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

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# Chapter 7

## Village Politics in Madura: the Dynamic Relationships between Religious Leaders, Local Strongmen, and Village Officials in Their Struggle for Influence

### Introduction

Local politics in Indonesia, especially after the collapse of the Suharto administration, has become an attractive subject for a number of discussions. The post-Suharto era has been labelled the 'transitional phase' to denote the political transformation from authoritarian rule to a more democratic government, or from the New Order era (1966-1998) to the '*Era Reformasi*' (the Reformation Era/1998-present day). This transition has been accompanied by a process of decentralisation, one of the main characteristics of which is regional autonomy. As suggested by Henk Schulte Nordholt, the transition from centralisation to decentralisation should not be mistaken for a transition from authoritarian rule to a democratic one. In fact, the process of decentralisation can be accompanied by authoritarian rule under certain conditions (Schulte Nordholt, 2004: 30).<sup>110</sup>

At the lowest level of administrative hierarchy, village politics has also experienced such a transition. Despite the absence of national, provincial, and regency level political actors at the village level, the village has become a field of social, economic, cultural, and political interaction between prominent segments of local society that reflects the circumstances at a higher level. This

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110 Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken stress the argument in Schulte Nordholt and Van Klinken, 2007: 1.

contradicts common New Order perceptions about the village that the village in Indonesia was best described merely as a place where its residents shared the communal concerns and interests; that it was free from politics, mainly because political parties were not allowed to operate at the village level; and that village authorities and institutions were simply traditional elements of pre-colonial and colonial legacies that were to be subordinated by modernity. According to Antlöv, such common images included the situation in which the military left their garrisons and became administrative power holders at village level, a number of village heads were retired soldiers, and one army representative, Babinsa (village guidance army soldier), and one police representative, Bimmas (community guidance police officer), were posted in almost every Indonesian village to 'guide' the population (Antlöv, 1995: 39).

This chapter focuses on village politics in Madura. It makes use of a case study in the village of Bayang by way of illustration.<sup>111</sup> Among the questions posed are: What are the sources of authority of influential village figures, such as the *klebun*, the *kiai*, and the *blater*, in Madurese villages? What are their leadership strategies in village politics? How do these influential figures form a relationship with each other and with the villagers? What are the characteristics of village politics in Madura? Why do these characteristics become important factors?

As a result of the continual reformation process in the post-Suharto period, village officials have become unable to ignore pressures and close scrutiny from different parts of society. In many places, village politics has, in fact, been marked by recurrent power struggles between village officials and influential village leaders. It is true that a village parliament (BPD - Badan Permusyawaratan Desa) has been established in every village, and that this parliament, along with the village head and village officials (*perangkat desa*), form the village government that is provided with certain autonomy to establish and implement its own policies. Moreover, this parliament shows a large degree of independence and frequently forms an opposition to the village head. Nevertheless, as is the case in many rural societies, it seems quite obvious that the

<sup>111</sup> The name of the village and the sub-district where the village is located and the names of the people are fictitious. The reason is obvious and it is explained in Chapter 1.

existence of traditional local leaders in a decentralised era cannot be ignored due to their constant influence. The circumstances in the Madurese villages encourage interaction between important segments of society in which the *kiai*, the *blater*, and the *klebun* form complex relationships in the struggle for influence; in which Islamic symbols and patronage play significant parts. I would also maintain that despite different attitudes from the three actors, their relationship is perhaps best described as pragmatic and mutually beneficial in nature. According to Hans Antlöv, the structure of local politics created by the New Order administration was based on intimate personal relations and on patronage (Antlöv, 2003: 196). In the post-Suharto Madura, despite exceptions and changes, the circumstances have remained relatively similar.

### Sources of authority

The village of Bayang is located along the coast of western Bangkalan. It borders on the Madura Strait in the west. Due to its location, a large part of its population is fishermen. However, the village does not have a harbour. The landscape in the inland part of the village is dominated by *tegalan* (dry or non-irrigated field).<sup>112</sup> Moreover, due to its proximity to Java, a number of villagers are commuters who live off casual occupations in Surabaya and Gresik, including hawkers, street parking masters (*tukang parkir*), *calo* (passenger recruiters for public transport), and porters. The village is headed by Rokib, a 54 year old small to medium entrepreneur whose profession, besides his *klebun* post, is running a service station (*bengkel*) near the sub-district market and renting out a number of fishing boats. He was elected *klebun* in the village head election in early 2010.

There is a small *pesantren* with less than a hundred *santri*, led by an old-fashioned *kiai*, *Kiai Shodiq* who is 67 years old. Locals say that the *pesantren* used to attract a lot of *santri* in the 1960s and 1970s from neighbouring villages and sub-districts, and even from Sampang, Sumenep, Surabaya, and Gresik during the *kiai's*

<sup>112</sup> In general, Madura is an arid and infertile island. There are not many rice fields, and if there are any, they are only planted in rainy seasons. In only a few irrigated areas, rice fields are planted in dry seasons. The most important crop planted in *tegalan* is maize. The crop is planted in the beginning or in the middle of rainy seasons.

father's leadership. Nowadays, only *santri* from other sub-districts in Bangkalan study in the *pesantren*, of whom very few are Bayang locals. However, these Bayang locals do not lodge (*mondok*) in the *pesantren*. They only undertake *mengaji* (learning to read Quran, sometimes with Arabic lessons) in the afternoon and evening. Some villagers point out that the *pesantren* is dying out because, unlike his father, the current *kiai* does not possess enough charisma to attract *santri* and followers. Some older villagers hold that, unlike his father, *Kiai Shodiq* does not have healing and predicting abilities, taking away the main reason why a large number of *santri* studied in the *pesantren* during his father's *kiai*-ship. Some other villagers, however, believe that the *kiai*'s somewhat self-imposed seclusion from the vast network of *kiai* and the political world is the main reason why the *pesantren* is declining. Whatever the reasons behind the decline of the *pesantren*, *Kiai Shodiq* is always being compared with his father in many aspects. This signifies the importance of hereditary factors to *kiai*-ship, in which the status of a *kiai* is ultimately legitimised by such factors. This is in line with Iik Mansurnoor's findings in Pamekasan where, despite the prominence of the *kiai* families of Banyuwangi in Pamekasan, each individual in the family does not automatically become a prominent figure, even though he is given access to such a position (Mansurnoor, 1990: 238). On the other hand, *kiai* who do not have a well-known *kiai* lineage, do have possibilities, albeit rarely, to achieve prominence because of certain reasons, including ties with important local leaders, the affiliation with the NU, the reputation of their *pesantren*, and their styles of *dakwah* (religious dissemination).

The village is also home to Khoirul, a 61 year old businessman. He runs three grocery stores: one in the village, one in the market in the sub-district, and one near the Kamal port. He also has a scrap business in Jakarta that is managed by two of his younger brothers. Consequently, he frequently travels to the country's capital to monitor the business. He and his family are all *haji*. Despite his claim that he is retired from *blater*-ship, the villagers still consider him as a prominent *blater*. In fact, he is still recognised in the vast network of *blater* in Bangkalan, and to a large degree in Sampang and Surabaya as well. Before travelling to Mecca in 2004, he had

been a leader of a *blater* group for years. Nowadays, he sometimes comes to *remo* in order to pay respect to the old brotherhood if he knows the host quite well. He claims, however, that he no longer drinks alcohol, although he admits that sometimes he still dances with the *tandhak* and will give some money to the hosts now and then.

