

Tengka, identity politics, and the Fiqh of civilization: The authority of Madura's Kiai in the post-truth era

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This paper explores the role of *tengka*, a distinctive moral ethic of Madurese culture, in addressing the escalating identity politics in the post-truth era. It focuses on how religious leaders, known as Kiai, in Pamekasan, Madura, respond to identity politics by applying the concept of Fiqh of civilization as a framework for analysis. The study uses a socio-legal approach to explore three key aspects of the Kiai's role: the shifting dynamics of identity politics among the Kiai, the integration of *tengka* into their approach to identity politics, and the potential benefits and obstacles in this

integration process. The findings reveal that the identity politics of the Madura's Kiai authorities have experienced substantial evolution in the post-truth era. Despite various challenges faced by *tengka* in the context of identity politics, it presents substantial opportunities for internalization as a strategy to tackle these issues. This aligns with the Fiqh of civilization, which formulates the anticipation of identity politics in realizing *al-mashālib al-'ammah* (public interest) and strengthening religious moderation. The academic contribution of this research lies in the Fiqh of civilization, which is the contextualization of *Fiqh al-siyāsah* in analyzing identity politics, offering a unique perspective on the interaction between traditional moral and ethical values and the challenges of modern society.

Makalah ini berupaya mengeksplorasi peran *tengka*, nilai etika moral khas Madura, dalam menghadapi intensifikasi politik identitas di era post-truth. Fokus utama adalah pada respon otoritas Kiai di Pamekasan Madura terhadap politik identitas yang dianalisis melalui lensa fikih peradaban. Dengan menggunakan metodologi yuridis-sosiologis, studi ini bertujuan untuk memahami otoritas Kiai dalam tiga aspek sosial yang signifikan: dinamika politik identitas di antara Kiai Pamekasan, Madura; proses internalisasi *tengka* dalam politik identitas para Kiai; serta peluang dan tantangan dalam internalisasi tersebut. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa politik identitas otoritas Kiai Pamekasan telah mengalami evolusi substansial di era post-truth. Meskipun *tengka* menghadapi berbagai tantangan dalam konteks politik identitas, nilai ini menawarkan peluang signifikan untuk diinternalisasikan sebagai strategi dalam mengatasi masalah-masalah tersebut. Hal ini sejalan dengan fikih peradaban yang telah merumuskan antisipasi politik identitas dalam mewujudkan *al-mashālib al-'ammah* (kepentingan umum) dan penguatan moderasi beragama. Kontribusi akademis dari penelitian ini terletak pada fikih peradaban yang merupakan kontekstualisasi fikih siyasah dalam menganalisis politik identitas, yang menawarkan perspektif unik tentang interaksi antara nilai-nilai moral dan etika tradisional dan tantangan masyarakat modern.

Keywords: *authority; fiqh of civilization; identity politics; Kiai Madura; Tengka*

Introduction

In the contemporary post-truth era, the internalization of *tengka*—a distinctive moral and ethical value intrinsic to Madurese society—is imperative for confronting the issues of identity politics in Indonesia (Kamaludin & Iskandar, 2022; Damayanti, 2023). Kiai and their pesantren institutions are deeply embedded within the cultural and socio-cultural fabric of Madurese society, playing a significant role in shaping the community's character through the value of *tengka* (Syarif, 2018; Utsman, 2018). Additionally, Kiai wields considerable influence as a religious leader in the realms of education, politics, social affairs, and economics within Madurese society (A'la et al., 2018; Mukriaji et al., 2020; Alatas,

2021). In addition to the influence of the contestation over differences in practical political support, which has dragged down Kiai Pesantren Madura (Faizin, 2017; Assiddiq, 2020a; Topan, 2022), identity politics is also influenced by hoax news, which has an impact on hate speech, provocation, intolerance and even radicalism (Qodir, 2018; Syahputra, 2019; Utami & Darmaiza, 2020). Thus, *tengka*, as a typical Madurese character attitude, should be internalized and practiced in social and political life to overcome identity politics.

