

Reconciling Mosques: Antagonistic Tolerance and Conflict Management among Religious Groups in East Indonesia

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Abstract

The use of mosques as public spaces is not immune to contestation and conflict. Various Islamic denominations vie for control over God's house and seek to impose their religious practices. This article draws from field research conducted in Lombok, Indonesia, which has over a thousand mosques. The study focuses on the factors, processes, and management of conflicts within mosques. In-depth interviews with mosque superintendents, religious leaders, societal leaders, and congregants shed light on the issue. The research suggests that some mosque-based conflicts can be resolved through accommodation, tolerance, and compromise. Mosque superintendents can promote peace-building in their communities daily by utilizing win-win solutions. However, conflicts involving Puritan transnational Islamic groups and groups perceived as deviant are particularly challenging and can lead to social segregation. These minority groups are often viewed as less tolerant and a threat to the majority's long-standing religious traditions. On the other hand, collaboration and solidarity between superintendents and congregants of a mosque can help protect it from occupation by transnational Islamic groups and foster a sense of community among the majority Islamic group. The relationship between majority and minority Islamic denominations is often marked by antagonistic tolerance and communal tolerance.

Keywords: Mosque, contestation, religious conflict, conflict management

Introduction

Lombok is known as Pulau Seribu Masjid, which means "an island with a thousand mosques." This is because the island, which covers an area of 4,738.65 square kilometers, has many mosques.¹ For Muslims in Lombok, a mosque is a multifunctional house of worship. In addition to its primary function as *taok sembahyang* (a place for congregational prayers), a mosque serves as *taok ngaji* (a place for learning the Qur'an), *taok bebadak* (a place for Islamic proselytization), *taok rowah* (a place for feasts), and *taok ngatur* (a place for communal meetings).² Some scholars argue that the high number of mosques in Lombok, particularly in Mataram, reflects a cultural contestation against the high number of Hindu temples.³

A mosque displays a symbol of obvious Islamic facets and Muslim unity.⁴ Despite differences in educational and social backgrounds, economic status, denomination, and religious organization, Muslims can come together and pray in a mosque. However, there are instances in which competition for religious influence and authority can lead to conflicts and even violence within the community. These conflicts may arise due to dissatisfaction with mosque management (*takmir masjid*) or disagreements over applying the most authentic worship rituals, the closest practices to the Prophetic tradition (*sunnah*).⁵ Conflict problems and potentials exist everywhere, including in sacred spaces such as mosques.⁶

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¹ The data from 2010 show that 472 new mosques were built in four years. *Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat dalam Angka Tahun 2016*, 183.

² Muh. Hasanain, *Refungsionalisasi Peran Masjid dalam Pengembangan Pendidikan Umat di Lombok Timur* (Dissertation, UIN Mataram, 2021).

³ Every Hindu built a small temple called *sanggha* in their yard. They also built a big temple in their community. The temple is located southeast of the community's settlement. See S. Suprpto, "Religious Leaders and Peace Building: The Role of Tuan Guru and Pedanda in Conflict Resolution in Lombok-Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 53, no. 1 (2015): 225–250.

⁴ Mohamad Abdun Nasir, "Islam in Diaspora: Shari'a Law, Piety and Brotherhood at al-Farooq Mosque, Atlanta," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 54, no. 1 (2016): 59–93.

⁵ A mosque becomes an arena for negotiation and contestation of religious discourses. See Tutin, "The Mosques of Southeast Asia: A Narrative of Representation and Negotiation," in *Southeast Asian Islam: Integration and Indigenisation (1st ed.)*, ed. Nasr M. Arif, Abbas Panakkal (Routledge India, 2024), 263–289.

⁶ The mosque's involvement in conflict adds to the long list of internal disputes among Muslims. See Patrick D. Gaffney, "Authority and the Mosque in Upper Egypt: The Islamic Preacher as Image and Actor," in *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning (RLE Economy of Middle East): Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse*, ed. William R. Roff (Routledge, 2015), 199.

