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The *Ijāzah* as an Infrastructure of Scholarly Authority: The Legitimation of *'Ulamā'* within the Haramayn–Nusantara Network (18th–19th Centuries)

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Abstract
Studies of 18th- and 19th-century *'ulamā'* networks linking the Haramayn and the Nusantara region have extensively covered intellectual mobility, knowledge transmission, and teacher-student relationships; however, they have not adequately explained the mechanisms that transformed knowledge transmission into the legitimation of *'ulamā'* authority. This research analyzes the *ijāzah* as a mechanism of scholarly authorization, clarifies the relationship among the *ijāzah*, the *sanad* (chain of transmission), and teacher-student networks, and identifies how *'ulamā'* legitimacy was reproduced from the Haramayn to Nusantara. The study employs an intellectual history approach combined with scholarly network analysis, drawing on a literature review of *ijāzah* documents, *sanad* manuscripts, biographical dictionaries (*tarājim*), and the works of *'ulamā'* from both the Haramayn and Nusantara during the 18th and 19th centuries. External and internal criticism assess the context, authenticity, and credibility of sources, while content analysis maps authorization formulas, teacher-student relationships, *sanad* patterns, and forms of scholarly recognition; historical-contextual analysis traces the *ijāzah*'s evolving functions across periods and regions. The findings indicate that the *ijāzah* operates through four interconnected mechanisms: validating competence, linking *sanad*, social recognition, and transmitting authority to student networks. Patterns of teacher-student relationships show that the Haramayn served as a hub of transregional legitimacy. At the same time, *ijāzah* recipients in Nusantara converted scholarly authorization into local authority through teaching, building student networks, and maintaining the *sanad*. The *ijāzah* adapted to shifting socio-political configurations and the development of scholarly institutions without

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losing its role as a medium of legitimation. These findings position the *ijāzah* as a socio-scholarly infrastructure that explains the mechanisms behind the formation and reproduction of *ʻulamāʼ* authority within transregional Islamic networks.

Keywords: *Ijāzah*; Haramayn; Archipelago; *Sanad*; Islamic History

Abstrak

Kajian jaringan *ʻulamāʼ* Haramayn–Nusantara abad ke-18–19 telah banyak membahas mobilitas intelektual, transmisi pengetahuan, dan relasi guru–murid, sementara mekanisme yang mengubah transmisi ilmu menjadi legitimasi otoritas *ʻulamāʼ* belum dijelaskan secara memadai. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis *ijāzah* sebagai mekanisme otorisasi keilmuan, menjelaskan hubungan *ijāzah* dengan *sanad* dan jaringan guru–murid, serta mengidentifikasi proses reproduksi legitimasi *ʻulamāʼ* dari Haramayn ke Nusantara. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah intelektual dengan analisis jaringan keilmuan berbasis studi kepustakaan terhadap naskah *ijāzah*, manuskrip *sanad*, kitab *tarājim*, dan karya *ʻulamāʼ* Haramayn serta Nusantara pada abad ke-18–19. Kritik eksternal dan internal digunakan untuk menilai konteks, otentisitas, dan kredibilitas sumber, sedangkan analisis isi memetakan formula otorisasi, relasi guru–murid, pola *sanad*, dan bentuk pengakuan keilmuan; analisis historis-kontekstual digunakan untuk menelusuri perubahan fungsi *ijāzah* lintas periode dan wilayah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *ijāzah* bekerja melalui empat mekanisme yang saling terkait, yakni pengesahan kompetensi, penghubungan *sanad*, pengakuan sosial, dan penerusan otoritas kepada jaringan murid. Pola hubungan guru–murid memperlihatkan bahwa Haramayn berfungsi sebagai simpul legitimasi transregional, sementara penerima *ijāzah* di Nusantara mengonversi otorisasi keilmuan menjadi otoritas lokal melalui pengajaran, pembentukan jaringan murid, dan keberlanjutan *sanad*. Fungsi *ijāzah* mengalami penyesuaian seiring perubahan konfigurasi sosial-politik dan perkembangan institusi keilmuan, tanpa kehilangan perannya sebagai medium legitimasi. Temuan ini menempatkan *ijāzah* sebagai infrastruktur sosial-keilmuan yang menjelaskan mekanisme pembentukan dan reproduksi otoritas *ʻulamāʼ* dalam jaringan Islam transregional.

Kata Kunci: *Ijāzah*; Haramayn; Nusantara; *Sanad*; Sejarah Islam

Introduction

The network of Islamic scholarship connecting the Haramayn and the Nusantara region from the 18th to the 19th centuries served as a transregional space for forming, validating, and distributing religious authority. The Haramayn functioned as a vital center of Islamic learning. At the same time, the mobility of *ʻulamāʼ* (Islamic scholars) and students from the Nusantara region enabled knowledge, reputation, and scholarly authority to traverse geographical boundaries (Imawan, 2024). The teacher-student relationship formed the basis of knowledge transmission. In contrast, the *sanad* (chain of transmission) and *ijāzah* (scholarly license) provided mechanisms to validate this transmission and authorize a student to teach specific disciplines (Ad-Diba'i, 2026). In this study, *ijāzah* is understood broadly as a practice of granting scholarly authorization that encompasses the validation document or statement, the teacher-student relationship, the continuity of the *sanad*, the issuer's reputation, and recognition of the recipient's capacity to

transmit knowledge. This definition distinguishes the *ijāzah* as a document from the *ijāzah* as a social practice that generates legitimacy.

