period. His students then introduced al-Attas' thoughts and books to other audiences who were interested in his thoughts. The Attasian network in Indonesia primarily targets higher education, reflecting al-Attas' emphasis on the critical role of universities in shaping knowledge and discourse (Al-Attas 1993: 152–167; 1980: 12; 1979: 38–47). This network appeals to highly educated, urban, middle-class Muslims and operates across various domains, including institutions of thought, universities, colleges, boarding schools, gender advocacy, study circles, bookstores, and social media activism. Activities include publications, seminars, workshops, discussions, translations, and intensive reading of al-Attas' works. Additionally, members actively engage in public discourse by writing in books, journals, newspapers, websites, and social media, striving to influence intellectual debates and societal narratives.

The Attasian network is not a centralized structure but rather a collection of independent groups connected by a shared al-mamater and a common interest in al-Attas' ideas. This network is unified by a vision to wage an intellectual struggle, known as *ghazwul fikri* (war of thought), against ideologies perceived as opposing the Islamic worldview (Al-Attas 1995: 1–39). This vision fosters

a reactionary mode of thinking characterized by actively responding to discourses emerging in academic and public spheres. Although al-Attas' ideas on the Islamic worldview, the Islamization of knowledge, and his critique of Westernization were originally articulated within philosophical and epistemological frameworks, their influence has expanded beyond intellectual discourse to shape socio-political and religious dynamics in the public sphere, particularly through the efforts of his students and followers in Indonesia.

Previous studies on the intellectualism of the Attasian network have primarily focused on INSISTS, the most prominent representative of al-Attas' students in Indonesia. Tiar Anwar Bachtiar analyzes INSISTS' opposition to liberal Islamic ideas between 2003 and 2012, identifying it as the most influential intellectual group countering the Islamic liberal movement and providing valuable insights into the contributions of the first generation of Attasians in Indonesia (Bachtiar 2017). However, this study aims to go beyond Bachtiar' work by examining the broader developments and trajectories of al-Attas' followers, including networks outside of INSISTS and their engagement in public activism, which Bachtiar largely overlooked. Robitul Firdaus explores INSISTS' central role in promoting al-Attas' concept of Islamization of knowledge in Indonesia (Firdaus 2013), while Imron Mustofa focuses on its methodological framework (Mustofa 2019). Martin van Bruinessen categorizes INSISTS as a conservative intellectual organization opposed to modernist, liberal, or progressive reinterpretations of Islamic teachings (Van Bruinessen 2013a: 16). However, his study does not address the broader Attasian networks' influence on public activism, a gap this study intends to fill (Van Bruinessen 2013b: 45).

The influence of Attasianism and its networks extends significantly into public activism in Indonesia, including anti-Shia activism, social media campaigns, 'Aksi Bela Islam' demonstrations, and gender-related activism. Al Makin highlights the role of Majelis Intelektual Ulama Muda Indonesia (MIUMI - Council for Young Intellectual Ulamas of Indonesia), an Attasian think tank, in promoting anti-Shia sentiment and facilitating discourse aimed at homogenizing Islam in Indonesia, particularly in cases of Shia persecution in Yogyakarta (Al Makin 2017; Zulkifli 2024). In the digital sphere, Imam Adhianto's study of the @IndonesiaTanpaJIL (ITJ - Indonesia without Liberal Islam Network) movement, part of the Attasian network, reveals how this social media-based movement represents political identity activism in the public domain (Ardhianto 2018). Akmal Sjafril, an ITJ leader, claims that the movement played a role in diminishing the influence of the Liberal Islam Network within the digital space (Akmal 2019). In the area of gender activism, Afifur Rochman Sya'rani argues that Aliansi Cinta Keluarga (AILA - The Family Love Alliance) actively promotes Islamic conservatism, particularly on issues of gender and sexuality, drawing ideological support from Attasianism (Sya'rani 2023). Furthermore,

Fachri Aidulsyah and Yuji Mizuno suggest that Attasianism plays a crucial role in the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia, as seen in the ‘Aksi Bela Islam’ campaign (Aidulsyah and Mizuno 2020).

Previous studies on al-Attas have often been limited to specific aspects, focusing either on its intellectualism or activism in an isolated, atomistic manner. This study aims to offer a more holistic and comprehensive understanding by investigating al-Attas’ thought and examining how his ideas have shaped the development of his students and his followers in Indonesia. It further explores the genealogy, networks, and contemporary trajectories of these networks within both intellectual and activist domains. Using textual and discourse analysis, this study analyzes al-Attas’ primary works as foundational sources, followed by examining the writings of his students and followers who share Attasian aspirations. We argue that al-Attas’ concepts of de-Westernization and the Islamization of knowledge have influenced the formation of the Attasian network in Indonesia. While al-Attas’ ideas initially emerged within intellectual circles, they were later transformed by his proponents into activism, enabling the Attasian network to reach a wider audience. Its ability to sustain networks and maintain relevance in both intellectual and activist spheres underscores its significance in contemporary Indonesia.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Islamization, and the Idea of Reform

The discussion about the Attasian network in Indonesia is closely linked to the ideas of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, a prominent intellectual whose thought has significantly influenced discourse in Southeast Asia and beyond. Al-Attas is widely recognized for his ideas about the Islamization of knowledge and his critique of secularism. He defines Islamization as:

The liberation of man first from magical, mythological, animistic, national—cultural tradition opposed to Islam, and then from secular control over his reason and his language. The man of Islam is he whose reason and language are no longer controlled by magic, mythology, animism, his own national and cultural traditions opposed to Islam, and secularism. He is liberated from both the magical and the secular world views. Islamization is a process not so much of evolution as that of devolution to original nature; man as spirit is already perfect, but man as such when actualized as physical being is subject to forgetfulness and ignorance amid injustice to himself and hence is not necessarily perfect... Thus in the individual, personal, existential sense Islamization refers to what is described above in which the Holy Prophet represents the highest and most perfect Example; in the collective, social and historical sense Islamization refers to the Community’s striving towards realization of the moral and ethical quality of social perfection achieved during the age of time Holy Prophet (may God bless and give him Peace!) who created it under Divine Guidance (al-Attas 1993: 44–45).

Based on the paragraph above, three key aspects define the concept of Islamization: (1) It involves liberation from both “traditional” beliefs such as magic, mythology, and animism, as well as “modern” ideologies like

secularism; (2) It signifies a process of returning to the true nature of humanity; (3) It encompasses moral and ethical objectives aimed at achieving social perfection. For al-Attas, the Islamization of knowledge unfolds in two stages: first, the isolation of Western concepts and understandings, and second, the reorientation of these concepts with essential Islamic principles (ibid.: 162–163). Thus, the process of de-Westernization is inseparable from the discourse of Islamization.

