

## **WOMEN'S ROLE IN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY QIBLA DETERMINATION: AN ANALYSIS WITH NEOFUNCTIONAL THEORY**

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### ***Abstract***

*This article discusses the involvement of women in religious authority, especially in the practice of determining the Qibla direction. Normatively, Islam does not differentiate between men and women in mastering the science of falak. However, the social role of women is often limited by the construction of patriarchal culture. in this article there are 2 objectives that will be discussed first how the role of women in religious authorities related to the determination of the Qibla in contemporary times and how the study of the theory neofunctionalism on the role of women in religious authorities related to the determination of the Qibla direction in contemporary times, so that the results obtained that the role of women in religious authorities related to determining the direction of the Qibla has a different role where historically the role is held by men based on religious sources (Al-Quran, sunnah, ijma', qiyas) although in contemporary times it can be done by women. As for the point of view of Jeffrey Alexander's Neofunctionalism theory, this study sees that the role of women in determining the Qibla has a dual function, first, the integrative function which is to maintain the continuity of religious tradition with contemporary science; second, the adaptive function, namely opening space for women's participation in the technical realm of religion, third, the symbolic function, namely presenting new legitimacy that religious authority does not exclusively belong to men and the dynamic function, namely correcting gender bias in the practice of religious authority.*

**Keyword:** *religious authority, women, Qibla direction, neofunctionalism theory*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Humans, as social beings, continue to evolve with the changing times, in line with the concept of functionalism, which not only emphasizes order but also recognizes the existence of conflict, dynamics, and social change. This theory views that every element of society has a dual function, namely maintaining integration while opening up opportunities for change. In the context of religion, these dynamics are evident in worship practices, one of which is practical ijtihad in determining the direction of the qibla. In the contemporary era, methods for determining the direction of the qibla have become increasingly sophisticated and

are no longer the exclusive domain of men, even though traditionally this work has been associated with men. However, some people still believe that if men are available, they are more qualified to perform religious duties, including determining the direction of the qibla, so that the results of women's ijтиhad are often questioned.<sup>1</sup> This doubt stems from the legitimacy of women's religious authority, both because of the assumption that women are less capable of becoming mujtahids and because of the conservative interpretation of hadiths on women's leadership, which has resulted in restrictions on women's roles in issuing fatwas, becoming qadis, or appearing as scholars. As a result, in patriarchal cultures, women's authority in religious practice is often considered secondary, and the results of their ijтиhad are viewed as less valid even though they use the same scientific methodology as men.<sup>2</sup>

This research is very interesting to be studied further, but previously there have been many similar research results conducted, related to women and determining the Qibla direction as written by alamsya et al.<sup>3</sup>, Furthermore, an article written by Kurniawan about the community's response to the measurement of Qibla direction.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the author's previous article on female religious authority in determining the direction of the qibla from the perspective of neo-functionalism social theory in social practice, this study is unique because it combines two fields (astronomy + gender) through neo-functional theory. The determination of the direction of the qibla is still often associated with the role of men, with women seen in a technocratic-religious position rather than merely as religious symbols or religious leaders. This is inseparable from the patriarchal

<sup>1</sup> Richard Ormerod, "The History and Ideas of Sociological Functionalism: Talcott Parsons, Modern Sociological Theory, and the Relevance for OR," *Journal of the Operational Research Society* 71, no. 12 (2020): 1873–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01605682.2019.1640590>.

<sup>2</sup> Nurul Ilmi Arsil and Nur Aisyah, "Analisis Arah Kiblat Masjid Tua Kaluppin Kecamatan Enrekang Kabupaten Enrekang Dengan Metode Bayang-Bayang," *HISABUNA: Jurnal Ilmu Falak* 2, no. 3 (2021): 132–47, <https://doi.org/10.24252/hisabuna.v2i3.24993>.

<sup>3</sup> Alamsyah, "Pemberdayaan Perempuan Melalui Kalibrasi Arah Kiblat Di Masjid Al-Irshan Minasa Upa Kota Makassar," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Nasyiatul Aisyiyah Sulawesi Selatan (JPMNAS)* 5, no. 1 (2025): 18–30, <https://doi.org/10.56983/jpmnas.v5i1.1793>.

