

ARABIC-PEGON IN THE ISLAMIC LEARNING TRADITION: Cultural Mediation, Knowledge Transmission, and Preservation in *Pesantren* Education

Mohammad Makinuddin & Friendis Syani Amrulloh

Universitas Kiai Abdullah Faqih Gresik

Jl. Kyai H. Syafi'i No.07, RT.02/RW.02, Suci, Kec. Manyar, Kabupaten Gresik, Jawa Timur 61151, Indonesia
e-mail: moh.makin@unkafa.ac.id; friendis.amrulloh@unkafa.ac.id

Abstract: Despite the rapid modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia, the Arabic-Pegon script faces significant challenges in its role as a traditional medium of knowledge transmission and Arabic acquisition. Previous studies have often overlooked how this script functions as a critical space for cultural mediation and identity preservation in contemporary settings. This study aims to critically analyze the role of Arabic-Pegon as a cultural and linguistic medium within Islamic education, specifically focusing on its current utility and preservation efforts. Using a qualitative case study approach at Pesantren Mambaus Sholihin Gresik, data were collected through in-depth interviews with educators and a philological-pedagogical analysis of handwritten classical texts (*kitab kuning*). The findings indicate that Arabic-Pegon functions beyond transliteration by connecting classical Arabic Islamic texts with Javanese linguistic and cultural frameworks. Its use facilitates students' comprehension of complex religious concepts while maintaining localized forms of Islamic literacy and cultural identity. The study further demonstrates that *pegon's* continuity is sustained through intergenerational knowledge transmission, institutional support, and adaptation to contemporary educational contexts. The study contributes to Islamic sociolinguistics by conceptualizing Arabic-Pegon as a dynamic linguistic and epistemological medium for localizing, transmitting, and preserving Islamic knowledge.

Keywords: *Pesantren* Education, Arabic-Pegon, Arabic Acquisition, Manuscript Preservation, Islamic Epistemology

Corresponding author	Mohammad Makinuddin			
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Introduction

Arabic Pegon has served as a unique adaptation of the Arabic script, enabling it to be used for writing Javanese languages for centuries. This script emerged as a cultural and linguistic bridge, facilitating the transmission of Islamic teachings to the local population in a form that was both accessible and relevant to their native tongues.¹ In addition, *Pegon* plays an important role in the acquisition of Arabic for students through the mastery of vocabulary and the gradual understanding of classical texts. By adopting Arabic letters to fit the phonetic and grammatical structures, Arabic Pegon became essential in religious, educational, and social contexts,² particularly within Indonesia's Islamic boarding schools, or *pesantren*. This script not only preserved Islamic knowledge but also enabled the blending of local cultural identity with the broader Islamic tradition, making it a vital component of Indonesia's religious and linguistic heritage.³ Its continued use today highlights its enduring importance in connecting Islamic scholarship with indigenous languages.

Understanding Arabic Pegon is crucial for accessing classical Islamic texts, which form a core component of education in Indonesian *pesantren*.⁴ These texts, often called Islamic classical text (*kitab kuning*), contain foundational Islamic knowledge in jurisprudence, theology, and ethics.⁵ Arabic Pegon, a script that adapts Arabic letters to represent Javanese, Madurese, and Sundanese,⁶ serves as a linguistic bridge, allowing *santri* (Islamic students) to engage with these sacred texts in ways that align with their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Mastering this script is not only an academic requirement but also a spiritual journey for many *santri*, as it enables them to comprehend and internalize the teachings of classical scholars. Given the complexity of the script and the texts it conveys, proficiency in Arabic Pegon is indispensable for students to participate fully in discussions, understand religious principles, and help preserve Islamic knowledge within their communities.⁷

The role of Arabic Pegon in *pesantren* education cannot be separated from its function as a bridge to Arabic language learning.⁸ While Arabic remains the core language of Islamic sciences, many *santri* struggle with accessing the *kitab kuning* due to linguistic barriers.⁹ *Pegon*, which adapts Arabic script to Javanese phonology, offers a scaffolded approach to teaching Arabic grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. In doing so, it introduces Arabic in a culturally contextualized manner.¹⁰ As such, *Pegon* is not merely a script but a pedagogical medium that prepares students for formal Arabic proficiency, aligning closely with the objectives of Arabic language education in traditional Islamic institutions.