The concept of an "infrastructure of scholarly authority" refers to the relational configuration linking the *ijāzah* and *sanad*, allowing individual authority to gain cross-regional recognition, be converted into teaching authority, and be reproduced through intergenerational relationships. A scholar's authority is not formed solely through textual mastery or local social standing; its effectiveness also depends on their position within the scholarly network, the credibility of their teachers, the continuity of the *sanad*, and community acceptance (Bano, 2022). Issues arise when the process of establishing the authority of Nusantara scholars is understood merely in terms of mobility and networks, without unpacking the specific mechanisms that transform scholarly relationships into legitimacy that can be recognized, transferred, and reproduced across social spaces.

The growth of Hajj-related travel and educational mobility intensified the relationship between the Nusantara region and the Haramayn throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. The increased flow of pilgrims, the development of shipping in the Indian Ocean, the expansion of maritime trade, and the adoption of steamships from the second half of the 19th century onwards broadened opportunities for repeated travel among pilgrims and seekers of knowledge from Southeast Asia (Shairani, 2024). The growth of the Jawi community in Mecca and Medina created a social space that brought students from the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago into contact with *ʻulamāʼ* from across the Islamic world (Ratnasari, 2020). These historical traces reveal the connections of figures such as Sheikh Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani, Sheikh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, Sheikh Daud al-Fatani, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, Sheikh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi, and Sheikh Mahfuz al-Tarmasi to the scholarly milieu of the Haramayn, even though their respective positions, periods of activity, and forms of engagement within that network varied. This historical reality positions the *ijāzah* as a specific object of analysis, distinct from the broader mobility of *ʻulamāʼ* networks. Consequently, any analysis must take into account other mechanisms of legitimation—such as written works, Sufi order (*ṭarīqa*) affiliations, patronage, scholarly lineage, and community acceptance—to allow for a comparative examination of the *ijāzah*'s role as an infrastructure of authority, rather than simply assuming it to be the sole source of legitimacy.

Studies of the Haramayn–Nusantara network have yielded significant findings but have yet to adequately explain the *ijāzah* mechanism as a link between knowledge transmission and the formation of authority. Esfandiar (2022) illustrates the intellectual ties between the Middle East and the Nusantara region as a transregional network that facilitated the spread of Islamic reform from the 17th to the 18th centuries, while emphasizing the importance of *ʻulamāʼ* mobility and teacher-student relationships; however, this focus has not elucidated how formal or relational authorization transforms network connectivity into recognized scholarly

authority. Hudayana (2022) examines the Jawi community in Mecca as a space for the formation of Islamic identity and intellectual consciousness among Nusantara Muslims during the colonial era; while his contribution is vital for understanding the social context of the Jawi community, he does not explain the function of the *ijāzah* as a mechanism for the selection, validation, and distribution of authority among network members. Imawan (2024) maps the *sanad* and Sufi order networks connecting Nusantara *ʻulamāʼ* with scholarly centers in the Middle East; this mapping reveals the relational structure of transmission, yet the interplay between *sanad*, *ijāzah*, the reputation of the authorizing figure, and the effectiveness of the recipient's legitimation remains to be analyzed in depth. Gallop (2022) highlights the value of religious manuscripts as sources for reconstructing the transmission of knowledge and the authority of Nusantara *ʻulamāʼ*; a manuscript-based approach provides access to the material traces of scholarly networks but has not positioned *ijāzah* documents as a social practice capable of explaining the process by which knowledge is converted into authority.

Rofi (2025) identifies traditional Islamic educational institutions as arenas for the reproduction of authority through the continuity of scholarly *sanad*; these findings broaden the understanding of the institutional reproduction of authority, whereas the processes preceding such institutionalization—specifically the role of the *ijāzah* as a mechanism for cross-regional authorization—have not been a primary focus. Previous research has elucidated the actors, spaces, and transmission pathways involved. However, questions remain regarding the mechanisms that enable authority to travel from the Haramayn to the Nusantara region and gain local social recognition. An empirical gap remains because scholars have not systematically reconstructed patterns of *ijāzah* issuance and reception, or the relationships between issuers and recipients within the Haramayn–Nusantara network. A conceptual gap arises from the lack of an integrative explanation of how *ijāzah*, *sanad*, reputation, networks, and community acceptance function as constituent elements of authority. Methodologically, a gap emerges from prior studies' tendency to focus on network mapping, biographical narratives, or manuscript transmission without examining the relational mechanisms linking authorization to the reproduction of authority. This study positions the *ijāzah* as the unit of analysis to explain this process historically and within a network context, while distinguishing its function from other legitimation mechanisms operating within the ecology of *ʻulamāʼ* authority.