<sup>4</sup> Kurniawan Kurniawan, "Respon Masyarakat Terhadap Metode Pengukuran Arah Kiblat Menggunakan Keyakinan (Studi Kasus Desa Wora Kec. Wera Kab. Bima)," *Astroislamica: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 4, no. 1 (2025): 122–41, <https://doi.org/10.47766/astroislamica.v4i1.3440>.

tradition in Muslim societies, where religious authority is generally attached to male imams, kiai, or ulama. In fact, normatively, Islam does not restrict women from mastering or applying the science of astronomy.

Furthermore, the objectives of this study have two aspects. First, how women's role in religious authority relates to determining the direction of the qibla today, and how neofunctionalism theory can explain the function and dynamics of women's role in the practice of determining the direction of the qibla today.

## **METHODE**

The approach used in this article is qualitative with field research. This approach was chosen because the main focus of the research is to analyze the community's understanding of the concept of religious authority, the role of women in determining the direction of the qibla, and its application through neofunctionalism theory. The primary data in this article consists of interviews and documentation in classical Islamic literature (fiqh books, hadith, tafsir) that discuss the direction of the qibla and religious authority, works of sociology (Jeffrey Alexander on neo-functionalism), and contemporary articles on women in astronomy. Secondary data is sourced from scientific journal articles, research results, news reports, and activity reports on qibla calibration involving women.<sup>5</sup>

Then, the data collection technique used interviews and documentation. The author obtained interview data from in-depth interviews with the aim of answering research questions such as exploring the direct experiences of women involved in determining the direction of the qibla (academics, practitioners, or religious leaders).<sup>6</sup> Then, understand their perceptions of religious authority and the social legitimacy they possess. Identify the challenges, obstacles, and opportunities for women in the sphere of religious authority. Obtain personal narratives that may not be written in formal literature. Then, analyze the data in

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<sup>5</sup> Dialektika Fikih et al., "OTORITAS HAKIM PEREMPUAN DALAM DIALEKTIKA FIKIH: PERSPEKTIF KRITIS KOMPARATIF" 8 (2024).

<sup>6</sup> hendri dan zul Efendi, "Problematika Ilmu Falak Kontemporer : Studi Kiblat Di Rumah Makan Pinggir Jalan Lintas Kabupaten/Kota Se Sumatera Barat," *AL-MARSHAD: Jurnal Astronomi Islam Dan Ilmu-Ilmu Berkaitan* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1–10, <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/268352-pemikiran-thomas-djamiluddin-tentang-sal-e18c4210.pdf>.

this research article using descriptive analysis techniques with deductive-inductive thinking. This inductive thinking pattern is used to answer issues that arise. Furthermore, the researcher uses this descriptive analysis in the perspective of neo-functionalism social theory, namely religious authority and the role of women in determining the direction of the qibla.<sup>7</sup>

The analysis technique that the author uses, quoting from the opinion of Milles and Huberman as described by Sugiyono that the data analysis process is carried out through three stages, namely data reduction which means that the data obtained in the field is quite a lot, so it is necessary to analyze by reducing the data by summarizing selecting the main data according to the theme. The next step, data display by presenting data in the form of descriptions, charts, relationships between categories and so on. So that it makes it easier to understand what is happening and plan further work, namely Verification / conclusion by providing conclusions and verification.

Furthermore, it is analyzed according to sociological theory, namely the theory of neofunctionalism on the religious authority of women's roles in determining the Qibla direction, as well as its application through the theory of neofunctionalism which analyzes the data obtained from interview data and documentation reviewed from sociological theory, namely from the opinions of figures so that the religious authority of women's roles in determining the Qibla direction can be made as one of the considerations in women's ijтиhad in determining the Qibla direction.<sup>8</sup>

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **women and determining the direction of the qibla in the present day**

Before the author explains the concept and women in determining the Qibla direction, the concept of religious authority is first revealed, which means the legitimacy that individuals or groups have to interpret, teach, and direct the

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<sup>7</sup> Hendri Hendri, "PRAYER ROOM QIBLA DIRECTION AT SCHOOL IN BUKITTINGGI: (Qibla Study in Junior High School and Senior High Schools Prayer Room)," *Al-Hilal: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 1, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.21580/al-hilal.2019.1.1.5189>.

