

TUAN GURU'S SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT OF RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY IN LOMBOK

M. Habib Husnial Pardi | UIN Mataram – Indonesia

Muhammad Said | STAI Darul Kamal, Lombok – Indonesia

Corresponding author: muhhabib71@uinmataram.ac.id

Abstract: This article examines the role of *Tuan Guru* as a *pesantren* leader in resolving religious ideological conflicts between the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah-Nabdlatul Wathan* and Sunnah communities in East Lombok through a spiritual leadership model. Using a qualitative case study supported by phenomenological and ethnographic approaches, the study investigates the dynamics of religious ideological conflict and the implementation of spiritual leadership in conflict resolution. The findings reveal that differences in religious ideology constitute the primary source of conflict, often triggering broader social tensions. *Tuan Guru*'s spiritual leadership effectively fosters reconciliation by promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and harmonious social relations despite enduring ideological differences. This study offers a comprehensive perspective on religious conflict by integrating spiritual guidance, community leadership, and contemporary conflict resolution approaches. It contributes to the theoretical development of spiritual leadership and provides practical insights for education policymakers, community leaders, and scholars concerned with conflict management in Islamic societies.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, religious ideology, spiritual leadership, *Tuan Guru*.

Introduction

Lombok, an island in Indonesia renowned for its rich cultural and religious heritage, presents a unique socio-religious dynamic where Islam plays a central role in shaping community life. Among the key figures influencing this dynamic are the *Tuan Guru*; Islamic scholars and spiritual leaders who hold a revered position within the

community. Derived from the Malay and Sasak languages, the term ‘Tuan Guru’ translates to ‘master teacher’, signifying their role as educators, spiritual guides, and custodians of Islamic values.¹

Tuan Guru are instrumental not only in propagating religious teaching² but also in addressing social challenges. Including conflict resolution within the multi-ethnic and religiously diverse population of Lombok.³ Their leadership extends beyond the confines of religious rituals, encompassing broader societal issues such as inter-communal disputes, ethical governance, and social cohesion.⁴ This dual role highlights their significance as mediators and agents of peace in a region often marked by cultural pluralism and occasional tensions. Conflict resolution within religious communities is an area of growing scholarly interest, particularly in regions where traditional leadership intersects with modern governance. *Tuan Guru* employ a combination of Islamic jurisprudence, local customs (*adat*), and moral authority to mediate disputes, foster reconciliation, and maintain harmony and agents of peace in a region often marked by cultural pluralism and occasional tensions. Conflict resolution within religious communities is an area of growing scholarly interest, particularly in regions where traditional leadership intersects with modern governance. *Tuan Guru* employ a combination of Islamic jurisprudence, local customs (*adat*), and moral authority to mediate disputes, foster reconciliation, and maintain harmony.⁵

¹ Jamaluddin and Siti Nurul Khaerani, “Islamisasi Masyarakat Sasak Dalam Jalur Perdagangan Internasional: Telaah Arkeologis Dan Manuskrip,” *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 18, no. 1 (2020): 135–63, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v18i1.577>.

² M. Habib Husnial Pardi, Muhammad Said, and Adibah Sulaiman, “The Making of Islamic Education in Lombok-Indonesia: Genealogy, Transformations, and Ideology,” *Syamil: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 12, no. 2 (December 2024): 417–41, <https://doi.org/10.21093/sy.v12i2.9872>.

³ Jeremy J. Kingsley, “Peacemakers or Peace-Breakers? Provincial Elections and Religious Leadership in Lombok, Indonesia,” *Indonesia*, no. 93 (2012): 53, <https://doi.org/10.5728/indonesia.93.0053>.

⁴ Muhammad Adlin Sila, “Religious Authority and Local Governance in Eastern Indonesia, by Jeremy J. Kingsley,” *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 176, nos. 2–3 (2020): 432–34, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17602010>.

⁵ Jeremy J. Kingsley, “Redrawing Lines of Religious Authority in Lombok, Indonesia,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 42, no. 5 (2014): 657–77, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04205010>.

This paper seeks to explore the spiritual leadership of the *Tuan Guru* in Lombok, with a focus on their role in conflict resolution within religious communities. By examining their methods, influence, and the socio-cultural factors that empower their leadership, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on the intersection of spirituality, leadership, and peacebuilding in pluralistic societies.

Previous studies related to this topic have highlighted that the role of *Tuan Guru* in religious propagation is deeply rooted in local cultural values.⁶ The culturally grounded methods of *da'wa* employed by *Tuan Guru* aims to foster social character development and adapt to societal needs through effective communication and integration with cultural practices.⁷ However, detailed explanations of what constitutes this 'integration' remain lacking. Similarly, the concept of culturally based *da'wa* (preaching) has yet to be elaborated upon in sufficient depth. Hamdi's research on conflicts within the Nahdlatul Wathan organization recommends that the central government possesses the authority, resources, and legitimacy to facilitate the reconciliation of local conflicts in Lombok.⁸ This approach to conflict resolution emphasizes community-centered methods, involving local stakeholders, including community leaders and organizations, to achieve peace.⁹

In contrast, Muttaqin's study of Nahdlatul Wathan focuses on the dynamics of power, violence, and significant internal conflicts that have persisted since the passing of the organization's leader in 1997. These conflicts, rooted in leadership struggles, ideological disputes, and the influence of external religious movements particularly Salafi groups continue to this day. While neither study centers specifically on conflict resolution, they provide valuable insights into the complex

⁶ Fawaizul Umam, "Tera Ulang Peran Profetik Tuan Guru Dalam Konteks Kebebasan Beragama Di Pulau Lombok," *Ulumuna* 13, no. 2 (2017): 433–66, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v13i2.367>.

