

***Muakhi* as a Relational Resource in House-of-Worship Disputes: Anjau Silau and FKUB Mediation in Bandar Lampung**

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Abstract

Disputes over houses of worship in Indonesia are often treated as regulatory problems, although their development also reflects unequal majority-minority relations, contested building use, local opposition, and limited communication. This article examines how *muakhi*, a Lampung conception of brotherhood or socially constituted kinship, was interpreted and translated into *anjau silau*, a relational practice of visiting and dialogue, in the GKKD and GPIN disputes in Bandar Lampung. It also examines how the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) connected these culturally grounded practices with formal mediation. The study employed a qualitative multiple-case design based on interviews with 11 purposively selected informants and relevant case documents. Within-case and cross-case thematic analyses were used to compare the disputes' trajectories, cultural interpretations, communication practices, mediation processes, and immediate arrangements. The findings show that participants associated *muakhi* with brotherhood, mutual recognition, visiting, listening, and deliberation rather than with a single formal customary procedure. Its most observable enactment in the two cases was *anjau silau*. However, the documented visits occurred primarily after tensions had emerged and were perceived as helping reopen communication and limit further escalation rather than preventing the original disputes. FKUB connected these relational practices with multiparty meetings and administrative negotiations. Mediation produced a temporary worship arrangement in the GPIN case, whereas the available evidence does not establish a conclusive settlement in the GKKD case. The findings suggest that *muakhi* can provide a culturally intelligible relational resource for mediation when its application remains inclusive, consistent with religious rights, and connected to transparent institutional procedures.

Keywords: *Muakhi; Anjau Silau; Houses of Worship; Interreligious Mediation; FKUB*

A. Introduction

Disputes over houses of worship in Indonesia occur at the intersection of religious freedom, administrative regulation, local politics, and everyday relations between religious communities. Although such disputes are often framed as licensing problems, their development is also shaped by unequal majority-minority relations, concerns about religious expansion, limited

communication, and disagreement over how buildings are used for collective worship (Crouch 2010; Qodir 2021; Tamba 2024). Consequently, compliance with administrative procedures does not by itself ensure social acceptance, just as local acceptance cannot substitute for the legal protection of religious freedom.

The establishment and use of houses of worship are governed by the 2006 Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs, commonly identified as Joint Regulation No. 9 and No. 8 of 2006 (Republic of Indonesia 2006). The regulation provides procedures for maintaining interreligious harmony, empowering the Forum for Religious Harmony, and establishing houses of worship. Studies of its implementation, however, show that administrative requirements may become entangled with local political interests, social pressure, and minority-majority inequalities (Crouch 2010; Tamba 2024). Research on disputes in Pondok Aren and Laut Dendang similarly indicates that inadequate communication, concerns about religious proselytization, and conflicting interpretations of licensing requirements can intensify local opposition (Aisyah and Sairi 2023; Arifinsyah and Fitriani 2019).

These dynamics are evident in Bandar Lampung. In 2023, disputes arose over the use of residential buildings for collective worship by the Gereja Kristen Kemah Daud (GKKD) congregation in Rajabasa Jaya and the Gereja Protestan Injili Nusantara (GPIN) congregation in Way Kandis. In both locations, disagreement over building use and licensing intersected with limited prior communication between the congregations and surrounding residents. Previous research on the GKKD case identifies regulatory barriers, weak civic ties, and insufficient communication as important sources of the prolonged dispute (Riyanto 2025). The two cases therefore cannot be reduced either to administrative noncompliance or to religious difference alone; they need to be examined as disputes in which legal procedures, social recognition, and intergroup relations interact.

Research in several Indonesian settings has shown that local cultural resources can contribute to interreligious communication and conflict management. Local wisdom may provide shared language, recognized actors, and relational practices through which conflicting parties can communicate, although its operation depends on local power relations and institutional support (Agung et al. 2024; Halim and Pahrudin 2019). This qualification is important because cultural practices do not automatically produce inclusive outcomes. They may assist dialogue and social repair when they recognize the parties as equal participants, but they can also reproduce exclusion when local custom is treated as superior to legal protections or minority rights.

