

NGOs CONTESTATION ON ISLAMIC HIJRI CALENDAR IN URBAN MUSLIM SOCIETY IN INDONESIA: FROM AUTHORITY TO IDENTITY

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Abstract

This article discusses on religious contestation on determination of Islamic Calendar in Urban Muslim society in Indonesia. An Indonesian Islamic calendar discourse is always dominated by Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah as two largest Islamic NGOs. The choice of individuals from this group to fill the office of Minister of Religious Affairs, the official authority, is a sign of the domination amongst these mass organizations. To analyze the contestation of religious authority, this paper recommends the application of an analytical framework of the Gramsci's hegemony theory which illustrates the contestation between them. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the two organizations' experts in Islamic astronomy, which were then evaluated using a descriptive approach. The finding of this paper reveal that the contestation between Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah not only in relation to the power, but also strengthening the identity of each group to shows their power on Islamic Calendar discourse in Indonesia.

Keywords: Authority, Identity, Islamic Calendar, Indonesian NGOs.

A. Introduction

Every decision on how to live a religious society life involves religious authority. The Ministry of Religion Affairs, which has the special responsibility of overseeing religious discourses in Indonesia, has the official religious authority in that country. This religious authority is inextricably linked to the influence of the large organizations that make up its leaders' backgrounds. Networking is the primary factor in deciding whether or not a mass group has a strong position in social life, according to the link between the leadership of government institutions and mass organizations (Bruzzi & Zeleke, 2015; Hensengerth, 2015; Kalmbach, 2008; Sunarwoto, 2015). In the context of urban Muslim society in Indonesia, A mass group can readily achieve legitimacy in

every decision that indirectly affects social life if it has strong relations with government agencies. The ministry of religion's dominant status eventually prompted competition among religious organizations to hold the institution's leading position.

Conflict in the community follows the rivalry between the groups. Although not physically, the disputes demonstrate that this contestation is also an ideological struggle that would eventually result in the supremacy of power in society, in addition to fighting over positions (Javornicky, 2015). One group becomes dominant as a result of this supremacy, whereas another group is marginalized. Community members are uneasy about this, especially if it involves religion. They readily include organizational goals in political decisions as a result of winning this competition, strengthening their status in society (Arifianto, 2019). Determining the start of the Hijri month, particularly the months of Ramadan, Shawwal, and *Hajj*, is one possible cause of religious confrontation in Indonesia. The argument in the discourse over this case intensifies when the government's judgments are not followed and are not put into practice, leading to social misunderstanding.

For instance, the government held the *Isbat* Session in 2013 to decide when the month of Shawwal 1434 AH would begin. The majority of Muslim mass organizations were invited by the government to discuss and choose a date for Shawwal. Except for Muhammadiyah, the majority of the large-scale Muslim organizations were invited to the *isbat* hearing. Muhammadiyah contended that their absence was caused by the *hisab* strategy they employed to be disregarded and safeguard the sentiments of other Muhammadiyah adherents (Salim, 2019). Muhammadiyah's absence demonstrates how the Nahdatul Ulama groups dominate the Hijri calendar discourse utilizing the observation (*rukyyat*) technique, with Muhammadiyah feeling like a minority (marginalized) group that only functions as a complement at that particular time. Additionally, Muhammadiyah has adopted a different stance about the beginning and end of Ramadan than the government in recent years. In actuality, Muhammadiyah did not take into account the most recent government standards, especially the Neo Crescent visibility criteria 2022, in establishing the beginning of the month.

The hegemony of power (and its counter-hegemony) in this discourse serves as the author's starting point for analyzing the contestation of religious authority in the context of determining the first day of the Islamic month in Indonesia. Apparently, this discourse is not just a contestation of religious authorities which give rise to power hegemony. This discussion also addresses how each group's identity and distinctive attributes must be challenged in order to demonstrate the power of organizational influence in urban Muslim society in Indonesia.

