

Local consolidation and intra-Muslim coexistence: Nahdlatul Ulama in Klaten Utara, 1998-2024

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Abstract

This article examines the local consolidation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Klaten Utara from 1998 to 2024 within a religious landscape where Muhammadiyah was perceived as socially influential. Existing studies often approach NU-Muhammadiyah relations through national politics, doctrinal contrast, or institutional rivalry, leaving subdistrict-level coexistence less explored. Using a historical approach, this study draws on organizational decrees, circular letters, activity documentation, photographs, and interviews with NU leaders and local residents. The study finds that NU's local development was shaped through administrative consolidation, ritual visibility, and everyday coexistence. Leadership structures and surviving documents strengthened institutional legitimacy; recurring *pengajian*, *salawatan*, *mawlid*, and *musyawarah* made NU socially recognizable; while Idulfitri gatherings, neighborhood interaction, and civic cooperation softened organizational boundaries. The article argues that NU's consolidation in Klaten Utara was not achieved against Muhammadiyah, but through negotiated coexistence within shared local Muslim life.

Keywords: NU; Muhammadiyah; Klaten Utara; intra-Muslim coexistence; local consolidation.

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Introduction

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah have long stood as two of the most consequential Islamic organizations in Indonesia, not only because of their size, but because each has built a different grammar of Muslim social life. NU is often associated with pesantren networks, ulama authority, and ritual traditions rooted in local communities, while Muhammadiyah has usually been read through reformist activism, education, philanthropy, and institutional modernization. Yet the relationship between the two cannot be adequately understood as a fixed opposition between “traditionalist” and “modernist” Islam. That binary may help introduce the field, but it quickly becomes too blunt for local history. In villages,

neighborhoods, mosques, schools, and family networks, organizational identity is lived less like a doctrine carved in stone than as a set of practices negotiated in ordinary social space.¹

Scholarship on NU and Muhammadiyah has often placed them within familiar frames: NU through pesantren networks, ulama authority, and political adaptation; Muhammadiyah through reformism, education, philanthropy, and modern religious organization.² Comparative works have frequently stressed doctrinal, ritual, and political differences, although recent studies show that their relationship is also shaped by political alignments, state relations, local leadership, and everyday negotiation.³ Local research is crucial here, because it reveals that difference does not always become conflict; it may also be managed through tolerance, neighborhood ties, and shared civic practices.⁴ Building on this perspective, this article examines Klaten Utara (North Klaten) not as another case of rivalry, but as a subdistrict-level site where coexistence, collaboration, and NU's local consolidation developed within a religious landscape remembered by NU actors as strongly associated with Muhammadiyah.⁵

Klaten Utara is useful for this inquiry because NU's post-1998 history there was not marked by rupture, but by gradual local consolidation through remembered beginnings, fragile archives, leadership transitions, and recurring religious programs. The 2003-2008 leadership period under Humaidi Yusuf, supported by NU administrative documents, indicates an important step in this process.⁶ Yet this article does not claim Muhammadiyah's statistical dominance, since comparative data on membership, mosques, schools, charitable institutions, or affiliated facilities is unavailable. Instead, Muhammadiyah's "strong presence" is treated as a locally reconstructed category, drawn from interviews, organizational memory, circular letters, photographs, routine gatherings, and everyday social practice.

¹ Greg Fealy, *Ijtihad Politik Ulama: Sejarah NU 1952-1967* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2003), 38-40; Martin van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradisi, Relasi-Relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1994), 35; Nur Alhidayatillah and Sabiruddin, "Nahdlatul Ulama dan Muhammadiyah: Dua Wajah Organisasi Dakwah di Indonesia," *Al-Imam: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 9, no. 1 (2018): 15.

² Fealy, *Ijtihad Politik Ulama*, 38-40; Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Yogyakarta: Gading Pustaka, 2020), 17; van Bruinessen, *NU*, 35.

³ Alexander R. Arifianto, "From Ideological to Political Sectarianism: Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the State in Indonesia," *Religion, State & Society* 49, no. 2 (2021): 126-41.

⁴ Elsa Nurrohm Safitri and Anwar Mujahidin, "Conflict Resolution between Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah Congregations in Tumpak Rejo Hamlet, Ponorogo Regency," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia* 3, no. 3 (2022): 236-47.