<sup>8</sup> zainul arifin dan muhammad ulin nuha Hendri, "GOOGLE MAPS: MAQASHID SYARIAH STUDY ON HOW TO DETERMINE THE DIRECTION OF CONTEMPORARY QIBLA," *Jurnal El-Falaky Jurnal Ilmu Falak* 17 (1385): 302.

religious practices of the community. In the Islamic tradition, religious authority is generally attached to male scholars, kiai, or imams. However, history records that women also have an important role in religious authority.<sup>9</sup>

Although rarely mentioned in the mainstream literature, women also indirectly contributed to Islamic astronomy. In medieval times a number of female scientists in the Islamic world were involved in the study of mathematics and astronomy, although not much documented. In modern Indonesia, women have begun to be involved as phalac science activists including lecturers of phalac science, members of hisab rukyat bodies, facilitators in determining Qibla direction and authors of works in the field of phalac science.<sup>10</sup>

Islamic law does not stand on the basis of gender, let alone aim to favor men and oppress women. Islam does not interpret men and women as separate, rival and competing entities. The differences in rights, obligations, and the provisions of rukhsah (leniency) in sharia cannot be interpreted as a form of prioritization or discrimination.<sup>11</sup> However, women's testimony in Islam, which is considered half that of men, leads to discrimination against women in the public sector. This raises the issue that women's testimony from a gender perspective is contrary to pure Islamic thought, where gender issues in the perspective of Islamic thought should be in harmony with human nature and reason in all times and places. But instead, people underestimate and believe that in Islamic law there are aspects of discrimination against women.<sup>12</sup>

Some forms of women's contribution in phalac science include: first, education and phalac literacy, women also teach phalac science in madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and universities. This gives an example that phalac is an

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<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Riyyan Firdaus and Mohamad Dindin Hamam Sidik, "Constructing Religious Legitimacy in the Digital Public Sphere: A Study of Islamic Discourse on Social Media," *Khazanah Theologia* 6, no. 2 (2024): 85–110, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kt.v6i2.33173>.

<sup>10</sup> Adam Yudha Aryasatya et al., "Deconstruction of Patriarchal Authority in Religious Interpretation ( Analysis of Minister of Religious Affairs Nasaruddin Umar ' s Statement on the Monopoly of Religious Interpretation in Indonesia in 2025 )" 4, no. 1 (2025): 6195–6203.

<sup>11</sup> Habibunnas Habibunnas Habibunnas, "Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Kompilasi Hukum Islam : Perempuan Sebagai Saksi Perkawinan," *Istinbath : Jurnal Hukum* 18, no. 2 (2021): 278–302, <https://doi.org/10.3233/istinbath.v18i2.3200>.

<sup>12</sup> AHMAD MUSYAHID, "Esensi Hikmah Syari'Ah Terhadap Kesetaraan Gender," *Al-Maiyyah: Media Transformasi Gender Dalam Paradigma Sosial Keagamaan* 7, no. 2 (2014): 268–77, <https://doi.org/10.35905/almaiyyah.v7i2.245>.

inclusive science. Second, academic research, many thesis studies, theses, and scientific articles written by women related to the Hijri calendar, rukyatul hilal, Qibla direction, and modern astronomical phenomena.<sup>13</sup> In community service, the involvement of women in Road to School activities or public observations makes phalac science more easily accepted by the younger generation. Fourth, observatory leadership, several campus observatories and local astronomy communities are now led or developed by women, marking the birth of a participatory leadership model.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, strengthening the science and religious literacy of women who are active in the phalac community can be an agent of dual literacy of science and religion that brings together spiritual values with modern astronomical understanding. The regeneration of the younger generation of women's involvement as teachers, lecturers, and community activists makes them inspirational figures for children and adolescents, especially female students, to dare to enter the world of science which has been considered dominantly male, such as the Indonesian female phalak community (KPKI).<sup>15</sup>

Academic and professional career opportunities through phalac and astronomy research, women can expand their academic work including scientific publications, conference participation, and cross-country research collaborations. Synergy with technological innovation, women who are adaptive to digital technology have the opportunity to become a driver of phalactic transformation, for example through the use of telescopes for easily accessible observations. Cultural and gender constraints in some communities, women's involvement in

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<sup>13</sup> Ahmad et al., "Relevansi Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Islam Di Era Digital: Studi Literatur Normatif Dan Kontekstual," *Jurnal Paris Langkis* 5, no. 2 (2025): 465–74, <https://doi.org/10.37304/paris.v5i2.20471>.

