

Conflict and Integration: The Mujahidin Mosque Case Study (A Perspective of Conflict Theory and *Fiqh al-Ikhtilaf*)

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Abstract: *The conflict at the Mujahidin mosque arose from two root causes: first, a misunderstanding between Moel and Latif regarding Moel's desire to give tafsir lectures at the Mujahidin mosque. Second, a difference of opinion regarding the position of the saff. Moel and his supporters wanted to change the saff to match the position of the mosque building, while Latif and his supporters wanted to maintain the position of the saff so that it continued to face the right corner of the mosque, as this position was in line with the direction of the qibla. According to Dahrendorf, the conflict that occurred at the Mujahidin mosque was natural because conflict and differences lead to peace and equality. This is evident in what is happening at the Mujahidin mosque today. After a prolonged conflict from 1998 to 2016, with coordination and awareness from each of the conflicting parties, the conflict finally ended and became a beautiful peace.*

Keywords: mosque, conflict

Abstrak: *Konflik di masjid Mujahidin terjadi akibat dari dua hal yang menjadi akar konflik tersebut, yaitu: pertama, kesalahpahaman antara Moel dan Latif mengenai keinginan Moel memberikan pengajian tafsir di masjid Mujahidin. Kedua, perbedaan pendapat mengenai posisi saff, pihak Moel dan pendukungnya ingin mengubah saff agar menyesuaikan dengan posisi bangunan masjid, sementara pihak Latif dan pendukung tetap ingin mempertahankan posisi saff agar tetap mengarah pada arah pojok kanan masjid, karena memang posisi itu yang sesuai dengan arah kiblat. Konflik yang terjadi di masjid Mujahidin menurut Dahrendorf adalah wajar sebab konflik dan perbedaan itu akan mendatangkan perdamaian dan persamaan. Hal itu terbukti dengan apa yang terjadi di masjid Mujahidin yang sekarang. Setelah terjadi konflik berkepanjangan sejak tahun 1998 hingga tahun 2016, dengan adanya koordinasi dan kesadaran dari masing-masing pihak yang berkonflik, akhirnya konflik tersebut berakhir dan menjadi sebuah perdamaian yang indah.*

Kata Kunci: Masjid, Konflik

Introduction

Religious moderation is a whip The mosque is fundamentally defined by the Arabic root *sajada*, meaning "to prostrate," which identifies it as a sacred space for worship and submission to God. Beyond its theological definition, the mosque serves

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as a vital social instrument designed to unite the Muslim community and strengthen communal bonds through regular interaction. However, the ideal of the mosque as a sanctuary of peace is increasingly challenged by social realities where these spaces become arenas for competition over status, financial gain, and social position. Such was the case at the Mujahidin Mosque in the Wiyung district of Surabaya, East Java, which became the site of a profound and prolonged social rift spanning nearly two decades, from 1997 to 2016.

The history of the Mujahidin Mosque is deeply personal, rooted in the legacy of H. Mujahidin, a man of humble means who passed away in 1975. His son, H. Moel Khuzaini (Moel), fulfilled his father's dying wish by funding and constructing the mosque between 1979 and 1981. As the primary benefactor and wakif (endower), Moel assumed the role of Chairman of the Takmir (mosque management). For years, the mosque functioned as a center for local spiritual life, but the seeds of discord were sown in the late 1990s as a result of shifting power dynamics and differing interpretations of religious practice.

The conflict at the Mujahidin Mosque was not a singular event but a multi-layered explosion of tension categorized by two primary "root causes". The first root was a personal and professional misunderstanding involving Moel and the mosque's imam rawatib (permanent prayer leader), Abd. Latif. Upon his retirement from the Surabaya City Government, Moel sought to share his newly acquired knowledge of Arabic and Tafsir (Quranic exegesis) by establishing a study circle at the mosque. However, a lack of coordination led to a significant slight: one evening, Moel arrived to teach, only to find the mosque empty because the congregation had followed Latif to attend a funeral service for a neighbor. Moel interpreted this as a deliberate act of disrespect and a sign that the congregation was more loyal to Latif than to the mosque's founder.

This personal grievance escalated into the second, more public root of the conflict: a dispute over the physical and spiritual alignment of the mosque, specifically the saff (prayer rows). In 1997, Moel unilaterally decided to change the direction of the saff. Originally, the rows were aligned toward the corner of the mosque, which matched the calculated Qibla via compass and astronomical calculation (hisab). Moel, however, insisted on straightening the rows to align with the mosque's building structure, which faced slightly further south. He justified this change by arguing that it

made the mosque appear more spacious and cited the theological view that one may face toward God from any direction.