Research and publication on this issue are rare. Most mosque-related studies focused on mosque management (*imarat al-masjid*), fundraising strategies, and maintenance.⁷ Studies on mosque-based conflict and its resolution are scarce.⁸ Ahmad Salehudin conducted one of the rare studies on mosque-based conflict. He found a cleft mosque in Yogyakarta. The existence of a new Puritan Islamic movement creates three Islamic denominations: Nahdlatul Ulama Islam, Muhammadiyah Islam, and Tauhid Islam.⁹ Such contestation occurs in Java Island and outside Java, including Aceh, the westernmost part of Indonesia.¹⁰

Mosque-based conflict addresses religious ritual differences as well as political and ideological issues. Zulfan Taufiq and Al-Makassary discovered that a mosque becomes an arena for competition over power between a traditional group and a radical one. The radical group used several mosques in Bekasi, one of the closest cities to Jakarta (the capital city of Indonesia), to seed radical transnational ideology.¹¹ A political and ideological contestation also obviously appears in a conflict involving the managers of Muhammadiyah and the elites of Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS).¹² This conflict heated and pushed the central administrators of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama to issue an instruction to protect all organizational assets, such as educational institutions and mosques, from sabotage by other Islamic groups.¹³ Such conflict over power has made mosques, in Jajang Jahroni's term,¹⁴ a fighting arena between Islamic groups. These studies confirm that a mosque as a sacred space is not free from conflict and contestation.

The above studies focused on tension and conflict. Research on how actors, religious leaders, and mosque superintendents deal with and manage mosque-based conflict is scarce. Conflict resolution research is essential. Conflict among Muslim activists in controlling and influencing the congregation's religiosity always exists. This in-depth study delves into the potential conflict factors and identifies how mosque activists manage conflict creatively. Academically, this study develops conflict knowledge, conflict resolution, and peace-building. This research also suggests several valuable recommendations for the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the local government, and other stakeholders in strengthening the social early warning system. This study focused on the factors and processes of the conflict and elaborated on the patterns of conflict management creatively developed by the mosque superintendents. This research also explored the best practices of conflict management models and tolerance between diverse Islamic groups competing over a mosque.

Method

This article draws on extensive fieldwork conducted in multiple mosques across West Lombok, North Lombok, Central Lombok, and East Lombok. The data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 65 key informants, including mosque superintendents (*takmir*), religious leaders, societal leaders, and congregations. To protect the identities of the research participants, pseudonyms have been utilized in

⁷ Bara and Riyan Pradesyah, "Mosque Financial Management in The Pandemic Covid 19," Proceeding International Seminar of Islamic Studies, Vol. 2, 2021; Zulkarnen Mora, Dias Setianingsih, and Bustami Bustami, "The Effectiveness of Entrepreneurship Management on the Mosque Prosperity Agency in Langsa in terms of Sharia," *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal): Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3, no. 4 (2020): 2914–2925.

⁸ Studies of conflict and its management in houses of worship were primarily conducted in Churches. See Hugh F. Halverstadt, *Managing Church Conflict*, Louisville (Westminster John Knox Press, 1991); Jim Van Yperen, *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict* (Moody Publishers, 2008).

⁹ Ahmad Salehudin, *Masjid yang Terbelah di Gunung Sari: Tarik-Menarik antar Aliran Islam dalam Masyarakat Jawa* (PhD Thesis, Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2006).

¹⁰ Muhammad Ansor, *Berebut Paling Saleh: Kontestasi Orang Yasin dan Orang Sunnah di Sidodadi Kabupaten Aceh Tamiang*, ICIS XII Sunan Ampel. Surabaya, 25 (2012), 1461-1484.

¹¹ Zulfan Taufik, "Berebut Kuasa Rumah Tuhan: Ekspansi Ideologi Radikal Melalui Masjid di Kota Bekasi," *Islam Realitas: Journal of Islamic and Social Studies* 4, no. 1 (2018): 21–38; Ridwan Al-Makassary et al., *Benih-benih Islam Radikal di Masjid Studi Kasus Jakarta dan Solo* (CSRC, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2010).

¹² Syaifudin Zuhri, "The Mosque as Religious Sphere: Looking at The Conflict Over Al-Muttaqun Mosque" in *Regime Change, Democracy and Islam: The Case of Indonesia, Islam Research Programme* (Jakarta, 2013), 295-321. Recent research shows that PKS utilizes tahfidz schools to attract the public's support. See Jajang Jahroni, "The Rise of Tahfidz Schools in Contemporary Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 31, no. 2 (2024): 305-335.

¹³ "PBBU Minta PKS Hentikan Perebutan Masjid" (accessed on May 3, 2022); Abdurrahman Wahid (ed.), *Ilusi Negara Islam: Ekspansi Gerakan Islam Transnasional di Indonesia* (LibForAll Foundation, 2009). PKS is recognized as an organization that awakens Islamism. See Akh. Muzakki, "When the Middle Class Coincides with Islamism: A Preliminary Study of Islamic Populism in Recent Developments of Indonesia," *The Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies (QIJIS)* 12, no. 1 (2024): 177-212.

