

THE SEIZURE OF THE MOSQUES AS PUBLIC SPACES BETWEEN DAYAH AND SALAFI-WAHABI ULAMAS IN ACEH

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Abstract: *This research examined the contestation of Islamic clerical authority in the struggle for religious public spaces in Banda Aceh City, which occurred between dayah ulamas and Salafi-Wahabi group. A field-library-typed research was employed with qualitative analysis approach. The data was collected by means of interviews, as well as documenting and observing the phenomenon of contestation occurred between religious authorities. The data was then analyzed with a sociological approach combined with the social theories; discourse-power relations, public spaces and religious authorities. This study found that the contestation of religious authorities in public spaces between the two groups aims to seize and maintain the facilities of the religious public spaces; mosques, musallas (Muslim's prayer rooms) and other da'wah spaces. Three constructions of socio-religious authority were found to build synergies in seizing the religious public spaces. First, the cosmological construction of religious doctrine and authority; Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah and Ash'ariyyah as a doctrine and identity; Second, religious rituals and efforts to standardize the religion; Shafi'iyah and Salaf ash-shalih; and Third, Places of Worship to confirm the existence of the movement of the two contesting groups. These three pieces of evidence stated that the contestation of religious authorities in fighting over religious public spaces in Banda Aceh City is not only concerned with the confirmation of doctrine and belief, but has expanded to fighting over access to social and economic facilities.*

Keywords: Contestation of Religious Authorities, Religion Public Space and Islamic Sharia.

المخلص: تبحث هذه الدراسة عن ظاهرة التنافس الديني بين فريق العلماء السلفي والوهابي بمنطقة بندا أتشيه. وكانت من الدراسة المكتبية بنوع الوصفي والكيفي. جمع البيانات بطريقة المقابلة والوثائق ثم الملاحظة عن الظواهر والوقائع في مجال التنافس الديني. وتحليلها بالمدخل الاجتماعي التي تتضمن عن النظريات الاجتماعية، ونظرية علاقات بين وقائع أي حقيقة الظاهرة مع قوة السياسية، ثم السلطة الدينية. توصل هذه الدراسة إلى أن وقائع عن ظاهرة التنافس الديني في الحياة الاجتماعية التي تحدث فيها بين فريق العلماء السلفي والوهابي تهدف إلى الاستيلاء علمرافق الأماكن العامة الدينية وصيانتها مثل المساجد والمصليات وغيرها من ساحات الدعوة. توجد ثلاثة المنشآت للسلطة الاجتماعية والدينية لبناء التآزر بين الفريقين في الاستيلاء الفضاء العالم الديني وهي: الأولى، بناء فضاء أو مساحة الأفكار والعقائد، هي أن تكون فريق أهل السنة والجماعة ثم الأشعرية كأساس الأفكار والعقائد والهوية. الثانية، نشأة الأعمال الدينية والجهود على التقييش في الدين، الظاهرة بين الشافعية والسلف الصالح. الثالثة، تمكين مكان العبادة تأكيداً على وجود حركة الفريقين المتنافسين. فهذه الثلاثة تدل على أن التنافس الديني في محاولة الفريقين أو المجموعتين للحصول على فضاء إعراف ودعم المجتمع بمدينة بندا أتشيه، ليس فقط الخوض في تعزيز العقائد والمعتقدات، ولكن أيضاً في النضال من أجل الوصول إلى المرافق الاجتماعية والاقتصادية.

Abstrak: Penelitian menelaah tentang kontestasi otoritas keulamaan dalam perebutan ruang publik Agama di Kota Banda Aceh, yang terjadi antara ulama dayah dengan kelompok salafi-wahabi. Jenis penelitian ini berbentuk field-library research dengan analisis kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini dilakukan dengan wawancara, dokumentasi dan pengamatan terhadap fenomena kontestasi otoritas keagamaan yang terjadi. Kemudian dianalisis dengan pendekatan sosiologis yang dipadukan dengan teori-teori sosial; relasi wacana-kuasa, ruang publik, dan otoritas keagamaan. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwasanya kontestasi otoritas keagamaan yang terjadi di ruang publik antara kedua kelompok bertujuan merebut dan mempertahankan fasilitas ruang publik keagamaan; masjid, mushalla, dan ruang dakwah lainnya. Ditemukan tiga konstruksi

otoritas sosial keagamaan untuk membangun senergisitas dalam merebut ruang publik agama tersebut. Pertama, Konstruksi kosmologi doktrin dan otoritas keagamaan; Ahlussunnah wal jamaah dan Asy'ariyyah sebagai doktrin dan identitas; Kedua, Ritual keagamaan dan upaya standarisasi dalam beragama; Syafi'iyah dan Salaf ash-shalih; dan Ketiga, Tempat Ibadah sebagai peneguhan eksistensi gerakan dari kedua kelompok yang berkontestasi. Ketiga bukti ini menyatakan bahwasanya kontestasi otoritas keagamaan dalam memperebutkan ruang publik agama di Kota Banda Aceh, tidak hanya berkuat ada peneguhan doktrin dan keyakinan, melainkan telah meluas dalam memperebutkan akses fasilitas sosial dan ekonomi

Keywords: contestation, religious authorities, religion public space, islamic sharia.

A. INTRODUCTION

The contestation of religious authorities occurred between dayah ulama and Salafi-Wahabi group does not fully occur as an effort to defend the religious ideas or ideals of the groups they believe in. The contestation of authorities occurred between these two groups is more likely due to the effort to seize the religious public spaces, which, in this case, are religious facilities, such as mosques and prayer rooms. This can be seen from several religious phenomena recorded in various media, such as the disbandment of worship rituals at the Jabir Al-Ka'by Mosque in Meulaboh,¹ the burning of the site of Muhammadiyah's Taqwa Mosque in Sangso-Bireun,² the

¹ Harian Aceh, "Concerning MPU Recommendations, This is the Explanation from the Management of the Jabir Al-Ka'biy Mosque," *HARIAN ACEH INDONESIA* (blog), 7 August 2019, <https://www.harianaceh.co.id/2019/08/07/soal-rekomendasi-mpu-begini-penjelasan-pengurus-masjid-jabir-al-kabiy/>; Acehtrend, "The Procedures for Worship and Recitation at the Jabir Al-Ka'biy Mosque in Meulaboh," *AceHTrend.Com* (blog), 8 August 2019, <https://www.acehtrend.com/2019/08/08/tata-cara-ibadah-dan-pengajian-di-masjid-jabir-al-kabiy-meulaboh/>.