⁷ Ahyar Ahyar, Nurul Imtihan, and Wan Khairul Aiman Bin Wan Mukhtar, "Culture-Based Dakwah and Education Values: A Study of TGH. M. Najamuddin Makmun's Work," *Ulumuna* 28, no. 1 (2024): 108–35, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i1.702>.

⁸ Saipul Hamdi, "Tuan Guru, Politik Dan Kekerasan-Ritual Dalam Konflik Nahdlatul Wathan," *Teologia* 26, no. 2 (2015): 242–68; Supratman Muslim, Suprpto, and Jamaluddin, "The Tuan Guru Tradition of Nahdlatul Wathan in Pesantren," *Al-Albab* 11, no. 1 (2022): 45–62, <https://doi.org/10.24260/alalbab.v11i1.2193>.

⁹ Saipul Hamdi, "Politik, Agama Dan Kontestasi Kekuasaan Nahdlatul Wathan Di Era Otonomi Daerah Lombok, NTB," *Jurnal Review Politik* 1, no. 2 (2011): 130–47.

interplay of power and social dynamics within the context of religious organizations in Lombok.¹⁰

While the study by Saparudin et al. does not focus explicitly on conflict resolution, its exploration of the tensions between tradition and modernity, as well as the influence of conservative Islamic movements on Islamic educational curricula in Lombok, provides valuable insights into the role of *pesantren* as traditional Islamic educational institutions.¹¹ This research highlights the dynamic interplay between local traditions and external religious ideologies in shaping educational practices.¹² Similarly, the study by Anwar Sadat Harahap et al. examines the application of *Dalihan Na Tolu*, a cultural value system of the Batak community in North Sumatra, as a model for resolving religious conflicts. The *Dalihan Na Tolu* framework is rooted in three core principles of Batak social relations: *Somba Marbuhula* (respect for in-laws or the wife's family), *Eleke Marboru* (affection for daughters), and *Manat Mardongan Tubu*. These principles are employed in various contexts of conflict resolution, such as fostering interfaith dialogue, preserving social harmony, and resolving disputes through customary practices.¹³

Despite these valuable contributions, previous studies have not specifically examined how the spiritual leadership of *Tuan Guru* operates as an active mediating force in concrete, localized religious conflicts, particularly those involving tensions between traditional Islamic groups and Wahhabi groups in rural Lombok. Existing research tends to focus either on cultural preaching models, organizational power dynamics within Nahdlatul Wathan, and curriculum contestation in *pesantren* of Lombok. Consequently, there

¹⁰ M. Zaenul Muttaqin, "The Dynamics of Power, Violence, and Conflict of Nahdlatul Wathan," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 15, no. 2 (2021): 465, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2021.15.2.465-486>.

¹¹ Saparudin Saparudin, "Ideological Trap in Education: Rivalry Discourse on Islamic Literatures in NW and Salafi Schools in Lombok," *Tarbiya: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 9, no. 1 (2022): 19–34, <https://doi.org/10.15408/tjems.v9i1.24837>.

¹² Saparudin, "Gerakan Keagamaan dan Peta Afiliasi Ideologis Pendidikan Islam di Lombok," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 42, no. 1 (2018): 220, <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v42i1.506>.

¹³ Anwar Sadat Harahap et al., "Dalihan Na Tolu as a Model for Resolving Religious Conflicts in North Sumatra: An Anthropological and Sociological Perspective," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 3 (2023): 1943, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.13091>.

remains a significant gap in understanding how the spiritual authority of Tuan Guru is mobilized in practice to de-escalate ideological contestation at the village level. This study addresses that gap by investigating the role of Tuan Guru's spiritual leadership in mitigating the conflict between traditional Islamic groups and Wahhabi groups in Kembang Kerang Daya Village, Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, thereby offering an empirically grounded analysis of how religious authority, local cultural legitimacy, and spiritual leadership interact in resolving contemporary intra-religious tensions.

Kembang Kerang Daya Village is home to a Sumbawan diaspora that settled during the Islamic Selaparang Kingdom, which also known as Lombok Sultanate. Historical records indicate, that the Sultanate of Sumbawa sent forces to aid Selaparang in defending against the Bali-Mataram Kingdom's invasion in the second half of 18th Century CE.¹⁴ Following their victory, Selaparang authorities granted the Sumbawan forces land in Kembang Kerang Daya, where they established a community bound by strong kinship ties as descendants of the same group. Over time, however, the community became ideologically divided into two Islamic factions: adherents of traditionalist Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan (NW) and followers of conservative Al-Sunnah (Wahhabi Salafi) movement.¹⁵ This ideological divide has led to significant conflict, with disputes over religious practices and interpretations often escalating. The two groups have even established separate mosques and engaged in verbal confrontations during religious sessions via mosque loudspeakers.¹⁶

This study uses a qualitative approach with case study design, phenomenological design, and ethnography. The case study approach involves an in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon, event, activity, or social unit. In addition, relevant phenomenological design is used in the context of understanding phenomena about what participants experience, such as behavior, perception, motivation,

¹⁴ Alfons Van Der Kraan, *Lombok: Conquest, Colonization and Underdevelopment 1870-1940*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Singapore: Heinemann educational Books, 1980).