⁵ Sahid Wahyu Wijanarko, "Dari Kultural Menuju Struktural: Perkembangan Nahdlatul Ulama di Kecamatan Manisrenggo, Klaten Tahun 1983-2017" (Undergraduate Thesis--UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, 2020), 45; Mustofa, *interview*, Klaten Utara, May 15, 2025; Sunarto, *interview*, Klaten Utara, May 1, 2025.

⁶ PCNU Klaten, "Surat Keputusan Pengesahan Pengurus MWC Klaten Utara 2008-2013," 2008.

This article employs a historical approach grounded in local organizational sources. It draws on leadership decrees, circular letters, activity documentation, photographs, and interviews with NU leaders and local residents, including figures involved in MWC (*Majelis Wakil Cabang/* Sub-Branch Representative Council) NU Klaten Utara and residents who experienced NU-Muhammadiyah relations in everyday life. These sources are read critically rather than treated as transparent records. Formal documents help trace administrative consolidation, while interviews illuminate organizational memory, perceived challenges, and social relations that were not always preserved in written archives. This is especially important because the early post-1998 history of NU in Klaten Utara is marked by incomplete archival preservation. The article therefore reconstructs local history by bringing together surviving documents, oral testimony, and recurring religious practices as mutually informing historical traces.

The central question is therefore: how did the relationship between NU and Muhammadiyah in Klaten Utara shape patterns of coexistence, collaboration, and local organizational consolidation from 1998 to 2024? By asking this, the article shifts attention from doctrinal contrast to the social labor of living together: how NU strengthened itself in a setting where Muhammadiyah was perceived as influential, and how everyday encounters, religious gatherings, and organizational memories made national Islamic affiliations locally meaningful.

This article argues that NU's development in Klaten Utara was shaped by a double movement: inward consolidation and outward coexistence. Internally, NU strengthened leadership structures, preserved surviving documents, organized recurring programs, and cultivated organizational continuity. Externally, it entered shared social spaces, participated in neighborhood religious life, and built practical relations with Muhammadiyah actors without dissolving either organization's identity. Administrative consolidation, ritual visibility, and civic collaboration therefore overlapped: decrees stabilized the organization, *pengajian* and *salawatan* made it visible, and everyday relations with Muhammadiyah helped define the terms of its local recognition.

From organizational memory to administrative consolidation

The year 1998 is used here not as a clean birthdate of NU's presence in Klaten, but as a practical threshold for tracing the later consolidation of MWC NU Klaten Utara. Local history rarely begins with a trumpet blast. More often it appears through quieter signs: a remembered meeting, a leadership transition, a document that survived, a photograph kept by an organizer, a story repeated by those who were there. In this sense, Klaten Utara's post-1998 NU history is best read as a process in which a religious community became increasingly legible as an organization. Such a reading fits the broader logic of local history, which seeks to re-

cover experiences often overlooked by national narratives and to take seriously the heterogeneity of local actors, memories, and social practices.⁷

This is why organizational memory matters. The early development of NU in Klaten Utara cannot be reconstructed only from formal archives, because some records from the first years after 1998 were not preserved systematically. Yet absence is not emptiness. The gaps in the archive require the historian to move carefully between surviving documents, interviews, and traces of repeated organizational practice. Oral testimony from figures such as Sunarto, Secretary of MWC NU Klaten Utara, and Mustofa helps illuminate how NU actors remembered the organization's early efforts to gain local recognition, while surviving administrative documents provide firmer evidence of later structural consolidation.⁸ In studies of Islamic historiography, oral history has been proposed precisely as a way to recover local religious experiences when written sources are thin; archives, meanwhile, remain crucial because they preserve institutional traces produced close to the events themselves.⁹ The history of NU in Klaten Utara therefore has to be assembled from both: memory gives texture, documents give contour.

The clearest sign of this shift from remembered presence to administrative consolidation appears in the organizational structure associated with the 2003–2008 leadership period. Under Humaidi Yusuf, MWC NU Klaten Utara began to appear not merely as a loose religious tendency or a community of sympathizers, but as a formally arranged local institution. The leadership decree and the structure of MWC NU Klaten Utara are important for this reason. They did not simply list names. They translated local commitment into offices, duties, chains of responsibility, and recognizable organizational authority. In a setting where NU still had to make itself visible, administrative form mattered. It allowed the organization to speak in a language that could be recognized by higher NU structures, local members, and the wider community.