<sup>14</sup> Asma Nadia and Abdul Syukur, "Peran Perempuan Sebagai Pemimpin Dalam Masyarakat Islam ( Studi Ayat-Ayat Al- Qur ' an Tentang Kepemimpinan )" 6, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.47476/as.v3i2.536.10>.

<sup>15</sup> KPKI, "Komunitas Falak Perempuan Indonesia," KPKI, 2023, <https://blogkpkpi.blogspot.com/>.

science is still considered secondary to domestic roles, thus affecting space and opportunities.<sup>16</sup>

Access to technology Not all women in the phalactic community have equal access to modern astronomical equipment such as digital telescopes, due to economic, institutional, and cultural factors.<sup>17</sup> Research and publication opportunities Another challenge is the limited research opportunities that can hinder women's participation in academic achievement. Time management As individuals with dual roles (professional and family), women often face difficulties in dividing time between research, observation, and domestic social responsibilities. In the context of Qibla direction determination, religious authority intersects with scientific authority (expertise in astrology) therefore legitimacy in this field should be determined by scientific competence not gender.<sup>18</sup>

The function of women in religious authority can be understood from several dimensions. <sup>19</sup>First, the normative (theological) function in Islam and other religions, women have the same position as men in terms of religious responsibilities (*taklif syar'i*), such as worship, preaching, and conveying knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Evidence from the Qur'an and hadith shows that women can play the role of interpreters, narrators of hadith, teachers, and religious leaders within certain limits. for example, many female companions who became legal references (*such as 'Aisha and Umm Salamah*).

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<sup>16</sup> Mahzan Mahzan and Ismail Ismail, "Penetapan Waktu Wajib Zakat Fitrah Dalam Perspektif Fikih Dan Ilmu Falak," *Astroislamica: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 2, no. 1 (2023): 106–19, <https://doi.org/10.47766/astroislamica.v2i1.948>.

<sup>17</sup> Taufiqurachman Taufiqurachman et al., "Peran Ilmu Falak Dalam Penentuan Awal Waktu Shalat Di Indonesia," *JIIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 7, no. 11 (2024): 12482–90, <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v7i11.6205>.

<sup>18</sup> Dewi Fransiska and Thahir Maloko, "Penentuan Arah Kiblat Pemakaman Lamuru Dan Karaeng Sailong Perspektif Ilmu Falak," *HISABUNA: Jurnal Ilmu Falak* 1, no. 2 (2020): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.24252/hisabuna.v1i2.14669>.

<sup>19</sup> Dzuriyatun Toyibah, "The Gender Gap and Career Path of the Academic Profession Under the Civil Service System at a Religious University in Jakarta, Indonesia," *Komunitas* 10, no. 1 (2018): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.15294/komunitas.v10i1.12228>.

<sup>20</sup> Yusron Razak and Ilham Mundzir, "Otoritas Agama Ulama Perempuan:Relevansi Pemikiran Nyai Masriyah Amva Terhadap Kesetaraan Jender Dan Pluralisme," *PALASTREN Jurnal Studi Gender* 12, no. 2 (2019): 397, <https://doi.org/10.21043/palastren.v12i2.5981>.

Second, women's socio-religious function often plays a role as conveyors of religious values in the family, teaching prayers, worship, ethics, and religious traditions to children. In the community, women are also present as Quran recitation teachers, mubalighah, ustazah, family counselors, and da'wah activists. Women are the custodians of religious traditions (for example, in recitations, taklim assemblies, and religion-based social activities). Four educative functions of women have an important function in the transmission of religious knowledge: both through formal educational institutions (madrasah, pesantren, schools) and non-formal (recitation, halaqah, women's organizations). History records many female scholars who contributed to the transmission of hadith, fiqh, and tafsir.<sup>21</sup>

Five, the function of leadership in some contexts women function as religious leaders at the community level (head of majelis taklim, leaders of women's religious organizations, even fatwa members in certain institutions). In the contemporary era, many women are involved in religious institutional authority, for example as members of the MUI, fatwa commissions, or leaders of women's Islamic organizations (Aisyiyah, Muslimat NU, Fatayat NU). Women's advocacy and transformation functions serve as agents of change within religious authorities, championing issues of equality, gender justice, child protection, and women's rights based on the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* framework. They also play a role in reinterpreting religious texts to make them more contextual to the needs of the times.<sup>22</sup>

This is based on the results of interviews with several communities such as one of them, the Indonesian women's falak community (FKPI) said about the authority or determination of the Qibla by women.

