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Islam and politics in Madura : ulama and other local leaders in search of influence (1990-2010)

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Citation

Pribadi, Y. (2013, August 28). *Islam and politics in Madura : ulama and other local leaders in search of influence (1990-2010)*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/21539>

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Issue Date: 2013-08-28

Chapter 3

Madurese Kiai: Religious Leaders in Medina's Veranda

Introduction

This chapter deals with the roles of Madurese *kiai* as both traditional and modern leaders. As I have elaborated some aspects of *kiai* in the previous chapter, including the background of the emergence of *kiai* as religious leaders, in this chapter I will focus on how *kiai*, who symbolise Islamic leadership and are the main supporters of the *santri* culture, have characterised the dynamics of Islam and politics in Madura and have used their position to enhance their social standing and political well-being in state-society relations. In doing so, I will portray two prominent NU *kiai* figures. Among the questions posed in this chapter are: How do *kiai* preserve their position in society? What factors guide the interaction between *kiai* and the political world? To what extent have traditional *kiai* adapted to the modern political world?

It is clear that *kiai* with their *pesantren* and their organisational networks, such as that of the NU and Bassra, have cautiously responded to state power by establishing multifaceted relations with the state. These relationships range from distancing themselves from the government to forming mutually beneficial relations with the state when the power of the state is too strong to oppose, or when making an alliance with the government is seen as a useful choice. Certainly, *kiai* have become the social, cultural, economic, and political brokers in Madura.

Kiai as the leaders of people's power

In this section, I describe the participation of *kiai* in politics.

The emphasis is put on the roles played by *Kiai* Alawy Muhammad, a prominent *kiai* in Sampang. In this regard, the first important event was his protest against the violence in the Nipah (or Nepa) Dam incident (details of the incident are given in Chapter 5). The second important role he played was during election campaigns at the national and regional levels.

The importance of Madurese *kiai* has attracted a number of authors. Iik Mansurnoor, for instance, signifies the importance of *kiai* and makes a link between *kiai* and *rato* (old Madurese rulers) by outlining the decline of *rato* as a direct cause of the rise of the *kiai*'s societal role (Mansurnoor, 1995). Elly Touwen-Bouwsma, borrowing Mart Bax's concept of religious administration, traces the historical processes that led to the development of *ulama* and their organisations in Madura, which up to now have formed a counterbalance against the intervention of the state. She argues that the present strong social position of Madurese *ulama* is closely bound up with the process of state formation and the islamisation of Madurese society (Touwen-Bouwsma, 1992).

The Madurese culture that becomes part of the larger East Javanese culture is one of the ten most prominent sub-cultures in East Java. The grouping of the ten sub-cultures is classified based on their distinctive areas. Of these ten sub cultures, five are worthy of note: Mataraman, Pesisiran, Arek, Madurese, and endalungan.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Mataraman is an area that roughly covers Madiun, Magetan, Nganjuk, and Kediri. This area is influenced by a syncretist Islam as a result of the long rule of the Mataram Kingdom. Pesisiran is an area that exists in the regencies of Gresik, Lamongan, and Tuban. This area was the first in touch with Islam and therefore is highly influenced by a more orthodox Islam. Madura is an island that consists of four regencies, Bangkalan, Sampang, Pamekasan, and Sumenep. Like Pesisiran, Madura is also heavily influenced by a more orthodox Islam, and in this study, that form of Islam is defined as *santri* Islam. Pendalungan is also known as Tapal Kuda. This has been the main migration area of the Madurese for hundreds of years. This area covers (approximately) Jember, Banyuwangi, Bondowoso, Situbondo, and Probolinggo. As a result of extensive migration from Madura, the culture of people of Pendalungan is similar to that of the Madurese. Arek is a metropolitan area that covers Surabaya, Sidoarjo, and Malang. As an urban area, Arek has become a place where many people from other sub cultures migrate to. During the colonial era, this area was also influenced by the Dutch culture, and therefore Arek is considered as the most developed area and their religious orientation is best represented as rational and pragmatic (Chalik, 2010: 138-139).

Religious leaders in these areas show distinctive characteristics in terms of political attitude. According to Abdul Chalik, due to their distinctive sub cultures, the NU *kiai* in the five areas have their own distinctive preference when it comes to supporting political parties. He argues that Mataraman NU elites tend to maintain a relationship with formal religious issues and there is a tendency to separate religion from politics, while the NU elites of Pesisiran, Arek, Madura, and Pentalungan tend to combine religion and politics in their political attitude (Chalik, 2010). Therefore, it seems likely that Islamic political parties will have significant support in Pesisiran, Arek, Madurese, and Pentalungan areas, while non-Islamic political parties (such as the PDIP), besides receiving support from their traditional supporters, the *abangan* people, also draw support from a number of NU elites and followers in Mataraman.

Besides forming a large part of the ethnic composition of Pentalungan (Tapal Kuda), the number of Madurese who live in Arek and Pesisiran is not insignificant, and therefore it seems likely that Madurese also play a central part in contributing to the support for Islamic political parties in these areas.

In explaining the phenomenon of Madurese *kiai*, Mansurnoor maintains that the *kiai* should be looked at as an institution, in the sense of a cluster of attributes. This consists of the personal holder of the position and an indispensable set of characteristics such as family background, resources, religious centres and a network of followers (Mansurnoor, 1990: 238). Meanwhile, according to Mark Woodward, in Java, many *kiai* are often wealthy. A *kiai*'s wealth does not constitute a religious problem as long as it is used for religious purposes. A *kiai*'s wealth may be acquired through various sources, including donations from disciples and *kiai*'s guests. However, not all *kiai* are rich. Some are simply well-qualified religious men struggling to make a mark as teachers. Some are less wealthy and so are forced to take jobs as manual labourers, or their family members may sell goods at the market to make ends meet (Woodward, 1989: 144). If we look at the categorisation of *kiai* in Madura in the previous chapter, we may have a clearer view why some *kiai* are rich, while others have modest means. Although he does not mention it specifically, in Woodward's study, it is perhaps *kiai pesantren* or

kiai tarekat who are often wealthy because they frequently receive donations from their disciples or from their guests. *Kiai dukun* and *kiai langgar* may be less well off because they are less exposed to outsiders, and therefore they receive fewer guests than *kiai pesantren* and *kiai tarekat*, and in turn receive fewer donations.

