Contention Within the Family: Environmental Justice and Religion in Indonesia

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Abstract

The religious dimensions concerning environmental justice have been neglected in scholarly conversation despite the fact that religious organizations were initially part of environmental justice activism and movements. To fill this gap, scholars have begun to scrutinize the role of religious institutions in relation to various environmental harms that disproportionately affect marginalized people and people of color. Pellow and Guo (2017) have identified three main ways in which religion shapes environmental justice. First, religion is used to legitimize environmental injustices. Second, religion can be used as a means of resisting environmental injustices. Third, environmental injustices can negatively impact religious or spiritual practices. This thesis extends our understanding of the first two dynamics. Using the case of internal contention among the family members of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), the largest religious organization in Indonesia, and drawing on in-depth interviews with activists and secondary sources, the analysis reveals that religious organizations are fields of contention where a faction within the organization may justify environmental injustices, whereas another may advocate for environmental justice. The resource extraction conflicts in Kendeng and Wadas prompted the contention, with *Front Nahdliyyin untuk Kedaulatan Sumber Daya Alam* (The *Nahdliyyin* Front for Sovereignty over Natural Resources/FNKSDA) opposing and resisting environmental injustice, while NU tends to support the state and corporations in perpetuating injustice. The analysis also shows that the contention stems from varying interpretations of the organizational ideology and practical interests among the contentious parties.

KEYWORDS

Religion, Environmental Justice, Resistance, Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama, Factions

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Chapter One Introduction

Religious institutions were involved in the inception of environmental justice movements back in the 1980s. The Task Force of the Niagara Frontier (ETF) represents an early example of religious environmental activism, effectively aiding local residents in navigating environmental health and justice issues with local and state government authorities in a neighborhood in New York. This incident later became known as the Love Canal disaster (Hay 2009). In Warren County, North Carolina, the United Church of Christ (UCC) also took the lead in initiating a study that established the link between racism and environmental discrimination (UCC 1987). The leaders also orchestrated numerous protests and voiced their strong opposition to the PCB landfill in the area (Bullard 2000). In another part of the globe, the Chipko movement in India derived its tactics and challenges from the Hindu religious heritage. Its activists incorporated Hindu religious ceremonies into their protests on commercial logging and deforestation (Shiva 1986).

However, the religious dimensions concerning environmental justice have been neglected in scholarly conversation despite the fact that religious organizations were initially part of environmental justice activism and movements. Very few environmental justice scholars have studied the connections between religious organizations and environmental justice in the last three decades. They primarily focus on investigating and addressing the unequal distribution and discrimination of environmental harm among different social groups, with particular emphasis on factors such as race and class (Brulle and Pellow 2006; Downey 1998). Some recent studies are beginning to examine religion's role in environmental issues, but the studies typically focus on either delving into the environmental values within religions or depicting religion as a wellspring

of inspiration for environmental movements (Ellingson 2016; Gade 2019; Hancock 2018) rather than examining religious organizations' active role in mobilizing environmental resistance.

In order to fill this gap, scholars have begun to scrutinize the role of religious institutions in relation to various environmental harms that disproportionately affect marginalized people and people of color (Wilkins 2021; Pellow and Guo 2017). Pellow and Guo (2017) suggest three frequent dynamics at play in explaining this intersection, although only two of them are relevant to this thesis: 1) when religion or spirituality becomes a source of resistance and resilience against environmental injustice, and 2) when religious institutions, leaders, or doctrines are deployed to legitimate the commission of environmental injustices[1]. The first identifies certain individuals and groups driven by religious beliefs who have played pivotal roles in environmental justice movements (Immergut and Kearns 2012; Pontoriero 2022). This stream views religious institutions as sources of inspiration and legitimation and sometimes even takes the lead in organizing and rallying support for particular acts of resistance. Other studies suggest that religious affiliations, leaders, or doctrines may directly influence or sanction the perpetration of environmental injustice. In this sense, religious institutions can facilitate discrimination through the exercise of their power or by creating and employing privilege (Smiley 2019; LaDuke 2005; Collins and Grineski 2019).

In this thesis, I propose using factionalism to properly understand various tensions within religious institutions over the disproportionate consequences of natural resource extraction. I examine Indonesia's largest religious organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)[2], and its stance

[1] The third dynamic of Pellow and Guo explains the situation where the commission of environmental injustices harms the role of religious or spiritual practices.

[2] There is no exact number of NU members or followers since the organization has no membership record. Scholars estimate that membership ranges from 40 to 60 million people (Bush 2009, Fealy 2018). A 2019 survey by Alvara Research Center found that 39.4 percent of Indonesian Muslims identified as NU followers, which would mean that more than 92 million Indonesians are NU followers (Ali 2021).

towards natural resource extraction conflicts in various parts of Java, Indonesia. Natural resource extraction has led to conflicts between the government, the private sector, and local people who are mainly followers of NU. The conflicts have also revealed ongoing tensions between NU's organizational leaders, who often show their complicity in environmental injustice and others who defend people against these injustices. The contentions within NU triggered the emergence of a faction called *Front Nahdliyyin untuk Kedaulatan Sumber Daya Alam* (The *Nahdliyyin* Front for Sovereignty over Natural Resources/FNKSDA). *Nahdliyyin* means the follower of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and their name thus indicates continued allegiance to NU. This allegiance is manifested through their observance of NU's rituals and adherence to the teachings of its leader, known as *kyai*. The Nahdliyyin also demonstrate profound respect and obedience to the *kyai* on both religious and secular issues (Turmudi 2006). In this thesis, I argue NU can be viewed as a large family in which the parents can hold differing positions regarding natural resource extraction with their oldest child despite the fact that the extraction is clearly harmful to the other family members (*Nahdliyyin*). Their different positions, therefore, lead to internal contention among the family members. In addition, the emergence of FNKSDA as an environmental justice faction within NU is also consistent with some scholars' assertion that religious environmental groups are embedded within their parent organization (Kidwell 2020).

This thesis, therefore, argues that the position of religious institutions on environmental injustices is contingent on the dynamic between factions within a religious organization, where those positions are mostly highlighted through different ideological interpretations and practical interests between factions. As a result, a faction within the organization may justify environmental injustices, whereas another may advocate for environmental injustice. In essence,

the thesis contends that NU serves to justify various environmental injustices in Java, while FNKSDA actively advocates justice for the people while urging NU to support their struggle.

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows. The next section discusses the binary perspective on environmental justice and religion and its limitations. This section also explains factionalism and its relevance to the analysis of the largest Indonesian Muslim organization, NU. The second section discusses the ideological differences between NU and FNKSDA. Finally, the analysis of two cases of resource extraction illustrates the tension between the two factions. The first case examines the tensions arising from limestone mining in the Kendeng mountain region of Central Java for cement production, while the second case highlights the factions' responses to the andesite extraction conflict in Wadas village, Central Java. In particular, it highlights the different paths taken by the factions. FNKSDA expresses opposition and resistance to environmental injustice, whereas NU shows more support to the state and corporations in perpetuating injustice. The thesis concludes by discussing the implications of the findings and the prospects for future research.

Chapter Two Environmental Injustice and Religion: Considering Factionalism

Environmental justice (EJ) examines the unequal distribution of any sources of environmental hazards and their consequences among communities, in which one group experiences more negative effects than the others due to racial or economic differences. The field originally concentrated on environmental hazards and contamination but has broadened its scope to encompass nearly all aspects of global unsustainability. This includes widespread industrialization, depletion of resources, energy consumption, patterns of consumption, food systems, availability of environmental resources, and public policies that disproportionately impact minority, indigenous, and low-income communities (Holifield, Chakraborty, and Walker 2018). EJ also examines multiple dimensions of social inequality, including race, class, immigration status, gender, and sexual orientation (Collins and Grineski 2019) and geographical differences (Carruthers 2008; Ako 2013). One dimension that has not yet been substantively engaged in environmental justice research, however, is religion.