Furthermore, to understand al-Attas' thoughts and his position within the intellectual landscape, it is crucial to examine his critiques of secularism and its relationship with modernist, reformist, traditionalist, and secularist Muslim groups. Al-Attas criticized both modernist and traditionalist camps, arguing that both are grounded in weak intellectual authority, with scholars who wrongly equate all forms of knowledge. Modernists, according to al-Attas, draw from Western sources as well as less authoritative religious scholars, while traditionalists often rely on a mix of modernist ideas and the teachings of lesser ulamas. In both cases, the foundation of knowledge is deemed inadequate (ibid.: 115–116). As someone rooted in philosophical-theoretical foundations, al-Attas condemned opinions from both modernists and traditionalists who blamed Sufism for the decline of Muslim society or sought to marginalize its spiritual dimension. According to him, both groups indirectly contribute to the despiritualization of Islam, which, in turn, cultivates secularism (ibid.: 121). The third category, secular intellectuals, draws inspiration from the West (ibid.: 124). Al-Attas argued that this group lacks both the intellectual and spiritual capacities to fully comprehend Islamic scholarship and epistemology. Instead, these intellectuals place greater trust in Western thought than in the works of Muslim scholars. The danger, as al-Attas saw it, was that they remained unaware of the threats posed by secularism, which forms the basis of Western scientific conceptions and promotes immorality (ibid.: 125). Thus, the core concern in al-Attas' critique of modernists, traditionalists, and secularists is the source and legitimacy of knowledge authority.

Al-Attas contended that the primary issue with secularism lies not in its application within the state or government, but within its philosophical foundation. He firmly argued that debates about whether a state should be secular or theocratic are irrelevant, as Islam does not affirm a distinction between the sacred and the profane. Nonetheless, he questioned the bias introduced by secularism in political and governmental structures, highlighting how secularism contributes to political desacralization and despiritualization. For al-Attas, the central challenge faced by Muslims lies within the intellectual realm, which serves as the foundation for “positive resistance” through political means (ibid.: xv–xvi).

The ambiguity of al-Attas' position between intellectual and political pursuit seems to invite multiple interpretations especially regarding the political struggle for Islamism's identity and the potential realization of

the Islamic State. According to Syed Farid Alatas, al-Attas' concern lies in envisaging a religion-based society, not civil society (Alatas 2009: 173). Moreover, Muhammad Khalid Masud (Masud 2005: 382) and Farish A. Noor (2009; 2015: 211) referred to al-Attas as Islamist, while Bassam Tibi called al-Attas' project of Islamization of knowledge, de-Westernization and de-secularization of knowledge a fundamentalist political project (Tibi 1995: 7). Tibi argued that the Islamization of knowledge through de-Westernization and the critique of modernity faces a dilemma: on the one hand, the proponents adopt modern technological advancements, while on the other hand, they reject the foundational philosophical ideas underpinning these developments. Additionally, de-Westernization could ultimately lead to cultural self-isolation, hindering development and engagement with the world (ibid.: 18). In contrast, Staath (2002: 227) contended that al-Attas and his institution, ISTAC, should not be categorized as expressions of fundamentalism in Malaysia. Staath emphasized that ISTAC was not solely a state-driven institution in Malaysia, and he criticized Western, Eurocentric views that underestimated the philosophical contributions of local scholars like al-Attas.

Abaza also argued that Bassam Tibi's classification of al-Attas as a fundamentalist is problematic, as it fails to take into account the local political context of Malaysia, particularly in the aftermath of the 1969 ethnic riots between the Chinese and Muslim communities and the subsequent state-driven Islamization policies (Abaza 2013: 89). One of the key figures behind this Islamization process was Anwar Ibrahim, a former student of al-Attas, who later played an important role in securing financial and political support for his teacher's ambitious project, the establishment of ISTAC, during his tenure as Deputy Prime Minister. Tibi's analysis, by overlooking these domestic political dynamics, risks flattening the complexity of al-Attas' position and the relationship between intellectual and political actors in Malaysia. Furthermore, Tibi's characterization does not sufficiently acknowledge the distinction between al-Attas and figures such as Nik Abdul Aziz of Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS - Malaysian Islamic Party). While Nik Aziz and PAS positioned themselves as critics of Mahathir Mohamad's government, al-Attas, through his close ties with Anwar Ibrahim, shared a broader national vision, especially aspects of state-led Islamization. This difference highlights al-Attas' distance from Islamist party politics, despite the fact that his intellectual discourses on Islamization and knowledge have often been appropriated by PAS and other Islamist groups (Abaza 2013: 224). It is therefore important to situate al-Attas not as a fundamentalist in the sense implied by Tibi, but as an intellectual figure whose work operated within and was shaped by the broader political configurations of Malaysian modernity.

In other words, the primary focus of al-Attas' Islamization lies in the epistemic domain, rather than in *real-politik*, although he acknowledged the

influence of intellectual activity on the political realm. Al-Attas envisioned higher education, particularly at the university level, as the institution through which his ideas would be realized. His educational model assumed that reform and *ta'dib* would be implemented hierarchically, starting at the “higher levels” of education and gradually affecting lower levels. For al-Attas, the true aim of education was not simply to cultivate good citizens, but to shape *al-insan al-kulhy* (The Universal Man) (Al-Attas 1993: 154). Al-Attas sought to realize this vision through the establishment of ISTAC, a graduate-level institution dedicated to the Islamization of knowledge.

The Dawn of al-Attas: ISTAC and RZS-CASIS

In order to understand the dynamics of the intellectual network of al-Attas in Indonesia, it is important to understand the history of the context of the higher education institution founded by al-Attas in Malaysia, namely the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), because there was a rise and fall era of ISTAC. Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud argues that ISTAC was in its heyday under al-Attas from 1 December 1987 to 13 October 2002. Founded on December 1, 1987, ISTAC was initially known as the “Institut Pemikiran dan Tamadun Islam” (IPTI) or the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (IIITC), and was located within one of the offices of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). However, due to its proximity to another institute involved in the Islamization of knowledge, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), frequent administrative errors and confusion in correspondence made it difficult to distinguish between IIITC and IIIT. As a result, IIITC later changed its name to ISTAC. ISTAC’s inaugural lecture took place on May 15, 1991, at its office near IIUM, and by October 4, 1991, the lecture series was moved to its dedicated campus in Damansara. In addition to formal lectures, al-Attas initiated the Saturday Night Lectures, a weekly lecture series that began on February 29, 1992. This lecture series expanded beyond students to include the general public (Ismunanto 2016).