² Republika, "Incendiarism of the Mosque and "Prank" Parade," Republika Online, 20 October 2017, <https://republika.co.id/share/oy20r6396>; Fajar DetikNews, "Pemuda Muhammadiyah Protests the Prohibition of Muhammadiyah Mosque Construction in Bireuen," *detiknews*, 8 June 2016, <https://news.detik.com/>

commotion of Friday prayer at the al-Izzah Mosque, North Aceh,³ the cessation of recitation at the Al Makmur Mosque in Banda Aceh⁴ and the disbandment of Tabligh Akbar at the al-Fitrah Mosque in Keutapang, Banda Aceh.⁵ The feud between the Salafi-Wahabi group and dayah ulama, which has been touted because of the spread of heretical sects or ideas, is not entirely true. This happens more likely due to the struggle for religious public spaces in the form of places of worship.

So far, research on public sphere tends to focus on two aspects. First, the aspect of public sphere defined as an egalitarian and equal space, full of democratic values and far from the exclusive values of certain groups or sects.⁶ This kind of public sphere was initiated by Habermas, although, later, Habermas changed his view that it is very difficult to close the public sphere from religious views—Habermas changed his theory of public sphere into a postsecular public sphere.⁷ Public sphere is also open to social movements.⁸ Second, the Religious

berita/d-3228468/pemuda-muhammadiyah-protas-larangan-pembangunan-masjid-muhammadiyah-di-bireuen.

³ AJNN, “Commotion during Friday Prayer at the Al-Izzah Mosque in North Aceh,” *Aceh Journal National Network (AJNN)* (blog), May 2016, <https://www.ajnn.net/news/shalat-jumat-di-masjid-al-izzah-aceh-utara-ricuh/index.html>.

⁴ Kumparan.com, “A Group of Masses Stops Ustad Farhan’s Recitation at the Oman Mosque, Aceh,” kumparan, January 2020, <https://kumparan.com/acehkini/sekelompok-massa-hentikan-pengajian-ustaz-farhan-di-masjid-oman-aceh-1sj3jr2OdQG>; AcehTrend.com, “Middle-Aged Women Gather at the Oman Mosque to Reject the Mayor’s Decree Concerning the Management of BKM,” January 2020, <https://www.acehtrend.com/2020/01/31/emak-emak-rapatkan-barisan-di-masjid-oman-tolak-sk-wali-kota-tentang-pengurus-bkm/>.

⁵ BBCNews, “Ustad Firanda is Rejected in Aceh due to His Pro-Wahabi Tendency,” *BBC News Indonesia*, 14 June 2019, Indonesia part, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-48617536>; Suara.com, “Ustad Firanda Andirja’s Recitation in the Aceh Mosque is Dismissed by the People,” January 2019, <https://www.suara.com/news/2019/06/14/140653/pengajian-ustaz-firanda-andirja-di-masjid-aceh-dibubarkan-warga?page=all>.

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Public Space: A Study, About Categories, Bourgeois Society*, 3rd Edition (Pasar Minggu, Jakarta: Balesastra Pustaka, 2012).

⁷ Hedi Hedi, “Religion in Jurgen Habermas’ Post-Secularist Society,” *Panangkaran: Religion and Society Research Journal* 3, no. 2 (15 August 2020): 249, <https://doi.org/10.14421/panangkaran.2019.0302-07>.

⁸ Ann Brooks, *Women, Politics and the Public Sphere*, 1 ed. (Policy Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781447330639.001.0001>; Donatella della Porta, “Social Movements and the Public Sphere,” in *Rethinking the Public Sphere Through Transnationalizing Processes*, ed. by Armando Salvatore, Oliver

Public Space. If Habermas examines the public sphere in bourgeois society in the west, Eickelman and Elsavatore find that the Muslim public space in the middle east is often influenced by the religious background and traditions of each person and community.⁹ Religion has power in the public sphere,¹⁰ even in various era.¹¹

This paper departed from an argument that the contestation of religious authorities does not stand alone in the ideological sphere, but there is something behind the ideological contestation of religion. In the socio-religious context of the Acehnese people, the public sphere of religion cannot be separated from the roles and responsibilities of the ulama. The existence of dayah ulamas and Salafi-Wahabi group in Banda Aceh City, which are competing against each other in building religious authority, cannot be separated from the ability of these two groups to control the public sphere of religion. Mastering religious public spaces, in this case the facilities of houses of worship (mosques), is done through a very well-planned and systematic process. Not only the Salafi-Wahabi group as a new

Schmidtke and Hans-Jörg Trenz (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 107–33, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137283207_6; Laura Knoppers, “Gender and the Public Sphere in Habermas and Milton: New Critical Directions,” *Literature Compass* 11, no. 9 (September 2014): 615–24, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12176>; Jim McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere*, 1 ed. (Routledge, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203203330>; Niamh Reilly, *Secularism, Feminism, and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.26>.

⁹ Dale F. Eickelman and Armando Salvatore, “The Public Sphere and Muslim Identities,” *European Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 1 (April 2002): 92–115, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975602001030>.

¹⁰ Michael Brennan and Diana Stypinska, “Religion and the Public Sphere,” in *Sociology*, by Michael Brennan and Diana Stypinska (Oxford University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199756384-0246>; Judith Butler, Eduardo Mendietta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, ed., *The Power of Religion in The Public Sphere* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Noorhaidi Hasan, *The Making of Public Islam Piety, Democracy and Youth in Indonesian Politics* (Yogyakarta: Suka Press, 2013).

¹¹ Muhammad Anzor, “Post-Islamism and the Remaking of Islamic Public Sphere in Post-Reform Indonesia,” *Studia Islamika* 23, no. 3 (30 December 2016): 471–515, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v23i3.2412>; Patricia Hannam, *Religious Education and the Public Sphere*, 1 ed. (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an Informa Business, 2019). Series: Theorizing education series: Routledge, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351132237>; Maria Rovisco, *Cosmopolitanism, Religion and the Public Sphere*, 1 ed. (Routledge, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315816968>.

authority compared to the dayah ulamas, the dayah group also uses their abilities and relations to control the space.