Previous research has extensively examined the history and development of Arabic Pegon, including its linguistic evolution, cultural significance, and pedagogical application in Indonesian *Pesantren* education.¹¹ These studies highlight the integral role that Arabic Pegon plays in preserving classical Islamic teachings and transmitting religious knowledge through Islamic classical text, which forms the core curriculum in many *pesantrens*.

Despite its recognized importance, many *santris* encounter significant challenges in mastering Arabic Pegon.¹² The script is complex and requires a deep understanding of Arabic and Javanese. At the same time, the language used in Islamic classical text is often archaic and challenging for contemporary learners to grasp.¹³ This complexity hinders students' ability to read and understand texts and affects their overall learning experience within the Pesantren system.¹⁴ Therefore, unlike previous research that positions *pegon* merely as a cultural artifact, this study explicitly analyzes its pedagogical dimension as a critical 'gateway' for Arabic language acquisition, demonstrating how it functions as a cognitive bridge for Javanese learners to master complex theological texts.

While several studies have explored the historical and cultural dimensions of Arabic Pegon, there remains a significant gap in the pedagogical literature regarding its practical role in Arabic language acquisition and in the comprehension of classical Islamic texts within *pesantren*. Most existing research has not examined how localized script systems, such as Arab Pegon, function as transitional tools for Arabic proficiency among novice learners. This study addresses that gap by investigating the instructional strategies used to teach Arabic Pegon in *pesantren* settings, focusing on how these methods enhance students' access to Islamic classical text. The research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What pedagogical stages are involved in Arabic Pegon instruction? (2) What challenges do Santri face in mastering Pegon and classical texts? (3) How does *pegon* support Arabic language learning outcomes? The objective is to develop a framework that supports effective Arabic language pedagogy through indigenous scripts. The implications extend to curriculum development in *pesantren* and Arabic language programs, offering insights into culturally embedded teaching methods. This study's originality lies in integrating the *pegon* script pedagogy with Arabic linguistic outcomes, bridging traditional Islamic education and contemporary applied linguistics in an underexplored educational context.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to gain a holistic understanding of the Arab Pegon phenomenon within its natural context at Pesantren Mambaus Sholihin Gresik. This approach was selected to capture the complex interaction between cultural values and educational practices that cannot be quantified numerically. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique,¹⁵ focusing strictly on individuals with direct authority and experience in *pegon* instruction. The study involved 12 key informants, consisting of three senior Kiai responsible for curriculum policy, five senior *kitab kuning* teachers who actively teach classical texts (*kitab kuning*), and four advanced *santri* (Islamic students) who have demonstrated mastery in *pegon* literacy. This composition ensures a multi-perspective understanding among policymakers, instructors, and learners.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over three months, from January to March 2025, through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The interviews took place in the participants' natural settings, specifically in classrooms and teacher offices, to ensure comfort and authenticity of the responses. Each interview session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' formal consent. To ensure the depth of the data, the interview protocol focused on three key dimensions. Representative questions included pedagogical dimension, "How is the *pegon* script introduced to novice students, and what specific difficulties do they encounter during the transliteration process?"; cultural dimension, "How do you view the role of *pegon* in preserving the Javanese Islamic identity amidst the modernization of education?"; and preservation strategy, "What specific methods are used to ensure the transmission of *pegon* literacy to the next generation?".

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana,¹⁶ which involves three concurrent flows of activity. First, data condensation was performed, in which the raw audio data were transcribed verbatim, and researchers conducted open coding to identify initial categories such as "linguistic barrier" and "cultural pride." Second, data display was utilized to organize the coded data into matrices and thematic networks, allowing the researchers to visualize the relationship between *pegon* usage and student comprehension. Finally, conclusion drawing/verification was conducted, in which the emerging themes were triangulated across sources, with interview results compared to philological analysis of physical manuscripts from the *pesantren* to ensure the validity and methodological rigor of the findings.

To ensure the methodological rigor of this study, we adopted the criteria of trustworthiness proposed by Lincoln and Guba,¹⁷ encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through prolonged field engagement (three months) and sustained observation of the *bandongan* sessions. We also employed source triangulation by cross-referencing interview data from *kiai* (policymakers) with the practical experiences of novice *santri* and the physical evidence of the manuscripts. Transferability was achieved by providing a "thick description" of the pedagogical setting, enabling other researchers to assess the applicability of these findings to *pesantren* contexts or to similar indigenous literacy practices globally. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a detailed audit trail of the data collection process, including field notes, interview transcripts, and coding matrices. Finally, confirmability was addressed through reflexivity; the researchers acknowledged their insider position within the Islamic education system while maintaining critical distance during the analysis to minimize bias.