⁷ Yusran Ilyas, Rianti Sholihah, and Divani Truna Wijayanti, "The Combined Principles of Local History: Indonesian and Western Perspectives," *Analisis Sejarah: Mencari Jalan Sejarah* 15, no. 2 (2025): 148-55; Kuntowijoyo, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2013), 45.

⁸ Sunarto, *interview*; Mustofa, *interview*; PCNU Klaten, "Surat Keputusan Pengesahan Pengurus MWC Klaten Utara 2008-2013," 2008.

⁹ Imam Mashud, "Oral History: An Alternative of Islamic Historiography in Bolaang Mongondow," *Aqlam: Journal of Islam and Plurality* 8, no. 2 (2023); L. Nurdin, "Archives as Information Infrastructure and Their Urgency Towards Research," *Khazanah al-Hikmah: Jurnal Ilmu Perpustakaan, Informasi, dan Kearsipan* 9, no. 1 (2021): 28-38.

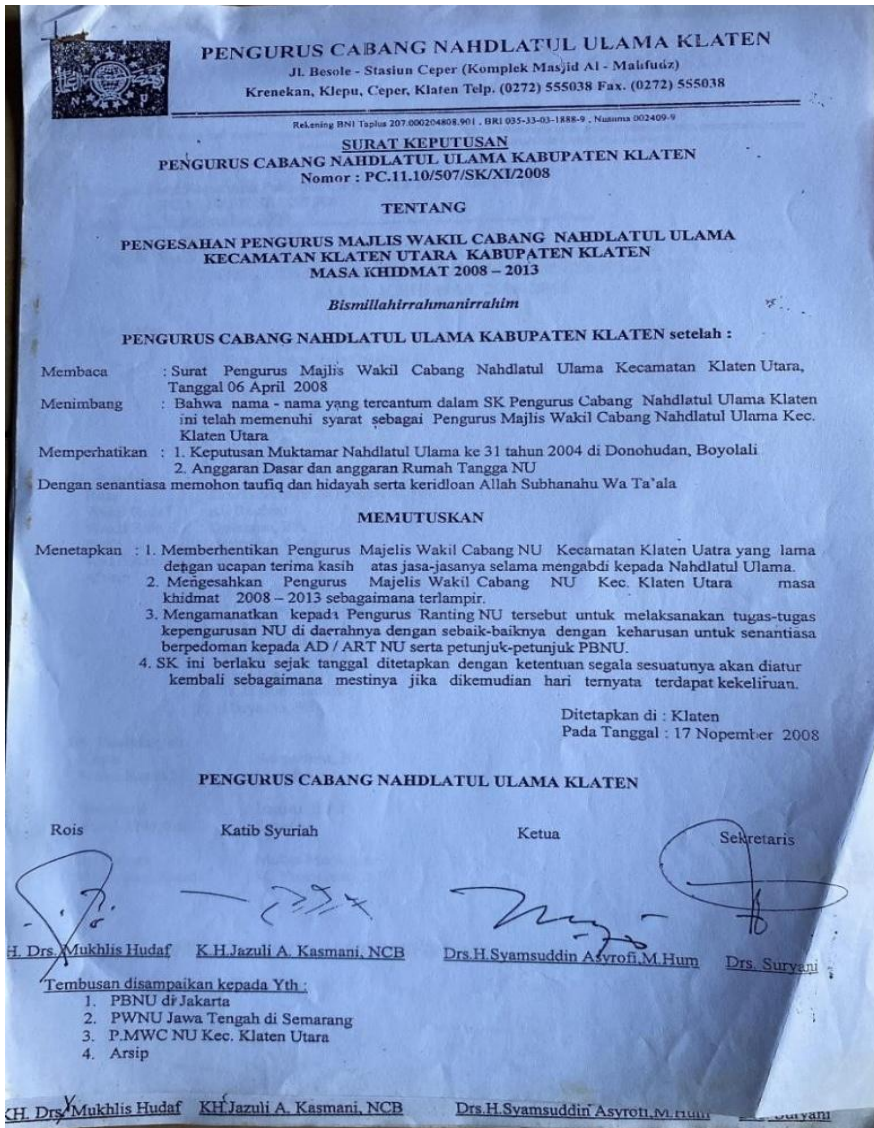


Figure 1. Surat Keputusan Struktur (Leadership Decree and Organizational Structure) of MWC NU Klaten Utara, 2003. Source: Sunarto' documentation.

