

FROM HERETICAL FATWA TO JUDICIAL REVIEW: SALAFI, ULAMA, AND COMMUNAL CONFLICT IN ACEH

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Abstract

The Salafi preaching style in Aceh has prompted a response from the Aceh Ulema Consultative Council (MPU/Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama) through a heretical fatwa on several Salafi teachings leading to communal conflict in Aceh. This article analyzes the socio-political background of the fatwa's emergence, its impact on socio-religious conflict in Aceh, and Salafists' resistance through a judicial review of the MPU's legality. Combining literature and field studies, this paper demonstrates that the socio-religious conflict between Salafists and Acehnese society stems from the former's truth claims regarding khilāfiyyah issues. This is evident in the Salafi preaching style, which criticizes and hereticates some traditional Acehnese Muslim practices, that generated antagonistic responses from the MPU, society, and the Aceh government. The conflict has intensified after Salafists challenged the MPU's legality in the Supreme Court of Indonesia despite its decline, which further solidified opposition to Salafi teachings and led to their marginalization in Aceh. This paper recommends that promoting tolerance by both parties is essential to resolving the conflict.

Keywords: salafi; MPU; conflict; heretical fatwa; resistance

Abstrak

Corak dakwah Salafi di Aceh memicu tanggapan Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama Aceh (MPU) melalui fatwa sesat terhadap beberapa ajaran Salafi yang berujung pada konflik komunal di Aceh. Artikel ini menganalisis latar belakang sosial politik munculnya fatwa tersebut, dampaknya terhadap konflik sosial agama di Aceh, dan perlawanan kelompok Salafi melalui uji materi terhadap legalitas MPU. Dengan menggabungkan studi literatur dan lapangan, makalah ini menunjukkan bahwa konflik sosio-religius antara kelompok Salafi dan masyarakat Aceh bermula dari klaim kebenaran kelompok Salafi mengenai isu khilāfiyyah. Hal ini terlihat dari gaya dakwah Salafi yang mengkritik dan mengecam beberapa praktik tradisional Islam di Aceh sehingga menimbulkan respon antagonis dari pihak MPU, masyarakat, dan pemerintah Aceh. Konflik ini semakin meningkat setelah kelompok Salafi mempertanyakan legalitas MPU di Mahkamah Agung meskipun ada penolakan dari MPU tersebut, yang semakin memperkuat penolakan terhadap ajaran Salafi dan menyebabkan marginalisasi mereka di Aceh. Makalah ini merekomendasikan bahwa peningkatan toleransi oleh kedua belah pihak merupakan hal yang penting dalam menyelesaikan konflik.

Kata Kunci: salafi; MPU; konflik; fatwa sesat; perlawanan

INTRODUCTION

The administrative system of Aceh regulates the duties and functions of the Aceh Ulama Consultative Council (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama Aceh* or MPU) through Aceh Qanun Number 8 of 2015. According to Article 9 of the Qanun, MPU has the right to issue fatwas on creeds and sects considered heterodoxy or heresy. One of its results is a fatwa on the falsehoods and heresies of some of Salafi's teachings. Fatwa MPU No 09/2014 was issued in 2014 in response to the conflict between the Salafists and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* (Aswaja) groups in Gampong Pulo Raya, Pidie (Fatwa MPU No 09/2014, 2014). Besides serving as a religious legal response to the unfolding phenomena, this fatwa also holds the potential to be exploited by factions or groups aiming to oppose the presence of Salafists in Aceh, consequently leading to new conflicts. Indeed, from its issuance until 2022, a minimum of ten conflicts have transpired, as shown in Table 01. Hence, this article sees this fatwa as a helpful discussion to examine the socio-religious conflict between the Salafist (Wahabi) and Aswaja groups in Aceh. Specifically, this article examines the socio-political climate surrounding the fatwa's emergence, its impact on Aceh's social, religious, and political spheres, and the Salafist resistance against MPU in the form of a lawsuit in the Indonesian Supreme Court.