Results and Discussion

Pedagogical Practices of *Pegon* at Mambaus Sholihin

Field observations at Mambaus Sholihin Gresik reveal that Arab *Pegon* mastery is not typically taught as a standalone linguistic subject but is integrated directly into the core curriculum of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) learning. The primary pedagogical mechanism identified is the *bandongan* system, locally referred to as *maknani* or *ngabsahi*. In this process, knowledge transmission relies heavily on the dictation method, in which the teacher (*kiai* or *ustaz*) reads the Arabic text, and students simultaneously translate it into Javanese using the *pegon* script.

Based on classroom observations conducted in the *ibtidaiyah* and *tsanawiyah* levels, the instructional process follows a rigid three-step sequence. First, the teacher reads the original Arabic text (*matan*) with correct *tajwîd*. Second, the teacher dictates the grammatical position (*i'râb*) of each word using Javanese codes, such as *utawi* (representing the subject) or *iku* (representing the predicate). Third, the teacher provides the lexical meaning in Javanese, which the students must transcribe immediately using the *pegon* script underneath the Arabic line. One of the senior teachers emphasized that this method forces students to learn the script by practice rather than by theory. In an interview conducted on February 12, 2025, regarding this direct method, he stated:

“The mastery of Pegon here is not achieved through theoretical classes where we teach the alphabet A to Z. Instead, the students are conditioned to write immediately when the Kyai speaks. The Bandongan method creates a sense of urgency; if they stop writing to think about the spelling, they will miss the meaning of the next sentence. So, the learning happens automatically and subconsciously through the pressure of the dictation speed.”

This practice results in a unique visual layout in the students' textbooks, known as *makna gandul* (hanging meaning). Physical examination of students' manuscripts shows that the *pegon* text is written diagonally in a smaller font than the original Arabic text. This layout requires high precision. A student from the *Tsanawiyah* level described the technical difficulty of this practice during an interview on February 15, 2025:

“At the beginning, the main challenge was the speed of dictation. My hand was stiff because I had to visualize how to write Javanese sounds with Arabic letters on the spot. The hardest part is distinguishing the vocal sounds like ‘o’ and ‘u’ while keeping up with the ustadz’s reading. However, after three months of daily practice, my hand naturally followed the sound without thinking about the letters anymore.”

The data further indicate that accuracy in *maknani* is strictly monitored. During the *sorogan* session (individual reading assessment), students are required to re-read their *pegon* notes in front of the teacher. Errors in writing the *pegon* script, such as missing a dot on the letter *fa*, which can change the meaning, are immediately corrected. This correction mechanism ensures that the *pegon* script functions as a precise, standardized code within the Mambaus Sholihin Gresik internal academic environment.

Linguistic and Technical Challenges

Data analysis indicates that students face significant phonological and orthographic interference during the initial acquisition of pegon literacy. The primary challenge identified is the “orthographic conversion” of Javanese sounds that do not exist in standard Arabic script, specifically the consonants *ng* (ڠ), *ny* (ښ), *c* (چ), and *g* (گ), as well as the Javanese vocal markers like *o* and *é* (*taling tarung*).

Based on interviews with first-year students of *ibtidaiyah*, the confusion often arises when distinguishing between standard Arabic vowels and modified Javanese vowels. A student described this cognitive load during a focus group discussion:

“The hardest part is not the Arabic language itself, but the spelling rules for Javanese sounds. For example, I often get confused when writing the sound ‘o’ (as in *sopo*/who) versus ‘u’ (as in *suku*/leg). Both use the wawu letter, but the pronunciation is different. If I forget to put the specific dot marker, the meaning changes completely. My hand feels stiff because I must think about the shape of the letter while trying to keep up with the kiai’s fast dictation.”

Furthermore, physical examination of students’ manuscripts reveals the technical difficulty of the *makna gandul* (hanging meaning) layout. In this tradition, students must write the Peking translation diagonally in a smaller font beneath the horizontal Arabic line. Observations of 15 student notebooks showed that approximately 60% of novice students struggle with spatial management. Their handwriting often overlaps with the original Arabic text or becomes too small to be legible. This illegibility creates a secondary problem; students are unable to review their own notes effectively after class.

