

Contested Local Wisdom: Moderate Character Education and Intra-Muslim Boundaries in Lombok Pesantren

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Abstract: Pesantren in Lombok teach character through a repertoire of Sasak customs (begawe feasts, merariq, maulid, proverbs of shame and restraint) that other Muslims on the island treat as legitimate heritage or as innovation to be removed. Two bodies of research describe this setting, and they rarely speak to each other. Studies of local wisdom in Islamic education usually present Sasak values as a consensual resource for moderate character. Studies of religious contestation document purification campaigns, rival claims to tuan guru authority and violence against Ahmadiyya, but seldom ask what happens inside the curriculum. This article asks how moderate character education operates when the local wisdom it draws on is itself contested between Muslim groups. Using a critical interpretive synthesis of a bounded case, we coded 31 Lombok studies and read 73 further sources on pesantren elsewhere, state moderation policy, boundary theory and method. Seven studies document contestation or exclusion and ten address character formation; only one does both. We argue that local wisdom reaches pupils through three gates: authority (whose tuan guru network certifies a practice), legitimation (which fiqh, 'urf or minority opinion supports it) and moderation (whether state and school indicators accept it). We name this the Boundary-Filtered Character Formation (BFCF) model and derive six propositions, four school-level patterns and a field protocol. The synthesis shows that the state's fourth indicator of moderation, accommodation of local culture, is itself a position in an intra-Muslim dispute, which has consequences for how pesantren management and Law 18/2019 are read.

Keywords: *Local Wisdom; Moderate Character Education; Boundary Work; Pesantren; Lombok; Tuan Guru; Intra-Muslim Boundaries*

Introduction

Consider a santri in Lombok. A family holds a feast after a death, relatives and neighbours gather, and a tuan guru leads prayers. For many Sasak Muslims this is *begawe*, a duty of kinship and a sign of a well-ordered life. For a Salafi-oriented preacher the same gathering may be an unfounded ritual that should be dropped. The scene is an illustration assembled from the literature reviewed below, not an observation

of ours. The pupil sits between these two readings, and the school has to decide what to say about them.

Character education is the part of Islamic schooling where this choice becomes visible. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs defines religious moderation through four indicators: national commitment, tolerance, rejection of violence and accommodation of local culture (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). Pesantren studies translate these indicators into daily practice through kiai exemplarity, kitab study, congregational routines and the hidden curriculum of boarding life (Salim et al., 2024; Siswanto et al., 2024; Ishomuddin & Aziz, 2025). The fourth indicator quietly assumes that local culture is a settled good. In Lombok it is not settled. Salafi and Wahhabi-oriented preachers treat Sasak life-cycle ritual as *bid'ah* (Faizah, 2012), tuan guru of Nahdlatul Wathan (NW) defend the same practices with fiqh arguments (Sainun et al., 2024; Umam et al., 2024), and some NW-affiliated actors have faced a sustained loss of religious authority to competing preachers (Saparudin, 2022). A school that “accommodates local culture” therefore takes a side in an intra-Muslim argument, whether it intends to or not.

The research record on Lombok has developed along two tracks that do not meet. The first track treats Sasak wisdom as a resource for character and learning. Recent studies describe *tindih* (propriety), *maliq-merang* (shame and restraint) and *sangkep* (deliberation) as the moral framework of a school culture in East Lombok (Karomi et al., 2026), link Sasak local wisdom to critical thinking and character among university students (Fadli, 2023; Arizona et al., 2025) and propose Sasak values for intercultural sensitivity in a tourism vocational school (Sayuti & Hafizin, 2026). The second track documents conflict. It shows Salafi purification set against NW traditionalism (Saparudin, 2022), the marginalisation of Sasak identity under Wahhabi influence in East Lombok (Said, 2019), mediation by a tuan guru among Aswaja and Wahhabi communities (Pardi, 2024) and violence against the Ahmadiyya community between 2002 and 2021 (Adnan et al., 2023). The first track rarely mentions dispute. The second rarely mentions pupils.

Lombok is a good place to ask the question, for reasons beyond its ritual life. The island has a dense network of pesantren and madrasas, several of them tied to a single large organisation, Nahdlatul Wathan, whose founder built an educational system that combined *salafiyah* and *khalafiyah* models (Rasyad et al., 2026). The island's tuan guru combine religious teaching with social and, increasingly, political roles (Gani et al., 2024). Salafi-oriented schools and preachers have grown since the end of the New Order (Pardi et al., 2024). The pesantren is also the institution on which much of the national debate about moderate Islam is focused, with a long scholarly tradition that treats the kyai as the keeper of traditional Islam (Dhofier, 1999) and a more recent one that asks whether pesantren communities have supplied traditions of pluralism and accommodation (Lukens-Bull, 2008). Lombok therefore combines a strong customary repertoire, a recognisable traditionalist institution and visible competition from reformist networks, which makes it an informative bounded case.

This gap matters for three reasons. First, pesantren management in Lombok is no longer a purely internal matter. Law 18/2019 gives pesantren a recognised place in the national education system (Republic of Indonesia, 2019), and recognition invites the state's moderation vocabulary into pesantren governance. Second, "moderate" is a contested label. Critical scholars read the moderation programme as a political instrument that has changed meaning across presidencies (Alvian & Ardhani, 2023) and question whether the theological formulae of the two largest Muslim organisations can still carry it (Hilmy, 2013). Third, evidence on tolerance in pesantren is thin precisely where it is most needed. Traditional ulama in Sukabumi were moderate toward non-Muslims yet split on the Ahmadiyya (Abdillah & Ali, 2020), which suggests that tolerance toward outsiders and tolerance toward Muslim others can come apart.

We ask three questions. How do Lombok pesantren and related schools draw on local wisdom for character formation? Where do intra-Muslim boundaries run through that practice? And what does a moderate character mean once the boundaries are visible? We do not collect new field data. We build a critical interpretive synthesis (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006) of a bounded regional case (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Thomas, 2011) and use boundary-work theory (Gieryn, 1983; Lamont & Molnár, 2002) to read the literature

against itself. The contribution is a model, the BFCF model, a coded corpus that shows how thin the overlap between the two research tracks is, and a field protocol for the empirical work the corpus shows to be missing.