¹⁵ Muharrir, "Resiliensi Pendidikan Islam Salafi Pasca Orde Baru (Studi Pada Pondok Pesantren di Lombok)" (Dissertation, UIN Mataram, 2022).

¹⁶ Mohammad Said, "Dinamika Wahabisme Di Lombok Timur: Problem Identitas, Kesalehan Dan Kebangsaan," *Fikrah* 7, no. 1 (2019): 167, <https://doi.org/10.21043/-fikrah.v7i1.5022>.

action, and others holistically.¹⁷ In comparing cross-cases, the researcher also described and interpreted the same pattern of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language from the group of participants. For this purpose, the researcher uses an ethnographic design.¹⁸ With the principle of data collection redundancy,¹⁹ data is collected mainly using participant observation was used to observe various practices, activities and personalities that were patterned and related to the conflict of religious ideology between Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan and Wahhabi. In addition, the semi-structured interview technique is the process of obtaining information by means of natural questions and answers while face-to-face between the researcher and the informant totaling 5-7 people.²⁰ The data is analyzed using the interactive model procedure of Miles and Huberman through three activities simultaneously: data condensation is data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or altering data that appears in a complete corpus of field-written notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials.²¹

Religious Community Conflict in Kembang Kerang Daya, East Lombok

Villagers of Kembang Kerang Daya are mostly affiliated with Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan, a traditionalist Islamic organization of Lombok Island. A small number of others, adherents of conservative-puritanical Wahhabi ideology that refer to themselves as 'al-Sunnah'. Statistically, wahhabi community approximately 30 households reside

¹⁷ Patricia Springborg, "Phenomenology and the Social Sciences," *Politics* 10, no. 1 (1975), 95–100; Heath Williams, "The Meaning of 'Phenomenology': Qualitative and Philosophical Phenomenological Research Methods," *The Qualitative Report* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4587>.

¹⁸ Anuruddika Jayatilaka, "Ethnography and Organizational Ethnography: Research Methodology," *Open Journal of Business and Management* 9, no. 1 (2021): 91–102, <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2021.91005>.

¹⁹ Robert E. Stake, *Case Studies in Denzin & Lincoln, Qualitatif Research Handbook* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Siswa, 2009).

²⁰ Oliver C. Robinson, "Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2014): 25–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2013.801543>.

²¹ Miles Matthew B et.al., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, Third edition (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2014).

in the region.²² Initially, the Wahhabi community in Kembang Kerang Daya Village was followers of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), another traditionalist Islamic organization which flourish mostly in Java.²³ They were students of Tuan Guru Abdul Mannan, a prominent figure of Nahdlatul Ulama in East Lombok.²⁴ Ironically, Tuan Guru Husni, one of the children of tuan guru Abdul Mannan, became the pioneer of the Wahhabi movement in East Lombok after returning from his religious studies in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. He became an advocate for Wahhabi teachings, and openly criticizing the practices of both NU and NW adherents²⁵. In this sense, the Wahhabi teachings promoted by Tuan Guru Husni emerged as a direct challenge to the ideologies of Nahdlatul Ulama and Nahdlatul Wathan in East Lombok.

Among *tuan guru*, Wahhabism is often perceived as a relatively rigid religious orientation. This perspective is regarded as markedly different from the Islamic traditions cultivated within NW and NU, both of which tend to be more accommodative of local practices and indigenous cultural wisdom. Furthermore, the intellectual background of Lombok's *tuan guru*; many of whom are alumni of Madrasah Shawlatiyyah in Mecca—has significantly shaped this religious orientation, as the institution is widely recognized for its critical, and at times oppositional, stance toward Wahhabism in Mecca.²⁶ Within this context, the presence of Wahhabism in Lombok not only introduces theological differences but also generates a pronounced ideological contestation within the local religious landscape.

With the expansion of Wahhabi influence in East Lombok, the emphasis on religious purification has not only generated stigmatization but also led to accusations of *bid'ah* (religious innovation) and even *shirk* (idolatry) against the religious practices of

²² Interview with MZ (5, May 2023)

²³ Interview with ZY (21, June 2023)

²⁴ Mohammad Said, "Dinamika Wahabisme Di Lombok Timur: Problem Identitas, Kesalehan Dan Kebangsaan," *Fikrah* 7, no. 1 (2019): 167, <https://doi.org/10.21043/-fikrah.v7i1.5022>.

²⁵ Saparudin and Emawati, "Ideological Framing, Mosques, and Conflict: Bargaining Position of Salafi Movement in Lombok, East Indonesia," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 18, no. 1 (2023): 231–44, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol18no1.19>.

²⁶ Carol E. B. Choksy and Jamsheed K. Choksy, "The Saudi Connection: Wahhabism and Global Jihad," *World Affairs* 178, no. 1 (2015); Christopher M. Blanchard, "The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya," in *Modern Islam: Traditions and Concerns* (2011).

Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (Aswaja) communities of as NW²⁷ and NU²⁸ which revolve around Sunni's trilogy of orthodoxy in its commitment to mainly Shafii schools of law, Ash'ariyya theology and al-Ghazali's sufism. From a Wahhabi perspective, Islam as practiced in Lombok is often viewed as being deeply intertwined with local traditions and cultural expressions, leading to the perception that many ritual practices deviate from the perceived purity of Islamic teachings. Consequently, such practices are frequently labeled as *bid'ah*, and in some instances, even considered to verge on *shirk*. Within this context, relations between Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan communities and Wahhabi groups have become increasingly strained, as reflected in the socio-religious dynamics unfolding across several villages in East Lombok, including Mamben, Toya, Kota Raja, Bebidas, and Kembang Kerang Daya.²⁹ The contestation of religious authority between Aswaja and Salafi groups also occurs in rural areas of Java, where competing claims over the legitimacy of doctrines, religious practices, and social influence are actively negotiated within society.³⁰

In Kembang Kerang Daya Village, initial differences in organizational affiliation gradually escalated into a power struggle over the management of the Jami' Nurul Wathan Mosque. The Wahhabi group viewed Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan administrators as having deviated from religion. Consequently, they refused to pray behind Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan imams and eventually built a separate mosque for their community. Nonetheless, the separation of place of worship does not reduce the conflict between the two parties as the Wahhabi group intensify and deepen the conflict through sermons and lectures accusing the practices as heretical. Using loudspeakers in their mosques, they labelled the Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan group as '*ahl al-*

²⁷ Fahrurrozi, *Nahdlatul Wathan: Refleksi Keislaman, Kebangsaan, dan Keummatan*, (Mataram: CV. Al-Haramain Lombok, 2019), 271.

²⁸ PBNU, *Anggaran Dasar Nahdlatul Ulama Hasil Keputusan Muktamar Ke-34 NU*, (Jakarta: PBNU, 2022), 2

²⁹ Nazar Naamy, "Tuan Guru, Islamic Da'wah, and Competition: The Fragmentation of Authority in Lombok-Indonesia," *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture* 34 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.59670/jns.v34i.1126>; Nazar Naamy, "Islamic Da'wah and Cancel Culture on Virtual Media (A Case of Salafi in Lombok)," *Lentera: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* (2022), <https://doi.org/10.21093/lentera.v0i0.7397>.

³⁰ Zuly Qodir, Krismono, and Irwan Abdullah, "Salafism in Rural Java: The Struggles of Indonesian Islam Since the Fall of the New Order." *QIJS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 11, 2 (2024): 247-278, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/qiis.v11i2.7953>

*nar*³¹ (people of hellfire) for engaging in what they considered to be heretical activities.³¹ Ideological conflicts are increasing with the emergence of young Wahhabi preachers who have freshly graduated from Sunnah Islamic boarding schools in East Java and Central Java.³² This phenomenon resembles the pattern of conflict observed in Java, where Hadrami *majlis* groups responded to the rise of the Wahhabi movement. In this context, the interaction between the two groups not only reflects differences in religious interpretations but also illustrates broader socio-religious dynamics, particularly in the contestation over the preservation of traditional authority, religious identity, and established Islamic practices within society.³³



Figure 1: Current Aswaja and Wahabi Community Mosque

In Kembang Kerang Daya, conflicts over mosque management reflect deeper ideological tensions³⁴. For the Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan community, the mosque is not only a sacred place of worship but also a symbol of their Aswaja tradition and a legacy built on family property, creating a strong sense of ownership and emotional attachment. In this context, the imam holds a respected position as a guardian of religious continuity, linking generations, tradition, and lived practice. For the Wahhabi community, controlling the mosque is equally strategic. It provides freedom to disseminate their religious

³¹ Interview with SW (February 20, 2022)

³² Interview with MH (20, June 2022)

³³ Arif Zamhari, "Defending Islamic Tradition: Theological Responses of the Hadrami Majlis Taklim Groups toward the Salafi-Wahabi Preaching Movement in Contemporary Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 16, no. 1 (2022), 75-102, DOI: [10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.75-102](https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.75-102)

³⁴ Amin El-Yousfi, "Conflicting Paradigms of Religious and Bureaucratic Authority in a British Mosque," *Religions* 10, no. 10 (2019), 564.

teachings and serves as a key space for gaining influence and legitimacy within the broader community.

A young Wahhabi preacher, Ustaz ZA, who often criticized the Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan community in his sermons, labeling them heretical once visited Tuan Guru Haji Muhammad Ruslan Zain al-Nahdy, subsequently called as TGH Ruslan Zain, an ulama of Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan in East Lombojk who happens to live in that village, to challenge him to a public debate, bringing Salafi-Wahhabi texts as references. TGH Ruslan Zain refused to accept the challenge, seeking to prevent further provocation and possible escalation. Many Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan followers, who were his students, felt that Ustaz ZA had insulted their teacher. Some gathered and threatened to attack the Wahhabi mosque. However, Tuan Guru Ruslan firmly prevented them and prohibited any use of violence. He reminded them that ideological differences must not lead to physical conflict, especially since the people of Kembang Kerang Daya Village share strong family ties.