DISCUSSION

The contestation of religious authority in Aceh is not something new. Since the days of Iskandar Muda, debates about Sufism, theology, and women's leadership have also influenced the Acehnese government in the past. After independence, a dispute between the modern Islamic thought movement fronted by the All Aceh Ulama Association (PUSA) and the traditional Islamic Dayah group also occurred. Indubitably, there are similarities and also many differences with the study of the contestation of religious authority in a more open era that is happening today. Previous studies tended to focus more on theological debates that resulted in the mass judgment of teachings, both verbal and physical violence. However some contemporary researchers are still focusing on theological studies in the contestation of religious authority—the level of protection of a person's human rights is also a concern of the state. The distinction in the current study is that the control of religious authorities on the theological discourses developed is closely related to efforts to dominate a larger public space to access social, economic and political aspects.

The occupation of mosques in this study examines several things that the author considers important. The seizure of mosques that occurred in this study was not entirely the effort of the two contesting parties in controlling religious facilities, but the end of a long process after these groups carried out various movements; doctrinizing theology, uniformity of schools to affirmation of movement with control of places of worship. This study adopts the theory of power and knowledge relations developed by Michael Foucault, the theory of public space which was initiated by Habermas and the theory of authority by Max Weber. So far, theological contestation between dayah ulama and salafi-wahabi tends to focus more on growing authority and weakening it, which ends with the truth claims by certain groups. In its development, the author views the current phenomenon as starting to move towards the control of facilities, although it still begins with the doctrinizing so that it has the power to seize the religious facilities that are intended to control.

A. Religious Understandings of Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulama

1) The Doctrinal Cosmology between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulama in Aceh

The people of Aceh have long been known as an Islamic community that firmly holds their beliefs from time to time. The doctrinal cosmology of this community cannot be separated from the various constructions that have been strengthened by the ulama, who are the source of understanding the doctrine for the people in understanding the source of their knowledge; Al-Qur'an and Hadith. The construction of doctrinal cosmology in Aceh could be concluded as follows: *having the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah i'tiqad, which is sourced from Ash'ariyah and Mātūridīyah, having the Fiqh sharia with the Syafi'iyah school of thought and Sufism with al-Gazālī views.* The following is the implementation of the form of doctrinal cosmology in Acehnese society.

a) *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*; the Aqidah I'tiqad in Aceh

The presence of the Salafi-Wahabi group in Banda Aceh City by joining and leading the activities in various recitation groups provides a new color in understanding the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah i'tiqad. It is not permissible for the public to have different views in terms of the Aqidah, it is different from understanding the fiqh in worship. The new color promoted by the Salafi-Wahabi group clearly poses a threat in understanding the 'true' Islam. Moreover, this group rejects and refutes some of Aqidah teachings in the Ash'ariyah concept and the Mātūridīyah concept.

Having an aqidah i'tiqad with Ash'ariyah and Matrīdiyah views for the dayah group is an inevitability that must be believed. Apart from being a legacy of the ulama from time to time in Aceh, this i'tiqad has also become a unifier of the nation in disputing various differences. Believing in Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah as a way of life for Muslims, according to the dayah group, cannot be separated from the Ash'ariyah and Mātūridīyah aqidahs. Different in understanding fiqh as a necessity of worship, the four major schools of fiqh and their derivatives have been included in the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah without debate.

If referring to the historicity regarding the formation of Asy'aryah school of thought, it seemed that this school was an alternative offer from the theological debates at that time. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī was previously known as a follower of the Mu'tazilah school of thought who had studied with Wāṣil bin Ḥaṭṭāb who had a tendency to deify rationality-intelligence more than Allah's revelation. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī's repentance from Mu'tazilah theology was driven by his thought that the role of intelligence was not strong enough in reaching God, which was actually understood and believed. This Ash'arīyah theology was later formulated by Abū al-Ḥasan into a theology mediating various debates concerning the understanding of thoughts. Be it Jabariyah, Qadariyah, Mu'tazilah, Murji'ah, even the Shia views.

The view in Aqidah, according to the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah which is based on the teachings developed by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Asy'arī and Abū Manṣūr al-Mātūrīdī, is different from that understood by the Salafi-Wahabi group. The Salafi-Wahabi group tends to hold the view of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah in accordance with the Salaf aqidah, namely the aqidah believed by the salafus salih. According to Nauval Pally Taran, one of the Salafī youths and intellectuals in Banda Aceh City, 'it is still very possible and we can refer to the salafus salih, even to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. In my opinion, that is the true aqidah.'¹² The Salafi-Wahabi group does not reject the construction of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah aqidah which is based on Ash'arīyah and Mātūrīdīyah teachings. Still according to Nauval:

“We have to be clear about the historicity of Ash'ariyah aqidah, Abū Ḥasan al-Ash'arī repented from the Mu'tazilah theology he had adhered before—then he formulated Asy'arīyah theology—and some things were missed or forgotten. Abū Ḥasan then repented again, leaving the theology he had formulated by composing al-Ibānah book in accordance with the aqidah of the Salafus salih. The repentance and the last book written him is not recognized by the other group. And they accuse us of lying, even though these books were quoted by many great ulamas after him”.¹³

¹² Nauval Pally Taran, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City, December 2020.

¹³ Taran.