Method

Design

This is a literature-based qualitative study. No interviews, observations or surveys were carried out, and no informant is quoted. The design is a critical interpretive synthesis (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006), which was developed for heterogeneous bodies of evidence and aims at a synthesising argument and a critique of the literature itself, not at pooling effects. That fits the Lombok record, which mixes ethnography, legal and historical work, discourse analysis, small surveys and curriculum development studies. The case is bounded in the sense of Flyvbjerg (2006) and Thomas (2011): the subject is Muslim education and religious authority on the island of Lombok, and the object is the contest over local wisdom within it. Snyder (2019) distinguishes systematic, semi-systematic and integrative reviews, and our procedure is closest to the semi-systematic type, which suits topics studied across disciplines. Document analysis (Bowen, 2009) guided how we read published studies as documents with a purpose, an author and a context. We used PRISMA 2020 vocabulary (Page et al., 2021) to report corpus construction, and the ENTREQ and eMERGe checklists (Tong et al., 2012; France et al., 2019) to decide what to disclose. All three were developed in health research, so we apply them by analogy and omit items that concern clinical outcomes.

Corpus construction

Searches were run in October 2026 on journal and publisher pages in English and Indonesian along five strands: Lombok boundaries and tuan guru authority; moderate character education in pesantren; local wisdom in Islamic education; boundary and authority theory; and synthesis methods with comparative cases. Snowballing from reference lists extended each strand. A study entered the analytic corpus if it was a peer-reviewed article or chapter, concerned Muslim education, authority, ritual or intra-Muslim relations among Sasak communities, and displayed author, year, venue and DOI

on a publisher or journal page that we could read. Context and theory sources were retained under the same verification rule. More than 35 candidates were excluded because these fields could not be confirmed, often because a journal site blocked automated access. The excluded set includes two articles that are directly on topic, one on character education at an NW Selaparang pesantren and one on Salafism, state recognition and local tension in Islamic education in Lombok. We return to this loss in Section 6.

The final reference list has 104 entries (Table 1 and Figure 2). Thirty-one studies form the Lombok analytic corpus. The remaining sources provide context on pesantren elsewhere, state moderation policy, theory and method.

Figure 2. Corpus construction and synthesis flow

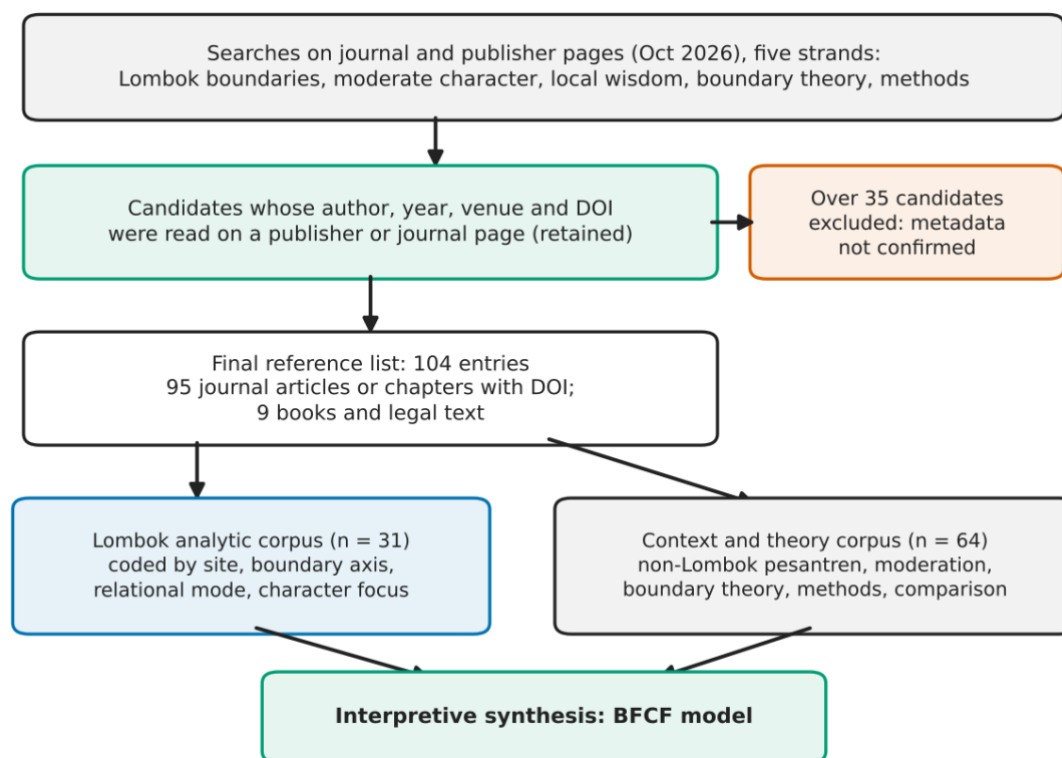


Table 1. Composition of the source base

Strand	Entries	Role in the analysis
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Strand	Entries	Role in the analysis
Lombok analytic corpus	31	Coded by site, boundary axis, relational mode and character focus
Local wisdom and pesantren outside Lombok	13	Comparison of embedding, accommodation and purification
Moderate character and moderation policy	18	Definitions, mechanisms, critique, tolerance evidence
Boundary theory and Indonesian boundary studies	19	Concepts for the coding frame and the model
Method and comparative cases	14	Design, reporting, comparison beyond Indonesia
Books and legal text (no DOI)	9	Foundations and policy definitions
Total	104	

1.