In Lampung, *muakhi*—a local conception of brotherhood or socially constituted kinship—has been discussed as a cultural resource for rebuilding

relations after communal and ethnic conflict. Philosophical analysis identifies spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions within *muakhi*, while research in plural communities in Lampung shows that cultural integration operates through interdependence, adaptation, and sustained interaction across ethnic and religious boundaries (Qurun and Dudha 2020; Kesuma 2017). Hartoyo (2019) shows that *muakhi* contributed to the restoration of interethnic relations after communal conflict, while also identifying resistance to its more formal ceremonial implementation. Salim and Ruslan (2021) similarly describe its use in pre- and post-conflict management through deliberation and cooperation among customary leaders, government actors, and community groups. Research on the Bandar Lampung Forum for Religious Harmony (*Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, hereafter FKUB) has also examined the institution's broader strategies for fostering religious tolerance (Ruslan and Sonhaji 2021). These studies demonstrate the relevance of local values and institutional actors, but they do not fully explain how *muakhi* is translated into concrete dialogic practices in disputes over houses of worship. Studies of culturally grounded conflict management in Ciamis and Palu similarly show that local cultural resources are most constructive when they are connected to institutional actors and inclusive deliberation rather than treated as autonomous substitutes for legal protection (Komaruddin 2016; Dachlan 2021). Comparative research on indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms also indicates that their effectiveness and continuity depend on community acceptance, institutional recognition, and the capacity to respond to changing social conditions (Gena and Jarra 2023).

This article addresses this gap by examining *muakhi* as a culturally intelligible relational resource and *anjau silau* as one of its practical expressions in interreligious mediation. *Anjau silau* is understood here as a culturally recognized practice of visiting others to maintain relationships, exchange information, and open dialogue. The article does not treat *muakhi* as an inherently effective or self-contained customary solution. Instead, it examines how participants interpreted its relational values, how those values were enacted through visits and dialogue, and how they were connected to formal mediation. The article also extends previous research on the GKKD dispute by comparing it with the GPIN case.

The study is guided by two questions. First, how was *muakhi* interpreted and translated into the relational practice of *anjau silau* in the GKKD and GPIN disputes? Second, how did FKUB connect *muakhi*-informed relational practices with formal procedures in mediating the two disputes? These questions direct attention to the meanings participants attributed to *muakhi*, the practices through which those meanings were enacted, and the interaction between cultural and institutional mechanisms. By comparing the two disputes, the article offers a context-specific account of how a local ethic of brotherhood was mobilized

within contemporary interreligious mediation. It argues that *muakhi* can provide relational resources for dialogue only when its application remains inclusive, does not restrict the rights of particular religious groups, and operates alongside legal guarantees of religious freedom.

B. Methods

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case design to examine how local cultural practices and institutional mediation were mobilized in disputes over houses of worship in Bandar Lampung. The two cases involved the Gereja Kristen Kemah Daud (GKKD) congregation in Rajabasa Jaya and the Gereja Protestan Injili Nusantara (GPIN) congregation in Way Kandis. Both cases concerned the use of residential buildings for collective worship, objections from surrounding residents, and mediation involving the Forum for Religious Harmony (*Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, FKUB). Each dispute was first examined as a bounded case and was then compared to identify similarities and differences in its context, communication patterns, mediation process, and use of *muakhi* and *anjau silau* (Yin 2018).