This article contributes to two study areas: (a) Aceh's privilege system and the role of MPU, and (b) the heretical fatwas against some Salafi teachings and the Salafist's resistance. These two themes include research results on the heretical fatwa issued by MPU (Ataillah, 2017; Nurdin et al., 2017, 2018), sociological studies of fatwas, and the position of ulama and fatwas in the Aceh privilege system (A. Abubakar, 2014; Feener, 2013; Jalil, 2007; Lukman & Khairuldin, 2017; Miller, 2010; Razak et al., 2021; Sabil, 2012), as well as the conflict between Salafists and the traditional Acehnese Muslims (M. Abubakar, 2016; Febriandi & Yunanda, 2021; Kasim et al., 2019; Khatijah, 2018; Miswar, 2020; Nirzalin & Febriandi, 2022; Noviandy et al., 2022; Permana, 2021; Yunus & Amiruddin, 2021), the conflicts outside Aceh (Abidin, 2016; Budiwanti, 2014; Fitriani, 2015, 2016; Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2013; Maksum, 2016; Putra, 2018; Sahrin & Suyanto, 2017; Saparudin, 2017; Ulum, 2016), and judicial review of Aceh's qanun (Fuad et al., 2022; Rani et al., 2020; Simon, 2019), are also an offer to the development of conflict studies and the Salafists' resistance under Aceh's privilege system.

This article goes further and differs from previous studies because these scholars look specifically at Aceh, MPU, and the Salafist's resistance separately. This article not only studies the fatwa in terms of *istinbāt* of fatwa (method of issuing fatwas) (Ataillah, 2017; Nurdin et al., 2018) but also examines the need for a socio-political approach to see why the fatwa emerged and what are its implications; the presence of Salafi in Aceh and the MPU's role under Aceh's privileges system are not merely seen from a legal perspective (A. Abubakar, 2014; Feener, 2013; Jalil, 2007; Lukman & Khairuldin, 2017; Miller, 2010; Sabil, 2012), but they are also a social phenomenon that requires social analysis tools.

This article examines the conflict between Salafi and Aswaja in Gampong Pulo Raya, Pidie, and the MPU's response by issuing a heretical fatwa against some of Salafi's teachings. The following section discusses the impact of the fatwa on the socio-religious conflict in Aceh and how the ruler-religious clerics' alliances came together in Aceh against Salafi. Finally, before concluding remarks, this article reviews Salafist's resistance to the stigma of heresy in the form of a lawsuit against the MPU's legality and the subsequent response to Salafi by MPU, local government, and pro-MPU NGOs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is based on a field and literature study that draws upon several sources, including MPU Fatwa number 9 of 2014 and interviews with MPU's key figures. Additionally, the study also incorporates documents owned by MPU, Aceh Laws and Qanuns, Supreme Court case file number 73/P/HUM/2019 (Agung, 2019), which involves judicial review of Article 9 of Aceh Qanun Number 8 of 2015. The study also takes into account mass and electronic media reporting on social and religious conflicts between Acehese traditional Muslims and Salafists, as well as some figures of MPU management as primary sources.

The data obtained is analyzed using Michel Foucault's power relations theory of governmentality and domination models to examine the roles of MPU in determining whether the other parties are a heresy or an offshoot that may or may not be punishable by existing regulations. This article also uses James Scott's resistance theory to determine the Salafi resistance to MPU. After analyzing the two theories above, this article draws conclusions based on the proposed problem formulation.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Salafi and Conflict in Gampong Pulo Raya: Heretical Fatwa against Salafi

The MPU's Fatwa number 09 of 2014 is a response to the socio-religious conflicts between Salafi/Wahabi and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* group in Gampong Pulo Raya, a village in Pidie regency, Aceh.