The post-truth era is marked by a crisis of authority in various fields, including religion (Alatas, 2021; Mursyidin et al., 2023). Kiai as religious leaders began to question their authority in religion because they experienced a crisis of exemplary, trust, and faithfulness because they were trapped in identity politics (Maimunah, 2019; Suherman et al., 2020; Ramli & Elatrash, 2021). This era refers to a social and political condition where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than emotions and personal beliefs (Enroth, 2023; Hannon, 2023). This era is characterized by the widespread dissemination of misinformation, fake news, and public skepticism toward authentic data and facts (Bufacchi, 2021). In the context of this study, *tengka* holds significant relevance (Syarif, 2018; Utsman, 2018). Amidst the rise of identity politics, which often bases itself more on emotional affiliations than on factual and universal principles, *tengka* offers a robust moral foundation (Faiz, 2015; Budi, 2022). This value can serve as a tool to counteract the polarization and manipulation of information in identity politics; this aligns with the Fiqh of civilization that has formulated the anticipation of identity politics in realizing *al-mashālih al-'ammah* (public interest) and strengthening religious moderation (Fareha, 2018; Hoesterey, 2020; Taufiq, 2020; Faiz, 2023).

The current research on *tengka* has primarily remained theoretical, with some practical applications but not yet integrated into the Fiqh of civilization (al-Attas, 1993; Suntoro, 2019; Hasan et al., 2023). There are two main areas of *tengka* that have been explored. The first is in the theoretical realm, with the thesis “*Tengka as Social Ethics in Traditional Madurese Society*” successfully addressing the challenge that *Tengka* lacks a theoretical foundation (Utsman, 2018). This was followed by a more focused study on the concept of *tengka* (moral) education from the perspective of Abd Hamid bin Itsbat (1868-1933) in Banyuwangor Pamekasan, which is an analytical study of the Book of Tarjūmān (Syarif, 2018).

The second area is in practical applications, such as the study of Sumenep city governance based on the theology of obedience to the *Bhapa Bhabu 'Gurub Ratoh* relationship, which led to the development of *tengka* (Na'im, 2018). Despite these two main axes of *tengka* studies, no research has internalized *tengka* into the Fiqh of civilization as a strategy to address the widespread identity politics among the Kiai of Madura's pesantren.

This research aims to address the gaps in previous studies by focusing on the response of Kiai authorities in Pamekasan Madura to identity politics, using the Fiqh of civilization as an analytical framework. The study seeks to answer three main questions: the dynamics of Kiai Madura's political identity in the post-truth era, the internalization of *tengka* in Kiai Pamekasan Madura's identity politics, and the opportunities and challenges of this internalization in the post-truth era. This comprehensive examination of Kiai authority in the context of identity politics, the integration of *tengka*, and the potential for addressing these issues through Fiqh of civilization offers a significant academic contribution to understanding and managing identity politics in the post-truth era.

This study employs a socio-legal methodology to investigate how the authority of Madura's Kiai adapts to the evolving landscape of identity politics by integrating the ethical framework of *tengka* in the post-truth era (Katrino & Afrida, 2021; Agustina & Ismah, 2024). The initial hypothesis of this research indicates that Kiai authorities hold varying perspectives on identity politics, which in turn, drive the dynamics of identity politics that necessitate the integration of *tengka* within the Fiqh of civilization framework (Hasan et al., 2023; Rois et al., 2024). Although it has severe challenges, the *ijtihad* of internalizing *tengka* in the Fiqh of civilization is still very open in responding to identity politics. This follows the principle of Fiqh of civilization in protecting *Maqāshid al-Syari'ah* (Auda, 2008; Attia, 2010; Maimunah, 2019; Islam, 2022; Taufiq, 2023b), realizing *al-mashālih al-'ammah* (public interest) and strengthening religious moderation (Al-Buthy, 2005; Muhsin et al., 2019; Taufiq, 2020; Faiz, 2023). The academic contribution of this research is in its presentation of the Fiqh of civilization paradigm as a response to identity politics in the post-truth era, offering a novel insight into how Kiai authorities navigate the intersection of traditional moral and ethical values (*tengka*) with the complexities of modern society (identity politics) (Zaini et al., 2023; Choiri & Ardyansyah, 2024). This dialectic of *tengka* and identity politics

can be internalized into the Fiqh of civilization as a new paradigm of *Fiqh al-siyāsah* (Hasan et al., 2023; Rois et al., 2024).

Method

This study employed an empirical methodology and socio-legal approach (Huda, 2021), focusing on a qualitative analysis of the dynamics of identity politics and the role of *tengka* among the Kiai in Pamekasan, Madura. The primary data collection method involved semi-structured interviews with key informants, including traditional Kiai, community leaders, and scholars with expertise in Madurese culture and Islamic law (Zayyadi et al., 2023). Additionally, observational data and secondary sources such as local publications and archival materials were utilized to understand better the historical and cultural context (Huda, 2021).