Studies highlight that religion is often used to justify or legitimate the commission of environmental injustices. Pellow and Guo identify several forces at play in this action. First, religious leaders or religious organizations have facilitated acts of conquest or dispossession through religious power. In Arizona, for example, the Catholic Church built an International Observatory on a mountain that is sacred to the indigenous people, blocked access, and destroyed key elements of the mountain (LaDuke 2005). A second way in which religion is used to legitimize environmental damage is through the creation of environmental privilege. Through the power of religion, it is possible for a group of people to create situations that enable the construction of exclusive environmental amenities such as clean air and water, open space, and safe neighborhoods (Park and Pellow 2011, 2019). Collins and Grineski (2019) illustrate how

environmental privilege manifests within specific religious communities in Salt Lake City. Their research reveals that Mormon privilege is deeply rooted in the area and contributes to environmental injustices. The study highlights that being Mormon strongly correlates with lower exposure to air pollution, whereas affiliation with other minority religions strongly correlates with higher levels of air pollution. In another instance, Israel-Palestine illustrates how Jewish people enjoy greater access to material wealth and resources than Israeli Arabs. Tal (2002) points out that Arab farmers, who cultivated over ten percent of Israel's crop area, received only two percent of the water allocated to agriculture. Additionally, Arab communities do not have access to green spaces or general cleanliness.

Religion has also proven to be an important component of resistance, and religious organizations play an important role in ending environmental injustices. Pellow and Guo (2017) observe that faith-based organizations and institutions have been at the center of much of the environmental justice movement since its beginnings. In fact, the initial protest that launched EJ was against a toxic waste landfill in Warren County, North Carolina, in 1982 and was headed by a religious leader at the United Church of Christ. This church was also the first to publish a national study examining environmental racism in the United States.

Several studies support Pellow and Guo's argument. Immergut and Kearns (2012), for example, highlight the significant involvement of religious groups as primary agents in addressing the highly hazardous environmental conditions in Ironbound, New Jersey. These groups offered organizational support, emphasized environmental justice concerns, and facilitated collaborative efforts across different denominations while also promoting rituals aimed at redemption. Another illustration comes from Pontoriero (2022) who demonstrates the constructive involvement of Buddhist and African Indigenous Christians in grassroots

environmental justice movements in the global south. Through an exploration of the experiences and contributions of two religious leaders, Pontoriero contends that religion plays a vital role in inspiring the UNEP Faith for Earth initiative.

Although Pellow and Guo portray religious organizations' dynamics, they do not make claims about distinct organizations. They use examples of different religious organizations or institutions when describing each of the two dynamics. As mentioned above, they demonstrate that some religious institutions, such as the Vatican, are contributing to environmental injustice, whereas other organizations, such as UCC, support people's struggles for environmental justice. Based on their examples, one can assume that their position is that religious institutions either enable environmental injustices or actively oppose them. Pellow and Guo seem to argue that any particular religious organization can be identified as either oppressive or liberatory.

A complication in explaining the situation in Indonesia is that its religious organizations seem to play a role not only in promoting environmental injustices but also in advocating environmental justice and becoming a crucial source of resistance to environmental injustice. As I will show in this thesis, some organizations, such as NU in Indonesia, are not labeled so easily. The different standpoints of each group may cause contention within a single religious institution or organization.

It is important to recognize that NU is not monolithic in its views and opinions. Instead, it is diverse and exhibits internal contention among its members. These factions are also differentiated by contrasting interests but remain in one family of NU. Perhaps this internal contention is what Pellow and Guo meant when they highlighted the ways that environmental injustice is strongly related to the religious institution or actors' articulation and the circulation of power within religion itself. As stated in their article, "there is nothing inherently anti-ecological

or environmentalist about religion and spirituality; it depends on how these traditions are articulated, framed, and deployed by institutions, leaders, adherents, and others" (p. 342). In other words, a religion or religious institution/organization can be an arena of contention for power among conflicting parties. One faction may justify injustices, whereas another may advocate for justice.

As Billings (1990) points out, religion must be understood in its double functions, that is, as an apology for and legitimation of the status quo including its culture of injustice on the one hand and as a means of protest, change, and liberation on the other hand. Similarly, Pellow and Guo (2017) acknowledge religion can and is frequently employed in both harmful and beneficial ways for human societies, cultures, and non-human natures. The direction depends on how the religion is articulated, framed, and deployed by institutions, leaders, adherents, and others. They also emphasize that the ways religion operates in the service of or against environmental justice are situated by the existing social inequality and the way that power circulates within and across communities.

Nonetheless, as I argued above about Pellow and Guo, a growing body of research on NU and other religious organizations in relation to the environment assumes that there is only a single operation within them. It focuses on the ability of the organizations or faith members to involve and participate in conservation activities and the creation of alternative energy resources. Amri (2012) portrays the involvement of NU and the other leading Muslim organization in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah[3], in addressing environmental problems by using spiritual and religious planks to raise environmental awareness, such as an anti-deforestation campaign and

[3] Muhammadiyah is the second largest Islamic organization in Indonesia. Along with other organizations, such as Persis, they represent an Indonesian Sunni faction that promotes the idea of religious purification and emphasizes the authority of the Quran and Hadith as supreme Islamic law.

reforestation project. Meanwhile, Gade's (2012) study provides an example of how the two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, NU, and Muhammadiyah, both have environmental teaching through their educational institutions that encourage their adherents to conduct environmental actions. Mangunjaya and Praharawati (2019) show the contribution of Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) to the issuance of seven *fatwas* on the environment and conservation movement. They also argue that these *fatwas* contribute to increasing the involvement and understanding of Muslim communities in tackling biodiversity conservation and climate change.

Researchers have also focused on the rise of FNKSDA. Almujaddidy (2021), for instance, referred to the group as Progressive Muslim Environmentalism, emphasizing its contributions to deepening the theological-ethical discourse on the environment and advocating directly for individuals impacted by agrarian and environmental disputes. However, his analysis overlooks the relationship between FNKSDA and its umbrella organization, NU, potentially leading to a historical oversight regarding the group's emergence and limited comprehension of the tensions between the two groups.

These studies ignore the dynamic of the organization and disregard the possibility of competing groups that may consider different paths. Sociologists identify such differences as factionalism. Balser (1997) describes factionalism as a conflict between groups within the same organization that once shared common beliefs but evolved into divergent opinions and interests. Moreover, she contends that factionalism pertains to groups that come into conflict as they pursue different goals, strategies, and tactics due to divergent interests (p. 200). However, in the context of religious organizations, factionalism might emerge due to poor internal conflict management or ideological contestation. In addition, Balser (1997) also notes that the organizations' external environment, such as the government's response to the movement, might

influence organizational members' behavior and contribute to factionalism. She then argues that both the internal and external elements are critical in examining factionalism.

Using the theoretical discussions above, I intend to examine the way that NU, as one religious organization, responds to environmental injustice. Specifically, I examine how and why a path of struggle against environmental injustice emerges inside a single religious organization and what the ideological interpretations and practical interests are that shape these internal differences. Considering the fact that religion, specifically Islam, is an indispensable and integral part of Indonesian society, and the role of religious organizations is a crucial factor in social and political development in Indonesia, I find the case of NU and FNKSDA is an excellent way to describe the contention within religious organizations, and how different factions articulate and negotiate their power in order to accomplish their goals.

This thesis draws on data collected through secondary sources and in-depth interviews. It also follows ethical guidelines. The research received the approval of the Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK IRB-22-06936-XM).

As the initial step, I collected secondary data from two main websites: www.nuonline.com and www.fnksda.or.id. The first website is the NU official website, and the second is the FNKSDA official website. I also collected data from a website led by FNKSDA activists (www.islambergerak.com). These websites provide articles written by activists as well as information regarding several activities related to the topic of the study. There were also a few internal documents provided on the websites, which were used to describe these organizations' points of view, particularly in relation to environmental and natural resource issues. I also used FNKSDA's YouTube channel and Instagram to capture the more recent activities of the organization and its activists.