B. Method

In order to bolster this claim, I interviewed an Islamic astronomy professional from NU (Lajnah Falakiah PBNU) and got some input from a Muhammadiyah Islamic astronomy expert (Majlis Tarjih dan Tajdid) to learn more about their perspectives on this topic. This paper is divided into four interrelated parts. The history and evolution of the Hijri Calendar in Indonesia were covered in the first session. The second session will go over NU's *rukyyat* process, and the third session will go over Muhammadiyah's calculation method. The last session will cover the controversy surrounding the Hijri Calendar in Indonesia in recent years.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

The Development of Islamic Calendar in Indonesia

A calendar is a scheduling tool for keeping track of the passing of time. Humans are able to record each event that has occurred throughout their history and the history of a country using the Calendar. Therefore, the calendar plays an important role in the development of human life and civilization (Saksono, 2007). The smallest unit of the calendar, when converted, is a day, which is made up of hours, minutes, and seconds. Astronomy is an absolute thing in its determination, similar to the calendar. Though some calendars are just based on abstract concepts and simply follow a system that repeats without having any astronomical relevance, the vast majority of calendar systems throughout the world make reference to astronomical cycles. Some calendars are coded based on written law, but some are delivered via oral messages (Segan, 2006). Nowadays, it is estimated that there are around 40 different types of calendar models used on around the world and each calendar system has a different method of determination according to the references used (AlModarresi & White, 2004). All 40 calendar types have anomalies, and each calendar's anomalies are affected by a number of different causes (AlModarresi & White, 2004).

Calendars can often be divided into three categories. The Masehi calendar or Christian calendar comes first. This calendar system bases its calculations mostly on the movement of the sun (*syamsiyah* or solar system). The next category is the lunar calendar (*kamariah*) which is based on the lunar movement during orbit (evolved towards the earth). The Islamic calendar, also known as the Hijri calendar, is purely lunar and follows the cycle of the moon's phases without referring to the tropical year. The last category is the luni-solar calendar which combines the lunar and the solar system. The luni-solar calendar features a lunar ordinal that refers to the cycle of the moon's phases; however, an insert is provided every few years to keep this calendar in line with the seasonal calendar (Nawawi, 2010).

All Muslims agree that the Hijri Calendar is used as a reference in determining the main worship for Fasting, *Eid al-Fitr* and *Hajj*. This calendar was initially established as the official calendar in history in 642 AD, or 10 years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, by the Caliph Umar ibn Khattab. July 16, 622 AD was designated as the first day in the Hijri Calendar which refers to the event of the Prophet Hijrah of Muhammad Makkah to Medina. However, the use of this calendar was announced by the Prophet Muhammad some time before he died (Xin, 2001). This calendar was created using the moon's orbit around the earth. Because the identification of the beginning of the month is based on the motion of the moon, there are frequently disparities between this method and the more widely used solar calendar method (Odeh, 2006). The problem that arises is the difference between the beginning of the day and where the day begins (Rofiuddin, 2016). Before the arrival of the holy months of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhulhijjah, the question of the harmonization of the Islamic calendar is still a contentious issue. This is logical given that Muslims want certainty during those three months due to the adoption of Ramadan fasting, *Eid al-Fitr* and *Hajj*.

The debate about the Hijri Calendar's unification is evolving more and more with the times and astronomy itself. The development of this discourse eventually also reached in Indonesian urban Muslim as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. The Hijri calendar discourse that developed in Indonesia is in the spotlight of the Islamic world and is interesting to study because of the existence of two large mass organizations, namely Muhammadiyah and NU (Feener, 2007; Porter,

2002), which are often symbolized as a source of difference in the determination of the beginning of the Islamic month in that NU adheres to the *rukyyat* while Muhammadiyah adheres to the *hisab* (Azhari, 2012; Izzuddin, 2012). Thoughts from transnational Islamic movements are added to the discourse surrounding the Hijri calendar in Indonesia in addition to the two principal Islamic organizations such as the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) that use the global *rukyyatul hilal* method as a determinant of the beginning of the Hijri Calendar, PERSIS (Islamic Unity) which uses the calculation system which is inline with Muhammadiyah, but slightly different in the order of their use (al-Jawi, 2008; Azhari, 2015; Feener, 2007; Liow, 2009).