Despite efforts to maintain peace, the ongoing ideological rivalry and polarization eventually led to tension. Society became divided, resulting in social disharmony. Identity and ideology emerged as the main triggers for the unrest. One of the young Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan preachers, Ustaz RA, took offense at a sermon by Ustaz ZA. In his lecture, Ustaz ZA criticized imams and khatibs who still smoked or enjoyed fishing, claiming it damaged the *murū'ah* (dignity) of a religious figure. The following day, Ustaz RA confronted Ustaz ZA, leading to a physical altercation that caused commotion in Kembang Kerang Daya Village. Luckily, the community was able to resolve the issue, prevented the tension from escalating.³⁵

The sources of the conflict, based on the findings, can be traced in a sequence: *first*, differences in the interpretation of religious teachings; *second*, the struggle for religious authority in the mosque; *third*, the labeling of others as heretics; *fourth*, the use of inappropriate methods of preaching; and finally, the emergence of ideological and identity differences between the two groups.

Conflict Resolution through Tuan Guru's Spiritual Leadership

Theoretically and empirically, it has been proven that Tuan Guru in the Islamic narrative in Lombok has deep roots and a long history in all dimensions of community life, shaping the religious identity of

³⁵ Interview with MS (February 2023)

individuals and communities, and plays a crucial role in shaping social values and norms.³⁶ Historically, Tuan Guru and Islam are known simultaneously, inseparable in the daily lives of the Lombok people, depicting two complementary elements and forming a strong foundation for the social, cultural, and spiritual life of the Lombok people, interpreters and disseminators of traditional Islamic teachings rooted in the values of Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan, a dominant Islamic organization in Lombok³⁷ that plays a crucial role in maintaining the continuity and relevance of Islamic teachings in community life. The two interact to create a strong and mutually supportive relationship, where Tuan Guru serves as a role model in practicing Islamic teachings and the community responds with obedience and respect.

Tuan Guru teach Islam in *pesantren*, *madrrasah*, and *Majlis Ta'lim*, using a cultural approach aligned with local Sasak traditions.³⁸ With sincerity and steadfastness, they preserve Islamic teachings without rejecting local culture. As a result, Islam in Lombok has developed in a contextual and accommodating manner, integrating local wisdom—such as the *nyongkolan* wedding tradition and pilgrimages to the tombs of saints.³⁹ Therefore, they serve as mediators⁴⁰ and advisors, symbolizing local Islamic identity, in resolving social or family conflicts through wise counsel based on Islamic principles to reach just and peaceful solutions. They help maintain harmony and peace in the community.⁴¹ Historically, Tuan Guru have functioned as central

³⁶ Lalu Ahmad Zaenuri, “Reconceptualising Da’wa: A Study of Tuan Gurus’ Perceptions and Motivations in Adopting Digital Da’wa,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 19, no. 1 (2025): 92, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2025.19.1.92-116>.

³⁷ Safinah and Zainal Arifin, “Otoritas Kepemimpinan Karismatik Tuan Guru Dalam Membentuk Budaya Religius,” *Evaluasi: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 2 (September 2021): 311–30, <https://doi.org/10.32478/evaluasi.v5i2.754>.

³⁸ Muslim, Suprpto, and Jamaluddin, “The Tuan Guru Tradition of Nahdlatul Wathan in Pesantren.”

³⁹ Fawaizul Umam, Mohammad Ali Al Humaidy, and Moh. Asyiq Amrulloh, “Dialectics Between Islam and Local Culture in Wetu Telu Lombok Muslims’ Merariq Tradition: An ‘Urf Perspective,” *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 19, no. 1 (2024): 104–25, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-ihkam.v19i1.10603>.

⁴⁰ Kingsley, “Redrawing Lines of Religious Authority in Lombok, Indonesia.

⁴¹ Umam, Al Humaidy, and Amrulloh, “Dialectics Between Islam and Local Culture, 104–25.

reference figures in matters of religious interpretation, social guidance, and community decision-making in Lombok.⁴²

In the context of this study, Tuan Guru Haji Muhamad Ruslan Zain Al-Nahdy (b. 1953), holds significant religious and social authority among educators as well as the broader Lombok community. In the ideological conflict between the Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan community and the Sunnah-Wahhabi group in Kembang Kerang Daya village, he used his spiritual leadership authority to mediate and reduce tensions within the community.⁴³ The religious-ideological tension in Kembang Kerang Daya Village between the Darul Kamal pesantren's community which he leads and teach and the Salafi-Wahhabi group has been ongoing since the 1980s and has begun to diminish in recent years. This is due to his significant role in managing the religious-ideological conflict. In this study, religious ideology is defined as a set of ideas that refer to religious tools and accompany actions in a sustainable and systematic manner.⁴⁴ To analyze the process of resolving religious-ideological conflict, this study uses the Thomas-Kilmann conflict resolution model theory which is categorized into avoidance, accommodation, competition, collaboration, and compromise.⁴⁵

Based on the findings, TGH Ruslan Zain is very wise and careful in resolving sharp religious ideological differences indirectly at Kembang Kerang Daya Village, considering their roles and status for the two parties in conflict. On one side are the leaders of the pesantren, who of course must protect the pesantren community, and on the other hand are religious leaders who accommodate all levels of society as well as people who are elderly in the family social system in

⁴² Jun Mawalidin, "Peranan Tuan Guru Ormas Islam Nahdlatul Wathan di Lombok Wadah Ajaran Keagamaan dan Sosial (Islam)," *Ijtimaiya: Journal of Social Science Teaching* 5, no. 2 (2021), 221, <https://doi.org/10.21043/ji.v5i2.11577>.