Looking at the village's history, it has been a base for the Salafi group for decades. In 1998, a school founded by Salafi preacher Ustaz Faisal Hasan Sufi was burned down by the community. The village has also not celebrated the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid al-nabi*) for two decades. In 2011, the village mosque was renovated with funding from Qatar. Ustadz Abu Rifqy, a Salafi preacher, was appointed by the *keuchik* (village head) to teach at the mosque (IPAC Report No. 32, 2016).

In 2014, hundreds of people attended Abu Rifqi's *ta'lim* (teaching) at the mosque. The school he founded then grew, with about 100 students in 2014. However, due to the emergence of different types of education and religious teaching in the community, such as not celebrating the mawlid (the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad), not reciting *qunūt* in the *subuh* prayer, and not reciting dhikr and praying together and loudly after the five compulsory prayer, the non-Salafi community in the village was worried and complained about Salafi's teachings (IPAC Report, 2016: 14).

In that situation, an anti-Salafi movement emerged, even led by the community leader. Idrus, for instance, the head of Pidie's Titeu District, criticized the Salafi teachings of not celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday in his speech at the Mawlid celebration in Gampong Loih, Pidie in April 2013. Because of his criticism, the village head and the community of Gampong Pulo Raya sued Idrus for defamation, but to no avail. In response, in March 2014, Idrus held the Mawlid celebration in Gampong Pulo Raya. The Chairman of MPU Pidie, Tgk Nasir Ibrahim, was appointed as a preacher. In his lecture, he emphasized respecting the tradition of the Prophet's birthday. The congregation cheered: "Attack Wahabi!" (IPAC Report, 2016).

The conflict between the two groups in Titeu village continued for some time. Then, on Friday, April 11, 2014, a group of village residents stopped Abu Rifqi's congregation from performing Friday prayers at the Gampong Pulo Raya Mosque. The situation was finally resolved on April 16, 2014, when the MPU intervened and reconciled the two parties. As a result, the Salafi group at the Gampong Pulo Raya Mosque suspended the Friday prayer activities at the mosque for a while to avoid further conflict (MPU Pidie, 2014).

Amid this agreement, MPU Pidie formed a particular team. They interviewed Salafi teachers and investigated their textbooks. As a result, MPU Pidie found that, according to Salafi's teachings, the Prophet of Adam and the Prophet of Idris is only the Prophet (*nabi*), not the Messenger of God (*rasūl*), Allah resides on the 'arash, the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*mawlid*) as well as dhikr and pray together and loudly after five-time compulsory prayer are heresy (*bid'ah*).

Based on this evidence, those teachings are false and heresy for MPU. Hence, "the government must close the Salafi's recitations, da'wa activities, and all recitations labeled as heresy by MPU Aceh such as Salafi's recitations in Gampong Pulo Raya in Titeu District, Pidie and other places, and prohibit their activities." (MPU Fatwa No 09/2014, 2014).

Some of the above issues are *khilāfiyya* matters in Islam. But for MPU, a fatwa should be issued in response to the conflict in Gampong Pulo Raya, Pidie, Aceh.

Ruler-Religious Relation: MPU, Conflict, and the Anti-Salafi Movement

This section describes the relationship between Aceh's ruler and religious authority in forming the resistance to the Salafi movement. The ruler-religious authority referred to here is the relationship between MPU and the Aceh Government in formulating Aswaja values as a guide for the Acehnese people and as a counter to the Salafi movements. By elucidating this relationship, the role of MPU in determining whether the teaching of Salafi is false, heresy, and deviant or vice versa can be described (Foucault, 1993). The explanation is as follows:

After Aceh was ratified as a privileged province in Indonesia, the MPU's role in this privilege system became central in Acehnese society. Article 9 of Aceh Qanun Number 08 of 2015 legalizes the MPU's role in determining whether a group is heresy or vice versa, following the indicator of Aswaja's thoughts. This is because, legally, Aswaja is used as the basis for the Government of Aceh.