*“For a long time, people believed that only male clerics and teachers could measure the direction of the qibla. In fact, anyone can learn astronomy. I once helped correct the direction of the qibla in a village mosque. At first, the community refused, but after I showed them the*

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<sup>21</sup> Sudarmadi Putra, “Peran Gender Dalam Kajian Ilmu Falak,” *Sanaamul Quran : Jurnal Wawasan Keislaman* 2, no. 1 (2022): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.62096/tsaqqafah.v2i1.15>.

<sup>22</sup> Dian Anggraini et al., “Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Tafsir Tematik (Studi Kasus Kepemimpinan Maria Ulfah),” *Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 16, no. 6 (2023): 2596, <https://doi.org/10.35931/aq.v16i6.1859>.

*astronomical calculations, they accepted it. Even so, I am still often looked down upon because I am a woman..* ”<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the results of interviews with community leaders

*“Until now, people have believed that only male clerics and religious teachers should measure the direction of the qibla. However, anyone can learn astronomy. I once helped correct the direction of the qibla in a village mosque. At first, the community refused, but after I showed them the astronomical calculations, they accepted it. Even so, I am still often looked down upon because I am a woman.”*<sup>24</sup>

Interviews with other community leaders

*“At first, we were hesitant to accept the results of measurements taken by women in determining the direction of the qibla, because religious matters are usually left to clerics or religious teachers. But after we saw that the calculations were the same as those in the official application, we became convinced. I think now it doesn't matter whether it's a man or a woman, as long as the knowledge is correct.”*

begitu juga wawancara dengan Jemaah atau pengurus masjid

*“At first, I disagreed because it seemed strange for women to determine the direction of the qibla, but after praying at the mosque where the direction of the qibla had been corrected, I felt more at ease. So, in my opinion, if they have the knowledge, women can also do it.”*<sup>25</sup>

## DISCUSSION

**The analysis of neofunctionalism theory can explain the function and dynamics of women's roles in the practice of determining Qibla direction.**

The theory of neofunctionalism coined by Jeffrey C. Alexander develops neo-functionalism with characteristics: first, recognizing conflict, dynamics, and change in society. second, understanding that social institutions (including religion) have dual functions: integration and transformation.<sup>26</sup> third, emphasizing the symbolic and cultural dimensions in shaping authority. fourth provides space for social actors (including women) to become agents of change. With this framework, women's involvement in determining the Qibla direction can be understood as a process that not only maintains the continuity of worship

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<sup>23</sup> KPFI, “Komunitas Falak Perempuan Indonesia.”

<sup>24</sup> wawancara dengan tokoh masyarakat H malin sati, “Wawancara Dengan Tokoh Masyarakat, H. Malin Sati,” 2025.

<sup>25</sup> wawancara dengan pengurus masjid j anwar, “Wawancara Dengan Pengurus Masjid ,J Anwar,” 2025.

<sup>26</sup> Nurul Awwaliyah and Siti Rofi'ah, “Rabbani: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam MADRASAH SEBAGAI SISTEM SOSIAL PERSPEKTIF TALCOTT PARSONS 1 Nurul Awwaliyah, 2 Siti Rofi'ah,” *Rabbani: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 2, no. 1 (2021): 56–71, <http://ejournal.iainmadura.ac.id/index.php/rabbani>.

(integrative function), but also opens space for gender equality and transformation of religious authority (adaptive and symbolic functions).<sup>27</sup>

When viewed from the results of interviews with phalac science activists as well as phalac science experts, based on the analysis of the results of interviews, according to the analysis of functionalism theory according to Jeffrey Alexander, neofunctionalism sees society not only as a stable system, but also dynamic, full of conflict, and open to change through the role of new actors.<sup>28</sup>