The Salafi-Wahabi group offers to make the *aqidah i'tiqad* as a choice because it is undisputed. *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* *aqidah* that can be accepted by all parties without dispute is the *aqidah* of the *salafus salih*. The last *salafus salih* that can be referred without dispute is to refer to the Islamic *aqidah* of the Imams of the *madhhab*. As stated by Ustad Harits Abu Nauval:

Why don't we choose the undisputed *Ahl al-Sunnah* *aqidah*. Who is the *Ahl al-Sunnah* *aqidah* that is not disputed? Yes, the *aqidah* of the *madhhab* priests. Who does not admit that the four priests of the *madhhab* have the *aqidah* of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*? All admit that the priests of the *madhhab* had the correct *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* *aqidah*. We don't deny the existence of *aqidah* initiated by *Abū Ḥasan al-Asy'arī*, we can examine again the history about the lifetime of *Abū Ḥasan* and the lifetime of the priests of the school of thought. We can still trace the *aqidah* of the *Salafus salih* as we can refer to the *fiqh* opinions of the Imams of the *madhhab*.¹⁴

The views expressed by the Salafi-Wahabi leaders above are showing that the source of understanding understood by the *dayah* group is still in dispute. One of them is the issue that develops in understanding the nature and substance of Allah. The Salafi-Wahabi group cannot accept the view of understanding about the existence of the nature and substance of Allah—this understanding does not exist in the *Ahl al-Sunnah waljamaah* *aqidah* of the priests of the school of thought. This also sparks the anger of the *dayah* group—this understanding is related to the construction of monotheism or *Tauhid*. Misunderstanding the structure of the teachings of monotheism can make a person to be an infidel. *Tengku Umar Rafsanjani*, Head of *Dayah Mini* of *Banda Aceh City* explained this;

Wahabis are trying to change *aqidah* understanding, that has been built for a long time, believed by the people. Teachings conveyed by them in various recitations mislead the Muslims. They do not understand the science of monotheism but, eventually, teach monotheism. They disbelieve in people who study monotheism like us. They don't recognize the attributes of Allah because they consider it to be an ordination to humans—but when it comes to discussing the existence of Allah, they agree with the belief of Allah residing

¹⁴ Haris Abu Naufal, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and Salafi-Wahabi *Ulamas* in *Banda Aceh City*, December 2020.

in the sky. Many things are not in sync with what they say. Because their goal is to destroy Muslims. The reference book that they use as a source of *aqidah* is not famous among the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. They use *al-Ibānah* book from *Abū Hasan al-Asy'arī*. It is a book that they have faked.¹⁵

Moreover, the Chairman of the *Nahdhatul Ulama* of Banda Aceh City, *Teungku Rusli Daud, M.Ag*, who is also the leader of *Dayah Mishrul Huda Malikussaleh, Lam Jame—Banda Aceh*, expressed his views;

The *Ash'aryah aqidah* developed by *Abū Hasan al-Asy'arī* was not made by him, but *Asy'arīyah* teachings were the result of his summary from various *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* scholars. So it is not true if the *Wahabis* say that *Abū Hasan* was not based on the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, they (*Wahabi-ed*) are the ones who are not the adherents of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. It is true that *Abū Hasan* lived long after the the *Imams* of the *Fiqh* school, but the *Aqidah* compiled or summarized by him has summarized the *aqidah* of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* scholars. *Asy'arīyah aqidah* is very moderate, not too right-oriented and not radical like *Wahabis*.¹⁶

The views of the *Salafi-Wahabi* group presented at various recitations, especially on the teachings of *aqidah*, spark the attention and anger of the *dayah* group. *Salafi-Wahabi* group has different methods and styles in delivering material about *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah i'tiqad*, this attracts the attention of the people of Banda Aceh City. So that recitations delivered by this group was attended by more worshippers. Although according to the *dayah* group, there was a mass mobilization with the aim of attracting more mass attention.

¹⁵ Umar Rafsanjani, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and *Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas* in Banda Aceh City, 2020 (*T Teungku H. Umar Rafsanjani, Lc, MA* Apart from being the leader of *Dayah Mini* in Banda Aceh City, he is one of the anti-*Wahabi* activists who has always been involved in various actions to track down and disband various *Salafi-Wahabi* activities.).

¹⁶ Rusli Daud, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and *Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas* in Banda Aceh City, December 2020 (*Teungku Rusli Daud, who is often called Waled Rusli, currently leads the Nahdhatul Ulama Mass Organization in Banda Aceh City and Dayah Mishrul Huda Malikussaleh Leader in Banda Aceh City.*).

b) *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* as A Cultural Identity and Identity Politics

The construction of the discourse of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* understanding is carried out by the *dayah* group using the structure of educational institutions that have existed for a long time. This structure can convey various ideas of *dayah* *ulamas* starting from the highest level to the grassroots level throughout Aceh. This idea can be discussed in an instructional manner at the existing *dayahs* in every regency/city to the smallest recitation groups at the *gampong* level. The construction of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* understanding is spread and discoursed in a one-version form, which is recommended or certified by *Dayah Ulamas* in Aceh. The understanding of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* is in a limited-edition form, with understanding limited to the construction of Acehnese *dayah ulama*.

The discourse of knowledge of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* in Aceh, which was developed by *Abu Dayah* with its various device structures to the level of *gampong*, is an effort to inherit *aqidah* education from the *Ulamas* as a *warasat al-anbiyā'*. This understanding later becomes a discourse to counter various issues developing later regarding the understanding of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* in Aceh. The understanding becomes the basis for countering *dayah* movements against the existence of various deviant sects, including the *Salafi-Wahabi*. The theological construction of the *dayah ulamas* was also built with the power of discourse and knowledge relations possessed by the *dayahs*. This makes the *dayahs* the sole inheritor of the understanding of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* term, so it is not uncommon if the congregation expresses '*kiban kheun teungku bak dayah*' (meaning: as conveyed by the *Ulama* in *Dayah*) related to their belief in the *ulamas*. This has become a regular thing for the people in Aceh in general, although it is slightly different from the people in *Banda Aceh City*.

2) Religious Rituals: The Efforts to Standardize the Religion

The *Salafi-Wahabi* group and the *Dayah Ulama* group are actively involved in continuing to strengthen doctrinal cosmology. This is done by keeping the congregation or its members with religious rituals that have been licensed by the two groups. The rituals of each of these groups cannot be separated from the references of the *ulamas*,

namely the *dayah* scholars who come from the views of charismatic Acehese scholars, as well as the Salafi-Wahabi group that claims to refer to the rituals of the *salafus salih*. Later, this will be able to map the number of places of worship, or educational institutions with a certain group license. The existence of this ritual discourse is their respective effort to standardize the religion. Even then, riots often occur in society in Aceh because these two parties try to construct standardization of rituals in religion.