Based on this mandate, MPU has played an active role in conducting studies and issuing various fatwas, including fatwa number 09 of 2014, on the false and heresy of some of Salafi's teachings, as explained in the previous section. This fatwa and Fatwa number 4 of 2011 on the Aswaja creed (*'aqida*) criteria influenced the relationship between Aswaja and Salafi in Aceh. These two fatwas became the driving force for the anti-Salafi march or Aswaja March on September 9, 2015, involving thousands of Islamic students and *dayah* (Islamic boarding school) clerics raising several demands to the Aceh Government.

They demanded that the Aceh Government regulate the religious practice (worship) according to the Shafi'i school of thought; the Grand Imam and Imam of the five daily prayers of Baiturrahman Grand Mosque in Banda Aceh must be from adherents of the Shafi'i school of thought, the management of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque must be under the control of the Wali Nanggroe of Aceh; the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque must be under the supervision of the MPU; establishment of Islamic boarding schools and institutions that do not conform to the Shafi'i school of thought and the Aswaja creed is not permitted; stopping all activities of Salafi, Shiite, Communist and heretical groups throughout Aceh; ensuring that all activities in public spaces and religious activities have received permission from MPU; dismissing the head of the Aceh Regional Work Unit - *Satuan Kerja Perangkat Daerah* (SKPA) and the head of the Agency who are not in accordance with Aswaja (Kita, 2015).

In response to those demands, MPU held a meeting with the Aceh clerics on October 26, 2015, in Aceh Besar District (K. Aceh, 2015). This meeting decided the official MPU decision number 24 of 2015 concerning the regulation of worship procedures in Aceh (MPU, 2015). As a follow-up, the second meeting was held on November 21, 2016, which led to the issuance of MPU Decree Number 9 of 2016 on Strengthening the Institution of Islamic Sharia Enforcement (MPU, 2016).

Furthermore, to prevent and resolve the development of heretical sects in Aceh, MPU held a meeting on September 18-19, 2017, during which Acehnese clerics and experts were invited. This meeting resulted in the MPU fatwa number 11 of 2017 concerning the efforts to prevent heretical sects (MPU, 2017b). MPU also held the IV 2017 plenary meeting on 21-23 November 2017 to avoid polemics and religious conflicts among the people of Aceh, especially related to 'aqīda issues (creed). This plenary meeting resulted in fatwa number 4 of 2017 on the Significant Books of Creed (*Kitāb al-Tawhīd al-Mu'tabarāh*) in Aceh (MPU, 2017a). These efforts demonstrate that MPU has taken a concrete step to resolve the Salafi problem in Aceh.

The MPU's efforts above show that MPU intends to fortify the religious beliefs of the people of Aceh. However, in some cases, a group used the fatwas to justify the rejection of Salafi—for example, the headmaster of Ma'had As-Sunnah (Salafi school), Ustadz. Haris was expelled on August 20, 2015. Thousands of people gave an ultimatum that the school would be closed in the last three days. This is because people are disappointed by the Salafi teachings, which condemn the local religious practices such as *tahlilan*, *tawasul*, and celebrating the Prophet's birthday as a *bid'ah* (Sabil et al., 2017). The same happened with other Salafi institutions, such as the Tamassuk Bis Sunnah Foundation headed by Abdul Qodir Jailani in the village of Lam Awe, Aceh Besar. The people expelled the headmaster of this foundation and his family. This is not to mention the conflicts in the mosques that were "infiltrated" by Salafi, such as the Baitur Rahman Grand Mosque, Ajuen Mosque, Aceh Besar, al-'Izzah Mosque, Krueng Mane, North Aceh, and others (Sabil et al., 2017).

In the following years, the conflicts between Salafi and Aswaja also occurred. The climax was the expulsion of Ust Firanda Adirja, a Salafi preacher who wanted to preach in Aceh, and shortly thereafter, a circular letter from the Governor of Aceh Number 450/21770 prohibiting peaching activities other than *I'tiqād Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* which is sourced from the Shafi'i school of thought (G. Aceh, 2019).