Fieldwork was conducted in Bandar Lampung in 2024. Eleven informants were selected purposively on the basis of their direct involvement in the disputes, knowledge of the mediation processes, or understanding of Lampung cultural practices. They comprised one FKUB representative; two congregational representatives, one from GKKD and one from GPIN; four residents or neighborhood representatives from Rajabasa Jaya and Way Kandis; and four customary or academic informants with knowledge of *muakhi*, *anjau silau*, and intergroup relations in Lampung. This role-based selection was intended to include institutional, congregational, community, and cultural perspectives rather than to achieve statistical representation (Palinkas et al. 2015). The distribution and relevance of the informant categories are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Informant Categories and Their Relevance to the Study

Informant category	Number	Relevance to the study
FKUB representative	1	Institutional mediation, interreligious communication, and coordination with government actors
GKKD and GPIN representatives	2	Congregational experiences, licensing processes, objections, and mediation
Residents or neighborhood representatives	4	Community concerns, local communication, and the development of each dispute

Customary academic informants	or	4	Interpretations of <i>muakhi</i> , <i>anjau silau</i> , and their applicability across religious communities
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Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2024

Primary data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews addressing the chronology of each dispute, participants' interpretations of its causes, communication between the parties, mediation processes, and understandings of *muakhi* and *anjau silau*. The interviews were conducted in person, recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim. Secondary materials included available mediation agreements, correspondence or records concerning permits and community objections, FKUB notes, relevant customary statements, and news reports about the two cases. These materials were used to reconstruct the chronology and compare interview accounts with the available documentary evidence. To reduce the ethical risks associated with sensitive interreligious disputes, the findings identify informants primarily by their institutional or community roles. Interview excerpts presented in English were translated from Indonesian while retaining their original meaning.

Analysis proceeded in two stages. First, within-case analysis was conducted separately for GKKD and GPIN. Interview transcripts and documentary materials were coded according to the sources of tension, communication practices, mediation activities, the role of FKUB, and references to *muakhi* and *anjau silau*. Second, cross-case analysis compared the triggering issues, communication patterns, forms of mediation, immediate arrangements, and reported limitations of the two cases. The resulting themes were organized around the two research questions: participants' interpretations of *muakhi* and its enactment through *anjau silau*, and FKUB's connection of these relational practices with formal mediation (Braun and Clarke 2006; Yin 2018). Credibility was pursued through source triangulation across congregational, neighborhood, customary, academic, and FKUB accounts; comparison of interviews with available documents; limited confirmation of key information with accessible informants; and maintenance of interview, coding, and case-comparison records (Nowell et al. 2017; Tracy 2010). Because the data were retrospective and collected during a limited field period, the analysis identifies reported interpretations, practices, and perceived mechanisms rather than establishing that *muakhi* or *anjau silau* caused conflict prevention or produced long-term reconciliation.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

The within-case and cross-case analyses of interviews with 11 informants and the available case documents produced three related findings. First, the GKKD and GPIN disputes followed similar trajectories involving contested

residential building use, administrative uncertainty, and inadequate prior communication, although their immediate arrangements differed. Second, participants interpreted *muakhi* as a relational ethic of brotherhood, mutual recognition, visiting, listening, and deliberation, while *anjau silau* represented its most observable enactment in the two disputes. Third, FKUB connected these culturally grounded relational practices with meetings, administrative discussions, and multiparty mediation. The evidence was strongest in documenting these interpretations and practices rather than their long-term effects.

1) Dispute Trajectories in the GKKD and GPIN Cases

The GKKD dispute concerned the use of a residential property associated with the pastor in Rajabasa Jaya for regular collective worship. Residents and congregational representatives offered different accounts of the communication and licensing processes preceding the conflict. Several neighborhood informants stated that residents had not received sufficient information about the regular use of the property for worship. A neighborhood representative explained:

“We had warned the pastor that a house should not be used for worship before the permit process was completed. Residents became suspicious because worship activities were held there every Sunday. We went to the house to ask that the service be stopped, and some residents entered after receiving no response.” (Neighborhood representative, GKKD case, 2024; translated from Indonesian)