The analysis was conducted through thematic coding of the interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials, focusing on identifying patterns and inconsistencies related to the internalization of *tengka* and its impact on identity politics. The theoretical framework of Fiqh of civilization (Suntoro, 2019; Taufiq, 2023a), guided the analysis, particularly in its application to governance and public policy from an Islamic perspective. This framework was crucial in interpreting how *tengka* aligns with the principles of public interest and can inform more inclusive and ethical policy-making processes (Borhanuddin Zakaria et al., 2019; Setyawan et al., 2023).

The theory of Fiqh of civilization is particularly relevant as it offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the intersections between Islamic jurisprudence, ethics, and political governance, which is essential in analyzing the socio-political dynamics within Muslim communities (Riyadi & Rokamah, 2023; Zaini et al., 2023; Choiri & Ardyansyah, 2024). This study enriches the academic discourse by demonstrating the contextualization of *fiqh al-siyāsah* not only in traditional issues but also in addressing contemporary challenges in the post-truth era (Katrino and Afrida, 2021; Marzuki, 2021; Sadiani et al., 2023). This contextualization can form the concept of Fiqh of civilization as a paradigm of contemporary *fiqh al-siyāsah* (Damayanti, 2023; Jaelani et al., 2024).

The authority of Madura's Kiai and the dynamics of identity politics in the post-truth era

In the post-truth era, characterized by a prevalent disregard for facts in favour of emotional and personal beliefs, the authority of Kiai Madura is being tested in new and complex ways (A'la et al., 2018; Pribadi, 2018). These revered authorities of Islamic scholars in Pamekasan, Madura, have historically been anchors of moral and spiritual guidance within their communities (Barton et al., 2021). However, as identity politics become more pronounced, the Kiai's influence is both a beacon for stability and a potential vector for communal divisions (Huda et al., 2020; Suherman et al., 2020). This research explores how the Kiai authorities navigate the treacherous waters of modern political discourse, employing *tengka* to counteract the burgeoning challenges of misinformation and identity-based conflicts (Al Qurtuby, 2012; Sidel, 2018). Through a socio-legal study framework, this paper delves into the dynamics of identity politics among these traditional leaders, investigating their strategic responses and the implications of their actions on community cohesion and political engagement (Utami & Darmaiza, 2020).

The interplay between traditional moral values and the demand of contemporary governance presents a unique case study in the form of the Madura's Kiai as agents of cultural and religious continuity (Asmani, 2014; Luthfy, 2019), their role in the political sphere has evolved significantly in response to the shifting paradigms of the post-truth Era (Enroth, 2023). This paper utilizes Fiqh of civilization to analyze how these leaders integrate *tengka* into their political and social strategies (Taufiq, 2022a), thereby shaping the discourse and potentially mitigating the divisive impact of identity politics (Utsman, 2018). The study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how traditional values can inform public policy and leadership in times of societal polarization (Lubis, 2020), offering insights into the broader implications of religious and cultural identity in the governance of modern pluralistic societies (Susilowati et al., 2019).

Kiai Taufik Hasyim, head of Pesantren Sumber Anom and Chair of Branch of Nahdlatul Ulama Pamekasan, feels that the dynamics of identity politics in Pamekasan Regency are very harsh and are visible in every political moment in Pamekasan Regency (Khoiri, 2018). This is considered a powerful weapon for gaining votes because the role of

Kiai in Pamekasan Regency is considered to have a very strong influence (A'la et al., 2018). This was explained during an interview with Kiai Taufik Hasyim.

Kiai Taufiq conveyed that in every political moment, from village head elections to presidential elections, identity, particularly religious identity, is prominently and visibly used as a weapon and tool to gain support (Damayanti, 2023; Hayati et al., 2024). This indicates that campaigns that persuade people to vote for a particular candidate consistently involve religion, as it is viewed as an effective means to mobilize the masses in society (Hasyim, 2023). He also regretted that religious identity was often used in connection with general elections, leading to the beginning of divisions between religious communities. Religious issues are susceptible to being linked to political issues (Hasyim, 2023).

Kiai Husein Ali Karrar, the head of the Pesantren Midad Al-Qodiri, shared in an interview that identity politics in Pamekasan Regency has improved compared to past political years. He explained that the dynamics of identity politics in Pamekasan are now more subdued than in 2019 (Amal, 2020). This change, he noted, is not only due to a growing awareness among the populace about the dangers of political fanaticism but also because the people of Madura are becoming more politically conscious. However, he emphasized that the influence of Kiai in Madurese pesantren on identity politics remains significant, as these religious leaders still typically expect their students to support the political candidates they endorse (Karrar, 2023).

