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**KIAI RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND DISCOURSE OF POWER IN POST-LUNAR ECLIPSE  
ALMSGIVING DETERMINATIONS THROUGH HANNAH ARENDT  
AND HADITH PERSPECTIVES**

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**Abstract**

This study aims to examine the forms of religious authority of kiai in the determination and implementation of post-lunar eclipse almsgiving practices in Ketapang Village, Sampang, Madura, and to analyze how the discourse of power strengthens kiai legitimacy when analyzed through Hannah Arendt's and hadith perspectives. This qualitative research employs an ethnographic approach. The data consist of information on religious authority construction, power discourse, and almsgiving practices, sourced from four kiai and fifteen community members in Ketapang Village. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews with kiai and community members, participant observation of religious gatherings and eclipse-related rituals, and documentation of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) and religious pronouncements. Data analysis employs thematic analysis with stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, integrating Hannah Arendt's political philosophy framework with hadith studies methodologies. The findings demonstrate that kiai religious authority is constructed through textual mastery, interpretive competence, and community recognition, while power discourse operates through theological legitimation, social networks, and performative practices. The interaction between religious authority and social power creates community compliance through mechanisms of trust, cultural tradition, and spiritual charisma. This research contributes theoretically to understanding the dynamics of religious authority in contemporary Islamic communities and pragmatically provides insights into the negotiation between classical texts and modern social realities.

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**Keywords**

Discourse of Power, Hadith, Hannah Arendt, Kiai Religious Authority, Post-Lunar Eclipse Almsgiving.



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## INTRODUCTION

The case of post-lunar eclipse almsgiving in Ketapang Village, Sampang, Madura, provides a critical site for examining religious authority construction in contemporary Islamic communities. Madura's distinctive Islamic culture, characterized by strong kiai influence and traditionalist practices, creates an ideal setting for such inquiry (Abd A'la, 2002; Kuntowijoyo, 2002). The Madurese concept of *buppa' bhabhu' ghuru rato* places religious teachers in a hierarchy of respect alongside parents and government officials (Wiyata, 2002). However, mechanisms through which kiai construct and legitimate determinations regarding specific ritual practices remain underexplored. When lunar eclipses occur, kiai employ multiple strategies: referencing classical hadith texts, invoking astronomical knowledge, mobilizing community networks, and performing public rituals demonstrating spiritual competence.

The discourse of power surrounding kiai determinations in Ketapang Village reveals a profound academic concern: why do community members, including those who possess direct access to canonical hadith texts, continue to subordinate their interpretive judgment to the authority of specific kiai figures when regulating religious rituals such as post-lunar eclipse almsgiving? Field observations conducted during two lunar eclipse events (March and September 2025) documented a striking pattern of deference: the moment a kiai issued his pronouncement, community preparations for almsgiving were immediately mobilized, regardless of prior individual understandings. One community member who had studied at a *pesantren* for six years stated in an interview: "Even though I have read the hadith myself, I still wait for Kiai's word before acting, because his understanding encompasses deeper dimensions the chain of transmission, the scholars' commentaries, the contextual wisdom that I cannot access alone" (Interview, April 2025). Documentation of religious assembly records further reveals that kiai pronouncements on eclipse-related obligations have consistently structured communal ritual behavior across multiple generations in Ketapang, establishing a pattern of authority that operates not through formal enforcement but through internalized recognition. This raises a central academic problem: what are the mechanisms through which kiai construct and legitimate their authority over specific ritual determinations, and how does the discourse of power operate to reinforce this legitimacy beyond mere textual possession? The relationship between religious authority and social power in shaping community compliance remains theoretically underexplored, particularly in the context of specific ritual practices within Indonesian traditionalist Islamic communities.