⁴³ Joanna Elizabeth Crossman, "Followership: A Spiritual Perspective and the Implications for Organizational Practice," Satinder Dhiman, Gary Roberts, and Joanna Crossman (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Fulfillment* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61929-3_30-2.

⁴⁴ Hassan Rachik, "How Religion Turns into Ideology," *The Journal of North African Studies* 14, no. 3–4 (2009): 347–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629380902923994>.

⁴⁵ G. Richard Shell, "Bargaining Styles and Negotiation: The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument in Negotiation Training," *Negotiation Journal* 17, no. 2 (2001): 155–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1571-9979.2001.tb00233.x>.

the Kembang Kerang Daya Village community.⁴⁶ This situation is suitable for the application of Thomas-Kilman conflict resolution model according to its character, which is very strict on principled but moderate matters in the social dimension with a spiritual leadership approach. The implementation of spiritual leadership through altruistic values is relevant considering that the locus of conflict resolution of religious ideologies is in accordance with religious places and societies.⁴⁷

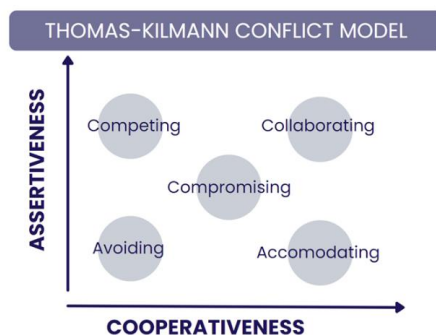


Figure: Thomas-Kilman conflict management model

The resolution of religious conflict in Kembang Kerang Daya Village followed three main approaches. *First*, avoidance and accommodation. TGH Ruslan Zain consistently restrained his followers from responding to Wahhabi provocations with violence, whether through action or polemical da'wa. He firmly stressed that violence is forbidden in Islam and would only bring harm to both sides. Instead, he chose peace over confrontation. This strategy was grounded in the social reality of Kembang Kerang Daya, where strong family ties connect the community. Preserving social and familial harmony became a priority, even amid sharp ideological differences.

Second, the principle of *musabaqah fi al-khairat* (the competition in good deeds) is useful in making sense the difference. This is done by increasing the volume and expansion of *pengajian* (religious studies for

⁴⁶ Alexis Louis Roy, Christelle Perrin, and Christophe Assens, "Management of Conflict in Non-Profit Organization with Shared Governance," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2022), 440–57, <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2022.101033>.

⁴⁷ Eleftheria Egel and Louis W. Fry, "Spiritual Leadership as a Model for Islamic Leadership," *Public Integrity* 19, no. 1 (2017), 77–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999-922.2016.1200411>.

general public) activities aimed at increasing public understanding, especially regarding various interpretations of religious teachings as part of *sunnah Allah* (divinely ordained), has contributed significantly to increasing awareness. These efforts are integrated into *pengajian*, which often emphasize the breadth of sources and reference in religious practice. This session draws on the views of scholars from various classical texts to provide a comprehensive insight. This method has specifically expanded people's understanding of religious teachings, especially those that are in harmony with the Aswaja tradition. As a result, this broader understanding has fostered a constructive response within the *pesantren* community, allowing them to discuss different perspectives, such as Wahhabi teachings, with greater tolerance and more informed perspectives, can make better decisions, discuss more effectively, and contribute to problem solving in more meaningful ways.⁴⁸

Third, strengthening internal conviction. In every *pengajian*, TGH Ruslan Zain emphasized commitment to one's own *amaliyah* (religious practices) without condemning others. He reminded his congregation to uphold the virtuous traditions inherited from their teachers and to entrust disagreements to Allah. His conflict-resolution model reflects his educational background as an alumnus of the Madrasa Shawlatiyyah in Mecca, an institution rooted in the Aswaja tradition. This foundation enabled him to combine theological firmness with a socio-cultural approach suited to the local context of Kembang Kerang Daya Village,⁴⁹ making his leadership both principled and conciliatory.

The core strength of spiritual leadership lies in altruistic love, selfless action that prioritizes the well-being of others. This reflects Islamic values such as *rahma* (compassion) and *ithar* (selflessness). In this regard, August Comte distinguishes between egoism and altruism, arguing that altruism strengthens social solidarity and moral integrity. In Islam, this aligns with the concept of *fitra* (human nature)⁵⁰ which inclines leaders toward justice and virtue. When leaders deviate from this nature, oppression may arise. Therefore, spiritual leadership grounded in altruism provides an effective framework for conflict

⁴⁸ Interview with SW (April 2022)

⁴⁹ Egel and Fry, "Spiritual Leadership as a Model for Islamic Leadership, 77–95.

⁵⁰ E. L. Stocks and D. A. Lishner, "Altruism," in *Encyclopedia of Mental Health* (2023), 62–67, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-91497-0.00105-3>.

resolution and social harmony⁵¹. Leaders must embody compassion, service, honesty, and optimism in their conduct, fostering belonging and spiritual well-being.⁵² As Kriger and Seng note, these values are shared across major religious traditions. In Islam, they are rooted in the Qur'an and further developed in Islamic philosophy and Sufism.

