

Religious Moderation in Addressing Qibla Direction Deviation: A Case Study of Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque in Tulungagung, Indonesia

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Abstract

The qibla direction is a fundamental requirement in Islamic prayer, yet its misalignment often generates debate at the community level. The Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque in Tulungagung, Indonesia, exhibits a deviation of approximately 30°, leading to differing responses among religious leaders, Islamic organizations, and government institutions. Previous studies have largely focused on technical-astronomical accuracy or social conflict, while limited attention has been given to the role of religious moderation in managing such disputes. This study aims to analyze stakeholders' responses to qibla deviation and to formulate resolution strategies grounded in religious moderation. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis reveals three dominant orientations: rigid groups demanding absolute precision, moderate groups advocating gradual adjustment through deliberation, and tolerant groups emphasizing the sufficiency of *jihat al-ka'bah*. The findings suggest that integrating religious moderation with modern astronomical technology provides an effective framework for resolving qibla disputes, preserving worship validity, and sustaining congregational harmony.

Keywords: qibla direction, al-Munawwar Grand Mosque, religious moderation.

Arah kiblat merupakan syarat fundamental dalam pelaksanaan salat, namun ketidaktepatan arahnya kerap menimbulkan perdebatan di tingkat komunitas. Masjid Agung Al-Munawwar di Tulungagung, Indonesia, menunjukkan adanya penyimpangan arah kiblat sekitar 30°, yang memicu beragam respons dari para tokoh agama, organisasi Islam, serta institusi pemerintah. Penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya umumnya menitikberatkan pada akurasi teknis-astronomis atau konflik sosial yang muncul, sementara perhatian terhadap peran moderasi beragama dalam pengelolaan perbedaan tersebut masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis respons para pemangku kepentingan terhadap penyimpangan arah kiblat serta merumuskan strategi penyelesaian yang berlandaskan prinsip moderasi beragama. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara mendalam, observasi lapangan, dan analisis dokumen. Analisis tematik menunjukkan tiga orientasi dominan, yaitu kelompok rigid yang menuntut ketepatan absolut, kelompok moderat yang mendorong penyesuaian secara bertahap melalui musyawarah, serta kelompok toleran yang menekankan kecukupan konsep *jihat al-ka'bah*. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi antara moderasi beragama dan teknologi astronomi modern dapat menjadi kerangka yang efektif dalam menyelesaikan sengketa arah kiblat, menjaga keabsahan ibadah, serta mempertahankan keharmonisan jamaah.

Kata Kunci: arah kiblat, Masjid Agung al-Munawwar, moderasi beragama.

A. Introduction

From the Walisongo period to the modern era, the determination of the qibla direction has remained a significant concern for Muslims in the Indonesian archipelago. Historical narratives, such as the account of Mbah Bolong at the Ampel Mosque, who was believed to indicate the Kaaba through a hole in the mosque wall;¹ the determination of the qibla direction of the Demak Grand Mosque by Sunan Kalijaga;² and the correction of mosque qibla orientations in Batavia by Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari demonstrate a synthesis between *ilm al-falak* (Islamic astronomy) and elements of *karāmah* (spiritual charisma) in qibla determination.³ A similar pattern is evident in the correction of a mosque's qibla direction in Pekojan by Nawawi al-Bantani,⁴ which differed from measurements conducted by Sayyid Uthman, as well as in the efforts of Ahmad Dahlan, who realigned the qibla direction of the Kauman Grand Mosque in Yogyakarta based on scientific calculations despite initial resistance.⁵ Taken together, these accounts illustrate that qibla determination in Indonesia has long functioned as both a religious and scientific discourse, integrating spiritual authority, rational deliberation, and empirical-astronomical knowledge within the lived practice of Indonesian Islam.