¹⁴ Abdul Wahid, "Masjid, Isu Toleransi Keagamaan, dan Penguatan Masyarakat Multikultural," in *Masjid di Era Milenial: Arah Baru Literasi Keagamaan*, ed. Jajang Jahroni & Irfan Abubakar (CSRC UIN Jakarta, 2019).

mosques and other places. Data analysis is conducted through several stages: data condensation,¹⁵ data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Interview data were classified into themes such as conflict causes, patterns, resolution, and the actors' creativity in managing mosques. The researcher uses triangulation to maintain data reliability and validity by conducting various data collection techniques such as observation, document study, and interviews. The researcher has long experience as a researcher and religious conflict mediator living in Lombok for 25 years, which allowed thorough observation, document study, and interviews. The researcher also conducted member checking with several key informants and peer debriefing with his colleagues, who are experts in the sociology of religion, religious education, and conflict resolution.

Contestation, Antagonistic Tolerance and Conflict Resolution

George Weige evaluates fairly that religion may become a source of conflict and has creative potential for social tolerance, democratic pluralism, and non-violent conflict resolution.¹⁶ Many scholars discuss the contribution of Islam to conflict resolution¹⁷ and elaborate Islamic principles in it.¹⁸

Robert M. Hayden proposes another theory of interreligious conflict. Hayden introduces an antagonistic tolerance model that “explains long-term patterns of relationship between members of groups which identify themselves and each other as ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ communities, differentiated primarily based on religion, coalescing but rarely intermarrying.”¹⁹ Antagonistic tolerance is negative or passive tolerance towards the existence of others. Antagonistic tolerance is an effort to allow the dominance of the other or noninterference, while positive tolerance means acknowledging and respecting others regardless of existing differences and disagreements. Therefore, coexistence without antagonistic feelings is rather impossible. In antagonistic tolerance, diverse religious groups share religious sites. However, they do so in a competitive sharing mode. The competitive sharing phenomenon can be observed in the Balkans and India.²⁰ According to Hayden, tolerance is merely a pragmatic adaptation to a situation where embracing the other is more feasible than repressing them.

In contrast, Jeremy Menchik researched tolerance among internal Muslim groups. Menchik defines tolerance as the “willingness to put up with those things one rejects or opposes.”²¹ Menchik found that Indonesian Muslims are more tolerant towards non-Muslims than other Islamic denominations. Focusing on Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Persis, Menchik concluded that tolerance practiced by Indonesian Muslims is tolerance without liberalism or communal tolerance. Different from liberal tolerance, communal tolerance prioritizes faith and group choice.²² Consequently, individual freedom is restricted.²³

Do tensions not lead to violence as long as one group dominates over the other? Religious-based conflict in Indonesia often violates minority groups. The minority groups such as Ahmadiyya and Shia experience violence from the dominant group supported by the ruler. Therefore, some researchers perceive internal religious conflict as a result of competition over religious authority among religious elites.²⁴ Competition over religious authority and power has caused violence against the Shia community in Sampang-Madura and the Ahmadiyya community in Lombok.²⁵ Hamdi explains that the

¹⁵ Data condensation refers to selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data appearing in the entire corpus (body) of written field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.) (SAGE Publications, 2014), 31.

¹⁶ George Weige, “Religion and Peace an Argument Complexified,” in *Resolving Third World Conflict: Challenge for New Era*, ed. Syeryl Brown and Kimber Schaub (US Institute of Peace Press, 1992), 173. See also Muhammad Shahbaz Manj et al., “Role of Religion in Global Peace and Conflict Resolution,” *Qualitative Research* 23, no. 1 (2023): 14-21.

¹⁷ Ralph H. Salmi, Cesar Adib Majul, and George Kilpatrick Tanham, *Islam and Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practices* (University Press of America, 1998); Uzma Rehman, “Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Islam: Toward Reconciliation and Complementarity between Western and Muslim approaches,” *Islamic Studies* 50, no. 1 (2011): 55-69.

¹⁸ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam: Theory and Practice* (University Press of Florida, 2003).

¹⁹ Robert M. Hayden, “Intersecting Religioscapes and Antagonistic Tolerance: Trajectories of Competition and Sharing Religious Spaces in the Balkans,” *Space and Polity* 17, no. 3 (2013): 320-334.