In the interview, he stated that before the 2024 general election, the condition of Kiai identity politics was calmer than in the previous year because people had begun to be aware of and understand politics. In this case, the influence of Kiai on the choice-making process is still felt to be very strong. There are some Kiai who still require their students to have one voice with their Kiai (Amal, 2020; Ramli & Elatrash, 2021; Zaini et al., 2023; Choiri & Ardyansyah, 2024).

Further insights were gathered through an interview with Kiai Ali Rahbini Abdul Latif, the head of Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Masaran and Chairman of the District Majelis Ulama Indonesia Pamekasan. He expressed his belief that the grip of religious identity politics would eventually loosen, emphasizing that religion should lead to tranquillity and should not be exploited for power or personal gains. He acknowledged the challenges in moving

away from identity politics, noting that while leaders must demonstrate their virtues, there is a risk for those who appear virtuous but are not. He stressed that authentic leadership involves collaboration across different ethnicities, suggesting that identity politics should be set aside (Katrino & Afrida, 2021; Marzuki, 2021). Although some Kiai in Pamekasan are not overly fanatical about politics, their moderate stance contributes to a more relaxed political climate (Latif, 2023).

He expects that the Kiai in Pamekasan should become a unifying figure and not make the political situation in the Pamekasan district more heated with the political identity Kiai that requires his students to be in line with his choice because, however differences are a necessity and cannot be forced especially in right as a citizen, one of them is the political right to be elected and vote (Faizin, 2017; Mahmadatun, 2017; Assiddiq, 2020a; Lubis, 2020).

In a later interview with Kiai Abd Aziz, the Head of Quran Mulia at PP Muhammadiyah Pamekasan, it was revealed that there is a strong sentiment among the Kiai that identity politics should be avoided despite the inherent challenges. He stressed the importance of keeping politics separate from issues related to identity, saying that this is key to keeping the community in Pamekasan united and strong. He noted that while some political groups focus on specific identities and rights related to Islam, politics should focus on fairness, people's well-being, health, and the common good (Azis, 2023).

During the interview, Kiai Abd Aziz elaborated on the historical context of identity politics in Pamekasan, recalling instances where Kiai would campaign in ways that leveraged religious texts rather than promoting an independent understanding of the Qur'an. He suggested that this indicates the deep-rooted nature of identity politics in the area, which has traditionally been woven into the fabric of local political campaigns. He argued that such practices undermine the essence of democratic engagement, which should be free from manipulative influences (Halili, 2019; Zaini et al., 2023; Choiri & Ardyansyah, 2024).

The initial research question highlighted that although identity politics is still prevalent among Kiai in Islamic boarding schools throughout the Pamekasan Regency, there has been a significant improvement in the political atmosphere. This positive change is due to an increased understanding among Kiai and the wider community about their rights

in elections, such as voting and standing for election. This shift signals a progressive evolution in the political dynamics of the Pamekasan Regency, indicating a trend toward more informed and fair political participation (Azis, 2023).

The dynamics of Kiai identity politics in the post-truth era persist in Madura. This is due to varying interpretations of identity politics among the Kiai and its impact on social conflict (Al Qurtuby, 2012; Maimunah, 2019; Ramli & Elatrash, 2021). The social facts above show that identity politics among Kiai Pesantren in Pamekasan still occurs even though, at this time, the conditions of the political process in Pamekasan Regency are better because more Kiai and people are aware of their rights, namely the right to vote and be elected. In the Fiqh of civilization approach, the Kiai Pesantren Madura as a religious authority must consider the benefits (*al-maslahah al-mursalah*) and harm (*al-mafsadat*) in political activities (Huda et al., 2020; Hasan et al., 2023; Taufiq, 2023) This approach aims to foster political elections that are safe, peaceful, and tolerant (Muhsin et al., 2019; Taufiq, 2022b).

Internalization of *tengka* in the identity politics of Madura's Kiai in the post-truth era

In the nuanced social fabric of Pamekasan, Madura, the practice of *tengka* presents a formidable counter to the pervasive forces of identity politics, particularly in the volatile ambiance of the post-truth era (Budi, 2022). This era, marked by a pronounced disregard for objective truth in favour of emotional and personal belief, has escalated the stakes of identity politics, making the role of traditional values like *tengka* increasingly critical (Susilowati et al., 2019; Situmorang and Aslam, 2020; Agustina & Ismah, 2024). The concept of *tengka*, rooted in respect, integrity, and community cohesion, is particularly significant in its potential to mitigate divisive politics, which often exploit religious and ethnic identities to garner support (Suntoro, 2019; Ardhanariswari et al., 2023; Nugraha et al., 2023).