Beyond technical writing issues, data from senior teachers reveal a decline in “paleographic literacy,” the ability to read older handwriting styles. While current students are proficient in reading standardized printed *pegon* (computer fonts used in modern *kitâb*), they show significant difficulty with manuscripts from previous generations of kiai. One of the senior archivists at the *pesantren* noted:

“There is a generational gap in literacy. Students today can write pegon rapidly because they are dictating what they hear. However, when we ask them to read the manuscripts left by the founding kiai from 50 years ago, many give up. They find the cursive style (*khathth*) and the lack of vowel markers (*gundul*) in the old texts too difficult to decipher compared to the neat fonts they see in their textbooks.”

This finding suggests that while *pegon* is still widely used, the depth of literacy regarding historical manuscripts is diminishing among the younger generation of *santri*.

Beyond the cognitive challenges, the physical materiality of the *pegon* manuscripts plays a crucial role in the learning ecosystem. Observations of the *kitab kuning* used by students reveal a standardized “visual architecture” that dictates the learning process. The wide margins and the interlinear spaces are not empty voids but are strategic spaces designed for *maknani*.

Students use specific ink colors to differentiate information layers: black ink is used exclusively for the original Arabic text, while red or blue ink is used for the Pehlevi translation. This color-coding serves as a visual mnemonic, helping students distinguish the sacred text from vernacular interpretation. Furthermore, the diagonal orientation of the *pegon* script written at a 45-degree angle beneath the horizontal Arabic line creates a distinct visual rhythm. A senior *ustâdz* noted that this layout is not merely aesthetic but functional; it prevents the student's eye from skipping the translation while reading the Arabic text. This "visual discipline" forces the eye to travel in a zigzag motion, ensuring that the grammatical code and lexical meaning are processed simultaneously with the source text.

Preservation Efforts in the Digital Era

To counter the potential erosion of local literacy, Mambaus Sholihin Gresik has implemented specific preservation strategies that extend beyond the traditional classroom. Data from the curriculum department reveals that the preservation of *pegon* is institutionalized through two main mechanisms: structural enforcement and digital adaptation.

First, the *pesantren* enforces a mandatory linguistic rule requiring that internal communications be written in *pegon*. Observations of the dormitory environment confirm that public announcements, dormitory regulations, and student wall magazines (*majalah dinding*) are predominantly written in *pegon* script. A senior administrator explained that this policy aims to maintain *pegon* as a "living script" rather than a mere academic artifact. In an interview, the head of the Education Committee stated:

"If *pegon* is only used in the *kitab kuning* class, students will forget it once they graduate. Therefore, we require the student organization (*pengurus pesantren*) to write their meeting minutes and public announcements in *pegon*. This creates an environment where reading *Pegon* becomes a daily habit, not just a study obligation."

Second, the data shows a conscious effort to adapt *pegon* to modern media. The *pesantren* has initiated a program to digitize the manuscripts of the founding *kiai* to prevent physical decay. Furthermore, to foster interest among the "digital native" generation, the institution holds annual "*pegon* calligraphy competitions." These events encourage students to explore *pegon* not only as a medium of instruction but as an art form (*khathth*). Winners of these competitions are often tasked with creating digital typography for the *pesantren*'s social media content, effectively merging traditional literacy with modern digital platforms.

Beyond the cognitive process, the physical materiality of *pegon* manuscripts at Mambaus Sholihin Gresik serves as a strategic educational space. Observations of students' *kitab kuning* reveal a standardized "visual architecture" specifically designed for *maknani*. The wide margins and interlinear gaps are not merely voids but are functional zones for Javanese annotations. Students employ a sophisticated color-coding system to manage information layers: black ink is reserved for the sacred Arabic text (*matan*), while red or blue ink is used for the *pegon* translations to prevent visual confusion.

Furthermore, the 45-degree diagonal orientation of the *pegon* script underneath the horizontal Arabic text creates a specific visual rhythm. This layout is not merely aesthetic; an ustadz noted that this “visual discipline” prevents the eye from skipping the vernacular translation while reading the source text. This zigzag eye movement ensures that grammatical codes and lexical meanings are processed in synchrony with Arabic syntax.

Pegon as Cognitive Scaffolding in SLA

The empirical evidence regarding the *maknani* method necessitates a critical re-evaluation of Arab Pegon, shifting the academic discourse from cultural preservation to pedagogical utility. While previous research has predominantly categorized localized scripts through a cultural or translational prism,¹⁸ our analysis establishes that its primary function is fundamentally pedagogical. Specifically, within the framework of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), *pegon* operates not merely as a script, but as a sophisticated “cognitive scaffolding” mechanism.