The emergence of kiai as a supreme religious authority figure in Ketapang Village is not reducible to textual expertise alone; it is deeply embedded in the socio-cultural architecture of Madurese society and actively reproduced through institutional, performative, and relational processes. Documentation of pesantren records, religious gathering rosters, and community almsgiving archives reveals that kiai have historically functioned as nexus points between celestial-theological interpretation and communal moral governance, a role reinforced by the Madurese cultural framework of *buppa' bhabhu' ghuru rato* that positions religious teachers alongside parents and rulers in a hierarchy demanding reverence and compliance (Wiyata, 2002). During participant observation of the March 2025 lunar eclipse, Kiai A.B. was witnessed leading collective eclipse prayers before a congregation exceeding two hundred persons, personally distributing alms while verbally citing prophetic traditions with full isnadic attribution, and presiding over communal supplication until the eclipse concluded, a performance that simultaneously activated his religious, social, and symbolic capital in one embodied event. Community members interviewed afterward consistently described their compliance not as passive obedience but as deliberate recognition of the kiai's special capacity to mediate between divine command and practical communal life: "When Kiai speaks during an eclipse, it is as if the Prophet's guidance is being transmitted directly to us through him" (Interview, community member, March 2025). This convergence of cultural expectation, institutional positioning, textual mastery, and performative demonstration explains why kiai occupy an irreplaceable role in regulating Islamic rituality in Ketapang, and why the discourse of power they deploy commands voluntary compliance rather than coercive enforcement. The present study examines precisely these interlocking processes of how kiai religious authority is constructed through textual competence, institutional affiliation, and spiritual charisma, and how the discourse of power embedded in their determinations on post-lunar eclipse almsgiving operates through mechanisms illuminated by Hannah Arendt's (1961) political philosophy of authority and the epistemological standards of classical hadith scholarship.

The interaction between religious authority and social power in shaping community compliance presents a complex dynamic. Ethnographic observations reveal that community members' adherence to kiai pronouncements is mediated by multiple factors: trust in textual knowledge, patron-client relationships, and pesantren network participation (Rofiqi, Zainiyati, Niam, & Kusaeri, 2026), and shared cultural understandings of cosmic events. During recent lunar eclipses, community members reported giving charity because their kiai recommended it, while

others cited direct hadith knowledge or family tradition. This variation suggests that authority operates through differentiated mechanisms rather than uniform imposition. Do kiai function primarily as transmitters of textual tradition, or as active constructors of religious meaning? How do community members navigate between direct hadith engagement and deference to kiai interpretation?

Recent scholarship on religious authority and power discourse informs this study. Andok (2024) examined digital transformations in Muslim perceptions of religious authority in Qatar, revealing how digital media shifts power dynamics through democratized access to texts, though focusing on urban populations rather than traditional settings. Baycar and Rakipoglu (2022) analyzed the UAE's religious soft power through the ulema, demonstrating state-supported discourse serving political objectives, yet concentrated on elite-level authority. Arifianto (2020) investigated Islamic authority struggles in post-reformasi Indonesia, illuminating discourse politicization but not examining everyday authority mechanisms. Faisal et al. (2022) explored kiai traditional authority in strengthening religious moderatism in South Sulawesi and Gorontalo, though limited to ten kiai and an anti-radicalization focus.

Ali et al. (2025) examined religious authority transformations through Islamic epistemology in the digital age, revealing shifts from ijtihad-based interpretation to user-generated content validated by popularity. These studies reveal a research gap: while existing scholarship addresses authority transformations in digital contexts and institutional dynamics, insufficient attention addresses micro-level processes through which traditional authorities construct power in specific ritual contexts. This study's novelty lies in three dimensions: ethnographic examination of authority in specific ritual practice (post-lunar eclipse almsgiving); interdisciplinary integration of Arendtian political philosophy with hadith methodologies; and focus on Madura, an understudied region significant in Indonesian Islamic traditionalism, contributing regionally-specific findings to broader theoretical discussions.

This research draws on two primary theoretical sources. Hannah Arendt's conceptualization in "Between Past and Future" (1961) and "On Violence" (1970) distinguishes authority from power and coercion, arguing that authority requires recognition and voluntary acceptance, operating through hierarchical structures where superior positions derive authority from foundational sources beyond themselves. Arendt's framework illuminates how kiai authority functions through continuous community recognition grounded in Islamic textual tradition. The hadith perspective,

from classical criticism in Ibn al-Salah's "Introduction to the Science of Hadith" and al-Suyuti's methodological works, emphasizes authentication through sanad (transmission chain) and matn (content) analysis. Integrating these traditions enables analyzing how kiai draws authority from classical sources while actively constructing legitimacy through contemporary interpretive practices.

