Kiai in Indonesian Social-Political Changes

Yanto Bashri

Employee of the Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religion Affairs
yantobashri@gmail.com

Abstract

This article describes the existence of kiai khos, a group of new traditional elites, who are able to play significant roles not only in the religious field but recently also in socio-political issues. These roles are served as the manifestation of their mastery of classical books (kitab kuning). Since KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) during his presidency, 1999-2001, the term kiai khos has become a new prototype for kiai with not only religious abilities but classical book mastery. The study shows that these new traditional elites have transformed the pesantren into a dynamic and are able to encourage kiai and santri to move forward well in the context of politics, economics and religion. It was done by using qualitative ethnographic methods with a socio-anthropological approach explaining the new space of traditional elites as a result of their imaginative articulation in the dynamics of religion and politics in Indonesia.

Keywords: *kiai; pesantren; religious; social-politics; change*

Abstrak

Artikel ini memaparkan tentang keberadaan kiai khos, sekelompok elit tradisional baru, yang mampu memainkan peran penting tidak hanya di bidang keagamaan tetapi belakangan ini juga dalam masalah sosial-politik. Peran-peran ini disajikan sebagai manifestasi penguasaan kitab-kitab klasik (kitab kuning) mereka. Sejak KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) pada masa kepresidenannya, 1999-2001, istilah kiai khos telah menjadi prototipe baru bagi kiai yang tidak hanya memiliki kemampuan agama tetapi juga penguasaan buku klasik. Studi tersebut menunjukkan bahwa elit tradisional baru ini telah mengubah pesantren menjadi dinamis dan mampu mendorong kiai dan santri untuk maju dengan baik dalam konteks politik, ekonomi dan agama. Hal itu dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode etnografi kualitatif dengan pendekatan sosio-antropologis yang menjelaskan ruang baru elit tradisional sebagai hasil artikulasi imajinatif mereka dalam dinamika agama dan politik di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *kiai; pesantren; agama; sosial-politik; perubahan*

INTRODUCTION

In the Islamic and socio-political discourse of Indonesia, the scholars pay more attention to the *kiai*. Their position is quite respectable in society because of its social roles such as educating people in the field of religion, making social changes, exercising social control, and overcoming social problems in society. Clifford Geertz describes it as a cultural pattern which places the *kiai* as a collection of symbols that unites the relationships between entities, physical, organic, social or psychological systems that are reflected in the form of Islamic boarding schools (Geertz, 1957). Building and organizing people's lives according to their capacity as the heir of the prophets (*warasat al-anbiyā*) is a role that makes its existence have a strong legitimacy to appear as a patron who has hierarchical power over society. *Kiai* always have a different place in the eyes of the people.

Geertz's view can be seen further in his research on three variants of Javanese society: *santri* (*kiai*), *abangan*, and *priyayi* in *The Religion of Java* (1960s). The broad response to this research from researchers to politicians, Geertz illustrates that the three-variant theory is not only showing religious expression as a cultural tendency of Javanese society, but also the creation of socio-political class differences in the community. The national political stage was marked by the contestation of three variants of Geertz who competed for people's votes and won power (Bashri, 2020).

One of Geertz's concerns is that the figure of a *kiai* is depicted as being deeply rooted in the cultural structure of society. The image of the *kiai* as an influential person has a very long history. Its genealogical roots can be traced to the peak of the glory of Islam in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, which in the context of the archipelago when the *kiai* succeeded in introducing, compromising, and dialoguing Islam with the socio-cultural-political reality in Indonesia. The strategic roles and assistance they undertake have placed the *kiai* as an inseparable part of the pulse of society, the history of religion and politics of the archipelago. Zulkifli described that the *kiai* paradigm as a religious figure has formed symbolic power and then developed in certain political preferences in the structure of society (Zulkifli, 2013).

Kiai are positioned as agents of change because of their role in shaping people's attitudes. His opinions are binding on various issues, not only covering religious issues, but also on political, economic and cultural issues. As a religious expert, the kiai's authority over society is not limited to social relations, but extends to political matters as well; It has not only theological validity but also its legitimacy in socio-political fields. Even in both traditional and modern societal structures in Indonesia, kiai receive more respect than other elites. Hidayat described, the kiai has the power to master the religious sciences and preserve religious orthodoxy practices for its adherents (Hidayat, 2011).

The success of the kiai in placing himself as a leader or influential person in society, including in the realm of politics, raises a positive response from his followers. The ability of the kiai to unite the religious systems of religious adherents and mystical powers (supranatural) by acting as intermediaries between them, interpreting religious teachings, changing religious attitudes and perspectives of their followers, even more than transforming religious concepts as a spiritual force, which drives the activities of the people.

The kiai in the structure of Indonesian Muslim society is quite rooted and has a high bargaining position when faced with power. His opinions that always refer to classical Islamic texts are able to homogenize traditional societies, and in the last few decades have metamorphosed into a modern Muslim intellectual movement after adopting modern elements in various studies which in Feener's view call it a cross-cultural context (Feener, 2007).