Previous studies on public perceptions of qibla accuracy reveal diverse social and religious dynamics across different regions of Indonesia. Abd Razak Usman examined the debate surrounding the qibla orientation of the Katangka Mosque in Gowa Regency, which was found to deviate by approximately 8° from the Kaaba, showing that some community members supported realignment due to concerns over the validity of prayer, while others opposed it out of respect for the mosque's historical value.⁶ A comparable pattern was identified by Sofiatun Uzma in her study of the Asasuttaqwa Mosque in Rumak Village, West Lombok, where the discovery of an inaccurate qibla direction generated differing responses among religious and community leaders.⁷ Similarly, Riskon Abaror Dayulay investigated the Al-Mukhlisin Mosque in Binanga Tolu, Padang Lawas, North Sumatra, which exhibited a deviation of up to 23°, and found interpretive differences between groups who insist on facing the physical structure of the Kaaba (*ain al-Ka'bah*) and those who consider facing its general direction (*jihat al-Ka'bah*) to be sufficient.⁸ Collectively, these studies demonstrate that disputes over qibla deviation in Indonesia are not merely technical-astronomical issues but are deeply embedded in broader considerations of religious

¹ Asti Musman, *Walisongo: Sebuah Biografi* (Yogyakarta: Anak Hebat Indonesia, 2021).

² Fairuz Sabiq, *Sunan Kalijaga Dan Mitos Masjid Agung Demak* (Indramayu: Adab, 2021).

³ Fadhal Ar Bafadhal and Asep Saefullah, *Naskah Klasik Keagamaan Nusantara: Cerminkan Budaya Bangsa* (Jakarta: Puslitbang Lektur Keagamaan, Badan Litbang Agama dan Diklat Keagamaan, Departemen Agama RI, 2005).

⁴ Miftah H. Yusufpati, "Karomah Syaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani Saat Meluruskan Arah Kiblat Masjid," SINDOnews, 2022, <https://kalam.sindonews.com/read/877391/786/karomah-syaikh-nawawi-al-bantani-saat-meluruskan-arrah-kiblat-masjid-1662433798>.

⁵ Muhammad Izzul Muslimin, "Kiyai Ahmad Dahlan Dan Arah Kiblat," Pusat Studi Muhammadiyah (PSM) UMY, 2021, <https://psm.umy.ac.id/id/kiyai-ahmad-dahlan-dan-arrah-kiblat/>.

⁶ Abd Razak Usman, "Pro-Kontra Akurasi Arah Kiblat Masjid Di Katangka Kabupaten Gowa (Studi Pada Masjid Tua Al-Hilal Dan Makam Raja-Raja Gowa)" (Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, 2024), <https://repository.uin-alauddin.ac.id/27969/>.

⁷ Sofiatun Uzma, "Pro Kontra Tokoh Masyarakat Dalam Penentuan Arah Kiblat Masjid Jami Asasuttaqwa Rumak Kecamatan Kediri Kabupaten Lombok Barat" (Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram, 2023), <https://etheses.uinmataram.ac.id/5782/>.

⁸ Riskon Abaror Dayulay, "Pro Kontra Kalibrasi Arah Kiblat Masjid Al-Mukhlisin Desa Binanga Tolu Padang Lawas Sumatra Utara" (Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, 2023).

interpretation, communal authority, and the negotiation between doctrinal rigor and socio-historical sensitivity.

Extending these findings, other studies highlight the emergence of social tensions and, in some cases, open conflict following efforts to correct qibla orientation in various local contexts. Ahmad Yaqin documents the case of the Nurul Iman Mosque, where worshippers became polarized between a pro-realignment group supported by mosque caretakers and an opposing group comprising wakif representatives and local community leaders, a situation that ultimately prompted state intervention and led the pro-change faction to establish the Baitus Salam Mosque.⁹ Similar patterns of division are reported by Nurkholis Mustofa in his study of a mosque in Cabe Kidul, Magelang,¹⁰ and by Hilman Nur Fatah Hilah in Tamansari, Demak,¹¹ where communities were likewise split between supporters and opponents of qibla remeasurement. In contrast, Afif Jamiyl Al Mustofa observes that although congregants of the Darussalam Mosque in Ponorogo expressed dissatisfaction with changes made after mosque renovation, communal cohesion in worship was largely preserved.¹² Other studies emphasize epistemic challenges rather than overt conflict: Bahrudin et al. note that residents of Nirannuang, Gowa, demonstrated concern for qibla accuracy but relied primarily on the general notion of facing west without scientific verification, while Nur Hidayah found in Gunungpati, Semarang, a division between those who supported qibla correction to ensure prayer validity and those who resisted due to concerns over ritual quality.¹³ Similarly, Miskiyah reports that in Pekalongan, some community members rejected qibla adjustments issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, viewing the existing orientation as the outcome of earlier *ijtihād* by respected ulama.¹⁴ Taken together, these studies reinforce the argument advanced in the preceding discussion that qibla realignment is not merely a technical-astronomical endeavour but a socially negotiated process shaped by authority, tradition, and varying degrees of religious understanding.