Drawing on Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the interlinear translation practiced in *bandongan* effectively bridges the gap between the students’ actual developmental level (Javanese literacy) and their potential development (Arabic mastery). This finding significantly refines Anonby’s¹⁹ observation on script adaptation and emphatic consonants. At the same time, Anonby views adaptation primarily as a linguistic necessity for phonetic representation, we contend that in the pesantren context, it is a deliberate instructional strategy. By mapping Javanese grammatical codes directly onto Arabic syntax, *Pegon* is perceived by instructors and students to function as a cognitive scaffold that helps lower linguistic barriers and facilitates engagement with classical texts.

Furthermore, this approach corroborates Pennington’s²⁰ findings regarding the efficacy of auditory input in language learning. The *bandongan* method, which compels students to listen and transcribe simultaneously, ensures that phonological acquisition precedes semantic understanding. Although Davenport and Hannahs²¹ emphasize that deep phonological awareness is a prerequisite for literacy, our data suggest that *pegon* shortcuts this process by using the mother tongue (L1) as a metalinguistic tool. Unlike the “direct method,” which often forbids L1 use, *pegon* uses Javanese sounds as an affective anchor, in line with the affective filter hypothesis. This strategy effectively lowers the learning anxiety identified by Winarso and Haqq,²² enabling students to decipher complex *kitab kuning* arguments without waiting for full Arabic fluency. Thus, *pegon*’s persistence is not a refusal to modernize but rather aligns with the “multilingual turn” in contemporary SLA theory, suggesting that leveraging local linguistic resources serves as a vital pedagogical support in facilitating engagement with classical texts in a foreign language.

This pedagogical synergy further illuminates the role of *pegon* as a mechanism for epistemic agency, where localized scripts serve as a transformative tool in decolonizing language education. The integration of Javanese code into Arabic syntax does not merely facilitate translation but represents a sophisticated form of “translanguaging” that empowers students to negotiate meaning across disparate linguistic systems. Recent studies by Aziz et al.²³ Highlight that such metacognitive strategies are essential for fostering learner autonomy in traditional settings, as they allow students to restructure complex information actively. This process aligns with the findings of Budiharso et al.,²⁴ who argue that the survival of *pesantren* pedagogical traditions like *pegon* is rooted in their ability to adapt classical knowledge to contemporary democratic and educational needs. Furthermore, the diversity of content in these ancient manuscripts, as explored by Daffa and Nurmutia,²⁵ suggests that the script functions as a vital repository of national identity, protecting it from the homogenization of global linguistic standards. While Fidayani and Ammar²⁶ observe that modern curriculum integration often struggles with linguistic barriers, the *pegon* method at Mambaus Sholihin Gresik proves that indigenous scaffolding can effectively bridge the gap between traditional Azhari standards and local comprehension. Ultimately, as Maftuhin²⁷ posits, the act of “translating the untranslatable” through interlinear scripts like *pegon* is not a sign of linguistic deficiency but a sophisticated hermeneutical achievement that maintains the sanctity of the source text while ensuring its practical accessibility.

This research further supports the “Multilingual Turn” in contemporary Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory. By affirming *pegon*’s scholarly legitimacy, we challenge the monolingual, Arabic-centric paradigms that often dominate Islamic education. *Pegon* embodies an indigenous epistemology that ensures sacred knowledge remains accessible without requiring the total erasure of local linguistic identity. This pedagogical engine demonstrates that traditional *pesantren* ecosystems are fertile grounds for culturally responsive pedagogy.

Cultural Mediation and Identity Formation: *Pegon* as Epistemic Resistance

Beyond its pedagogical utility, the persistence of *pegon* in the digital era represents a profound act of cultural resistance and epistemic sovereignty. Our analysis suggests that for the *pesantren* community, *Pegon* is not merely a neutral transcription tool, but a deliberate “identity marker” that distinguishes the hydrology of Indonesian Islam from the hegemony of global Arabism. Language acculturation, the modification of Arabic script to accommodate Javanese phonology, is a conscious declaration of cultural hybridity.²⁸ It signifies that adopting Islamic theology does not necessitate erasing local Javanese identity. By maintaining this script, the *pesantren* actively constructs a unique cultural space where Islam is indigenized, ensuring that the religion remains grounded in the archipelago’s soil rather than becoming an import.²⁹