This research aims to examine the forms of religious authority of kiai in determining and implementing post-lunar eclipse almsgiving practices in Ketapang Village, Sampang, Madura, and to analyze how the discourse of power strengthens kiai legitimacy when examined through Hannah Arendt's and hadith perspectives. Specifically, the study investigates: (1) how kiai construct and legitimate their determinations regarding post-lunar eclipse almsgiving through textual and theological resources; (2) how power discourse operates to reinforce kiai authority when analyzed through Arendtian and hadith frameworks; and (3) how the interaction between religious authority and social power shapes community compliance with almsgiving recommendations in the specific socio-cultural context of Ketapang Village.

The significance is twofold. Theoretically, this study contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship by demonstrating how political philosophy enriches Islamic studies in understanding religious authority dynamics beyond theological frameworks. Integrating Arendtian concepts with hadith methodologies offers an analytical model applicable to religious leadership studies across diverse contexts, advancing discussions on authority construction, textual tradition-social power relationships, and classical texts' contemporary relevance. Pragmatically, this research provides insights for religious educators, community leaders, and policymakers regarding religious authority dynamics in Indonesian Islamic communities. Understanding how kiai negotiate tradition and modernity in ritual contexts informs approaches to religious education, community development, and cultural-religious tradition preservation. By illuminating non-coercive religious authority mechanisms, this study contributes to social cohesion discussions and traditional leadership roles in contemporary Muslim societies.

## **METHOD**

This qualitative research employs an ethnographic approach to examine religious authority and power discourse in kiai determinations on post-lunar eclipse almsgiving practices in Ketapang Village, Sampang, Madura. The data consist of information regarding authority construction, power

discourse mechanisms, and almsgiving practices, sourced from four kiai and fifteen community members selected through purposive sampling. Data collection techniques include: (1) in-depth interviews with kiai possessing recognized religious authority and community members who participated in eclipse-related almsgiving practices; (2) participant observation of religious gatherings, pengajian sessions, eclipse rituals, and actual almsgiving practices; and (3) documentation of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), hadith references, kiai pronouncements, and religious materials circulating within the community. Research was conducted over five months from February to June 2025.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis with stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analytical framework integrated Hannah Arendt's conceptualization of authority and power with hadith studies methodologies, examining how kiai construct authoritative discourse through textual citation, negotiate between texts and contexts, and how community members engage with these pronouncements. Researchers conducted a critical analysis of authority construction and power discourse using Arendtian political philosophy and classical hadith criticism concepts, including sanad analysis, matn evaluation, and contextual understanding. Furthermore, findings were compared with related research to identify convergences, divergences, and theoretical contributions. Coding procedures identified key themes: textual foundations of authority, power discourse dissemination mechanisms, tradition-modernity negotiation strategies, and community reception patterns.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

This section presents the findings of fieldwork conducted in Ketapang Village, Sampang, Madura, examining the construction and exercise of kiai religious authority in determining post-lunar eclipse almsgiving practices. The findings are organized around three interrelated dimensions: the forms of religious authority manifested by kiai, the discourse of power mechanisms employed to strengthen legitimacy, and the actual practices of post-lunar eclipse almsgiving as shaped by authority-power interactions. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with four kiai and fifteen community members, participant observation of religious gatherings and eclipse-related rituals, and documentation of classical Islamic texts and religious pronouncements. The analysis reveals complex patterns of authority construction that simultaneously honor classical textual

traditions while responding to contemporary social realities in this coastal Madurese community.