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper uses a qualitative ethnographic research method. The research was conducted intensively to reveal the important role of the kiai in socio-politics through literature study and interviews. The writer tries to construct reality both symbolically and phenomenologically in observing the role of kiai, therefore this research does not give up a philosophical point of view, namely the interpretivist point of view (relying on the researcher's interpretation or subjective research). While the approach is socio-anthropological.

The author places himself as someone who interpretes, understands, experiences, and even produces new social phenomena for the kiai. There are two important things in understanding the important role of the kiai in socio-political change. *First*, research on primary data and secondary sources by referring to inductive thinking in the perspective of neutrality, uses people's preferences to try to reconstruct in and according to these data or sources. In addition to interpreting, the author also tries to bring other people's experiences to life, stand up and use the views of others, through multistage data collection, processing and analysis.

Second, the roles of kiai in religion, culture, religion, education and politics are constructed and classified thematically. In this case, as much data as possible was collected, then categorized and analyzed using descriptive-analytic methods. So the research was carried out by literature study and interviews. Literature studies are studies on the role of the kiai in society change that have been carried out by previous researchers. This data is processed and analyzed together with other primary data obtained through field research with special techniques, interviews, to obtain a picture of the figure of the kiai khos as a new traditional elite in the cultural structure of society.

DISCUSSION

Charismatic Traditional Kiai

The two roles of the kiai, as explained above, are carried out with the support of a leadership pattern that is often identified with classic attributes, namely charismatic and traditional leadership. This pattern is characteristic of kiai leadership with various roles such as teaching and fostering religion for students, exercising community control, making changes, becoming a mediator, and solving social problems. Bahtiar Effendy views that the kiai in that position carried out "domestication of Islam" in the cultural and political structure of society (Effendy, 2011).

The kiai's space to appear as charismatic figures began when he founded the pesantren and then taught the students who then created esoteric and exoteric relationships between the two of them. The close enough relationship between the two even lasts throughout life to form preferences in social, political, economic, cultural and religious life.

Together with the kiai pesantren to develop Islam in Indonesia, not only on the transmission of Islamic knowledge and values, but also in the formation of political constellations, social change, economic improvement, and recently the development of gender studies (Arifin, 2013).

The kiai has hierarchical power in the tradition of a patriarchal society. As the founder and leader of the pesantren, the skills and success of the kiai in bringing the pesantren to a large extent depend on their expertise and depth of knowledge. The ups and downs of pesantren are largely determined by the level of clerics' character in fulfilling religious needs and controlling the social, political, economic, educational and cultural communities of the community.

From a theological perspective, such a leadership pattern is based on the broad quality of a kiai's self—these qualities are often assumed to be a gift from God—which attracts society. The quality of personality as seen in the leadership of the kiai like this is the characteristic of a religious leader—who at a certain time is believed to lead recitation, tahlilan, and various other religious activities—illustrates how important the kiai's position and role are. The kiai becomes a patsoen, a symbol of goodness from various kinds of goodness; then ordained as the holder of moral authority, bearer of the "heavenly message", and other heavenly labels.

In the study of social sciences, leadership becomes the focus of study because of social, cultural, and political aspects, which means that leaders will always be born in both small and large communities. In other words, a leader will be present in a community or community group that allows influence and direction. A leader is usually born from an influential minority group whose position is very dominant, while those who are influenced by their position are subordinate to a large number. The leader, through his leadership process, directs the behavior of others towards a common goal. The kiai is thus a leader playing an important position, in his capacity as a pioneer who determines the structure, circumstances, ideology and activities of his group. The kiai places politics not to gain political and economic benefits, but to protect traditions and maintain the values of pluralism and democracy in Indonesia (Bush and Fealy, 2014).

There are at least three perspective models of the study of leadership. *First*, individual leadership. This type of leadership stems from

the individual strength inherent in a person as an ability, in the sense that someone has given a powerful appearance that causes other people to accept his orders as something imperative. This individual strength is usually colored by theological thinking, a strength obtained from the guidance of "revelation" or the quality of a person's self that is explored from religious teachings to become the basis for his behavior which is considered sacred (Fauzi, 2012).

This kind of leadership pattern is often found in traditional societies –a homogeneous society that has almost the same beliefs, views of life, cultural values, and lifestyles. This homogeneity can create collective awareness, lifestyle equality, direct relationships between community members, and an impersonal division of labor that can easily be united by charismatic leadership (Mohamed, 2015).

The kiai is a figure who has the ability to mobilize society in social, cultural and other fields, including making political choices. The kiai's can be classified in this category because they are identified as having charismatic power (*charismatic authority*), as seen in Sunan Giri or Maulana Ishak or known as Raden Paku, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, Gus Dur, and others.

Second, administrative leadership. This leadership model lies not in individual power, but in the position of power or status held. This kind of legal authority is usually manifested in a bureaucratic organization that is not determined by the appearance of an individual's personality, but by a mutually agreed upon regulatory procedure. Emotional elements are put aside and then replaced by rational elements. In this context, a person is considered to have charisma because of the position he plays in a certain administrative structure, for example the head of the RT, the Lurah, the Village Head, and others. These positions have nothing to do with metaphysical concepts, and therefore do not symbolize anything.