Still, the movement toward administrative order was uneven. Interviews indicate that records from the years between 1998 and 2003 were not always managed or preserved systematically. This archival fragility should not be treated only as a technical failure, although it certainly created difficulty for historical reconstruction. It also reveals something about the condition of many local religious organizations: they often act before they archive, gather people before they build filing systems, and rely on trust long before documentation becomes routine. The early history of NU in Klaten Utara therefore survives in a scattered

form. Some of it is held in documents; some of it remains in the memory of those who carried the organization through its formative years.¹⁰

Seen from this angle, consolidation was not a single event. It was a slow thickening of organizational life. Leadership continuity, surviving decrees, secretarial work, photographs, and repeated programs gradually gave NU a more stable presence in Klaten Utara. The archive may be incomplete, but the traces are not silent. Together, they show an organization learning to become legible: first to itself, then to its members, and finally to the local public. This is why the history of MWC NU Klaten Utara after 1998 should be read not simply as institutional growth, but as the formation of organizational memory through the imperfect materials that local history often leaves behind.¹¹

Ritual visibility and community formation

Administrative consolidation gave MWC NU Klaten Utara a structure, but structure alone could not make the organization socially felt. For NU to become recognizable in local life, it needed rhythm: gatherings that returned, voices that were heard again, and religious practices through which people could see that the organization was not only present on paper, but alive among them.

Pengajian became one of the most important rhythms of that presence. In the available records and interviews, NU activities in Klaten Utara appear not as occasional events but as recurring programs arranged across weekly, monthly, and annual cycles. The monthly *pengajian* held by MWC NU Klaten Utara, for example, functioned as more than a forum for religious instruction. It gathered jamaah from different local areas, created a space for listening and discussion, and allowed religious teaching to sit beside the ordinary concerns of community life.¹² This matters because *pengajian* in NU circles often works as a social infrastructure: it teaches, but it also gathers; it transmits doctrine, but also keeps people connected; it creates a shared calendar through which members know when and where the community will meet again. Studies of NU recitation gatherings in other local contexts similarly show that routine *pengajian* can produce social interaction, strengthen a sense of togetherness, and form cultural-religious values beyond the formal content of the sermon itself.¹³ In Klaten Utara, this recurring pattern helped NU move from administrative existence toward social

¹⁰ Nurdin, "Archives as Information Infrastructure," 28-38.

¹¹ Mashud, "Oral History"; Ilyas, Sholihah, and Wijayanti, "The Combined Principles of Local History," 148-55.

¹² Mustofa, *interview*; MWC NU Klaten Utara, "Surat Edaran Pengajian Akbar Rutinan MWC NU Klaten Utara," 2023.

¹³ Siti Nashihah, Abdullah Idi, Mohammad Syawaludin, and Imam Rodin, "Tri Wulan Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama Recitation's Cultural Values in East OKU Regency," *Juspi: Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam* 7, no. 1 (2023): 29-35; Mibtadin, "Community Religious Expression through Sholawat in Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalan Ngawi Village," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 42, no. 1 (2022).

recognition. People did not encounter NU only through decrees or leadership names. They encountered it through repeated acts of assembly, through familiar faces, through the expectation that religious learning would return next month, and through the slow trust that grows when an organization keeps appearing.

The importance of *pengajian* also lay in its connection to *musyawarah*. In Klaten Utara, monthly gatherings were not only moments of listening to religious instruction; they also became occasions for coordination, evaluation, and the quiet labor of organizational maintenance. This is where ritual and administration met. A sermon could strengthen religious understanding, but the meeting around it could also help leaders discuss programs, maintain communication with members, and keep the organization from becoming a name without movement.¹⁴ In that sense, *musyawarah* gave ritual life an organizational spine. It translated gathering into governance, and governance back into community. This may seem ordinary, almost too modest to be called historical. Yet local organizations are often sustained by precisely these modest repetitions: people come, listen, discuss, remember tasks, carry messages home, and return again.