**Table 1.** Religious Authority and Power Discourse in Kiai Determinations on Post-Lunar Eclipse Almsgiving in Ketapang Village, Sampang, Madura

Religious Authority of Kiai	Power Discourse	Post-Lunar Eclipse Almsgiving Practices
<b>Textual Mastery and Interpretive Competence</b> Command of classical hadith literature; Ability to cite specific prophetic traditions; Knowledge of multiple scholarly opinions; Competence in Arabic texts	<b>Theological Legitimation</b> Reference to Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim; Invocation of scholarly consensus; Connection to prophetic example; Cosmic-theological framing of eclipses	<b>Ritual Timing and Performance</b> Almsgiving performed during or immediately after an eclipse; Types of charity: money, food, clothing; Distribution to the poor, orphans, mosques; Individual and collective practices
<b>Institutional Positioning</b> Pesantren leadership roles; Teaching positions in religious education; Generational authority transmission; Recognition by religious organizations	<b>Social Network Mobilization</b> Utilization of pengajian forums; Mobilization of santri networks; Engagement with community leaders; Public pronouncements in mosques	<b>Community Participation Patterns</b> High compliance among pesantren-affiliated families; Varied participation by socioeconomic status; Gender-specific implementation patterns; Intergenerational transmission
<b>Spiritual Charisma and Moral Exemplarity</b> Personal piety and devotion; Genealogical connection to respected scholars; Reputation for spiritual insight; Embodiment of Islamic values	<b>Performative Practice</b> Public demonstrations during eclipses; Visible charity distribution; Integration of prayer and almsgiving; Ritual leadership in communal events	<b>Motivations and Meanings</b> Fear of cosmic consequences; Obedience to kiai guidance; Fulfillment of religious duty; Seeking divine protection and blessings

*Source: Field Observations, In-depth Interviews, and Documentation, Ketapang Village, Sampang, Madura (2025)*

## Religious Authority of Kiai

### Textual Mastery and Interpretive Competence

The religious authority of kiai in Ketapang Village is fundamentally grounded in their demonstrated mastery of classical Islamic textual traditions, particularly hadith literature. All four kiai interviewed exhibited extensive knowledge of prophetic traditions related to celestial phenomena and charitable obligations. Their authority derives not merely from possessing this knowledge but from the ability to cite, interpret, and apply it to contemporary situations. During eclipse events, kiai consistently referenced two primary hadith traditions: the narration from Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari describing the Prophet's command to pray and give charity during eclipses, and the tradition from Mughirah bin Shu'bah explaining that eclipses are signs from Allah. The kiai's competence extends beyond simple citation to include knowledge of transmission chains, awareness

of variant narrations, and familiarity with classical scholarly commentaries. This textual mastery is publicly demonstrated through religious teaching sessions where kiai explain the theological foundations of eclipse-related obligations, cite relevant hadith with proper attribution, and navigate questions about differing scholarly opinions regarding the timing, types, and recipients of almsgiving.

### **Institutional Positioning**

Kiai authority is significantly reinforced through their institutional positions within the pesantren system and broader religious educational networks. The four kiai studied occupy different but complementary institutional roles: two senior kiai lead established pesantren with decades of operation, while two younger kiai combine traditional religious education with more contemporary approaches. These institutional positions provide platforms for authority expression and transmission. Senior kiai leverage their pesantren's longevity and alumni networks to extend their influence, while younger kiai utilize their integration of traditional and modern educational methods to appeal to broader audiences. Institutional authority manifests through control over curriculum content, appointment of teaching staff, establishment of religious calendars and observances, and designation of community religious leadership roles. The pesantren structure enables kiai to shape students' understanding of religious obligations from an early age, creating generational continuity in religious practice. Furthermore, kiai recognition by regional religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama structures provides additional institutional legitimacy that extends beyond individual charisma to organizational affiliation.

### **Spiritual Charisma and Moral Exemplarity**

Beyond textual knowledge and institutional position, kiai authority rests substantially on perceived spiritual qualities and moral exemplarity. Community members consistently described kiai using terms suggesting exceptional piety, spiritual insight, and ethical conduct. This charismatic dimension of authority operates through multiple channels: personal devotional practices that exceed ordinary obligations, genealogical connections to respected scholarly lineages, reputation for answered prayers and spiritual efficacy, and embodiment of Islamic ethical ideals in daily conduct. During eclipse events, kiai spiritual authority becomes particularly visible as they lead collective prayers, perform personal supplications, and demonstrate immediate charitable giving. The combination of visible piety with accessible personal demeanor creates a model of religious authority that community members find both inspiring and approachable. Genealogical factors also

contribute significantly, as three of the four kiai studied descended from established scholarly families, providing inherited spiritual capital that reinforces their individual achievements. This charismatic authority proves especially important for younger or less institutionally established religious leaders seeking to build followings.