The emergence of that circular letter cannot be separated from the role of MPU of Aceh Province in collaborating with the government as a follow-up to Salafi da'wa in Aceh. This letter aims to respond to the Salafi phenomenon by presenting MPU's opinions and ideas. In addition, it also aims at maintaining the stability of the religious atmosphere in worship and stem the spread of *madhdhāh* other than *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. This is what is meant at the beginning of this section: that the relationship between the ruler and MPU, who have power and political agenda, will determine other parties, such as Salafi, whether their teaching are falsies and heresies or vice versa.

Salafists Against the Stigma of Heresy: From Conflict to Judicial Review

This section discusses Salafist's resistance to MPU through judicial review. The resistance referred to here is that of Salafists' lawsuit against the Qanun Aceh Number 08 of 2014 Article 9 and their actions against a group that contradicts their ideology. To borrow the language of James Scott, resistance arises from an individual or a group defending their rights (Scott, 1985).

Why does resistance arise? Let us begin this discussion with the central position of MPU in the Aceh privilege system. As explained before, in Article 9 of Qanun Aceh Number 8 of 2014, the duties and functions of MPU are to issue fatwas on creeds and sects considered false and heresy. The product of this Qanun can be seen in the fatwa of MPU on some falsehoods and heresies of Salafi teaching (MPU Fatwa No. 09/2014). Consequently, a group of people use this fatwa to butcher Salafi's preaching. As a result, Salafists found it challenging to develop their teachings in Aceh.

We do not mean here to say that the fatwa is the "culprit" of the conflict, but the conflict needs to be addressed from two directions: Salafi versus Aswaja. The Salafi style of proselytism, with its concepts of *sunna* and *bid'a*, as well as the deification and blaming of other Islamic religious practices, often causes conflict. This happens not only in Aceh, but also in various

regions in Indonesia (Abidin, 2016; Budiwanti, 2014; Fitriani, 2015, 2016; Ma'rifah & Asroni, 2013; Maksum, 2016; Putra, 2018; Sahrin & Suyanto, 2017; Saparudin, 2017; Saparudin & Emawati, 2023; Ulum, 2016) and some parts of the world (Cesari, 2005; Kroessin & Mohamed, 2008; Orakzai, 2011; Sujibto & Filiz, 2023). While the Acehese have been practicing Aswaja doctrine for hundreds of years, Salafi comes as a newcomer, distorting their teachings. This self-accusation regained momentum in the form of an offensive fatwa. In the end, conflict was inevitable. The post-fatwa conflicts are described in the table below.

Table 01. Salafi vs Aswaja Conflict in Aceh

| No | Date | Cases |
|----|--------------------|---|
| 1 | February 11, 2022 | The Civil Service Police-Wilayatul Hisbah (Satpol PP-WH) stopped plans for the Friday prayer at al-Ka'by Mosque, West Aceh. |
| 2 | March 17, 2020 | Dissolution of the weekly Islamic recitation session of the Kaukus Wartawan Peduli Syariat Islam (KWPSI). |
| 3 | January 27, 2020 | Dissolution of Ustaz Farhan Abu Furaihan's recitation at the Oman Mosque |
| 4 | June 21, 2019 | Aceh Municipality took over management of the Oman al-Makmur Mosque |
| 5 | Jun3 13, 2019 | The rejection of Ust. Firanda to preach in Aceh |
| 6 | June 05, 2016 | Chaos at the Mosque of Muhammad, Keude Dua, Bireuen Regency, resulted in injuries. |
| 7 | May 20, 2016 | Chaos at the Mosque of Al-Izzah, Aceh Utara |
| 8 | March 29, 2016 | Eviction and dissolution of Ustaz Abdul Qodir's Foundation, Peukan Bada, Aceh Besar. |
| 9 | September 10, 2015 | Aswaja parade I. |
| 10 | October 01, 2015 | Aswaja parade II. |
| 11 | August 20 2015 | Expulsion and dismissal of Ust. Haris Islamic Boarding School (Ma'had As-Sunnah). |