Based on their position and how they are regarded, each figure symbolises distinctive sources of authority. The *klebun* represents official and formal authority, while the *kiai* reflects religious authority, and the *blater* personifies cultural authority. While the *klebun*, together with village officials and BPD constitute the village government, the *kiai*, *Kiai Shodiq*, and the *blater*, *Khoirul*, are regarded as *tokoh desa* (important figures of the village) or *tokoh masyarakat* (village notables) and are sometimes addressed as *sesepuh desa* (village elders), even though they are not very old. They are neither elected, nor appointed to this special position, but their positions are justified by the general agreement of the villagers. In principle, anybody can become an unofficial member of *tokoh desa* or *sesepuh desa* if they fulfil one or more conditions, for example by having an official position in higher government (but not in the own village), possessing certain abilities in religious or cultural domains, through wealth, or through involvement in communal issues and closeness to *warga masyarakat* (villagers). In Bayang, besides *Kiai Shodiq* and *Khoirul*, there are other villagers who are regarded as *tokoh desa* who have various occupations and positions, ranging from civil servants to landowners. The above three figures—*klebun*, *kiai*, and *blater*—are typical local leaders in Madurese villages. The official, religious, and cultural archetypes of leadership are ideal. In reality, not all villages are marked by the presence of such leaders. Moreover, a number of leaders may have dual status (*klebun-kiai* or *klebun-blater* or rarely *kiai-blater*, such as *Fuad Amin Imron*). Nevertheless, to my knowledge, there is no such figure who is combined *klebun*, *kiai*, and *blater*. Therefore, categorisations of this kind are useful, yet they should never be treated as absolute.

*Rokib*, the *klebun*, is perceived to have extensive economic resources by village standards. Coming from a village elite family, his father owned almost all of the fishing boats in the village. His

siblings are among the richest people in the village. Members of the family run a building material store, a small restaurant in Bangkalan city centre, and a grocery store in the market of Bangkalan. Their grandfather is said to be among the village pioneers who practiced inter-island trade between Madura and Borneo.<sup>113</sup> Rokib is a sympathiser of one political party. However, he does not really maintain a close relationship with the party. His network is limited to local functionaries in the sub-district. During the New Order, he was not affiliated with any particular political party. His association with the party started when an acquaintance asked him to get involved, not long after the 2009 general elections. He does maintain a close relationship with higher authorities and continuously strives for state-backing during his years in office. Moreover, he and some family members are *haji*. He went to Mecca in 2007 together with his wife.

The secretary of the village, Saidi, is really in charge of daily affairs within the village. Already an official in the previous *klebun*'s tenure, he is an experienced village bureaucrat who takes care of all administrative affairs. In fact, Rokib is hardly seen in his office, which generates some complaints from the villagers. Rokib is frequently spotted in his busy service station or in Surabaya where he purchases motorcycle and car spare-parts and conducts other business related to his service station or his fishing boats. Another reason why he delegates most of his clerical tasks is that he simply does not have the capacity to undertake them himself. Saidi, who carries out the tasks for him is considered as a trustworthy official and subordinate. In fact, it is common in Madura for a *klebun* to be seen more frequently outside of his office than carrying out his duties.

A report from an East Java newspaper in 2010 suggests that many *klebun* wear sarong instead of their uniforms during their working hours. Moreover, the *klebun* are frequently seen in the village market instead of the *balai desa* (literally village hall, but it also means village office). They often take the village stamp along

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113 In the early twentieth century, a large number of Madurese lived in the south and west of Borneo, especially in areas around Kotawaringin and Sambas. Some resided in coastal cities, such as Pontianak and Banjarmasin. They worked in seaports or became contract workers in clearing and managing hinterland areas (De Jonge, 1989: 25).



with them, so that villagers with administrative business have to come to the village market or the *klebun*'s house in order to get assistance.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, although Saidi is capable of conducting secretarial tasks, which is appreciated by villagers, he remains in the shadow of Rokib in terms of popularity and, in fact, none of the villagers believe that he will one day assume the *klebun*-ship. Saidi is not a wealthy villager. He depends solely on his official position, a small field of crops, and a small number of livestock as a means of living. Unlike Rokib, he does not have a prominent ancestry to support his career and influence. Therefore, according to standard Madurese perceptions about the ideal *klebun* (as I have explained above and in the previous chapter), Saidi cannot become a powerful patron. Saidi is aware of this circumstance and claims that he never wants to become a *klebun*.

Another notable village official is Muchsin, a village *modin* (someone who takes care of and is entrusted by the villagers to arrange socio-religious affairs, such as marriage, and affairs of birth and death – in some villages, the position is called Kepala Urusan Kesejahteraan Rakyat/Head of the Public Welfare Affairs and is placed within the organisation of village officials). In daily life, Muchsin and other village *modin* are expected to attend weekly *pengajian*, *tahlilan*, or *slametan* or other religious gatherings held by their fellow villagers. A *modin* can be a *kiai langgar* or *kiai kampung* who teaches Quranic recital and gives Islamic lectures in the village mosque or sometimes in the village hall. He can also be a young man returning from a *pesantren* with ambitions to preach in his own village. Moreover, he can also be a villager with any occupation with sufficient religious knowledge and who is regarded as a pious, modest, and sincere person. As a *kiai langgar*, Muchsin fits the first criterion, while two other *modin* in the village fit the third criterion. Like Saidi, Muchsin is not wealthy. Although his wife is native to Bayang, he is from another village; hence, he is not seen to possess an important lineage. He was a *santri* during his youth and settled in Bayang once he finished his *pesantren* education. After marrying a Bayang native, he moved to the village and started teaching small children basic Quranic recital, and moved on to give Islamic

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114 [www.harianbhirawa.co.id/demo-section/berita-terkini/13961-kepala-desa-di-bangkalan-dilarang-pakai-sarung](http://www.harianbhirawa.co.id/demo-section/berita-terkini/13961-kepala-desa-di-bangkalan-dilarang-pakai-sarung), accessed on 17 April 2012.

lectures to a wider audience.

*Kiai* Shodiq comes from a *kiai* family. As I have mentioned above, he also possesses a prominent religious genealogy in the village standard. Despite his father's absence from the political world, his father's reputation extended beyond his village, not only as a preacher, but also as a healer, or a *kiai dukun* (*kiai* and healer simultaneously, who is known as an intermediary between the real world and the unseen supernatural world). He was regularly visited by people from his own village and also from other places in Madura and Java who looked for *barakah* (blessing) and *karamah* (dignity) from the *kiai*. His father wanted *Kiai* Shodiq, his only son, to follow in his footsteps as a *kiai dukun*, although he also had two daughters. It is said that the young *Kiai* Shodiq was not interested in running the *pesantren* and learning mystical-supernatural sciences because he was more interested in becoming a trader. However, his father kept pressuring him, and when he passed away, the untrained *Kiai* Shodiq had no choice but to take over the *pesantren* and to forget about his desire to become a merchant. Sooner or later, the *santri* started to leave his *pesantren*. Visitors no longer came to the *pesantren* for spiritual guidance or healing, although he is still visited today by people who want to ask for guidance and advice for family matters, such as marriage and divorce. He once established a cooperative without success and it was closed down within eight months of its establishment. He once had a number of fishing boats that he rented to local fishermen, but due to bad management, none are left now. He still has, however, a number of crop fields tilled by his relatives and this provides him with a source of income in addition to donations from the *santri*'s parents and those who visit him to ask for guidance and advice.

Khoirul is the wealthiest of the three most influential villagers. From the late 1970s until the end of the 1990s, Khoirul was known as a *blater* who was held in awe (*disegani*). He was frequently involved in petty crimes in Surabaya when he was in his twenties. During this period, he made friends with local gangsters who dominated the Perak port area in Surabaya. He gained prominence when he became head of security for a number of warehouses in Perak.