I used the secondary data to create a map showing the locations where FNKSDA activists formed regional committees that engaged with communities involved in various natural resource and environmental conflicts. The map of the regional committees (see Appendix 1) also lists various conflicts of concern for each committee. As of 2022, there were 18 regional committees, and all of them are on the island of Java. Based on this mapping, I chose two cases, Wadas and Kendeng, for several reasons. First, both cases clearly illustrate the intense contention between FNKSDA and NU. Since both cases attracted national attention, they serve as prime examples of how the contention extends beyond FNKSDA and local NU leaders to NU's regional and national leadership as well. Second, the extensive media coverage of these cases provides the best access to online data, such as articles and investigative reports. To gather more information about the cases, I conducted searches on the mentioned websites and Google using keywords like "NU and Wadas" and "NU and Kendeng" to find news articles detailing FNKSDA and NU's involvement. Lastly, these cases exemplify two distinct types of factional conflicts involving external actors' interests: Wadas showcases a conflict related to a state program, while Kendeng demonstrates a conflict involving both state and corporate agendas.

I attempted to contact NU's elite but did not receive a response. I did, however, obtain a collection of the results of NU's national meeting, which outlined organizational decisions on various issues from its establishment until 2015. Within this collection, NU issued seven organizational decisions that relate to environmental and natural resource issues between 1994 and 1997. In addition, a more recent decision was available on its official website. Additionally, as a part of my efforts to comprehend NU's basic ideology, *Aswaja,* I consulted a book that was written by a former leader of NU (Khittah Nahdliyah) and a book on the same topic that was published by the East Java branch of NU (Aswaja An-Nahdliyah). I also consulted a book

written by one of the FNKSDA's activists that highlighted their criticisms of *Aswaja* and portrayed their attempt to connect the idea of *Aswaja* and the Marxist perspective (*Aswaja Materialis*).

To deepen my understanding of the organizations and the cases, I also conducted interviews with six members of the FNKSDA during the summer of 2022. Interview participants were chosen based on their key roles within the organization. Some were national leaders of the organization, while others were local activists directly involved with the cases. Throughout the interviews, they shared their experiences and perspectives as members of the organization. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format following an interview guide (Appendix 2). They lasted for one to two hours. Due to the researcher and participants' different locations, the interviews were conducted via WhatsApp voice call. The interviews were recorded with the participant's consent to ensure that the richness and detail of their responses were captured. I manually transcribed and translated the interviews into English.

I also obtained permission to attend part of the organizational meeting of FNKSDA to better understand its dynamics. Through Zoom, I observed portions of the 3rd National Congress of FNKSDA in May 2022. During the first day of the Congress, I took note of a number of points in each of the FNKSDA's branch reports. Unfortunately, I was not allowed to join the remainder of the Congress because it was restricted to FNKSDA due to a congress rule prohibiting outsiders from participating.

Chapter Three Challenges to NU's Aswaja from Progressive Islam

Before diving into the contention between NU and FNKSDA concerning two natural resource issues, it is important to understand how FNKSDA activists challenge their leaders' interpretation of NU's ideology. This challenge reflects FNKSDA's attempt to redirect NU's ideology toward the perspective of the oppressed. They situate their movement under the idea of "progressive Islam." The activists use this term to cover their movement from the leftist controversy within the public. This controversy is particularly linked to the anti-communist purge of 1965-1966 and the subsequent systematic repression of leftist ideologies and teachings during Suharto's New Order regime (1966-1998) (Fealy and McGregor 2010). They also try to reclaim the term from the dominant interpretation of the Liberal Islamic Network (JIL)[4], which interprets progressive more as supporting the strengthening of freedom of thought and expression, promoting secularism, and individual rights. The movement aims to represent the interests of NU's followers based on their different interpretations of religious thought toward liberation from social, political, and economic oppression. As Al-Fayyadl, the leader of FNKSDA, stated:

> Progressive Islam is not a camp that is separate from society… It is a compound of experiences of the oppressed people, theological teaching of liberation which comes from local values, Islamic doctrines, or universal wisdom, critical social theory with structural and emancipatory orientation, and moral and ethical alignment toward the people's

[4] JIL stands for Jaringan Islam Liberal (Liberal Islamic Network). It was founded in 1999 by a group of young Muslim scholars. The group believes that individual freedom and rational thought are essential to their religious interpretation.

liberation. It is also radical in calling for substantial social change without sacrificing its people (Al-Fayyadl 2015)[5].

*Ahl Al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (*or *Aswaja)* is the primary foundation of NU ideology. However, various groups within NU interpret *Aswaja* differently. They also refer to Aswaja as a way to connect and legitimize their actions. *Aswaja*[6] refers to a theological branch of Islam, which is equivalent to Sunni in the Indonesian context (Saenong 2021). The formation of NU's *Aswaja* distinguishes NU from other Sunni organizations in Indonesia, such as Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah's ideology of religious purification prompted some *Ulama* to establish NU in 1926 to support a less purist interpretation, and this difference remains a source of contention between the two organizations (Noer 1973). NU's *Aswaja* also differs from more scripturalist groups, such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), and transnational Islamic organizations, such as Hizbut Tahrir. FPI is a militant Islamic group that promotes the full implementation of Islamic law and has engaged in violence (Kine 2013), while Hizbut Tahrir encourages the implementation of the global Islamic caliphate (Muhtadi 2009). Although they also claim to follow Sunni theology, these organizations are more intolerant of any differences. In contrast, NU generally promotes a more inclusive and moderate interpretation of Islam, which resulted

[5] All translations are mine.
[6] To differentiate itself from other groups, NU declares its theological basis as *Ahl Al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdliyyah* or *Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah* (Saenong 2021). It consists of three fundamental doctrines. It follows the theology of Al-Asy'ari and al-Maturidi, adopts one of the four Islamic schools of thought/law (Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i, and Hambali), and follows al-Ghazali and al-Baghdadi's Sufistic tradition (Muchtar et al. 2007; Saenong 2021). NU emphasizes the importance of a combination of logical reason and divine revelation, such as the Quran and the Prophetic sayings (*Hadith*). For *Fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence schools, NU follows the thoughts and utterances of the imam of the four schools, although, in practice, there is a clear tendency towards the Syafi'i school. NU believes the transmission would not be pure and correct unless each generation obtained Islamic teachings from the previous generation (Rumadi 2015).

from its implementation of the *Aswaja*. Importantly, as I argue below, there are also different interpretations of *Aswaja* within NU, including the one promoted by leaders of FNKSDA.

Three characteristics of Sunni Islam are considered essential by NU: moderation (*al-tawassut*), justice (*al-I'tidal*), and balance (*al-tawazun*) (Siddiq 2005; PWNU Jawa Timur 2007). Among the three, NU considers moderation to be its primary value (Burhani 2012; Jubba et al. 2022). NU leaders argue that NU stands in the middle between two extreme poles of Islam because "the radical pole is very rigid or strict and confrontational, and the liberal pole is very compromising, permissive, and hedonist" (NU Online 2010). In fact, the moderate view of NU does not always equate to that of the center. For example, NU excludes Ahmadiyyah from the Muslim community because it considers them a deviant sect in Islam, although it stresses that this difference should not be used to attack or criminalize Ahmadis (Burhani 2012). Additionally, although NU is Sunni, NU also integrates a Sufistic tradition (Rumadi 2015). Whereas an Islamic state is propagated by radical Islamic groups, NU rejects this idea and accepts the idea that Indonesia's current, secular form of government is final.

NU's interpretation of *Aswaja* centers on the idea of moderation. NU leaders define moderation as a desire to avoid extreme actions and to be cautious in acting and expressing opinions. For NU, this idea is clearly illustrated by the tendency to choose what is generally called the middle way. Several practices are regarded as middle-way behavior, including an emphasis on *musyawarah* (deliberation) rather than majority-rule voting, as a way to solve all kinds of problems in social life. NU believes this is an ideal attitude of maintaining a middle path between liberalism and radicalism.