Source: processed from various sources

The presence of MPU in the anti-Salafi movement in Aceh largely distracted Salafists from challenging the legality of MPU in the Supreme Court of Indonesia. This is because, according to Salafists, the root of the conflict between Salafi and Aswaja lies in the legality of MPU in determining other sects as heresy. At the same time, Salafi itself has been designated as a heresy through MPU fatwa number 09 of 2014. This is nicely narrated in their request for judicial review of the legality of the MPU (Article 9 of Aceh Qanun Number 8 of 2015) as follows:

“That the petitioners as Salafists.... suffered much spiritual damage with the elimination of many studies due to the impact of the MPU's Fatwa on Salafi. Groups of people also victimized the petitioner in the seizure of the Alfitrah Keutapang Mosque during the *ta'lim* (recitation) of Ustad Firanda from Jakarta.” (Mahkamah Agung, 2019).

The legality of the MPU challenged by Salafists is Article 9 of Aceh Qanun Number 8 of 2015 on the Guidance and Protection of Aqida. Here is the full article:

“(1) the Aceh MPU has the authority to issue fatwas regarding ‘aqida or allegedly heretical sects; (2) the Aceh MPU has the authority to issue fatwas regarding an institution or an individual spreading ‘aqida or allegedly heretical sects; (3) the MPU fatwa as referred to in

paragraph (1) and paragraph (2) shall be submitted to the Government of Aceh and District/City Government for follow-up” (Pembinaan Dan Perlindungan Aqidah, 2015).

From the explanation above, the MPU's fatwa on some falsehoods and heresies of Salafi teachings is binding in the Aceh privilege system. However, according to the Salafists' lawsuit to the Supreme Court of Indonesia, it is invalid, cannot be applied to the public, and has no binding legal force (Supreme Court, 2019). Their reasons are as follows:

First, Article 9 Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of Aceh Qanun cannot solve various problems, instead aggravating the existing problems. The proof is that the MPU fatwa number 8 of 2014 was used by a group of people to "seize healthy mosques, divide religious people, and persecute preachers who came from Jakarta."

Second, the term “allegedly heretical” in the Qanun is ambiguous, thus creating legal uncertainty in its application, as well as contradictions between one law and another or one article and another.

Third, the Article contradicts Article 28 E Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion for everyone; Article 28 I Paragraph 1, where choosing and practicing religious teachings is the right of everyone; and Article 28 J Paragraph 2, which guarantees freedom of religion and equal and fair treatment.

Fourth, the Article contradicts Article 1 and Article 2 of Law Number 1 PNPS of 1965 in conjunction with Article 2 paragraph (2) of Law No. 5 of 1969 concerning blasphemy that the authority to declare an organization, a religion, a sect of belief is heresy or not rests with President based on the consideration of the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Attorney General, and the Minister of Home Affairs, not MPU.

Fifth, Aceh Qanun Number 09 of 2015 is contrary to higher laws.

Table 02: List of Plaintiffs' Names

| No | Name | Job | Status |
|----|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Khidir M | University student | Plaintiff |
| 2 | Fata'ah Muliadi | University student | Plaintiff |
| 3 | Furqan | University student | Plaintiff |
| 4 | M. Afif As Syawal | University student | Plaintiff |
| 5 | Malik Dewa, S.H | Advocate | Legal Counsel |

Source: (Mahkamah Agung, 2019).