Salawatan, *mawlid* commemorations, and annual gatherings gave this internal rhythm a more public sound. If *pengajian* gathered the community through instruction and discussion, *salawatan* gathered it through voice, emotion, and shared devotional atmosphere. The available documentation records *mawlid*-related activities and *salawat* events connected to NU circles in Klaten, including photographs of religious gatherings and commemorative events.¹⁵ These activities should not be reduced to cultural ornament. In NU religious life, *salawat* and *mawlid* are part of a devotional language through which love for the Prophet, attachment to tradition, and communal belonging are expressed together.¹⁶ In Klaten Utara, such activities helped NU become recognizable not by announcing itself aggressively, but by filling public religious time with familiar forms of worship, praise, and assembly. Annual gatherings worked in a similar way. They widened participation, brought ulama and community members into a shared space, and allowed NU to appear as a living religious presence rather than a private affiliation.

Through these recurring practices, NU in Klaten Utara did not simply maintain religious activities; it trained the public eye to recognize its presence. *Pengajian* created a rhythm of learning, *musyawarah* kept that rhythm connected to organizational responsibility, while *salawatan*, *mawlid*, and annual gatherings gave NU a devotional and public face. The result was not spectacular expansion, but something quieter and perhaps more durable: a community gradually learning

¹⁴ Mustofa, *interview*; MWC NU Klaten Utara, “Surat Edaran Pengajian Akbar Rutinan MWC NU Klaten Utara,” 2023; Sunarto, *interview*.

¹⁵ Mustofa, *interview*.

¹⁶ Mibtadin, “Community Religious Expression through Sholawat in Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Ngawi Village,” *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 42, no. 1 (2022).

where to gather, whom to trust, and how to remember itself as part of NU.¹⁷ This form of ritual visibility also mattered because it allowed NU to become socially recognizable without turning local religious life into open confrontation. In a setting where Muhammadiyah was perceived as influential, NU's recurring programs offered a way of being present without being combative.¹⁸ Its visibility was built less through polemic than through repetition: people came, listened, sang, deliberated, returned, and slowly made the organization part of the local religious landscape.

Everyday coexistence and flexible boundaries with Muhammadiyah

If the previous section showed how NU became visible through its own religious rhythms, this section turns to the social space in which that visibility had to be negotiated. In Klaten Utara, the relationship between NU and Muhammadiyah was not simply a story of competition between two Islamic organizations. Difference existed, and it mattered. Yet difference did not automatically harden into separation. It was carried into neighborhoods, family conversations, religious gatherings, and everyday gestures of recognition. Coexistence, in this sense, was not an abstract ideal. It was a practice of living close enough to remain different, but not so distant that difference became a wall.¹⁹

The experience of Mustofa is revealing in this regard. As an NU figure who had previously been part of Muhammadiyah, his trajectory complicates any rigid reading of organizational identity at the local level. He was not merely an observer standing outside the relationship between the two organizations; his own experience crossed that boundary. In the history of Klaten Utara, this matters because local affiliation was not always lived as a sealed category. A person could know Muhammadiyah from within, later serve NU, and still speak of cooperation rather than rupture. Mustofa's account suggests that the boundary between NU and Muhammadiyah was real, but porous. It marked difference in religious style, organizational memory, and communal belonging, yet it could also be crossed through personal history, social trust, and shared concern for local religious life. Such a figure helps us see Klaten Utara not as a battlefield of fixed identities, but as a landscape where organizational boundaries were negotiated by people whose lives did not always fit neatly inside institutional boxes.²⁰

The annual Idulfitri gatherings between members of MWC NU Klaten Utara and Muhammadiyah leaders or members show another layer of this coexistence. Idulfitri is not merely a calendrical event at the end of Ramadan; in local social

¹⁷ MWC NU Klaten Utara, "Surat Edaran Pengajian Akbar Rutinan MWC NU Klaten Utara," 2023.

¹⁸ Mustofa, *interview*; Sunarto, *interview*.

¹⁹ Nur Alhidayatillah and Sabiruddin, "Nahdlatul Ulama dan Muhammadiyah: Dua Wajah Organisasi Dakwah di Indonesia," *Al-Imam: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 9, no. 1 (2018): 15.