Building upon the preceding discussions of contestation and conflict, subsequent studies shift attention toward moderation-based approaches in responding to differences in qibla orientation. R. Muhalling, in his study in Kendari, demonstrates that the determination of mosque qibla directions is often grounded in social consensus rather than geographical or astronomical calculations, a condition that gives rise to debates related to spatial aesthetics, communal authority,

⁹ Ahmad Ainul Yaqin, "Konflik Sosial Terhadap Perubahan Arah Kiblat Masjid Nurul Iman Balang Karanglo Klaten Selatan," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 4, no. 1 (June 28, 2018): 51–62, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v4i1.587>.

¹⁰ Nurkholis Mustofa, "Konflik Masyarakat Mengenai Diskursus Perubahan Arah Kiblat (Studi Kasus Di Dusun Cabe Kidul Desa Srumbung Kabupaten Magelang)" (Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, 2023).

¹¹ Hilman Nur Fatah Hilah, "Respons Masyarakat Terhadap Perubahan Arah Kiblat Masjid Dan Mushola Di Desa Tamansari Kecamatan Mranggen Demak" (Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, n.d.), <https://eprints.walisongo.ac.id/id/eprint/10751/>.

¹² Afif Jamiyl Al-Mustofa, "Persepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Penentuan Arah Kiblat Masjid Darussalam Desa Lengkong Kecamatan Sukorejo Kabupaten Ponorogo" (Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ponorogo, 2023), <https://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/26137/>.

¹³ Usman, "Pro-Kontra Akurasi Arah Kiblat Masjid Di Katangka Kabupaten Gowa (Studi Pada Masjid Tua Al-Hilal Dan Makam Raja-Raja Gowa)"; Nur Hidayah, "Respon Masyarakat Atas Arah Kiblat Masjid Dan Mushola : Analisis Terhadap Kemantapan Ibadah Masyarakat Gunungpati Semarang" (Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, 2018), <https://eprints.walisongo.ac.id/id/eprint/8911/>.

¹⁴ Miskiyah Miskiyah, "Penolakan Masyarakat Terhadap Verifikasi Penetapan Arah Kiblat Oleh Badan Hisab Rukyat Kemenag Kota Pekalongan Di Pekalongan," *Al-Hukkam: Journal of Islamic Family Law* 1, no. 1 (2021): 83–98, <https://doi.org/10.28918/al-hukkam.v1i1.255>.

and the rhetoric of *waqf*.¹⁵ Responding to such dynamics, Abdul Karim Faiz proposes a framework of religious moderation based on principles of honesty, transparency, compassion, *ukhuwwah Islāmiyyah*, and flexibility in addressing differing views on qibla accuracy, emphasizing education and social wisdom in communicating calibration results so as to avoid communal division.¹⁶ In a similar vein, research conducted in Tulungagung reveals a distinctive social response in which communities remained calm and refrained from polemics despite awareness that several mosques deviated from the ideal qibla direction; congregants continued to pray together without altering prayer rows (*şaff*) and without triggering social conflict. Collectively, these findings complement earlier studies by illustrating that, alongside technical accuracy and juridical debate, moderation-oriented social practices can play a crucial role in maintaining communal harmony amid differences over qibla determination.

From an academic perspective, this study emerges from a clear gap between normative expectations and observed social realities. In principle, differences of opinion regarding the qibla direction carry a strong potential to generate communal tension, as they relate to a fundamental requirement of prayer, facing the Kaaba. However, empirical evidence from Tulungagung presents a contrasting situation: despite the misalignment of the qibla direction in several mosques, such discrepancies have not resulted in division or open conflict among worshippers. Instead, congregational prayers continue to be performed with solemnity, and social harmony within the community is largely preserved. This divergence between theological ideals and lived religious practice warrants further exploration in the introductory section of this study, particularly to elucidate how values of moderation, togetherness, and communal ethics function as mitigating factors that reduce the potential for conflict in sensitive religious matters.