It is also in Java that many leading *kiai* have family ties with other *kiai*. The ties are made possible due to, among other things, the tradition of intermarriage among *kiai* families. A *kiai*'s son, for instance, is usually sent to a *pesantren* whose owner (almost certainly also a *kiai*) is familiar with the *kiai*. After finishing his religious education, the *kiai*'s son will be trained by his last mentor to build his own *pesantren*. The *kiai*'s interventions are evident when it comes to matters of marriage and a *santri*'s leadership. For instance, *Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari*'s interferences can be witnessed when *Kiai Manaf Abdulkarim*, the founder of *Pesantren Lirboyo* in Kediri, *Kiai Jazuli*, the founder of *Pesantren Ploso* in Kediri, and *Kiai Zuber*, the founder of *Pesantren Reksosari* in Salatiga were finishing their studies in *Pesantren Tebuireng* in Jombang, under the guidance of *Kiai Hasyim*. During their last stint in the *pesantren*, the three *santri* (who later on became *kiai*) were appointed senior teachers. They were entrusted with religious and non-religious issues such as tutoring younger *santri*, placing new *santri* and even receiving *santri*'s parents who visited their children. When *Kiai Hasyim* was ensured that the capacity of the three *santri* had developed the capacities to lead their own *pesantren*, he arranged marriages for them. In the early period during their leadership in their newly built *pesantren*, they were also provided with a number of *santri* from Tebuireng. These *santri* were initial assets for the young *kiai* in terms of expanding their own *pesantren* (Dhofier, 1982: 59).

Unlike Java, in Madura, someone who has finished his *pesantren* training usually has to 'complete' a number of complex steps prior to becoming a *kiai*. In present-day Madurese religious spheres, in order to be acknowledged in religious circles, it is common for a *kiai* to fulfil three essential requirements: he has to belong to a *kiai* family; he has to lead a *pesantren*; and he has to belong to the NU. If one of the three requirements cannot be met, then he will not be considered *kiai* in the vast network of *kiai* in Madura (Interview with a member of a renowned *kiai* family in

Bangkalan on 11 November 2009).

Exceptions, however, do occur. *Kiai* Fuad Amin Imron (this figure is further described in Chapter 6), the current regent of Bangkalan (for the periods 2003-2008 and 2008-2013) is widely regarded as a *kiai* even though he has never led a *pesantren*. The fact that he is held in such high regard seems to be because he is a great-grandson of *Kiai* Kholil and a son of *Kiai* Amin Imron, a leading *kiai* of the NU and the PPP. Moreover, according to *Kiai* Nuruddin (this *kiai* is further described in the next section), there are three kinds of *kiai* in Madura based on their sources of income. Firstly, *kiai* who depend primarily on their own resources to finance their *pesantren*. Secondly, *kiai* who besides depend on their own resources, also rely on financial aid from other parties. Thirdly, *kiai* who depend primarily on financial aid from other parties to manage their *pesantren* (Muthmainnah, 1998: 142).

The community does not expect Madurese *kiai* to support themselves. Therefore, *kiai*'s trading or farming activities are always managed by other people. These activities are not expected to be performed by the *kiai* themselves because they are considered as tasks beneath the *kiai*. The *kiai* are expected to be different from ordinary people because by appearing to be so, they show special characteristics that commoners do not have. *Kiai* also uphold their sacred position by preserving a prevalent belief in society that people will receive their *barakah* (blessing) and *karamah* (dignity) if they visit *kiai* to ask for guidance on any matter.

In general, it is commonly acknowledged that the *kiai* in Madura today have a great influence over society. *Kiai* are seen as people who have extensive knowledge of Islam, and whose capability in the religious realm goes beyond that of the commoners. They are respected as the most authoritative source within the Islamic dominion. The high esteem in which the public holds *kiai* places them as commanding figures and the people's leaders, a position which has been largely achieved since at least the early nineteenth century when the local aristocracies gradually lost their influence. It is mostly in villages and sub-districts that the great power of *kiai* has been noticed, not only by villagers but also by village officials. Village authorities have, on the one hand, been contested by *kiai*, and on the other hand, they have also enjoyed the benefit

of *kiai* leadership among the people. Without the support of the *kiai*, it would have been less possible to involve the villagers in the implementation of development programmes during the New Order era. Both village authorities and the *kiai* are certainly aware of this situation.

The high status of the *kiai* is also enjoyed by their families. People's regard for *kiai* families is central to the *kiai* and his families' success in winning sympathy. Their institutions and personalities have also played significant roles in successfully gaining followers. Although exceptions occur, the position of *kiai* in Madura is an ascribed status, in which the children of *kiai* (especially, but not exclusively, the sons) also enjoy the high status bestowed upon their father—a position that they will assume, voluntarily or otherwise, later in life.

Moreover, the prestige of a *kiai* is garnered from the gathering of visitors. Top *kiai* are aware that they can get a more accurate image of society by meeting people not only from their own region, but also from other areas. During the New Order era, when only a minority of educated people in the villages had access to radio, television, newspapers and magazines, *kiai* were able to disseminate up-to-date issues to their visitors. Armed with the latest information, they could create more concern among their visitors about the socio-political world outside their place of origin. However, they were also aware that by presenting their independence, *kiai* could prove that they were responsible only to God. By distancing themselves from the irreligious realm, *kiai* gained the trust of their followers. As long as a *kiai* was independent, he would enjoy leadership among his followers.

A prominent *kiai* in Sampang, recognisable by his distinctive turban and robe-style clothing, *Kiai Alawy*, is a striking figure for many Madurese. He is the fourth son of eleven siblings and was born when the Dutch powers still occupied his fatherland.⁴¹ His father was a small, low-level *kiai* who possessed extensive knowledge of Islam. When *Kiai Alawy* was a teenager, due to hard times on Madura, he escaped from the island and lived in Malang, East Java.

⁴¹ No-one, including *Kiai Alawy* himself, knows exactly when he was born, as is often the case for many leading *kiai*. It is often said that the *kiai* was born in 1926 when the NU was founded.

In Java, he gained a more respectable status (than he had as a small trader in Madura) by becoming a merchant. During the Sukarno administration, he went to Mecca not only for pilgrimage, but also to study. Like many Madurese *kiai* who had studied in this period, as soon as he returned to his homeland, he led a *pesantren* and began to spread his influence.

Although *Kiai Alawy* comes from a *kiai* family, it was not a big, high-level *kiai* family. He did not have the extensive privileges enjoyed by a *lorah* (an honorific title for the son of a high-status *kiai*). However, he still enjoyed a number of advantages in his father's *pesantren*, especially among the *santri*. Although leading a *pesantren* is possible for people who do not have a big *kiai* lineage, those living in western Madurese regencies face difficulties vis-à-vis the dominant position of other *kiai*, particularly that of *Kiai Kholil's* descendants. Moreover, running a *pesantren* requires sufficient resources and in Madura, traditions are also an important factor. Therefore, in the beginning, it is likely *Kiai Alawy* was under tremendous pressure to win over public opinion.