One of the busiest ports in Indonesia, Perak attracts many trading and storage companies, and as a negative effect of being

an economic centre, Perak also attracts a lot of criminals. In the 1980s, Surabaya and East Java in general were notorious *bromocorah* (local term for criminals) dens. For instance, based on an account from a local East Java paper, the East Java police stated that there were around 25,000 *bromocorah* in East Java in 1983 (*Jawa Pos*, 23 June 1983).<sup>115</sup> Warehouses in Perak were seen by *bromocorah* as big targets for raids. In order to protect their businesses, entrepreneurs made extensive use of private security forces that were seen to be more reliable than the police. Madurese *blater* and other strongmen with martial arts skills, and sometimes those supposedly blessed with invulnerability and supernatural powers, were hired for these purposes. Khoirul met fellow *blater*, who also worked in security, at *remo* gatherings. Consequently, he was appointed as head of security in Perak. It is said that he was a fearless guard who would risk his life in order to protect his boss' warehouses.

Thanks to his reputation for being a reliable security guard, he was approached by the Golkar branch of Bangkalan to ensure the smoothness of Golkar's campaigns during election periods in the 1980s and 1990s. He was also asked to persuade people in his village to vote for Golkar. However, he claims that he never really influenced people's political preference because his heart was with the PPP. He asserts that making Golkar's campaigns smoother was not a big problem for him because it was his nature to tackle security matters, but asking people to vote for Golkar was something he could not do because it was against his own political preference. In fact, his closeness with Golkar functionaries brought him to another stage in his life in the mid 1990s when he started his own business in scrap trading in Jakarta, supported by a Golkar functionary from Bangkalan, who he had met during Golkar's

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115 The activities of these criminals were countered with harsh actions by the police and military forces. Between 1982 and 1985 there was a series of mysterious killings in Indonesia known as *petrus* (*penembak(an) misterius* – the mysterious rifleman/shooting or the mysterious killer/killing) whose targets were mostly *bromocorah* or *gali-gali/gali* (*gabungan anak-anak liar*, literally meaning gangs of wild kids) (Van der Kroef, 1985: 757-758; Pemberton, 1994: 311-318; Siegel, 1999: 225-230; Schulte Nordholt, 2002: 48). *Bromocorah* and *gali* were recognised by their tattoos. This distinguished them from *orang biasa* (commoners) during the *petrus* time in which anyone with a tattoo was almost certainly considered *bromocorah* or *gali* and thus were marked for death.

campaigns and who was transferred to Jakarta. Once Khoirul had made the business a success, he entrusted it to his brothers and decided to move back to his home island where he opened grocery stores and gradually left the *blater* world, the world which he had embodied during his days as a security head in Surabaya, and which indirectly brought him wealth. Therefore, despite his activities as an entrepreneur, and his supposed retirement from the *blater* world, the villagers in Bayang and his colleagues and friends in Surabaya and Jakarta still consider him as much feared and awed *blater*.

It was during the New Order that Khoirul came to be associated with politics. His collaboration with Golkar, which was facilitated by privileged access to funds, brought him to prominence and riches, and at the same time he built up intimate relations and patronage with Golkar functionaries. Although local notables from religious components of society in Madura remained largely outside the structure of the state, many local notables of cultural standing were co-opted by the authoritarian Suharto administration into the political machinery of Golkar. In this sense, Khoirul is an obvious product of the New Order.

It is clear now that these three influential villagers possess certain authorities based on their background. While official, religious, and cultural authorities indicate the level and type of authority each figure possesses, other aspects, such as popular opinion in regard to these figures, play a significant part as well. Firstly, all figures are well-off villagers. Some *tokoh desa* are not rich, and to a large degree this undermines their participation in communal programmes or their say in communal issues. It is obvious that a hierarchy exists within the village elite. Secondly, another vital element of authority that the three figures have is the religious title attributed to them. While the principal religious authority in Bayang is in the possession of *Kiai Shodiq*, the *haji* status of Rokib and Khoirul are also very highly regarded. It is true that villagers do not ask for spiritual guidance from Rokib or Khoirul, but there is a common belief that people who have performed pilgrimage to Mecca are special in certain ways: they are *terpanggil hatinya* (summoned by God) and they are *mampu* (capable of practising Islamic values after returning from Mecca, as well as

wealthy enough to have carried the cost of the *haji*). There is even a common conception among some villagers that lower *guru ngaji* (religious teachers, mostly those who teach children in *langgar*) are less competent than *haji*, especially when it comes to knowledge of pilgrimage, since these *guru ngaji* never leave for Mecca. Therefore, the *haji* status places Rokib and Khoirul among the village's magnates. The last of the three elements is genealogy. Rokib and Kiai Shodiq come from respectable families settled in the village three or more generations back. Despite Khoirul's salt-of-the-earth ancestry, he is perceived as the founder of a new, influential entrepreneurial family in the village, and hence his descendants will be considered prominent in the future. This shows that the criteria for someone to be considered of prominent descent are not clear, and it is clear that the labelling is based on general agreement, not on a fixed and absolute appraisal. It is indeed the ordinary lineage of Saidi and Muchlis that prevent them from being regarded as members of *tokoh desa*—despite people's appreciation of their decent occupation—because they neither come from a prominent family, nor have they initiated a new one.

### Managing reputations, network, and influence

Like many villages in Madura, Bayang is a *swasembada* (self-sufficient) village.<sup>116</sup> While the level of education of all village officials in Bangkalan in recent years is relatively low (50.96 per cent are primary school (Sekolah Dasar - SD) graduates; *Bangkalan dalam Angka 2007: 2*), in Bayang, the majority of the village officials are

116 Based on their level of development, villages in Indonesia are classified into three levels. The lowest is *desa swadaya* (self-assisting village). This village has a number of potentials which are managed by its own villagers, and has certain characteristics such as: being relatively isolated from other villages, being less inhabited, and strictly associated with *hukum adat* (customary law). The next category is *desa swakarya* (self-employment village). This is a transitional stage between *desa swadaya* and *desa swasembada*. This type of village has a number of characteristics such as, being quite far away from economic centres, *hukum adat* no longer strictly binds the inhabitants, and the economy and infrastructure are better developed than in *desa swadaya*. The last category is *desa swasembada* (self-sufficient village). The inhabitants of this village are able to make use of and develop its natural resources and potentials in cooperation with regional development activities. Characteristics of this type of village include with a low prominence of *hukum adat*, a higher population, and the greater participation of its inhabitants.

junior high school graduates (Sekolah Menengah Pertama – SMP). All of the villagers in Bayang are Muslims. In fact, the sub-district of Langkap (pseudonym) of which Bayang is an administrative part, has no followers of any other religions besides Islam. Of the eighteen sub-districts in Bangkalan, Langkap and four other sub-districts are exclusively Muslim (*Bangkalan dalam Angka 2007*: 145).

With regard to the level of religiosity among adult villagers, people of Bayang are composed of three groups. The first and smallest group includes those who most consciously and adamantly observe and have a high level of religious knowledge. This group consists mainly of higher educated villagers (junior higher school and above) and those who travel to other sub-districts or other regencies quite frequently. They attend *pengajian*, *tahlilan*, *khaul* or other religious communal gatherings on a regular basis and understand the significance of these occasions. They do not overtly claim that they are *santri*, but they do not reject to be identified as *santri*. The second group, the majority, are those who claim that they belong to the *santri* group. They are mostly lower educated (junior high school and below). They are also active in attending *pengajian*, *tahlilan*, *khaul* or other religious communal gatherings on a regular basis, but they do not really understand the full meaning and the significance of these events. The third group is in between the first and second groups in terms of size. These are the people who do not clearly identify a religious orientation. They are neither aware of the latest developments in Islamic issues and concerns, especially outside their own village, nor do they claim that they belong to the *santri* or non-*santri* group. They are mostly less well-educated. They are the least active in attending the above religious gatherings. This grouping is meant to depict the composition of the villagers. Nevertheless, these are relative, not absolute, indications of religiosity.