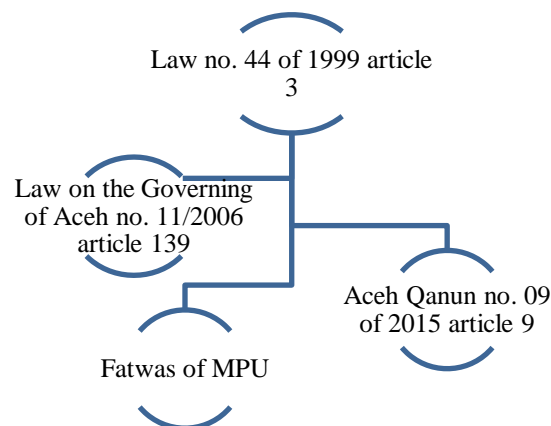
Table 03: List of Defendants' Names

| No | Name of Institution | Legal Counsel |
|----|--|-----------------------|
| 1 | Governor of Aceh | Dr. Amrizal. J. Prang |
| 2 | Leader of the Aceh People's Representative Council (Pimpinan Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Aceh or DPRA) | |

Source: (Mahkamah Agung, 2019).

However, according to the Indonesian Supreme Court's response, the MPU's position in Aceh Qanun Number 09 of 2015 is vital as a derivative of Law of Indonesia Number 44 of 1999 that the privilege of Aceh lies in four things, one of which is the role of the ulama in determining regional policies (Article 3 Paragraph 2; Supreme Court, 2019). The establishment of the MPU is stipulated in Article 9 of this Law, which considers regional policies in government, society, development, and the Islamic economy. Meanwhile, the Qanun sued by Salafi, according to the Supreme Court, is misguided because it is in accordance with the Law on Aceh Government Number 11 of 2006 Article 139 paragraph (1): "MPU has the function of stipulating fatwas that can be one of the considerations for regional government policies in the fields of governance, development, community development, and economy." (Mahkamah Agung, 2019).

Figure 01. MPU Legality Hierarchy



For the above reasons and several other reasons that are not appropriate according to the Supreme Court, on October 24, 2019, the Salafists' lawsuit cannot be accepted. This is stated in decision number 73/P/HUM/2019. In its final decision, the Supreme Court said:

"1. Rejecting the petition for judicial review from the Petitioners: 1. KHIDIR. M, 2. FATA'AH MULIADI, 3. FURQAN, 4. M. AFIF AS-SYAWAL, aforementioned; 2. Punish the Petitioners to pay court costs of Rp1,000,000.00 (one million Rupiah)." (Mahkamah Agung, 2019).

The rejection of the petitioners' request for judicial review by the Indonesian Supreme Court is reasonable. This is because the petitioners' arguments tend to interpret the law in a fragmented and unsystematic manner. They should consider the philosophical, constitutional, and juridical foundations of Qanun No. 8 of 2015 against the historical interpretation of laws to uncover the legal reality. Specifically:

1. The philosophy of Pancasila and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity), acknowledging the state's recognition of regional differences;
2. Constitutionally, Article 18B paragraph (1) and Article 28D paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, which recognizes particular regions and guarantees legal certainty;
3. Juridically, Law No. 44 of 1999 concerning the Implementation of the Special Provinces of the Special Region of Aceh and Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Aceh Government Law;
4. The Indonesian Constitutional Court Decisions No. 61/PUU-XV/2017 and No. 66/PUU-XV/2017, both regarding the conduct of general elections in Aceh, concerning legal certainty.

Therefore, within the context of regional autonomy, this authority is an aspect of implementing asymmetric decentralization. The existence of Law No. 44 of 1999 concerning

the Implementation of the Special Provinces of the Special Region of Aceh and Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Aceh Government Law indeed conflicts with the PNPS Law of 1965 on the prevention of religious abuse and/or blasphemy, alongside Law No. 5 of 1969 concerning Statements of Various Presidential Decrees and Presidential Regulations as Laws. However, according to Amrizal J. Prang, Head of the Legal Bureau of the Aceh Regional Secretariat, legal principles within the legal system, such as particular legal principles and exception/deviation legal principles, are applied to address this conflict (Prang, 2019). The Aceh Government Law, through attribution, grants the Aceh Government the authority to regulate Islamic law and the role of ulama via the Aceh Qanun (Budiono et al., 2022; Djawas et al., 2024; Sahlan et al., 2019), thus negating the necessity for a Judicial Review of the MPU legality.