This leadership model can also be referred to as leadership that relies on legal authority, the participation of a person on the basis of his position as a socio-cultural elite based on normative rules and legal rules. More scholars can categorize this model, as the studies conducted by Hiroko Horikoshi (1978) and Clifford Geertz (1960). The description of legal authority can at least be seen in the mass mobilization and militant agitation of the peasant community movement in Banten during the 19th

and early 20th centuries (Wahid, 2012), or Jihad Resolution Fatwa KH Hasyim Asy'ari in physical war against the invaders. The role of the religious elite in this social movement is so dominant that it has become the preference of many circles.

Third, traditional leadership. This leadership model is rooted in the established belief in someone who is considered to have strengths. This placement comes from a tradition passed down from generation to generation or from generation to generation. The position of the leader in this category is determined by old habits carried out by a group of people in carrying out various traditions that are considered social piety. Leaders in this leadership are sometimes referred to as role models and sometimes patrons (*protectors*) who are dominant in the history of Islamic politics and have had an impact on the development of science and knowledge (Black, 2011).

Kiai are placed as role models because they are considered to have several features such as knowledge, religion, economy, politics and culture. Kiai are cultured "*wong agung*" and are placed in the traditional elite strata. Likewise, kiai can be classified as a patron because of the power of charisma that has created a feudalistic space that provides superior authority in leadership and symbolic power (Franklin 2014). Thus, the kiai's patronage is not only in the context of religion and social traditions, but in its development it also impacts on political preferences and determines political choices.

Hamayotsu stated that the superiority of the kiai has even unconsciously created individual personality traits that do not want to be intervened; no one dared to oppose their power and authority both in the pesantren system and in the social community (Hamayotsu, 2011).

Kiai Cultural Struggle

The charisma of the kiai as described above can at least be able to place the "*kiai kbos*" as often mentioned by Gus Dur in his presidency, 1999-2001. Although in the discourse Gus Dur does not mention terminology, in some literature and interviews the author conducted it can be described that the *kiai kbos* is a new traditional elite group that has sufficient religious knowledge and a strong level of influence in society. The

momentum of the presence of *kiai kbos* coincided with the changes in Indonesia's economy, social and politics.

Epistemologically, some literature illustrates that the *kiai kbos* is a figure who has effective moral authority (effective moral authority figure) among the young and old generations. Steven Fish describes him as a religious leader to guide political society (Fish, 2002). Jun Honna mentioned that he is a charismatic Islamic leader in society (Aspinall and Fealy, 2010).

This researcher's view illustrates that Islamic and socio-political discourse in Indonesia always requires the presence of a *kiai* figure. That the world of politics, *kiai*, and *pesantren* is difficult to separate. Since the pre-independence era, the role of *kiai* in the structure of society and politics has always decorated every sheet of the history of the journey of the nation's children. Together with the community, the *kiai* devote all their energies for the sake of the Red and White and the Republic of Indonesia. Entering the era of independence marked by the Old Order era, the *kiai* always open space to make contributions. Likewise during the New Order era, although it was slightly different from the previous period. Even entering the Reformation era which has been rolling since 1998, as described by Laila Khalid Alfirdaus, the opportunity for the *kiai* to express their political aspirations and articulate their position as a public figure is even wider (Alfirdaus, 2014).

National history shows that the *kiai* has an important role in every movement of changing times. Together with other national figures, the *kiai* responded to new challenges with a creative adaptation process by placing religious doctrines as daily rituals actualized in the Indonesian political, social, economic and cultural order (Julia Day Howell, 2001). The presence of religious figures in power politics does not only occur in Indonesia or the archipelago in general, but also in several other countries in the world. In Indonesia, religious figures are represented by the *pesantren* elite, traditional leaders, culture and mystics. The phenomenon of Indonesian politics is a phenomenon of the combination of Islamic doctrines and local culture, Islamic mysticism and Javanese mysticism that is carried out by the community.

Mysticism as normative piety –which in an Islamic perspective is called Sufism—contains values that are often practiced in everyday life as

a manifestation of belief in the kraton (*royal cult*) which forms the core of state beliefs and the theory of kajawian. Religious texts are understood based on aspects of Javanese Hindu-Buddhist mythology and doctrine which form the basis of the kraton religion to form a relationship between syari'ah and mystical doctrine and even unite in the space of mystical-sufistic theory. In other words, mystical values in Javanese tradition are heavily influenced by elements of Hinduism into important rituals of a king and aristocracy through works of art and literary writing.

Some works of art became the main pride of the heyday of Hinduism from time to time. Written in Javanese, it has been copied into play form for the purposes of various types of wayang and wayang dances are present in the form of epic, romance, and heroic literature. Kings and aristocrats had a very strong interest in art. In almost every history, saga, stories, fairy tales, and myths influence --not enlighten the minds and minds—of the people on the figure of a king who is described as an incarnation of a god. Monks and palace workers routinely performed ceremonies, dances, and praises whose teachings glorified the position of kings who were placed as incarnations of the gods. Hindu religious teachings are used for their legitimacy in the structure of society.