This research examines four key issues: the mechanisms of *ijāzah* practice as a form of authorization within the 18th–19th-century Haramayn–Nusantara scholarly network; the factors shaping an *ʻālim*'s scholarly legitimacy; the process by which authorization is converted into teaching authority and intergenerational religious leadership; and the impact of 19th-century changes on the function of the *ijāzah*. The study aims to reconstruct the relationship between *ijāzah* issuers and

recipients, identify the elements constituting scholarly legitimacy, analyze the transformation of authorization into authority, and explain the dynamics of the *ijāzah*'s function within the Haramayn–Nusantara network. It argues that the *ijāzah* constitutes an infrastructure of scholarly authority that links individual competence with *sanad*, the teacher's reputation, network structures, and social recognition; consequently, its effectiveness is determined by the issuer's credibility, the recipient's position, the nature of the knowledge transmitted, connections to other networks, and community acceptance.

Method

This study uses a qualitative method that integrates a transregional intellectual history design with scholarly network analysis to reconstruct the *ijāzah* mechanism in producing, validating, transmitting, and reproducing *ʿulamāʾ* authority across the Haramayn–Nusantara network during the 18th and 19th centuries. The units of analysis encompass *ʿulamāʾ* actors, *ijāzah*, *sanad*, institutions, locations, and relationships—specifically teacher–student and grantor–recipient dynamics—with the *ijāzah* operationalized through functions of competence legitimation, authorization of knowledge transmission, scholarly recognition, and the establishment of authoritative continuity. Primary sources include *ijāzah* manuscripts, *sanad* records, *ʿulamāʾ* writings, *ṭabaqāt* (biographical chronicles), *tarājim* (biographical notices), travelogues, correspondence, and archival materials, while secondary sources comprise monographs, scholarly articles, manuscript catalogs, and relevant historiography; the corpus was selected based on direct relevance, authenticity, timeframe, and connection to the Haramayn–Nusantara network, then verified through cross-source triangulation. Data collection involved source inventory and tracing, provenance verification, authenticity critique, identity disambiguation, and structured extraction of actors, timeframes, locations, institutions, *ijāzah* types, and relationships, alongside coding evidentiary certainty levels. Analysis proceeded via external and internal criticism, content analysis of *ijāzah* formulas, reconstruction of temporal networks, and historical-contextual interpretation; confirmed relationships were distinguished from inferential ones, and network centrality was not equated with scholarly authority. The network structure was analyzed to dynamically explain the interconnections between mobility, legitimation, and the reproduction of authority.

Results and Discussion

The Formation of the Haramayn–Nusantara Scholarly Network and *ʿUlamāʾ* Mobility in the 18th and 19th Centuries

The Haramayn—specifically Mecca and Medina—serve as hubs where *ʿulamāʾ*, students, and pilgrims converge, acting as conduits for disseminating knowledge that links diverse Muslim regions through cross-regional social and intellectual ties (Rohmana, 2023). The significance of these two holy cities cannot be fully explained

by their religious status alone; their function as a network arises from the density of interactions among individuals who meet, study, teach, copy texts, and forge relationships that endure beyond their actual stay. Consequently, the Haramayn–Nusantara network is a relational structure comprising geographical nodes, connecting actors, mobility routes, learning spaces, and flows of knowledge. Nusantara plays an active role through *ʿulamāʾ* who travel, settle, study, teach, write, and bring back scholarly traditions. Inter-regional linkages form at the intersection of Hajj corridors, trade routes, diaspora networks, student communities, and pedagogical relationships, collectively creating transregional intellectual connectivity (Hikmah & Rochmawati, 2026; Imawan, 2024).

While human mobility serves as the initial mechanism for establishing connections, physical travel does not equate to intellectual mobility. Maritime routes connecting Aceh, Palembang, Banten, Makassar, Batavia, Penang, Calcutta, Hadramawt, Jeddah, and Suez provided corridors for movement; however, scholarly relationships were formed only when such journeys resulted in pedagogical contact, periods of study, the exchange of texts, or bonds between teachers and students (Maulana et al., 2024). The Hajj pilgrimage served as a primary gateway to this process, as some pilgrims extended their stays in the Haramayn to attend *ḥalaqah* (study circles) and learn from specific *ʿulamāʾ* (Maulani, 2023). The biographical trajectories of Abd al-Samad al-Falimbani, Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, and other *ʿulamāʾ* from the Malay-Indonesian world (Jawi) show how these travelers shifted from student to network connector upon returning to Nusantara. Mobility analysis must distinguish between the Hajj pilgrimage, student migration, the travels of *ʿulamāʾ*, and the circulation of texts as interconnected yet distinct processes.