²⁰ Mustofa, *interview*.

life, it becomes a ritual moment for resetting relations, softening accumulated distance, and renewing recognition among neighbors and religious communities. In Klaten Utara, the practice of meeting, greeting, asking forgiveness, listening to religious messages, and sharing informal conversation created a social grammar through which difference could be acknowledged without being sharpened into hostility.²¹ This should not be romanticized as the disappearance of disagreement. NU and Muhammadiyah still carried different organizational memories and religious styles. Yet the Idulfitri gathering provided a recurring mechanism for keeping those differences socially manageable. It made reconciliation ordinary, annual, and embodied. People did not only speak about harmony; they sat in the same room, shook hands, exchanged greetings, and allowed the relationship to be renewed through repeated social contact.²²

The case of Ahmad brings this pattern down from the level of organizational leaders to the quieter level of neighborhood life. Ahmad was identified in the earlier field material as an NU member living in an environment where most residents were affiliated with or oriented toward Muhammadiyah. This small case is analytically important precisely because it is not spectacular. There is no dramatic debate, no public polemic, no institutional confrontation. Instead, what appears is a more ordinary form of coexistence: an NU resident taking part in *pengajian* organized by Muhammadiyah neighbors.²³ His participation suggests that organizational affiliation did not automatically determine the limits of religious sociability. To attend a Muhammadiyah *pengajian* did not require Ahmad to cease being NU; nor did his NU identity necessarily prevent him from entering a shared space of Islamic learning. The boundary remained, but it did not become a locked gate. It functioned more like a line that people knew was there, but could cross for the sake of neighborhood relations, religious learning, and everyday civility. This is where the Klaten Utara case becomes especially revealing. Intra-Muslim coexistence was not only produced by elite agreements or formal inter-organizational meetings; it was also sustained by residents who continued to live together after the event was over, after the sermon ended, after the organizational labels had done their work. Ahmad's case therefore should not be treated as proof that NU-Muhammadiyah differences were irrelevant. They were relevant. But their relevance was negotiated inside the routines of local life, where the demands of being a neighbor could soften the hard edges of being an organizational member.²⁴

Taken together, Mustofa's personal trajectory, the Idulfitri gatherings, and Ahmad's participation in Muhammadiyah-organized *pengajian* show that coexistence in Klaten Utara was neither a sentimental slogan nor a sign that organizational differences had disappeared. It was a practical arrangement, remade thro-

²¹ Mustofa, *interview*; Mukhlis Hudaf, *interview*, Klaten, May 15, 2025.

²² Safitri and Mujahidin, "Conflict Resolution."

²³ Ahmad, *interview*, Klaten Utara, June 7, 2025.

²⁴ Ahmad, *interview*; Safitri and Mujahidin, "Conflict Resolution," 236-47.

ugh repeated contact. NU and Muhammadiyah remained distinct in memory, ritual style, and institutional affiliation, but those distinctions were managed through neighborly ethics, shared religious spaces, and the willingness to recognize one another as part of the same local Muslim society.²⁵ This is the point at which the language of rivalry becomes too narrow. It cannot explain why an NU member could attend a Muhammadiyah *pengajian* without losing his own affiliation, or why a former Muhammadiyah participant could later become an NU leader and still narrate the relationship in terms of cooperation. The case of Klaten Utara therefore shows that intra-Muslim coexistence operated not by erasing organizational identities, but by making them livable within the ordinary textures of local life.²⁶

Civic collaboration and public engagement

Everyday coexistence became more visible when it moved into public work. In Klaten Utara, NU-Muhammadiyah relations were not sustained only by politeness, shared neighborhoods, or annual greetings; they also appeared in practical cooperation when local religious life required coordination, security, and social trust. Civic collaboration was therefore a different layer of coexistence. It did not erase organizational difference, but asked both sides to act together in public space. In this sense, cooperation became a way of making coexistence useful, not merely peaceful.²⁷

The cooperation between Banser and Kokam offers one of the clearest examples. Banser, associated with NU's Ansor network, and Kokam, associated with Muhammadiyah's youth-security tradition, each carries its own organizational history and symbolic identity. Yet in Klaten Utara, the earlier field material records occasions when Banser helped Kokam secure Muhammadiyah events, including religious or social activities that required crowd management and public order.²⁸ This kind of cooperation is modest, but historically revealing. Security work is not ceremonial from a distance; it requires bodily presence, trust, discipline, and coordination at the edge of an event, where disorder could easily disturb the gathering. When Banser and Kokam stood together in such contexts, they did more than "show tolerance." They performed a practical recognition of each other's role in maintaining local Muslim public life. The collaboration also suggests that NU-Muhammadiyah coexistence in Klaten Utara was not confined to elite statements or abstract calls for harmony. It was enacted in tasks: guarding entrances, managing participants, preventing disruption, and ensuring that reli-

²⁵ Mustofa, *interview*; Ahmad, *interview*.