Kiai Alawy first became known at a national level in September 1993, after the Nipah⁴² dam incident in the Banyuates sub-district of Sampang, approximately sixty kilometres north of the capital of the regency. The Nipah dam incident was a bloody confrontation between the residents of Banyuates sub-district and police officers and soldiers. It resulted in the death of four people. The central government, via the local government of Sampang, planned to build a dam in the sub-district. Landowners within this proposed site protested the plan to acquire their property, including a number of mosques and sacred cemeteries and, heated negotiations ensued. According to one of the vice chairmen of the regency's parliament (*Kiai* Moh. Ismail Muzakki), the regent of Sampang, Bagus Hinayana, in a meeting on 20 September 1993 with residents of Banyuates in Planggaran Timur village, intimidated villagers who rejected the plan to build a dam in their area by threatening to shoot those who refused to approve the plan (*Jawa Pos*, 19 October 1993). On 25 September 1993 around five

⁴² According to legend, the name is derived from a *sakti* (possessing magical power) *kiai*, *Kiai Nipah* who is claimed as the ancestor of the Nipah villagers. His grave was venerated for various purposes (mostly for acquiring wealth) before the site was scheduled to be flooded.

hundred villagers, many of whom it is said were carrying sharp weapons, confronted officials from Badan Pertanahan Nasional (the National Land Board) and Kantor Sosial Politik (the Social Politics Office), and several police officers and soldiers from Planggaran Timur village. The military then opened fire (*Surya*, 26 September 1993; *Surabaya Post*, 28 September 1993; and *Kompas*, 28 September 1993).

After the incident, *Kiai Alawy*, together with Sampang residents, demanded justice. Vice President Try Sutrisno asked *Kiai Alawy* to calm the fiery situation in Sampang (*Jawa Pos*, 16 October 1993). As a result of the protest, the soldiers who had shot four people were brought to court and punished. Furthermore, the commander of the local armed forces in Sampang (Kodam 0828), Lieutenant Colonel (Artillery) Sugeng Wiyono and the commander of the local police (Polres Sampang), Lieutenant Colonel (Police) Siswinarto, were dismissed (*Suara Karya*, 16 October 1993 and *Media Indonesia*, 16 October 1993). However, the regent, who had allowed the armed forces to shoot, remained in charge until the end of his tenure in 1995.

Kiai Alawy's involvement in the violent Nipah dam incident can be interpreted as a demand from the public: the people have great expectations of their leaders. Moreover, because *Kiai Alawy* was a prominent *kiai* in Sampang, the government asked him to help resolve the incident. The government realised that it was easier to ask a *kiai* to pacify the heated situation than to cope with the tense circumstances without involving local leaders. The situation indicates three important aspects. First, the position of *kiai* in society is so high that the people request them to be their representatives and to voice their concerns. Second, the government saw the *kiai* as mediators in disputes with the people, and this clearly indicated the importance of *kiai* as intermediaries. Third, following the incident, the position of *Kiai Alawy* and other *kiai* who were involved in the mediation process became stronger in society and in the eyes of the government. It was clearly very good for their reputation, especially in the political realm.

However, during the New Order, it seems that *Kiai Alawy* had more complex relationships with the government compared to other *kiai* of the PPP. Unlike many other *kiai* of the PPP, *Kiai*

Alawy did not necessarily experience economic exclusion from the government. This seems to be a result of his closeness to the authorities in Surabaya and Jakarta. Following his involvement in the Nipah dam incident, the government was aware that there were certain *kiai* in Madura who should not be overlooked; one of them was *Kiai Alawy*. Rumours spread that *Kiai Alawy* was awarded financial aid to renovate his *pesantren* (Widjojo & Fawzia, 1999: 68). In a private conversation with one of Bassra's *kiai*, I was told that despite *Kiai Alawy's* involvement in the initial gatherings of Bassra, *Kiai Alawy* was not asked to participate in Bassra's later programmes and meetings because the Bassra *kiai* suspected that *Kiai Alawy* had made certain agreements with the government that would make other Bassra *kiai* feel uncomfortable.

In terms of the wider community, *Kiai Alawy* was perceived by many with suspicion as well as with respect. Following the 1997 Sampang riot, which occurred after the general elections (this riot is further described in Chapter 6), *Kiai's Alawy* residence became a meeting place where PPP functionaries and the government discussed the riot. This led to a perception that *Kiai Alawy* had been 'bought' by the government in order that he would be less critical in his response to the riot. Others held the view that *Kiai Alawy* was an influential figure in the PPP and in Sampang in general, and so the government needed to pay attention to this *kiai* if they wanted to tackle the riot effectively. The government might also have been aware that *Kiai Alawy* was influential in terms of the increase in votes for the PPP in Banjarmasin. According to John Sidel, in the course of the 1997 election campaign, it became clear that the PPP in Banjarmasin would pick up votes previously claimed by the PDI, as well as many more votes from among the city's recent migrants, especially those from Madura. This increase in votes was made possible due to, among other things, the election campaign of the PPP, which saw this prominent *kiai* travelling to Banjarmasin to bring out the vote (Sidel, 2006: 93).

According to Widjojo and Fawzia, there were three types political attitude among *kiai* during the New Order. The first was those who were critical and anti-government; secondly, those who were critical but moderate and open towards the government; and finally, those who always supported the government (Widjojo

& Fawzia, 1999: 69). This categorisation is similar to the above categorisation by *Kiai* Nuruddin in describing types of *kiai* in Madura. According to Widjojo and Fawzia, in Sampang the third category was very small, and, in fact, these *kiai* were usually secluded from the vast religious network in Sampang. One of the *kiai* who belonged to the third category was *Kiai* Muafie, the then chairman of the Sampang branch of Golkar. Like other *kiai* of Golkar, he was rewarded with financial support and privileged access to government's resources. The majority, however, fell into the first category. *Kiai* who belonged to this category seemed to enjoy the benefits of a prestigious religious circle in Sampang and gained much respect from the people. Nevertheless, they also experienced discrimination from the government in the form of the difficulties getting financial aid or qualified teachers from the Ministry of Religious Affairs for their *pesantren*. One of the *kiai* who belonged to the first category was *Kiai* Ersyad who was known as a critical PPP cadre (Widjojo & Fawzia, 1999: 69).

It was very likely that, like in Bangkalan and also other regencies in Madura, the *kiai* leadership in Sampang was relatively autonomous and independent of state intervention. Both parties appeared to keep their distance from each other. The government's approaches to *kiai* in order to gain their active involvement in *pembangunan* (development, modernity) programmes during the New Order were far from successful. The religious approach of the regent of Sampang, Fadillah Budiono, for instance, was to become a *khatib* (a person who delivers a sermon during the Friday prayers or Eid prayers) in a number of mosques. However, this was viewed negatively by the *kiai*. The regent, according to Widjojo and Fawzia, admitted that the influence of regency officials over *kiai* in Sampang was very low (Widjojo & Fawzia, 1999: 70).