Coding and synthesis

Each Lombok study received four codes, set down in Appendix A. *Site* recorded where the study looked: a pesantren, madrasah or NW institution; a school or university classroom; or community, ritual, tuan guru authority and law. *Boundary axis* recorded the line at issue: NW/Aswaja versus Salafi-Wahhabi, Wetu Telu versus Waktu Lima, Ahmadiyya, intra-NW relations, custom versus fiqh, tradition versus modernity, or a Hindu-Muslim contrast case. *Relational mode* recorded how the study portrays the relation between local wisdom and Islamic teaching: alignment or embedding, accommodation or mediation, legitimation or reinterpretation, contestation or purification, exclusion or violence, or no single mode. *Character focus* recorded whether the study addresses character or value formation. The coding follows the directed logic of Hsieh and Shannon (2005), with categories taken from the framework in Section 2 and revised twice during reading. The synthesis stage moved from descriptive themes to analytic themes in the manner of Thomas and Harden (2008), and the final step compared the Lombok pattern with comparative cases in order to build the model.

Coding was done by one analyst from abstracts and, where the abstract was thin, from the first pages of the article. No second coder checked the categories. The counts reported below describe the corpus and make no claim about the population of all studies or about the frequency of practices on the island. Appendix A would change if a second coder disagreed, and the conclusions in Section 4 rest on the large differences in the counts, not on single cells.

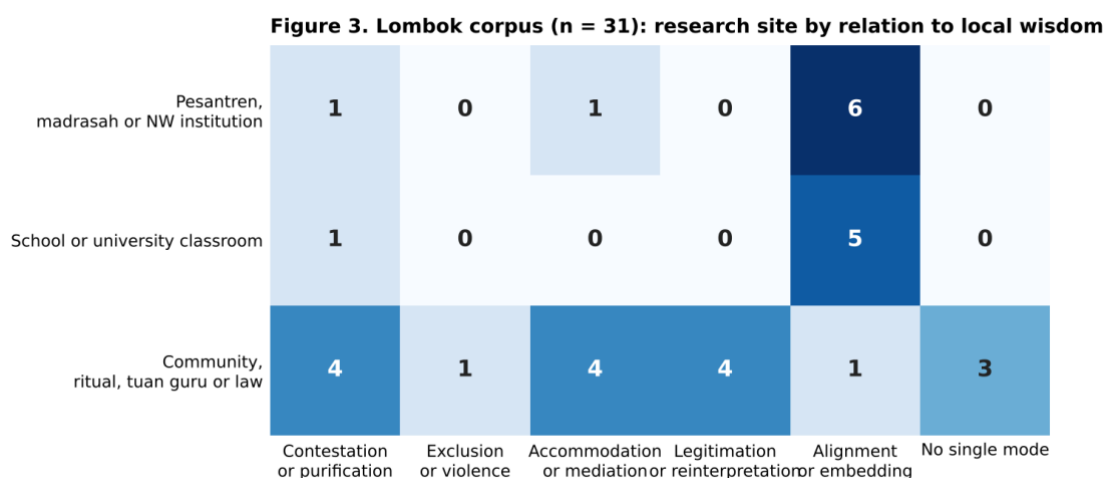
Trustworthiness and reflexivity

Four steps support the credibility of the synthesis. Every coded study is listed in Appendix A, so a reader can contest any code. Every reference carries a DOI that we read on a publisher or journal page, except books and the statute. Sources that we could verify only in part are marked in Appendix B. Partisan sources are flagged in the text, as with Said (2019), whose analysis is openly critical of Wahhabism and is read here as one side of the dispute. Finally, the model offered in Section 5 is stated as propositions that field research can falsify.

Results

The Lombok Corpus at A Glance

Of the 31 studies, 26 were published in 2021 or later, which shows how recent the evidence base is. Seventeen examine community, ritual, tuan guru authority or law, eight examine a pesantren, madrasah or NW institution, and six examine a classroom in a school or university. Twelve studies present local wisdom or Sasak tradition as aligned with Islamic teaching and as usable in education. Six document contestation or purification, one documents exclusion and violence, five describe accommodation or mediation, four describe legitimation or reinterpretation, and three do not report a single mode. Ten studies address character or value formation. Figure 3 shows how sites and modes combine.



The figure displays the main pattern. Pesantren and school studies cluster in alignment: six of the eight institutional studies and five of the six classroom studies describe local wisdom as compatible with Islam and useful for formation. Studies that report contestation sit almost entirely in the community column. Only two contestation studies look inside an educational institution (Pardi et al., 2024; Witriani et al., 2024), and neither is a study of curriculum practice. Among the ten studies that address character, seven report alignment, two report accommodation and one reports contestation. Among the seven studies that report contestation or exclusion, one addresses character. The two research tracks therefore overlap in a single article, which is the empirical basis for Figure 1.

The corpus also shows an imbalance of sites. None of the eight institutional studies examines a Salafi-oriented pesantren from the inside. Pardi et al. (2024) describe the genealogy of Islamic education on the island, including the post-New Order growth of modernist and Salafi-Wahhabi integrated schools, but they treat these as an institutional trend, not as a site of character education.

Where The Boundaries Run

Seven boundary axes appear in the corpus (Figure 4). Tradition versus modernity has the most studies (nine), followed by NW/Aswaja versus Salafi-Wahhabi and custom versus fiqh (six each), intra-NW relations (five) and Wetu Telu versus Waktu Lima (three). The Ahmadiyya and Hindu-Muslim axes each have one study.