The Saka Calendar, also known as the Hindu Javanese Calendar, is a calendar calculating system that Indonesians are familiar with historically, notably in Java. In its development, this calendar is also used by the Hindu community in Bali as a religious calendar and custom calendar. As the influence of earliest Islam in Indonesia, which was marked by the establishment of the first Islamic kingdom Samudera Pasai in Lhoksumawe, North Aceh, Islamic culture slowly began to enter and influence the people in the Java Island region. With the establishment of the Islamic Mataram kingdom in Java, Islam gained political power so that its development was more effective and had an influence on the life order of the Javanese people (Saifullah, 2010). The switch from the Saka Calendar, which was based on the movement of the sun, to the Javanese Islamic Calendar, which was based on the movement of the moon, had a significant impact on the social structures of the Javanese community at that time. The adjustment of this calendar is a form of cultural acculturation carried out by Sri Sultan Agung Prabu Hanyakrakusuma as the King of Mataram II who came to power in 1613-1645 AD. Changes in the Calendar system occurred in 1633 AD / 1043 H to coincide with the year 1555 Saka. However, the beginning of the Islamic Javanese year continued to follow/continue the calculation from the Saka year ie starting at 1555 (Hariwijaya, 2010). This transition unfortunately not followed by an academic tradition in the form of writings (books and *kitab*s) that discussed the Hijriyah calendar (Butarbutar, 2017). Muslims were only instructed to conduct *Rukyyatul Hilal* in the western horizon at sunset on the hills or the beach every 29th of Sya'ban and 29th of Ramadan at that time (Jayusman, 2014). Then, Islamic groups in Indonesia followed the discourse around the establishment of the Hijriyah Calendar, particularly in regards to the creation of the Hijri Calendar. Each mass organization used a different technique to create the Hijri system, and in certain cases, this also had an impact on the calculations' outcomes and the initial selection of the lunation month (Djamaluddin, 2000).

NU's Approach on Observation

From a historical standpoint, it has taken NU a while to implement the *Rukyyat* technique. The process started with the Surabaya NU Conference on September 8-13, 1954, and continued with the Situbondo conference in 1984, which ultimately decided that it was connected to the Hijri calendar issue, particularly in the initial determination of Ramadan, Syawal, and Dzulhijjah, NU based on *rukyyatul hilal* and *istikmal* (Izzuddin, 2007). Whereas the *hisab* method is only used as a companion to the *rukyyat* method and not as a major determinant related to the Hijri Calendar (Lajnah Falakiyah Pengurus Besar Nahdhatul Ulama, 2006). In the pre-1998 period, NU only used *rukyyat* without any restrictions on criteria and was only specifically used to determine the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal and Dhulhijjah (Sudiby, 2014). Then after 1998, In the Hijri Calendar system, NU started using *hisab* as a *rukyyat* companion and performed *rukyyat* every new month. Additionally, the hilal observation report must be processed by the Lajnah Falakiyah and then decided by the central board; it is

not always assumed that it would be accepted (PBNU).

While NU achieves the crescent visibility criteria, it does not necessarily guarantee that *rukyyat* will lose NU. This criterion is seen as a method of selection for NU, preventing all crescent testimony from being accepted. Prior to the application of this criterion, NU had a history of accepting all new moon observations, even when the computation did not meet the minimal criteria for the new moon's appearance. In addition, the testimony given does not refer to the results of the previous calculation so the results are not accurate. For this phenomenon, the use of this criterion becomes important for NU so that the quality of witnesses of seeing the *hilal* becomes accurate and verified. What needs to be underlined here is that NU still uses the *rukyyat* method. There is no substitute for *rukyyat* for NU in identifying the start of the Islamic month because it is an absolute approach. The witness who relays his observations appears credible, and the *rukyyat* method for NU is viewed as a means of observing with the naked eye (and now it can use sophisticated optical equipment). Even though now some groups interpret the *rukyyat* to be replaced by *rukyyat bi al-'ilm* (observing by calculation), but it cannot be accepted by NU. They assume that the word *rukyyat* is observe and believe so the terminology *rukyyat bi al-'ilm* cannot be used as a method without real witnesses or observations (Hambali, 2019).