Tension culminated on February 19, 2023, when residents entered the property and the worship service was stopped. The GKKD representative described the incident from the congregation’s position:

“A group of residents came while the service was taking place and asked us to stop. They said that we did not have official permission to use the house as a place of worship. We tried to explain that the licensing process was underway. As the situation became more tense, the police stopped the service to maintain order. We were disappointed because we only wanted to worship peacefully.” (Congregational representative, GKKD case, 2024; translated from Indonesian)

These accounts agreed that the residential property was being used for collective worship and that the permit process remained contested, but they differed over the adequacy of prior notification and the congregation’s efforts to comply with administrative requirements. The data therefore do not support describing the incident solely as a licensing violation or solely as religious hostility. It developed through disagreement over building use, legal procedure, neighborhood communication, and the congregation’s right to worship.

One customary statement presented during the dispute asserted a long-standing objection to church construction within the customary territory of Rajabasa. Its complete archival identity and legal status could not be established

from the available materials. It is therefore analyzed as a position articulated during the dispute rather than as a legally binding prohibition.

The GPIN dispute in Way Kandis followed a comparable trajectory. The pastor's residence had been used for collective worship when the surrounding area was less densely populated. As the neighborhood grew, residents began questioning the regular use of the house for congregational activities. A community informant stated:

"The objection did not come from only one person; it was the position of residents in RT 06. The objection was expressed on February 5, 2023, because permission, particularly communication and approval from the surrounding residents, was considered unclear." (Community informant, GPIN case, 2024; translated from Indonesian)

After the objection was expressed, the district administration facilitated meetings involving GPIN representatives, residents, FKUB, police, and the local military territorial officer (*Bintara Pembina Desa*, Babinsa). Participants considered several temporary worship locations while the dispute over the residence remained unresolved. The GPIN representative reported that the congregation attended mediation at the district office with FKUB, the police, the local military territorial officer, and community representatives. The congregation was given 14 days to address the permit issue, while several temporary worship locations—including the district and municipal halls—were considered. Following further deliberation, the parties agreed that the congregation would temporarily use the Bandar Lampung Police Hall. At the time of data collection, the GPIN congregation continued using the Police Hall as a temporary place of worship. This arrangement reduced the immediate confrontation over the residence but did not settle the congregation's need for a permanent worship space.

Community and congregational accounts further indicated that the dispute over the building did not end everyday relations between the GPIN pastor and surrounding residents. The pastor reportedly continued participating in neighborhood activities, including mutual assistance, social events, national celebrations, and support for residents experiencing bereavement. One resident explained:

"We did have a dispute, and the mediation took place at the district office with FKUB, the police, and the district authorities. We did not have a personal problem with the pastor. The problem was the use of the house for collective worship. We still involved him in community activities." (Neighborhood informant, GPIN case, 2024; translated from Indonesian)

The distinction between disagreement over the worship space and continued neighborhood interaction was more visible in the GPIN case than in the available GKKD data. It indicates that conflict over a religious building does not necessarily eliminate all forms of everyday intergroup cooperation. At the

same time, continued social contact did not resolve the restrictions affecting the congregation's worship space. The principal similarities and differences between the two dispute trajectories are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Cross-Case Comparison of the GKKD and GPIN Disputes

Dimension	GKKD, Rajabasa Jaya	GPIN, Way Kandis
Contested practice	Use of a residential property for collective worship	Use of the pastor's residence for collective worship
Main disputed issues	Permits, prior notification, building use, customary objections, and the interruption of worship	Permits, neighborhood communication, building use, and local acceptance
Peak of dispute	Worship service stopped on February 19, 2023	Community objection expressed on February 5, 2023
Main actors	Congregation, residents, neighborhood and customary representatives, FKUB, local government, and police	Congregation, residents, FKUB, district authorities, police, and the local military territorial officer
Immediate response	Communication and mediation involving FKUB and other actors	Several mediation meetings and negotiation of a temporary worship location
Documented arrangement	No conclusive settlement was documented in the available data	Temporary use of the Bandar Lampung Police Hall
Continuing issue	Final legal, spatial, and relational status remained unresolved in the available data	Temporary relocation did not settle the need for a permanent worship space

Source: Field interviews and case documents, 2024.