The empirical data gathered through interviews with key religious and educational leaders in Madura reveal a deliberate application of *tengka* to stabilize and morally guide political interactions. For instance, during significant community events such as the haul

in Jrengoan Sampang, political figures are invited not to campaign but to participate in a manner that respects the sanctity of the event. This practice underscores a conscious effort by the Kiai to navigate the complex interplay between maintaining religious reverence and engaging with political realities. Such actions reflect a broader strategic application of *tengka*—not just as a moral compass but as a practical framework for ensuring that political engagements do not disrupt communal harmony (Hasyim, 2023).

Theoretically, this research is in line with the principles of the Fiqh of civilization, which advocates a contemporary *fiqh al-siyāsah* approach to internalizing moral ethical values (*tengka*) in political aspects to realize public interests (Al-Buthy, 2005; Oruç and Dirik, 2020; Taufiq, 2020), and strengthening religious moderation (Faiz, 2023; Hasan et al., 2023). By leveraging this framework, the research analyzes how *tengka* can be operationalized within political realms to foster ethical governance and public policy (Mursyidin et al., 2023; Setyawan et al., 2023; Jaelani et al., 2024). This approach is instrumental in exploring how traditional values can be intricately woven into the governance processes to counteract the often-divisive nature of identity politics, offering a blueprint for integrating ethical considerations into political strategies (Khoiri, 2018; Nur et al., 2020; Fernando et al., 2023).

The analysis further extends to examining how *tengka* influences the political behaviors of the Kiai and their followers (Hasan, 2021). It is evident that while the Kiai uphold *tengka* in public spheres, there remains a tension between these traditional values and the practical realities of political engagement (Budi, 2022). This tension is particularly pronounced in the post-truth context, where misinformation and emotive politics challenge the efficacy of traditional ethical frameworks (Suherman et al., 2020; Ramli and Elatrash, 2021). The study critically assesses the resilience of *tengka* in maintaining its integrity and relevance amidst these challenges, highlighting its dual role as both a moral ideal and a strategic tool in political navigation (Latif, 2023).

In synthesizing the findings, the research draws on comparative perspectives from international studies on the role of traditional values in politics, such as those conducted in similar socio-political environments in Southeast Asia. These comparisons enrich the analysis by providing broader insights into how localized moral principles like *tengka* are adapted and applied in different political contexts, contributing to a more comprehensive

understanding of their potential and limitations in shaping political discourse and behavior (Karrar, 2023).

According to Kiai Husein Ali Karrar, the “tengka” principle must be firmly upheld in political dynamics, especially for Kiai. Currently, there are still many Kiai who engage in practical politics and exploit religion as a means to secure votes in general elections. Additionally, Kiai sometimes pressure students (*santri*) and those around them to vote according to their political preferences, framing it as a form of respect or “*takzim*.” This behavior risks the erosion of tengka values in the Pamekasan district (Karrar, 2023).

In exploring the intersection of tengka and identity politics in the post-truth era, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with Kiai Aziz, the head of the Quran department at the Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School in Pamekasan. Kiai Aziz offered an alternative perspective, emphasizing that every individual has the right to vote and be elected, and as such, there should be no coercion in voting, as it is a personal right (Fikriawan et al., 2021; Marzuki, 2021; Zaini et al., 2023). Furthermore, he stressed that Kiai, as respected figures and role models, should provide political education to their students and the community, encouraging informed participation in general elections, even if their choices differ (Kamaludin & Iskandar, 2022; Hasan & Taufiq, 2023; Zayyadi et al., 2023). The following are the results of his interview:

“In my opinion, in practicing Tengka, first, the Kiai should not indoctrinate the community in making choices. Secondly, Kiai should provide enlightenment in politics without having to be the same in choosing leaders.” In Muhammadiyah jurisprudence, Muhammadiyah citizens are free to make ijtihad in choosing leaders (Azis, 2023).”

Kiai Abdul Mu'id, the head of Pesantren Darul Akhlaq and chairman of FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony) Pamekasan, emphasized the need for caution among the Kiai of Pamekasan Regency regarding their involvement in identity politics and practical politics (Mu'id, 2024). He strongly believes that while Kiai play a pivotal role within Islamic boarding schools and the wider community, they should primarily focus on their educational and spiritual duties rather than political engagements. By maintaining this focus, they can ensure a safer and more stable environment within their communities (Alatas, 2021; Zaini et al., 2023).