Critics might argue that maintaining such an archaic script is an inefficient anachronism in the face of modernization. However, we contend that this “inefficiency” is precisely the point. The deliberate preservation of *pegon* functions as a “cultural firewall.” In an era where transnational Islamic ideologies often promote a puritanical version of Islam that rejects local wisdom, *pegon* serves as a guardian of religious moderation (*wasathiyah*). This aligns with Marzuki et al.’s findings on multicultural education in Salaf Pesantren, which suggest that preventing radicalism requires strong local cultural roots.³⁰ By forcing students to access *kitab kuning* through the lens of Javanese-Pegon nuances, the *pesantren* prevents literal interpretations often associated with translation-free reading, thereby preserving the unique character of Indonesian Islam, which is tolerant and adaptive.³¹

Furthermore, this phenomenon functions as an integral system of historical preservation. Just as specific rituals are maintained to assert existence, *Pegon* functions as the collective memory of the *pesantren* intellectual genealogy. It proves that the institution does not simply “download” knowledge from the Middle East but processes it through a local epistemological filter. Suryani et al.³² emphasize that learning the *kitab kuning* with *pegon* meaning is crucial for preserving the intellectual work of Indonesian Ulama. Thus, *Pegon*’s survival is not a refusal to modernize, but a strategic form of “adaptive conservatism” that embraces the essence of modernity while strictly controlling the medium to ensure that the “soul” of the institution remains distinctly Javanese-Islamic.³³

The phenomenon of *pegon* in Gresik resonates with broader sociolinguistic trends in the Islamic world, specifically the tradition of *Ajam* scripts. Like the *Jawi* script in the Malay world or the Perso-Arabic script in Iran and South Asia, *Pegon* represents a universal strategy of Islamic civilizations to vernacularize the Qur’anic message.³⁴ However, a critical distinction emerges from our findings. While *Jawi* in Malaysia has historically served as a medium for state administration and literature, *pegon* in the Javanese *pesantren* context has evolved into a highly specialized pedagogical cipher.

Unlike *Jawi*, which is often read linearly, *Pegon*’s primary survival mechanism lies in its grammatical integration (*makna gandul*), which binds it to Arabic syntax. This suggests that *pegon*’s resilience is distinct from that of other modified Arabic scripts; its survival is guaranteed not by its status as a national language, but by its symbiotic utility for accessing theological *kitab kuning*. This comparison highlights the unique position of Indonesian *pesantren* education in preserving a script that has largely vanished from public administration but thrives in the scholastic domain.

The resilience of Arab *Pegon* in Gresik resonates with broader sociolinguistic trends in the Muslim world, particularly the *Ajam* script tradition. Similar to the *Jawi* script in the Malay Peninsula or the Perso-Arabic scripts in South Asia, *pegon* represents a universal strategy of Islamic civilizations to indigenize the Qur’anic message. However, a critical

distinction emerged; while Jawi in Malaysia has historically functioned as a medium for state administration, *pegon* has evolved into a highly specialized “pedagogical cipher” exclusive to the *pesantren* scholastic domain. Unlike Jawi, which is often read linearly, *pegon*’s survival is guaranteed by its symbiotic utility in the *makna gandul* system, which binds it directly to Arabic syntax.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Arab Pegon functions beyond a mere cultural artifact; it operates as a sophisticated pedagogical instrument and a mechanism of cultural resistance. First, regarding the principal findings, the research demonstrates that the *Bandongan* method utilizes *pegon* as “cognitive scaffolding.” By mapping Arabic syntax onto Javanese grammatical codes, this system reduces cognitive load and allows novice learners to access complex *kitab kuning* arguments without waiting for full linguistic fluency. Theoretically, this study contributes to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature by challenging the monolingual “Direct Method” paradigm. In Arabic language acquisition specifically, *Pegon* fosters incidental target language (L2) input through culturally resonant texts, bridging affective filters for faster uptake. It validates the “multilingual turn” theory, proving that leveraging the mother tongue (L1) as a meta-linguistic tool significantly accelerates the mastery of a classical target language (L2). Furthermore, it conceptualizes *pegon* as a form of “epistemic sovereignty,” offering a theoretical model of how indigenous communities can adopt global Islamic theology without erasing their local cultural identity. Practically, the implications for Islamic education are twofold. Curriculum developers should reconsider the prohibition on local languages in Arabic instruction, as vernacular scripts serve as effective “affective anchors” that reduce student anxiety. Additionally, Islamic educational institutions should institutionalize the preservation of local scripts not just as museum exhibits, but also as functional media in administrative and creative domains, to ensure the continuity of moderate Islam in the digital era.

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