This decision was met with fierce resistance from Latif and a large portion of the congregation who argued that the saff must strictly point toward the Ka'bah to ensure the validity of their prayers. The disagreement transformed the mosque from a place of worship into a courtroom of heated arguments and mutual accusations. When the congregation refused to yield, Moel asserted his perceived "ownership" of the mosque, claiming it was his family's property and that he would revoke its status as a public endowment (*wakaf*). This led to a mass walkout of congregants who refused to pray in a mosque they believed was no longer aligned with the Qibla.

The situation deteriorated further as the conflict moved from the mosque to the legal system. Tensions regarding the management of mosque funds—specifically proceeds from charity boxes and water sales—led Moel to report Latif to the police. Latif, a man of limited education and financial means, was unable to provide the complex financial reports Moel demanded. Despite Moel's eventual offer to settle the matter out of court if Latif admitted guilt, Latif's refusal led to his sentencing and a two-year imprisonment at Medaeng. This legal battle solidified the division between the "Pro-Moel" and "Pro-Latif" factions, creating a social vacuum where the mosque stood nearly empty for years, its religious and social activities silenced by spite.

To understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to employ a multidisciplinary approach, blending the sociological insights of Conflict Theory with the Islamic tradition of *Fiqh al-Ikhtilaf* (The Jurisprudence of Disagreement). From a sociological perspective, the Mujahidin Mosque conflict illustrates the theories of Ralf Dahrendorf, who posited that society is not static but is constantly shaped by the struggle between those in positions of authority and those who are subordinated. Moel, as the founder and chairman, represented the "authority" seeking to enforce new norms, while Latif and the congregation represented the "subordinate" group defending traditional interests and communal consensus. Dahrendorf's perspective suggests that conflict is a natural necessity in social associations and can, paradoxically, lead to eventual integration and peace.

Complementing this is the perspective of *Fiqh al-Ikhtilaf*. In Islamic history, differences of opinion (*ikhtilaf*) among scholars have traditionally been viewed not as a source of division, but as a "mercy" (*rahmat*) for the community. The dispute over the

Qibla at the Mujahidin Mosque is a modern echo of classical debates between the Shafi'i and Hanafi schools of law. While the Shafi'i school (followed by Latif's supporters) emphasizes facing the exact direction of the Ka'bah (*'ayn al-ka'bah*), the Hanafi school (aligned with Moel's view) allows for facing the general direction (*jihat al-qiblah*). Had the parties possessed a deeper awareness of this jurisprudential flexibility, the conflict might have been managed through mutual respect rather than ego-driven hostility.

The resolution of the conflict in 2016 serves as a powerful testament to the possibility of integration. After eighteen years of estrangement, the parties finally chose to set aside their egoism and engage in a communal *musyawarah* (consultation). They reached a physical and symbolic compromise: the mosque was renovated to realign the *mihrab* (prayer niche) according to a new Qibla measurement that satisfied both the theological requirements and the structural aesthetics of the building. This case study thus highlights how a mosque, though a site of intense disintegration, can return to its original function as a center of harmony when the principles of dialogue and religious tolerance are applied.

Research Method

The study employs a qualitative research approach, specifically utilizing a phenomenological perspective to understand social sciences as they relate to the lived experiences of the mosque's congregation. This methodological choice allows the researcher to delve deeply into the subjective meanings and interpretations held by the actors involved in the conflict. The research design is structured as a case study, focusing specifically on the Mujahidin Mosque in the Karah Village, Wiyung District, Surabaya.

To analyze the complex social dynamics within the mosque, the author adopts a multidisciplinary approach. This involves integrating several relevant fields of study to ensure a comprehensive examination of the problem. Specifically, the researcher utilizes:

Conflict Theory: The study applies the structural conflict perspectives of Ralf Dahrendorf, focusing on authority, associations, and interest groups.

Functional Conflict Theory: The research incorporates Lewis Coser's framework, which blends structural functionalism with conflict theory to understand how social friction can lead to integration.

Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh al-Ikhtilaf): The study uses the paradigm of ikhtilaf (disagreement in Islamic law) to evaluate the theological roots of the dispute over the saff (prayer rows) and the Qibla.

Data for this research was gathered through naturalistic inquiry methods. The author utilized qualitative interviews to collect primary information from key figures involved in the dispute, such as Abd. Latif (the former imam rawatib) and other congregants like Saiful. These personal testimonies provided the chronological details of the conflict, from its inception in 1996 to its resolution in 2016.

The analysis of the data follows a social fact paradigm, treating the conflict and the subsequent peace agreement as objective social phenomena that can be studied through established sociological and religious lenses. By comparing the field data with established theories of political and social conflict, the researcher identifies the "root causes" of the rift—namely misunderstanding and differences in religious interpretation. Finally, the study uses a descriptive-analytic method to conclude how coordination and mutual awareness eventually transformed a decade-long conflict into a peaceful integration.