Kiai Abdul Mu'id emphasized that while Kiai are not explicitly barred from engaging in politics, they must thoughtfully assess how their political activities align with the tenets of *tengka*. *Tengka* requires integrity and a mindful evaluation of the community's well-being, which should inform the Kiai's political engagements. This is particularly crucial in Pamekasan, a region in Madura known for its politically charged environment, where tensions can rapidly escalate (Mu'id, 2023).

He further expressed a desire for unity among the Kiai, emphasizing the importance of cohesion in facing the challenges of local politics. He stressed that the unity of Kiai could serve as a strong foundation for maintaining peace and preventing divisions within the community. His comments reflect a broader concern for the community's welfare and Kiai's role in fostering a harmonious social and political climate in Pamekasan (Mu'id, 2023).

Given the characteristics of Pamekasan-Madura, which is considered a red zone in political dynamics due to its susceptibility to friction and conflict, the proper implementation of *tengka* in political dynamics is essential (Khoiri, 2018; Taufiq, 2022a). The figure of the Kiai is considered to be the right figure of knowledge and approaching the students or the surrounding community to continue to apply *tengka* and not use identity politics, which can cause division and conflict in the Madura community (Mohammad, 2021; Budi, 2022).

Opportunities and challenges to the internalization of *tengka* in the identity politics of Madura's Kiai in the post-truth era

In the post-truth era, where emotional appeals and personal beliefs often overshadow objective facts, the society of Madura, like many others, is not immune to its effects (Bufacchi, 2021). This era has deeply influenced the political landscape, introducing complexities in how truth and information are perceived and utilized. The Madurese community, with its rich cultural heritage and firm adherence to traditional values (Moussa, 2015; Choiri & Ardyansyah, 2024), faces a unique challenge as these age-old principles intersect with the modern dynamics of misinformation and heightened identity politics (Budi, 2022). The pervasive influence of the post-truth era is evident in the way local leaders, particularly the Kiai, navigate these turbulent waters, often balancing traditional roles and the pressures of contemporary political strategies (Taufiq, 2022b).

The internalization of *tengka*, a core ethical framework within Madurese culture that emphasizes honesty, integrity, and communal harmony, is increasingly relevant today (Hasan et al., 2023; Riyadi & Rokamah, 2023). As the Kiai engage with the broader political environment, they confront both opportunities and obstacles in melding *tengka* with the practical necessities of identity politics (Suherman et al., 2020). This integration is tested in an era where factual distortions and emotional rhetoric can easily sway public opinion and disrupt community cohesion. The challenge lies in maintaining the essence of *tengka* amidst the cacophony of post-truth politics, striving to anchor their societal role in the virtues that have long defined their leadership (Huda et al., 2020).

Taufiq Hasyim discussed the implementation of *tengka* within Pamekasan, noting that there are significant opportunities for its practice, largely due to the existence and expansion of pesantrens where *tengka* principles are actively taught and integrated. However, he also pointed out the growing challenges faced by the community, especially the pressures from globalization and the influx of external cultures. These factors, he observed, pose a substantial risk to the traditional pesantren culture, potentially eroding the core values that sustain it (Hasyim, 2023).

The application of *tengka* in the Pamekasan community, especially in the globalization era, will be increasingly challenging because the Westernized foreign culture will erode the *tengka* culture. There is a concern that it can widen Kiai identity politics and threaten community unity (Susilowati et al., 2019; Fariana, 2021).

Thus, the interview with Kiai Ali Rahbini Abdul Latif, head of Pesantren Miftahul Ulum in Masaran and Chairman of Majelis Ulama Indonesia Pamekasan, revealed that there are both positive and negative aspects when a Kiai enters politics. However, upon deeper reflection, it is considered more appropriate for a Kiai to refrain from direct involvement in practical politics and instead serve as an advisor to politicians. This role ensures that the policies implemented do not conflict with the community's interests and uphold the *tengka* values deeply embedded in Madurese society. The following are the results of the interview:

“The challenge, if the Kiai do not descend on politics, is then the politicians will only have momentary interests. The opportunity is that the Kiai can become advisors to politicians, not to make Kiai as

identity politics. So as not to create divisions of the people and the policies and interests for the benefit of the people (Latif, 2023)."

The hope from Kiai Husein Ali Karrar as head of Pesantren Midad Al-Qodiri is that Kiai should not plunge into the world of practical politics so that sacrifice activities in the pesantren which should be used as a place to study religion and formal knowledge to be no longer optimal because other interests accompany it (Luthfy, 2019).

The challenge faced by Kiai Pesantren Madura, as observed, is to avoid getting deeply involved in practical politics to ensure that the activities of the pesantren are not compromised. It was noted that engaging in politics might be more acceptable if one is not a leader. Additionally, it was mentioned that some Kiai choose to participate in politics during presidential elections when they believe their involvement can significantly contribute to religious interests (Karrar, 2023).