Jeffrey C. Alexander developed what is known as neofunctionalism as a renewal of classical functionalism. Relevant points for your study neofunctionalism maintains its focus on social integration and function, but opens it up to become more dynamic by incorporating analysis of (micro) actions, conflict, uncertainty, interactional creativity, and the role of new actors who can change institutional balance . First, the concrete actions of actors from micro to macro.<sup>29</sup> and Interviews with female astronomers often highlight concrete actions to verify the results of field measurements of the direction of the qibla for technical publications, as well as the organization of rukyat and training. According to Alexander these concrete actions are not merely epiphenomena they have the potential to bring about changes at the structural (institutional) level. In other words, the collective actions of female astronomers can translate into procedural reforms within institutions systematic interview support.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, conflict and dynamics as engines of change. Neofunctionalism rejects the notion of society as a perfectly stable system it recognizes productive conflict. Interview findings that reveal internal resistance (rejection of women's roles by some traditional figures) as well as adaptive

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<sup>27</sup> Algimantas Valantiejus, "Teoriniy Prielaidy Ir Sqvoky Sistema J . Alexanderio Sociologijoje . Skiriamieji Neofunktionalizmo Bruoiai" 2 (1995).

<sup>28</sup> Jarosław Nocoń, "Systemic Analysis of Politics in the Light of Reconstruction of Structural Functionalism of Jeffrey C. Alexander," *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 50, no. 3 (2021): 7–20, <https://doi.org/10.15804/pps202139>.

<sup>29</sup> Maratus Shalihah and Nur Khasanah, "Pendidikan Islam Dan Perubahan Sosial Di Indonesia : Kajian Fungsionalisme Atas Peran Kebijakan Dalam Menjaga Solidaritas Sosial Kebijakan — Mengapa Dan Bagaimana Kebijakan Yang Serupa Dapat Menghasilkan Outcome Yang," no. September (2025).

<sup>30</sup> Marlian Arif Nasution, "Agama Dan Masalah Makna Dalam Teori Sosiologis Talcott Parsons," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Theosofi Dan Peradaban Islam* 4, no. 1 (2022): 129–40, <https://doi.org/10.51900/alhikmah.v4i1.12536>.

strategies (technical training, alliances with universities) are evidence of productive conflict dynamics that, according to Alexander, can encourage the institutionalization of new roles.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, neo-functionalism theory emphasizes the democratization of power and the demand for legitimacy. Based on neo-functionalism theory Alexander focuses on democratic incentives in social functions, namely accountability, participation, and meritocracy. The interview results show the public's demand for "transparent and science based decision makers" and greater acceptance when women demonstrate competence, which supports the interpretation that the shift to female power is part of the dynamics of the democratization of religious power.<sup>32</sup>

By analyzing the results of these interviews, it means that the new role of women as phalacists functions as a new actor in the system of religious authority. She presents an additional function that was previously rarely given to women: scientific authority in determining the Qibla. Furthermore, the conflicts and resistance faced by the interviewees are due to gender stereotypes ("those who can determine the Qibla must be men"). In a neofunctional perspective, this conflict is not always negative, but rather a trigger for social change.<sup>33</sup>

Then the function of social integration with scientific arguments (falak calculations), the informant was finally able to convince the community. This shows a new social integration process: women can be accepted as authorities if they have scientific legitimacy. The gradual social change in the case of women determining the Qibla direction shows a transition: from a patriarchal society to a society that is more open to women's authority. In accordance with neofunctionalism, this change does not erase the old system, but adds new functions that strengthen the sustainability of the social system.

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<sup>31</sup> Theguh Saumantri, "Integrasi Teori Sosiologi Analisis Studi Islam: Sebuah Pendekatan Interdisipliner," *Jurnal Kajian Islam Interdisipliner* 9, no. 2 (2024): 127–56, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/pasca/jkii/article/view/1388>.

<sup>32</sup> Mohammad Dzaky Zaidan et al., "Peran Pendidikan Islam Dalam Membentuk Solidaritas Sosial: Telaah Teori Fungsionalisme," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Sosial* 4, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.58540/jipsi.v4i2.946>.

<sup>33</sup> Mirjam Künkler and Devin J. Stewart, "Female Religious Authority in Shi'i Islam: Past and Present," *Female Religious Authority in Shi'i Islam: Past and Present*, 2021, 1–399, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v40i1-2.3252>.