### **Power Discourse**

#### **Theological Legitimation**

The discourse of power employed by kiai to strengthen their determination on post-lunar eclipse almsgiving operates primarily through theological legitimation strategies. Kiai frames their pronouncements not as personal opinions but as derivations from authoritative Islamic sources, particularly prophetic traditions. This theological framing establishes a hierarchy of authority in which the kiai position themselves as mediators between divine command (as expressed in the Quran and hadith) and contemporary practice. The discourse emphasizes several key theological themes: eclipses as divine signs requiring human response, charity as a means of averting cosmic and personal calamities, the specific efficacy of eclipse-time almsgiving compared to ordinary charity, and the continuity between prophetic practice and contemporary Muslim obligation, by consistently invoking Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim the two most authoritative hadith collections in Sunni tradition kiai establish their recommendations on unassailable textual foundations. The discourse also employs cosmic-theological framing that connects astronomical phenomena to divine will, human moral responsibility, and eschatological concerns, thereby elevating what might be viewed as optional charity to the status of urgent religious obligation.

#### **Social Network Mobilization**

Power discourse extends beyond theological argumentation to encompass strategic mobilization of social networks. Kiai utilizes existing religious and social structures to disseminate their determinations and ensure compliance. The pengajian system, regular religious study sessions, serves as the primary forum for communicating eclipse-related obligations, allowing kiai to explain their reasoning, address questions, and build consensus. These sessions create spaces where religious discourse circulates, is discussed, and becomes normalized within community consciousness. Kiai also mobilize santri (pesantren students) as intermediaries who carry messages to families and neighborhoods, extending the reach of kiai pronouncements beyond those who directly attend religious gatherings. Engagement with community leaders, village officials, and prominent families creates endorsement networks that lend social weight to religious

recommendations. Public pronouncements in mosques during Friday prayers ensure that eclipse-related guidance reaches the broadest possible male audience. This multi-channel communication strategy transforms individual kiai opinions into community-wide norms, making compliance with almsgiving recommendations a matter of social expectation as well as religious duty.

### **Performative Practice**

The discourse of power is reinforced through performative practices that make authority visible and tangible. During lunar eclipse events, kiai engage in public demonstrations of the very practices they recommend: leading eclipse prayers, making charitable donations in visible ways, organizing collective almsgiving distributions, and maintaining continuous prayer and supplication throughout eclipse durations. These performances serve multiple functions: they model proper ritual behavior, demonstrate kiai's personal commitment to their own teachings, create communal experiences that bind participants together, and establish kiai as ritual specialists who mediate between ordinary Muslims and sacred practice. The integration of prayer and charity in single ritual sequences emphasizes their interconnection in Islamic tradition. Public charity distribution events, where kiai personally hand donations to recipients, create spectacles of religious authority in action. These performative dimensions transform abstract theological discourse into embodied practice, making kiai authority experientially real rather than merely intellectually asserted. The visibility of kiai charitable giving also establishes moral expectations for community members, creating implicit pressure for participation based on demonstrated example rather than explicit command.

### **Post-Lunar Eclipse Almsgiving Practices**

#### **Ritual Timing and Performance**

The actual practices of post-lunar eclipse almsgiving in Ketapang Village exhibit both standardization and variation. The timing of almsgiving follows patterns established by kiai guidance: charity is ideally given during the eclipse itself or immediately following its conclusion, though some community members extend the practice to the following days. The types of charity distributed include monetary donations, food staples (particularly rice), and clothing items. Recipients primarily consist of the poor and needy within the village, orphans, and mosque institutions for subsequent distribution. The practice occurs at both individual and collective levels: some families make private donations directly to known needy persons, while others participate in organized distributions coordinated by mosques or pesantren. The ritual performance often combines almsgiving with other eclipse-related practices, including special prayers, Quranic

recitation, and increased supplication. This integration creates a comprehensive ritual response to cosmic events that addresses both material and spiritual dimensions of religious obligation.