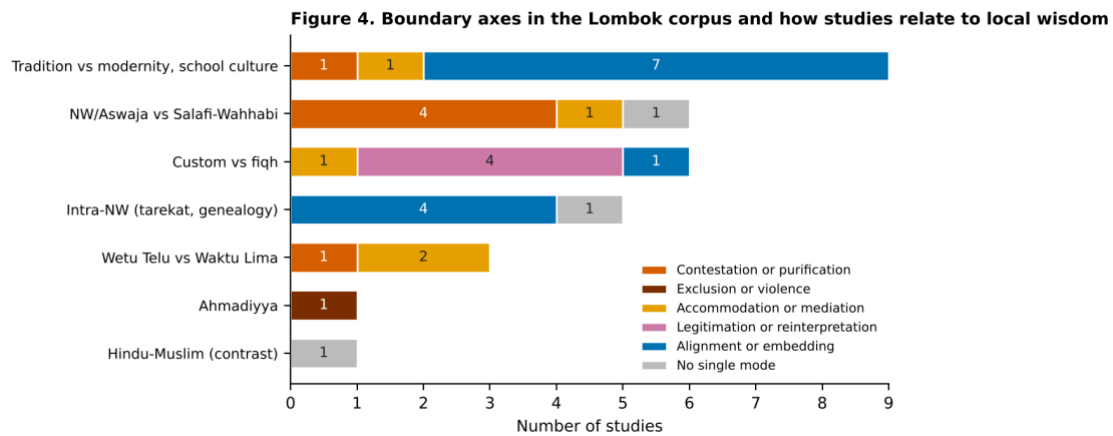


Table 2 sets the axes against the institutions through which each line is drawn and the type of boundary involved, following the distinction between symbolic and social boundaries (Lamont & Molnár, 2002).

Table 2. Boundary axes, institutions and type of boundary in the Lombok corpus

Axis	Institutions through which the line is drawn	Typical claim	Evidence	Boundary type
NW/Aswaja versus Salafi-Wahhabi	Mosques, study circles, schools, social media; funding of mosques and schools; begawe as mediation	Life-cycle ritual is <i>bid'ah</i> ; or tuan guru authority is being “desacralised”	Saparudin (2022); Faizah (2012); Said (2019); Pardi (2024); Pardi et al. (2024)	Symbolic, moving to social through school choice and authority
Wetu Telu versus Waktu Lima	Village ritual, kyai endorsement, heritage tourism, social media	Local practice is a local manifestation of universal values, or it is syncretism	Fitriani (2015); Sukardiman (2022); Ibrahim et al. (2024)	Symbolic, with generational change
Ahmadiyya	Mass organisations, vigilante groups, law and administration	Ahmadis are heretics outside Islam	Adnan et al. (2023); Burhani (2014, 2021); Menchik (2014); Alfitri (2008)	Social, enforced by violence and exclusion

Axis	Institutions through which the line is drawn	Typical claim	Evidence	Boundary type
Custom versus fiqh	Tuan guru legal reasoning; village law; child-protection norms	A custom is defended by minority fiqh or <i>'urf</i> , or criticised by maturity norms	Tahir (2008); Sainun et al. (2024); Umam et al. (2024); Kholidi et al. (2025)	Symbolic, with internal critique
Intra-NW relations	Tarekat Hizib, pesantren curricula, founders' rules, women's instruction	Internal cohesion through ritual and a shared curriculum	Rasyad et al. (2021, 2023); Muslim et al. (2022); Smith (2023)	Social capital inside a group
Tradition versus modernity	School culture, national curriculum, integrated Islamic schools	Pesantren integrate technology and secular subjects while keeping core values, with conservative resistance	Murdianto (2023); Rasyad et al. (2026); Witriani et al. (2024)	Institutional

Two patterns emerge. First, the symbolic distinctions are numerous and the social ones are few and severe. Most disputes in the corpus remain at the level of classification, but where a social boundary is enforced, as with the Ahmadiyya, the consequence is violence and civic exclusion (Adnan et al., 2023). Second, authority is the stake. Saparudin (2022) argues that the desacralisation of tuan guru authority is not driven mainly by theology and reflects competition among religious elites for public influence, with Salafi preachers working through mosques, study circles, schools and social media. Said (2019) reaches a similar conclusion from the opposite side and adds the claim that Saudi funding of mosques, schools and media reshaped local religious life in East Lombok. The two articles disagree about who is at fault, and agree that the dispute concerns who may teach.

How local wisdom enters character formation

The embedding studies identify five channels. The first is *school culture*. Karomi et al. (2026) describe a junior secondary school in East Lombok where *tindih* guides conduct and piety, *maliq-merang* appears in school rules and co-curricular activities, and *sangkep* is practised as participation, and they conclude that these values work only when they become repeated and integrated practice and not ceremony. The second is *curriculum content*. Sayuti and Hafizin (2026) integrate Sasak values into religious education for intercultural sensitivity in a tourism vocational school, and Wahyudiati (2022) argues that mutual respect, cooperation and consensus in Sasak custom can anchor science teaching. The third is *pedagogy and measurement*. Fadli (2023) reports a significant association between Sasak local wisdom-based learning and critical thinking among students in West Nusa Tenggara, and Arizona et al. (2025) report that the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom predicts character development among 505 prospective teachers. Both are cross-sectional survey designs, so they support association and not effect.

The fourth channel is *exemplary authority and da'wa*. Mulianah (2024) finds that tuan guru preach in a way that fuses Islamic values with local practice and use Sasak proverbs as educational media, and Muslim et al. (2022) describe the NW tuan guru tradition as preserved through halaqah and the study of authoritative texts. The fifth is *institutional memory*. Murdianto (2021) traces the emergence of Lombok pesantren from the informal *kerbung* tradition, and Smith (2023) shows how the founder's ideas about gender shaped women's instruction in an East Lombok NW pesantren.

Comparative sources show the same channels working elsewhere under different conditions. In Aceh, adat and syariat are treated as one interdependent value system in schools and informal institutions (Rizal et al., 2025). In South Sulawesi, Bugis values such as *siri' na pacce* are aligned with tolerance and justice in Islamic high schools (Ardiyansyah et al., 2025) and shape parents' choice of private Islamic schools (Aziz et al., 2024). In West Sumatra, the Minangkabau principle that custom rests on sharia is analysed as integration (Mariana et al., 2024). In Java, the *slametan* is read as

syncretism that expresses Islam Nusantara (Muqoddam & Maghfiroh, 2019) or as a custom that keeps local belief elements yet aligns with core Islamic values (Nasir, 2019). In Konawe, pesantren accommodate local ritual through extracurricular activities, with the degree of accommodation differing across settlement types (Bahri et al., 2023). Historical work on Pesantren Tegalsari in Ponorogo credits religious and socio-cultural moderation and political neutrality with preserving educational continuity in Java (Rofiq & Mujahidin, 2025), and research on pesantren salaf describes tahlilan, maulid and grave visitation as vehicles for internalising spiritual and social values, with schools answering puritan digital preaching by producing their own digital content and media literacy (Saepudin & Rohandy, 2024). Anggraeni et al. (2026) reviewed scholarship from 2015 to 2025 and framed pesantren as culturally embedded learning ecosystems, which is the closest existing synthesis to ours but does not treat contestation as its main variable. These cases supply typologies, though none supplies the four-part scheme used here; the labels are ours.