Among the three influential villagers mentioned above, the *klebun* is the one who has the official task to administer the village. As I have explained above, the village government consists not only of the *klebun*, but also of other officials. However, the most important of these officials is certainly the *klebun*, and the most important relationships between village officials and other segments of society are those between the *klebun*, *tokoh desa*, and *warga masyarakat*. The

*klebun* is the link between the state and society. In a traditional and less heterogeneous society—at least when we compare it to the neighbouring Javanese—like the Madurese, in which issues spread rapidly and become communal concerns, the position of the *klebun* is of importance, for instance, for introducing and accommodating government programmes and village regulations, or hushing up false rumours over government policies,<sup>117</sup> and channelling people's concerns to higher authorities.

In the New Order and before, when access to information was rather limited, or somewhat filtered during the Suharto administration, the *klebun*, along with other local notables often acted as an intermediary and as a source of information. He connected the village with the outside world and interpreted messages from the government. With the introduction of modern information technology, especially television, the internet, and mobile phones, villagers are now more exposed to the outside world. The dual position of the village head in the New Order, as a state agent and as a member of the village community, is depicted by Antlöv (1994, 1995) and Sven Cederroth (1994). The former demonstrates that there were some unwritten 'rules' for the village head, such as associating himself with the villagers and attending village rituals, in order to maintain authority. The latter asserts that the dual position made the village head vulnerable to criticism and attacks. From the viewpoint of the state, the village head was expected to facilitate the bureaucracy, for example by collecting taxes. Meanwhile, in the eyes of the villagers and the village elites, the village head was expected not only to act as a state agent, but also to further the villagers' interests and uphold a decent administration.

In the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, it was not uncommon that the office of village head was handed down within a single family or cluster of families. During the first decade of the New Order, the government had to rely upon the semi-independent officials at the village level. This policy was successful

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117 For example, in Bayang in 2011, rumours spread that all villagers who were living overseas (mostly as migrant workers) or in other cities had to return home as soon as possible to arrange a new E-KTP (electronic identity card) replacing the old manual KTP. The *klebun* dismissed the rumour and stated that the E-KTP would not be introduced in the near future.

in preventing them from acting against government policies, but at the same time it did not turn the village heads into competent and qualified officials who could carry out the will of the state (Hüsken, 1994: 123).

Under the Dutch colonial administration, and from the independence until 1979, the village head was elected for life. Then the law on village government was introduced in 1979. This law brought significant changes to village administration. The LKMD (Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa - Village Community Resilience Board) was founded and the tenure of the village head was limited to an eight year term and to a maximum of two terms (Hüsken, 1994: 124; Sidel, 2004: 64). However, the 1979 law on village government was implemented only after 1988. That year and the year after witnessed a series of village elections in Java based on the law issued in 1979 (Hüsken, 1994: 124).

Under the New Order administration, the village head and his families, relatives, and cronies benefited significantly from the government's efforts to raise agricultural productivity, as their control over the office of village head provided them with the opportunity to manipulate government subsidies for agricultural inputs (fertilisers or pesticides), credit facilities, and infrastructure. The control over village administration also allowed village heads to become pioneers in local investment in agricultural machinery, processing facilities, transport, and a variety of capital-intensive agricultural and mercantile activities as well as construction and real estate speculation (Sidel, 2004: 65).

John Sidel argues that the efforts of centralised authoritarian rule, which continuously attempted to implement *pembangunan* programmes, was mediated by the interests of pro-government local notables who controlled the lowest administrative hierarchy at the village level. The village head used his position as intermediary to enhance his strategy of political entrenchment and private capital accumulation. Moreover, the village notables also played a decisive role in the allocation of government resources and the enforcement of government programmes, which included rural electrification (*listrik masuk desa* programme), intensification of agricultural productivity (*intensifikasi pertanian* programme), and family planning (*keluarga berencana masuk desa* programme). They



were also responsible for brokering village cooperatives (Koperasi Unit Desa - KUD) and the leasing of village land to agro-business concerns (Sidel, 2004: 65).

In his observations on a village in West Java, Antlöv demonstrates that the success of village politics during the New Order was not primarily measured in terms of its effects, but rather in terms of whether they were implemented in a 'gentle without disturbances' manner that supposedly achieved their official targets. In other words, for the village head, appearances were more important than content, as long as his superiors were satisfied (*Asal Bapak Senang* - ABS) (Antlöv, 1994: 86). This indicates that the village head had to pose himself as a subordinate in order to assure his vertical network, so that government programmes in his village would continue smoothly. However, no matter how important the village head was for higher authorities, he could not get promoted to higher bureaucratic levels as he was not an official civil servant (*pegawai negeri sipil*). Therefore, it is not surprising that during his tenure, the village head would continuously attempt to secure private economic benefits for his unclear future.

Certainly, village officials often have to comply with people's wishes and have to be able to position themselves effectively between the state and the people. In the series of murders of *dukun santet* (black magic sorcerers) in Banyuwangi, East Java,<sup>118</sup> observed by Nicholas Herriman, in which the 'sorcerers' were killed and their bodies displayed in *balai desa*, the village hall was "a site of state control, but also as a site which is ambiguous, the locus partly of state control, and partly of local control" (Herriman, 2008: 100). Herriman argues:

It is likely that the *balai desa* partly symbolises the centre of state control in the village, so local residents also appropriate it to perform their local justice and thereby assert community control. Both the state's sovereignty in the village and the significance of the *balai desa* in symbolising this

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118 In January 1998, Banyuwangi was the site of rumours of alleged sorcerers being murdered by unidentified black-clad assassins known as the 'ninja' (the fabled Japanese martial arts experts with supernatural powers). The reason behind the naming is that the perpetrators of the killings are said to have dressed in black-clad ninja fashion. In that month in that regency, about ten people accused of sorcery were killed by what the police later identified as local hoodlums (Retsikas, 2006: 61-62).

control are thus contested [and] the officials, installed to impose state control over local residents, become themselves subject to the will of local residents, in the same way that the physical offices of the *balai desa* that are the centre of state control in the village are sometimes overrun by local residents (Herriman, 2008: 102-103).

All of the above examples clearly indicate that the level of authority of a village head or a village official is not always steady and that it is frequently challenged by villagers, especially when the village head's attitudes to government programmes are concerned or, in recent years, in the case of *peraturan desa* (village regulations). These regulations govern, amongst other things, administrative services related to marriage and divorce, arrangements of identity cards (KTP), building permits (IMB), and birth certificates (Akta Kelahiran). Villagers expect the village head and village officials to represent communal interests and to be autonomous rather than compliant to higher authorities. In Bayang, Rokib has shown himself to be an average leader whose leadership is often questioned due to his low loyalty to the village. Rokib's preference in conducting his business and abandoning his official tasks has generated resentment. His popularity has gradually diminished, within a year from his appointment. A number of villagers do not really take him seriously. He does have a number of royal supporters (for as long he maintains patronage with them), such as his clients in business, employees of his service station, fishermen who rent his fishing boats and their business partners and families, the *taksi* and *ojek* drivers and his closest neighbours. Rokib is certainly a powerful patron for his clients, a condition that reflects that of the New Order. As Antlöv shows, even though a new type of village leader has been emerging since the collapse of the Suharto administration, village dynamics change over long periods of time (Antlöv, 2003: 206).