Particularly prior to the reform era, the use of the *rukyyat* process for NU frequently results in different government choices. This results from variations in the way the government determines the start of the month. The government tends to use the calculation method used by Muhammadiyah because in that era this mass organization dominated the authoritative determination by the government. This can at least be proven in 1992, 1993 and 1994 the news issued by NU regarding the determination of 1 Shawwal retreated a day from the government's decision. This different decision was then repeated in 2006 but specifically in the East Java region. At that time, NU's decision was the same as the national government, while the East Java NU regional administration (PWNU) decided differently. When determining the start of the Hijri month after 2006, NU and the government always agreed because the Ministry of Religious Affairs' authority had switched from Muhammadiyah to NU (Hambali, 2019).

The Calculation Method of Muhammadiyah

Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah chose a different method from NU. Muhammadiyah tends to use *hisab* as a method in determining early Hijri month. Historically, the use of the calculation method was first used in the almanac in 1927/1345 AH where it was mentioned that Muhammadiyah used *hisab hakiki* with *Imkanurrukyyat* criteria. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah uses the *ijtima qobla ghurub* method which is guided by the new moon that will come when *ijtima* (conjunctions) occur before sunset. This theory was used by Muhammadiyah until 1937 AD Then in 1938 AD Muhammadiyah used the *wujud al-hilal* method and continues to be used today. Since it was confirmed during the Seminar Falak Hisab Muhammadiyah held on August 26-28, 1970, the usage of the *wujud al-hilal* method has finally been employed as the primary method by the Muhammadiyah to determine the start of the Hijriyah (Azhari, 2012).

The different attitude taken by Muhammadiyah using the *hisab* method departs from a different interpretation from other Muslims, especially about the arguments about *rukyyat*. Muhammadiyah understands that the command of *rukyyat* and *istikmal* as mentioned in the hadith still contains *illat* (causal law), namely the state of society at that time was still *ummi* (cannot read and write) so that *illat* will be reduced along with

the times (Amri, 2012; Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah, 2009). Muhammadiyah argued that in making this decision, the institute sought to link between the idyllic dimension of revelation and human civilization. Muhammadiyah provides logical-scientific reasoning that takes into account the fact that the calculation is more certain and can be supported by science (Azhari, 2012). With this inauguration, the *hisab* method also becomes a main characteristic of the Muhammadiyah community which is identical with its scientific rational reasoning.

Muhammadiyah's supply of the *hisab* technique is regarded as meeting the demands of the general people, particularly during religious holidays. Muslims at least need certainty as soon as possible or in advance to ensure the agendas that are arranged are not messy. *Hisab* is considered the right method for this discourse. With *hisab*, people are able to obtain certainty and there is no worry about changing their plans. In addition, *Hisab* provides convenience in compiling the annual Islamic Calendar. With *hisab*, the beginning of the month can be determined in advance without doubt the original determination of the month must be made each month for *rukyyat*, which has a tendency to be ambiguous. This was viewed as unproductive and made creating an annual Islamic calendar challenging. Muhammadiyah persuadably maintained the *hisab* method of identifying the start of the Hijri month on the aforementioned arguments (Anwar, 2012).

2. Discussion

The Dynamics of the Celebration of Islamic Holidays in Indonesia

Islamic values have undoubtedly influenced Indonesian urban Muslims social lives as the country has the largest Muslim population in the world. As the Muslim calendar of prayer, the Hijri calendar soon made its way into Indonesian society as well, particularly when it came to defining the start of the Hijriyah month. It is undeniable that nowadays the people of Indonesia are still divided into two different groups in terms of determining the beginning of the month, namely the group adopting the *hisab* method and the group adopting the *rukyyat* method. They will say that they truly do not follow calculation or *rukyyat* and that they only follow groups that provide protection for both NU and Muhammadiyah if asked why they employ the approach. They inspire trust in their respective organizations and are unconcerned with the decisions or strategies made by such companies (Moller, 2005).

Moller gave an overview of the differences and tensions between these organizations in the initial determination of the month of Ramadhan 1422 H. At that time, Muhammadiyah had announced that fasting would begin on Friday November 16, 2002 based on the hilal position which was already above the horizon on the previous day. Meanwhile, NU and the Government are still waiting for the results of the hilal observations (*rukyyat*) conducted in several regions in Indonesia. In the end the government decided that fasting would start on Saturday 17 November 2002. Then it could be concluded that NU and Muhammadiyah would start fasting on a different day. It is worth noting that Persis, a follower of the *Hisab* technique, rejects Muhammadiyah's choice as another *Hisab* method user. Persis, on the other hand, made the decision to side with the Government and NU because they thought the *hilal* position at the moment was extremely important. Eventually, this phenomena also affected on *ukhuwah Islamiyah*.