The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on the Tulungagung community, which demonstrates a moderate and harmonious attitude amid differences in qibla orientation, in contrast to earlier studies that predominantly highlight conflict, fragmentation, or social tension resulting from qibla realignment. This study foregrounds an empirical manifestation of religious moderation at the grassroots level, where tolerance, restraint, and tranquility in worship characterize communal responses. Its significance resides in contributing to the strengthening of moderate Islamic discourse in Indonesia by underscoring that the unity of the *ummah* does not necessarily depend on uniformity in the physical direction of prayer, but rather on the cultivation of *ukhuwwah* values, mutual respect for differences, and the spiritual maturity of communities in engaging with contemporary religious challenges.

This study aims to assess the accuracy of the qibla direction in several mosques in Tulungagung using scientific methods and modern calibration techniques, while simultaneously examining public perceptions and responses to qibla discrepancies within the context of worship practices and religious understanding. It further seeks to analyze local interpretations of qibla accuracy through the lenses of Islamic jurisprudential schools (*mazāhib*) and the values of religious moderation. Through this approach, the study endeavours to identify patterns of interaction between theological reasoning, social attitudes, and the degree of public acceptance of

¹⁵ R. Muhalling et al., "Controversy of the Qibla Direction Determination in Kendari City, Indonesia," *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana* 26, no. 2 (2021): 161–70, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4678868>.

¹⁶ Abd Karim Faiz, "Moderasi Fiqh Penentuan Arah Kiblat: Akurasi Yang Fleksibel," *JIL: Journal of Islamic Law* 1, no. 1 (February 27, 2020): 83–99, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v1i1.23>.

scientifically derived qibla measurements. The initial hypothesis posits that the people of Tulungagung exhibit a moderate and accommodating stance toward qibla-related issues; despite being aware of directional differences among mosques, they continue to preserve social harmony and serenity in worship, viewing communal cohesion and peace as more significant than engaging in technical or polemical theological debates.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for exploring social meanings, perceptions, and practices as they occur in natural settings. Qualitative methods are used to systematically collect, organize, and interpret non-numerical data derived from observations, interviews, and documents, with the aim of understanding how social actors construct and negotiate meaning in everyday life.¹⁷ As a qualitative case study, this research focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of a specific and bounded social context.¹⁸ The case selected is the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque in Tulungagung, a prominent religious landmark, through which the study examines both the scientific accuracy of the qibla direction and the surrounding community's religious interpretations and attitudes, particularly in relation to values of religious moderation.

Primary data were obtained through direct field observations and in-depth interviews. Observations focused on the physical orientation of the mosque's qibla direction, the arrangement of prayer rows during congregational prayers, and patterns of worship practice. In-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including officials from the Tulungagung Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, representatives of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of Tulungagung, members of the Muhammadiyah *Tarjih* Council, representatives of the Nahdlatul Ulama *Bahsul Masail* institution in Tulungagung, mosque caretakers (*ta'mir*), imams, and members of the surrounding community. Secondary data were collected through document analysis, including classical and contemporary *fiqh* literature on facing the qibla, works on qibla measurement methods within Islamic astronomy (*ilm al-falak*), and scholarly publications on religious moderation.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and document review. Scientific measurements were conducted to assess the accuracy of the qibla direction of the Al-Munawar Mosque, complemented by observations of congregational prayer practices. Interview data were used to capture community perceptions and religious reasoning regarding qibla accuracy. Documentary sources provided contextual information, such as the mosque's historical background and institutional structure. Following data collection, all materials were analysed descriptively and thematically. Community views were categorized into three orientations; rigid, moderate, and tolerant; and subsequently analyzed in relation to *fiqh* perspectives on qibla direction and the theoretical framework of religious

¹⁷ Hamed Taherdoost, "Data Collection Methods and Tools for Research; A Step-by-Step Guide to Choose Data Collection Technique for Academic and Business Research Projects," *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)* 10, no. 1 (2021): 10–38.