### **Neofunctionalism analysis of women's role in religious authority related to determining the direction of the qibla in contemporary times**

According to the sociological theory of neofunctionalism Jeffrey C Alexander, women's authority in determining the Qibla direction is considered to be present as an agent of change in the religious system of women carrying out functions that were previously dominated by men. in the aspect of conflict resistance, resistance initially arises: the community doubts, worshipers feel strange, leaders are still bound by tradition and this conflict is not destructive, but triggers social reflection. The aspect of social integration with scientific legitimacy (phalactic science, official application), resistance is reduced. Community leaders and worshipers begin to accept, creating new functions in the social structure. In the aspect of gradual change, society remains patriarchal, but women's authority has begun to be recognized. This new function expands the system of religious authority without destroying the old structure according to the pattern of neofunctionalism (conflict then adaptation then integration).<sup>34</sup>

According to the integrative function to analyze this phenomenon, a sociological perspective is needed that is able to read the functions, dynamics, and conflicts in society. Neo-Functionalism theory developed by Jeffrey C. Alexander provides an analytical framework that every social institution, including religion, not only functions to maintain order (integration), but also encourages change, accommodates conflict, and creates symbolic meaning. Thus, women's involvement in Qibla determination can be understood not only as technical participation, but also part of the transformation of religious authority.<sup>35</sup>

Women who play a role in determining the Qibla direction basically carry out an integrative function, namely maintaining the continuity of Islamic teachings with social life. Qibla determination is a valid condition of prayer that cannot be abandoned. In practice, both men and women can do it as long as they have competence in phalacology. When a woman phalacist determines the qibla

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<sup>34</sup> Moch Zihad Islami et al., "Pengembalian Fungsi Surau Sebagai Identitas Minangkabau Melalui Elaborasi Madrasah Diniyah Awaliyah: Perspektif Neo-Fungsionalisme," *Jurnal Lafinus* 1, no. 1 (2024): 68–93, <https://doi.org/10.22146/lafinus.v1i1.9852>.

<sup>35</sup> Moh. Khoirul Fatih, "Epistemologi Double Movement," *Al Furqan: Jurnal Al Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 2 (2019): 97–108.

direction of a mosque or musala, she is ensuring that the people's worship remains valid according to Sharia. This role emphasizes that women's authority in the technical aspects of religion serves to maintain ritual order and the unity of the people. In some Islamic universities in Indonesia, such as UIN, many female lecturers and students are experts in phalac science. They are active in measuring qibla directions and training the community. This shows that the role of women is not just an additional participation, but a support for religious social integration.<sup>36</sup>

According to the adaptive function, neofunctionalism emphasizes the importance of the adaptation function in dealing with social change. Women's involvement in determining the Qibla direction is a form of religious adaptation to the development of science, education, and gender awareness. In the modern era, women's access to higher education is increasingly open. Many pursue Islamic astronomy, using technology such as theodolite, GPS, and satellite-based applications. Their presence shows how religious authorities are able to adapt to a new reality: that women can also become astrologers. This phenomenon shows that religion is not a static institution, but rather responsive to social dynamics. By making room for women in technical authority, Islamic society is proving that competence is more important than gender identity.<sup>37</sup>

According to the Symbolic function, women's involvement in determining the Qibla direction also has a symbolic dimension. In a patriarchal society, the presence of women as religious authorities is often seen as unusual. However, when women appear as phalacists, they present a new symbol: an inclusive and science-based religious authority. This symbol has a double meaning: first, for women themselves, it legitimizes that they have space in public authority, not only in the domestic sphere. second, for society it confirms that religion can be

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<sup>36</sup> Agus Khoirul Fais, Ahmad Izzudin, and Mahsun Mahfudz, "Analisis Peran Ilmu Falak Dalam Menentukan Arah Kiblat: Pendekatan Integratif Antara Tradisional Dan Teknologi Terkini," *Jurnal Cahaya Mandalika* 3, no. 3 (2024): 1769–79, <https://ojs.cahayamandalika.com/index.php/jcm/article/view/2949>.

<sup>37</sup> Ahmad Rizqi Turama, "Formulasi Teori Fungsionalisme Struktural Talcott Parsons," *PENGARUH PENGGUNAAN PASTA LABU KUNING (Cucurbita Moschata) UNTUK SUBSTITUSI TEPUNG TERIGU DENGAN PENAMBAHAN TEPUNG ANGKAK DALAM PEMBUATAN MIE KERING* 15, no. 1 (2016): 165–75, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/196255896.pdf>.

interpreted in an egalitarian manner, not seeing gender as a barrier to authority. A symbolic example of this can be seen in the Qibla calibration activity involving the women's majelis taklim. When they use falak tools, the accurate measurement results not only confirm scientific truth, but also symbolize social recognition of women's capacity.<sup>38</sup>