TGH Ruslan Zain's spiritual leadership in conflict resolution is articulated through peaceful engagement grounded in religiously framed moral authority. In line with Suprpto and Jeremy Kingsley's findings on the role of religious leaders, he prioritizes the creation of social stability by promoting messages of peace, harmony, and communal solidarity, delivered through continuous individual and collective guidance. His preference for non-violent resolution should not be interpreted as passive avoidance. Rather, it reflects a deliberate rejection of coercive measures while actively pursuing reconciliation through dialogue, moral persuasion, and sustained community engagement.⁵³

Peacebuilding Efforts: Family Ties and Cultural Similarities

The spiritual leadership of Tuan Guru Haji Muhammad Ruslan Zain al-Nahdy serves as a potential prototype for managing and resolving ideological conflicts within religious communities, which can emerge at any time and in various contexts.⁵⁴ This is particularly evident in addressing the socio-religious tensions and divisions that frequently arise within such communities in which parties in conflict are genetically related through bloodlines. The social capital of Kembang Kerang Daya Village society is embedded in cognatic

⁵¹ Parvathy Valsala and Preetha Menon, "Psychospiritual Basis of Altruism: A Review," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 63, no. 3 (2023): 344–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167819830517>.

⁵² Louis W. Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 14, no. 6 (2003), 693–727, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.09.001>.

⁵³ Suprpto, "Religious Leaders And Peace Building: The Role of Tuan Guru and Pedanda in Conflict Resolution in Lombok – Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 53, no. 1 (2015), 225, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2015.531.225-250>; Jeremy J. Kingsley, "Redrawing Lines of Religious Authority in Lombok, Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 42, no. 5 (2014), 657–77, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04205010>.

⁵⁴ Vandyarman Mulya Priyanda and Mainita Hidayati, "Interfaith Harmony Governance: A Quintuple Helix Model for Collaborative Policy Implementation of Religious Values and Tolerance in Indonesia," *Harmoni* 24, no. 2 (2025), 299–325, <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v24i2.927>.

kinship networks, which constitute a critical resource for sustaining socio-religious cohesion across divergent religious orientations. These kinship bonds function as an integrative mechanism in post-conflict settings, facilitating reconciliation and collective reintegration. In addition, local socio-cultural practices have played a significant role in restoring normalized relations between Wahhabi groups and the Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan community following periods of tension.

The *begawe* tradition, encompassing life-cycle rituals such as marriages, births, circumcisions, and funerals—serves as a key cultural arena for reaffirming social solidarity. Within the cognatic structure of the Kembang Kerang Daya Village community, such rituals operate not merely as ceremonial events but as strategic spaces for rebuilding trust and reinforcing inter-familial and inter-group ties.⁵⁵ This tradition also serves as an ideologically neutral public space, where ideological divisions are set aside. During these events, the people of Kembang Kerang Daya Village come together in mutual support and unity, transcending ideological boundaries.⁵⁶

The Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan and Salafi-Wahhabi communities in Kembang Kerang Daya Village have progressively cultivated a mutual understanding and an acceptance of their ideological divergences. This development is particularly evident among members of the Salafi-Wahhabi community, especially within the older generation, who have increasingly acknowledged the familial and social fragmentation that such ideological divisions have historically engendered. Consequently, a significant portion of the Salafi-Wahhabi community has adopted a more conciliatory stance, reframing these doctrinal differences as matters of pluralistic coexistence rather than sources of conflict or contention.

This evolving dynamic underscores the adaptive capacity of religious communities to mitigate inter-ideological tensions, fostering a more harmonious socio-religious environment in Kembang Kerang Daya Village. It further highlights the role of generational shifts in influencing attitudes toward ideological pluralism within religiously

⁵⁵ Interview with MT (May, 2022)

⁵⁶ Irfan Ahmad, “Anthropology of Islam: History, Culture and Power,” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 50, no. 4 (2013), 495–509, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019464613503238>; Ahmad Fathan Aniq, “Lombok Islam in the Eyes of Anthropologists,” *Al-Qalam* 28, no. 2 (2011), 197, <https://doi.org/10.32678/alqalam.v28i2.1372>.

diverse settings. In the context of religious practices, the Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan and Wahhabi communities in Kembang Kerang Daya Village exhibit distinct doctrinal orientations and preaching strategies. The Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan community has consistently prioritized the establishment and development of Islamic educational institutions, including pesantren, madrasahs, and formal schools, as a primary means of religious propagation. Conversely, the Wahhabi community has undergone a significant transformation in its preaching approach.

Previously known for confrontational rhetoric that labeled Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan followers as heretical, the Wahhabi community has shifted to a more individualized and pragmatic approach. It now focuses on lower-middle economic groups, using financial assistance as an entry point for religious outreach.⁵⁷ This strategy has proven effective in the post-conflict period, enabling the gradual expansion of Wahhabi teachings within Kembang Kerang Daya Village's socio-religious landscape. The shift illustrates how doctrinal commitment adapts to social context and how socio-economic factors significantly shape patterns of religious propagation in plural communities.