This issue is not exclusive to Java. A modest family in the Riau archipelago saw firsthand how one family became perplexed when the Hijri month's beginning was determined. This incident took place in 2011, or at the conclusion of Ramadan in the year 1432 H. Because one family was certain that Eid will occur tomorrow, they had

made special meals for Lebaran at the time. However, they finally had to bow down because the government, at that time represented by Suryadharma Ali as the Minister of Religion, announced that tomorrow still had to rule Ramadhan because the new moon had not yet appeared in various observation spots in Indonesia. This caused a heated debate in their family and they almost decided to follow the Muhammadiyah's decision to decide on Eid on tomorrow. They ultimately made the decision to join the government (and NU), as they were members of NU by inheritance (Long, 2017).

These variations will eventually result in symbolic dominance in society. The place of worship is one of the means of domination when people celebrate different Lebaran. The place of worship which is claimed to be the "NU Mosque" will carry out Eid prayers in accordance with the provisions of the NU, as well as the "Muhammadiyah mosque". This domination results in a minority around the place of worship. The Muhammadiyah community will surely celebrate in a place far from their home because the nearby mosque is the "NU mosque" which is different in the implementation of Eid prayer. On the other hand, if the neighborhood mosques celebrate Eid on separate days, NU inhabitants will undoubtedly hold *Eid Al-Fitr* prayers away from their homes (Nafi', 2019).

Additionally, in Banyumas, the interactions between followers of *Aboge* (Alif Rebo Wage) and non-*Aboge* Muslims during each Eid celebration are fascinating. Islam has its own system for determining the Islamic Calendar, as is common knowledge. *Aboge* Islam often subtracts two to three days from the Hijri calendar. In every celebration of *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*, non-*Aboge* Muslims will respect *Aboge* Islam by not spreading in front of *Aboge* Islam. When *Aboge* Islam celebrates *Eid al-Fitr* 2 days later, only then non-*Aboge* Muslims await the implementation of Eid prayer for the *Aboge* people to finish and give the Eid greetings (Sodli, 2017). The peacefulness that has developed here is a result of Indonesian Muslims' maturity in dealing with disagreements around the Hijri Calendar.

This determination issue seems to affect not only the top of Islamic groups, particularly NU and Muhammadiyah, but also the urban Muslim live. It is well known that Muhammadiyah and NU Organizations frequently target the office of minister of religion as a key position. Although it goes beyond the Hijriyah Calendar debate, this topic is one of the key factors driving competition between these two organizations for the office of Minister of Religious Affairs. The first conflict arose when the Wilopo Cabinet in 1952 placed KH Faqih Usman (Muhammadiyah member) as minister of religion for two periods, which was strongly opposed by Nahdliyin. In fact, at that time NU had to get out of Masjumi. When Tolkhah Hasan, a NU member, had to replace A. Malik Fadjar (Muhammadiyah) as Minister of Religious Affairs during the Abdurrahman Wahid administration, hostilities flared up once more (Schwarz, 2000).

Additionally, symbolic violence will result from the dominance exercised by people in the Minister of Religious Affairs' inner circle. Unconscious forms of cultural and social dominance, such as prejudice towards particular groups or ethnicities, are modeled by symbolic violence (Jenkins, 1992). Through the use of this Minister's authority, the dominant group monopolizes the law or policy created by the government to serve their political and ideological goals (Villegas, 2004).

Contestation on Authority Perspective: NGO's Hegemony

This does not mean that NU has always been able to dominate the position of Minister of Religion. Zaini Ahmad Noeh when presenting his paper at the Falakiyah Meeting in Pelabuhan Ratu openly said that the decision on the determination of the beginning of the Islamic month at the time of Minister Munawir Syadzali

(Muhammadiyah) was different from its predecessor (Azhari, 2012). NU was ascribed by Muhammadiyah because they only used the *hisab* method and ruled out the *rukyyat* method that NU had carried out for years. Since that time, NU and Muhammadiyah have experienced psychological conflict once more. It took a few years before they could celebrate a joint holiday amicably.