Where Contestation Lives, and Why The Curriculum Is Silent

The contestation studies are concentrated in community life: life-cycle rituals, marriage customs, mortuary practice and the status of tuan guru. Faizah (2012) shows Salafi expansion running against Sasak rituals from birth to death, which Salafis treat as *bid'ah*. Fitriani (2015) finds that Wetu Lima practitioners in West Lombok hold hybrid identities, do not fear the charge of syncretism and see their rituals as local expressions of universal Islamic values. Saharudin (2019) supports the long view by reading rice symbolism as a sign that early Islam entered peacefully by confirming indigenous symbols.

Defence of the contested practices takes several forms, and they matter for schools because they supply the arguments a teacher can use. Sainun et al. (2024) show tuan guru in Central Lombok defending the custom of paying *fidyah* for the deceased by citing minority fiqh positions, and note that non-compliance brings social stigma. Umam et al. (2024) apply *'urf* to argue that merariq can be recognised as an Islamic legal practice. Tahir (2008) describes tuan guru efforts to formalise elopement marriage. Yet the critique also comes from within Islamic reasoning. Kholidi et al. (2025) study

merariq among minors and find that Islamic teaching on maturity and child protection offers a basis for reinterpreting the custom. This is important for the argument. Local wisdom is contested by Salafi purifiers, and it is contested by norms that tuan guru themselves share, so a school cannot treat all criticism as an outside attack.

Why does the curriculum stay silent? We offer three readings and flag them as inferences. One is that the contest is fought over adults' ritual obligations and over teaching authority, and the school appears only as a venue. A second is that research access to a Salafi-oriented school's classroom is hard, and that the Lombok literature relies on genealogies, discourse analysis and community case studies. A third is that mediators avoid naming disputes in school settings. Pardi (2024) describes a tuan guru who resolves ideological conflict through *begawe* and *silaturrahim*, using the custom that is under attack as the instrument of reconciliation. In that case the contested practice does the moderating work. Muhtar (2021) shows the same logic across religions, with the Topat War festival at Lingsar enabling peaceful resolution between Hindus and Muslims, though that case is inter-religious and so serves as a contrast and not as evidence for the intra-Muslim line.

The one corpus study of a school-level counter-pole is informative. Witriani et al. (2024) find that integrated Islamic elementary schools serving urban middle-class families in Lombok promote a "new style of Islam" built on *kaffah* and early identity formation. This is boundary work through schooling, with the school offering a competing model of what a good Muslim child looks like. It does not mention *begawe* or *tindih*. The absence is itself a data point, since a new style that does not draw on local wisdom does not need to attack it explicitly.

The moderation discourse as a boundary

Read against the Lombok evidence, the state's four indicators behave differently (Table 3).

Table 3. The four indicators of religious moderation read against Lombok boundary evidence

Indicator (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019)	What it asks of local wisdom or pupils	Consistent with Lombok evidence	In tension with Lombok evidence
National commitment	Pupils affirm the nation and its symbols	Aswaja pesantren and integrated schools adopt the national curriculum (Rasyad et al., 2026)	Reduced participation in state ceremonies attributed to Wahhabi influence in East Lombok (Said, 2019), a partisan source
Tolerance	Pupils accept difference among groups	Tuan guru mediation by dialogue and mutual respect (Pardi, 2024); tolerance taught through exemplary conduct (Matin Salman, 2017)	Violence and civic exclusion of Ahmadis (Adnan et al., 2023); split views on the Ahmadiyya among ulama elsewhere (Abdillah & Ali, 2020)
Rejection of violence	Pupils reject violent means	Soft engagement preferred to deradicalisation language (Wildan & Muttaqin, 2022); Salafi school variants are not uniformly radical (Malik, 2024)	Vigilante violence justified in theological terms (Burhani, 2021)
Accommodation of local culture	Pupils respect local traditions	Tuan guru use proverbs and contextual da'wa (Mulianah, 2024); school-culture studies (Karomi et al., 2026)	Salafi rejection of life-cycle ritual as <i>bid'ah</i> (Faizah, 2012); internal critique of merariq among minors (Kholidi et al., 2025)

The fourth indicator is the one that takes a side. The first three indicators ask pupils to adopt attitudes toward the nation, outsiders and violence, which most Muslim groups on the island can accept in principle. The fourth asks them to accept a set of practices that a significant group of Muslims regards as unfounded. A Salafi-oriented school can pass the first three indicators and fail the fourth by design. Zuhdi (2018) found that moderate curricula depend on teachers' stance, and conservative teachers

restricted exposure to difference, which suggests that the fourth indicator will be applied unevenly. Critical readings add that the programme has served political purposes (Alvian & Ardhani, 2023) and that the vision of the two largest organisations may no longer meet current demands (Hilmy, 2013). Qoumas et al. (2024), writing from the policy side, describe the programme as working effectively, and the contrast between their account and the critical ones is typical of the field.

The tolerance evidence is thinner than the policy vocabulary assumes. In Sukabumi, ulama of traditional pesantren held moderate positions toward non-Muslims, yet some refused to join Christmas celebrations and views on the Ahmadiyya diverged, with one ulama taking a stricter view (Abdillah & Ali, 2020). Rohman and Muhtamiroh (2022) report that a sequential curriculum and discursive methods in Pesantren Al-Anwar form inclusive pupils, and Rahman et al. (2022) credit dialogical teaching of Islamic philosophy for opening students' views, but the second study is in a university. Lukens-Bull (2008) described the pesantren community as a tradition of pluralism and accommodation, and Lukens-Bull (2001) described tradition and modernity in Islamic education as two sides of one coin, which anticipates the Lombok pattern of adaptive integration (Murdianto, 2023). None of these studies separates tolerance toward non-Muslims from tolerance toward Muslim others as a primary outcome. That separation is the one that the Lombok boundaries make necessary.