¹⁸ Karin Laumann, "Criteria for Qualitative Methods in Human Reliability Analysis," *Reliability Engineering & System Safety* 194 (February 2020): 106198, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.res.2018.07.001>.

moderation, allowing for a systematic interpretation of the interaction between theological understanding, social attitudes, and acceptance of scientific calibration results.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque: Historical Context, Communal Role, and Qibla Direction Findings

Mosques play a vital role as centers of worship, culture, and education, thereby shaping a positive image of Islam in society. The relationship between mosques, Islam, and local culture constitutes an inseparable unity. For this reason, sustaining the engagement of younger generations with mosques is essential.¹⁹ Rapid modernization, if not properly filtered, may pose challenges to youth religiosity. In this context, mosques that actively involve young people can function as a social and spiritual bulwark against negative external influences. Historically, the Islamization of Indonesia occurred through various channels, including trade, marriage, bureaucratic networks, *pesantren* education, and Sufism. Islamic art and architecture, such as multi-tiered roof mosques constructed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, also served as important media for the dissemination of Islamic teachings.²⁰

The Great Mosque of Al-Munawwar embodies complex historical values encompassing identity, politics, customs, culture, and art. This complexity necessitates an in-depth approach to historical reconstruction. Understanding the dialectics of the mosque's history is crucial for introducing future generations to its historical trajectory. Mosque construction is not merely a physical endeavor but represents the spiritual resilience and religious commitment of the community.²¹ The history of the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque is inseparable from the broader historical development of Tulungagung. However, limited documentation of local Islamic history has resulted in a scarcity of reliable references concerning historical figures and religious buildings. Therefore, systematic documentation efforts are indispensable.

In 1847, RMT Djajaningrat, together with the local community, initiated the construction of the city mosque as an expression of the Ngrowo people's spirit of struggle and perseverance. The mosque functioned as a gathering center for scholars and students, strengthening the community's religious consciousness. Despite severe economic pressures at the time, the construction continued, demonstrating the community's strong religious commitment. This spirit was inspired by the religiously grounded resistance of Pangeran Diponegoro. Within Diponegoro's sphere of

¹⁹ Mohamaddin Abdul Niri, Nurulhuda Ahmad Zaki, and Mohamad Luqman Hakim Mohd Nor, "Analisis Komputasional Aplikasi Sun Compass Dalam Penentuan Arah Kiblat Muslim," *Jurnal Fiqh* 20, no. 1 (June 30, 2023): 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.22452/fiqh.vol20no1.1>; Abdul Ghoffar, "The Influence of the Kaaba According to History in the Qur'an and Hadith on Islamic Architecture," *Journal of Islamic Architecture* 8, no. 4 (December 26, 2025): 1142–57, <https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v8i4.25443>.

²⁰ Walter R. Schumm, "How Accurately Could Early (622-900 C.E.) Muslims Determine the Direction of Prayers (Qibla)?," *Religions* 11, no. 3 (February 25, 2020): 102, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11030102>; Oliver Leaman, *Routledge Handbook of Islamic Ritual and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003044659>.

²¹ Agus Ali Imron Al-Akhyar, "Sejarah Masjid Agung Al-Munawwar Sekaligus Peran Di Masyarakat Sekitar," *Academia*, 2020, https://www.academia.edu/44783098/Sejarah_Masjid_Agung_Al_Munawwar_Sekaligus_Peran_di_Masyarakat_Sekitar.

influence, the village of Tawang Sari notably resisted Dutch intervention due to its strong religious ethos, a factor that significantly motivated Djajaningrat to establish the mosque.

The construction of the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque was carried out independently, without the involvement of the Dutch colonial government, as evidenced by the absence of any records in the *Staatsblad* or *Besluit*. The initiative was led by local authorities and fully supported by the community. Further research uncovered an inscription written in Arabic and Javanese script without diacritical marks, located on the imam's ornamentation at the Al-Muhajirin Mosque in Gedangsewu. This inscription provides important clues for tracing the early history of the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque. Consisting of three lines, it is believed to mark significant historical events of its period, particularly those related to the mosque's existence.²²

Regarding the accuracy of the qibla direction of the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque in Tulungagung, measurements conducted using Google Earth, the Dioptre Camera application, and a Suunto compass indicate that the mosque's building orientation is approximately 264 degrees. In contrast, the correct qibla direction for Tulungagung is approximately 294 degrees. This indicates a deviation of about 30 degrees southward from the correct qibla direction. According to MUI Fatwa No. 05 of 2010,²³ the qibla direction in Indonesia generally lies toward the northwest, whereas the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque is oriented closer to the southwest. Consequently, the deviation of the mosque's orientation is considered significant. Furthermore, the orientation of the prayer carpets follows the same direction as the building and has not been adjusted to align with the correct qibla direction.²⁴