In Sampang and also in Madura in general, given their status, *kiai* are expected to provide their followers with religious services and advice, including guidance in issues of marriage, divorce and inheritance. In political spheres, utilising his rhetorical abilities, *Kiai* Alawy attempted to convince his followers that participation in politics was compulsory for Muslims. As a Madurese *kiai*, his support for the NU is almost unquestionable. The NU, from its establishment until the present day, has provided numerous

Madurese *kiai* with a great political network. The traditional network based on kinship and marriage certainly remains important, but it was through the NU network that *Kiai* Alawy was able to reach higher levels in the political world. *Kiai* Alawy criticised the NU for the decision made at its 1984 congress to return to its 1926 charter (the 1926 *khittah*). He also repeatedly stated his opposition to the attempt to secularise the organisation by accepting Pancasila as its sole ideology. The board of the Pasuruan branch of the NU reported that when he delivered a sermon in Pasuruan on 1 March 1997, he publicly slammed the NU for its decision to return to the 1926 *khittah* (*Jawa Pos*, 18 March 1997). However, in the same paper, *Kiai* Alawy denied the accusation. He said that 'I did not slam the NU; there is no way that a *kiai* smears (*mencoreng*) Islam' (*Jawa Pos*, 18 March 1997).

The withdrawal of the NU from the PPP caused bewilderment in Madura. After the 1971 general elections, all Muslim parties (the NU, Parmusi (Partai Muslimin Indonesia), Perti (Pergerakan Tarbiyah Islamiyah), and PSII (Partai Sarikat Islam Indonesia)) were amalgamated into the PPP and all nationalist and Christian parties (the PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia), IPKI (Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia), Murba, Partai Katolik, and Parkindo (Partai Kristen Indonesia)) were fused into the PDI (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-the Indonesian Democratic Party) in 1973. While in other places the dissociating of the NU from the PPP was accepted relatively easily, NU followers in Madura, who were mostly villagers, were undecided about whether to vote for the PPP or for other parties in the next elections in 1987. They were waiting for instructions from their *kiai* on whether they would vote for the PPP again or whether the *kiai* would ask them to give support to other parties. A situation of confusion was generated by many *kiai* who, unlike most *kiai* in Java, were still strongly affiliated with the PPP. The strong affiliation of many *kiai* in Madura with the PPP, while in Java and other places some *kiai* openly supported Golkar, confused the NU followers after the withdrawal. A number of *kiai* in Madura believed that voting for Golkar would mean a betrayal of Islam, while giving preference to the PDI was unlikely to reap rewards. As a result, according to many *kiai*, the PPP remained the only feasible party to pick. However, prior to its 27th Congress, the

chairman of the NU, *Kiai* Idham Chalid, encouraged *nahdliyin* to have free political aspirations, and to support not only the PPP if they wanted to, but also Golkar or the PDI (*Jawa Pos*, 31 August 1984). To avoid perplexing NU followers, the *kiai* decided to be more pragmatic by persuading *nahdliyin* to vote for a party that defends and promotes Islamic values. This was seen by *nahdliyin* as a plea to vote for the PPP. However, the results of the 1987 elections in Madura were disappointing for the PPP. For the first time during the New Order era, Golkar gained a victory on the island.

Like many *kiai* in Madura during the Suharto administration, *Kiai* Alawy believed that the PPP was a party for Muslims. He insisted that it was a great sin for Muslims to vote other than the PPP. However, he rejected the idea that Islam had to be implemented in an Islamic country. Apparently, this point of view led him to support a prominent secular figure, Megawati Sukarnoputri (daughter of Sukarno, Indonesia's first president) during the 1997 general elections.

Before the general elections, in April 1993, the PDI held its fourth congress in Medan. Soerjadi was re-elected the general chairman of the party due partly to the intervention of the government. Many senior members of the party, however, objected to the results of the congress. In the Kongres Luar Biasa (the extraordinary congress) from 2 to 6 December 1993 in Surabaya, following the dissent regarding the results of the fourth congress, Megawati was elected the general chairman of the party. To cope with the dual leadership, the government facilitated the Musyawarah Nasional (the national convention) from 22 to 23 December 1993 in Jakarta. In the convention, Megawati was installed as the general chairman of the PDI, and the new board of the party was formed. Nevertheless, the convention did not prevent leadership conflicts within the party. A faction in the party led by Fatimah Achmad, who was endorsed by the government, held a congress in June 1996 in Medan. Even though many PDI members and sympathisers who supported Megawati's leadership rejected the results of the 1996 congress, which placed Soerjadi as the general chairman, the government approved the congress and recognised the new board of the party as the legitimate board to lead the party that would participate in the 1997 general elections.

Following the 1996 congress in Medan, Megawati's supporters occupied the PDI headquarters in Jakarta and held a series of demonstrations against Soerjadi's PDI. This culminated in the headquarters being attacked by Soerjadi's supporters and security forces on Saturday, 27 July 1996 (the Sabtu Kelabu incident – the Grey Saturday incident) and resulted in a number of Megawati's supporters being killed or injured.

Following the incident, the popularity of Megawati was boosted. She was seen as a symbol of people's resistance against the government. As a result, she gained the support of a PPP branch in Surakarta (Solo), Central Java. The term 'Mega-Bintang' (a term to denote the imaginary coalition between Megawati as the PDI's leader and the PPP whose symbol is a *bintang* (star)), which came to the fore during the campaigns subsequently became a powerful symbol of Islam and nationalism. *Kiai* Alawy was believed to be the mastermind of the idea, although many people also suspected it had come from Mudrik Sangidu, a functionary of the PPP of Surakarta.

During the 2008 *Pilkada* (*Pemilihan kepala daerah* - elections in a province or regency/municipality to elect a governor or a regent/mayor) of the East Java province, *Kiai* Alawy was a commanding figure in terms of his support for one of the pairs of candidates (the *Pilkada* is further sketched in Chapter 6). Khofifah Indar Parawansa, the only female candidate for governor, paired with Mudjiono (a general at the Kodam V/Brawijaya, the military area command of the Indonesian Army in the East Java province) under the acronym KAJI (*K*hofifah and *M*udjiono) to run in the elections. This partnership was legitimated by a *fatwa* from the *kiai* in 2008. The *fatwa* was issued in response to his followers and a number of *kiai* who questioned the legality of voting for a female candidate. In the *fatwa*, the *kiai* declared that a woman has the right to struggle like a man. He also rejected the view that forbids a woman to be a leader. Consequently, he appealed to the people of Sampang and Bangkalan to vote for the couple. Moreover, he gathered several *kiai*, *klebun*, public figures, and thousands of people from Sampang and Bangkalan together at a wedding feast for his grandchild to rally support from his devotees.