Al-Attas’ relationship with ISTAC officially ended in 2002 when his contract as director of ISTAC was not renewed by IIUM authorities. The reasons for this termination remain unclear, though Mahmood Zuhdi identifies three primary factors: ISTAC’s perceived neglect of the study of the Malay region in favor of a focus on the Middle East and Western thought; the institution’s significant financial expenditures, which caused financial losses for the university; ISTAC’s failure to meet its mission of producing intellectuals and scholars (Dalia Ismail, n.d.). Following the takeover, ISTAC underwent several name changes, including the Ibn Khaldun International Institute of Advanced Research (ISLAH) in 2015, and the International Institute of Islamic Civilization & Malay World in 2017 (Hafiz Zakariya and

Yadi 2017). Currently, ISTAC has reverted to its original name, although it is no longer associated with al-Attas' ideology or his disciples.¹

After the ISTAC period, al-Attas's intellectual legacy found a new home with the establishment of the Center for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science, and Civilization (CASIS) on February 1, 2011, at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Kuala Lumpur campus. However, al-Attas did not serve as its director; instead, his leading disciple, Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, took on the role. CASIS was founded to continue al-Attas's mission of Islamizing knowledge and advancing his philosophical worldview. Alongside Wan Daud, the institution was co-founded by al-Attas's other students, including Muhammad Zainiy Uthman and Khalif Mu'ammarr.² Several former ISTAC students also joined CASIS as lecturers, such as Wan Suhaimi Wan Abdullah, Syamsuddin Arif, and Wan Azhar Wan Ahmad. On June 15, 2019, CASIS was officially renamed Raja Zarith Sofiah Center for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science, and Civilization (RZS-CASIS) in honor of Queen Zarith Sofiah of Malaysia, who has been a key supporter of its development.³

Although al-Attas did not formally direct RZS-CASIS, his ideology and legacy are strongly present within the vision of the institution, especially the project of Islamization of knowledge (Saat 2020: 3–8). Like ISTAC, RZS-CASIS not only conducts classroom teaching, but also launches programs that try to reach professionals and wider communities. RZS-CASIS opened an audit class program allowing students to follow non-formal lectures which are attended by professionals from outside the field of Islamic thought. ISTAC's Saturday Night Lecture is a weekly lecture series of RZS-CASIS, led by Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, who holds the Sayyid Muhammad Naquib al-Attas Chair of Islamic Thought at the institution, and is continued by other students of al-Attas. Moreover, Worldview of Islam Series (WISE) offers a summer school program that is not only attended by Malaysian citizens, but also participants from abroad who are interested in al-Attas' ideas.

Currently, RZS-CASIS has become the major destination for Indonesian students interested in al-Attas' thought. The Attasian network in Indonesia also frequently participates in programs organized by RZS-CASIS, which helps sustain strong intellectual and institutional ties between Attasian circles in Indonesia and Malaysia. Beyond RZS-CASIS, the dissemination of al-Attas ideas in Malaysia is supported by other institutions managed by direct students or ideological students such as Ta'dib Institute, Himpunan Keilmuan Muslim (HAKIM), Akademi Jawi Malaysia (AJM), Pertubuhan Pendidikan Futuwwah (FUTUWWAH), Circle of Ta'dib and Adab (CITA). The influence

1. ISTAC-IIUM, "Overview," Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://institute.iium.edu.my/istac/overview/>>.

2. RZS-CASIS "About," Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://humanities.utm.my/casis/>>.

3. RZS-CASIS "About," Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://humanities.utm.my/casis/>>.

of al-Attas' thought extends beyond Malaysia and Southeast Asia, to United States through Hamza Yusuf, an American-Muslim scholar (Spannaus & Razavian 2019: 42). This influence is reflected in the Zaytuna College, an institution founded by Yusuf, which highlights al-Attas' concept of *adab* as a core value in education, as showcased by the institution's website (ibid.: 52). However, the significant influence of al-Attas lies in Indonesia, where it has been disseminated through his direct students and those who are interested in al-Attas' thought.

Attasian Network in Indonesia: Origin and Transformation

This section highlights the current developments of the Attasian network, which can be categorized into two generations. The first generation, primarily associated with the ISTAC period, had a direct teacher-student relationship with al-Attas, as seen in the founders of Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilizations (INSISTS). The second generation consists of students of al-Attas' disciples, both in Indonesia and Malaysia, particularly during the RZS-CASIS period. INSISTS became the main representative of al-Attas and its first established network in Indonesia. While not all of its founders were direct disciples of al-Attas, they shared a strong commitment to his ideas. However, al-Attas' direct students played a crucial role in shaping the movement, as INSISTS contributed to the emergence of other Attasian networks.

The Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilizations (INSISTS) was established on March 4, 2003 in Segambut Village, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, by a group of students and lecturers of Indonesian origin of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) and the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Currently, the institute is headquartered in Kalibata, South Jakarta. The founding figures of INSISTS include Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, Adian Husaini, Adnin Armas, Anis Malik Toha, Syamsuddin Arif, Ugi Suharto, and Nirwan Syafrin Manurung.⁴ In addition, other important individuals such as Henri Salahudin and Muhammad Arifin Ismail contributed significantly to the development and continuity of the organization. The educational and organizational backgrounds of the founders demonstrate a strong connection to modernist Islamic traditions in Indonesia (Bachtiar 2017). Several key figures—Zarkasyi, Arif, and Armas—received their early religious training at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, the same institution that trained prominent intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid. Others, such as Husaini, Suharto, Arif, and Armas, were affiliated with the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, DDII). Nirwan Syafrin Manurung, by contrast, was an alumnus of Madrasah

4. INSISTS, "Latar Belakang," Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://insists.id/latar-belakang/>>.

Mu'allimin al-Washliyah in Medan. In 2005, Husaini and Armas also became active as administrators within Muhammadiyah, thereby extending their modernist affiliations into one of Indonesia's largest socio-religious organizations. In contrast, Anis Malik Toha represented a traditionalist background, having completed his religious education at the Mathali'ul Falah Islamic College in Pati, Central Java. Although their trajectories differed, the founders shared a common intellectual platform in Malaysia, either as undergraduate, postgraduate, or doctoral students, or as lecturers at IIUM. ISTAC, though administratively autonomous, was institutionally part of IIUM and provided the central meeting ground for many of them. Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi studied at ISTAC after completing his earlier degrees at the University of Punjab and the University of Birmingham. Adian Husaini pursued his doctorate at ISTAC, following his earlier studies at Bogor Agricultural University and Jayabaya University. Ugi Suharto likewise completed his doctorate at ISTAC, having earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in economics at IIUM. Syamsuddin Arif earned both his master's and doctoral degrees at ISTAC, alongside an additional master's degree at IIUM. Adnin Armas completed his undergraduate studies at IIUM and his master's degree at ISTAC. Nirwan Syafrin Manurung pursued his master's and undergraduate studies at IIUM before earning a doctorate at ISTAC. Anis Malik Toha, in contrast, was a lecturer at IIUM but not a direct student of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas at ISTAC. Moreover, the second generation of Attasians comes from more diverse educational and religious backgrounds.