Another important aspect of moderation is the government's position from NU's point of view. A key element of NU's interpretation of moderation is its support for the government.

Siddiq (2005) explains that the implementation of *Aswaja* ideas is connected to NU's relationship with the state and its commitment to nationalist ideals since the anti-colonial struggle (Siddiq 2005, 66). The *fatwa* provided a religious argument that Indonesian independence from the Dutch was closely tied to the independence of their religion (Fogg 2019). Importantly, NU was the first religious organization to accept Pancasila as the sole ideology for all Indonesian Muslims during the time of President Suharto (Elson 2001; Ward 2010). Despite some dissent from the government in the early 1980s, overall, NU honors and obeys the government, so long as the latter is considered to not deviate from or act contrary to God's laws and provisions (Siddiq 2005, 66).

The idea of moderation is applied to religious matters and beyond religion, including politics and the economy. In fact, many debates inside NU surround politics and economics. Some scholars view NU's self-described moderate position as a strategy to gain political and economic advantage, including government funds for NU constituents, business opportunities for NU, and important positions in the state bureaucratic structure (Mietzner and Muhtadi 2020; Wadipalapa 2021). Although their explanation of NU's strategic goals is convincing, they focus only on the formal roles of NU, including those who hold positions at the national and local levels in the official structure of NU (Saenong 2021). These officials control and make the organizational decisions, and those who take on political roles in parties have even become President (Abdurrahman Wahid 1999-2001) and Vice President (Ma'ruf Amin, 2019-2024). However, referring to NU's formal roles overlooks the fact that there are other prominent NU figures outside these formal structures.

Included in this category are those who hold religious authority in their area as descendants of NU leaders and/or by leading Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) or becoming

students (*santri*) at these schools. Some of these people oppose the current NU leadership and its organizational ideology of moderate Islam. These young religious leaders, intellectuals, and activists articulate more progressive ideas and question NU's role as an intermediary for legitimizing social conflict and state oppression. The latter group formed FNKSDA in 2013.

Since 2013, FNKSDA has raised questions and urged a reinterpretation of *Aswaja*, especially its application to conflicts over natural resources in Java. The group expresses solidarity with the struggle of many people, in particular NU followers, who have been affected by the state's development programs and privately owned businesses. In doing so, they stand in opposition to NU formal leaders, who advocate for the government and private sector. These activists consider NU's leaders to be erroneous in their emphasis on moderation (*al-tawassut*) as NU's first value. FNKSDA takes the position that justice (*al-I'tidal*), rather than moderation, is the foremost principle in the *Aswaja*. As Front leader Zidni Ilman Nafia explained:

> Moderate itself does not mean impartial because justice is fundamental. So, in my opinion, what our friends are currently fighting for is improving justice, which is being damaged by the oligarchs through laws (Pratama 2019).

To support justice as its foremost value, FNKSDA's activists have interpreted *Aswaja* using explicitly Marxist analysis. Their reasoning is that, as an analytical tool, Marxism appears to be the most effective means of explaining their social world. One example is the idea of Liberation *Fiqh* (*Fiqih Pembebasan*) (Islam Bergerak 2019). Liberation *Fiqh* denounces injustice and radically reformulates what *Aswaja* is and what NU should be. The activists argue that NU's interpretation of *Aswaja*, as it is currently composed, is deficient because it fails adequately to

challenge the suffering of the poor, the exploitation of natural resources, and the destruction of the environment. Therefore, a conception of *Aswaja* that will empower NU's followers in the face of injustice is needed.

Fiqh is fundamental for NU and is enacted through the issuance of *fatwas*. In producing *fatwas*, NU primarily relies on the written text of classical Muslim jurists (Zulian 2018). The *fatwas* are derived from the doctrines of *Aswaja*, which follow a specific and strict adherence to the selected opinion of mostly Syafi'i jurists. In producing the *fatwas*, NU jurists use direct quotations or develops analogies between unlisted issues and similar ones found in Syafi'i's *fiqh* books. In many cases, such as the adoption of birth control and family planning policy in 1989, a *fatwa* from NU has been instrumental in securing the success of government programs and an instrument to cope with modern development (Hosen 2003). Mahfudh (1994) emphasizes this expansion of *fiqh* outside the religious realm. As such, it is not only a tool to evaluate social reality against Islamic ideals, concluding with the decision of permitting or prohibiting behavior being codified in a *fatwa*, but also a tool for social engineering.

In contrast, FNKSDA believes that utilizing conventional legalistic approaches is not sufficient to address the current destruction and misery caused by the expansion of natural resource extraction. Such approaches do not address the issues of inequality and exploitation. As FNKSDA leader Al-Fayyadl explains:

> The existing Islamic political economy is incapable of proposing any solutions. Instead, it supports the continuing exploitation and destruction of natural resources. Numerous Muslim entrepreneurs own businesses in the mining and forestry sectors. Despite

> ravaging nature, they are able to portray an image of themselves as pious Muslims (Al-Fayyadl 2016).

In a 2018 discussion and accompanying interview, Al-Fayyadl argued that "scientific study such as Marxism can help to sharpen *fiqh.*" He explains that *fiqh* needs Marxism as a guide and intellectual tool to dissect capitalism. The current *fiqh* falls into emphasizing the propriety of legal processes instead of dealing with overcoming materialistic problems. For example, the current *fiqh* does not consider the accumulation of wealth to be an incorrect practice as long as it is collected and accumulated in a manner in accordance with Islamic law. This perspective fails to consider the issue of inequality and exploitation because it tolerates accumulation, which deems an individual achievement. In fact, Al-Fayyadl (2016) believes that the Marxist perspective helps jurists use *fiqh* to recognize the effects of capitalist relations, deepening inequalities, and environmental destruction.

Al-Fayyadl (2016) points to three central concepts of Marx: the critique of bourgeois political economy, historical materialism, and socialism. He finds the former two useful and compatible with Islam but shies away from the latter. The critique of political economy, he argues, is useful in explaining the problems within capitalism that currently dominate the economic system. This capitalist system provides space for individualism to flourish and incorporate market ideology to transform society into its competition arena. The flourishing of Islamic liberalism explored by JIL (Ali 2005) and the development of the Sharia economy (Kato 2014) are examples of the manifestation of this ideology in the Islamic milieu supported by NU in Indonesia. Al-Fayyadl argues that the Marxist approach is useful for uncovering the fallacy of

the existing Islamic political economy, which ignores the rising exploitation and destruction of natural resources and the deepening of structural inequality. As he states:

> Instead of eradicating the structural gap, the Islamic political economy is the backbone of a capitalistic, corporate, and oligarchic national economy. Instead of promising to liberate people from the constraints of the existing economy, the Islamic political economy turns out to put new economic burdens on them: continually increasing costs of Islamic education (including in *pesantren*), the choking prices of agricultural and plantation for farmers and peasants, rising numbers of Indonesian Muslim migrant workers without any safety net or security guarantee (Al-Fayyadl 2016).

Second, historical materialism helps to analyze the formation of classes in society, and their subsequent conflict and struggle. It helps *fiqh* to understand the relations of exploitation between the oppressive and the oppressed classes. Al-Fayyadl believes these concepts can be effective tools to grasp socioeconomic relations and pave the way toward forming liberation *fiqh*. For him, the Marxist approach is useful in identifying whether resource exploitation is producing more benefit or hardship. By explaining the forms of exploitation and the practices of capital in the mines karst industry, for example, activists can uncover that the industry has been causing more harm than good for the village people in the long term.