The kings and the nobility were not the groups that had the authority to interpret the teachings contained in Hindu philosophy. In fact, this religion is very minimal --maybe even non-existent—attention to philosophy, but instead emphasizes the arts. The elements of rationality and science were marginalized, and art flourished on the other hand. Like Dewa Ruci's fiber, humans acquire experiential knowledge not through rational reasoning, but inner experience. This is called mystical philosophy (Dharsono (Sony Kartika), et. al. 2010). Likewise, Buddhism has developed a lot in Sumatra, where the region has become the center of education and renewal of Buddhism (Daniels, 1999). This magnificent center of education has not left any influence on Sumatra, including in the language and philosophy of Buddhism. The evidence for legacy does not seem to show that Buddhist rabbis used Sumatran language in teaching and writing.

Prapanca, one of Majapahit's poets, wrote a popular work, *Negara Kertagama*, which paid attention to reason and mind. This work did not have any influence on society. The Kraton, which consists of groups of

goddesses (*dewi-dewi*), responded strongly, so that this work is now only preserved and preserved in the form of one manuscript. Other writers such as Empu Kanwa wrote *Arjuna Wiwaha*, which contains philosophical values and elements, but unfortunately almost all of it is composed in the form of poetry which is not affixed with explanation or interpretation. The two works are considered to contain elements of threat to the palace so that they do not deserve to be consumed by the ears and eyes of the common people. At that time, the people of the archipelago tended to be artistic rather than philosophical.

Chuzaimah Batubara described, the tradition of writing literature and art was recommended and maintained by the kings and aristocrats to maintain a position in the structure of society, while at the same time the community did not care about religious teachings (Batubara, 1999). The community only carries out worship as limited as a spirituality which is influenced and guided by the kings and other aristocrats, including the religious leaders. Hindu-Buddhism is accepted as a religion because its teachings do not differ much from Javanese beliefs, for example the introduction of writing procedures, Saka year calculations, mystical teachings, and royal concepts about animist religious culture and dynamism as well as local traditions and customs. among farmers (*abangan*). Hindu-Buddhism developed, like Robert Sternberg, after experiencing a process of "creative adaptation" of the culture of society as reflected in architecture, carving, the concept of kings and government systems, characters and literature, belief systems, social stratification, and the calendar system (Sternberg, 1999).

Hindu-Buddhist teachings spiritually did not kill people's beliefs, but on the contrary enriched Javanese culture. Hindu-Buddhism exerted influence on the field of knowledge of life and knowledge of the universe as well as state theories influenced by kings who were described as "sacred" as representatives of the gods to regulate people's lives –which became a support for priyayi culture with its sparkling secularity. Hindu-Buddhist religion became a thin ornament in the structure of society, even some people had an indifferent attitude towards teachings, it became the trust of kings and aristocrats for the purposes of their power and court. Hindu-Buddhist religion has not succeeded in changing the mindset of

the indigenous people as evidenced by the birth of Nusantara intellectualism (Mohd. Shuhaimi and Osman, 2012).

Cultural adaptation was also carried out by Islam when it was present in Javanese society in the 13th century without disturbing Javanese animist beliefs and dynamism. The process of creative adaptation of Islam –and of course this is reinforced by the elastic original Javanese culture—its spread by the *pesantren* elites made its teachings easily accepted by the community. There is no significant resistance when Islam is present carrying elastic teachings related to Islamic symbols or religious rites.

The elasticity of Islam to local cultural colors or patterns can be seen in the spread of Sunan Kalijaga, which creates Javanese Islamic-inspired songs such as *ilir-ilir*, *tandure wis semilir*, and often performs *gamelan* and *wayang* for the effectiveness of introducing Islamic values and for the easy conversion of Java society (Daniels, 2016). Another thing is seen in the construction of the first mosque, Saka Tunggal Baitussalam, which was built by Kiai Mustolih in 1822 whose architecture resembles the local architecture of the Hindu-Buddhist heritage. The presence of Islam in Java did not carry cultural symbols in the Middle East, in contrast to Buddhism, which moved the “stupa” culture or Christian church buildings with Western-style architecture. The kiai did not transfer Arabic cultures, but instead packaged Islamic doctrines into Javanese cultures so as to make it easier for people to accept Islamic doctrines.

Clifford Geertz said that the religion of Islam which integrates into the traditions of Javanese society by balancing the animistic traditions between Hinduism and Islam then affects the social, economic and political ideology structures. Based on his research, Geertz sees Javanese Islam as a syncretic religion; a mixture of animism, Hinduism and Buddhism, which later colored Islam Nusantara in general. This syncretism can be seen in the slametan tradition, which has been seen from generation to generation as a value that unites mystical and social elements. Even in Jochem van den Boogert's research, he called it pure praxis value and simplicity in the form of God's offering (*Lord's supper*) (Boogert, 2015).

In *The Religion of Java*, Geertz describes comprehensively the structure of identity and organization in three stream systems; *priyayi*,

abangan, and santri. The three groups have different emphases of religiosity, for example priyayi on elements of Hinduism from concepts to daily rituals that are manifested in court and poet traditions. Abangan emphasizes his belief in elements of local traditions, especially in ritual ceremonies, belief in spirits, belief in witchcraft, and magic. This belief is commonly practiced by farmers with syncretic ideology. Meanwhile, the students emphasized their belief in Islamic elements. The religious tradition of the santri is a perspective and manifestation of the obedience of Javanese and non-Javanese people.