The last aspect in the neo-functionalism framework is the dynamic or corrective function. Women's involvement in Qibla determination serves as a corrective to the gender bias inherent in religious authority. So far, many people consider religious authority to be synonymous with men. This view has no *shari'i* basis, but was born from patriarchal culture. With the appearance of women in the role of falakiyah, this biased social structure began to be corrected practically. Women phalacticians prove that religious authority is actually determined by knowledge, capacity and integrity, not gender. This is a dynamic function: changing old understandings, aligning authority with Islamic principles of justice, and opening space for social transformation.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, based on the theory of functionalism, women as Qibla direction determinants have functions such as the function of Adaptation. In Parsons' theory, every social system must adapt to the environment in order to survive. Women who master phalac science and participate in determining the Qibla direction show the adaptation of religious authorities to social development and modern education. Access to higher education for women allows them to master technology (GPS, theodolite, digital compass) thus strengthening religious authority in the contemporary era. with the intention of women in falakiyah is a form of religious adaptation to increasingly egalitarian social realities.<sup>40</sup>

Second, the Goal Attainment function, the main goal of the religious system is to maintain the purity of worship, one of which is through the correct

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<sup>38</sup> Hamad Bakar Hamad, “‘Neo-Functionalism’: Relevancy for East African Community Political Integration?,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 9, no. 7 (2016): 69–81, <http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol9no7/9.7-8-Hamad.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> Emyllia Fatmawati, “Arah Kiblat Tanah Haram Dengan Perspektif Hadis,” *Jurnal Ilmu Falak Dan Astronomi* 3, no. 1 (2021): 60–76.

<sup>40</sup> Fais, Izzudin, and Mahfudz, “Analisis Peran Ilmu Falak Dalam Menentukan Arah Kiblat: Pendekatan Integratif Antara Tradisional Dan Teknologi Terkini.”

Qibla direction. Women's involvement accelerates the achievement of this goal because they expand the number of phalacists and Qibla calibration experts. Their competence not only complements men, but also guarantees the shar'i goal that people worship according to guidance. in the sense that women become instruments for achieving the goals of Muslim worship through the determination of the Qibla. Third, the function of integration (Integration) social systems need integration so as not to break apart. When women play a role in determining Qibla direction, they serve as a link between sharia texts, technology, and social practices. They also bridge the gap between the younger generation and tradition, between religious science and astronomy. This means that women in phalacology maintain the unity of the people in worship through scientific legitimacy.<sup>41</sup>

Fourth, Latency / Pattern Maintenance Function Women play a role in transmitting phalacognition and religious traditions to the next generation, whether in pesantren, campuses, or majelis taklim. This role maintains the continuity of religious knowledge and instills the value of inclusiveness that religious authority can be egalitarian. in the sense that women are not only technical actors, but also guardians of religious patterns so that they remain relevant and inclusive in the future. Functionalism Analysis Conclusion With a functionalism perspective, the role of women in determining Qibla direction: Adaptive to the times, Instrumental in achieving shar'i goals, Integrative in maintaining the unity of the people, Preservative in preserving religious values and traditions. This means that women's involvement is not just an addition, but a vital functional element in the Islamic socio-religious system.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings in this article can be concluded first, Women have an important role in religious authority, especially in the field of falak and Qibla direction determination. Although they still face social and structural barriers, their contribution shows a new function in the Islamic religious system. Through the perspective of Neofunctionalism, women's involvement is understood as a

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<sup>41</sup> Fatih, "Epistemologi Double Movement."

form of social integration that strengthens religion's adaptation to modernity. Thus, the role of women in religious authority is not only scientifically valid, but also has strategic value in building an Islamic society that is inclusive, just, and relevant to the times. from the perspective of neofunctional sociological theory, it has several functions such as the function of adaptation (Adaptation) In Parsons' theory, every social system must adapt to the environment in order to survive. Goal Attainment The main goal of the religious system is to maintain the purity of worship, one of which is through the correct Qibla direction. Furthermore, the function of Integration is that social systems need integration so that they do not break apart. When women play a role in determining the Qibla direction and the fourth function of latency or pattern maintenance (Latency / Pattern Maintenance) women play a role in transmitting astrology and religious traditions.

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