The process of *dayah* education makes Aceh and the people of Aceh in general adhere to the Syafi' school of worship. Even, it is not uncommon for this condition to shape the community into *maẓhabīyah* or fanatics in madhab. Fanaticism in adhering a madhab is to characterize the school that is believed to be the most correct school of worship. This phenomenon then flourished in the movement to counter the Wahabi issues in Banda Aceh City. So it is not uncommon to worship according to the Shafi'i school of thought carried out in society as a standard in rituals—if it is not in accordance with the Shafi'i school of thought, then it is considered invalid or part of Wahabism.¹⁷

The cult of Imam Shafi'i and Shafi'iyah as well as the scholars who teach this school also often occurs. Several recitation congregations from the *dayah* group had said that following the Shafi' school of thought is the way to enter heaven by telling the various advantages of Imam Shafi'i. Likewise with the cult that develops within the Salafi-Wahabi group, following the *salafus salih* is the best way. These cults will later give broader power to *Dayah's* Ustads or Tengkus to get wider access to various other socio-political facilities. The following is a description of the worship standardization efforts that are taking place in Banda Aceh City.

a) The Islamic Construction of *Maẓhabī*

The construction of Islam in the practice of *maẓhabiyah* in Aceh is an inevitability that cannot be denied. In addition, this understanding of the Syafi' school of fiqh is embraced by the majority of Muslims in Southeast Asia. The number of adherents of

¹⁷ M. Wahyu Ihsan, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City, December 2020; Norma Manalu, Interview: Implementation of Islamic Sharia in Aceh, December 2020.

the Shafi' school, which is the majority in that region, is also part of the strong authority of the ulamas in Aceh in teaching this school in various dayahs. The strong authority of the scholars coupled with the number of adherents, which is the majority, makes Syafi'i the only school of fiqh that is believed to be true at the grassroots level. Meanwhile, in the middle class group with sufficient education and knowledge, their belief in the Shafi' school is at the methodological level. Methodologically, the congregations believe that the Shafi' school has many more complicated considerations, and decides a law with a strict process. This shows the strength of Imam Shafi'i in methodologically deciding a law to make his followers prefer his school. In addition, the process of deciding a law in the Shafi' school is more open to many methods so that it does not seem rigid in studying the law. Some other schools, for example, cannot accept the qiyas method or *maṣlaḥat mursalah* and so on.

Pandangan Ulama Dayah, bermazhab pada salah satu mazhab fiqh merupakan sebuah keharusan, karena seseorang dianggap tidak mampu mengetahui segala sesuatu jika tidak merujuk pada Imam mazhab. Selain karena kita tidak hidup pada masa Rasulullah, para *sahabat* dan *tābi'in*, maka bermazhab adalah sebuah keniscayaan. Mustahil seseorang dapat melakukan ibadah tanpa ia mempelajari pada ajaran yang disampaikan, atau dituliskan oleh para Imam mazhab. Sedangkan bermazhab Syāfi'i adalah mazhab terbesar yang dianut dan berkembang di nusantara dari masa ke masa.

In the opinion of the Dayah scholars, adhering and following one of the schools of thought is a must because a person is considered incapable of knowing everything if he/she does not refer to the Imam of the school. Apart from the fact that we do not live at the time of the Prophet, the companions and the *tābi'in*, having a school of thought is an inevitability. It is impossible for a person to perform worship without studying the teachings conveyed, or written down by the Imams of the madhhab. While the Shafi' school is the largest school that has been adopted and developed in the archipelago from time to time.¹⁸

¹⁸ Mustafa Husain, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City, December 2020; Bulqaini Tanjung, Interview: Contestation of

In the view of the Salafi-Wahabi group, having a school of thought in doing worship is a necessity in Muslim society. This is even more so if there are things in the practice of maḥḍah or gairu maḥḍah worships that are not found in the main sources of Islamic teachings; Al-Qur'an and Hadith. This group also has no objection to the Shafi' school of thought—but still looking at things that are not disputed by the scholars is the main thing. And referring to the Salafus salih is something that comes first without having to vilify the views of other scholars.¹⁹

These two religious groups have different points of view, although, visibly, the arguments built by both of them have a clear similarity. The existence of the view of worship practices played by the Salafi-Wahabi group in the city of Banda Aceh seems to be a threat to a change in aqidah. For some people in the city of Banda Aceh, it seems as if they have mapped out which mosques implement worship according to the sunnah of the Salafi-Wahabi group, and which ones that are considered to be the part of Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah group. The difference in those mosques is only seen from the differences in practicing the rituals of worship—but it becomes a claim to the occurrence of differences in aqidah. It is the description mentioned by the authors that the fiqh view of worship in Acehese society is trapped in mazhabiyah, even tends to be taqlid because the source of fiqh knowledge developed tends to be Syafi'iyah.

b) Syāfi'iyah: Mazhab Fiqh of Aceh Community

Religious rituals for the people of Aceh must have madhab guidelines recommended by the ulamas. Not only in Aceh, but even in Southeast Asia, belief in practicing worship refers to the Imam Syafi'i school of thought. Likewise, the Fiqh studies found in the dayah group are filled with a series of discussions about the Shafi'i

Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City, December 2020.

¹⁹ Naufal, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City; Taran, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City; Yusbi Yusuf, W Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City, December 2020; Hatta Selian, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City, December 2020.

or Shafi'iyah schools. There is no study of other schools of thought. Similarly, the study carried out by the Salafi-Wahabi group, although this group is more inclined to the Ḥanafī school of thought. Studies of the Shafi' school are still practiced by this Salafi-Wahabi group as long as they do not conflict with those practiced by the Salafus salih.

The dayah group always conducts an in-depth study concerning the rituals that refer to Imam Shafi'ī, and more and deeper on the study of Syafi'iyah. The studies of Imam Shafi'ī's madhab and Syafi'iyah are not much different in principle because they both come from the views of Imam Shafi'ī himself. The Syafi'iyah study basically still uses the principles of ijthadiyah methodology carried out by Imam Syafi'ī. Although the study of Syafi'iyah carried out by his students and successors after him tends to develop from the principles and methodology of Imam Shafi'ī.²⁰

This is what Salafi-Wahabi group often asks, *is it true that Aceh applies the Syafi' school of thought? We are ready to carry out rituals according to the Shafi' school of thought, but only those that are considered the real teachings of Shafi' school.*²¹ It is natural for such question to be raised and addressed to the dayah group. Because there are many criticisms coming from the community that the Salafi-Wahabi group is considered not following the Shafi' school teachings on non-urgent matters. For example, not doing dhikr in congregation after the fardhu prayers, not reading qunut at the dawn prayer, not performing the 20-cycle tarawih prayer. Or the Salafi-Wahabi group does not practice religious culture. In fact, according to Ustad Hatta Selian:

In the study of the book among the Dayah group itself, it discusses about not making dhikr aloud after praying in congregation. We can also see some of Abu Mudi's explanations via YouTube, apart from loud dhikr after praying in congregation, it also talks about the intentions and how the intentions are pronounced and so on. Regarding loud dhikr, we can open the I'ānah al-Ṭālibīn book

²⁰ Daud, W Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City, December 2020.