The coincidence of Islam with social culture and politics also received the attention of Mark R. Woodward. In his latest research, Woodward views Islam and Javanese culture as paradoxical interdependence. The difference between the two is imperceptible, and if there is only visible on the surface. This view emerged after studying the Javanese kraton and folk religion with an emphasis on cultural and religious influences from "Hinduism" ranging from ideology, rituals, to Hindu-Buddhist prototypes in Javanese traditional mysticism. Woodward describes a shift in Javanese Islamic culture or Javanese culture which has important consequences for understanding the dynamics of power in Javanese and Indonesian society. Therefore, when the palace describes it as a cultural center (center of culture), at the same time it claims to be its religious legitimacy or a vehicle for spreading Islamic teachings (Woodward, 2011).

In contrast to Geertz's conclusion that Javanese Islam as a Hindu-Buddhist derivation is more mystical, on the other hand Woodward believes that the Javanese Islamic tradition is a derivation of Islam that can be found for equivalents in the Middle East, Malay, Persian and other regions. The tradition of slametan, grave pilgrimage and rituals of Muslim Javanese prayer and traditional santri are performed to hope for a blessing from heaven (blessing descending from heaven) or as a gift from God. Woodward is further of the view that if Javanese Islam was viewed from the perspective of the Muslim tradition as a whole, and not from the polemics of modern reformism, there would be striking similarities to Middle Eastern and South Asian Islam.

Azyumardi Azra considers that Javanese Islam is considered syncretic with animism and Hindu-Buddhist as Geertz's study has had a

tremendous impact on the performance of Islam in the archipelago both historically, sociologically, culturally and politically. Geertz's study influenced the general view of the world community about Nusantara Islam as a marginal and peripheral religion to Islam in the Middle East because it mixed with animistic and Hindu-Buddhist elements. Islam seems to have had no influence at all on the culture of the Archipelago (*Southeast Asia*) (Azra, 2005).

The presence of Islam in the archipelago is a struggle for the characters of two cultures who are competing for influence. One side of Javanese culture with a strong and established ancient tradition has a tendency to be defensive and even resistant to any culture from outside, while on the other hand, Islam, which has an expansive character, will always carry out attacks on cultures that tend to be offensive and critical. Javanese culture that inherits ancient traditions will always show its existence as a strong tradition even though at the same time Islam exerts expansive pressure.

These two cultures are competing for the influence that is in view. Azra views Islamic culture as a "big tradition" with a number of universal canonicals competing with Javanese culture as a "small tradition" consisting of local elements with a limited reach. Islam is the main element, while Java is the additional element. There is a process of maintaining a cultural identity that actually has been going on long before independence. Every culture has the character of maintaining identity and resisting change.

M. Bambang Pranowo's study in Tegalrejo at the foot of Mount Merbabu, Magelang shows that Javanese people are not syncretic, but a society who adhere to religious traditions. Javanese society is an orthodox society. The level of Islamic orthodoxy in Javanese society has been going on long before independence (since the 14th century), marked by the strengthening of the role of the kiai and the spread of santri culture in the community. Places of worship (mosques and langgar) exist in several corners of people's lives, although Tegalrejo and Javanese society were previously known as areas with the population of PKI, PNI and Abangan (Pranowo 2009).

Mysticism was creatively adapted by the kiai to deconstruct the Javanese people's perspective as well as to be used in protecting the

community and filtering information from outside to create a new face of Javanese Islam. These two channels allowed Islam to quickly and deeply enter into the Javanese cultural structure, from the kraton as the main basis for the designation of a theocratic state to classification among the people. Kiai plays an important role in communicating Islamic doctrines, forming society, spreading religious traditions as enrichment in Islam, and then filtering (*brokers*) on any issues that are thought to destroy the fabric of society.

Thus, thanks to his strong position, the kiai occupied a reformist position at the level of social structure and political cosmology. They make changes by injecting new understandings that have not been known to the public before through majelis taklim, halaqah, and special meetings with roles as intellectuals, mediators, cultural brokers, and sometimes mystics who demand more skills and have access to or relations with external systems. In fact, it is not uncommon for all of these roles to be played almost simultaneously and sometimes in different spaces. They not only actively encourage fundamental change, resist the flow of change, and filter within a community against pressures for change, but also create educational, economic, and political opportunities.

This is the kiai phenomenon in the global era. The transformation of the kiai continues—even more and more—confirmed his existence as a charismatic, authoritative and respected figure in the community. Thus, underestimating all the kiai phenomena by stating that in society the level of knowledge is not above average and that society maintains the past tradition, the existence of kiai is an inevitable necessity. Such an assessment only cuts off the link between the structure of society and the goals, processes and effects of mysticism, and obscures the kiai's position as reformer. If socio-cultural change is seen as a long process, and as anthropologists say that the concept of "traditional" and "modern" is a universal empirical criterion, then the reform of the kiai becomes a necessity, equal in position to Buddhists, priests, intellectuals, and scholars. the steps are always decorated with "mystical".