However, Al-Fayyadl argues that socialism is incompatible with *fiqh, though* this claim does not mean a complete rejection of the idea of socialism. Al-Fayyadl appears to be engaged in an attempt to minimize controversy that might undermine their movement. This is because Al-Fayyadl and several other leaders of FNKSDA are regarded as descendants of NU leaders. The

best way to do this is by softening their jargon to represent their political orientation and movement. Second, the word socialism has a negative image within the NU's milieu due to the history of violent conflict between the NU and the Indonesian Communist Party. Forcing the idea of socialism might potentially raise a rejection from NU's grassroots[7]. However, in the last few years, the new leader of FNKSDA has expressed a more open stance in advocating the idea of ecosocialism (French 2022).

FNKSDA's engagement with Islam and Marxism can also be seen through the concept of *Aswaja Materialis (Materialist Aswaja)* (Fajar 2021). Roychan, the FNKSDA activist who coined the term, explains that it is an epistemological critique of the current discourses on Islamic studies. This concept provides a dual approach to addressing problems. Instead of mixing *Aswaja* and Marxism, Roychan explains that each plays a different role. *Aswaja* serves as the foundational belief of NU and its followers, whereas Marxism takes an analytical approach to see the current structural problems. As Roychan stated:

> Marxism is used as a paradigm of thought. As *Manhajul Fikr* (thinking method), I use Marxism to understand structural problems that are occurring because, without this perspective, we only have a shallow understanding. We, especially the *Nahdliyyin*, are often trapped into seeing these structural problems as moral problems. I think this kind of perspective is not sufficient for *Nahdliyyin* in the future. Therefore, we need Marxism to

[7] Fealy and McGregor (2010) show that NU was an active participant in the anti-communist killings. NU leaders at both the national and local levels have tacitly and sometimes openly, advocated violence. Even though some NU leaders, such as Abdurrahman Wahid when he was President, have expressed remorse for the killings and proposed an apology, NU has rejected this proposal and any efforts to rehabilitate and restore the victims' and survivors' rights.

advance our perspective in identifying various structural problems that are happening at the grassroots level, which is where the base of NU or *Nahdliyyin* is (Interview 2022).

An opening towards progressive Islam began in the 1980s due to dissatisfaction with the authoritarian New Order when NU left formal party politics. This return to *khittah* ("original intentions") opened the door for NU to strengthen its social concerns and serve the worldly needs of the community (Van Bruinessen and Wajidi 2006). Young NU activists, under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid, who later became the 4th president of Indonesia, started to expand their concern to social issues and injected NU's wing organization, Lakpesdam, with critical ideas. These activists also established LKiS (Institute for Islamic and Social Studies) in 1992 and, a year later, published a translation of Hassan Hanafi's work on *Kiri Islam* (Islamic Left) (Niam 2017). By the mid-1990s, Lakpesdam, LKiS, and other NGOs could expand their work that obliquely disseminates Marxist-inspired modes of analyzing social inequalities and a progressive (and anti-establishment) restatement of basic principles of Islam (Van Bruinessen and Wajidi 2006). After the fall of the New Order, more discussion of the leftist discourses took place, and LKiS started to publish other books, such as *Peta Pemikiran Karl Marx* (translated: The Outline of Karl Marx's Thought). LKiS has played a significant role in supporting a more critical reading of Islam through its publication and discussion series. In 2013, LKiS (see Appendix 1. II) hosted a discussion on the issue of natural resource governance, which, in retrospect, was the initial meeting of the establishment of FNKSDA (Batubara 2015).

Chapter Four FNKSDA and Its Challenge to NU: A Contention within the Family

Two natural resource conflicts in Java Island in Kendeng and Wadas highlight the contention between factions within the NU. According to Pellow and Guo (2017), religious organizations will respond to environmental justice struggles by supporting or opposing them. However, these conflicts directly or indirectly involve NU, and this involvement has stimulated different responses within NU. The contention that arises among family members of NU can range from minor disagreements to more serious disputes that may strain relationships within the family unit.

The two conflicts illustrate the different practical interests of NU leaders and activists at the grassroots level which creates contention among them. Some of the national and local leaders of NU express their support for the extraction of natural resources. This support mostly relies on the argument that the organization needs to support any state's attempt to maximize its resources for the benefit of the whole nation. Meanwhile, the FNKSDA and a few local leaders of NU oppose it. Their contention is that NU should not endorse any policies that pose a risk to the environment or adversely affect grassroots communities, the vast majority of whom are followers of NU (*Nahdliyyin*). These conflicts also show how FNKSDA uses religious narratives to counter NU's delegitimization of people's resistance. Here, delegitimization is a process of categorizing groups into extremely negative categories and excluding them from acceptability (Bar-Tal 1990). This organization plays a key role in connecting local communities in several areas of conflict with a broader network of resistance throughout the country while building its own goal of challenging NU's support of natural resource exploitation injustices.

The cases of natural resource conflict reveal information about the role of NU's elite in perpetuating injustice. This section aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of

NU's elite role and its religious articulation in supporting natural resource extraction. Also, it shows the internal reaction from FNKSDA in response to NU's elite position. They increasingly recognize that many natural resource conflicts in Indonesia are associated with NU. This is due to its elites' ownership of a company, its management, or holding executive and legislative positions at various levels. It is necessary for them, then, to stand and fight before the people. This position has forced the activists to initiate multiple forms of creative engagement.

The two cases are both located in the Central Java province. In 2023, this province had a population of over 37 million, with 10.77 percent living below the poverty line. It is considered the second poorest among the six provinces on Java island and the fifteenth poorest province in the country. Rural poverty rates are generally higher in this province, with 11.87 percent of rural residents living below the poverty line compared to 9.78 percent of urban residents and 10.77 percent overall (BPS Central Java Province 2024).

The first conflict centers on the rapidly expanding cement industry concerning the Rembang factory in the Kendeng Mountains. The Kendeng Mountains stretch across Central and East Java and are a karst formation that stretches along two mountain ranges. This landscape attracted the cement industry to extract karst limestone to support increased cement production (Jatengprov 2019).

The Kendeng conflict is located in the Rembang Regency. This regency has a significant poverty rate, with 14.17 percent of its population living below the poverty line, making it the seventh-highest percentage of poor people of 29 regencies in Central Java province (BPS Rembang Regency 2023b). The cement conflict is primarily centered in the Gunem sub-district, where 6 out of 16 villages are classified as experiencing extreme poverty (Al-Musthofa 2023). Local villagers in the Gunem sub-district primarily work as medium-scale farmers. 45 percent of

them control less than 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres) of land, and 47 percent control between 0.5 and 2 hectares (1.2 and 4.9 acres) of land (BPS Rembang Regency 2023a).

Additionally, the villagers are members of the Saminist community, which positions them as a minority and makes them easily identifiable as non-*Nahdliyyin*. The Samin community is a group of Javanese people who traditionally uphold the teachings of Samin Surosentiko. He was born in 1859 and opposed the Dutch colonial power. The Samin community depends mainly on agriculture for its welfare. They grow rice and other crops, such as corn, beans, cassava, and tubers. The Saminists consider agriculture a way of life and live from what they get through agricultural activities or other physical work (Kunz, Hein, and Sobirin 2024).

The expansion of cement production sparked massive resistance from local villagers, who worried the mining would significantly deteriorate their groundwater resources and further alter the ecosystem. They challenged the mining permit in the Supreme Court. In 2016, the villagers won the lawsuit, which forced PT. Semen Indonesia (SI), a publicly-listed state-owned company, to stop its activities. However, the company insisted on continuing to mine based on a new permit from the local government (Firmanto 2016). In 2016, to protest mining and cement production several Kendeng women cemented their feet inside wooden boxes outside the presidential palace in Jakarta (Candraningrum 2019). To this day, the protesters are joined in an alliance called *Jaringan Masyarakat Peduli Pegunungan Kendeng* (JMPPK).