²¹ Naufal, W Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

which prohibits it, this book is one of the main references in the dayah community.²²

Likewise, the Syafi'iyah study conducted in Aceh, for the Salafi-Wahabi group, the study in dayahs is no longer part of the study of the Imam Syafi' school of thought. Instead, the Syafi'iyah study is reviewed according to the Acehnese context and part of the effort to construct the charisma of the dayah ulamas. There is a phrase that is often the subject of discussion by academics, and becomes a 'meme' on social media, namely *the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah with the Syafi'i ad-Dayyah school of thought*. The ad-Dayyah phrase is the Shafi'i school of thought or Syafi'iyah which refers to the views of the authority of the ulamas in the Dayah group in Aceh. This phrase developed after the emergence of a phrase that developed on the island of Java with the term '*Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamā'ah an-Nahdliyah*', which refers to the understanding of scholars from NU (Nahdhatul Ulama).

c) **Syāfi'īyah in Understanding the Worships of Dayah & Salafi Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City**

Syafi'iyah's clerical thoughts and doctrines in Aceh are no different from the construction of belief doctrine of the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamā'ah i'tiqad which is used as the building of Aqidah Islamiyah. These two constructions are an inseparable unit in understanding Islam in Aceh. It is possible that if someone does not read qunut after dawn prayer in Aceh, that person will be considered not to have the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah i'tiqad, even it is not impossible to be considered as a deviant. This is a testament to the love or great authority of the dayah ulamas in Aceh in building religious understanding. At this point, the Salafi-Wahabi group has difficulty conveying such messages to remote villages in Aceh. However, the Salafi-Wahabi movement spread more quickly to urban communities, especially in Banda Aceh. The doctrines to the middle/city community are certainly different from those to the people in remote villages. The Salafi-Wahabi movement builds doctrine by using propositions as the strongest source of religion. In addition to

²² Selian, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

the Qur'an and Hadith, urban communities are introduced by referring to the Salafus salih scholars who hold fast to these two foundations.²³

According to Ustad Yusbi Yusuf, the existence of people in the city differs in filtering various information, especially in terms of religion. Following are his views on the religious phenomenon in Banda Aceh City;

The Salafi-Wahabi group in Banda Aceh City does not provide religious knowledge with views that are not based on clear and strong sources. Why does the Salafi-Wahabi movement tend to be accepted more quickly in cities? Because, indeed, urban people are more selective, more intelligent in their religion, not just accepting various religious information. If they receive information from various recitations, of course they have a filter, which information can be retrieved, and which information is only the idea of the Ustads. This is very different from those happen in the villages, everything that is conveyed by the Tengkus is used as a religious doctrine even without a clear source.²⁴

The same thing was also expressed by many academics, speakers and worshipers who took part in various recitations in Banda Aceh City. Being a resource for recitations in Banda Aceh City is different from in villages, the readiness of a lecturer is very much needed, he/she must prepare the materials well. This also makes the Salafi-Wahabi group more prepared with various recitation materials along with the arguments that will be constructed in each recitation. However, according to Tengku Umar Rafsanjani, the reasons for the Salafi-Wahabi developments to be accepted faster in cities are different, namely;

Because the people of the city are weak in their religious understanding. Moreover, when the sects of this Wahabi group enter the city of Banda Aceh, they only have the Al-Qur'an and Hadith as capital. The group always brings the Qur'an and Hadith, everytime - even though it is proof of the shallowness of their knowledge. Moreover, many urban people did not study religion

²³ Taran, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

²⁴ Yusuf, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

specifically when they were in the village, or when they were still small. The evidence is that many people in the city of Banda Aceh who are still obedient to the views of the ulamas, it shows that they had studied religion. So that they don't get stuck in the lipstick of the Qur'an and the hadiths conveyed by the Wahabis.²⁵

What was conveyed by Ustad Umar Rafsanjani was also supported by many parties, especially the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah movement group. Even though, in terms of their movement, the dayah group must be able to do many different things with their da'wah movement in the villages. Various recitations delivered by the speakers, not only from the Salafi-Wahabi group and the dayah group but also from many other parties, also tried to make the recitation in Banda City more scientific in accordance with the demands of the audience. If the recitation does not follow the scientific needs of each theme, the event will be abandoned by the congregations.²⁶

The Shafi' school tends to be introduced more by the Salafi-Wahabi group in urban communities, which refers directly to the books of al-Umm and al-Risālah. Meanwhile, the Syafi'iyah school is mostly taught through the doctrines conveyed by Dayah ulamas and Tengkus in remote villages or gampongs in Aceh. The dayah scholars tend to refer more to the Shafi'iyah books, such as; Safinah al-Najā, Matn al-Gāyah wa al-Taqrīb, Fatḥ al-Qarīb, I'ānah ālibīn, Fatḥ al-Mu'in, Kanz al-Gāribīn (al-Maḥallī) and so on.

B. Places of Worship: Confirming the Existence of the Movement

The Dayah Ulama group and the Salafi-Wahabi community in urban areas such as Banda Aceh realize that the power of i'tiqad doctrine and the teachings of the madhhab in implementing religious rituals is not sufficient in controlling the public sphere. Controlling public sphere, in this case is religious discourse, does not make these two groups exist or survive. This awareness makes them fight for physical space in developing the religious discourse they believe in.

²⁵ Rafsanjani, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

²⁶ Selian, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

It distinguishes the two movements in managing and competing in developing worship spaces in urban areas.

The seizure of the mosque for the *dayah* group is not the main thing to do, but the call for Salafi-Wahabi teachings is a must that should be done.²⁷ This was conveyed by many authoritative religious figures from the *dayah* community in Banda Aceh City. Although the Salafi-Wahabi movement, which is trying to control various religious public facilities and make the position and paradigm of the *dayah* group, is starting to be pushed. Such conditions make the *dayah* group to continue to try to restore the paradigm of mosque development with the teachings of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah* developed by the *dayah* scholars.