²⁰ Robert M. Hayden, “Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans,” *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 2 (2002): 205-231.

²¹ Jeremy Menchik, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 124.

²³ *Ibid.*, chap. 6.

²⁴ Li, Chun Leung, Khalid Isa, Khairul Anuwar Mustaffa, Ainul Asyraf Lokman, and Mohamad Fikri Mohd Bakri. “From Colonial Legacies to Contemporary Challenges: The Muslim Experience in Hong Kong and Macau,” *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 2 (2024): 277-292.

²⁵ Ahmad Zainul Hamdi, “Klaim Religious Authority dalam Konflik Sunni-Syi'i Sampang Madura,” *Islamica Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 2, no. 6 (2013): 215-231.

Sunni-Shi'i conflict in Sampang Madura is a contestation over religious authority predominantly exercised by *kiyais* (Muslim scholars). The Sunni NU *kiyais* are superordinate, exercising their position as the ruling class. They maintain their status quo.²⁶ Erni also argues that the Ahmadiyya conflict in Lombok is competition over control among religious leaders or *tuan gurus*.²⁷

A further question is how to manage religious conflict and prevent it from being destructive. In *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution*, Louis Kriesberg, cited by Panggabean and Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, states that conflict may occur and end destructively or constructively. Kriesberg recommends three mechanisms for ending conflict constructively: internal group mechanism, intergroup mechanism, and external mechanism.²⁸ Regarding internal group mechanisms, religious leaders may make several efforts such as pacifying their followers, restricting the issue for hushing the mass, reminding family members or community to refrain themselves, disseminating religious teachings of the importance of peacemaking, and establishing social sanction against those who violate internal group agreement.²⁹

Religious conflict management has several strategies, including competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.³⁰ Each strategy is effective for a particular cause and type of conflict. Religious leaders who exert control and reputation may develop conflict management and peace-building strategies. Peace-building activities are essential for community members to reduce tension and find common ground.³¹

Mosque-Based Conflict Management: Cases, Patterns and Strategies

This section delineates several mosque-related conflict cases, root causes, patterns, and management. Mosque superintendents and religious leaders prefer accommodation, compromise, and collaboration, while competition is only for a particular conflict. Tolerance among Islamic groups exists peculiarly. The following passages explain these causes and strategies further.

Friday Prayer Observance in Several Mosques Consecutively Every Week

Dasan Agung is a neighborhood with the most mosques in Mataram City Lombok. In this urban village, there are six great mosques. The distance between one mosque and the other is not far, less than 300 meters. They are large mosques (*masjid jami'*). Such great mosques are built only in the capital city of a district on Java Island. Furthermore, Al-Takwa and Hubbul Wathan Islamic Centre, which are government mosques, are not far from those six large mosques.

The many mosques in Dasan Agung have caused controversy regarding Friday prayer observance. Such controversy triggered tension. Conflict occurred because of various religious doctrines and sects or schools. According to Shafi'i School, Friday prayer has to be held in one mosque in one neighborhood. *Ta'addud al-jum'ah*, Friday prayer observance in several places in one village is prohibited. Initially, every mosque in Dasan Agung held Friday prayer. The superintendents of each mosque did not succumb. They claimed their mosque was the most representative and authoritative for Friday prayer observance. Consequently, every mosque competed to become the fastest in performing Friday prayer activities. This harmful competition has happened for an extended period. From a sociological perspective, such disintegration causes estrangement or social friction. Ultimately, societal life lacks harmony.

The mosque superintendents and religious leaders held discussions and mediation to solve such issues. They agreed to observe Friday prayer in Riadus Salihin Mosque, Raudatul Abror Mosque, Al-Takrim Mosque, and Al-Hidayah Mosque consecutively in one mosque weekly. All community members approved this practice. The four mosques reached a win-win solution through collaboration and compromise.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Erni Budiwanti, "Jamaah Ahmadiyah dan Resistensi Sosial di Lombok," *Jurnal Harmoni* 6, no. 23 (2007).

²⁸ Samsu R. Panggabean and Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, *Merawat Kebersamaan: Polisi, Kebebasan Beragama dan Perdamaian*, ed. Rafsadi, Irshad, and Husni Mubarak (Yayasan Paramadina, 2011).

²⁹ S. Suprpto, "Religious Leaders and Peace Building: The Role of Tuan Guru and Pedanda in Conflict Resolution in Lombok-Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 53, no. 1 (2015): 225-250.