Intermediary actors strengthen connectivity by linking pathways of mobility, resources, and learning spaces. Trade networks, Hadrami diaspora families, Sufi order (*ṭarīqa*) affiliations, and political patronage serve as social channels that facilitate travel and access to scholarly circles, even though each operates according to a different function and logic (Rijal, 2020). Support from sultanates or local elites for travel to the Haramayn must be examined through concrete cases that reveal the interplay between travel funding, diplomatic interests, religious imperatives, and the dispatch of students. Similarly, the Hadrami diaspora cannot be viewed merely as an abstract mediator; their mediating role must be traced through specific actors, families, or relationships that facilitate travel, accommodation, introductions to teachers, or the circulation of texts. Such social networks function as the infrastructure supporting mobility, whereas intellectual connections emerge when these social resources give rise to learning relationships and knowledge exchanges—connections that can be traced through biographies, correspondence, or travelogues (Imawan, 2026).

The Jawi community provided a social nexus that transformed individual mobility into collective connectivity. The term “Jawi” refers to a social category

applied to Southeast Asian Muslims in the Haramayn; it does not strictly align with modern ethnic or national boundaries (Coluzzi, 2022). Historically, this community created spaces for interaction among students, *ʿulamāʾ*, and sojourners, enabling horizontal relationships alongside vertical access to Haramayn teachers. *Ribāṭ*s (lodgings), guesthouses, *ḥalaqah*s (study circles), and residential neighborhoods served as meeting grounds that fostered the reading of religious texts, manuscript copying, discussion, and information exchange (Choirin et al., 2025). Consequently, the Jawi community should be understood as a network node and social intermediary, rather than merely a collective identity. Relationships among students facilitated the flow of information and teacher recommendations. At the same time, connections with Haramayn *ʿulamāʾ* provided access to scholarly traditions that were subsequently transmitted to various educational centers across the Nusantara archipelago.

Tracing specific actors and concrete relationships clarifies network reconstruction. Figures such as Abd al-Samad al-Falimbani, Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, Dawud al-Fatani, Nawawi al-Bantani, and Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi should be positioned as nodes within distinct relational configurations, defined by their teachers, study locations, communities, scholarly works, and subsequent ties to students and institutions upon returning home. Biographical and *tarājim* sources on Haramayn *ʿulamāʾ*—including the works of Ahmad ibn Zayni Dahlan—must be treated as primary data for reconstructing relationships, not merely as supplementary references. Manuscript notes, study texts, travelogues, correspondence, and educational records can be utilized to identify the direction of relationships and the circulation of knowledge. Such mapping allows *ʿulamāʾ* from the Nusantara region to be viewed as active agents connecting various nodes, rather than passive recipients of knowledge from a central seat of learning.

Knowledge flows along several intertwined pathways: the mobility of *ʿulamāʾ* and students, the circulation of books and manuscripts, the establishment of pedagogical relationships, and ongoing communication after their return. Works such as *sharḥ* (commentaries), *ḥāshiyah* (marginal glosses), study notes, and manuscript copies must be traced through evidence of ownership, colophons, study records, or transmission histories to demonstrate how texts moved between nodes. Correspondence and student exchanges also require substantiation through historical documents to move beyond mere assumption. *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), *surau* (prayer rooms), and local learning centers served as nodes for receiving and processing knowledge, linking the learning experiences gained in the Haramayn with the intellectual needs of the Nusantara community. The network structure was thus bidirectional: the Haramayn provided a meeting ground and learning resources, while Nusantara *ʿulamāʾ* brought knowledge, texts, and pedagogical experience back to the local environment, reconnecting it with transregional networks.

The density of relationships forged through mobility, the Jawi community, intermediary actors, and pedagogical ties sustained the network even after physical journeys ended. The return of *ʻulamāʼ* did not sever connections; they maintained relationships through correspondence, book shipments, student exchanges, visits, and inter-institutional links. This continuity highlights the distinction between physical and intellectual mobility: a journey ends upon return, while knowledge and relationships continue to circulate through texts and other media. Furthermore, the network was not strictly hierarchical, as Nusantara *ʻulamāʼ* served as connectors who adapted knowledge and linked local communities to transregional nodes.

Ijāzah and *Sanad* as Mechanisms for Legitimizing Scholarly Authority

A functional distinction must be drawn between *ijāzah* and *sanad* to prevent the mechanism of legitimizing scholarly authority from being reduced to a merely linear, genealogical relationship. *Sanad* refers to the structural continuity of transmission linking the recipient of knowledge to the teacher and the preceding chain of authorities (Al Hadid et al., 2022). In contrast, *ijāzah* constitutes an act of authorization granted by an authority figure to a specific individual, enabling them to engage in scholarly activities within a defined scope (Porsdam & Mann, 2024). This distinction situates legitimacy across several levels: the teacher assesses the student's competence, the *sanad* upholds the continuity of knowledge, the *ijāzah* affirms the right of transmission, and the community tests scholarly status through acceptance. These four elements are interdependent, not automatic. An individual may possess a *sanad* without gaining the authority to teach the entire corpus of a discipline, while holding an *ijāzah* does not automatically confer broad social authority. Legitimacy emerges from the interplay of competence, authorization, the grantor's credibility, and the recipient's recognition.