Currently, al-Attas has reached a broad audience, with nearly all of his affiliates engaged in the fields of education and Islamic thought, including think tanks, universities, Islamic boarding schools, gender initiatives, social media activism, and study circles. One of the important networks of al-Attas operates within the realm of higher education. As a key figure in INSISTS, Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi made the Universitas Darussalam (UNIDA), Ponorogo, as the leading university for mainstreaming and disseminating al-Attas' ideas on the Islamization of knowledge, de-Westernization with Syamsuddin Arif, Henri Sholahuddin and others. Several study centers founded to support this vision include the Directorate of Islamization of Knowledge, the Center for Occidental Studies (CIOS), and the Program Kaderisasi Ulama (PKU - Ulama Regeneration Program). PKU is an intensive six-month program focused on strengthening the intellectual foundations of the future ulamas. The program attracts the attention of scholars from diverse backgrounds and intellectual disciplines who are interested in issues of Islamic thought, and aims to produce "an intellectual ulama." By the end of the program, participants are required to undertake a campus tour where they present research related to issues of thought such as anti-liberalism, secularism and pluralism.

Moreover, Adian Husaini played an important role in disseminating al-Attas' ideas by initiating the establishment of At-Taqwa Islamic Boarding

School in 2015. At-Taqwa offers a unique model within Indonesia's *pesantren* landscape, which is typically categorized into traditional, modern, and Quran-memorization-based boarding schools. Unlike these models, At-Taqwa emphasizes the study of Islamic thought, offering programs from junior and senior high school to college levels. It introduced initiatives such as the Shoul-Lin Al-Islami program, the Islamic Boarding School for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilization (PRISITAC), and At-Taqwa College Islamic Boarding School (ATQO).⁵ Husaini aimed to adapt al-Attas' educational philosophy to lower levels of education, from junior high school to college. In this effort, Husaini was supported by other Attasians, including Muhammad Ardiansyah (UIKA), who serves as the head of At-Taqwa Islamic Boarding School, and Khayrurrijal (RZS-CASIS). Additionally, Husaini heads the doctoral program in Islamic Religious Education at Ibn Khaldun University (UIKA), Bogor, where he and his colleague Nirwan Syafrin Manurung teach al-Attas' ideas to postgraduate students.

Like INSISTS, other Attasian networks include institutes of thought such as Institute Pemikiran dan Peradaban Islam (InPas – Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization)⁶ based in Surabaya and Institut Pemikiran Islam dan Pembangunan Insan (PIMPIN), in Bandung.⁷ InPas is led by UNIDA graduates such as Kholili Hasib and Bahrul Ulum. Meanwhile, PIMPIN was organized by Wendi Zarman (UIKA) and Usep Mohamad Ishaq (RZS-CASIS). In Padang there is Wacana Fikir Islam (WAFI - Islamic Thought Discourse)⁸ initiated by Metsra Wirman (RZS-CASIS) and in Medan Islamic Thought and Information for Da'wah (ISTAID) led by Muhammad Arifin Ismail.⁹ Furthermore, another important network of Attasianism is on the gender front. Although gender issues are not a direct concern of al-Attas and hardly be found in his works, the Attasian network seeks to challenge the mainstreaming and hegemony of feminist discourse in Islam based on al-Attas notion of Islamic worldview and de-Westernization. Two leading figures in

5. Pondok Pesantren At-Taqwa Depok, "Profile" Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://attaqwa.id>>.

6. InPAS Indonesia [@inpas.indonesia]. (n.d). [Instagram Profile]. Instagram. Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://www.instagram.com/inpas.indonesia/?hl=id>>.

7. Institut Pemikiran Islam dan Pembangunan Insan [@pimpin_bdg]. (n.d). [Instagram Profile]. Instagram. Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <https://www.instagram.com/pimpin_bdg/>.

8. Wacana Fikir Islam [@wafipadang]. (n.d). [Instagram Profile]. Instagram. Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://www.instagram.com/wafipadang/?hl=id>>.

9. ISTAID [@istaidcenter]. (n.d). [Instagram Profile]. Instagram. Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://www.instagram.com/istaidcenter/>>.

this area are Henri Shalahuddin and Dinar Dewi Kania, (UIKA), respectively managing editor at the Center for Gender Studies (CGS)¹⁰ and head of research and law at AILA.¹¹

Another significant Attasian network operates within social media activism, particularly through @IndonesiatanpaJIL,¹² led by Akmal Sjafril (UIKA), who also heads Sekolah Pemikiran Islam (SPI - School of Islamic Thought) with branches in Yogyakarta, Jakarta, Tangerang, and Padang. Sjafril is also a trustee of the Center for Ta'dib and Islamization of Knowledge (CADIK), a study group offering programs on Islamic thought, the Islamization of knowledge, and al-Attas' worldview, including audit classes on his works.¹³ In Yogyakarta, a major student hub in Indonesia, PKU-UNIDA alumni established the Bentala Tamaddun Nusantara Foundation in 2019, led by Anton Ismunanto, Ayub, Aldy Pradhana, and others, with Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi as its supervisor. Bentala serves as an Islamic studies institution with a semi-*pesantren* program for university students, attracting those interested in Islamic thought and al-Attas' concept of worldview.¹⁴

It is important to distinguish Attasian perspectives on Islamization from those of other networks such as Hizbut Tahrir, the Salafi movement, and the Tarbiyah network. In contrast to Salafi orientations, which reject philosophical speculation and Sufism, Attasian thought is rooted in philosophical analysis and the integration of mystical traditions within Islam—elements that Salafis have consistently criticized. Meanwhile, al-Attas aimed to revitalize and rationalize philosophical mysticism in the Malay world, a tradition previously marginalized by modernist and revivalist discourses (al-Attas 1963). As noted by Bachtiar, the Attasian movement sought to establish itself on an intellectual foundation, avoiding theological strategies such as *takfīr* and accusations of apostasy. This orientation allowed for intersections with secular intellectuals in the realm of ideas, rather than in theological polemics. Yet, this intellectualist posture has been questioned, particularly in light of Attasian support for the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI - Indonesian Ulama Council) fatwas against secularism, pluralism, and liberalism, as well as its opposition to Shi'a communities—stances that are heavily infused with theological judgments.