³⁰ Ritu Kaushal and Catherine T. Kwantes, "The Role of Culture and Personality in Choice of Conflict Management Strategy," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 30, no. 5 (2006): 579-603.

³¹ Norman Chivasa, "Reflections on the Everyday Dimensions of Peacebuilding in Seke District, Zimbabwe," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 18, no. 1 (2023): 105-109.

Friday prayer observance in several mosques consecutively every week is also practiced in Sekarbela, Karang Kemong, Karang Baru, Dasan Tapen, and other places in Mataram, West Lombok, and North Lombok. By doing so, Muslims do not violate the *ta'addud al-jum'ah* prohibition. Sociologically, a mosque still functions as a means of social integration. A Friday prayer is a medium for socialization and reinforcement of community brotherhood. According to religious leaders, Friday prayer observance in only one of several mosques in one neighborhood aims to maintain community fellowship. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Friday prayer observance in one of several mosques respectively was halted temporarily to prevent COVID-19 transmission.³²

Every mosque is allowed to hold daily congregational prayers. Each mosque is also allowed to celebrate Islamic festivals such as the Prophet's birthday, Isra' Mi'raj, and the like in their mosque. The community also may hold a wedding ceremony in a mosque. The spirit of the mosque enlivenment in Dasan Agung, a crowded urban village in Mataram, is evident. Likewise, mosque construction, renovation, and maintenance remain up to date. More people live in this neighborhood. It is feasible in the future that every mosque will hold Friday prayer every week; there will be no Friday prayer observance in several mosques consecutively every week. A mosque will not be sufficient to accommodate people, whose number increases every year.

Such conflict management maintains harmony in the Muslim community in Dasan Agung and other Lombok areas. Religious life and social relations take place successfully and actively. Robust solidarity preservation in Dasan Agung protects its mosques from the intrusion of new preachers from the transnational Puritan movement. The Salafi-Wahabi denomination, for instance, cannot intrude on Dasan Agung mosques.

The Dasan Agung community also discusses various issues potentially creating controversy and conflict in the mosques. They discuss the construction and maintenance of mosques and urban village governance. Moreover, the most frequently discussed issue is the distribution of *zakat*, *infaq*, and *sadaqah* (obligatory and optional charities) gathered by the mosque superintendents. One of the superintendents said, "We always discuss big issues. We choose a kinship approach to solve a problem so that it does not need to be reported to the police."³³ In other words, non-litigation approaches through mediation are preferred over litigation.

Twin Mosques with One Minaret and Role-Sharing Model

The mosque superintendents in Banyu Mulek, West Lombok, demonstrate another best conflict management practice. They had two great mosques separated by a road. The superintendents agreed to build a bridge connecting the two mosques: Nurul Badiah Mosque in West Banyumulek and Silaturahmi Mosque in East Banyumulek. The two mosques are united now and named "Masjid Kembar Menara Tunggal" (Twin Mosques with One Minaret).

Before the two mosques unification, religious conflict occurred for an extended period in Banyu Mulek. According to Haji Jamiludin, a local public figure and the chief of the construction of the Twin Mosques with One Minaret, opposition between two groups in the society happened years ago. The two groups held different religious understandings. One group obligated performing congregational daily five prayers in a mosque. On the other hand, the other group viewed that Muslims do not have to perform *dzuhur* and *ashr* prayers in a mosque because most of the congregation members are farmers who work from morning to evening. They are reluctant to perform congregational prayers in a mosque during the day. Such various religious understandings triggered tension. Finally, the other group did not want to perform congregational prayers in Nurul Badiah Mosque. They separated themselves from their old congregation and built a new mosque named Silaturahmi Mosque.

Social friction extended afterward. Society was split even at the family level. A family might consist of members affiliated with the two different mosques. This is similar to various denominations in Christianity. Some family members performed prayers in the Nurul Badiah Mosque, while others performed prayers in the Silaturahim Mosque. Every party claimed that their mosque was the most beautiful and proper. Such detrimental competition occurred for years.

³² The Indonesian government issued instructions for social distancing and crowd avoidance during the Covid-19 pandemic.

³³ Johan Rahmatullah, the superintendent of Al-Hidayah Mosque, interview, September 23, 2022.

When one mosque held a religious activity, the other did not want to lose and did the same. Loud noises were heard from the speakers of the two mosques simultaneously. When one mosque renovated its building, the other did the same. "At that time, the two mosques had different management. If one mosque were painted, the other would be painted too," said Jamiludin, remembering the friction. The superintendents raised community support persistently. The community members had to support the renovation of the two mosques by providing quite a lot of money and participating directly in the work process. They complained about this issue.