Although a few of the five pairs of candidates had an Islamic

background, the concentration of voting centred primarily on two pairs. Competing against Khofifah and Mudjiono, the other strong pair was Soekarwo and Saifullah Yusuf, under the acronym KARSA (SoeKARwo and SyaifullAh Yusuf). Gus Ipul (the nickname of Syaifullah Yusuf) was well-known, and possessed the traditional genealogy of NU leaders (a nephew of Abdurrahman Wahid). However, Khofifah was also a prominent figure in the NU and had been a minister during the Abdurrahman Wahid presidency. In Bangkalan, *Kiai* Imam Buchori Kholil, who is a descendant of the legendary *Kiai* Kholil, also gave support to Khofifah. It was also in Bangkalan where a dispute between descendants of *Kiai* Kholil occurred. Another prominent figure of *Kiai* Kholil's clan, the current regent *Kiai* Fuad Amin Imron stood behind KARSA. The two *kiai* made use of the popularity of their common ancestry to rally support for the competing candidates.

Kiai Alawy, like many other *kiai* who supported their own candidate during the *Pilkada*, was aware that his open yet observant attitude could significantly boost the fame of his candidate among visitors who happened to visit him. Visitors come to see *kiai* whenever a problem arises and certainly when they have funds to pay for the visit; however, during the *Pilkada* process the *kiai* applied a different policy. The daily time table for a *kiai*, which involves teaching *santri* and leading prayers, was not conducive to receiving visitors. Instead, they served as the spokespersons of the candidates and sometimes acted beyond their capacity as men of religion. For some *kiai*, such as *Kiai* Alawy, supporting certain candidates or certain political parties in elections—as long as it was not support for Golkar during the New Order—was a vital way to preserve their position in society. This demonstrated the importance of the *kiai* as central actors in local politics in Indonesia.

Kiai as the ultimate moderate leader

In this section, I illustrate the beneficial factors that attract *kiai* to become involved in politics and the ability of *kiai* to adapt to the modern political world. *Kiai* Nuruddin Rahman is a notable figure not only in Bangkalan, his place of origin, but also in the East Java province. Although he never formally associates himself with any political party, his influence goes beyond his *pesantren*,

and he is an eminent religious leader in the world of Madurese *kiai*. His influence in Bassra, first as the leading spokesperson and then as member of the Central Coordinator Council, has been demonstrated not only in the religious realm, but also in socio-political spheres. Moreover, his leadership in two *pesantren* in Bangkalan has attracted certain political parties to try to recruit him as a leading cadre of these political parties. However, these political parties failed as *Kiai* Nuruddin did not join any political party.

Kiai Nuruddin was born in 1957. Like many other *santri*, he studied in several *pesantren*, including *Pesantren Al Khozini* in Sidoarjo, East Java and *Pesantren Darul Ulum* in Jombang. As a child, he spent some years in a number of *pesantren* in Madura, such as *Pesantren Darul Hikmah* and *Pesantren Al-Hamdaniyah*. He later attended two universities: a private university in Surabaya where he obtained a bachelor's degree in law, and then in a private university in Bangkalan (now a state university) where he obtained another degree in law. *Kiai* Nuruddin comes from a lower *kiai* family. His study times in Java were the early stages of the formation of his thought on social and religious issues. In the *pesantren* tradition, the children of *kiai* are highly influenced by their parents, and their first lessons of Islamic knowledge are given by their parents. However, in most cases, they are encouraged to obtain more training in famed *pesantren* following initial teaching in the family.

Kiai Nuruddin's early participation in the socio-political realm can be traced to his membership of several organisations, such as Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia (KNPI - The National Committee of Indonesian Youth), Ikatan Pelajar Nahdlatul Ulama (IPNU - The Student Association of Nahdlatul Ulama), Gerakan Pemuda Ansor (GP Ansor - The Youth Movement of Ansor) and Majelis Wilayah Cabang Nahdlatul Ulama (MWCNU - The Branch District Assembly of Nahdlatul Ulama). The second and the third organisations are the NU's wing organisations. *Kiai* Nuruddin's contributions to the NU led him to take a number of strategic positions within the organisation. For instance, he was one of the board members of the NU branch in Bangkalan and, currently, he is one of the vice chairmen of the *syuriah* (the Advisory Board in the

field of religion) of the NU branch of East Java province. During the period from 2004 to 2009, he was a member of Dewan Perwakilan Daerah (DPD - The Regional Representative Council) representing the East Java province. Recently, *Kiai* Nuruddin was appointed member of Central Coordinator Council of Bassra. During the opposition of Bassra to the *industrialisasi* scheme (to introduce industrialisation and to create industrial estates in Madura), which emerged with the plan to erect the Suramadu Bridge that would connect the islands of Java and Madura (details of this opposition are described in Chapter 5), *Kiai* Nuruddin acted as the general secretary of Bassra as well as its main spokesperson.

As part of its development, Bassra has also become a medium by which the Madurese *kiai* are able to voice their socio-political concerns. One of their early concerns was their rejection of Porkas/SDSB (the state-sponsored lottery). The organisation is also concerned with *aliran sesat* (religious deviation) as well as other *kemaksiatan* (something in violation of God's law). The strong opposition of Bassra to the *industrialisasi* scheme highlighted it as a rival to the government during the Suharto administration; indeed, its action had a significant impact on the public.

Bassra consists of *kiai* who lead *pesantren* in Madura. The unofficial membership is spread all over the island. *Kiai* Muhammad Kholil A.G., a charismatic *kiai* of Madura from the legendary *Kiai* Kholil dynasty, and *Kiai* Tijani Jauhari of *Pesantren* Al-Amien Prenduan, Sumenep from the renowned *Kiai* Chotib family of Sumenep were the main architects of Bassra. As a non-formal organisation, Bassra does not have fixed members. Any *kiai* in Madura is said to be able to join the organisation. *Kiai* Nuruddin claims Bassra has ninety per cent of *kiai* in Madura as its supporters (Interview with *Kiai* Nuruddin on 1 December 2009).⁴³

According to Ali Maschan Moesa, *Kiai* Dhovier Syah of Sampang explained that at a gathering in 1989 a number of *kiai pesantren* in Madura started to think about 'intensifying' the

⁴³ In another interview with *Kiai* Mashduqie Fadly, a *kiai* who represented the PPP in Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah Tingkat I and Tingkat II (DPRD I and II - The Regional People's Representative Council) of the East Java province and the Bangkalan regency, respectively, I found out that some *kiai* have never been asked to participate in Bassra. *Kiai* Mashduqie, however, did not reveal why he was not asked to participate in Bassra (Interview on 1 December 2009).