Muhammadiyah suffers from symbolic violence much more frequently in this sense. Muhammadiyah is like carrying out / celebrating *Eid al-Fitr* alone when some Muslims (NU) prefer to join the government rather than obey what is decided by Muhammadiyah. This has happened many times and Muhammadiyah seems to walk on its own without any empathy from the government. Muhammadiyah member also look strange in the midst of the community when they celebrate *Eid al-Fitr* first while others still carry out fasting on the 30th day. When Muhammadiyah declined to participate in the Sidang Isbat (Session to Determine the Beginning of the Hijriyah Month, Especially Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhulhijjah) in 2012 to Determine the Beginning of Ramadhan 1432 H, it resulted in the highest level of symbolic violence. Muhammadiyah declined to go because they felt stifled by the existence of the sidang isbat and that their opinions or suggestions in each execution of the isbat session never receive a favorable reaction from the government (Revianur, 2018).

The phenomena of conflict between NU and Muhammadiyah in this discussion about the Islamic calendar demonstrates that this scenario is not a typical one. The perseverance of these two organizations in upholding their individual approaches demonstrates their desire to assert their dominance in social life. The usage of each technique is a hint that each business wants to express its unique identity in addition to demonstrating organizational superiority. It is customary in the community for Muslims who use the *rukyyat* technique and those who follow the *hisab* method to be openly linked to Muhammadiyah. Although a group's identity is more frequently discovered than its outward appearance, the thinking, behavior, and attitude are also indicators of a group's identity that are both invisible and glaringly obvious (Wallace & Mullen, 2019). This group identity is formed based on cultural similarity, social life and interests. The identities raised by these groups are inherent and binding for their followers. However, this does not indicate that identity is always embed forever, but can be changed through negotiation with groups in social practices that focus on the problem of injustice, especially on public policy (Distler, 2017; Keddie, 2014). Due to this, the ministry of religious affairs has developed a system for determining the start of the Islamic month that is bridging the gaps that exist (Djamaluddin, 2017).

Furthermore, the contestation between Indonesian NGOs shows the hegemony (Vemia, 1981) of each mass organization in Indonesian urban Muslim. The characters who are plotted as spearheads or agents will then issue policies that tend to lead to the mass organizations background. This kind of hegemony needs to be addressed and the role of the ulama becomes very large to provide a middle way to this problem. The dispute that is engulfing the ulama, who were once a source of religious inspiration, threatens to lessen their power and appeal in society. If the ulama can keep their idealistic outlook or if they are constrained by orthodoxy, which prevents the expansion of discourse on solutions to the attainment of oneness, the political dynamics that fast turn will test their constancy in this regard (Hasyim, 2019; Ichwan, 2005). There have been numerous instances where intellectuals' charisma has waned as a result of their idealistic ideals being utilized as bargaining chips by political rivalries (Yuki & Hiroko, 2014). They are thought to have an inclination toward political matters and an inconsistent approach when it comes to issuing fatwas in response to legitimate issues that arise. Scholars should be positioned as an appropriate mediator and a point

of reference in the Hijri Calendar discourse in order to minimize or even completely eradicate any potential horizontal conflicts. Furthermore, when disagreements over the choice of the Islamic holiday cannot be avoided, national unity must be preserved with the help of the ulama's wisdom.

D. Conclusion

The social and political factors that exist in Indonesian urban Muslim society, particularly in the context of the Hijri Calendar discourse, are essential given that there are various ways to determine it. Indonesian nongovernmental organizations' (NGOs) Islamic calendars were divided into two main schools, *rukyyat* and *hisab*. The existence of these two streams eventually led to social dynamics, especially before the arrival of 3 months of worship, namely Ramadan, *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*. In this circumstance, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the government has made an effort to offer a compromise so that both parties in the Hijri Calendar debate might come to an understanding. But within the government, there is dynamism since different mass organizations compete with one another for dominance. The presence of this domination not only demonstrates a group's strong authority but also serves to enhance the ideology of the group by legitimizing it through monopolized legal or policy goods. When such differences cannot be avoided, the ulama play a crucial role in preserving the unity of the people.

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