Furthermore, interest-based conflict also emerged. The conflict between the twin mosques was also related to competition over their management. Some of the congregations who did not like the leadership of Nurul Badiah Mosque left and joined the next Mosque, Silaturahmi. Dissatisfaction often appeared when one family managed and controlled the mosque fully and did not open sufficient access for other families to participate in the management. The competition between the two mosques went on for a prolonged time. It included Friday prayer observance. The faster the mosque was in Friday prayer preaching, the more legitimate it was.

The youth leaders realized such destructive competition. Therefore, in 2002, they initiated uniting religious leaders, societal leaders, and mosque superintendents. They had a discussion and agreed on several matters. *First*, the old management of the two mosques was dissolved. *Second*, the religious leaders elected the new management of the two mosques. *Third*, five-time and Friday prayers were held in the two mosques successively. *Fourth*, the mosques were renovated with quite similar exterior designs. *Fifth*, one minaret and bridge were built to connect the two mosques. *Sixth*, the name of the two mosques was changed to *Masjid Kembar Menara Tunggal* as a unification symbol. *Seventh*, the congregations and donors funded the two mosque renovations.

Through a win-win agreement, the buildings of the two mosques were unified majestically. This unification ended all the previous controversies between the mosque superintendents and congregations. The mosque superintendents and religious leaders chose to compromise and collaborate to resolve conflict. All the parties involved did not lose and could save their faces. Muslim leaders in Lombok generally prefer accommodation in conflict resolution. Such accommodation is also observed in their willingness to maintain local tradition, which is partly integrated and, to some extent, adopted into Islamic law.³⁴

Strengthening Solidarity and Preventing Islamic Transnational Movement

Most mosque superintendents use compromise, collaboration, and accommodation strategies in conflict management. However, in a particular situation, this model does not work well. Alternatively, the mosque superintendents choose to compete. Competing takes a win-lose approach. This strategy is usually applied in mosque-based conflict management in housing complexes. The real estate developers build mosques in housing complexes as a part of public facilities for the residents. They have different religious backgrounds. Therefore, a mosque often becomes an arena for contestation between religious activists.

In housing complexes, the election of mosque superintendents takes place dynamically and contestably. The mosque superintendents influence the religiosity feature of the congregation. The superintendents are responsible for maintaining the mosque. Their most crucial role is choosing the prayer leaders (*imam*) and creating the schedule of prayer leaders, preachers, and religious teachers who lead the congregational prayers and spiritual activities. The mosque's preachers, prayer leaders, and Islamic teachers greatly influence the congregation, who follow their religious tradition. If the mosque *imam* and superintendents are from NU or NW, the practiced religious tradition follows NU or NW. Similarly, if the *imam*, preacher, and Islamic teacher are from Muhammadiyah, the religiosity model of the mosque congregation is Muhammadiyah tradition.

Salafi-Wahabi groups also make efforts to deliver their teachings in the mosques of housing complexes. However, they face resistance. The mosque superintendents are not deliberately letting the new one replace their prevailing religious tradition. For instance, in the Tulip housing complex, Salafi preachers tried to hold Islamic teachings in Al-Haromain Mosque. Nevertheless, they failed because the mosque

³⁴ Miftahul Huda (2019), "Toward a New Theology for a Religiously Restless Region: The Accommodation of Local Traditions into Islamic Law in Lombok," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 50–72.

superintendents stated that Al-Haromain already had its schedule of regular Islamic teachings. They asked the Salafi group to follow the existing tradition instead. “We do not need a new Islamic teaching forum. We invite everyone, including Salafi friends, to join our Islamic teaching forum, but they hesitate to follow. Finally, they move into another mosque,” said Nasihin.³⁵

Most of the *imams*, preachers, and Islamic teachers in Al-Haramain Mosque are lecturers at Mataram State Islamic University. They usually possess moderate religious understanding. Religious moderation is the primary mission of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, with which the lecturers affiliate.³⁶ Moreover, *tuan gurus* (local Islamic teachers or scholars) are often invited to preach and teach in Al-Haramain. They are the leaders of some Islamic boarding schools that have moderate perspectives. Most of them affiliate with NW and NU. Due to the failure to occupy one mosque, some transnational Islamic organizations like the Salafi chose to build a new mosque outside the housing complexes.³⁷ They established a mosque as a part of the Abu Hurairah Boarding School complex in Lawata, Mataram. This school manages integrated Islamic education from elementary, middle, and high school levels.³⁸ The existence of these Salafi schools threatens Islamic education institutions in Lombok.³⁹