10. The Center for Gender Studies, "Profil the Center for Gender Studies (CGS)," Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://thisisgender.com/about-us/>>.

11. AILA Indonesia [@ailaindonesia]. (n.d). [Instagram Profile]. Instagram. Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://www.instagram.com/ailaindonesia/>>.

12. IndonesiaTanpaJIL [@tanpajil]. (n.d). [Instagram Profile]. Instagram. Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://www.instagram.com/tanpajil/>>.

13. CADIK Indonesia [@cadikindonesia]. (n.d). [Instagram Profile]. Instagram. Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://www.instagram.com/cadikindonesia/>>.

14. Bentala Tamaddun Nusantara, "Sejarah," Retrieved July 4, 2024, from <<https://bentala.or.id>>.

Also, unlike Hizbut Tahrir, the establishment of a caliphate is not the primary objective of Attasian Islamization. Initially developed within the academic and intellectual sphere, Attasian narratives of Islamization have, however, expanded into broader arenas, including activism. The trajectory of Husaini illustrates this complexity: a former Hizbut Tahrir activist who later distanced himself from the movement (Arifin 2005). Husaini appears to have appropriated elements of Attasian thought while retaining aspects of his earlier ideological commitments. Finally, Attasian ideology does not exhibit the same organizational intensity as the Tarbiyah movement, which has relied upon strong membership structures to sustain its political influence. Instead, the Attasian approach remains more restrained, emphasizing intellectual engagement over mass mobilization, and thus differs markedly from the strategies employed by both Tarbiyah and other transnational Islamist movements.

Attasian Network and Intellectualism

The global network of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals in the modern era is closely tied to broader intellectual trends, including religious renewal, modernity, and diverse ideological currents. While intellectual influences from the Middle East and the West have traditionally dominated the discourse in Indonesia (Azra 2004; Kersten 2016; 2012), exchanges with neighbouring Southeast Asian countries are often overlooked or deemed marginal. However, the intellectual connection between Malaysia and Indonesia—particularly through Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and the Attasian network—deserves greater recognition. Al-Attas' thought has had a profound and lasting impact in Indonesia, with his network managing to sustain and expand more effectively and cohesively than many other intellectual movements. The strength of this network is rooted in the direct teacher-student relationships it fosters, as well as the geographical and cultural proximity between the two countries, which has facilitated ongoing intellectual exchanges and collaborations.

The followers of al-Attas argue that Islamic higher education in Indonesia such as Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN – State Islamic University), Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN - State Islamic Institute), and Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (STAIN - State Islamic College) became a fertile ground for the spread of liberal Islamic thought, a process initiated by figures like Mukti Ali and Harun Nasution who reformed the curriculum. Husaini has criticized UIN for being infiltrated by what he calls the “liberal virus” and hegemonized by the Western version of religious studies that emphasizes historicity and liberal worldview to study Islam (Husaini 2006: 125; 2009). Meanwhile, the Attasian network hardly found a place within UIN, especially after one of al-Attas' students accused UIN of introducing Western and controversial ideas.

Attasian thinkers have been particularly critical of the intellectual direction taken by UIN in Indonesia, which they accuse of uncritically accommodating Western ideas, especially those rooted in Orientalist scholarship. One of the most

contested issues in this regard is the application of hermeneutics to the study of the Qur'an. For the Attasians, hermeneutics is a theory historically developed in the context of Biblical studies and therefore unsuitable for analyzing the Qur'an as *kalam ilahi* (divine speech) (Armas 2005). They argue that Islamic scholarship possesses its own rich and well-established methodologies for interpreting the Qur'an, and that adopting hermeneutics risks subordinating Islamic epistemology to foreign intellectual traditions. The Attasians are sharply opposed to the fact that hermeneutics has become a compulsory subject in several UIN campuses such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Bandung (Husaini & al-Baghdadi 2007: 1–3; Shalahuddin 2007: 86, 94, 99). They view the enthusiasm for hermeneutics among certain UIN scholars as symptomatic of an uncritical embrace of Western epistemologies supported by the fact that the hermeneutics proponents were graduated from Western Universities. The Attasian critique has identified UIN scholars such as Amin Abdullah, Yusuf Rahman, Fakhruddin Faiz, Taufik Adnan Amal, and Syamsu Rizal as leading proponents of hermeneutical approaches. In turn, these scholars have responded strongly. Yusuf Rahman, a lecturer at UIN Jakarta and a proponent of hermeneutics, dismissed the Attasian position as apologetic (Rahman 2019a: 60), arguing that it is driven by theological defensiveness rather than academic rigor (Rahman 2019b: 8). He contends that Attasian critics generalize too quickly and fail to recognize the diversity and dynamism of hermeneutical traditions in the West, which cannot be reduced to a single, monolithic discourse. Similarly, Fakhruddin Faiz has characterized the Attasian group as “anti-hermeneutics,” arguing that while hermeneutics, like any intellectual discipline, must be approached critically, outright rejection overlooks its potential contributions to contemporary Qur'anic studies (Faiz and Usman 2019: 43–45). Beyond hermeneutics, the Attasian critique also extends to other domains of intellectual discourse at UIN, particularly debates on religious pluralism and gender equality. From the Attasian perspective, UIN has become a site where ideas of Western liberalism and pluralism are legitimized, including notions such as the permissibility of interfaith marriage and the adoption of feminist discourses into Islamic thought. These developments are seen as symptomatic of what they regard as an epistemological crisis in modern Muslim scholarship—an overreliance on Western intellectual frameworks at the expense of Islam's own intellectual heritage.

Moreover, despite identifying as an Islamic university, UIN does not favour Islamization of Knowledge as the intellectual vision. Even though UIN Yogyakarta proposes the paradigm of ‘integration and interconnection’ to integrate Islamic and modern science as conceptualized by Amin Abdullah (Abdullah 2007), the Attasian network views this paradigm as unqualified. They argue that the process of Islamization necessitates the complete removal of the Western worldview, a task that cannot be accomplished simply by integrating Islamic and Western sciences. Thus, it is understandable why

Attasianism has built its network in private universities such as UNIDA and UIKA which can accommodate the vision of Islamization of knowledge, de-Westernization and anti-liberal ideas.