Granting an *ijāzah* reflects a specific authoritative relationship between the grantor and the recipient. The teacher assesses the student's suitability based on the nature of the instruction, the depth of material mastery, the accuracy of transmission, and the moral reputation relevant to the discipline. The student receives authorization for a specific capacity rather than limitless legitimacy for all religious activities. The *ijāzah* formula within the tradition of text transmission may include the identities of the teacher and student, the title of the work, the chain of transmission, the mode of transmission, and permission to narrate or teach specific material (Alias & Yusof, 2023). These documentary elements establish the *ijāzah* as both evidence of a pedagogical relationship and a marker defining the limits of authority. A teacher's authority does not exist in isolation; its credibility is shaped by their position within scholarly networks, the reputation of their work, the quality of their students, and community acceptance (Ismah, 2016). Legitimacy operates through a relational chain linking personal assessment with collective recognition.

The relationship between *sanad* and *ijāzah* becomes clearer when viewed through their distinct operational mechanisms. *Sanad* provides a structure of

continuity that allows knowledge to be traced through a lineage of teachers (Cahyadi et al., 2025). In contrast, *ijāzah* transforms a student's status from a mere recipient of knowledge into someone authorized to transmit it (Idriz, 2022). The two do not always correspond one-to-one, as a *sanad* may document a continuous line of transmission without necessarily granting full authorization to every individual in the chain. In contrast, an *ijāzah* might grant permission limited to specific works or fields of study. Analytically, this implies that possessing a *sanad* cannot automatically prove the recipient's interpretive authority. Tracing legitimacy requires identifying the type of *sanad*, the nature of the *ijāzah*, the subject matter, the scope of authority, and the status of the authorizing figure.

Disciplinary variations demonstrate that the function of the *ijāzah* is not uniform. The hadith tradition recognizes authorization to transmit specific works or material through traceable chains of transmission, focusing primarily on the continuity of reception and the accuracy of delivery (Musadad, 2026). The *fiqh* (jurisprudence) tradition entails a more complex process, as recognition of the ability to teach or issue *fatwā*s is linked to mastery of the legal corpus, the school's methodology, and the capacity for *istinbāṭ* (legal derivation) (Muslim et al., 2022). The Sufi tradition involves forms of authorization related to spiritual guidance, the pledge of allegiance (*bayʿat*), spiritual instruction (*talqīn*), or the appointment of a successor within a *ṭarīqa* (Sufi order) structure; thus, the object of legitimation encompasses the capacity to guide disciples (Sabiq & Arisnawawi, 2025). The *qirāʾāt* (Qur'anic recitation) tradition emphasizes direct recitation, precision in articulation, and continuity in transmission of the reading (Hafid, Nabilah, & Najakhah, 2024). This differentiation indicates that *ijāzah* is an umbrella category whose function depends on the specific object of authorization.

The Haramayn–Nusantara context reveals legitimation as a process involving multiple actors. Sheikhs in the Haramayn grant authorization to *ʿulamāʾ* or students from the Nusantara region based on pedagogical relationships and assessed competence, while the recipients carry this legitimacy into a different social environment (Wirianto et al., 2023). The authoritative value of an *ijāzah* depends on the grantor's reputation, the nature of the knowledge transmitted, and the recipient's ability to maintain their credibility upon returning to their home community. Primary evidence—such as *ijāzah* documents, *sanad* manuscripts, *samāʿ* (audition) records, colophons, biographical dictionaries (*tarājim*), and educational histories—serves as the basis for reconstructing this process. Sources such as biographical works on Haramayn scholars and educational records of Nusantara figures must be read critically, taking into account the temporal context, the purpose of writing, and the author's position. This analysis allows legitimacy to be traced as a historical process rather than assumed as an automatic consequence of the course of study.

Social recognition of the *ijāzah* must be distinguished from the authorization a teacher grants. The *ijāzah* document attests to the act of granting permission. In contrast, community acceptance must be shown through other sources that demonstrate how the recipient exercised their authority or gained recognition for it. Student records, produced works, teaching logs, manuscript colophons, scholarly lineages (*sanad*), and biographies of *ʻulamāʼ* can reveal whether personal legitimacy evolved into social authority. This process of conversion did not always succeed automatically, as a teacher's reputation in the Haramayn did not necessarily translate into equivalent acceptance in the Nusantara region. Teaching competence, the relevance of the knowledge imparted, school-of-thought (madhhab) affiliation, ties to educational institutions, and community response all shaped the outcome.

The teacher's position as a grantor of legitimacy also warrants critical examination, as an *ijāzah* issuer's authority did not stem solely from personal status. Their credibility rested on the depth of their knowledge, pedagogical reputation, scholarly affiliations, position within *ʻulamāʼ* networks, and recognition by the broader community. Consequently, the chain of legitimacy possesses a multi-layered structure: the teacher grants authorization, the *sanad* provides continuity, the *ijāzah* document records the mandate, and the community determines the social weight of that authorization. This model explains why an *ijāzah* recipient might possess the legitimacy to transmit a specific text without automatically acquiring the authority to interpret an entire discipline or serve as a public reference point. Conversely, local authority could develop through one's works, teaching, and reputation, even if the formal *ijāzah* documentation held was limited.