The Salafi Group built a mosque outside the housing complexes and sent preachers to the mosques in government offices. They also became the primary donor in mosque construction in government offices like that in a sub-district government office in East Lombok. Because the Wahabi group has occupied many mosques in government offices, the Proselytization Institute of NU Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah PBNU) pushed the government to prohibit Wahabi activities.⁴⁰ Such tension occurred in the mosque of Permata Hijau housing complex in Mataram. The competition over the management of the mosque caused conflict. The mosque superintendents held several meetings and discussions, but they deadlocked. They have NU and NW religious traditions. Therefore, they practice NU and NW religious traditions in the mosque like in other places in Lombok.

Contestation over mosque management is not associated with material or economic reasons. The contestation dynamics are more related to power and control. The mosque superintendents exercise power and control in influencing the mosque's religious tradition. Tanthawi, the Head of Raudlatul Salamah Mosque superintendents, talked about his happiness when he successfully removed Salafi preachers from his mosque, “We can share. We allow the other group to join the congregational prayers in this mosque as long as they do not bring new teaching, let alone blame our practices.”⁴¹ Competitive sharing occurs between diverse Islamic groups in a mosque, employing Hayden's term. The minority follows the majority worship tradition. If a member of Puritan groups such as the Salafi intends to join and perform congregational prayers in a mosque, they forcefully tolerate tradition, which was established first. However, this is temporary and personal. Only a few members of the minority group do so personally. In the Salafi case, its community is likely to consolidate to occupy a mosque or build a new mosque where they can practice authentic Islamic traditions, according to their perspective. Some Salafi preachers stated they did not intend to occupy a mosque but called Muslims to follow the Prophet Muhammad's traditions. “We are ordered to preach and teach Islam as it was exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. We are not allowed to create heresies,” said Abu Nida, one of the Salafi leaders in Mataram.⁴²

³⁵ Nasihin, the *imam* of Al-Haromain Mosque in Tulip Housing Complex, interview, February 23, 2022.

³⁶ Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, Rosila Bee Binti Mohd. Hussain, Rahimin Affandi Bin Abdul Rahim (2024), “The Dissemination of Religious Moderation through the Policy of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs,” *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies (QJIS)*, Vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 147–176. <https://doi.org/10.21043/qjis.v12i1.27552>.

³⁷ Saparudin, Saparudin, and Emawati Emawati (2023), “Ideological Framing, Mosques, and Conflict: Bargaining Position of Salafi Movement in Lombok, East Indonesia.” *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 231–244.

³⁸ Hasbialloh Hasbialloh (2021), “Existence of Salafi Education Institutions in West Nusa Tenggara: Study on Resistance and Conflict of Beliefs and Student's Parents Motivation in Selecting the Salafi Educational Institutions,” *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, Vol. 8, no. 10, pp. 341–348.

³⁹ A deep study of Salafi educational institutions can be read in Jamhari Makruf and Saifudin Asrori (2022), “In the Making of Salafi-Based Islamic Schools in Indonesia,” *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 60, no. 1, pp. 227–264.

⁴⁰ See CNN Indonesia “LD PBNU Harap Pemerintah Larang Wahabi: Banyak di Masjid Kantor” See further description from: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20221028063033-20-866380/ld-pbnu-harap-pemerintah-larang-wahabi-banyak-di-masjid-kantor>, accessed on October 28, 2022. PBNU issued the same instruction more than 15 years ago. See “Masdar: Masjid-masjid NU Harus Dipertahankan” from <https://www.nu.or.id/warta/masdar-masjid-masjid-nu-harus-dipertahankan-vkW7l>: See also “Rebut Kembali Masjid Nahdliyyin, LDNU Kumpulkan Majelis Ta'lim se-Jabotabek” from <https://www.nu.or.id/warta/rebut-kembali-masjid-nahdliyyin-ldnu-kumpulkan-majelis-talim-se-jabotabek-cobAi>, accessed July 6, 2022.

⁴¹ Tanthawi, the superintendent of Raudlatul Salamah Mosque, interview, September 16, 2022

⁴² Abu Nida, the Salafi teacher, interview, July 18, 2022.