2. Diverse Religious Responses to Qibla Deviation at Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque

This subsection presents the empirical findings derived from in-depth interviews with key religious figures, mosque authorities, institutional representatives, and congregants of the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque. It focuses on documenting the diversity of religious responses to the approximately 30-degree deviation of the mosque's qibla direction, as identified through astronomical measurements. The findings highlight variations in *fiqh* orientation, perceptions of prayer validity, tolerance thresholds for deviation, and preferred corrective strategies, reflecting the plurality of religious reasoning and authority within the local Muslim community. The interview data reveal diverse religious responses among stakeholders regarding the approximately 30-degree deviation of the Qibla direction at the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque. These responses vary in terms of *fiqh* orientation, perceived urgency of correction, and preferred methods of addressing the deviation.

Several informants emphasized the necessity of Qibla accuracy as part of the perfection of prayer. Aji Damanuri, Chairman of the the *Majelis Tarjih wa Tajdid* (Council for Legal Reasoning and Renewal) of Muhammadiyah Tulungagung, stated that although prayer remains valid when worshippers intend to face the Kaaba, the ideal obligation is to face the physical Kaaba (*ain al-*

²² Al-Akhyar.

²³ Komisi Fatwa MUI, "Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Tentang Arah Kiblat" (2010), <https://mui.or.id/baca/fatwa/arrah-kiblat>.

²⁴ Ahmad Musonnif, "Observation: Qibla Direction Measurement at Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque Tulungagung" (Tulungagung, 2025).

ka'bah) when accurate determination is possible.²⁵ He considered the existing deviation to exceed acceptable tolerance and supported immediate correction using precise astronomical and satellite-based technologies, accompanied by educational and dialogical approaches. In contrast, mosque administrators and imams tended to adopt a more accommodative stance.²⁶ Fuad Syaiful Anam, Head of the Mosque Management, acknowledged the importance of Qibla accuracy but maintained that prayers remain valid as long as worshippers perform *ijtihad* in orienting themselves toward the Kaaba.²⁷ He expressed openness to correction provided that it does not disrupt congregational harmony and is supported by adequate financial and technical resources.²⁸ Similar views were expressed by mosque imams, Masduki and Haris Syamsudin,²⁹ who supported scientific calibration but proposed practical solutions such as adjusting prayer rows (*ṣaff*) or prayer mats rather than altering the mosque's architectural structure.

From an institutional and legal perspective, Bagus Ahmadi, Chairman of the Fatwa Commission of MUI Tulungagung, referred to MUI Fatwa No. 5/2010, which allows those located far from Mecca to face the general direction of the Kaaba (*jihat al-ka'bah*). He emphasized a persuasive and compromise-based approach, prioritizing congregational unity.³⁰ A similar position was conveyed by Ahmad Balya, Head of Islamic Community Guidance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Tulungagung, who viewed Qibla accuracy as an element of worship perfection rather than a determinant of prayer validity in cases of deviation. Other responses reflected broader tolerance limits within classical *fiqh*. Syafi' Mukarrom, Chairman of the *Baḥṭul Masā'il* of Nahdlatul Ulama Tulungagung, stated that deviations of up to 45 degrees remain tolerable based on the secondary opinion (*qaul Ṣānī*) within the Shāfi'ī school and in line with Hanbali jurisprudence. He suggested slanted prayer rows as a practical compromise.³¹ Efendi Aris, Vice Chairman II of the Mosque,³² similarly argued that alignment with the general orientation of surrounding mosques toward the Kaaba is sufficient for prayer validity. At the congregational level, attitudes also varied. Some congregants expressed a strict preference for precise orientation toward the *'ain al-ka'bah*,³³ while others demonstrated a tendency toward *taqlid*, entrusting Qibla determination entirely to mosque authorities regardless of technical deviation.³⁴

3. Negotiating Qibla Accuracy through Religious Moderation

This study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on Qibla determination in Indonesia by demonstrating that Qibla realignment does not inevitably lead to social conflict when

²⁵ Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī ibn Yūsuf Al-Shīrāzī, *Al-Muḥadhdhab Fī Fiqh Al-Imām Al-Shāfi'ī* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.).