The Salafi-Wahabi group continues to broadcast religious messages through various mosques in Banda Aceh City. The existence of the Salafi-Wahabi group could be seen in the large number of mosque worshipers attending each recitation held.²⁸ The view of the large number of worshipers attending the Salafi-Wahabi group recitation at the religious public space facilities becomes a bargaining chip for the *dayah* group. Apart from the various pros and cons concerning the study material presented—the presence of this group in a number of mosques has been accepted by the community in Banda Aceh City.

The two contesting communities can be said to have a balanced presence in Banda Aceh City. This is nothing but supported by the fact that the people of the city of Banda Aceh tend to be more plural and pragmatic or have not many rituals in worship. This balanced existence also makes worship places, in this case are the mosques, as the lands that are contested by each party. Control over places of worship is a statement of the existence of a group. This shows that in mastering the means of worship, they have mastered the management, the procedures for worship, the religious leaders and,

²⁷ Rafsanjani, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and Salafi-Wahabi *Ulamas* in Banda Aceh City; Tanjungan, Interview; Tarmizi Daud, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and Salafi-Wahabi *Ulamas* in Banda Aceh City, December 2020 (First Chairman of the *Ulama* Consultative Assembly [MPU] of Banda Aceh City).

²⁸ Naufal, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and Salafi-Wahabi *Ulamas* in Banda Aceh City; Taran, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and Salafi-Wahabi *Ulamas* in Banda Aceh City.

most importantly, the congregations. The following is an explanation of how the mosque can become a movement of socio-religious authority.

1) Ideological Map of the Mosques in Banda Aceh City

In Banda Aceh City, there are 96 mosque units spread over 9 (nine) districts; Syiah Kuala, Baiturrahman, Jaya Baru, Meuraxa, Lueng Bata, Kuta Alam, Banda Raya, Ulee Kareng and Kuta Raja.²⁹ There are 96 mosque units with a population of 265,111 people. In terms of the number, the average number of mosques has not met the needs. However, it is supported by a larger number of prayer rooms as an alternative place of worship for the people in the city of Banda Aceh.

The Salafi-Wahabi group seems to have a very strong mass base. In terms of numbers, this group is basically not much in demand by urban residents in Banda Aceh, but its development and existence from time to time shows a significant respect. According to Noval Pally Taran, the Salafi-Wahabi in Banda Aceh City once controlled 30 facilities where this group could carry out various activities, starting from mosques, prayer rooms, hospitals, educational institutions, student dormitories and various other places belonging to the congregation.³⁰

2) Mosques as the Locuses for New Movement of Mass Ideology

Each group realizes that the mosque is a means where da'wah can be delivered according to what they believe. For the dayah group, conveying religious messages in accordance with the i'tiqad of Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah and the views of the scholars from generation to generation in Aceh is a mandate that must be carried out. While the Salafi-Wahabi community is aware of developments in religion,

²⁹ aascenter, 'Number of Mosques Registered at the Banda Aceh City Islamic Sharia Service in 2019', *Open Data - Open Data Banda Aceh Datasource: Number of Mosques Registered at the Banda Aceh City Islamic Sharia Service in 2019* <https://data.bandaacehkota.go.id/index.php/dataset/jumlah-mesjid-terdaftar-di-dinas-syariat-islam-kota-banda-aceh/resource/9c7c08ed-a614-4f29-865a-6d8d7f31a14f> [accessed 1 April 2021].

³⁰ Taran, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

the people in Aceh have been filled with various forms of bid'ah, both in worship and in daily life. Preaching this issue is an obligation to get people out of ignorance and make them understand their religion and its rituals in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as the views of the salafus salih.

Taking the mosque control for every group in urban areas, such as Banda Aceh, is an inevitability that must be fulfilled, because it is a place for the doctrines to be grown and developed, so it is not uncommon for the Salafi-Wahabi group to often develop the term of "Sunnah Mosque". The term of "Sunnah Mosque" has developed nationally and Banda Aceh City has become one of the places where the term is popularized. Dayah group and Salafi-Wahabi community choose places of worship where their ideological comfort can be found. Although the dayah group does not admit that it is important for them to fully control the mosque, the most important thing for the dayah group is to stop the development of Salafi-Wahabi teachings in the mosque even without the presence of dayah group in the mosque.³¹



sunnah mosque slyer³²

³¹ Rafsanjani, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City; Tanjungan, Interview.

³² The Characteristics of the Sunnah Mosque: 1) Quiet atmosphere, the management does not turn on the murrotal before and after adzan. 2) There is no prayer beads because it is sunnah to use the fingers during the dhikr. 3) There is not a lot of

The flyer above had widely circulated in Banda Aceh City from one WA Group to another—and often became the subject of discussion between groups on various social media. The circulation of the flyer had no effect on the number of worshipers attending the mosque. This shows that the comfort for worship of the congregation is not significantly influenced by the developing discourse.³³ The ideological movement of the two groups that are fighting each other and constructing their understanding in the public sphere is currently moving towards the movement to ideologicalize the mosques. The Salafi-Wahabi group develops the “Sunnah Mosque” term, which is a mosque that conforms to what they believe in. In addition, there is also a term of “Bid'ah Mosque”, which is termed as a mosque with religious rituals controlled by the dayah group. Meanwhile, the dayah group develops the term of “Wahabi Mosque”. Wahabism in the view of the dayah group is a deviant community. The existence of Wahabis and the mosques they control must be taken over by any means.³⁴

The Salafi-Wahabi movement in controlling the mosque can be said to be effective in attracting the interest of the congregation to pray in the mosque. Although the idea of this ideological movement from the mosque is a new thing in Banda Aceh City, the “Sunnah Mosque” is still crowded with worshipers. This is also inseparable from the fact that there is a large number of Muhammadiyah residents who also live in Banda Aceh City.³⁵ So that the existence of the Salafi-Wahabi group's da'wah is slightly easier—many things in the form of religious rituals that have many similarities. However, the claim of public space into a sunnah public space claim made by this group has been successfully carried out neatly. With the assumption

qur'an calligraphy carving and ornaments on the mosque walls. 4) There is no qunut during the dawn prayer. 5) There is no tradition of shaking hands after the greeting. 6) Tight and straight lines (heel meets heel). 7) There is no dua in congregation after a prayer. 8) The heart feels serene and peaceful after leaving the mosque.