²⁶ Nur Alhidayatillah and Sabiruddin, "Nahdlatul Ulama dan Muhammadiyah," 15; Safitri and Mujahidin, "Conflict Resolution," 236-47.

²⁷ Hudaf, *interview*; Mustofa, *interview*.

²⁸ Mustofa, *interview*; Karanganyar News, "Sinergitas Muhammadiyah dan NU Demi Kemashlahatan Umat," 2022.

gious events could proceed without turning organizational difference into social suspicion.²⁹



Figure 2. NU and Muhammadiyah Participation in the Palestine Solidarity Action in Klaten, 2023. Source: Merawati Sunantri, *Suara Merdeka Solo*, November 25, 2030.

Broader humanitarian actions in Klaten also show how civic collaboration could extend beyond routine religious events. The Palestine solidarity action held at Alun-Alun Klaten in November 2023, for instance, involved various Islamic and civic elements, including NU, Muhammadiyah, MUI, Banser, Kokam, local authorities, and wider community participants.³⁰ The importance of this event for the present article does not lie primarily in the Palestine issue itself, but in what the event reveals about local public religious cooperation. A humanitarian cause created a shared civic platform where different Islamic organizations could appear together, coordinate roles, gather donations, and address the wider public. Disaster response offers another supporting example. LAZISNU Klaten's assistance after the 2024 windstorm in Tambong Wetan and MDMC's preparedness during the Merapi emergency show that both NU and Muhammadiyah possessed their own humanitarian infrastructures, even when operating through different organizational channels.³¹ These examples should not be overstretched into a

²⁹ Mustofa, *interview*.

³⁰ Achmad Hussein Syauqi, "Ribuan Warga Klaten Gelar Aksi Peduli Palestina, Shalat Ghaib di Tengah Guyuran Hujan," *Detik Jateng*, November 24, 2023, <https://www.detik.com/jateng/berita/d-7055058/gelar-aksi-bela-palestina-warga-klaten-salat-gaib-di-tengah-hujan/> (accessed June 12, 2025); Hudaf, *interview*.

³¹ NU Core, "LAZISNU Kabupaten Klaten," <https://lazisnuklaten.com/> (accessed June 12, 2025); Syifa, "Merapi Erupsi, Relawan MDMC Berjaga di Pos Koordinasi." January 27, 2021,

claim of permanent unity. They show something more specific: in moments of public concern, organizational difference could be temporarily reorganized around service, relief, and moral responsibility.

Civic collaboration therefore transformed coexistence into public practice. In the previous section, coexistence appeared through neighborly relations, Idulfitri gatherings, and shared religious spaces; here it appeared through tasks that required coordination in front of the wider community. Banser and Kokam cooperation, humanitarian solidarity, and social assistance all suggest that NU-Muhammadiyah relations in Klaten Utara and wider Klaten were not limited to polite distance. They could become active, practical, and socially useful.³² This does not mean that the two organizations became the same, nor that differences in religious style, institutional memory, or social orientation disappeared. They did not. But local civic work created occasions in which those differences were not the main problem to be solved. The immediate question became simpler and more public: who would help, who would guard, who would organize, who would respond? In that practical grammar of service, coexistence gained weight. It became less a statement about harmony and more a habit of working beside one another when local life required it.³³

Consolidation through coexistence

The Klaten Utara case suggests that local consolidation did not require NU to define itself against Muhammadiyah. This is perhaps the most important point of the article. NU strengthened its own institutional life while inhabiting a social-religious environment in which Muhammadiyah was perceived as influential. The process was not frictionless, and it should not be described as a seamless harmony. Yet the available evidence points to a more subtle pattern than rivalry: NU became more organized, more visible, and more socially recognizable through a combination of inward structuring and outward negotiation. In other words, coexistence was not a decorative background to NU's development. It was one of the conditions through which local consolidation became possible.

Three findings stand out. First, administrative consolidation gave NU a firmer institutional body. Leadership structures, decrees, secretarial work, surviving archives, and remembered organizational transitions helped MWC NU Klaten Utara move beyond a partly cultural or memory-based presence into a more legible local organization. Second, ritual visibility gave that institutional body a public rhythm. *Pengajian*, *salawatan*, *Mawlid*, *musyawarah*, and annual gatherings allowed NU to be encountered repeatedly by members and the wider community,

<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2021/01/merapi-erupsi-relawan-mdmc-berjaga-di-pos-koordinasi/> (accessed June 13, 2025).