Lines of argument across the two tracks

Critical interpretive synthesis asks for a synthesising argument that goes beyond a summary of studies (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). Reading the two tracks against each other produces three lines.

The first is a *reciprocal translation*. The practices that the embedding studies call local wisdom, such as begawe, proverbs and merariq, are the same practices that the contestation studies call ritual to be purified or defended. The two vocabularies describe one object through two classifications. A study of *tindih* in a school (Karomi et al., 2026) and a study of fidyah for the deceased among tuan guru (Sainun et al., 2024) concern the same sphere of Sasak moral life, yet the first reports a consensual resource

and the second reports a practice that needs a legal defence and carries stigma for those who decline it.

The second is a *refutation* of a common assumption. The embedding literature often treats local wisdom as a bridge to moderation, since Sasak values of respect and deliberation resemble the state's tolerance indicator. The contestation literature shows that the same wisdom can function as a boundary, because defending or rejecting it marks a person as belonging to one group or another (Saparudin, 2022; Fitriani, 2015). Both can be true at once, and which one dominates depends on who is looking and in which institution.

The third is a *line of argument* about authority. Across both tracks, the question on which the findings turn is who may certify a practice as Islamic, local or both. Tuan guru can do so because of their position in teaching networks and local governance (Muhtador et al., 2023; Gani et al., 2024), and rivals contest the position more often than the content. This line leads directly to the first gate of the model.

Comparative cases

Table 4 sets Lombok beside cases where Islamic schooling polices or accommodates local custom.

Table 4. Comparative cases of contested custom in Islamic schooling

Case	Who polices	What is policed	What the school offers	Source
Cambodia (Cham Muslims)	Salafi and other reformist networks	Local customs and practice	Salafi divisions follow how groups handle local realities, not imported typologies	Pall (2023)
India and Pakistan (Deoband)	Ulama organisations	Scholarly standards and practice	Bureaucratic and organisational formalisation; structured hierarchy and assessment	Metcalf (1978); Bano (2007)
Morocco	The state	Which Islam is official	State support moved from Salafism to Sufism	Faitour (2024)

Case	Who polices	What is policed	What the school offers	Source
Perlis, Malaysia	Rulers and the administration	A reformist “Sunnah” line	Patronage, legal enactment and enforcement fix a reformist line	Malik and Mat (2017)
Patani, southern Thailand	Pondok communities and modernising reformers	Traditional pondok form	Modern schools with contemporary subjects as a route of revival	Salaeh (2023)
Java	Santri networks and Islamisers	Slametan and related practice	Tradition aligned with core Islamic values	Nasir (2019); Ricklefs (2012); Woodward (2011)

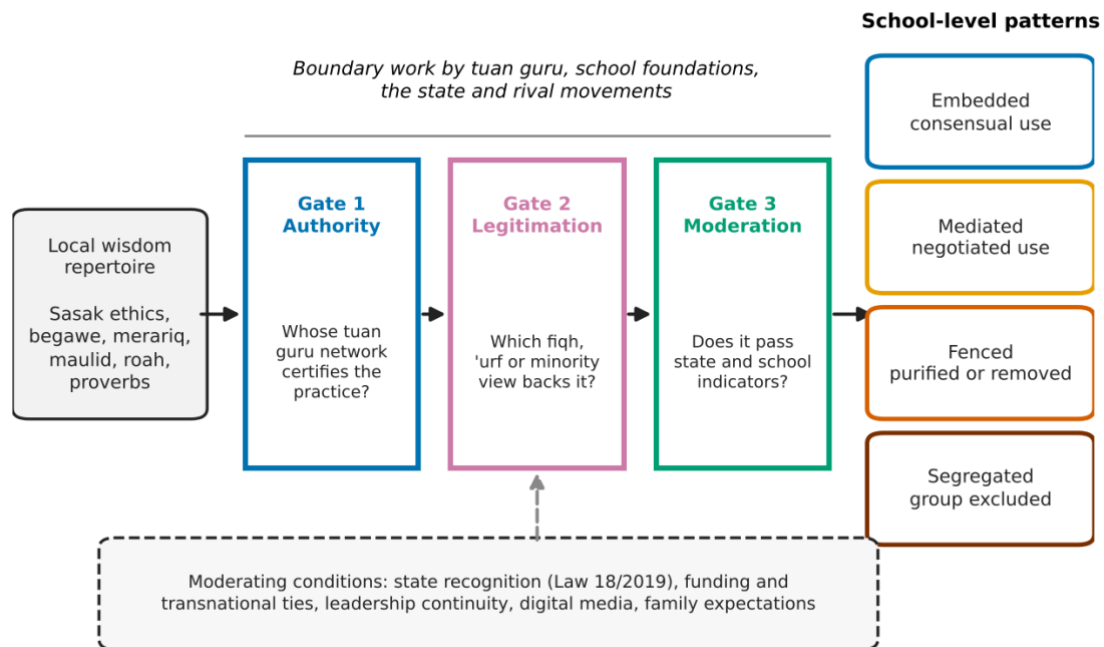
The cases support three working questions for Lombok: who polices, what is policed and what the school offers in exchange. Pall (2023) adds a methodological warning. Groups cannot be coded by imported labels, because the lines that matter are drawn by how actors respond to local realities. We therefore coded observed practice and relation, and treated the labels “Salafi”, “traditionalist” and “Aswaja” as claims made by actors. Faitour (2024) and Malik and Mat (2017) show that states and rulers can fix a line through patronage, which is the mechanism that Law 18/2019 may activate for Lombok pesantren through recognition and funding (Republic of Indonesia, 2019). The wider literature on Indonesian Islam places the whole question within the “conservative turn” and the long history of Islamisation (van Bruinessen, 2013; Ricklefs, 2012) and within the question of whether Islam Nusantara can be both local and authentically Islamic (van den Boogert, 2026). Hefner (2000) and the civil Islam argument supply the optimistic background, in which pluralist organisations anchor democratic life, and the Lombok evidence shows how much work that optimism assumes at the school level.