### **Community Participation Patterns**

Community participation in post-lunar eclipse almsgiving demonstrates differentiated patterns based on multiple factors. Families affiliated with pesantren institutions exhibit the highest compliance rates, reflecting the direct influence of kiai teaching and the normative expectations within pesantren-connected networks. Socioeconomic status affects both participation rates and donation amounts, with wealthier families giving more substantial material aid while poorer families contribute according to their means or participate through labor in distribution efforts. Gender patterns emerge in implementation, with men typically handling monetary donations and public distribution while women prepare food items and coordinate household charitable efforts. Generational differences appear in motivations and understandings: older community members tend to emphasize traditional beliefs about cosmic consequences of eclipses, while younger participants more often cite obedience to kiai guidance and fulfillment of religious duty. Urban-educated community members show more varied responses, with some seeking additional textual justification beyond kiai pronouncements. Despite these variations, the overall participation rate remains high, indicating the effectiveness of kiai authority in shaping community practice.

### **Motivations and Meanings**

The motivations underlying community participation in post-lunar eclipse almsgiving reveal complex intersections of religious belief, social obligation, and cultural tradition. Many community members express fear of cosmic consequences if proper ritual responses to eclipses are neglected, reflecting traditional Madurese cosmological understandings that link celestial events to earthly welfare. Obedience to kiai guidance emerges as a primary motivation, particularly among those with close pesantren connections who view following kiai recommendations as a religious duty in itself. The practice is understood as fulfilling obligations to both divine command and community leadership. Seeking divine protection and blessings motivates participation, with almsgiving during eclipses viewed as particularly efficacious for averting calamity and securing divine favor. Social expectations also play roles, as visible participation in almsgiving demonstrates religious commitment and social responsibility. The meanings attributed to the practice extend beyond individual benefit to encompass community welfare: collective ritual response to cosmic events is understood to protect the entire village from harm. This communal dimension creates shared

responsibility for proper observance, making individual participation matter to collective well-being.

### **Discussion**

The findings from Ketapang Village illuminate how religious authority operates through mechanisms that Arendt (1961, 1970) identifies as authority proper rather than power or violence. Kiai achieve compliance not through coercion but through community recognition of their augmented connection to Islamic foundational sources. This authority structure, manifesting in post-lunar eclipse almsgiving determinations, confirms Arendt's insight that authority creates hierarchical relationships where superior positions derive legitimacy from sources beyond individual qualities. However, where Arendt emphasizes political tradition, this study reveals the centrality of textual interpretation in religious contexts, showing how authority operates through what Foucault (1972) terms power-knowledge relations while maintaining a voluntary rather than coercive character.

Classical hadith methodology introduces epistemological dimensions absent from Arendt's political analysis. The authentication criteria systematized by scholars like Ibn al-Salah, sanad and matn analysis, establishing textual reliability hierarchies, create what Hallaq (1999) identifies as sophisticated validation mechanisms independent of contemporary institutional structures. Kiai authority thus requires demonstrated competence in navigating these authentication hierarchies, distinguishing *sahih*, *hasan*, and *da'if* hadith while reconciling apparent contradictions in prophetic traditions (Daniel W. Brown, 2009; Rofiqi, et al., 2026). This epistemic authority dimension, operating alongside institutional-traditional authority, explains why both senior kiai with established *pesantren* bases and younger kiai with superior textual credentials command recognition, albeit through different emphases within the broader Islamic scholarly tradition (Bruinessen, 1995; Dhofier, 2011).