After the conflict resolution, the socio-religious relationship between the Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan and Wahabi communities began to thaw, become more harmonious, and respect and tolerate each other. The growth of social capital, namely kinship ties (family) of the same race, and other socio-cultural tools and traditions, such as *begawe*, marriage, birth, circumcision, and even death rituals, has become the main capital in normalizing socio-religious relations, uniting them in a public space that is ideologically free, and there are no more ideological dividing lines that have been a source of conflict between the two group. In addition, there is an awareness from parents of the Wahhabi community that it is also important for families to contribute to building socio-religious relations in the Kembang Kerang Daya Village community.

This study shows that TGH Ruslan Zain, as a pesantren leader, effectively resolved religious conflict through spiritual leadership. His approach offers a model for preventing ideological violence, including tensions with the Wahhabi community. He integrated religious principles with humanistic values, fostering altruism and social responsibility. He also considered the strong kinship ties between the

⁵⁷ Interview with MA (March, 2022)

conflicting groups, prioritizing family harmony in every resolution effort. In addition, he intensified *pengajian* activities, through *majlis ta'lim* and formal educational institutions—not only as acts of worship but also to redirect attention away from conflict. These forums expanded the community's religious understanding, particularly regarding differences in interpretation as part of *sunna Allah*, which should be addressed with wisdom rather than hostility.

The social conflict in Kembang Kerang Daya Village has currently shown a relatively de-escalating trend, as indicated by the absence of overt frictions leading to open disputes. The previously opposing groups now tend to prioritize social harmony grounded in kinship ties, rather than intensifying ideological differences. In this context, the practice of dialogical engagement rooted in familial and communal values between the Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan community and the Sunnah community has become a key factor in maintaining sustained social stability.

Nevertheless, this peaceful condition remains contingent. The potential for future conflict escalation persists, particularly if new actors—especially among the younger generation within both groups—begin to reproduce and amplify ideological differences. Therefore, the sustainability of peace is highly dependent on the capacity of both communities to preserve inclusive dialogical communication patterns and to mitigate the risk of identity-based radicalization at the grassroots level.

The study presents a localized framework for conflict resolution grounded in Islamic values, particularly within educational institutions in regions experiencing religious tensions. The proposed model emphasizes the application of Qur'anic principles as a basis for conflict mediation, with a focus on fostering peacebuilding through the spiritual authority of religious leaders. It underscores the role of spiritual figures as mediators, who, unlike external political actors, possess inherent moral legitimacy within their communities.

The research highlights spiritual leadership as a distinctive leadership model, with Tuan Guru functioning not merely as administrators but as moral and spiritual guides. These leaders contribute to conflict resolution by promoting core Islamic principles of tolerance and mutual respect, facilitating dialogue between opposing groups, and bridging ideological divides between traditional and

conservative-puritanical interpretations of Islam⁵⁸. Such leadership plays a crucial role in educational institutions, where unresolved ideological conflicts can have profound and lasting implications on students and the wider community. Moreover, this study contributes to religious and cultural studies by deepening our understanding of the interplay between local religious traditions and global Islamic movements in shaping religious identities, particularly in the Lombok context. Analyzing these dynamics offers practical insights into identifying early indicators of ideological conflict, developing culturally sensitive conflict resolution strategies, and recognizing the influential role of education in shaping religious ideologies.

Conclusion

The ideological conflict between the Aswaja-Nahdlatul Wathan and Sunnah-Wahhabi groups in Kembang Kerang Daya Village, East Lombok, is rooted in differing interpretations of Islamic teachings. Divergences in religious understanding and practices constitute the primary source of conflict, which subsequently generates derivative conflicts, including struggles over mosque management authority (conflict of interest), social fragmentation through the establishment of separate mosques, and exclusive *da'wa* practices that delegitimize other groups as polytheistic or doctrinally unorthodox.

This study demonstrates that the tuan guru, in this case Tuan Guru Haji Muhammad Ruslan Zain al-Nahdy, a representation of a pesantren leader and community authority, plays a significant role in mitigating such ideological conflicts through a spiritual leadership approach grounded in altruistic values. In practice, he applies the Thomas Kilmann conflict management model situationally, adapting his strategy to contextual needs, while maintaining firmness in the dimension of belief and moderation in the socio-cultural dimension. These findings extend the scholarship on spiritual leadership by showing that the spiritual leadership of the Tuan Guru is also effective in addressing religious ideological conflicts within community-based Islamic contexts.

This study proposes a locally grounded framework for conflict resolution rooted in Islamic values, particularly within educational

⁵⁸ Harda Armayanto and Adib Fattah Suntoro, "Managing Religious Diversity: An Ihsan Approach," *Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 24, no. 1 (2023): 99–130, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol25no1.4>.

institutions and community settings experiencing religious tensions. The model emphasizes the application of Qur'anic principles as a foundation for mediation, highlighting the central role of spiritual authority in fostering peace. It demonstrates that religious leaders, endowed with strong moral legitimacy, function as effective mediators who can bridge ideological divides more credibly than external political actors. Conceptualized as a form of spiritual leadership, this model positions the *tuan guru* not only as institutional leaders but also as moral and spiritual guides who promote tolerance, mutual respect, and dialogue between competing groups, including those representing traditional and conservative-puritanical orientations. Furthermore, the study contributes to the discourse on religion and culture by elucidating the interaction between local Islamic traditions and transnational movements in shaping religious identity in Lombok. It also offers practical insights into identifying early signs of ideological conflict, designing culturally sensitive resolution strategies, and recognizing the pivotal role of education in the formation of religious worldviews. []

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