2) *Muakhi* and Its Enactment through Anjau Silau

Customary and academic informants broadly defined *muakhi* as brotherhood or socially constituted kinship. They associated it with maintaining relationships, visiting others, mutual recognition, and settling disagreements through deliberation. Their accounts nevertheless showed that *muakhi* was not a single, uncontested practice. Some distinguished between its broad relational meaning and formal customary procedures for incorporating someone into kinship.

One cultural informant cautioned that formal customary incorporation may not be equally acceptable across religious communities:

“Muakhi has several forms, including the formal adoption of someone as kin. When it remains a personal or family relationship, it may not create a problem. Difficulties can arise when it involves a community or people of another religion because the process uses Lampung customary procedures.” (Cultural informant, 2024; translated from Indonesian)

Other customary and academic informants related *muakhi* to the interaction between Lampung culture and Islamic values. These accounts indicate that its application in an interreligious dispute requires adaptation. In the GKKD and GPIN cases, the documented practices emphasized visiting, listening, maintaining contact, mutual respect, and deliberation. The available evidence does not indicate that a formal customary incorporation ritual was used in either case.

Within this broader relational understanding of *muakhi*, participants described *anjau silau* as a practice of visiting religious communities, residents, and local figures to initiate direct conversation. Across the interviews, limited prior communication was repeatedly identified as a condition that allowed suspicion and disagreement to intensify. Congregational and community informants did not always agree about who had failed to communicate or whether sufficient notification had been provided. They nevertheless shared the view that more direct communication before the use of the residences for regular worship might have reduced misunderstanding. An FKUB representative explained:

“FKUB often holds meetings that we call *anjau silau*. We visit churches and meet the pastors to conduct dialogue and discuss the problems they face.” (FKUB representative, 2024; translated from Indonesian)

The visits allowed FKUB to hear accounts outside formal mediation meetings and encouraged the parties to explain their positions directly. Congregational representatives reported that FKUB maintained communication with them, visited them, and advised them to establish more regular contact with surrounding residents. Community informants similarly associated visits and face-to-face meetings with opportunities to express objections without waiting for tensions to develop into public confrontation.

The timing of these activities is important. In the two cases, the most clearly documented *anjau silau* visits occurred after disagreement or confrontation had already emerged. The data therefore do not show that the practice prevented the original conflicts. Informants instead attributed two more limited functions to it. First, visits could reopen communication after relations had become strained. Second, continued contact was expected to reduce the possibility that unresolved disagreements would escalate again. Its preventive relevance was therefore expressed as an anticipated or perceived function rather than as a directly observed causal outcome.

In practice, *anjau silau* represented an observable enactment of the broader relational elements that participants associated with *muakhi*. It involved visits, direct communication, listening to the parties' accounts, and encouraging continued interaction. These activities supported renewed dialogue and efforts

to contain escalation, while formal decisions and negotiated arrangements remained dependent on the institutions and parties involved.

3) FKUB's Connection of Muakhi-Informed Practices and Formal Mediation

The interviews identified four recurring components of FKUB's involvement. The first was separate contact with congregational representatives, residents, and local figures to collect information about the dispute. The second was the use of visits and less formal conversations to reduce distance between the parties. The third was the facilitation of meetings involving governmental, security, congregational, and community actors. The fourth was continued advice and communication after an immediate arrangement had been discussed.