The Kendeng conflict shows how SI sought legitimation from several powerful *Kyai* in the area, legitimizing the cement industry expansion. Leaders of two prominent *pesantren* took strikingly different positions. *Kyai* Maimoen Zubair, the leader of *Pesantren Al-Anwar,* was a key proponent of mining. He supported SI despite the turmoil of anti-cement resistance in the surrounding community. He insisted on the development of the cement factory for several

reasons. First, development is an expression of nationalism, and the growth of SI is necessary because it is a state company. Second, the construction of the cement factory would benefit local inhabitants, stating that the destruction of the mountain was worth the sacrifice. His position has been that "every good deed will always produce goodness, benefits, and prosperity in the world. Moreover, if indeed the mountain is mined until it disappears, at least it was to the service, interest, and benefit of the people and the state" (Media Indonesia 2017). Third, *Kyai* Maimoen blamed the resistance against the cement factory on the interests of a handful of "big actors".

The religious authority also plays a crucial role in bolstering the power of the cement industry by delegitimizing opponents. After the 2016 protests, which included bold tactics such as cementing one's feet to the ground, the Yogyakarta branch of NU issued a *fatwa* that forbade further demonstrations. NU Yogyakarta argued that such protests could be categorized as harmful, and harming the body is prohibited in Islam (Suara Islam 2017). Delegitimation of the resistance also took the form of distinguishing the protesters from the greater predominantly Muslim public by exposing their religious identity. There is a long history of MUI and NU leaders in the area delivering speeches that attack the Kendeng people, who are primarily Samin people, as non-believers (Idhom 2009). When the cement industry conflict emerged, they urged Muslims not to join the resistance led by the Samin. By delegitimizing the Samin people in Muslim eyes as non-believers, these religious leaders tried to erode public support for the Samin people from their right to defend their land and resources from exploitation.

FNKSDA activists, by contrast, joined the Samin people and other activists in building a tent and mosque of struggle (*tenda dan musholla perjuangan*) as a symbolic space of their movement. They held various cultural and religious activities as a symbol of their rejection of the cement factory construction. This symbolic movement attracted a lot of solidarity and support

from a diverse group of people, notably including several *Kyai*. To show their support in September 2014, *Kyai* Zaim Ahmad Ma'syum, Gus Baihaqi, and Mbah Manaf held an NU ritual called *istighosah* to ask for help from God (Ahmad 2016). This event leveraged support from followers for the movement. FNKSDA also gained more support from several NU *Kyai*, including *Kyai* Mustofa Bisri, the Supreme leader of NU and the principal of Pesantren Roudhotul Tholibin. The activists hosted a grand *Istighosah Akbar* in March 2015 to support the Kendeng people. This support amplified the spirit of the struggle of the activists and Kendeng's people (Ardianto 2015).

FNKSDA has also attempted to counter *Kyai* Maimoen's religious argument for supporting SI. Al Fayyadl published an article in 2017 that situated Kyai Maimoen's argument as only a personal opinion with no power to revoke the Supreme Court decision against the cement factory. Using *fiqh* arguments, he uncovered contradictions in the seemingly coherent statements of Kyai Maimoen. For example, he examined *Kyai* Maimoen's concept of *maslahah* (the general welfare). He argued that *Kyai* Maimoen's conception of *maslahah,* which relied on the state providing financial assistance to the people, could not be foreseen. Distinguishing between particular welfare and total general welfare, Al Fayyadl criticized *Kyai* Maimoen's concept as particular while protecting the environment as the total general welfare (FNKSDA 2017). This reinterpretation is a smoothing strategy to counter the opinion of a *Kyai*. The activists use this strategy to avoid direct conflict with *Kyai* and his followers for two reasons. First, the activists are primarily *santri* and the descendants of *Kyai*. In the NU tradition, *Kyai* occupy a high social position, and his *santri* will obey every wish without critically doubting the validity of his teaching. Second, *Kyai* also has fanatical followers who will do anything to protect their leader. As a result, direct confrontation will detriment this social relationship and stimulate unnecessary

conflict with *Kyai's* followers. Their strategy is simply to "clarify" *Kyai* Maimoen's argument and offer an explanation that helps people understand not just the superficial financial benefits of the cement industry but also the broader context, including its significant destruction of the environment in the region. Additionally, they hoped that the counter statements would not infuriate his followers, which might potentially undermine the resistance movement.

The second conflict shows the role of NU in natural resource extraction as the andesite mining plan for the supply of Bener Dam construction materials in Wadas Village. The conflict was brought to the attention of the national public after a riot erupted in February 2022. The root of the conflict started in 2018. At that time, the Indonesian government listed the village as the affected area of the construction of the Bener Dam. The Dam is part of the National Strategic Project. The government determined that part of the village area would be used for andesite mining.

Wadas village is situated in the Bener sub-district of Purworejo regency. In 2023, the poverty rate in Purworejo was 11.33 percent, making the regency the fourteenth highest percentage of poor people among the regencies in Central Java. Even though the percentage is lower than the Rembang regency, it remains higher than the provincial average. In terms of livelihood, the majority of people in the Bener sub-district people are small-scale farmers, with 88 percent owning less than 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres) of land and only 12 percent of them possessing land up to 2 hectares (4.9 acres) (BPS Purworejo Regency 2023). Their livelihood relies on productive agricultural land, in which all their plants are cultivated in the hills or home gardens. The plants are mostly seasonal fruit trees such as durian, coffee, cubebs, vanilla, and sugar palm or mainstream commercial timber species such as sengon (*Paraserianthes falcataria L. Nielsen*) (Muryanto 2021). In a survey of economic potential conducted by the residents of

Wadas village with local NGOs, all of the plants cultivated in this village produce high annual revenue. The hills also assist in preventing the threat of landslides and serve as a water catchment area for 23 water springs in the village (Friends of the Earth International 2022).

The Wadas conflict represents a different kind of NU involvement and its response to the extraction. NU's support for andesite extraction in Wadas is somewhat different from its position on the Kendeng case. The organization did not actively participate in the conflict, nor did NU Kyai actively support mining. Instead, in Wadas, NU responded passively to state repression of the villagers. In response to the chaos, NU released an ambiguous statement that is more in favor of the dam construction. NU urged the government to communicate more persuasively with the people and explained the urgency of the andesite extraction in support of the development of the Bener dam. NU's chairman also expressed his intention to facilitate a dialogue between the government and the Wadas people (Kumparan 2022). The FNKSDA activists expressed their concern about this ambiguity, as Thoriq stated:

> NU's statement was actually ambiguous. They wanted to do something. [But] They strived to be diplomatic when facing power. They wanted to frame the Wadas people as not understanding yet or as if they did not understand the urgency of [the Bener dam] development and andesite mining. In fact, many or most of the Wadas people reject andesite mining (Interview 2022).

NU's statement did not address the issue of mining and related injustice throughout the establishment of the project. Efendi et al. (2022) explain that there has been a legal issue behind the project since its initial planning. The government did not involve the villagers in planning the

mining area. There is also an indication that the government committed administrative errors in issuing the project permit as part of the construction permit for the Bener dam because the permits should should have been issued separately. By not considering these problems in its statement, NU silently legitimated the practice of environmental injustice. However, in addition to NU's general reticence, there is also a local NU leader, *Kyai* Zainal Mustofa, who is more direct in expressing his agreement with the mining and accuses those who oppose it of instigating the conflict.

In Wadas, FNKSDA supported the villagers' resistance by initiating religious gatherings and amplifying social media campaigns to raise public solidarity with the Wadas people (French 2022). In March 2022, along with the villagers, FNKSDA held a *Nyadran*, a traditional ceremony to welcome the Islamic fasting month, Ramadhan. Conventionally, people do Nyadran by cleaning and praying at their ancestors' graves (Rudianto 2019). The rites were conducted a few days before the beginning of the fast. Its rituals include a *slametan* (ritual meal), a recitation of a part of the Quran (*Surah Yasin*), cleaning and repairing of graves, and scattering of flowers on them. People usually recite the Quran on behalf of the deceased in the hope that God will show mercy on them and permanently end the torment of death. This recitation also expresses pious works that will be beneficial for the reciter (Woodward 2011). However, FNKSDA and Wadas's villagers used the ceremony to creatively express their struggle to reject the mining plan. Two prominent young religious leaders attended the ceremony, Gus Salam and Gus Kautsar, who are grandsons of NU leaders (Priyanto 2022). The prominent NU figure Imam Azis and the first daughter of Abdurrahman Wahid, Alissa Wahid, also expressed their support for the struggle (Prabowo 2022; Alfarizi 2022). Alissa even stated that the andesite extraction project contributed to the destruction of social order in Wadas village.