On the other hand, it is the tendency of the scholars themselves to fail to explain the phenomena of "mysticism" and "intellectualism" of kiai, which are now scattered in several professions. Most scholars begin the “knowledge” and “experience” the kiai have from the analysis that places

traditionalism against modernism. With these two criteria, the kiai is then categorized as a person/group who does not have the concept of renewal and is inexperienced because his reading sources are classical books. If reviewers direct their analysis on strategies for how the kiai can survive and how to deal with new challenges, it will certainly be more important and more useful. The kiai will not underestimate the changes experienced by society and the characteristics of a particular society, but on the contrary, make them new challenges.

Political Change

The role of the kiai in changing the socio-political construction of Indonesian society has been going on for a long time. Together with pesantren, the kiai's efforts to contribute to the space and field of political life by incorporating Islamic values and morality do not stop. Pesantren as the oldest education is used as a means of planting an Islamic value system capable of creating religious individuals in the life of a more religious society with teaching that leads to strengthening religious understanding or *tafaqquh fî al-dîn* (expertise in religious studies) (Zuhdi, 2018), and kiai. as a leader often has an influence on the socio-political life of the community.

The phenomenon of the existence of kiai in the developing social space in Indonesia as a result of their interactions in the structure of the society that surrounds them. Kiai are always at the forefront of maintaining ideology and guarding currents that can affect the social and political life of society. This current is very strong in changing the structure of society in the last few years, it is realized that it has influenced the kiai's cognitive structure and even shaken his leadership pattern as the sole religious authority holder. However, with attention to the spiritual guidance and education of the people, the kiai always transforms in the public sphere to provide public education, trying to be present to influence and mobilize people's emotional actions or responses. Pesantren have always been centers of community development in addition to traditional learning centers (Lukens-Bull, 2010).

The spirituality dimension of the kiai is placed in a position of mutual influence between individual elements and Indonesian society, while the kiai's attitude towards national political phenomena that

surrounds social life is used to describe the ongoing social field. The dynamic social movement of society is a flow that exposes the kiai to an attitude of always responding to it. As religious and social figures, the kiai is always awaited by their presence to balance social movements with ideal values and Islamic teachings (Sidney Jones, 1984). Because apart from the teachings of Islam and its symbols, the political field is another element that influences the life of the structure of society.

Social and political spiritualization has strengthened in the traditional Islamic thought system so as to produce products of religious knowledge among the community. Based on Arkoun's findings, the social dreams of the Muslim world community are formed through the projections of values, history, reality, society, and the physical environment that are influenced by traditions over a long period of time. Arkon assessed that religious discourse in Arabic is still dominated by mythologies that shape people's mindsets. The Arab world has always been colored by tensions between myths and logos which have led to backwardness in the social, political, economic and cultural fields (Arkoun, 2003).

This research finds the following important things. First, the marriage of traditionalism and nationalism. The traditionalism that was brought up by or promoted by the traditional kiai of NU was religious understanding which was converged with the understanding of nationalism. This tendency gave birth to a distinctive traditionalism: on the one hand it can show the meaning of orthodoxy and the other side shows the complete anti-rationalism despite the excessive respect for the past. When the kiai succeeded in marrying traditionalism and nationalism, the NU kiai became a community that seemed to have enough vitality to absorb and relate to social change (Niam, 2017). Thus, the effort to eradicate religious traditionalism actually manifests religious traditionalism itself on the surface combined with the spirit of nationalism even though it glorifies the glories of the past.

Second, the transmission of Islamic sciences. The kiai possesses the foundations and extraordinary intellectual property that the Muslim community needs. The yellow book and the pesantren tradition are the intellectual property of the kiai which is always transferred from one generation to another. Thus, pesantren have various characteristics that

are proven to be able to survive in a changing society even with various criticisms of these traditional educational institutions such as charismatic kiai leadership, not fostering criticism, and un-programmed teaching, and others (Arifin, 2013). Pesantren are able to become established institutions as a basis for scientific transmission, initially in rural areas but in recent years, they have begun to grow in urban areas with high vertical mobility.

Third, appreciation of the thought of medieval scholars. The kiai greatly exalted the work of medieval scholars by making it the main foothold in answering contemporary socio-political problems. The kiai uses the interpretation method in understanding the works of previous scholars according to the socio-political interests of the community and maintains one of the four schools of Sunni law. Even so, this appreciation actually makes the kiai always claimed to be very flexible towards political situations and tends to be accommodating to the new changes offered by the modern mindset or the mind dominated by local traditions. In fact, it is not uncommon for this group to be accused of practicing syncretism, *bid'ah*, and *keburafat*.

The flexibility of traditionalist political attitudes is evident in a number of political *ijtihad*, such as the acceptance of Pancasila as the sole principle, the granting of the title *wali al-amri al-darûri bi al-syaukah* to Soekarno, and others (Porter, 2005). In a socio-religious context, the flexibility and openness of this traditional group is often associated as an implication of theological understanding that is considered different from the theological perceptions of modernist Muslims. If traditionalist Muslims are attributed to a Muslim community that adheres to one of the four schools of Sunni law and tends to syncretic practices of worship, on the other hand the "modernists" a priori do not recognize the priority of any school and only consider the Koran and as- Sunnah as the main source of law (Burhani, 2016).