²⁶ Aji Damanuri, "Interview" (Tulungagung, 2025) August 14, 2025.

²⁷ Abū Bakr ibn Mas'ūd Al-Kāsānī, *Badā'i' Al-Ṣanā'i' Fī Tartīb Al-Sharā'i* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Shirkah al-Maṭbū'āt al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.); Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Rusyd al-Qurtubī, *Bidāyah Al-Mujtahid* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.).

²⁸ Fuad Syaiful Anam, "Interview" (Tulungagung, 2025) August 11, 2025.

²⁹ Masduki Masduki and Haris Syamsudin, "Interview" (Tulungagung, 2025) August 11, 2025.

³⁰ Bagus Ahmadi, "Interview" (Tulungagung, 2025) July 21, 2025.

³¹ Syafi'i Mukarrom, "Interview" (Tulung, 2025) August 4, 2025.

³² Efendi Aris, "Interview" (Tulungagung, 2025) August 11, 2025.

³³ Moch Mu'alimun, "Interview" (Tulungagung, 2025) August 11, 2025.

³⁴ Mukarrom Mukarrom, "Interview" (Tulungagung, 2025) August 11, 2025.

approached through a framework of religious moderation.³⁵ Rather than framing Qibla accuracy as a zero-sum contest between scientific precision and inherited tradition, the case of the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque in Tulungagung illustrates how juridical plurality, technological awareness, and communal ethics can be integrated to preserve both ritual integrity and social harmony. In this respect, religious moderation emerges not as a peripheral ethical value but as a central mechanism for negotiating contemporary religious–astronomical challenges.

In line with earlier studies by Abd Razak Usman, Sofiatun Uzma, and Riskon Abaror Dayulay, this research confirms that disputes over qibla deviation are rarely confined to technical–astronomical considerations. They are instead embedded within broader questions of *fiqh* interpretation, historical legitimacy, religious authority, and communal identity. Similar to findings from Gowa, Lombok, and Padang Lawas, the Tulungagung case reveals persistent tension between those who prioritize facing the physical Kaaba (*‘ain al-ka’bah*) and those who consider orientation toward its general direction (*jihat al-ka’bah*) sufficient. However, the present study diverges from much of the earlier literature by showing that such doctrinal differences do not necessarily culminate in open conflict or institutional fragmentation.

Previous research frequently documents polarization and social rupture following Qibla correction efforts, including mosque splits and state intervention, as reported by Ahmad Yaqin, Nurkholis Mustofa, and Hilman Nur Fatah Hilah. In contrast, despite a relatively large deviation of approximately 30°, the Tulungagung community largely avoided confrontational outcomes. This finding suggests that the magnitude of deviation alone is not a decisive factor in generating conflict. Instead, social outcomes are shaped more decisively by leadership strategies, interpretive flexibility within *fiqh*, and the prioritization of communal cohesion over juridical absolutism.

The responses observed in this study align closely with literature emphasizing the socially negotiated nature of religious knowledge. As noted by Bahruddin, Nur Hidayah, and Miskiyah, community acceptance of Qibla orientation often depends less on scientific certainty than on trust in religious authority and respect for earlier *ijtihād*. In Tulungagung, modern astronomical data were widely acknowledged, yet they were commonly treated as probabilistic (*ẓanni*) rather than absolute. This epistemic stance allowed mosque authorities and congregants to recognize scientific findings without delegitimizing the determinations of earlier scholars, thereby reducing the potential for symbolic rupture with the past.

A major contribution of this study lies in its demonstration of how religious moderation operates concretely across multiple layers of authority. Consistent with Abdul Karim Faiz’s moderation framework, key actors adopted persuasive, educational, and deliberative approaches grounded in the principles of *tawassuṭ* (middle way), *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), and *tawāzun* (balance). Rather than imposing correction, they favored compromise-based solutions, such as adjusting prayer rows or the imam’s prayer mat, that minimized disruption while signalling openness to improvement. This contrasts with cases where rigid enforcement of recalibration intensified resistance and division.