The Production and Reproduction of Nusantara *ʻUlamāʼ* Authority through *Ijāzah* Networks

Obtaining an *ijāzah* from the *ʻulamāʼ* of the Haramayn served as the starting point for establishing the authority of the *ʻulamāʼ* of the Nusantara region. A student's status underwent a socio-intellectual transformation as transregional authorization gained through pedagogical relationships translated into recognition within their home community. This conversion process unfolded across several interconnected arenas, including the reputation of the teacher granting the *ijāzah*, the nature of the knowledge mastered, works produced, teaching ability, student networks, ties to elites, and public acceptance (Imawan, 2024). While the *ijāzah* provided initial legitimacy, public authority was forged through the social testing of the recipient's capabilities. The biographies of Abd al-Samad al-Falimbani, Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, Nawawi al-Bantani, and Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi highlight the importance of examining the link between their education in the Haramayn and their subsequent activities upon returning home. Their intellectual journeys can be understood as a process of converting transregional legitimacy into authority through interactions with Nusantara social structures.

Legitimacy becomes authority through social recognition of the scholarly connections they brought back from the Haramayn. Information regarding teachers, chains of transmission (*sanad*), *ijāzah* credentials, scholarly works, and learning experiences circulated through student networks, *ʿulamāʾ* families, the Jawi community, correspondence, religious text instruction, and inter-institutional ties (Monady, Hasan, & Sagir, 2025). The public did not grant authority simply because an individual held an *ijāzah*; they had to demonstrate credibility through scholarly performance and the ability to address the community's needs. The *ʿulamāʾ*s written works, teaching activities, *fatwā* rulings, the establishment of study circles (*ḥalaqah*), and involvement in religious institutions served as arenas where their reputations were tested. This pattern explains why an *ijāzah* is best viewed as initial capital requiring conversion, rather than an automatic certificate of public leadership.

Religious leadership emerged when transregional legitimacy secured institutional and social channels, allowing the *ʿulamāʾ*s influence to extend beyond personal relationships with their teachers. *Pesantren*, *surau*, *majelis taklim* (religious study groups), and *ḥalaqah* serve as arenas for conversion, as these educational spaces give *ʿulamāʾ* opportunities to demonstrate competence, shape students, and build enduring reputations (Ubaidillah & Faiz, 2025). While connections with *ʿulamāʾ* families and local elites can extend their reach, they cannot be treated as automatic determinants of authority. Each case requires examining the actors, relationships, timing, and social consequences—elements verifiable through biographies, local histories, *ʿulamāʾ* works, student records, and institutional archives. Thus, *ijāzah* networks operate within a social ecosystem that links teacher authorization, the recipient's intellectual capacity, community acceptance, and the institutionalization of teaching. Authority emerges from the convergence of these elements, rather than from the *ijāzah* in isolation.

The distinction between the production and reproduction of authority must be emphasized to ensure analysis does not merely reiterate the function of legitimation. Production refers to establishing new authority when legitimacy derived from the Haramayn network is converted into recognition and religious standing within the Nusantara arena (Ghozali, 2024). Reproduction refers to maintaining, expanding, and transmitting authority once that position is established—through teaching, mentoring students, founding institutions, disseminating works, preserving *sanad*, maintaining intellectual-familial ties, and granting *ijāzah* to the next generation (Cahyadi et al., 2025). This distinction demonstrates that reproduction is not merely a repetition of existing authority, as every act of transmission may involve selection, adaptation, and shifts in network configuration. A student receiving a new *ijāzah* might link to other regions, establish different institutions, or develop authority with a distinctive character. Thus, the network expands authority while transforming its social form.

Authority reproduces when the teacher-student relationship generates continuity traceable through individuals, texts, institutions, and educational practices. An *ʿulamāʾ* who has gained transregional legitimacy can expand their network by teaching specific texts, forming *ḥalaqah* (study circles), accepting students, and granting them authorization based on their areas of expertise. Students then carry these relationships into new social spheres, forging the next links in the chain (Salem, 2021). The mere existence of a *sanad* is insufficient evidence of reproduction, as it indicates only a transmission link that must be contextualized within the successor's actual activities. Records of *ijāzah*, *sanad* manuscripts, colophons, texts used in instruction, student biographies, the histories of *pesantren* and *surau*, and produced works can trace both the continuity and the transformation of authority. This pattern reveals *pesantren* and *surau* as social infrastructures that transform pedagogical relationships into intergenerational networks, while *ʿulamāʾ* families reinforce continuity through the inheritance of reputation and social access.