ties between them. During a *khaul* in Batuampar, Pamekasan in February 1991, the idea of uniting the forces of Madurese *kiai pesantren* became stronger, so that concomitant with a *khaul* of *Kiai Kholil* in *Pesantren* Demangan, Bangkalan in March 1991, a number of *kiai pesantren*, such as *Kiai Kholil A.G.* and *Kiai Abdullah Schal* of Bangkalan, *Kiai Rofi'i Baidlowi* of Pamekasan, and *Kiai Tijani Jauhari* of Sumenep, discussed the idea more intensively (Moesa, 1999: 117). However, although Bassra was said to have been established because of the desire of Madurese *kiai* to strengthen the ties between *kiai* who lead *pesantren* in Madura (Interview with *Kiai Nuruddin* on 18 December 2009), it seems very likely that there were other motives behind its establishment. Among these motives was the *ulama's* concern about the fate of the Madurese in the *pembangunan* era, the fear of immorality that might accompany *pembangunan*, or the worry that when the *industrialisasi* plan came to fruition, the *ulama* might lose some of their religious authority. In relation to these three motives, one of the early indications of Bassra's concerns was the presence of *Kiai Kholil A.G.* as a speaker in a seminar about the *industrialisasi* plan on 31 August 1991 in the Bangkalan regency hall. In his speech, *Kiai Kholil A.G.* pointed out that the government should ask Madurese *kiai* to discuss the plan together with the government before they implemented it.

As a non-formal organisation that has become influential in socio-religious issues in Madura, Bassra has made efforts to appear more organised. Although it was founded in 1991, Bassra recently attempted to reformulate its structure and to strengthen the ties between its supporters. In its draft of statutes, which was issued in 2009, Bassra derives its conceptual considerations from the agreement of Madurese *kiai* in a meeting held in *Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan*, Sumenep on 1 November 1992; the declaration of a number of Madurese *kiai* (a proposal from the Sampang branch of Bassra in the mentioned meeting in Sumenep, which was later known as *Tafsir Azas Bassra*); and the outcome of a meeting in *Pesantren Al Hamidy Banyuanyar*, Pamekasan in August 2009. Moreover, in the draft, Bassra is also said to be a medium of communication, consultation and coordination for *kiai pesantren* from all groups in Islam. Bassra is an association which does not belong to any organization, political party, or group. While Bassra

does not have fixed members, it has a Dewan Penasehat (Advisory Council), Dewan Koordinator Pusat (Central Coordinator Council), Dewan Koordinator Daerah (Regional Coordinator Council) and Dewan Perwakilan Bassra (Bassra Representative Council). All councils are represented by Madurese *kiai pesantren*. Of these councils, all *kiai* involved in Bassra's activities are identified as participants (*Draft Pokok-pokok Pikiran Reorganisasi Bassra*, the document is in my possession).

While it is not clear why Bassra chose the name '*ulama pesantren*' (or *kiai pesantren*, *kiai* who lead *pesantren*), it seems that the *kiai* of Bassra wanted to underline the hierarchy in the vast religious circle of Madura. As I have explained in the previous chapter, in contemporary Madura, there are several types of *kiai*. *Kiai pesantren* are generally regarded as the highest rank. There are also *kiai tarekat* who usually lead a *pesantren* too, but are recognised primarily as *tarekat* teachers. The next category is *kiai dukun* and *kiai langgar*. These last two are considered the lowest in the hierarchy. The notion that *kiai* have to have *pesantren* is very important in Madura. Therefore, Bassra only consists of *kiai* who lead *pesantren*, as its name suggests. Consequently, *kiai dukun* and *kiai langgar* who do not have *pesantren*, and of whom there are many in Madura, cannot join Bassra.

We return now to *Kiai Nuruddin*. In another case, *Kiai Nuruddin* and a number of *kiai* from Bassra—*Kiai Abdullah Schal*, *Kiai Imam Buchori Kholil* and *Kiai Syafik Rofi'i*—were accused of making the Sanggau Ledo inter-ethnic conflict between the Madurese and the Dayaknese more hostile after they came to the conflict area in early 1997.⁴⁴

44 The inter-ethnic conflict in West Kalimantan began in at least 1968 in Toho, Pontianak regency. In the 1996-1997 conflict, the trigger was a quite insignificant matter: a quarrel in a *dangdut* music concert between Madurese and Dayaknese youth at the end of December 1996. In the following days, the quarrel in the concert transformed into a bigger conflict. Initially, rumours that a Dayaknese youth died in the concert spread among the Dayaknese. The next day, 30 December 1996, hundreds of Dayaknese invaded Sanggau Ledo, a Madurese settlement in Sambas regency. A mass fight broke out between the local people and the outsiders, which in turn generated more turmoil afterwards. By the end of March 1997, there were 6,000 refugees and 670 destroyed houses in Sambas. Meanwhile, there were 3,122 refugees and 225 burned houses in Sanggau (*Gatra*, 27 October 2000).

Kiai Nuruddin and some members of the Bassra board visited West Kalimantan (West Borneo) from 9 to 15 January 1997. General R. Hartono, the Staff Commander of the Army, accused some members of the Bassra board of making the conflict worse. *Kiai* Nuruddin insisted that their trip was aimed at calming the critical situation, particularly for the Madurese. Ismail Hassan Metareum, the General Chairman of the PPP, denied the involvement of *Kiai* Abdullah Schal and *Kiai* Imam Buchori Kholil—well-known for their association with the PPP—as the masterminds of the new turmoil (*Bisnis Indonesia*, 23 February 1997). *Kiai* Nuruddin stated that it was a big mistake to accuse them of being the provocateurs of the conflict. According to him, the NU Bangkalan was raising funds by issuing posters of leading Madurese *kiai* of the NU, such as *Kiai* Amin Imron and *Kiai* Abdullah Schal. The posters were also distributed in Borneo. During the riot, there was a dead Madurese holding the poster. General Hartono accused the *kiai* in the posters as well as other Madurese *kiai*, including *Kiai* Nuruddin, of being the provocateurs. Nonetheless, *Kiai* Nuruddin admitted that he was responsible for the making of the posters (Interview with *Kiai* Nuruddin on 4 March 2011). He also became involved in the committee of an *istighosah* on 8 March 1997 in Bangkalan to pray for the safety of the Madurese in the inter-ethnic conflict in Borneo (*Jawa Pos*, 9 March 1997). Meanwhile, *Kiai* Amin Imron, who was one of the *kiai* depicted on the posters, in an unplanned meeting with General Hartono at a cultural event in Jakarta, claimed that he never incited the Madurese in Borneo to make the conflict worse (*Jawa Pos*, 10 March 1997).