The presence and support of many NU leaders showcase factionalism in the organization and portray FNKSDA's mobilization of its internal network in NU in supporting their movement and resistance. Despite the fact that the formal leader of NU expresses its compliance with the extraction, many of its local leaders and activists demonstrate their support for people's struggle against natural resource extraction.

Moreover, the contestation between NU and FNKSDA is growing more intense. At their congress in 2022, FNKSDA distanced itself from NU by not inviting any NU leader to the congress and even stated that involving NU would offer little benefit to the organization. Some activists acknowledged that this standpoint created disputes within FNKSDA and perpetuated potential divisions among them because of their allegiance to the NU. Due to this situation, further research is necessary. Furthermore, analysis is needed to determine whether the contestation between NU and FNKSDA will continue or split. Importantly, the recent situation leaves questions open about the direction of the organization's movement and its struggle against injustice.

Chapter Five Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to expand our understanding of the relationship between environmental justice and religion. Scholars cite the relationship as important but tend to identify religious organizations as either opposing or contributing to environmental injustice. This dichotomy tends to overgeneralize the stance of particular religious organizations and leads to misunderstanding of the complex internal struggles of religious organizations. The framework does not take into account contention among groups within a single religious organization. This thesis is a step in explaining this dynamic by considering a contestation between factions within a religious organization in response to myriad environmental injustices. It is also consistent with other findings that identified different movements in eco-religious practices within the same religious denomination or tradition (Smith, Adam, and Maarif 2024).

The preceding sections have analyzed various forms of opposition, such as ideological and practical opposition between factions within one religious organization in Indonesia, NU. Additionally, the thesis highlights two distinct types of factional conflicts that involve the interests of external actors. By examining the ways that FNKSDA contests NU's authority in two important cases of conflict in rural Java, I have shown that opposing views exist within NU. Like NU, FNKSDA adheres to *Nahdliyyin* because FNKSDA leaders – and most of the local people in Wadas and Kendheng – are part of NU. Contention over EJ thus exists within the NU "family". The cases reveal that multiple NU elites, from national to local level, express their support for resource extraction under state and private companies. This dominant NU leadership is tied to the government and corporations, and their ties are legitimated by NU elite through their ideology of moderation. Meanwhile, FNKSDA represents a small faction opposing the NU elites and their support for mineral extraction. Although they oppose NU politically, they engage in

struggle by creatively molding NU's religious forum and traditions in support of their political goals.

The analysis above supports several conclusions. First, it affirms that a religious organization may be a field of contestation. This contestation shows a different interpretation of the organizational ideology between the contentious parties, and this difference shapes the form of their practical outlook. As shown in this thesis, FNKSDA activists offer a Marxist interpretation of NU's ideology as an alternative interpretation to the moderate ideology offered by NU leadership. Adopting Marxist ideas is a big move for the activists, considering the ongoing resonance of its controversial history within the NU milieu. Second, religion figures significantly in the process of legitimation or delegitimation of environmental injustice. In the Kendeng and Wadas conflicts, religion and religious organizations are not unified or monolithic. They are contested terrains. Although Pellow and Guo's framework emphasizes the significance of environmental justice in examining its intersection with religion, this thesis highlights the more nuanced nature of religious groups, which exhibit multiple complexities beyond merely perpetuating or challenging injustice. Viewing this phenomenon through a binary lens oversimplifies its intricacies. Instead, scholars should delve into the internal dynamics of religious organizations and their socio-cultural contexts to fully grasp this relationship.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

I. Regional Committees and Conflict Cases

1. Jakarta Raya • The committee resists the coastal area reclamation and eviction in slum areas. Its newest resistance is an eviction in the Kapuk Polgar area in Cengkareng, West Java. It is a conflict between 160 households and Greater Jakarta Metropolitan Regional Police. The case happened from September 2016 to February 2018. • The resistance of mining plan in Banda Indung, Karawang, West Java. • Conflict on Geothermal development in Padarincang, Banten.	**2. Bandung Raya** • The committee opposes the development of the housing line (Rumah deret) through the eviction of 197 households. The conflict started in 2017, and the removal happened on December 12, 2019. • The Bandung people also expressed their resistance to the Global Land Forum meeting in 2018. • The committee is in solidarity with the peasants in Cikembulan, Pangandaran, West Java, to fight for their land against PT. Startrust. • The committee is protesting the peasants'	**3. Cirebon** The committee joined the peasant movement in Cirebon greater area. First, they joined a peasant resistance (*Jatayu/Jaringan Tanpa Asap Batu Bara*) on the development of Steam Power Plant (PLTU) in Sumur Adem, Kecamatan Sukra, Indramayu in 2015. The conflict resulted in the criminalization and detention of 3 peasants in December 2017. The police used criminal defamation and blasphemy law to intimidate and restrict their freedom of expression in refusing the power plant development.

	criminalization in Cianjur, West Java	
4. Semarang The committee protesting several cases in Semarang's greater area: • Eviction on Kampung Tambakrejo, North Semarang in 2019. • Supporting residents in Blora, Central Java, against textile waste contamination on Bengawan Solo River. • The resistance to the development of the Islamic Center in Petamanan, Batang.	**5. Yogyakarta - Purworejo** The national committee resists the government decision that stipulates Wadas village as the location for andesite stone mining. The mining will acquire 153.64 hectares of land and impact 1800 inhabitants of Wadas village. The conflict has been started in 2015 and escalated throughout 2020-2021. The social conflict relates to the development of the Bener Dam. The Wadas people refuse to hand over the land because the area relates to their lifeline. The planned site is also prone to landslides.	**6. Yogyakarta** The committee involves in people's resistance against the Yogyakarta International Airport project. The project affected 550 families in five villages in the Temon subdistrict. They have resisted eviction for the project since 2011. The airport project has several problems, such as the uncredible environmental assessment due to the absence of community involvement, the use of intimidation and violence, and insufficient compensation. FNKSDA uses an undemolished mosque as the center of people's resistance.
7. Yogyakarta (Sukoharjo & Kebumen) • The committee expresses its solidarity against the criminalization of environmental activists against PT. RUM (Rayon Utama Makmur) at Sukoharjo, Central Java in 2018. The company is a subsidiary of a large textile company PT. Sritex. The activists were criminalized for fighting and protesting against the company's factory that has been emitting foul-smelling waste that affected villages in the	**8. Semarang – Rembang** Kendeng conflict shows multiple levels of involvement of various actors in resisting state ambition on cement project. The Samin people started struggling against the initial project in Pati in 2006 and successfully halted the project. But in 2014, the company began a new factory on the other side of Kendeng mountain in Rembang regency, and the conflict is still running today. FNKSDA initiated a religious gathering in March 2015 in support of the movement. This	**9. Bojonegoro** There is no specific conflict in Bojonegoro. The local committee seems more focused on mobilizing their group on provoking and educating young people on the urgency of Agrarian reform and protesting the controversial omnibus jobs bill.