The dual operation of institutional and epistemic authority dimensions reveals what Horikoshi (1976) identified in West Javan contexts: kiai leadership combining traditional charismatic elements with systematic knowledge transmission. *Pesantren* structures provide institutional platforms enabling authority expression and generational transmission, while textual mastery validates kiai as knowledgeable authorities capable of deriving contemporary applications from classical sources (Azra, 2002; Lukens-Bull, 2005). The performative practices observed public demonstrations during eclipses, visible charity distributions function as what Zamhari & Howell

(2012) term “enacted piety,” making abstract theological claims tangible through embodied practice. This integration of discourse and performance creates models for emulation rather than commands for obedience, bridging textual tradition and contemporary practice.

Comparing these findings with Andok’s (2024) research on digital transformations reveals contextual variations in authority dynamics. While their Qatar study identified how democratized text access challenges traditional hierarchies, the Ketapang case demonstrates that in pesantren-based communities, traditional authority remains robust because it depends on interpretive competence and institutional embeddedness rather than text monopolies. Community members possess the same hadith collections as the kiai, yet continue deferring to the kiai’s interpretation, confirming what Asad, (1986) argued about the irreducibility of religious authority to textual access alone. This finding challenges digital-age assumptions about automatic authority democratization, suggesting resilience when grounded in interpretive communities, maintaining classical validation standards (Knysh, 2000).

Baycar & Rakipoglu’s (2022) analysis of UAE’s state-sponsored religious soft power illuminates contrasting authority models. Where UAE ulema derive legitimacy from political appointment, Ketapang kiai depend on continuous grassroots recognition, creating what Soares (1998) identifies as accountability mechanisms requiring careful balance between textual fidelity and contextual sensitivity. Kiai cannot impose interpretations through institutional fiat but must persuade through demonstrated knowledge and moral exemplarity, operating in what Zaman (2010) describes as the negotiated space between classical tradition and contemporary pressures. This grassroots structure produces different legitimation strategies than top-down institutional authority, with kiai vulnerability to legitimacy loss if pronouncements diverge excessively from community expectations or established textual traditions.

Arifianto’s (2020) work on Islamic authority struggles in post-reformasi Indonesia identified politicization challenges, yet the Ketapang case demonstrates domain-specificity in authority effectiveness. Post-lunar eclipse almsgiving, being relatively non-controversial, creates space for traditional authority mechanisms to operate without the contestation characterizing more politically salient issues. This resonates with Baycar & Rakipoglu’s (2022) findings on kiai promoting modernism through ritual-devotional spheres while facing challenges in political domains. Both studies identify textual mastery, institutional positioning, and moral exemplarity as key authority components, confirming what Mahmood (2011) terms the “embodied practice” dimension of Islamic

piety, where authority derives from visible demonstration rather than abstract claims.

Ali et al.'s (2025) analysis of epistemological shifts from scholarly *ijtihad* to viral popularity contrasts sharply with Ketapang patterns. In this traditional community, religious truth claims remain validated through classical methodologies authentication, matn evaluation, and scholarly consensus rather than social media metrics, confirming what Turner & Asad (1994) identified as the persistence of traditional epistemologies in contexts where institutional structures support classical validation. The negotiation between hadith literature and contemporary realities exemplifies Gadamer's (2006) "fusion of horizons," where kiai actively construct interpretations addressing contemporary concerns while remaining recognizably rooted in classical sources. This requires what MacIntyre (2014) terms practical wisdom (*phronesis*), navigating between universal principles and particular circumstances through interpretive judgment.

Theoretically, this study demonstrates that Arendt's political philosophy productively illuminates Islamic religious authority when supplemented with hadith scholarship's epistemic dimensions. Authority in religious contexts requires both institutional-traditional legitimacy and interpretive-scholarly competence, operating through Arendtian mechanisms—hierarchical structure, augmentation, foundational reference—while adding validation processes emphasized in classical Islamic scholarship (Bourdieu, 1991; Buchanan et al., 1993; Hansen-Pauly, 2022). The findings reveal authority as domain-specific rather than monolithic, operating effectively in ritual spheres while facing challenges in political contestation, and show traditional authority mechanisms coexisting with modernity when embedded in institutions like *pesantren* that continuously reproduce textual competence and community recognition (Moosa, 2012).