The interview results with Kiai Aziz, the leader of Quran Mulia, Muhammadiyah Pamekasan, stated that the most difficult challenge today is that many people still lack political literacy. They are still stuck with the stigma that the words of Kiai must be obeyed, even though in terms of politics, all people have been guaranteed their rights by the State, namely the right to vote and be elected. This should then make Islamic boarding schools as one of the places that should participate in assisting in conducting political education to the students or the surrounding community that they must determine their own choices without any intervention from any party (Maimunah, 2019; Choiri and Ardyansyah, 2024). Asking the Kiai for advice and input in the context of political choices is allowed, and this is not a sin (Ramli & Elatrash, 2021; Damayanti, 2023).

The greatest challenge identified for those early in their political education is their tendency to prioritize emotional attachments to the Kiai over informed decision-making (Khoiri, 2018). It was emphasized that there is a significant opportunity for political education to help differentiate the words of the Kiai in political contexts as recommendations rather than religious decrees (Daud, 2022). This distinction is crucial so that community members understand that differing politically from the Kiai is not a religious transgression. While *tengka* may guide their respect for the teacher, it was noted that in terms of Sharia, everyone has the autonomy to engage in *ijtihad*, or independent reasoning, in political matters (Azis, 2023).

Kiai Abdul Mu'id, head of Darul Akhlaq, shared insights regarding the opportunities and challenges of internalizing *tengka* in Pamekasan Regency (Mu'id, 2024). He noted that Kiai in pesantren face extraordinary political challenges, emphasizing that divisions among Kiai could lead to rapid destabilization of the country. However, he also highlighted a significant opportunity for promoting inter-religious harmony, which he described as currently very harmonious and conducive in Pamekasan, although internal frictions within the Muslim community do occur. He stressed the importance of strengthening '*ukhuvah Islāmiyah*' (Islamic brotherhood) (Kamaludin & Iskandar, 2022; Agustina & Ismah, 2024). This term, originating from the Arabic language where "*ukhuvah*" means brotherhood and "*islāmiyah*" means related to Islam, underscores that all Muslims are brothers and should help, support, and care for each other regardless of differences in ethnicity, nationality, or social status. *Ukhuvah Islāmiyah* is highly relevant in studies focusing on social relationships, solidarity, or community dynamics within the Muslim context, as it provides a foundational basis for analyzing how these relationships are formed and maintained (Meirison et al., 2022). In conflicts or disputes, *ukhuvah Islāmiyah* offers a solution to strengthen unity and overcome differences through an approach centered on brotherhood and cooperation. Furthermore, in research on Islamic education, this concept can be used to understand how the values of brotherhood are taught and implemented in curricula and school activities (Zayyadi et al., 2023). By understanding and applying *ukhuvah Islāmiyah*, Muslims can create a harmonious environment filled with mutual understanding and enhance social relationships through social activities, humanitarian aid, and various forms of solidarity (Fikriawan et al., 2021; Hasan & Taufiq, 2023; Jaelani et al., 2024).

Kiai Abdul Mu'id explained that the role of Kiai in politics should be focused on providing advice and overseeing national politics rather than engaging in practical politics, ensuring their teachings in the pesantren remain consistent and impactful (Mu'id, 2023). He also said it would be better for Kiai to focus on managing and assisting their boarding school without entering practical politics (Mu'id, 2024). The Kiai are expected to be "referees" who have a neutral attitude in politics because if they join the political dynamics, there may be friction and conflicts that can threaten unity and integrity (Suherman et al., 2020; Ramli Elatrash, 2021). Conversely, if the Kiai only become referees and are neutral, they can give

messages, suggestions, and even advice to people involved in practical politics. In this case, the Kiai's role of Kiai is only as a guardian and national politics so that the unity of the people remains as one unit (Zaini et al., 2023; Choiri & Ardyansyah, 2024).

The discourse presented in this article primarily revolves around the insights gained from interviews with key religious leaders, offering a rich, qualitative snapshot of the current political and social dynamics within Pamekasan Madura. However, to deepen the analysis and enhance the robustness of the findings, it would be beneficial to integrate these interviews with theoretical frameworks and scholarly viewpoints, mainly focusing on the principles of Fiqh of civilization (Taufiq, 2023a). Fiqh of civilization as contextualization of contemporary *Fiqh al-siyāsah* provides a critical lens through which the response of the Kiai can be evaluated (Hasan et al., 2023; Taufiq, 2023a; Rois et al., 2024). By juxtaposing the interview data with Fiqh of civilization, the discussion could explore how well the political engagements and advisories of the Kiai align with the *maqāhid al-Syari'ah* in the political aspect (Maimunah, 2019; Taufiq, 2022b, 2023b), which seeks to balance the welfare of the community with the preservation of Islamic principles (Luthfy, 2019; Muhsin et al., 2019; Zayyadi et al., 2023).