vicinity. The activists were accused of hate speech and vandalism • The Urutsewu case marks FNKSDA's emergence. In 2013, some of FNKSDA's activists fought for the peasants. This case is a land confiscation conducted by the Indonesian Army. The Army claimed the land without supporting evidence, and the conflict has not been resolved since April 2011.	gathering was supported and attended by the supreme leader of NU. In 2016, the farmers were supposed to gain victory with the Supreme Court's decision to suspend the construction process. But the Governor then re-legalized the project. In 2017, the conflict escalated since one of the protestors died during a protest in Jakarta, where several peasants cemented their feet.	
10. Tuban The regional committee worked on rejecting the construction of an oil refinery in Sumurgeneng, Tuban Regency, in 2019. The project belongs to the state-owned oil and gas firm Pertamina and Russian oil company Rosneft.	**11. Jombang** Since 2018, the regional committee has worked with residents of Jombok village, Kesamben subdistrict, to refuse the oil and gas exploration planning by PT. Lapindo Brantas. In 2020, the committee also expressed its solidarity and support to three activists who walked to Jakarta to express their rejection of andesite and sand mining in Lebak Jabung village.	**12. Kediri** There is no specific environment or natural resource conflict in the city. The committee primarily focuses on building a network and voicing their concern on the controversial omnibus jobs bill. The activists also join some demonstrations to express their rejection of evictions in neighboring areas.
13. Surabaya The regional committee works on several issues. The first is refusing a land transfer of Sepat reservoir to PT. Ciputra Surya or Citraland. The conflict happened from 2008 to 2018 due to a land swap from the city government to a private company. In 2018, the committee also	**14. Malang** There are no specific cases in Malang city. The committee primarily works or joins the public discussion in educating young people on critical ideas. They set up a periodic demonstration called "*Aksi Kamisan Malang*." The activists also join the mayday	**15. Probolinggo** The Probolinggo committee is resisting a land conflict in Desa Sumberlele. The organization tried to fight for the people convicted as land grabbers by a businessman. These three people have been living in the area for more than 20

expressed their solidarity with the land dispute between residents of Sumberanyar village with the Navy. The Navy illegally occupied more than 500 hectares of land. The land conflict is still continuing and resulting in violence. The villagers are also afraid of Alas Tlogo's type of conflict in 2007, which caused four residents to die in defending their land.	strike with the labor movement.	years, and the area itself is state land.
16. Sumenep The Sumenep regional committee proclaimed its establishment in 2015. Since 2016, The organization has been working on several issues. They have been rejecting the emergence of the shrimp industry, resisting the phosphate exploration plan and campaigns for its potential risk throughout the community. In collaboration with the PCNU Sumenep (the district level of the NU), this movement gained much support from the religious leaders (*kyai*) and has been widely discussed by the community since then. Since 2020, they have been responding and campaigning their refutation of the phosphate mining plan.	**17. Jember** The committee work has been working on advocating peasant land right at Berem village, Sumberejo. The conflict rose in September 2017 due to land grabbing using violence and systematic deception by PT. Seafer Kartika Tambak and PT. Seafer Sumber Rejeki. The committee also supports the resistance movement against gold mining in the Pace village, Silo subdistrict. After opposition from the people and discouragement from the local government, the government halted the mine permit in 2019. Since 2017, the committee has also joined the peasant's struggle over an irrigation canal with PT IMASCO Semen Asiatic in Puger district.	**18. Banyuwangi** The Banyuwangi committee works on two significant issues in the area. The first is the resistance movement to the gold extraction at Tumpangpitu mountain. The resistance started in 2006 when the local government gave the mining permit to PT. Indo Multi Niaga. In the following years, the PT. Indo Multi Niaga transferred the permit to PT. Bumi Sukses Indo and PT. Damai Sukses Indo with a joint investment of a multinational company. The FNKSDA collaborates with other organizations such as ForBanyuwangi and OPWB (Wongsorejo Banyuwangi Peasant Organization). The resistance is still happening today. The other resistance is the Patel resistance. It is a

		land conflict between peasants and PT. Bumisari. The conflict has been happening for almost a century.

II. Timeline

This section describes several important dates in the organization. During the pandemic period, the organization did not hold any physical meetings. The activists actively discussed various issues using online platforms such as Zoom and Youtube.

Date	**Description**
July 4, 2013	Several Nahdlatul Ulama activists held a discussion or seminar at Yogyakarta at LKiS (Institute for Islamic and Social Studies). The theme of the meeting was "NU & Conflict on Natural Resource Governance." It was attended by 23 people from Pati, Batang, East Kalimantan, Cirebon, Mojokerto, Kulonprogo, and Mandailing Natal.
July 11, 2013	A follow-up discussion and the initial meeting on the organizational establishment happened a few days after the LKiS discussion. The meeting was attended by Heru Prasetya, Hairus Salim, Bosman Batubara, and Nur Khalik Ridwan.
July 16, 2013	Activists were meeting with the NU senior, Kyai Imam Aziz. He is a progressive leader who initiates and supports the reconciliation between NU and Communist activists.
December 8, 2013	**The declaration establishing FNKSDA was made at Pesantren Tebuireng Jombang.**
December 8-9, 2013	The activists also had two days meeting (*halaqah*) and declared a second Jihad resolution along with the organization's declaration. Several organizations, such as Omah Kendeng (Pati), Gusdurian Network, Urut Sewu Peasant Union, Lapindo Mudflow Activists, The Mining Advocacy Network (JATAM), Kulon Progo Peasant Union (SPK), LKiS, Silvagama Foundation, and Nahdlatul Ulama's Scholars Association (ISNU).
April 3, 2015	FNKSDA held the first National Meeting at Kuningan, Jawa Barat. The organization formed its organizational cadre system called *Pesantren Agraria*. Since then, the cadre system has also facilitated the regional committee establishment.
May 26 – June 4, 2018	The organization established its first training. It called Sekolah Lapang Agraria (Agrarian School). The organization held the training in five villages in Ciremai Mountain and the other three villages surrounding the Indocement factory.
July 20, 2018	FNKSDA, in collaboration with PCNU Sumenep, and BATAN (*Barisan Ajaga Tana Ajaga Nak Poto*) held another agrarian training in Gresik Putih village, Sumenep.
October 24-26, 2018	FNKSDA held the second National Meeting in Pesantren Al-Itqon Tlogosari, Semarang.

February 1-7, 2019	The organization held the third Agrarian Research Class in Cirebon greater area. The training location was in Cirebon Timur, Brebes, and Kuningan. The training is a collaboration between the FNKSDA, Saung Daulat Amparjati (SDA), and Cultural Study and Philosophy Center (CSPC) Cirebon. Forty-one participants took part in the training.
May 14-16, 2022	FNKSDA held its third National Meeting in Jember.

Appendix 2

Interview Guide

History of FNKSDA

- How has the initiative to establish an organization emerge?
- What is the reason for establishing FNKSDA?
- What is the goal, and what is the demand?
- Why should establish a new organization? Why do the activists not join in or be part of Nahdlatul Ulama?
- Does FNKSDA receive particular attention from Nahdlatul Ulama?
- What is the response of Nahdlatul Ulama regarding the emergence of FNKSDA?

Organizational Structure

- What is the structure of the organization?
- How does the activist manage the organization?
- How dynamic is the structure in response to the goal of the organization?
- Is there any specific responsibility for every position within the structure?
- Is there any specific requirement for being part of the organization?

Resources

- What are the primary resources of the organization?
- Does the organization receive any external funding? If not, what is the funding source of the organization?
- What is the source of the organization's cadre? How does the organization maintain its cadre?
- How does the activist engage or disseminate their ideas to other people?
- How do the organization and activists build and broaden the network?

Issues and Responses

- What is the primary issue or concern of the organization?
- Is there any specific case that requires particular attention from the organization?
- How does the organization respond to those issues?
- Are there any strategies that the activists have developed in response to various environmental and natural resource conflicts?
- How do the activists respond to a case that might have Nahdlatul Ulama's involvement?

Vita

Husnul Khitam graduated with a bachelor's degree in Agribusiness from Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta in 2005. He then obtained his first Master's in Rural Sociology from Bogor Agriculture Institute, Indonesia, in 2011. After several years working in a private consulting company, he joined the Department of Sociology, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2012 as a junior faculty member. In 2019, Husnul started his graduate program at the Department of Sociology, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, with a scholarship from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. He will graduate in August 2024 with his degree in Sociology with an emphasis in Environmental Sociology.