An FKUB representative summarized the sequence as follows:

"We conduct interactive dialogue, which we call *anjau silau*, by visiting the parties to understand the problem. We then facilitate mediation so that both sides can explain their positions, followed by education about peace and religious moderation." (FKUB representative, 2024; translated from Indonesian)

Congregational accounts supported the presence of continued communication. The GKKD representative described FKUB as maintaining contact, visiting the congregation, and advising it to communicate with the surrounding community. The GPIN representative likewise reported repeated meetings concerning the use of the residence and the search for a temporary worship location. Community informants confirmed the participation of FKUB, district authorities, and police in mediation, although they did not always interpret the problem or proposed solution in the same way as the congregational representatives.

The relationship between informal visits and formal mediation is most clearly visible in the GPIN case. Initial communication was followed by meetings at the district office involving multiple institutions and community representatives. When proposed temporary locations encountered objections or were considered unsuitable, further negotiations continued until the Police Hall was accepted. The process produced an immediate compromise by providing the congregation with a temporary space while removing collective worship from the contested residence. It did not resolve the permanent spatial and administrative question.

In the GKKD case, the interviews also referred to visits, communication, and mediation involving FKUB, government actors, police, congregational representatives, and residents. However, the available materials do not specify a final agreement, alternative worship space, completed permit, or mutually acknowledged restoration of relations. The evidence consequently supports the

finding that FKUB connected relational contact with institutional mediation, but it does not support describing the GKKD conflict as conclusively resolved.

Across the two cases, FKUB did not replace formal procedures with local culture. It used the relational language of *muakhi* and the visiting practice of *anjau silau* to support communication before and during institutional meetings. Informal visits allowed the parties' concerns to be identified, while formal meetings brought those concerns into negotiations involving congregational, community, governmental, and security actors. The outcomes nevertheless remained shaped by unresolved questions of permits, building use, local acceptance, and religious rights. FKUB's contribution was thus most evident in the connection it created between relationship-building and institutional mediation, whereas the durability of the resulting arrangements could not yet be established from the available data.

2. Discussion

The comparison of the GKKD and GPIN cases indicates that participants invoked *muakhi* not as a separate or self-contained customary dispute-resolution system, but as a culturally intelligible relational framework. Participants associated it with brotherhood, visiting, listening, mutual recognition, and deliberation. Its most observable enactment in the two disputes was *anjau silau*, through which visits and direct conversation could support communication after relations had become strained. FKUB connected these relational practices with meetings, administrative procedures, and negotiations involving congregations, residents, government officials, and security actors. The significance of *muakhi* therefore lay in providing locally recognizable relational language and practices that could support, but not replace, formal mediation and legal protection.

This interpretation requires attention to the structural context of the disputes. In both cases, limited prior communication contributed to suspicion, but communication alone does not explain why minority congregations faced restrictions on the use of residential buildings for worship. Research on Indonesia's 2006 Joint Regulation shows that licensing procedures are implemented through local political and social relations that may place minority communities in unequal negotiating positions (Crouch 2010; Tamba 2024). Research on the GKKD case likewise identifies regulatory barriers, weak civic ties, and an inadequate governmental response as interconnected sources of prolonged conflict (Riyanto 2025). The present findings thus do not assign responsibility solely to congregations for failing to communicate. They indicate that administrative ambiguity, community opposition, unequal power, and weak interpersonal contact operated together.

The Thomas-Kilmann framework helps describe changes in interaction, provided that its categories are used as interpretive modes rather than fixed

labels for particular religious groups. Limited early communication resembled avoidance because contested issues were not discussed before tensions accumulated. Attempts to stop worship and insist on unilateral positions displayed competitive interaction. The temporary relocation negotiated in the GPIN case resembled compromise, while meetings involving congregations, residents, FKUB, and government actors contained elements of collaboration. These modes can coexist or change during a dispute; collaboration should therefore not be inferred merely from the occurrence of a meeting (Thomas and Kilmann 1974; Thomas 1992). In the present cases, the evidence documents movement toward negotiation but does not establish that all parties achieved equally satisfactory outcomes.