³² Mustofa, *interview*; Karanganyar News, "Sinergitas Muhammadiyah dan NU Demi Kemashlahatan Umat."

³³ Hudaf, *interview*.

not as an abstract affiliation, but as a recurring presence in religious life. Third, intra-Muslim coexistence shaped the social field in which this recognition unfolded. Muhammadiyah was not merely an opponent, nor simply a neutral backdrop. It was part of the local landscape through which NU negotiated its position, whether through personal trajectories such as Mustofa's, Idulfitri gatherings, Ahmad's participation in Muhammadiyah-organized *pengajian*, or practical cooperation in public events. These three findings are linked. Structure without visibility would have remained thin; visibility without social negotiation could have become confrontational; coexistence without organizational consolidation might have left NU present but weakly institutionalized.

This synthesis also clarifies the article's broader contribution. The Klaten Utara case complicates rigid narratives that treat NU and Muhammadiyah primarily as rival ideological blocs. Such narratives are not entirely wrong, since difference in ritual orientation, institutional culture, and political history remains real.³⁴ But they are incomplete. At the local level, Islamic life often moves through arrangements less dramatic than conflict and less simple than harmony. It is shaped by selective cooperation, neighborly recognition, shared gatherings, and the practical need to keep social life workable.³⁵ Klaten Utara shows that coexistence is not the absence of difference. It is the disciplined management of difference through ordinary practices. For NU, this meant that local consolidation did not require withdrawal from Muhammadiyah-influenced spaces. Instead, NU strengthened itself while learning to inhabit those spaces with care, repetition, and civic usefulness. The result is a more grounded picture of Indonesian Islam: national organizations become historically meaningful not only through central leadership, ideology, or formal programs, but also through the small local arts of appearing, gathering, negotiating, and working beside others.

Conclusion

This article has shown that NU's development in Klaten Utara after 1998 was shaped through a gradual process of local consolidation rather than sudden institutional expansion. The formation of leadership structures, the survival of administrative documents, and the continuity of organizational memory helped MWC NU Klaten Utara become more legible as a local institution. At the same time, NU's presence was strengthened through recurring religious programs: *pengajian*, *salawatan*, *mawlid* commemorations, *musyawarah*, and annual gatherings. These practices did not merely fill the organizational calendar. They created rhythm, recognition, and trust. Through them, NU became visible not only as a formal structure, but as a community repeatedly encountered in local religious life.

³⁴ Arifianto, "From Ideological to Political Sectarianism"; Alhidayatillah and Sabiruddin, "Nahdlatul Ulama dan Muhammadiyah."

³⁵ Safitri and Mujahidin, "Conflict Resolution."

The relationship with Muhammadiyah was central to this process, but not simply as a challenge or external pressure. Since reliable comparative data on membership, mosques, schools, or affiliated institutions is unavailable, this article has not claimed Muhammadiyah's statistical dominance in Klaten Utara. Instead, it has treated Muhammadiyah's strong presence as a locally perceived social-religious context reconstructed through interviews, organizational memory, and everyday practice. Within that context, NU-Muhammadiyah relations were marked by flexible boundaries, Idulfitri gatherings, shared religious spaces, neighborhood interaction, and civic cooperation. The cases of Mustofa and Ahmad are especially revealing: they show that organizational affiliation remained meaningful, yet did not always prevent movement across social and religious spaces. Coexistence in Klaten Utara, therefore, was not the erasure of difference. It was the local management of difference through repeated contact, practical recognition, and the ordinary ethics of living together.

The contribution of this study lies in its effort to read Indonesian Islamic organizations from below, at the subdistrict level where national identities become local practices. The Klaten Utara case suggests that NU and Muhammadiyah should not always be approached through the rigid frame of rivalry, even though their differences remain historically and socially significant. Their relationship may also be shaped through organizational memory, ritual visibility, neighborly coexistence, and selective civic collaboration. In this sense, NU's local consolidation was not achieved by escaping a Muhammadiyah-influenced environment, but by learning to inhabit it through structure, repetition, and negotiated social presence. Future research may strengthen this argument by adding comparative quantitative data on mosques, schools, membership, charitable institutions, and organizational assets affiliated with NU and Muhammadiyah in Klaten Utara. Such data would not replace local memory and oral testimony, but would give the history a sharper institutional map.

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