Among the three influential villagers, the *kiai* is the one who probably has the most followers, especially when including followers from outside the village. As is often the case, many parents in Madura will send their children to *pesantren* outside their own village or even outside the regency, even though there is a good *pesantren* nearby. The reasons are varied. One of them is because their ancestors also sent their children to a certain *pesantren* in areas

outside their residence. Another common reason is that many of their neighbours send their children to a certain *pesantren*. A common belief that Madura is home to good *pesantren* and has the reputation of being a *pulau santri* (*pesantren* island), has attracted many parents from outside the island. To many people in Bayang, *pesantren* in Gresik, Sampang, Sumenep, Pamekasan, Pasuruan, and Bangkalan (in other faraway sub-districts) have become primary destinations for their children. Besides the popularity of those *pesantren* among the parents, another major reason to send children outside Bangkalan is because they want them to become independent (*mandiri*), which seems unlikely if they study in nearby villages or sub-districts in Bangkalan. Therefore, the *pesantren* of *Kiai Shodiq*, like many other *pesantren* in Madura, hardly catches the attention of local populations, at least in the village and villages surrounding it.

We should note that even a *kiai pesantren* whose *pesantren* is going largely unnoticed by local parents, remains an influential figure in surrounding villages. Indeed, many prominent *kiai pesantren* are nationally renowned, as is often the case with *kiai* who become actively involved in politics. Hence, *Kiai Shodiq* is still regarded as an influential figure among local notables of Bayang. The most prominent role of *Kiai Shodiq* is his guidance in village rituals. Almost all religious activities in Bayang are led by *Kiai Shodiq*. Even if, for instance, a famous *kiai* is imported to a *pengajian akbar* (grand *pengajian*) or to give a sermon at a wedding party, *Kiai Shodiq* is also invited to accompany the famous *kiai*. This is a special honour bestowed on *Kiai Shodiq* for his contribution in terms of giving guidance to the villagers.

To the majority of the villagers, weekly *pengajian* in *Kiai Shodiq's pesantren* or in the village mosque, along with *tahlilan* to send prayers to their deceased ancestors and *slametan* to bless one's activities and other religious gatherings to commemorate holy people, are considered as routine occasions that are part of their ancestral heritage. If they do not observe these traditions, they believe that something bad may happen. For the most orthodox group of villagers described above (the first and smallest group), the purpose of these occasions is much broader than just tradition. They serve as media to bring themselves closer to God

by praising His name. *Kiai* Shodiq does not seem to be bothered by people's different understanding of the occasions. For the *kiai*, these occasions can be used to gather villagers and mobilise them for social, political, economic and religious purposes. It is true that not all villagers who come to these occasions can read Arabic, let alone understand the meaning of the incantation, yet the *kiai* will convince the participants by assuring them that simply listening to the recitation of Arabic verses is enough to acquire *pahala* (religious reward/merit for moral conduct).<sup>119</sup> Many villagers attend these occasions because they are attracted by the tantalising *pahala* they might obtain and also by the common belief that when one prays for deceased or holy people, the dead will bring benefits to the living. It is extremely important for the *kiai*'s influence to be a well respected leader of religious occasions.

Although more and more *kiai* are becoming active in politics, *Kiai* Shodiq seems to remain apolitical. By contrast, one author argues that the majority of *kiai* in Sumenep are political. They are highly involved in political parties and local parliament, while others are playing more passive roles, for instance, only offering political advice to their *santri* and the people (Karim, 2008: 163). It is quite obvious, however, that the majority of *kiai* in Bangkalan are not political. It is true that in Bangkalan there were many *kiai* who became functionaries in the PPP and represented the party in the local, regional and even national parliaments during the New Order. It is also true that in the post-Suharto period there are even more *kiai* who represent political parties—not only the PPP. However, the majority are still not associated with political parties. We should not forget that the majority of the *kiai* that the above author discusses are *kiai pesantren*. Other *kiai*, such as *kiai tarekat*, *kiai dukun*, and *kiai langgar* are mostly apolitical. The second and the third type of *kiai* are not expected to play active roles in political parties and parliament since they lack the capacity and capability to collect mass support, to build political networks and,

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119 As a comparison, in observing Islamic sermons in religious congregations in Java, Ward Keeler points out that, firstly, although many people seem to take delight in stories of all sorts, there is often an absence of stories in religious instruction. Secondly, many people do not express boredom or frustration or impatience with sermons that Keeler finds stultifying (Keeler, 1998: 166).

more importantly, to accumulate financial resources. The first type (*kiai tarekat*), while they have an extensive network and are able to collect financial resources, appear to be less active in politics and are more interested in religious devotion. However, among these three types of lower *kiai* (compared to *kiai pesantren*), it is perhaps only *kiai tarekat*, who also have *pesantren*, who may offer their political recommendations during elections.

*Kiai* who play active roles in politics seem to do this for various reasons. For some, political involvement is economically beneficial. During the New Order, it was common knowledge that *kiai* expected the government's support, whether for their *pesantren* or for themselves, when they joined Golkar. By the same token, the government would send messages of good will and express its desire for a beneficial relationship and their wish for *kiai* to endorse Golkar in elections, or at least not to oppose government programmes. In Pamekasan, for instance, Amir Mahmud, the Minister of Home Affairs, visited some *kiai* in Bettet and delivered large sums of money in 1975, and General Sudomo, one of the most prominent generals of the New Order, paid homage to *Kiai* Baqir of *pesantren* Banyuwani (Mansurnoor, 1990: 376-377). Moreover, *kiai* who united with the PPP expected financial or other advantages from the party. In fact, at least in Bangkalan, all *kiai* who have associated themselves with political parties seem to have benefited greatly from their political participation, something that is reflected in the fine appearance of their *pesantren*. Meanwhile, *kiai* who are more passive in politics still benefit from political parties, particularly prior to many kinds of elections when politicians pay a visit to the *kiai* for political purposes and deliver financial support to the *kiai* in exchange for political support. The most obvious kind of political support is providing voting advice to the *kiai's santri* and the community. Even though in the post-Suharto period *kiai* support for certain political parties or candidates in elections is not always very effective (as shown in the previous chapter), the trend for visiting *kiai* prior to elections still continues to the present day.

In contrast to Bangkalan, Pamekasan has a different example. One author reveals that it is in fact a number of *kiai langgar* who approached political candidates for a regent post during the 2008 *pilkada* (regency head election), not vice versa, in order to

gain a foothold in political configurations in Pamekasan. When their candidate acquired the regent position, the *kiai langgar* were convinced that they would also benefit, directly or indirectly, from their champion (Zamroni, 2008: 8).

Another reason why some *kiai* are inclined to enhance their participation in the non-religious domains is a rather religious one. According to one author, a prominent politician-*kiai* in Sumenep states that ‘power must be seized, in order for us to perform Islam comprehensively’. This political *kiai*’s view on Islam being comprehensive is typical, and the majority of *kiai* in Sumenep share this view, although they act in different ways (Karim, 2008: 163). This *kiai*’s view on politics seems to be the opposite of a Bangkalanese *kiai*’s view. *Kiai* Nuruddin, discussed in the previous chapters, who has never officially been associated with political parties, says:

*Kiai* who joined Golkar were perhaps attracted by financial reasons, to see the possibilities that their *pesantren* would be supported. *Kiai* who now take part in the PPP or the PKB are perhaps stimulated by the same reason that they expect to be assisted by the parties. It means that these *kiai* only want to save themselves (*menyelamatkan diri*) [from uncertainty]. I say there is nothing good [of all political parties] (Interview with *Kiai* Nuruddin on 4 March 2011).

One conceivable explanation for *kiai* involvement in politics is their religious ‘obligation’ to provide advice to their *santri* and the community. During elections times, the *santri* and the community usually expect their *kiai* to have certain political views. Although in reality the *kiai*’s political aspirations may differ from the people’s wishes, his views are still useful, at least when he instructs them not to vote for certain political parties or political candidates that do not support Islamic values.