Disciples of al-Attas have established off-campus networks and institutions which have spread across various regions, attracting a wide audience from universities and beyond. These networks present the issues of de-Westernization and the Islamization of knowledge as compelling topics for university students and the broader public. The Attasian networks organize programs such as book reviews, seminars, workshops and publications. In the book review program, the works of the teacher, al-Attas, became the main reading material and are read systematically. Here, there is a unique trend in which al-Attas' works are read word-by-word and in a hierarchical order from the fundamental to the advanced level which is reflecting the traditional model of study of classical prominent scholars. Al-Attas' books on Islam, education and de-Westernization: '*Risalah untuk Kaum Muslimin*,' '*The Concept of Education in Islam*,' '*Islam: The Concept Of Religion And The Foundation of Ethics And Morality*,' and '*Islam & Secularism*' are frequently studied. Al-Attas' philosophical works such as '*Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*' are reserved for advanced students due the complexity of the text and ideas. This approach reflects Attasian's understanding of its diverse audience, often characterized by limited knowledge of philosophy. In addition, they also conducted *rihlah 'ilmiyya* or intellectual journey from Indonesia to Malaysia to visit RZS-CASIS and attend public lectures, seminars or conferences. Likewise, Attasian Malaysia visited the Indonesian networks to attend seminars and lectures. These programs maintain and strengthen the relationship between Attasian networks in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Moreover, the influence of al-Attas on the de-Westernization and Islamization of knowledge in Indonesia must also be placed within the broader schools of knowledge Islamization such as those propagated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi. Unlike al-Attas, who realized his ideas through university which establish a direct relationship between teachers and students, al-Faruqi did not establish an educational institution but a transnational organization engaged in education through the institution founded by him, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), with two other colleagues, Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman and Taha Jabir Al-Alwani. Initially, IIIT was an organization engaged in scholarship and research driven by Islamization of knowledge as the grand project based in Herndon, USA. IIIT has many branches around the world, including Malaysia with IIUM. IIIT also collaborates with several universities in Indonesia by organizing various activities such as seminars or collaborations. However, a paradigm shift occurred during the last decades within IIIT, from the project of Islamization of knowledge towards Islamic methodology in America. If in the early years al-Faruqi dominated IIIT with the Islamization of knowledge

through a *tawhidic* approach, then al-Alwani dominated the subsequent period through the methodology of *ijtihad* of jurisprudence through the discourse of *maqasid al-shari'a* in responding to contemporary Islam. In addition, IIIT focuses more on serving the Muslim community in America (Spannaus 2019). Therefore, the current influence of al-Attas in the discourse of Islamization of knowledge is stronger than IIIT. Another proponent of Islamic Science is Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Nasr 1976). However, in Indonesia his idea of perennialism has been more popularly recognized than the Islamic Science concept. Also, although Nasr is an important intellectual in Islamic thought, he does not have direct students in Indonesia. His thoughts disseminated in Indonesia through the translation of his works. Nasr's perennialism has been embraced by liberal fronts such as Komaruddin Hidayat to support religious pluralism, a stance that contrasts with Attasian's anti-pluralism position (Widiyanto 2016).

Attasian network continues to shape intellectual discourse by engaging in debates on *Islam Nusantara* and religious moderation, both of which Attasian proponents view as extensions of liberal Islam. They criticize *Islam Nusantara* for reducing Islam's universality by tying it to a regional identity and argue that nativizing Islam risks elevating pre-Islamic cultural values over core Islamic principles (*usul*) (Sjafril, n.d.). Similarly, they reject the government's promotion of religious moderation (2019–2024), seeing it as aligned with liberal Islam through its emphasis on democratic values such as human rights, gender equality, and pluralism (Burhani 2018). They argue that terms like *fundamentalist Islam* and *political Islam* are used to delegitimize those who oppose this agenda, fostering division within the *ummah*. Furthermore, they view the global push for moderate Islam as a geopolitical strategy by Western powers to weaken Muslim religious convictions and create internal fragmentation (Arif 2022).

Attasian Network and Public Activism

In addition to its intellectual movement, Attasians are also engaged in mass movements and public activism (Bachtiar 2017: 234). For its proponents, intellectualism must be complemented by activism and collective mobilization. This marks a shift from al-Attas' focus on educational and intellectual struggles—particularly on individual cultivation—toward a broader emphasis on mass movements. In essence, the Attasian network represents a transformation of al-Attas's individual-centered concerns into a movement that embraces mass mobilization and political identity. While al-Attas viewed political and mass movements as subordinate to intellectual pursuits, his students and followers in Indonesia consider them as equally significant. His ideas on Islamization and de-Westernization serve as primary references, influencing not only philosophical discourse but also practical activism. However, it is important to note that Attasians and public activism are not entirely synonymous. Only

some Attasians engage in activism, as the network remains autonomous and decentralized, bound primarily by shared intellectual interests.

The socio-political and religious context in Indonesia influences the strategies and movements of Attasians. In contrast to Attasian network in Malaysia which has a close relationship with the government and aligns with the Islamic identity and Malay-ness (Mohd Faizal Musa 2021), Attasians in Indonesia operate distanced from government because the Indonesian government favors the idea of an Islamic narrative that is in line with democracy, as well as progressive and liberal Islamic values. Ideas and influences of Attasians in Malaysia can be translated in a top-down approach, while in Indonesia Attasians move from the bottom-up to address their aspirations to the government. The public activism championed by Attasians is outside the determination of political parties, although in some ways both have the same aspirations. Public activism within Attasianism is pursued through individual participation, formal networks such as ITJ, and the establishment of organizations such as MIUMI. The influence of Attasianism in organizing Islamization and de-Westernization activism in the public sphere has been evident in various occasions such as the MUI fatwa 2005, the persecution of Shia in Yogyakarta in 2013, Aksi Bela Islam rally in 2016, and the rejection of the Rancangan Undang-Undang Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual (RUU-PKS - Draft Law on the Elimination of Sexual Violence).

Attasian Network and MUI Fatwa on Pluralism, Liberalism dan Secularism

In 2005, MUI issued a fatwa against Pluralism, liberalism and secularism which are considered contrary to the teachings of Islam. The call for the fatwa emerged from various religious organizations concerned about the growing influence of liberal Islam in society. The counter-discourse launched by INSISTS and other anti-liberal Islam groups was perceived as insufficient to diminish the influence of the idea. As a result, a more strategic approach in form of fatwa was deemed necessary. This issue was discussed at the Kongres Umat Islam Indonesia (KUII - Indonesian Muslim Congress) IV in 2005 which resulted in the MUI for a fatwa against Liberal Islamic thought (Ichwan 2013: 81–82). Although the fatwa did not directly target JIL, it was implicitly aimed at this group for their vocal advocacy of these three ideas. The fatwa also targeted individuals affiliated with liberal Islam, and received opposition from various parties such as Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, Azyumardi Azra, Abdurrahman Wahid etc., who questioned the MUI's understanding of these concepts and their motivations.