³³ M Ifrizal, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City, December 2020 (Mosque Observer and Congregant in Banda Aceh City).

³⁴ Tanjungan, Interview.

³⁵ Yusuf, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

built among the congregation is to pray in the "Sunnah Mosque" not in the "Bid'ah Mosque".³⁶

The main movement of the *dayah* group is to hold demonstrations or expulsion/dissolution of Salafi-Wahabi recitations in mosques in Banda Aceh City, but not to seize the management of the mosque. This was conveyed by Tu Bulqaini in the following interview:

We, Aswaja members, do not intend to seize the mosque, let alone seize the management of the mosque. There is still too much work for us to do. We have been very happy here taking care of the orphans, delivering recitations and various religious activities. *Hana ta tumee meupiyoh hek pih* (very busy, no time to rest-ed). Why do we have to go to the mosque and stop the recitation? This is solely because they teach something that is not based on the *i'tiqad* of Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah.³⁷

Tu Bulqaini emphasized that there is no other orientation than wanting to save Muslims from Wahabi teachings which are considered misleading. Moreover, it is oriented towards seizing the management of the mosque. The same thing was conveyed by Teungku Zainuddin Ubit (Chairman of Banda Aceh City FPI) who often led the disbandment of Salafi-Wahabi recitations. Tengku Zainuddin stated as follows:

This Salafi-Wahabi teaching is very dangerous, it can damage family relationships. They will disbelieve people outside their group, including their own siblings. This has happened in Banda Aceh City, I have complete evidence. We don't just move, we move because there are reports that are troubling the residents with the teachings they convey. We deliver the reports carefully by letters, telephone calls, face-to-face meetings, if it is still ignored, it will be like those happened in Banda Aceh. We continue to monitor this Wahabi movement, we have complete data on this Wahabi movement. We continue to monitor 2 (two) Ustads and they are very dangerous, namely Farhan (Ustad Farhan Abu Furaihan-Red) and Haris (Haris Abu Nauval-Red). Others are still standard

³⁶ Ifrizal, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

³⁷ Tanjungan, Interview.

although slightly contradictory, liberal, with the views of Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah.³⁸

For the Salafi-Wahabi group, being able to preach and be accepted in the mosques in Banda Aceh City is an existence stating that their presence is recognized. The Salafi-Wahabi group assesses that their presence in Banda Aceh is accepted by the congregation, because the majority of the population is more educated and understand which religious education is appropriate to follow. As stated by Ustad Harith Abu Nauval;

We do not force our will to be able to preach in the mosques in the city of Banda Aceh. We are allowed to give lectures (*ceramah*), especially at this Makmur Mosque, most of the congregation in Lamprit is Muhammadiyah. We have a lot in common with Muhammadiyah, and differ in certain respects. You could see the number of worshipers attending Ustad Farhan recitation, the congregation was very crowded. Delivering recitations in mosques in Banda Aceh City cannot be done haphazardly, we must prepare materials, both with doctrinal and scientific studies. Even when the dayah group does not present. This is important to us. Our existence is not only recognized but also accepted. I think you know the reason behind the phenomenon of seizure of the mosques by the congregation from another group.³⁹

Ustad Haris Abu Nauval's comments implied that there was competition for religious authority between his group and the Dayah Ulamas. The congregation should be the one who decides, not by seizing or stopping the recitations in the mosques by moving a lot of masses. The same thing was conveyed by Ustad Yusbi Yusuf (the First Chairman of Prosperity Agency of the Al-Makmur Mosque in Banda Aceh City) in an interview took place at the al-Makmur Mosque:

Worship rituals at the Oman Mosque (the name for the Al-Makmur Mosque) has been like this for a long time. The majority

³⁸ Zainuddin Ubit, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City, December 2020 (Head of Banda Aceh City FPI - Field Coordinator for the Disbandment of Wahabi Recitations).

³⁹ Naufal, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between Dayah and Salafi-Wahabi Ulamas in Banda Aceh City.

of the congregation in Lamprit is Muhammadiyah. If the problem was the Ustads who led the recitations in this mosque, I did not see any wrong matter. All they delivered were the Qur'an and Hadith. I think there is something different between the *dayah* and that delivered by the *salaf* group. In the city of Banda Aceh, every recitation needs more than just 'he said that... they said that...', the congregation needs the arguments from the Qur'an and scientific studies. Since this was the issue, when we were contacted to cancel Ustad Farhan's recitation that night, I said the recitation must continue. That recitation had taken place for a while before the crowd came to disperse the recitation. I and the mosque management still persisted with various negotiations, even political ones, until the mosque management returned to the Lamprit village authority.⁴⁰

The superior group is cannot be determined from the socio-religious authority feud between the Salafi-Wahabi group and *Dayah* Ulama in the city of Banda Aceh. In terms of numbers and mass movements, the *dayah* group tends to be more dominant. However, in terms of mass discourse, both offline and online on social media, the existence of the Salafi-Wahabi group is more advantageous. The academics are indirectly more likely to provide moral support to the Salafi-Wahabi group, which has been in a situation that has been oppressed by the *dayah* group. Human rights activists are no exception, they see that there is a discrimination in terms of freedom of religion and organization for the Salafi-Wahabi group by the *dayah* group.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the contestation of religious authorities that occurred in the religious public space in Banda Aceh City between *dayah* ulamas and *salafi-wahabi* group. It turns out that the current study of religious public space is no longer dwelling on religious discourses in the space of *aqidah* and *shari'ah* alone. The contestation of religious authorities occurred in Aceh had penetrated into the struggle for religious public space in the form of religious

⁴⁰ Yusuf, Interview: Contestation of Religious Authorities between *Dayah* and *Salafi-Wahabi* Ulama in Banda Aceh City.

public facilities. Where the religious public facilities obtained could perpetuate the existence and da'wah movement of each contesting party. While the discourse of aqidah and shari'a is a strategy used by each party in instilling doctrine and belief on the masses and their congregations.

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