The Salafi group intends to change religious rituals and practices to follow the authentic Prophetic tradition and alter a mosque's interior and exterior designs. The exterior design of one mosque in housing complexes in Mataram was adjusted to imitate the Middle East mosques. This phenomenon confirms Hayden's thesis, stating that symbols of religious groups, such as mosques, are inherently politicized.⁴³ The designs of newly built Salafi mosques are alike.⁴⁴ Moreover, with considerable funds from Middle Eastern donors, the Salafi group will continue building Islamic education institutions to spread Puritan religious understanding fast and effectively.

Contestation will always exist to exercise authority and influence in applying religious tradition based on *da'wah* activists' perspectives. New minority Islamic groups will occupy a mosque managed by lenient superintendents or far from people's settlements. Jamaah Tablig created At-Taqwa, which has a few congregation members and is surrounded by government offices, as the center for their proselytization activities beside Darul Mustofa in West Lombok. The majority Muslim community is resistant to Jamaah Tablig because of several reasons. Jamaah Tablig lacks respect for local religious leaders such as *tuan guru*. They endeavor their proselytization by visiting people's houses, standing, and not entering their houses, which is considered impolite behavior. They often do *khuruj* (disseminating Islamic teaching outside Lombok or overseas). They are not involved in the communal activity of mosque construction. Rahman, a religious figure in Pejeruk Mataram, said, "We do not like this group. When we were building our mosque, they did not want to help. When our mosque was constructed, they wanted to occupy it."⁴⁵ Jamaah Tablig also sometimes stays in a mosque for several days; they sleep, cook, eat, and bathe. These activities make a mosque look dirty. "Many people complain about this issue to the mosque superintendents," said Syamsul.⁴⁶

When a new Islamic group disturbs the peace of the mosque congregation, the mosque superintendents take a competition strategy. Failed negotiations encourage the mosque superintendents to consolidate and improve the internal solidarity between them and the congregation. In this case, conflict contributes significantly to the improvement of the internal cohesion of mosque superintendents. As a result, the new Islamic group withdraws. This strategy is effective for protecting a mosque from the influence of transnational groups such as the Salafi, the Wahabi, and Jamaah Tabligh.

Conclusion

As a means for identity affirmation, tradition preservation, and Islamic proselytization, a mosque is not free from contestation, conflict, and tension among Islamic activists. Every party competes to strengthen its authority and power. By occupying a mosque, they expect to influence Muslim communities to follow their religious understanding, beliefs, and practices, which are considered the truest and the most authoritative. Some conflicts are sufficiently managed. The religious elites and Muslim community can develop tolerance with diverse Islamic denominations as long as they do not threaten the majority's prevailing religious tradition.

The mosque superintendents, religious leaders, and societal leaders establish creative conflict resolution mechanisms to induce a win-win solution. They demonstrate many best practices to maintain social harmony in everyday peacebuilding. Collaboration and accommodation are the most chosen strategies for conflict management. These strategies are implemented consecutively in Friday prayer observance in several mosques and the unification of Twin Mosques with One Minaret. The mosques superintendents can develop reconciliation practices to manage differences within Muslim society.

The mosque superintendents choose a competitive strategy in dealing with transnational Puritan Islamic groups and deviant ones. The mosque superintendents enhance internal consolidation between them. Solidarity between the mosque superintendents, religious leaders, and the congregation has proven effective in discouraging Puritan activists from competition over influence in a mosque. Further

⁴³ Robert M. Hayden, "Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans," *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 2 (2002): 205–231

⁴⁴ The Salafi group built mosques in many areas in East Lombok, such as Aikmel, Dasan Lian, Kalijaga, Suralaga, Toya, Kembang Kerang Daya, Kembang Kerang Lauk, Keroya, Dasan Bagik, Karang Baru, Jinang, Suntalangu, Jorbat, and Batu Cangku-Sapit. See Muharir Muharir, "Konstestasi Pendidikan Islam di Lombok: Nahdlatul Wathan vis a vis Salafi-Wahhabi," *Jurnal al Muta'aliyah: Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 2, no. 1 (2022): 1–12.

⁴⁵ Rahman, a preacher and mosque superintendent, interview, September 27, 2022.

⁴⁶ Syamsul, the superintendent of Al-Muhajirin Mosque, interview, May 7, 2022.

research on the innovation and creativity of mosque superintendents in managing conflict and developing harmony is required. The vast number of mosques in Lombok and other islands in Indonesia necessitates studies in conflict and religious conflict resolution.

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