Discussion

The BFCF model

The synthesis points to one structural claim: local wisdom does not move directly from Sasak life into pesantren character education. It passes through three gates, and the combination of outcomes at the gates produces the school-level pattern that observers describe as moderate, conservative or mixed. We call this the Boundary-Filtered Character Formation (BFCF) model (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Boundary-Filtered Character Formation (BFCF) model



The first gate is *authority*. A practice counts as local wisdom for a school when a tuan guru network that the school recognises certifies it. NW pesantren draw on a tuan guru tradition that is preserved through halaqah and authoritative texts (Muslim et al., 2022), and on tarekat relations that act as social capital within the educational system (Rasyad et al., 2021). Authority is also what rivals contest (Saparudin, 2022; Said, 2019), which is why the same practice can be certified at one school and refused at the next.

The second gate is *legitimation*. A certified practice must have an argument. Tuan guru defend fidyah with minority fiqh (Sainun et al., 2024) and merariq with 'urf

(Umam et al., 2024), and a practice whose defence fails, as with merariq among minors under maturity and child-protection norms (Kholidi et al., 2025), tends to be reinterpreted. Legitimation is where Islamic reasoning does the boundary work that the Salafi critique and the traditionalist defence share, and it is the point at which Asad's (1986) discursive tradition is most visible: the dispute is conducted in the vocabulary of a common textual lineage.

The third gate is *moderation*. State and school indicators decide whether the practice, once certified and defended, is taught as moderate character. The fourth indicator (Kementarian Agama RI, 2019) pushes toward admission, and school leadership, funders and national regulation decide how far. Zuhdi (2018) shows that teachers interpret and can restrict the moderate intent of a curriculum, which makes the gate partly a matter of classroom practice.

Four school-level patterns follow (Table 5). *Embedded* schools pass practices through all three gates without dispute and treat them as consensual resources. The seven character-focused alignment studies in our corpus describe this pattern. *Mediated* schools or leaders pass practices through the gates by negotiation, using contested customs as instruments of reconciliation, as in Pardi (2024), or adapting by integrating new subjects while keeping core values, as in Murdianto (2023). *Fenced* schools close the first or second gate: they refuse certification by the local tuan guru network or reject the legitimation arguments, and they teach a purified repertoire. The corpus contains no field study of such a school in Lombok, so this pattern rests on the community-level evidence of Faizah (2012) and Saparudin (2022) and on the national typologies of Salafi-based school variants (Malik, 2024; Suharto, 2018). *Segregated* patterns apply when a group is excluded from the educational field altogether, and the Ahmadiyya evidence is the clearest case (Adnan et al., 2023; Burhani, 2014; Menchik, 2014).

Table 5. Four school-level patterns of the BFCF model

Pattern	Gate outcome	Character content	Illustrative evidence	Status in the corpus
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Pattern	Gate outcome	Character content	Illustrative evidence	Status in the corpus
Embedded	All three gates open without dispute	Sasak values taught as consensual resource	Karomi et al. (2026); Sayuti & Hafizin (2026); Muslim et al. (2022)	Well documented
Mediated	Gates open after negotiation	Contested custom used for reconciliation or adapted	Pardi (2024); Murdianto (2023); Mulianah (2024)	Documented in a few cases
Fenced	Gate 1 or 2 closed	Purified repertoire; local practice treated as optional or unfounded	Faizah (2012); Saparudin (2022); Malik (2024)	Inferred from community and national studies
Segregated	Group excluded from the field	Pupils or institutions of a group are barred or attacked	Adnan et al. (2023); Burhani (2021)	Documented outside schools

Six propositions

The model yields propositions that can be tested (Table 6). They are stated so that fieldwork can disprove them.

Table 6. Propositions and observable implications

No.	Proposition	Observable implication
P1	Local wisdom enters character education in proportion to the school's alignment with the tuan guru network that certifies it	Schools outside the network treat the practice as optional or suspect; documents cite network figures
P2	Practices with an available fiqh or <i>'urf</i> defence are retained under pressure; practices that fail internal norms are revised	Teachers cite named arguments when defending a custom; revised practices cite maturity or child-protection norms
P3	Where moderation indicators operate as a checklist, the fourth indicator is met in documents more than in teaching	Gap between curriculum statements and observed lessons

No.	Proposition	Observable implication
P4	In fenced schools, tolerance toward non-Muslims and toward Muslim others diverge	Separate attitude measures show higher acceptance of non-Muslims than of Ahmadis or rival groups
P5	Contested practices that serve as reconciliation devices are more resilient than those that serve only as identity markers	Begawe-type events persist in mixed communities despite criticism
P6	State recognition shifts the moderation gate from the school to the state and widens the gap between documents and practice	After recognition, curricula adopt the state vocabulary while practice varies by network

P3 and P6 draw on a general observation in the hidden-curriculum literature. Kurniawan (2018) found that a school's stated normative commitment to tolerance was contradicted by its formal and informal practices, and the Lombok record gives no reason to expect that pesantren are exempt. P4 follows from the Sukabumi split between non-Muslims and the Ahmadiyya (Abdillah & Ali, 2020). P5 draws on Pardi (2024) and the festival evidence in Muhtar (2021), though the second is inter-religious. P1 and P2 rest on the authority and legitimation evidence in Section 4.