We now return to Bayang. Despite the presence of many ‘political’ *pesantren* in Bangkalan, the *pesantren* in Bayang remains non-political and focuses more on educational activities. Some village cynics say that the *pesantren* is too small to be taken into account in the political world of Bangkalan. Some, as explained above, assert that *Kiai* Shodiq does not have a talent for *politik praktis* (politics). Some also mention that the *kiai*’s father instructed

him not to get involved in politics. The reason is not clear. It may be true that the small size of the *pesantren* and the fact that *Kiai Shodiq* is not really well-known outside his village has prevented him from being approached by political parties, a condition that is also experienced by *kiai dukun* and *kiai tarekat* who do not have a *pesantren* and whose popularity is limited. It may also be true that the *kiai* simply does not have political skills since he was more interested in trading than running a *pesantren*, let alone being active in politics. It seems possible that he is simply forced to continue his father's legacy for lack of siblings. In short, like many other *kiai*, especially *kiai pesantren*, *Kiai Shodiq* certainly knows how to 'survive' in village politics, by turning himself into an indispensable man of religion, highly regarded by the villagers.

Among the three influential villagers, *Khoirul* is without doubt the one who has the least followers. He is neither a village official with formal authority, nor a spiritual leader who has religious authority. However, he is a charismatic man whose reputation as a respected *blater* in the past, combined with his riches, has placed him up there with the village's influential *tokoh desa*. Like the position of the *kiai*, the status of the *blater*—indeed, strongmen in general—seems to cling to a person for life, and provides him with a lasting reputation. Therefore, even though *Khoirul* claims that he is retired from *blater*-ship, the villagers and his fellow *blater* still regard him as one. In fact, when there is a call from a close fellow *blater* to come to a *remo* party, he is unlikely to decline the invitation. More importantly, in a situation where one's status is of importance, such as in village meetings, he will not hesitate to remind people of his *blater* status. Nonetheless, in village religious festivities, such as *pengajian akbar* or *halal bi halal* (a hallowed moment in *Idul Fitri*/Eid Al-Fitr during which Indonesian Muslims visit their elders, family, relatives, and neighbours to show respect, seek reconciliation (if needed), and preserve harmonious relations) *Khoirul* will not stress his *blater*-ship and instead will proudly emphasize his *haji* status.

Although this sounds very pragmatic to outsiders, villagers are never really bothered by this. If we look at the situation during the New Order in which many *Bangkalan* parliament members from the PPP were *kiai*, perhaps we may understand why having a

dual status is not such a crucial issue. In fact, many people expected that these *kiai*-politicians would be able to better voice their concerns. Nevertheless, there has been a slight trend in the post-Suharto period for *kiai* who become politicians to be somewhat distrusted by the people when it comes to their pragmatism and political manoeuvring, as I have explained in the previous chapter.

Khoirul is seen as an important figure not because of his wealth or merely because of his *blater* status. There are also a small number of petty *blater* who live in Bayang and actively participate in *remo*. However, some of these petty *blater* are seen to show off their physical power in public too much, and are criticised for drinking alcohol in public. They are not wealthy, and even though some have a permanent occupation, many depend heavily on casual jobs in the informal sector. As for their level of religiosity, these people may partly fit with the third group I have explained above, in that they do not clearly identify their religious orientation and that they almost never attend religious gatherings. These people are regarded by many people as *bajingan* (thugs) instead of *blater*. Here we can see that the distinction between the *blater* and the *bajingan* is quite hazy and that is how many people see it in reality.

The people in question, however, like to claim that they are *blater* and, indeed, technically they are *blater*, primarily because of their participation in *remo*, which is exclusive to *blater* and the main characteristic of the group. They do not make criminality their occupation, unlike the notorious *preman* (hoodlum whose main activity is extortion; the term is widely used in Jakarta), although their world is closely related to criminality. This is clear in their craze for gambling, which is considered a crime in Indonesia. Khoirul's past actions and reputation reflect this, in that he was economically underprivileged, tended to show off, and was a gambling man. Khoirul has changed significantly, but the *blater* status remains attached to him. It is his closeness to state officials (*pejabat*) and state security forces (*aparat*) that makes him an important figure in the village. His past experience as part of the security force in Golkar's campaigns and his security work in Perak introduced him to the *aparat* and the *pejabat*. This closeness with the *pejabat* and *aparat*, which follows the common pattern of the patron-client relationship in Indonesia, has been carefully



maintained by Khoirul, so that he was able to start a new business in Jakarta. His connections allow people from his village and also from other villages to use his *jasa* (service) to deal with the *aparats* when they have a problem with the law. Here we see that he becomes a fixer, someone to solve people's problems, often by improper or unlawful means, and an intermediary.

For instance, if someone loses a motorcycle, instead of reporting it to the police, he will come to Khoirul to ask for his help to find it using his wide network within the underworld. It is less attractive to ask help from the police because they are less likely to find the motorcycle again and, even if they do, the price that the owner of the motorcycle has to pay to the police is high. Although Khoirul may also ask something in return, the cost will not be as high as those of the police. Moreover, people put more trust in Khoirul because they know him better than they know the police. This situation reminds us of Daniel S. Lev's suggestion that for the less privileged recipients of justice, money is often crucial for buying acquittal, lowering the charge, or ensuring better treatment in prison. Bribery is so common that it has become a standard procedural stratagem, as it were, in both civil and criminal cases (Lev, 1999: 186).

His ability as a fixer differentiates Khoirul from petty *blater*, the *klebun*, and the *kiai*. By maintaining this special position, Khoirul has become a prominent figure whose influence stretches beyond the village. That does not mean, however, that Khoirul is able to mobilise villagers in the way that the *klebun* do when they call on the people to do *gotong royong* (communal aid), or like the *kiai* who can gather the people for a *pengajian* in his *pesantren* or the mosque of the village. Khoirul is not a communal leader. The only environment where he has real leadership is among the *blater*, where he led *remo* gatherings during his active years. However, he is still able to mobilise people who depend on him economically, such as those who are employed in his business in Jakarta or in his grocery stores in Bangkalan. Others include villagers who are involved in *kerapan sapi* (bull racing), especially those participants that believe that they, or their bulls, need protection from people who may threaten them physically, intimidate them, or use black magic on them. Here we see that Khoirul also acts as a protector

or patron for his clients, an ideal type of *blater*, unlike some of the petty *blater* I have described above.

Certainly, these three influential figures in the village know how to keep on good terms with the villagers as well as mobilise them, while at the same time channelling their power and influence towards their own interests. We can see that, among other things, wealth, religiosity, ancestry, and occupation play central parts in making these figures influential in their society. What we should also not forget is charisma, a concept well-known in Indonesian society. Religious elites, underworld leaders, and members of the aristocracy were assumed to possess particular charismatic power. At the village level in Bayang, this translates well to the *kiai*, the *blater*, and the *klebun*, the three of whom are expected to possess charisma in order to be acknowledged as prominent *tokoh desa*.

### **Maintaining a complex relationship**

During the New Order, state-society relations were principally based on centre-region (*pusat-daerah*) connections. Strict surveillance of local interests became one of the main concerns of the central government, although local leaders could sometimes act independently and press local governments at the provincial and regency levels when it came to general elections. In the first years of the Suharto administration, the state was concerned with how to allow freedom for political parties, while at the same time carrying out general elections as a symbol of democracy and as a sign of legitimacy of the new government without jeopardising its own authority. Central to this policy was the idea of exercising an 'elegant' authoritarian rule that promoted democracy as the government's main characteristic. In practice, the central government reserved seats for military officers in national, provincial, and regency parliaments and regularly rotated vital government posts in the provinces and regencies. State control was, however, not always firm, and sometimes military authorities opted for less direct interference in civil affairs, particularly in areas strongly influenced by Islam, such as Madura, where Islamic leaders dominated local parliaments. This is in line with what Van Klinken and Barker argue that the Indonesian state is much lighter on the ground than it has often been assumed to be (Van Klinken

and Barker, 2009: 6).