To strengthen MUI's position in the midst of criticism against the fatwa by various parties, Adian Husaini published a book, two months after the fatwa, entitled *Pluralisme Agama: Haram* (Husaini 2005). Husaini supported the fatwa's stance, asserting that it was firm and non-controversial. In this way,

INSISTS indirectly contributed to the adoption of the MUI fatwa (Bachtiar 2017: 155). The fatwa was beneficial to INSISTS and paved the way for its proponents to become the vanguard of anti-liberal thinking in Indonesia. The relationship between the Attasian intellectual group and the MUI fatwa must be understood in the Indonesia post-reformation socio-political context. The debate related to the fatwa in the post-reformation era is dominated by intellectuals rather than by state intervention during the New Order regime (Sirry 2013: 116). The openness in the public sphere allows for the opening of various kinds of religious discourses, both conservative and liberal. MUI fatwa became a precedent for the victory of religious conservatism in the public sphere.

In addition to influencing MUI fatwa, Attasian activism against liberal Islam took shape in the realm of social media activism through @IndonesiatanpaJIL (ITJ) commanded by Akmal Sjafril, a Husaini's student at UIKA. Emerged in March 2012, ITJ is a movement that originated from social media hashtags as a response to another hashtag campaign, the #IndonesiaTanpaFPI, supported by the liberal-Islamic activist circle. The latter group criticized the Front Pembela Islam (FPI - Islamic Defenders Front), a hardline Muslim organization, for its persecution practices and violent attacks on a religious minority, the Ahmadiyya. Given the massive support for the social media campaign to dissolve FPI, it is considered that JIL's gained a massive support in social media. Thus, ITJ launched a counter social media activism discourse which succeeded in organizing a time for demonstrations against JIL. Based on social media, this campaign attracted the attention of various ideologies including Hizbut Tahrir, Salafi, Tarbiyah and even from among artists, musicians and popular preachers. It marked the trend of social media-based Islamic activism in Indonesia that spreads propaganda and anti-Western discourse (Ardhianto 2018: 160). ITJ then expanded into branches in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Padang. Their activities included Radio and TV appearances, seminars on topic such as *ghazw al-fikr* (war of thoughts) and the promotion of Islamic worldview. Here the Attasian network can be seen from Husaini's role in backing Sjafril in launching a counter-discourse. Sjafril claimed that ITJ was successful in defeating JIL's influence on social media. Furthermore, it also signifies the disappearance of JIL's influence in the public space due to its failure to perpetuate its discourse in cyberspace (Akmal 2019, 373).

Attasian Network and Religious Minorities

One of the significant trajectories in the Attasian movement from intellectualism to public activism is the establishment of MIUMI. Although not directly related in a formal network, many figures from INSISTS are involved in MIUMI. MIUMI was established to transcend the boundaries of religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Persatuan

Islam (PERSIS - Islamic Union), DDII and gather young intellectuals from various backgrounds to address societal issues. Founded in 2012, MIUMI is led by Bachtiar Natsir supported by INSISTS-affiliated figures such as Husaini, Armas, Arif, Zarkasyi and Suharto. Organizationally and authoritatively, MIUMI does not intend to compete with MUI but to help it in the intellectual and political realms (Aidulsyah and Mizuno 2020, 13–14). MIUMI's agenda centers on three main issues: liberalization, apostasy, and heresy. The first issue characterizes the Attasian network as a staunch anti-liberal force, while the third involves campaigns against religious minorities, such as Shiites, considered as heretical (Takwin et al. 2016: 63).

One of the cases involving MIUMI is the attack by the Front Jihad Islam (FJI - Indonesian Jihad Front), the young wing of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI - Jihadi Council of Indonesia), against Rausyan Fikir, a Shia intellectual group in Yogyakarta in November and December 2013. Before the incident took place, in June 2013 MMI met MIUMI at its headquarters in Tebet, Jakarta. The meeting was attended by MMI leaders, Bachtiar Nasir and Fahmi Salim. Although both move in different domains, namely MIUMI is more in the intellectual realm and FJI is in the field role, both share the same enemy, namely Shia. MIUMI propagates anti-Shia sentiment and FJI takes action at the “street level.” Due to its impact on the dissemination of anti-Shia rhetoric, al Makin called MIUMI “the elite wing of conservative and radical groups in Indonesia” (Al Makin 2017: 15–16). Furthermore, Adian Husaini was indirectly involved in the formulation of the National Anti-Shia Alliance (ANNAS), which strongly opposes the existence and teachings of Shia and is present across several regions in Indonesia (Da'i, n.d.).

Attasian Network, MIUMI and Aksi Bela Islam

Moreover, the Attasian network has been linked to the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia, particularly in the blasphemy case against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok). Fachri Aidulsyah and Yuji Mizuno interpret it as the culmination of the third phase of Indonesia's conservative turn. Ahok's case and the ensuing movement of Aksi Bela Islam are not mere temporal phenomena but part of a broader genealogical trajectory rooted in the post-reform period's conservative currents. Aidulsyah and Mizuno suggest that there were three phases of conservative turns that led to Aksi Bela Islam. The first phase saw the dissemination of anti-liberal discourse by INSISTS and its network against liberal or progressive Islamic groups, particularly in the wake of the 2005 MUI fatwa. The second phase was marked by the formation and consolidation of an Islamist alliance, characterized by a shift from INSISTS' discourse to the establishment of MIUMI. This organization bridged the ideological divides between various religious groups to facilitate coordinated political lobbying and strategic mass mobilization. The collaboration between

INSISTS and MIUMI in movements and demonstrations was clear in initiatives such as ITJ in 2012 and the formation of the Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia (GNPF-MUI - National Movement to Defend Fatwa of Council of Indonesian Muslim Ulama) during Ahok case in 2016. The GNPF-MUI, headed by MIUMI secretary general Bachtiar Nasir, was an effort to support the MUI's fatwa against Ahok. The GNPF-MUI organised a series of large-scale protests known as Aksi Bela Islam that attracted public masses as they considered that law enforcement was taking too long to pursue legal action. Here, MIUMI's role was central in consolidating the various backgrounds of Islamic organizations in launching mass mobilization actions and political protests (Aidulsyah and Mizuno 2020: 7–21). In addition, Adnin Armas, an INSISTS co-founder and MIUMI board member, became a fundraiser for the demonstration of Aksi Bela Islam through his foundation, Yayasan Keadilan Untuk Semua (Justice for All Foundation) (Mahdi 2017).