Compared to the findings of R. Muhalling in Kendari, where Qibla determination relied primarily on social consensus detached from astronomical calculation, the Tulungagung case

³⁵ Ditjen Penyelenggaraan Haji dan Umrah, *Moderasi Manasik Haji Dan Umrah* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 20022).

represents a hybrid model. Here, astronomical technology is recognized as authoritative, yet its application is mediated through social consultation, gradual implementation, and sensitivity to local cultural norms. This approach reflects a contextual form of contemporary *ijtihād* that balances technical expertise with communal legitimacy, rather than privileging one at the expense of the other.

At the grassroots level, congregational attitudes further reinforce the role of moderation as lived religious practice. While some worshippers adhered strictly to Shāfiʿī norms emphasizing *ʿain al-kaʿbah*, others expressed acceptance of *jihat al-kaʿbah* in light of social considerations. Most congregants favoured middle-ground solutions that preserved the solemnity of worship and avoided symbolic acts, such as building alteration, that could provoke anxiety or division. This pattern supports Afif Jamiyl Al Mustofa's observation that communal cohesion can be maintained even amid dissatisfaction, provided that corrective measures are framed inclusively.

From a *fiqh* perspective, the dynamics observed in Tulungagung illustrate the practical operation of juridical plurality through mechanisms such as *intiqāl al-madhab* (selective transition between schools), *talfiq* (legal synthesis), and informed taqlīd to trusted local authorities. Actors who were normatively affiliated with stricter positions on Qibla accuracy nevertheless adopted more accommodating opinions when structural, social, or historical constraints made strict application impractical. Such shifts are consistent with established *fiqh* principles of *rafʿ al-ḥaraj* (removal of hardship) and *taysīr* (facilitation), and are justified in terms of *maṣlaḥah mursalah*.

Overall, this study advances the literature by showing that religious moderation provides a viable analytical and practical framework for managing disputes over Qibla accuracy. By accommodating doctrinal diversity, respecting inherited authority, and integrating scientific advancement within socially sensitive processes, the Tulungagung case demonstrates how sharia principles, astronomical knowledge, and communal ethics can be harmonized. This moderation-based approach not only preserves the integrity of worship (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), but also safeguards communal unity (*ḥifẓ al-ummah*), offering an alternative model to conflict-driven narratives that dominate much of the existing literature.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that responses to Qibla deviation at the Al-Munawwar Grand Mosque in Tulungagung are shaped less by the technical magnitude of misalignment than by the ways religious authority, *fiqh* interpretation, and social considerations are negotiated in practice. Although astronomical measurements indicate a deviation of approximately 30 degrees, stakeholders (including mosque managements, imams, religious organization leaders, government officials, and congregants), largely avoided confrontational approaches. Instead, they adopted moderation-oriented strategies such as deliberation, education, and practical compromise, including adjustments to prayer rows and prayer mats. The findings reveal broad agreement that Qibla accuracy contributes to the perfection of worship, while disagreement persists regarding the urgency and method of correction. These differences were managed through persuasive and inclusive processes that prioritized communal harmony over juridical rigidity.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on qibla determination and religious moderation by positioning moderation not merely as a normative ideal but as an operative framework for resolving religious–astronomical disputes. By integrating concepts of *tawassuʿ*, *tasāmuḥ*, and *tawāzun* with *fiqh* mechanisms such as *intiqāl al-maḏhab*, *talfiq*, and informed *taqlīd*, the study illustrates how juridical plurality functions dynamically in contemporary Muslim societies. This research extends previous studies that emphasize conflict and polarization by demonstrating that scientific knowledge, inherited religious authority, and social ethics can coexist within a negotiated religious practice. As such, it advances an analytical model in which Qibla accuracy is understood as a socially embedded and context-sensitive religious obligation rather than a purely technical or doctrinal matter.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. *First*, it is based on a single case study in Tulungagung, which limits the generalizability of its findings to other regions with different socio-religious configurations. *Second*, the research relies primarily on qualitative interview data, which captures perceptions and interpretations but does not measure long-term behavioural change following Qibla calibration efforts. Finally, while this study engages classical *fiqh* perspectives and contemporary policy discourse, it does not include a comparative cross-national analysis that could further illuminate how religious moderation operates in different legal and cultural settings. Future research may address these limitations by employing comparative, longitudinal, or mixed-methods approaches to deepen understanding of qibla negotiation in diverse Muslim contexts.

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