The findings also qualify affirmative accounts of local wisdom. Indonesian studies show that local cultural resources can support interreligious communication and provide recognizable pathways for conflict management (Agung et al. 2024; Halim and Pahrudin 2019). Studies in Lampung similarly associate *muakhi* with restoring relations after communal conflict and organizing cooperation before and after ethnic disputes (Hartoyo 2019; Salim and Ruslan 2021). Hartoyo (2019), however, also records resistance to the more formal ceremonial implementation of *angkon muakhi*. The cultural informant in the present study raised a comparable concern: a customary process shaped by Islamic and ethnic symbols may not automatically provide an inclusive framework for Christian congregations. This tension explains why the broad relational elements of *muakhi*—brotherhood, visiting, listening, and deliberation—were more adaptable than formal incorporation into customary kinship. Comparable research on disputes over worship spaces in Aceh Singkil and Semarang shows that dialogue and regulatory socialization may reduce immediate tension while political interests, institutional weaknesses, unequal power, and ambiguous administrative standards continue to obstruct durable resolution (Zain and Maturidi 2023; Suneki et al. 2026).

FKUB's position further complicates a simple description of it as a neutral mediator. Mediation generally involves a third party that assists disputants in identifying issues, communicating interests, and negotiating possible arrangements without unilaterally imposing a decision (Moore 2014). FKUB performed several of these functions by contacting the parties, facilitating meetings, and encouraging negotiated arrangements. At the same time, it operated within the regulatory structure governing houses of worship and interacted closely with local government. Its role was therefore both relational and institutional. Previous studies likewise describe FKUB as an intermediary that communicates across religious communities while facing institutional, political, and organizational constraints (Miharja and Mulyana 2019; Ruslan and Sonhaji 2021). Research on FKUB in Central Java and in Nganjuk and Kediri

similarly indicates that its effectiveness depends on communication strategies, institutional capacity, local relationships, and sustained coordination with religious and governmental actors (Rokhmad 2016; Sutamaji and Hakim 2024). In Pondok Aren, for example, mediation did not eliminate opposition to a church even after institutional actors became involved (Aisyah and Sairi 2023). The presence of FKUB should consequently be treated as a condition that enables dialogue, not as evidence that mediation will necessarily succeed.

A conflict-transformation perspective clarifies why a temporary administrative arrangement is not equivalent to relational change. Lederach (1997) distinguishes the immediate settlement of an episode from the longer process of changing the relationships and structures through which conflict is reproduced. The continued participation of the GPIN pastor in neighborhood activities suggests that some everyday social ties remained intact despite disagreement over the worship space. Continued visits and communication could provide a basis for relational repair. Nevertheless, the available data do not document attitudes or interactions over a sufficiently long period to establish durable reconciliation, positive peace, or transformed majority-minority relations. The findings are more appropriately understood as evidence of initial relational practices accompanying conflict management.

The preceding analysis can be consolidated by distinguishing participants' cultural interpretations, the practices documented in the two cases, the institutional role of FKUB, and the limits of the available evidence. Table 3 summarizes these relationships. It should not be read as a linear sequence in which *muakhi* automatically produces mediation or reconciliation. Rather, it presents the analytical connections among the relational meanings attributed to *muakhi*, their enactment through *anjau silau*, the conflict-management patterns identified in the cases, and the institutional processes facilitated by FKUB.