Despite *Kiai* Nuruddin's lack of allegiance to any particular political party, in two interviews with me, he stated that he was a sympathiser of the PPP during the New Order era (Interviews on 18 November and 1 December 2009). During the Suharto administration, many *kiai* were concerned that they could have been alienated and isolated from their networks if they had or were considered to have certain ties with the government. The reluctance of most *kiai* to join various state-sponsored associations generated problems for those organisations in terms of attracting prominent *kiai*. On a bigger scale, the unwillingness of well-known *kiai* to

join Golkar was caused by a concern about the possibility of being neglected by and excluded not only from their extensive religious networks but also from society. Even though it was not unusual in many parts of Indonesia for prominent *kiai* and other religious figures to maintain a close relationship with Golkar and even campaign for the party during the general elections,⁴⁵ in Madura it would be incorrect to state that most *kiai* served as partners of the government. Most *kiai* remained outside the structure of central power. They were very much aware that such an alliance with the government could be disadvantageous in respect of their influence over the people. Such a situation could include the departure of *santri* from their *pesantren* and more importantly, a loss of some of their religious authority.

Kiai Nuruddin's non-aligned position during the New Order era seemed to be derived from this point of view. He claimed that being a *kiai* means belonging to the public. As a public religious figure, he distanced himself from affirming his support for the Suharto administration during the New Order era; however, he was also aware that secular groups and government-backed public religious figures might criticise him for basing his neutrality on political expediency. Certainly, he consciously recognised the benefits and the disadvantages of his position. He was frequently asked to link with the PPP as well as to join Golkar, and he enjoyed the freedom to be acknowledged by the population as well as other *kiai* and the government who invited him for religious festivities. His relationships with diverse groups, in fact, strengthened his influence over society and increased his religious power. Moreover, he did not enjoy the privilege of 'state-sponsored' *kiai*, who were seen to have good positions in state-initiated Islamic organisations, such as Majelis Dakwah Islamiyah, which were composed of civil servants, teachers and a small number of religious leaders. However, he claimed that he did not resent this as these state-sponsored Islamic organisations were viewed in a somewhat negative light, because they voiced the government's ideas.

After the Suharto administration collapsed, the relationships

⁴⁵ For instance, *Kiai* Chalid Mawardi, an influential member of the NU opted for Golkar, while *Kiai* Musta'in Romly of *Pesantren* Darul Ulum, Jombang became an active spokesperson of Golkar, and even *Kiai* Abdurrahman Wahid was appointed as a member of the People's Assembly representing Golkar.

between the central government and the religious leaders changed. Alongside the rise of more independent religious leaders, the sole authority of the state, as well as its coercive force, began to disappear. The Suharto administration had positioned itself as an administration attempting to reform the previous rule (the Old Order) and to guide the state towards a 'rightful and democratic course', while the post-Suharto era has set out more democratic and decentralised policies, allowing people's leaders in many regions to spread their influence.

Kiai Nuruddin, who was never officially endorsed by the government,⁴⁶ began to take advantage of his independence from political parties in the New Order as a valuable tool in order to maintain and even to acquire a strategic position in the newly democratic and decentralised circumstances as well as to gain access to economic resources.

During the Konferensi Wilayah NU Jawa Timur (the Regional Conference of the NU East Java) on 11-13 October 2002, *Kiai* Nuruddin was a strong candidate for the position of chairman of the NU of East Java. He was backed by the supporters from the *Tapal Kuda* area, perhaps unsurprising, considering the region is known as a migration area⁴⁷ for the Madurese. However, the support was not sufficient, and the supporters began to question Imam Nahrowi's endorsement of *Kiai* Nuruddin. At that time Imam was the head of Garda Bangsa of East Java, a paramilitary group affiliated with the PKB. He was known to be a supporter of

46 Yet, he admitted that the older of his two *pesantren* once received aid from the government as a result of his victory in a P4 simulation (Pendidikan, Penghayatan, dan Pengamalan Pancasila - the Education, Internalisation, and Implementation of Pancasila, a state doctrine for its citizens as the sole philosophical base of life to adopt) as the best tutor and facilitator of P4 in East Java (Interview with *Kiai* Nuruddin on 1 December 2009).

47 The Madurese migration to East Java took place primarily during the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was significantly stimulated by the development of private plantations in that area. Many Madurese have since settled on mainland East Java, not only doing plantation work, but also working in sectors such as agriculture and trading (Elson, 1984 and Khusyairi, 1989). According to Van Goor, other reasons for the Madurese migration during the colonial era included the high number of crimes, poor jurisdiction, and extortion of the island's inhabitants by the regents and their relatives (Van Goor, 1978: 196-197).

Matori Abdul Djalil in the internal conflict between Matori's PKB Batutulis and Alwi Shihab's PKB Kuningan (with Abdurrahman Wahid as its central figure). Most *nahdliyin* were against Matori in the dispute, and apparently this hatred also manifested itself during the conference. They did not want to vote for *Kiai* Nuruddin since Imam's affiliation with the *kiai* might lead to a failure and further hostilities. In an interview, *Kiai* Nuruddin admitted that he had a close relation with Imam and believed that the closeness was due to their shared place of origin (Bangkalan).⁴⁸ *Kiai* Nuruddin claimed that an inadequate lobbying of the board of the NU branches was the main factor behind his defeat (Interview on 4 March 2011). As a result, Ali Maschan Moesa, a teacher from IAIN (State Institute for Islamic Studies) Sunan Ampel Surabaya became the winner; he defeated *Kiai* Nuruddin by a wide margin.

Apparently, the more pragmatic attitude of *Kiai* Nuruddin after the fall of Suharto, as he became more involved in politics, sabotaged his efforts to gain the leadership, at least within the local NU. The *kiai*'s failure to fulfil his followers' expectation not to be too involved with the conflict resulted in his unpopularity in the election process. Following the loss, *Kiai* Nuruddin became even more involved in politics. His involvement in politics marks his new political orientations. Nevertheless, he was still aware that he could support any political party or give preference to certain political figures as long as he carried it out under the banner of Islam and as long as he remained outside the state power

In the first direct presidential election of 2004, the incumbent president Megawati paired with Hasyim Muzadi, the general chairman of the NU. During the election, Megawati became the target of several *fatwa* forbidding votes for a female presidential candidate. Indeed, the radical Islamic group Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI - The Indonesian Mujahedin Council) issued a *fatwa* against a female president. The organisation had already been clear on this subject three years before, when Megawati replaced

⁴⁸ Imam Nahrowi comes from Konang sub-district in Bangkalan. He and several other members of the East Java local parliament from the PKB faction sporadically donated a small part of their salary to the NU of East Java in early 2000s. Many pundits then made a link between Imam's support of the NU and support for *Kiai* Nuruddin (Interview with *Kiai* Nuruddin on 4 March 2011).