As a result, modernist Muslims are considered to have failed to produce a new generation of Islam as a result of rejecting Islamic traditionalism, cutting off classical heritage and the Islamic education system. Meanwhile, traditionalist Muslims are able to produce pesantren graduates who can continue their Islamic studies. Although the portion is small, it is significant to become a true Islam (not only Muslim

intellectuals), and most importantly shows as a political alternative force ((Aspinall, 2010).

Even so, contrasting the two groups is no longer relevant, because this effort has consequences far from reconciling the congruence of thought. The difference between the two lies in large part in style, not content, because the thinking of the two meets in neo-modernism. However, as Donald J. Porter argues, to this day organizational affiliation remains an important source of political divisions between modernist and traditionalist Muslims.

CONCLUSION

The success of the *kiai* in responding to the political-economic changes in the country since the reformation beginning in 1998 was carried out by the traditional elite, namely the *kiai khos*. This change was used as a momentum to continue the reform project in the political field since the *kiai khos* broke the 1926 *khittah* in 1984 which had an impact on the *kiai*'s appearance as a progressive intellectual on one hand and a traditionalist *ulama* on the other. Through the *pesantren*, the *kiai* places change as a blessing to construct the birth of new traditions that strengthen one side of religious orthodoxy and the other side of politics. The ideology of traditionalism was successfully defended by the *kiai* amidst national and global political-economic changes to create a new intellectual tradition in 1984, followed by reforms in the political field in 1998. This generation is what is called the traditional *santri* and *santri par excellence* as the new traditional elite.

The *kiai*'s struggle to form a political tradition is an *ijtihad* that is consistently carried out in the midst of political pressure and state policies that are not conducive through the cosmopolitan movement and state politics by placing the concept of traditionalism against the concept of nationalism. As a result, the traditional elite now appear with two faces or double-edged swords. One side of traditionalism gave birth to a religious thought movement that tends to perpetuate religious orthodoxy as a result of the use of an indirect reference system to the Koran and *hadith* which has resulted in a space for experimentation and articulation of thought, on the other hand traditionalism has manifested itself as an Islamic political movement. Progressive (Islamic political movements) that become the

pillars for the upholding of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, and the Unitary Republic of Indonesia. Many study forums and NGOs were born since the 1926 khittah in 1984, and political institutions such as PKB since the reformation began in 1998. This state's political-economic struggle shows the intellectual and spiritual abilities of the kiai.

Thus, the role of kiai khos as guardians of traditionalism, which had been imaged as backward and old-fashioned, had turned into a progressive one. The tradition of kiai literacy explores classical scientific treasures, both tafsir, hadith, fiqh, tauhid, even politics and economics to be actualized into the contemporary scientific tradition to open a new era, political progressiveness within the traditional community. This progressive generation is a new traditional elite with a variety of education coloring the life of the nation and state in the last three decades. Kiai khos consists of pesantren elites who have bulldozed the political culture of the traditional people, now appearing as a new force in the current Indonesian political scene.

This conclusion is different from the research done by Endang Turmudi (2004) about the role of the kiai in politics which is not comparable to the socio-religion which causes a decrease in the kiai's charisma; Jajat Burhanudin (2012) explains that the choice of kiai to join politics transcends traditional boundaries, more than just spiritual leaders and religious reformers.

REFERENCES

- Alfirdaus, Laila Kholid. (2014). Islam and Local Politics: In the Quest of Kiai, Politics, and Development in Kebumen, 2008-2010. *Al-Jami'ah* 51(2):279–309. doi: 10.14421/ajis.2013.512.279-309.
- Arifin, Achmad Zainal. (2013). Charisma and Rationalisation in a Modernising Pesantren: Changing Values in Traditional Islamic Education in Java. A Thesis of Ph.D The Western Sydney University.
- Arkoun, Mohammed. (2003). Rethinking Islam Today. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588:18–39. doi: 10.1177/0002716203588001003.
- Aspinall, Edward. (2010). Semi-Opponents in Power: The Abdurrahman

- Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri Presidencies. Australia: ANU.
- Aspinall, Edward, and Greg Fealy. (2010). Soeharto's New Order and Its Legacy : Essays in Honour of Harold Crouc. Australia: ANU.
- Azra, Azyumardi. (2005). Islam in Southeast Asia: Tolerance and Radicalism. Australia: University of Melbourne.
- Bashri, Yanto. (2020). Perjuangan Sosial Dan Politik Pandemi. *Beritasatu.Com*.
- Batubara, Chuzaimah. (1999). Islam and Mystical Movements in Post-Independence Indonesia: Susila Budhi Dharma (Subud) and Its Doctrines. Canada: McGill University.
- Black, Antony. (2011). The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present. *Second Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd
- Boogert, Jochem van den. (2015). Rethinking Javanese Islam: Towards New Descriptions of Javanese Traditions Issue. Leiden: Leiden University.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. (2016). Kitab Kuning Dan Kitab Suci: Pengaruh Al-Jabiri Terhadap Pemikiran Keagamaan di NU dan Muhammadiyah. *Masyarakat Indonesia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Indonesia* 41(1):29–42.
- Bush, Robin, and Greg Fealy. (2014). The Political Decline of Traditional Ulama in Indonesia: The State, Umma and Nahdlatul Ulama. *Asian Journal of Social Science* 42(5):536–60. doi: 10.1163/15685314-04205004.
- Daniels, Timothy P. (2016). *Islamic Spectrum in Java*. First Edit. New York: Routledge.
- Daniels, Timothy P. (1999). Imagining Selves and Inventing Festival Sriwijaya. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30(1):7–10.
- Dharsono (Sony Kartika), Jakob Sumardjo, Matius Ali, Mudji Sutrisno, S.J., G.R. Lono L. Simatupang, Rahmanu Widayat, Pujiyanto, MarwatiJakob Sumardjo Matius Ali, Mudji Sutrisno, S.J., G.R. Lono L. Simatupang, Dharsono (Sony Kartika), Rahmanu Widayat, and Pu. (2010). *Estetika Nusantara: Orientasi Terhadap Filsafat, Kebudayaan, Pandangan Masyarakat, Dan Paradigma Seni*. Vol. 1. Surakarta: ISI Press Surakarta.
- Effendy, Bahtiar. (2011). *Islam dan Negara: Transformasi Gagasan Dan*

- Praktik Politik Islam Di Indonesia*. First. Jakarta: Yayasan Abad Demokrasi.
- Fauzi, Muhammad Latif. (2012). The Roles of Kyai and Pesantren in Preserving Islamic Tradition and Negotiating Modernity Muhammad Latif Fauzi IAIN Surakarta - Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesia Islam* 06(01):125–44. doi: 10.15642/JIIS.2012.6.1.125-144.
- Feener, R. Michael. (2007). Cross-Cultural Contexts of Modern Muslim Intellectualism. *Die Welt Des Islams* 47(3):264–82.
- Fish, M. Steven. (2002). Islam and Authoritarianism. *World Politics* 55(October):4–37. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2003.0004>.
- Franklin, Nathan John. (2014). Reproducing Political Islam in Java : The Role of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah Pesantren in the Political Socialisation of the Umat. Charles Darwin University.
- Geertz, Clifford. (1957). Ritual and Social Change : A Javanese Example. *American Anthropologist* 59(1):32–54.
- Hidayat, Rachmad. (2011). Santri , Kyai , and Ulama : Framing Masculinities within Indonesian Religious Elites. *International Workshop on Masculinities in Asia* (August 2011):0–14.
- Julia Day Howell. (2001). Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival Author. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60(3):701–29.
- Kikue, Hamayotsu. (2011). The End of Political Islam? A Comparative Analysis of Religious Parties in the Muslim Democracy of Indonesia. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 30(3):133.
- Lukens-Bull, Ronald. (2010). Madrasa By Any Other Name: Pondok, Pesantren, and Islamic Schools in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*. 04(01):1–21. doi: 10.15642/JIIS.2010.4.1.1-21.
- Mohamed, Sirelkhatim. (2015). Authority in Islam: The Institutionalization of Islam and the Elusive Transfer of Authority from Society to State. *Journal of Georgetown University-Qatar Middle Eastern Studies Student Association* 2015:2. doi: 10.5339/messa.2015.2.
- Mohd. Shuhaimi, Haji Ishak, and Chuah Abdullah Osman. (2012). Islam and the Malay World: An Insight into the Assimilation of Islamic Values. *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 2(2):58–65.
- Niam, Khoirun. (2017). Nahdlatul Ulama and the Production of Muslim Intellectuals in the Beginning of 21st Century Indonesia. *Journal of*

- Indonesian Islam* 11(2):351–88. doi: 10.15642/JIIS.2017.11.2.351-388.
- Porter, Donald J. (2005). *Managing Politics and Islam in Indonesia*. RoutledgeCurzon.
- Pranowo, Bambang. (2009). *Memahami Islam*. Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet and Indonesia Institute for Society.
- Sidney Jones. (1984). The Contraction and Expansion of the " Umat " and the Role of the Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia. *Southeast Asia Program Publications at Cornell University* 38(38):1–20.
- Sternberg, Robert J. (1999). *Encyclopedia of Creativity: Volume 2 I-Z*. Vol. 2. Second. edited by Howard Gardner.
- Wahid, Din. (2012). Challenging Religious Authority: The Emergence of Salafī Ustādhs in Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 6(2):245–64. doi: 10.15642/JIIS.2012.6.2.245-264.
- Woodward, Mark. (2011). Reflections on Java and Islam 1979-2010. *Al-Jami'ab* 49(2):281–94. doi: <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2011.492.281-294>.
- Zuhdi, Muhammad. (2018). Challenging Moderate Muslims: Indonesia's Muslim Schools in the Midst of Religious Conservatism. *Religions* 9(10):1–15. doi: 10.3390/rel9100310.
- Zulkifli, Zulkifli. (2013). The Ulama in Indonesia: Between Religious Authority and Symbolic Power. *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 37(1):180–97. doi: 10.30821/miqot.v37i1.79.