The capacity to reproduce authority does not always hinge on a linear chain of transmission (*sanad*), as authority is negotiated across regions and generations. The legitimacy of the Haramayn can gain strong recognition when aligned with the needs of local communities, legal schools (madhhabs), educational traditions, or patronage structures; conversely, its influence may be limited if recipients fail to establish social trust or encounter already entrenched authorities. Such an analysis frames the production of authority as a process of negotiation between transregional legitimacy and the religious structures of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago (Nusantara). Competition should not be assumed as an inherent characteristic of the network; rather, it must be demonstrated through actors' distinct roles, affiliations, interests, arenas, and sources of legitimacy. Polemical works, *fatwā*s, correspondence, biographies, travelogues, and local histories can provide concrete evidence of such competition or negotiation. This perspective also avoids the center-periphery model that casts the Haramayn as the sole producer of authority and the archipelago merely as a passive recipient.

This framework presents the *ijāzah* as part of an infrastructure of authority operating through the interplay of authorization documents, scholarly networks, community recognition, educational institutions, the circulation of texts, and the cultivation of *ʿulamāʾ*. The concept of infrastructure refers not merely to the *ijāzah* as an administrative document, but to a relational system that enables legitimacy to traverse social arenas and endure across generations. Its analytical contribution lies in clarifying the chain of conversion—often obscured in studies of *ʿulamāʾ* networks—in which transregional authorization serves as initial capital, reputation and competence put it to the test, the community grants recognition, institutions consolidate it, and student networks expand and perpetuate it. This model broadens the study of Haramayn–Nusantara networks by positioning the *ijāzah* as a

mechanism linking intellectual mobility with local structures of authority, rather than viewing it merely as proof of a teacher-student relationship.

The Dynamics of the *Ijāzah* Function Amidst the Changing Landscape of Islamic Scholarship in the 18th and 19th Centuries

The evolution of the *ijāzah*'s function across the 18th and 19th centuries cannot be defined solely by rising Muslim mobility or the expansion of the Haramayn–Nusantara network. Historical change must be traced through shifts in authorization practices, the scope of authority, teacher-student relationships, forms of documentation, and the methods of scholarly legitimation as they were translated into different social spheres. In the early 18th century, the *ijāzah* operated primarily within a pedagogical framework centered on face-to-face interaction, textual mastery, and the continuity of transmission through a teacher. The development of transregional networks throughout the 19th century expanded the arenas of its use without erasing that relational foundation (Idriz, 2022). The primary changes occurred in the scale and operational context: the *ijāzah* increasingly served as a marker of inter-regional connectivity, proof of proximity to specific authorities, and an instrument to bolster credibility upon the recipient's return to their home environment.

The expansion of Hajj-related mobility and the development of steam shipping in the second half of the 19th century increased both the volume and frequency of encounters between students from the Nusantara region and the *ʻulamāʼ* of the Haramayn (Fuadi, 2021). Transportation lowered geographical barriers, while authorization processes transformed through pedagogical mechanisms that emerged alongside increased mobility. Students who stayed longer in the Haramayn gained opportunities to attend study circles (*majālis*), read texts, cultivate teacher-student relationships, and receive authorization for specific works or fields of knowledge (Patria, 2023). Thus, increased connectivity expanded the opportunities to obtain an *ijāzah* rather than automatically altering its fundamental function. The changes lay instead in the widening reach of networks connecting issuers and recipients, the heightened reputational value of associations with prominent teachers, and the growing importance of bringing transregional legitimacy back to local settings. Mobility enabled change, while pedagogical relationships served as the mechanism.

Changes in the scale of these networks also influenced how the *ijāzah* functioned as a document and a representation of scholarly identity. As the teacher-student relationship transcended geographical boundaries, information about the teacher's name, the works studied, the line of transmission, and the scope of authority became increasingly vital to maintaining the traceability of that relationship. Evidence such as *ijāzah*s, *samāʿ* records, colophons, ownership notes, and educational histories can reveal whether the documentation changed form or gained social utility. While documentary formulas remained relatively stable, *ijāzah*s

were used differently to build reputation and link a scholar (*ʻulamāʼ*) to transregional networks. Consequently, the *ijāzah* shifted contextually from serving as proof of a pedagogical relationship to acting as a source of credibility recognized by a broader community.

Developments in communication, correspondence, and text circulation reinforced networks' function without fundamentally altering the basic principles of transmission. The exchange of information allowed teachers' and students' reputations to transcend their initial meeting places, while texts and manuscripts maintained intellectual connections long after they parted ways. Pedagogical relationships—originally localized within the Haramayn—gained continuity through texts, correspondence, students, and educational communities. The role of the *ijāzah* grew more complex, as the authorization document served as a bridge between personal learning and social recognition in other locales. The value of an *ijāzah* was no longer determined solely by the act of granting permission; it also depended on the grantor's reputation, the field of study, the recipient's network, and the recipient's ability to activate that legitimacy through teaching and writing.