To further enrich the discussion, it would be beneficial to compare these localized findings with the results of similar research from other regions or communities where Islamic jurisprudence is a key factor in governance (Assiddiq, 2020b). This comparative analysis could highlight unique aspects of the Madurese implementation of *tengka*, its integration into local politics, and common challenges faced across different contexts (Agustina & Ismah, 2024). Such a scholarly comparison would validate the findings and situate them within a broader discourse, providing a comprehensive understanding of the intersections between traditional Islamic values and modern political realities (Halili, 2019; Taufiq, 2022b). This approach would also identify practical implications and potential strategies for enhancing community cohesion and political integrity through applying Fiqh of civilization, thereby contributing to the ongoing dialogue on the role of religion in public governance.

The role of Madura's Kiai in countering the post-truth era is paramount, given their moral and religious authority in promoting truth and honesty within an increasingly polarized

society (Daud, 2022; Nugraha et al, 2023). In the Madurese tradition, kiai are not only seen as spiritual leaders but also as guardians of moral and social values. Leveraging this position, kiai can disseminate accurate information and challenge false narratives that often spread through social media and digital platforms (Hayati et al., 2024). They can organize religious gatherings, seminars, and lectures that address religious issues and educate the community on the importance of verifying information before sharing it (Kühle and Larsen, 2021; Damayanti, 2023). Additionally, Kiai can collaborate with educational institutions and local media to develop digital literacy programs to enhance the community's ability to recognize and combat misleading information.

However, the challenges faced by Madura's Kiai in countering the post-truth era are multifaceted (Khoiri, 2018; Halili, 2019). One of the most significant challenges is the resistance from groups with vested interests in maintaining false narratives for political or economic gain (Susilowati et al., 2019; Umam, 2022; Zaini et al., 2023). Kiai often face pressure and threats from these entities, affecting their willingness to speak out against falsehoods (Abed et al., 2023). Additionally, internal challenges, such as limited access to technology and digital skills among the kiai, can hinder their effectiveness in using digital platforms to combat hoaxes and misinformation (Lubis, 2020; Mursyidin et al., 2023). Addressing these challenges requires support from the government and civil society organizations in the form of training and provision of technological resources (Zayyadi et al., 2023). Moreover, building collaborative networks between Kiai and other community leaders can create a more formidable collective force in addressing the post-truth era (Bufacchi, 2021; Enroth, 2023). Thus, the role of Madura's Kiai in the post-truth era can be maximized as a bearer of truth and an agent of social change capable of strengthening community resilience against the negative impacts of false narratives.

Conclusion

This research set out to investigate the internalization of *tengka* within the identity politics of Madura's Kiai in the context of the post-truth era. The findings reveal that while *tengka* continues to be a significant moral and ethical guide among the Kiai of Pamekasan, the encroachment of modern identity politics and the pervasive influence of the post-Truth

era pose substantial challenges. Despite these obstacles, *tengka* remains a crucial element in fostering inter-religious harmony and guiding the political engagements of Kiai in a manner that prioritizes communal welfare and adherence to Islamic principles.

The academic contributions of this study are multifaceted. Firstly, the research enriches the discourse on the role of traditional ethical frameworks in contemporary governance, particularly within Islamic communities. By applying the principles of Fiqh of civilization as an analytical lens, this study not only elucidates the current practices of Kiai but also offers a critical evaluation of how these practices align with the broader objectives of Islamic governance aimed at public welfare. Furthermore, the comparative analysis with other scholarly works on similar themes highlights the unique position of Madurese *tengka* in political and social dynamics, offering valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of applying traditional values in modern political arenas. Thus, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of integrating religious and ethical considerations into political strategies, which is crucial for fostering resilient and harmonious communities in the face of global and local socio-political changes.

Several opportunities and challenges exist for internalizing *tengka* in Kiai identity politics in Pamekasan Regency. The challenges include instances where some Kiai, perceived as religious authorities, engage in practical politics and use religious identity politics to secure votes from their *santri* (students) or community. Conversely, the opportunities lie in the potential of *tengka* to mitigate and minimize Kiai's political identity, thereby preventing divisions in Pamekasan, Madura.

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