Attasian Network and the Elimination of Sexual Violence (UU-PKS)

The role of the Attasian network in shaping gender and family discourse, as well as activism in Indonesia, is significant, particularly through its gender-focused branch. The Center for Gender Studies (CGS) has influenced the AILA movement in countering feminist discourse and its legislative impact (Marhumah et al. 2022: 29; Sya'rani 2023: 6). This activism includes efforts to push for a judicial review of the Criminal Code on immoral crimes in 2017, seeking to criminalize adultery and homosexuality, as well as opposing the RUU-PKS. Originally drafted in 2012 by the National Commission on Violence Against Women (*Komnas Perempuan*) and passed in 2022, RUU-PKS faced criticism from AILA and Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS - the Prosperous Justice Party). AILA argues that the law is a product of secular feminist ideology that contradicts Islamic moral values, particularly regarding sexual autonomy, which they claim undermines Islamic principles on sexual conduct, such as the prohibition of premarital sex (*zina*). The AILA Department of Research and Law is led by an Attasian figure, Dinar Dewi Kania, who, along with another Attasian, Henri Shalahuddin, co-authored the book *Delusi Kesetaraan Gender: Tinjauan Kritis Konsep Gender*.¹⁵ Additionally, they initiated counter-discourses through hashtags like #IndonesiaTanpaFeminis and #UninstallFeminism, mirroring the earlier #IndonesiaTanpaJIL campaign. In contrast, RUU-PKS has received full

15. Kania and Yayasan AILA Indonesia 2020. Furthermore, Sholahuddin wrote a dissertation criticizing the influence of secular Western feminist discourse in gender discourse in state Islamic religious universities in Indonesia, see Shalahudin, n.d.

support from Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia (KUPI - Indonesian Women Ulamas Congress), a progressive Muslim women's organization claiming that the law aligns with Islamic teachings (KUPI Team 2022).

Conclusion

This study has examined the genealogy, intellectual networks, and trajectory of al-Attas' students and followers in Indonesia, situating it within the broader framework of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' vision of the Islamization of knowledge and de-Westernization. The transmission of al-Attas' thought from Malaysia to Indonesia highlights an alternative intellectual influence that operates beyond the traditional centers of Islamic authority in the Middle East and the enduring hegemony of Western epistemology. While al-Attas primarily focused on philosophical inquiries and the epistemological foundations of knowledge, his ideas have undergone a process of ideological transformation at the hands of his students and followers. This development led to the emergence of a structured intellectual movement that not only preserved his legacy but also actively engaged in the contestation of contemporary Islamic thought. The early generation of Attasian thinkers played a pivotal role in this process by disseminating al-Attas' ideas and fostering the establishment of a second wave of Attasian thought in Indonesia, further embedding these concepts into academic and activist circles.

Beyond the realm of intellectual discourse, Attasian network has strategically positioned itself in opposition to liberal and progressive Islamic currents, particularly in its critiques of Islam Nusantara and religious moderation, which it perceives as ideological extensions of Western-influenced thought. This positioning reflects a broader trend within the Attasian network to assert an exclusive Islamic epistemology that seeks to reclaim authority over religious interpretation and societal norms. Its intellectual interventions have extended into the public sphere, where Attasians have sought to influence policy debates and cultural discourses on religion, morality, and governance. Through the production of counter-discourses, the Attasian network has played a central role in shaping the ideological terrain of contemporary Indonesian Islam, aligning itself with conservative movements that challenge state-led religious moderation initiatives and progressive legal reforms.

The socio-political impact of the Attasian network is particularly evident in its engagement with activism, where it has contributed to the legitimization of conservative and populist movements in Indonesia. This influence has manifested in key moments such as the issuance of MUI fatwas against minority sects, the marginalization of Shia communities, the mobilization of mass demonstrations like the Aksi Bela Islam rallies, and the resistance to legal reforms such as the *RUU-PKS* (Sexual Violence Bill). Through its intellectual networks and activism, the Attasian network has reinforced a vision of Islam that is resistant to secular and liberal influences, while also shaping Indonesia's broader religious and political

landscape. As Indonesia continues to grapple with the intersections of religious authority, modernity, and governance, the role of the Attasian network remains significant in influencing both intellectual and socio-political developments, solidifying its place as a defining force in contemporary Islamic discourse.

List of Abbreviations

AILA	Aliansi Cinta Keluarga (The Family Love Alliance)
AJM	Akademi Jawi Malaysia
ANNAS	Aliansi Nasional Anti Syiah (National Anti-Shia Alliance)
ATQO	At-Ta'qwa College Islamic Boarding School
CADIK	Center for Ta'dib and Islamization of Knowledge
CASIS	Center for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science, and Civilization
CGS	Center for Gender Studies
CIOS	Center for Occidental Studies
CITA	Circle of Ta'dib and Adab
DDII	Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council)
FJI	Front Jihad Islam (Indonesian Jihad Front)
FPI	Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front)
FUTUWWAH	Pertubuhan Pendidikan Futuwwah
GNPF-MUI	Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia (National Movement to Defend Fatwa of Council of Indonesian Muslim Ulama)
HAKIM	Himpunan Keilmuan Muslim
IAIN	Institut Agama Islam Negeri (State Islamic Institute)
IIIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought
IIITC	International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
InPas	Institute Pemikiran dan Peradaban Islam (Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization)
INSISTS	Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilizations
IPTI	Institut Pemikiran dan Tamadun Islam
ISLAH	Ibn Khaldun International Institute of Advanced Research
ISTAC	International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization
ISTAID	Islamic Thought and Information for Da'wah
ITJ	Indonesia Tanpa JIL (Indonesia without Liberal Islam Network)
JIL	Jaringan Islam Liberal (Liberal Islam Network)
JIMM	Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Young Intellectuals Network)
KUII	Kongres Umat Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Congress)
KUPI	Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia (Indonesian Women Ulama Congress)
MIUMI	Majelis Intelektual Ulama Muda Indonesia (Council for Young Intellectual Ulama of Indonesia)
MMI	Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Jihadi Council of Indonesia)

MUI	Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Ulamas Council)
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Party)
PERSIS	Persatuan Islam (Islamic Union)
PIMPIN	Institut Pemikiran Islam dan Pembangunan Insan (Institute of Islamic Thought and Human Development)
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party)
PKU	Program Kaderisasi Ulama (Ulama Regeneration Program)
PRISITAC	Pesantren for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilization
RUU-PKS	Rancangan Undang-Undang Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual (Draft Law on the Elimination of Sexual Violence)
RZS-CASIS	Raja Zarith Sofiah Centre for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science, and Civilization
SPI	Sekolah Pemikiran Islam (School of Islamic Thought)
STAIN	Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (State Islamic College)
UIKA	Universitas Ibn Khaldun (Ibn Khaldun University)
UIN	Universitas Islam Negeri (State Islamic University)
UNIDA	Universitas Darussalam
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
WAFI	Wacana Fikir Islam (Islamic Thought Discourse)
WISE	Worldview of Islam Series

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