Nonetheless, the government always had strategies to exercise state control at the local level. The most noticeable was patronage. Patronage during the New Order can be seen, among other things, as an effort by the government to co-opt local figures, including village leaders. Under the Suharto administration, there was a political process referred to by Antlöv as 'betting on the strong' to achieve much of the authority of the New Order. The process was an intricate strategy of patronage by the state to recruit village leaders as state clients. It turned rural leaders into officials in New Order organisations. Consequently, the loyalties and aspirations of these leaders changed. The local population's concerns were no longer the basis of village rule. Instead, aligning to government priorities became more important (Antlöv, 1994: 73).

In most villages in Madura during the New Order, the main village leader was the *kiai*. Despite government's efforts to convert rural leaders into state officials, most *kiai* were not that malleable. Their position as *umat* (community) leaders and their social standing would be endangered if they were seen to be too close to authorities. Most *kiai* in rural as well as urban Madura were inclined to maintain their independence because they did not want to jeopardise their religious authority in the view of the *umat*. However, independence here should not be understood as political non-affiliation. In fact, many *kiai* who were labelled as independent religious leaders, were actually affiliated with the PPP.

One author provides a clear illustration of how one *kiai*, who became an agent of the state during the New Order, gradually lost his religious authority. In a village on the north coast of Madura, there were two important *kiai*. One was an ally of the *klebun* and a cadre of Golkar. This circumstance compromised his religious authority and people tended not to take him seriously. The other *kiai* headed a small, though favoured, *pesantren*, for which he declined government subsidies due to his preference for being independent. The greater religious authority of the latter *kiai* was apparent on many occasions (Niehof, 1987: 130).

Another point that could put *kiai*'s standing among the people and other *kiai* at risk, was their support for controversial programmes, such as the Keluarga Berencana (KB - Family

Planning/Birth Control) programme. Many villagers could not easily accept the programme due to their understanding that birth control was incompatible with Islamic teachings. *Kiai* were needed to convey the government's message. The question arose, which *kiai* were willing to fulfil this intermediary role? Some of them could not accept this programme at all, while some gradually changed their minds. Certainly, many *kiai* were convinced by the benefits of the programme. It often offered lucrative rewards, such as financial aids to *pesantren* and free pilgrimage to Mecca, to *kiai* who successfully promoted the programme. Events that showcased *kiai*'s support for the KB were frequently disseminated on television or in papers, and newspapers clippings were often displayed in the village hall.<sup>120</sup> To *kiai* who did not support the programme, those who promoted the KB were seen as *kiai plat merah*.<sup>121</sup> The former often persuaded the people not to obey the latter, one of the ways in which a *kiai*'s support for the KB programme might endanger his position in society.

We have to remember, however, that outside Madura, perceptions of KB were mixed. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the idea of birth control was associated with the practice of induced abortion and sterilisation, and thus a number of individual Islamic leaders opposed the idea of birth control. In July 1968, several months before the establishment of Lembaga Keluarga Berencana Nasional (LKBN – the Institute for National Family Planning), the Religious Council of Muhammadiyah (Majlis Tarjih) announced its stand against birth control. Meanwhile, on 25 September 1969, a year after the formation of LKBN, the NU stated that family planning was allowed for the purpose of spacing or improving both

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120 An illustration: a number of *kiai* in Sampang gathered in the Sampang regency hall along with officials from BKKBN (the National Coordination and Family Planning Agency) and those from the regency office to support the KB programme in that regency. The head of the BKKBN of Sampang delivered a speech to highlight the success of the programme in Sampang (*Jawa Pos*, 1 March 1982). Whether the programme in Sampang was really successful or not, the government needed to convince the *kiai* so that they would think that their tasks were not difficult and that they soon would reap the rewards.

121 *Kiai plat merah* literally means red plate *kiai*. *Plat merah* refers to the vehicle registration plate of government vehicles (which is red in colour), meaning that the *kiai* who were backed by the government or occupied official positions were considered as part of the government.

mother and child welfare, but not limiting births because of fear of hunger and poverty. In 1969, Muslimat (the women's organisation of the NU) was given a mandate by the NU to be involved in the family planning programme under the condition stated in the 1969 statement. In general, the NU accepted family planning gradually. Despite its acceptance in 1969, the NU prohibited the use of the IUD (intrauterine device, a form of birth control in which a small T-shaped device is inserted into the uterus) on the basis of religious sensitivity in its technical application. In 1972, the NU accepted the idea of family planning for the public use, and in 1979 sterilisation was accepted. However, it was not until 1983 that IUD was permitted under particular constraints. Finally, the concept of the small family was individually accepted by NU leaders after 1985 (Adioetomo, 1995). In Madura, as I have explained above, perceptions of KB among *kiai* of NU on New Order Madura were varied.

Meanwhile, during the New Order there was another type of village leader, the *blater*. Unlike the *kiai*, *blater* tended to make alliances with the government by being Golkar propagators. If they assumed a *klebun* office, as was the case in many villages, they would appear to be devoted to a steady relationship with superiors, such as the *camat* (head of sub-district), as opposed to communal concerns. Even though they acted as patrons in their relationships with many villagers, at the same time they were clients to the patrons higher up in the hierarchy. There were, certainly, exceptions. There was a small number of *blater* who became associated with the PPP. Unlike the *kiai* who maintained their independence, these PPP *blater* did not really enjoy the privileged status given to the PPP *kiai* even though they opted for that party instead of Golkar. The main reason for this seems to be the common perception that *kiai* were the guides of the *umat*, and therefore they should promote and guard Islamic values by supporting the PPP. The *blater*, on the other hand, were mostly regarded as cultural figures who preserved traditional Madurese values, and at the same time were expected to sustain *kiai*'s efforts to guard Islamic principles. Therefore, if the *blater* opted for the PPP, it was seen by the people as a rather compulsory action, following in the footsteps of the *kiai*. It clearly indicates that to a certain degree, the *blater* were the *kiai*'s liegemen.

The co-optation of the *klebun* and the construction of patron-client relationships between them and the state did not always mean that they were merely puppets who could be manipulated by higher authorities. Regency and sub-district officials often tolerated self-interested political manoeuvring by *klebun*. It was true that in some villages the *klebun*'s authority was more restricted than observers might assume. For instance, the *klebun* was unable to collect the entire IPEDA (a land tax to be paid annually by landowners) because some villagers failed to pay and the *klebun* had to find ways to compensate for the shortage (Touwen-Bouwsma, 1987: 107). It is also true that there were many *klebun* who did not serve as an extension of higher authorities. It was common knowledge that as soon as the *klebun* assumed his office, many *klebun* did not serve public interests properly, and instead they abused their position for their own interests. Those who were lucky would not be confronted with people's protests or the government's fury. Those who were unlucky would become target for removal by the government, as in a number of cases in Bangkalan. The *klebun* of Baringin village in Labang sub-district got into trouble with the law because he allowed people to gamble in the *balai desa* of his village (Memorandum, 14 April 1994). Moreover, the *klebun* of Morkepek village in Labang sub-district was prosecuted because of extortion. In Gili Anyar village in Kamal sub-district, the *klebun* was brought to court because he falsified information in order to obtain a school diploma that would be used as a requirement for an extension of his *klebun* post (Memorandum, 15 April 1994). In principle, higher authorities did not interfere with daily affairs in the village as long as government programmes and policies were implemented in ways that did not compromise higher authorities' position.