Abdurrahman Wahid in 2001 (*Tempo Interaktif*, 7 June 2004). Meanwhile, on 3 June 2004 a group of fifteen old *kiai*, known as 'Kiai Sepuh', gathered in *Pesantren Raudlatul Ulum*, Pasuruan to issue a *fatwa* not to vote for a female president. Among the *kiai* were Kiai Abdullah Faqih of *Pesantren Langitan*, Tuban; Kiai Chotib Umar of *Pesantren Raudlatul Ulum Jember*; and Kiai Mas Subadar was the host. They argued that women could become leaders of a country only when there were no eligible male candidates, and stated that it could be made possible only in an emergency situation (*Suara Merdeka*, 21 June 2004). For Megawati-Hasyim, the *fatwa*, which was disseminated in a sensational way by the mass media, was a heavy blow. Many parts of society argued that some elements of Islamic organisations had begun politicising religious domains. The *fatwa* from *kiai* of the NU was the outcome of a contest for legitimacy, not only in terms of scriptural understanding of the Quran and *hadith*, but also in a socio-political framework between the supporters of Megawati-Hasyim and Wiranto-Salahuddin Wahid, a younger brother of Abdurrahman Wahid, and a top NU figure. Therefore, such *fatwa* were not really surprising, given the large number of *nahdliyin* who could potentially be convinced not to vote for Megawati-Hasyim.

As an elite in the NU, Kiai Nuruddin believed that he had to take a stand on one of the two options, i.e. to give support to Megawati-Hasyim or Wiranto-Salahuddin. On 11 August 2004, Hasyim, along with twenty *kiai* including Kiai Nuruddin, Kiai Masduqi Mahfudz of Mergosono, Malang, and Kiai Idris Marzuki of Lirboyo visited Syeikh Muhammad bin Alawi bin Abbas Al-Maliki Al-Hasani in Medina. The purpose was clear: they searched for theological justification for a female leadership. Syeikh Muhammad was said to have given valuable advice to his visitors, such as stating that Indonesia is not a country with a caliphate system or *imam a'zam* (grand *imam*) and, therefore, it is not a problem if Indonesia has a female president.

Based on his advice, the *kiai* who went to Medina justified their support for Megawati by arguing that the great reputation of Syeikh Muhammad would guarantee the validity of his advice about a *fatwa* in their country. Kiai Masduqi Mahfudz stated that the visit was purely for *umrah* (a pilgrimage that can be undertaken

at any time of the year), not to seek a *fatwa* (Gatra, 20 August 2004). However, *Kiai* Nuruddin admitted that he was aware of the hidden agenda behind the pilgrimage. He claimed that Hasyim had financed the trip in his role as the general chairman of the NU, not as the presidential candidate. Surprisingly, in an interview with me, he asserted that the *kiai* who went to the Middle East in fact opposed a female presidential candidate, and stated that they would not support Megawati.⁴⁹ He argued that if Hasyim paired with a male candidate, such as Wiranto or Jusuf Kalla, many *kiai* would surely have endorsed him (Interview on 4 March 2011). *Kiai* Nuruddin's political aspirations in the post-Suharto period seem to indicate the pragmatism of religious leaders as power brokers. When beneficial opportunities knock, *kiai* do not waste them, although they do risk their respected position in society. The *kiai*'s pragmatism also shows the ability of religious leaders as individuals who are capable of placing themselves in the public eye. They tend to seek secure places within communities in order not to become trapped in the wrong political choice, so that when there is a political change (as was the case after the Suharto administration collapsed), they know how to voice their political aspirations or they know how the people will voice theirs. The use of religious elements by religious elites is in fact directed at protecting their privileged economic and political capitals.

The process of gaining legitimacy from abroad was crucial since many NU followers demanded guidance from their *kiai*. As one author notes, Islamic political leaders are supposed to act legitimately in their use of power and act for God. Such a leader is able to act in a pragmatic manner, including seeking relations with secular factions if this is believed to advantage the groups he stands for (Samson, 1978: 196-226). In the Megawati-Hasyim case, the visit to Medina was said to have generated approval from the prestigious and influential scholar, which in turn would guarantee popular support from the *nahdliyin*, although in this case the result

⁴⁹ There was a story making the rounds among leading *kiai* of the NU on the Megawati-Hasyim candidacy, which said that on the election day they would mark the picture of Hasyim, not that of Megawati, though both pictures were in the same ballot paper, so that they could claim that they were not in favour of female president.

was ultimately fruitless because of the confusion over who to elect.

Kiai Nuruddin's political involvement in the 2004 presidential election marked a new political orientation. During the Suharto administration, he was known for his supposedly neutral attitude and did not formally join any political party. In the post-Suharto period, representing the NU, he was elected as member of the DPD for the period of 2004 to 2009. *Kiai* Nuruddin is not a product of the New Order. Although his socio-political capability was built during that era, it was his choice to be politically neutral while remaining sympathetic to the PPP, which brought him into the national level. For the seat in the DPD, he gained 1,268,498 votes or 7.8 per cent of the total of 17,533,390 votes, which placed him in third place after *Kiai* Mahmud Ali Zain and *Kiai* Muzib Imron (*Lima Tahun Perjuangan DPD RI Jawa Timur 2004-2009*: 16-18). *Kiai* Nuruddin's participation in both the NU and Bassra is not regarded as two overlapping tasks. In fact, the maintenance and renewal of the personal ties he constructed in those organisations have been for his benefit. Moreover, since *kiai* regard themselves as guides for commoners, they are continuously required to adjust to new situations in order to maintain their positions. Arguably, *Kiai* Nuruddin has proved successful in this.

Conclusion

Religious leaders in Indonesia respond in various ways to ideological and political developments, in part because in each area they relate to localised political situations. In present day Indonesia, religious life has not been integrated into the political state and although a number of religious leaders occupy bureaucratic positions, most religious elites in Indonesia are not affiliated with bureaucracy. However, they continue to play important roles in Indonesia.

The high level of obedience of the *nahdliyin* to the NU and the *kiai* has been a key factor in terms of leading the *kiai* in Madura to interact with the political world. This is because the *kiai* know quite well that they will benefit significantly from the *nahdliyin*, not only in the political world, but also in terms of economic well-being. Certainly, the *kiai* are well adapted to the modern political

world.

Kiai Alawy and *Kiai* Nuruddin are only two examples of how Madurese *kiai* have played important roles in society. There are many more *kiai* that have also coloured the life of the Madurese. The *kiai* are undoubtedly the ultimate factor in terms of the continuation of the sacred values of the Madurese. Recently, these values have been promoted by religious leaders and regency officials on the island that has been labelled as Medina's veranda (*Antara News*, 3 April 2006).