Table 3.
Synthesis of Empirical Findings and Analytical Interpretations

Analytical element	Interpretation in the two cases	Empirical manifestation	Evidentiary boundary
<i>Muakhi</i>	A relational ethic of brotherhood, mutual recognition, visiting, listening, and deliberation	Relational language used to encourage communication and continued interaction	Participants did not interpret <i>muakhi</i> uniformly, and formal customary incorporation was not documented in either case
<i>Anjau silau</i>	A practical enactment of the relational elements	Visits, direct conversation, listening to the parties, and	The most clearly documented visits occurred after tensions emerged;

	associated with maintaining their preventive <i>muakhi</i> communication effect was perceived rather than causally demonstrated
Thomas-Kilmann conflict modes	Avoiding and Limited early The modes are competing communication, interpretive patterns preceded opposing positions, rather negotiation, while temporary compromise in than fixed elements of compromise in particular collaboration GPIN, and religious or appeared during multiparty community mediation meetings groups
FKUB mediation	A connection Separate contact FKUB's between with the parties, involvement culturally institutional enabled dialogue grounded meetings, but did not relational administrative guarantee an practices and discussion, and equitable or formal negotiation permanent procedures resolution
Conflict transformation	Initial efforts to Continued neighborhood The available data maintain or interaction in do not establish reopen relationships GPIN and durable alongside conflict communication reconciliation, management involving FKUB positive peace, or and the parties long-term relational transformation
Immediate outcomes	Different A temporary Temporary arrangements worship location arrangements emerged from the for GPIN; no should not be two mediation conclusive treated as processes settlement permanent documented for resolution or GKKD evidence of sustained harmony

Source: Authors' analysis of field interviews and case documents, 2024

As Table 3 shows, *muakhi* supplied a culturally recognizable relational vocabulary, while *anjau silau* represented its most observable enactment through visits, listening, and direct communication. FKUB connected these relational practices with formal meetings and administrative negotiation. However, neither the cultural practices nor FKUB's involvement guaranteed an equitable or permanent settlement. This synthesis supports a bounded interpretation of

muakhi as a relational resource that accompanied institutional mediation rather than as an autonomous mechanism of conflict resolution.

For policy and practice, the comparison suggests that communication should begin before disagreement becomes public confrontation, but this recommendation must not transfer the burden of securing religious freedom entirely to minority congregations. Early notification, direct visits, and inclusive meetings may reduce uncertainty, while governmental and FKUB procedures must remain transparent, documented, and consistent with legal protection for all religious groups. Local cultural practices are most constructive when they facilitate equal participation and remain open to people who do not share the ethnic or religious background from which those practices originated. These conditions determine whether *muakhi* operates as an inclusive relational resource or reproduces the boundaries that mediation is intended to address.

D. Conclusion

The comparison of the GKKD and GPIN disputes indicates that *muakhi* was interpreted by participants as a culturally intelligible relational framework based on brotherhood, visiting, listening, mutual recognition, and deliberation. Its most observable enactment in the two cases was *anjau silau*, which involved direct visits and efforts to understand the parties' positions. The documented visits occurred primarily after tensions had emerged; the evidence therefore does not establish that *muakhi* or *anjau silau* prevented the original disputes. Participants instead described these practices as helping reopen communication, limit further escalation, and reduce the possibility of renewed tension. FKUB connected these relational practices with formal meetings, administrative discussions, and negotiations involving congregations, residents, government authorities, and security actors. This bridging role is most clearly documented in the GPIN case, where mediation produced a temporary place-of-worship arrangement, whereas the available evidence does not establish a conclusive settlement in the GKKD case.

The article contributes a comparative explanation of how *muakhi* was translated from a broad ethic of brotherhood into relational practices within contemporary interreligious mediation. Its contribution is not a claim that local culture automatically resolves religious conflict, but an account of how culturally recognizable values may support formal mediation when they remain inclusive and consistent with the legal protection of religious freedom. Temporary administrative arrangements should therefore not be treated as evidence of durable reconciliation. Because the study relies on retrospective accounts from 11 informants and a limited set of case documents, its conclusions are confined to the two cases examined. Further research should trace mediation outcomes longitudinally and examine how minority congregations evaluate the inclusiveness of *muakhi*-informed approaches. For practice, FKUB and local

governments should combine culturally accessible dialogue with transparent procedures, equal participation, and protection of every religious community's right to worship.

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