The Madurese cultural context shapes authority dynamics through the *buppa' bhabhu' ghuru rato* hierarchy, placing religious teachers alongside parents and rulers in demanding respect (Julijanti, 2015; Wiyata, 2002). This cultural scaffolding reinforces kiai authority beyond purely Islamic sources, suggesting that religious leadership operates most effectively when aligned with broader cultural values rather than existing in isolation (Abd A'la, 2002; Kuntowijoyo, 2002). The particular intensity of kiai authority in Madura likely stems from this cultural reinforcement as much as Islamic tradition itself, indicating that understanding religious authority requires attention to local cultural contexts rather than assuming universal patterns across Indonesian Islamic communities.

Beyond these comparative dimensions, this research contributes to broader discussions of religious authority, modernity, and tradition by demonstrating that traditional leadership has not uniformly declined despite modernization and democratization. In contexts where pesantren structures, cultural values, and kitab kuning transmission continue reproducing religious knowledge and community recognition, traditional authority remains robust through what might be termed “adaptive traditionalism,” maintaining textual fidelity while enabling contextual responsiveness (Zamhari & Howell, 2012). The Ketapang kiai represent not pre-modern survivals but active reconstruction of traditional authority through engagement with modernity’s challenges, suggesting that modernization entails reconfiguration rather than elimination of religion’s social role and institutional forms.

These findings resonate with and extend several additional bodies of scholarship on religious authority, ritual practice, and Islamic knowledge transmission. Weber’s (2018) classic typology of traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal authority provides a foundational lens: the kiai of Ketapang embody a hybrid form that combines traditional authority (grounded in inherited pesantren lineage and cultural hierarchy) with charismatic authority (derived from perceived spiritual exemplarity and moral virtue), a combination that produces what Weber terms the “routinization of charisma” through institutional structures. William & Geertz’s (1961) foundational study of religious leadership in Java identified the kiai as a “broker” between the sacred world of Islamic textual tradition and the everyday moral concerns of rural communities, a role that remains analytically productive for understanding how Ketapang kiai position themselves as indispensable mediators in eclipse-related ritual governance. The present findings further align with Hefner’s (2015) analysis of Islamic education in Southeast Asia, which demonstrates that pesantren institutions do not merely transmit religious knowledge but actively produce forms of social authority that extend far beyond classroom walls, shaping community norms, ritual compliance, and political legitimacy in ways that persist well into conditions of high modernity. Similarly, Melchert & Berkey’s (2004) historical account of Islamic scholarly authority in pre-modern Muslim societies reveals that the construction of religious credibility has always depended on the public performance of knowledge through teaching, debate, and community service, a pattern directly observable in how Ketapang kiai deploy their textual competence during eclipse events as both epistemic demonstration and legitimacy performance. Finally, Mark R. Woodward’s (1989) study of normative piety and ritual practice in Javanese Islam underscores that Islamic authority in

Indonesian contexts is inseparable from ritual leadership: those who organize, lead, and embody proper ritual practice acquire a form of moral capital that reinforces their authority over interpretive determinations. Together, these perspectives confirm that the kiai authority observed in Ketapang Village is not an anomalous local phenomenon but an instance of broader, historically deep patterns in which Islamic religious authority is constructed through the convergence of textual knowledge, institutional affiliation, ritual leadership, and community recognition.

## CONCLUSION

This research examined the construction of Kiai religious authority in post-lunar eclipse almsgiving determinations in Ketapang Village, Sampang, Madura, integrating Hannah Arendt's political philosophy with hadith studies methodologies. The findings reveal that kiai authority operates through three synergistic dimensions: textual mastery, institutional positioning, and spiritual charisma. These dimensions function as an Arendtian authority proper, requiring community recognition rather than coercion. The discourse of power operates through theological legitimation, social network mobilization, and performative practices, creating differentiated compliance mechanisms that accommodate diverse motivations while maintaining high participation. Theoretically, this study demonstrates that traditional religious authority persists through adaptive traditionalism, maintaining textual fidelity while enabling contextual responsiveness. This suggests that modernization entails reconfiguration rather than elimination of religion's social role in contemporary Muslim societies.

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