Contributions to the literature

Three contributions follow. First, the model links two literatures that have developed apart. The embedding studies (Karomi et al., 2026; Arizona et al., 2025; Fadli, 2023) gain a mechanism for why their finding holds in some schools and fails in others. The contestation studies (Saparudin, 2022; Said, 2019; Adnan et al., 2023) gain an object, the school, through which their findings on authority could be tested. Second, the analysis qualifies the moderation discourse by showing that its fourth indicator is not neutral. This adds an intra-Muslim dimension to critical readings that have so far concentrated on political uses of moderation (Alvian & Ardhani, 2023; Hilmy, 2013). Third, the corpus shows that "moderate" as used in pesantren research needs disaggregation. Tolerance toward non-Muslims, toward Muslim others and toward local custom are separate attitudes, and the available evidence measures them together or not at all (Subchi et al., 2022; Abdillah & Ali, 2020).

The study also bears on the theoretical debate in Section 2. If every actor in the Lombok dispute argues from a common textual lineage, as the legitimation gate suggests, then Asad's (1986) discursive tradition approach explains why the disputants share arguments while disagreeing on outcomes. The critique by Fadil and Fernando (2015) applies as well: a lens that reads the Wetu Lima practitioner in Fitriani (2015) as the "everyday" Muslim and the Salafi preacher as the ideologue would miss that each is making a pious claim. Our coding treated both as claimants. The practice approach of Ammerman (2020) supports the call for fieldwork that observes what pupils and teachers do at a *begawe*, and not only what they say about it.

Alternative explanations and boundary conditions

Three alternative readings of the corpus deserve attention. The first is that the silence of the curriculum literature reflects an absence of conflict in classrooms. Perhaps schools in Lombok teach local wisdom without incident and the disputes are confined to adult ritual life. The corpus cannot rule this out, since the evidence on Salafi-oriented classrooms is missing, but the reduced participation in state ceremonies attributed to Wahhabi influence (Said, 2019) and the competing model of the child in integrated Islamic schools (Witriani et al., 2024) suggest that schools are at least implicated. The second reading is that the three gates are an artefact of our coding frame. We started from boundary-work theory, and the corpus might look different under another frame. The reciprocal translation in Section 4.6 reduces the risk, since the gates emerged from reading studies against each other, though a second analyst with a different theory would be a stronger test. The third reading is that the model describes the era of Law 18/2019 and not Lombok in general. Because 26 of the 31 studies were published since 2021, the evidence reflects recent conditions, and earlier periods, such as the colonial madrasa phase described by Pardi et al. (2024), may have followed other logics.

The boundary conditions of the model follow. It applies where a customary repertoire is contested by organised rivals and where a state vocabulary of moderation is available to schools. It will fit Aceh, where adat and syariat are treated as one system (Rizal et al., 2025), only where a rival network disputes that system, and it will fit Java where *slametan* and its Islamic reading are contested (Nasir, 2019; Muqoddam &

Maghfiroh, 2019). The comparative cases in Table 4 suggest that the three gates operate in different configurations when the state is itself a boundary-maker, as in Morocco and Perlis (Faitour, 2024; Malik & Mat, 2017). Generalisation here is analytic and not statistical, in the sense that a well-chosen case can show a mechanism (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Implications for pesantren management and policy

The model has four practical implications. They are conditional on the propositions and should be read as hypotheses for managers and policy staff.

First, pesantren leaders could document the authority and argument behind each local practice that they teach: who certifies it, and which *fiqh*, *'urf* or minority position supports it. A school that can state these two things is better placed to explain its curriculum to a visitor, an inspector or a rival preacher. Second, character education plans could set separate outcomes for tolerance toward non-Muslims, toward other Muslim groups and toward local custom, since the three can move independently. Third, because Law 18/2019 brings pesantren into the national system (Republic of Indonesia, 2019), officials who apply the fourth indicator might examine whether a school's accommodation of local culture is a statement in a document or a feature of lessons. Fourth, mediators have a resource in practices that the community already values. The *begawe* in Pardi (2024) was used because it carried obligations that both sides recognised, and school leaders might look for equivalent practices before designing new interfaith or intra-Muslim programmes.

A field protocol

The corpus shows what is missing, and the protocol below describes what a primary study would need. The sampling frame would contain two or three institutions in each of four types: an NW pesantren; an Aswaja pesantren outside NW; an integrated Islamic school of the kind described by Witriani et al. (2024); and a Salafi-oriented pesantren. Data would include interviews with *tuan guru*, teachers, pupils and parents; observation of *begawe*, *maulid* and similar events and of lessons that mention them; and analysis of curriculum documents and school rules. The analysis would code authority claims, legitimation arguments and enactments against the three gates. Two ethical

points deserve emphasis. The research involves minors and so needs parental consent and school permission. It also touches a group that has faced violence, so any inclusion of Ahmadiyya communities requires protection against identification and harm. A mixed design could add parallel attitude scales for the three kinds of tolerance, with the caution that survey items in this field often follow the state's indicators and so reproduce its categories (Subchi et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The question was how moderate character education operates when the local wisdom it uses is contested among Muslims. The synthesis of 31 Lombok studies and a wider set of sources gives a three-part answer. First, the research that treats Sasak wisdom as a resource for character and the research that documents contestation barely overlap: one study in the corpus does both. Second, the dispute concerns authority and legitimation more than doctrine, and it runs through mosques, study circles, marriage law and school choice, with exclusion enforced violently in the Ahmadiyya case. Third, the state's definition of moderation takes part in the dispute through its fourth indicator, accommodation of local culture, which favours one side of an intra-Muslim argument. The BFCF model describes the route that local wisdom takes into character education as three gates (authority, legitimation and moderation) and four school-level patterns (embedded, mediated, fenced and segregated), and six propositions make it testable.

The findings do not show that pesantren in Lombok fail to teach moderate character. They show that the evidence for how they do it is uneven, and that claims of moderation depend on which boundary the observer is looking at. A school can be tolerant toward non-Muslims and still exclude a Muslim group, and it can honour Sasak custom and still teach children to doubt the practice that their neighbours observe. Fieldwork in four types of institution, with separate measures of three kinds of tolerance, would show whether the model holds. Until then, the synthesis supports a cautious reading of any statement that a pesantren is "moderate" and an interest in the question, left open by the literature, of who decides what moderation requires.

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