The data source used in this study is the *wasathiyah* book, a primary source. It is supported by other literature by M. Quraish Shihab and other relevant journals as secondary sources. Meanwhile, the data collection technique in the type of library research is documentation, namely by collecting and analyzing documents in print and electronic media. (Putri & Fadlullah, 2022) The analysis technique in this study uses content analysis. This analysis is used to find out and examine the concept of religious moderation from the perspective of M. Quraish Shihab and its' application to Islamic Religious Education Learning in a focused and accurate manner. (W, 2022).

Results and Discussion

The term The research findings reveal that the conflict at the Mujahidin Mosque was a multi-dimensional phenomenon involving both individual and group dynamics that persisted for roughly two decades. Through the lenses of Dahrendorf's conflict

theory and the principles of Fiqh al-Ikhtilaf, the results of this study are discussed below.

The Roots of Disintegration

The conflict was fundamentally triggered by two primary issues that escalated over time. The first was a socio-personal misunderstanding between H. Moel Khuzaini (Moel) and Abd. Latif regarding a planned Tafsir lecture. Moel felt personally slighted and disrespected when he arrived to teach and found the mosque empty, as the congregation had followed Latif to a neighbor's house for a funeral service. From a sociological perspective, this represents a clash within the authority hierarchy of the mosque association, where the leader (Moel) perceived a challenge to his status by a subordinate (Latif).

The second root cause was a theological-technical dispute regarding the saff (prayer rows). In 1997, Moel unilaterally altered the saff to align with the mosque's building structure to create a sense of spaciousness. However, Latif and a significant portion of the congregation resisted, insisting that the saff must strictly point toward the Qibla corner based on astronomical calculations. This disagreement led to a total breakdown in community cohesion, resulting in a mass walkout of congregants who viewed the new prayer alignment as invalid.

Legal Escalation and Social Vacuum

The conflict shifted from religious debate to legal warfare when Moel reported Latif to the authorities over the management of mosque funds. Latif, lacking formal administrative training, was unable to provide the required financial accountability for charity boxes and water sales, leading to his two-year imprisonment at Medaeng. This event deepened the rift, creating a "social vacuum" where the mosque became largely deserted, and religious activities such as Yasinan, Tahlilan, and the Quranic Education Center (TPQ) ceased to function effectively.

Analysis through Fiqh al-Ikhtilaf

The discussion highlights that this conflict was unnecessary if viewed through the tradition of Fiqh al-Ikhtilaf (Jurisprudence of Disagreement). In Islamic law, the debate over whether one must face the exact Ka'bah ('ayn al-ka'bah) or merely the

general direction (jihat al-qiblah) is a classical one. The Shafi'i school, followed by Latif's group, demands the former, while the Hanafi school, which aligns with Moel's view, accepts the latter. The study suggests that the conflict persisted because both parties prioritized their own "egoism" and felt their opinion was the absolute truth, failing to recognize the established pluralism within Islamic jurisprudence.

The Path to Integration and Peace

The findings confirm Ralf Dahrendorf's theory that conflict is a necessary precursor to change and eventual peace. By early 2016, both parties reached a state of "insyaf" (self-awareness). Through renewed coordination and consultation (musyawarah), they reached a consensus to realign the saff according to the Qibla while renovating the mosque's interior to accommodate the change. This compromise resulted in the re-integration of the congregation, bringing back the vibrant religious atmosphere of the Mujahidin Mosque that existed prior to 1996.

Conclusion

The longitudinal study of the Mujahidin Mosque (1996–2016) leads to several critical conclusions regarding the nature of communal conflict and its eventual resolution. First, the conflict was not merely a theological dispute over the direction of the saff (prayer rows), but a complex interplay of personal ego, struggles for authority, and a lack of effective communication between the mosque's founder and its religious leaders. The transition from a personal rift into a collective social crisis demonstrates how individual interests can polarize an entire congregation when there is no mechanism for mediation.

From a sociological standpoint, the case validates Ralf Dahrendorf's theory that conflict is an inherent and necessary element of social associations. While the dispute caused a significant "social vacuum" and disintegrated the community for nearly two decades, it ultimately functioned as a catalyst for structural change. The resolution achieved in 2016 proves that conflict does not always lead to permanent destruction; rather, through coordination and collective awareness, it can pave the way for a more resilient and integrated social order.

Furthermore, from the perspective of Fiqh al-Ikhtilaf, the research concludes that the prolonged tension was exacerbated by a rigid interpretation of religious practice.

The clash between the Shafi'i and Hanafi perspectives on the Qibla could have been harmonized much earlier had there been a spirit of religious pluralism (*tasamuh*). The final integration was reached only when both parties moved beyond their "truth claims" and prioritized the collective welfare (*maslahah*) of the Ummah.

Ultimately, the Mujahidin Mosque case serves as a profound lesson for mosque management: that the physical alignment of a building is secondary to the spiritual and social alignment of its people. The successful integration in 2016, marked by the renovation and realignment of the mihrab, symbolizes the triumph of dialogue over egoism, returning the mosque to its original function as a sanctuary of peace and unity.

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