In fact, the Salafist's lawsuit was rejected. After the defeat of the Salafists, the anti-Salafi movement in Aceh grew stronger with the emergence of the Aceh Governor Circular Letter Number 450/21770 on the Prohibition of Conducting Recitation Other than the *I'tiqad Ahlussunnah Waljamaah* which is sourced from the Shafi'iyah school of thought by the Acting Governor of Aceh (Mahdi & Anshori, 2022; Manan, 2023; Zulkarnain, 2020). Hence, we see that the Salafist method of *da'wa*, which blames and condemns other groups that disagree with them, is not correctly applied in Aceh. According to Hasbi al-Bayuni, secretary of MPU, what is needed is an attitude of tolerance towards *khilāfiyya* issues. Hasbi asserts that if Salafis could tolerate the differences in religious views and avoid proselytizing other groups, conflict would not arise. The Acehnese people have no conflict with Muhammadiyah (Hasbi, 2024), a *da'wa* movement that is almost similar to Salafi.

The problem is that the issue at hand involves the MPU fatwa, which indirectly impacts Muhammadiyah because of shared practices with the Salafis, such as not reading *Qunut* in the Fajr prayer and not engaging in communal dhikr and prayers after the five obligatory prayers. Despite these similarities, the conflict between traditional Acehnese society and Muhammadiyah is not as severe as the conflict with the Salafis (Basri, 2024).

Historically, Muhammadiyah and traditional Acehnese society coexisted without significant conflict. However, the introduction of Salafi practices and their rigid approach to religious interpretation have led to increased tension (Basri, 2024). This indicates that while the content of Muhammadiyah and Salafi preaching might be similar, their methods and attitudes towards religious differences are markedly different, resulting in different outcomes in their interactions with traditional Acehnese society.

Muhammadiyah's approach is generally more tolerant and accommodating of *khilāfiyya* issues which has facilitated a more peaceful coexistence with traditional practices. On the other hand, the Salafist uncompromising stance on religious issues often leads to conflict. The Salafist strong truth claims and lack of negotiation on *khilāfiyya* issues appear to be the root of these tensions.

Thus, the difference in the level of conflict between traditional Acehnese society and these two groups underscores the importance of tolerance and flexibility in religious discourse. While Muhammadiyah's inclusive approach allows for harmony despite differences, the Salafists' rigid stance contributes to ongoing conflict. Consequently, if conflict between Salafi and Aceh society happens, Salafi's position in Aceh will be weak. This is because Aceh's privileged legal system obstructs Salafi's proselytizing. Salafist resistance to both society and authorities further weakens their stance.

CONCLUSION

Truth claims regarding *khilāfiyya* issues have led to communal conflict in Aceh, particularly evident in the Salafi preaching style that criticizes, blames, and hereticates some traditional Acehnese Muslim practices and the resulting responses from the MPU, society, and the Aceh government. The conflict started at Gampong Pulo Raya, Pidie, prompting the MPU to issue a

fatwa declaring several Salafi teachings as false and heretical. According to the fatwa, it is false to idolize *qunūt* of subuh (reciting *qunūt* in subuh prayer), celebrate the Prophet's birthday, dhikr, and prayer in congregation. It is heretical to believe that God's substance is only above the sky/ 'arash and is bound by time, place, and direction, that *kalām Allāh* (the words of God) is lettered and voiced, and that the Prophet of Adam and the Prophet of Idris is not *Rasūl* (Messenger), just Prophets. The terms "false" and "heretical" in the fatwa were subsequently used by the masses, religious NGOs, and authorities to reject all forms of Salafi activities. Feeling oppressed, Salafists challenged the legality of the MPU in the Supreme Court but lost, as the MPU's legal position was strong. Consequently, this defeat solidified the unity of religious authorities (the Aceh Provincial Government and the Aceh MPU) in firmly rejecting the presence of Salafis, leading to their marginalization in Aceh. Therefore, this paper argues that prioritizing an attitude of tolerance by both parties involved could resolve the conflict.

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