Colonial expansion cannot be viewed as the sole driver of changes in religious authority, as its influence operated through policies, restrictions, surveillance, and institutional shifts that varied across regions and time periods. The Dutch East Indies, for instance, had an administrative configuration distinct from Muslim territories under British rule (Wilson, 2019). Tracing the relationship between colonialism and the *ijāzah* requires following specific actors—notably traveling *ʻulamāʼ*, students returning to the Nusantara archipelago, religious officials, administrators of educational institutions, and the colonial authorities who regulated mobility and education. Mechanisms of change emerged when administrative restrictions or surveillance regarding travel and education compelled *ʻulamāʼ* to sustain their legitimacy through transregional networks operating outside state structures. Claims of epistemic autonomy are valid only if evidence shows that *ijāzah* networks upheld religious authority. Consequently, the relationship between colonialism and the *ijāzah* should be understood as a site of negotiation rather than a simple opposition between the *ʻulamāʼ* and the state.

Local educational institutions underwent a different kind of transformation, as the *ijāzah* began to operate within a framework characterized by organizational continuity, student cultivation, and the reproduction of knowledge. *Pesantren* and *surau* served not merely as sites for receiving legitimacy from the Haramayn, but as spaces that transformed personal authorization into transmissible authority—sustained through teaching, student cultivation, specific texts, and the maintenance of scholarly networks (Rofiqi et al., 2026). This process did not replace personal authority with institutional authority; the teacher remained the primary source of authority, while the institution provided a social environment that extended the *ijāzah*'s efficacy beyond the grantor's lifetime. A hybrid form emerged from the

convergence of three elements: personal authorization, network continuity, and institutional sustainability. Historical shifts can be evidenced through the educational trajectories of *ʻulamāʼ*, student records, the histories of pesantren and surau, instructional manuscripts, and documentation of teacher-student relationships.

The circulation of printed books in the nineteenth century changed the epistemic environment, but this must be distinguished from direct alterations to *ijāzah* practices. While broader access to texts reduced reliance on manuscripts for knowledge dissemination, it did not automatically eliminate the need for teacher authorization. This hypothesis requires testing through a comparison of documents and scholarly practices from before and after the expansion of printing—examining changes in *ijāzah* types, the objects of authorization, relationships with specific texts, and the profiles of those granting authorization. If the form of the *ijāzah* remained relatively stable, the more significant finding lies in the continuity of its core function amidst changes in the medium of knowledge. Should documentary changes or an expansion of authority appear, such shifts must be traced through empirical evidence. Printing thus appears to alter the environment of knowledge circulation rather than automatically transforming authorization. The essence of the *ijāzah* remains grounded in teacher authorization, pedagogical relationships, and traceable transmission. At the same time, its social function expanded alongside increasing connectivity, mobility, text circulation, colonial pressures, and the development of educational institutions. The 18th century laid a crucial foundation for the continuity of authorization patterns centered on direct relationships, whereas the 19th century saw an expansion in the scale and arena of transregional legitimacy.

Conclusion

The development of Islamic scholarly networks during the 18th and 19th centuries reveals that the *ijāzah* functioned as an infrastructure of authority, integrating teacher authorization, the validation of student competence, the continuity of the *sanad*, *ʻulamāʼ* mobility, text circulation, and social acceptance within the Haramayn–Nusantara network. Key findings highlight three mechanisms of legitimation: teacher–student relationships validated personal capacity through the granting of the *ijāzah*; the *sanad* linked personal authority to a continuous genealogy of transmission; and the Jawi community, the circulation of works, and collective recognition extended authority into a transregional social space. The network demonstrates that religious authority was relational and multilayered, as textual mastery, personal relationships, and network connectivity reinforced one another, without the possession of an *ijāzah* serving as automatic proof of social acceptance. Theoretically, these findings expand the study of transregional authority by framing the *ijāzah* as a socio-scholarly mechanism connecting individuals, texts, *sanad* chains, communities, and institutions. Practical implications include digitizing

manuscripts, documenting *sanad* chains, and developing prosopographical databases of *ʻulamāʼ*. Limitations regarding manuscript sources and undocumented *tarājim* risk introducing biases in the representation of actors, regions, and transmission pathways, while also constraining inter-regional comparisons. Future research should integrate philology, material history, digital prosopography, and social network analysis to examine variations in *ijāzah* functions, actor connectivity, and the transformation of authority from the Haramayn–Nusantara era into modernity.

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Author Contribution Statement

AA contributed to the conceptualization, research design, drafting of the initial manuscript, and manuscript coordination. S contributed to data collection and the literature search. RI contributed to data analysis, interpretation of findings, and refinement of the manuscript's content. RA contributed to reference verification, critical review, and manuscript editing. All authors participated in the final review and approved the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that this manuscript has no conflicts of interest—whether financial or non-financial—that could influence the objectivity, integrity, or presentation of the research findings. The authors conducted the entire research and writing process independently, free from the influence of any party that could potentially give rise to a conflict of interest.

AI Usage Statement

The authors used artificial intelligence (AI) to a limited extent to enhance language quality, correct grammar, and assist with manuscript formatting. The authors generated all research results, findings, concepts, analyses, ideas, interpretations, and conclusions—and bear full responsibility for them—rather than AI. The authors reviewed and verified the entire manuscript and assume full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the published work.

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