One author highlights this condition by stressing that, despite the New Order's deeper infiltration into society and its greater domination of local society than its colonial predecessor, the regional elite showed tremendous resilience and managed to survive. Moreover, at one point, apart from appointing military and ex-military personnel to strategic positions, the administration also appointed descendants of the old aristocracies as local agents (Schulte Nordholt, 2003: 575). Therefore, these local elites (non-*ulama*) did not emerge as a significant threat to the administration

due to their dependence upon the government for subsidies and other benefits and their potential vulnerability vis-à-vis the peasantry. In principle, the administration preserved its patronage with local elites to ensure the continuation of its rule at the local level. To keep the local elites dependent, funds were distributed to supporters as part of the patronage plan or as bribery. At the same time, much money was spent on security forces to repress dissidents who tried to confront the administration, specifically the poor. Although the administration also provided the poor with some economic benefits, this could be seen as either a compromise to avoid confrontations or as an effort to maintain a viable labour force to serve capital (James, 1990: 20). These were the general conditions in New Order Madura.

Village officials during the New Order were appointed by the *klebun* and approved by the regency office. In the post-Suharto period, they are—with the exception of the village secretary who is appointed by the regency/municipal secretary (Sekretaris Daerah) in the name of the regent/mayor—appointed by the *klebun* and approved by the BPD. This shows the importance of the BPD's role in village politics. This situation forces village officials to really brand themselves as the voice of the people. *Klebun* are also forced to market themselves wisely in order to curb competition from the *kiai* and the *blater* since these figures often stress their natural connectedness with the people and claim that they are the people's real protectors, rather than the *klebun*. Meanwhile, village officials are not always allied with the *klebun*; they may be collaborating with *kiai* or *blater* or they may be more independent. In general, however, village officials belong to the *klebun* office, and when the BPD criticises the performance of the village government, village officials, besides the *klebun*, usually become targets of criticism as well. Since many of the BPD members are village elites who *merakyat* (being populists – being close to the people) and are active in village communal activities, cooperation between village officials and these village elites, who are also BPD members, is crucial for the success of both government programmes and village policies. This is not to deny, however, the importance of cooperation between all village administrations with village elites who are not members of the BPD.

The relationships between the *klebun*, the *kiai*, and the *blater* have been complex. We know almost nothing about the *blater* during the Dutch colonial period, probably because their role was insignificant and their position in society was marginalised so that they went unrecorded in colonial administration reports. We know, however, a number of things about the *klebun* and the *kiai*.

West Madura, its area covering present-day Bangkalan, was brought under direct rule by the colonial administration in 1885, while the kingdom of Pamekasan was annexed in 1858, and Sumenep in 1883. Following the abolishment, the Dutch took control of the three kingdoms. The position of kingdoms in Madura was ambivalent under the Dutch administration. On the one hand, they appeared as independent kingdoms, and on the other hand, they belonged to the kingdom of the Netherlands (Kuntowijoyo, 2002: 4-5, 160). Under direct rule, a large-scale administrative reorganisation took place in the village. Villages were created by the colonial government, and the boundaries of these villages were determined by the requirements of administrative efficiency. The *lurah*, officials of villages appointed by *panembahan* (rulers of West Madura before the direct rule of the Dutch), were likely to acquire village head positions. During direct Dutch rule, the village head was considered the lowest official in the native civil service. He was responsible for arranging administrative records and collecting land taxes. Moreover, he was the only elected official. Others, such as the secretary and a number of assistants, were appointed by the village head (Touwen Bouwsma, 1987: 113-114). The *kiai* in Madura, like *kiai* in Java, have been associated with *kesaktian* (magical abilities). During the colonial period, the amount of *kesaktian* that was ascribed to an *ulama* family was based on being descendant from well-known religious leaders who were universally respected for their personal charisma and spiritual powers (Touwen Bouwsma, 1992: 114-115).

In Bayang, Rokib, *Kiai* Shodiq, and Khoirul are present-day *klebun*, *kiai*, and *blater*. While during the New Order Bayang was not free from the influence of Golkar and the PPP, the village has not become a battleground for ambitious local leaders who transform religious group loyalty into loyalty to political parties. While during the New Order there were hardly any local leaders



and villagers who openly supported Golkar, and the majority of the population claimed to endorse the PPP, the post-Suharto period has witnessed far more diverse political aspirations channelled to various political parties. It is relatively common now to see political party flags, posters, and banners displayed in Bayang, as well as in many other villages in Indonesia. However, this does not mean that villagers in Bayang have become significantly more conscious of supra-village political developments and, more importantly, recruitment by political parties has not increased since the level of political apathy seems to have grown. Moreover, despite the presence of some political parties through their 'representative offices',<sup>122</sup> many of the representatives in Bayang have limited awareness about political configurations on the national or even provincial level. They are mostly only active for one or two months prior to general elections, presidential elections, gubernatorial elections, and regency head elections. The representative offices seem to be merely symbols of the existence of certain political parties. While during the New Order strong group loyalties and a lack of tolerance towards other groups often sparked political tensions, the post-Suharto period seems to be marked by a lack of political loyalties. It is true that the PKB dominated the majority of votes in the 1999 general elections in Madura, but in the 2004 and 2009 elections, they received significantly fewer votes. Bayang has experienced a similar situation. It is still true, however, that political tension has fluctuated, heating up every now and then, and cooling down again. The level of tension is influenced by mixed political factors that largely mirror the situation on the supra-village level.

Rokib seems to be the most avid politician compared to *Kiai* Shodiq and Khoirul. However, his position as *klebun* prevents him from being a political party functionary. According to Law No 22/2004, the village head is not permitted to be involved in campaigns for general elections, presidential elections, gubernatorial elections, and regency head elections, and he is not permitted to be a political party functionary (board member). It is permitted, however, to be a sympathiser of a political party. *Kiai*

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122 All buildings of representative offices of political parties in Bayang are houses of the representatives and some are small shops.

Shodiq, as I have explained, is not really interested in politics, while Khoirul became an integral part of Golkar's campaigns during the New Order. In the post-Suharto period, Khoirul has become less active in politics and pays more attention to his business. Supra-village politics apparently does not really attract local notables from Bayang, who appear more interested in being involved in village politics.

For instance, Halim, the former leader of the hamlet (*kampung* or *dusun* or *padukuhan* or *padukoan*) of Semplok became controversial because he continued to carry the hamlet's stamp (*cap* or *stempel*). The stamp was needed by the hamlet if the inhabitants of Semplok wanted to arrange administrative deals in order to obtain official documents, such as SKCK (Character and Penal Clearance Requirements), Jamkesmas (Public Health Insurance) and Raskin (*beras miskin*, literally rice for the poor; it is an aid programme for certain poor households to purchase rice below the market price). The new hamlet leader, Gufron, reported this matter to the *klebun*. Halim did not want to give up the stamp because he was convinced that he still had the right to hold the position. One month before this issue arose, the hamlet dwellers agreed to elect a new hamlet leader because Halim was considered to have occupied the position for too long, more than ten years. Unlike the village, hamlet rule is not regulated under state law, but is arranged by mutual agreement between hamlet residents. Besides holding the post for too long, Halim was disliked by the people because, among other things, he allegedly took illegal payments (*uang rokok*, literally cigarette money) from people requesting administrative papers, and because he was accused of illegally keeping the Raskin distribution for himself or selling it.

The report to the *klebun* did not work out the way Gufron had wanted. The main reason was that Halim had family ties with the *klebun*. Rokib did not really take a firm decision; he only suggested that this matter should be solved in a *kekeluargaan* (consensual) way. Other village officials could not solve the problem either. *Kiai* Shodiq, who lived in a hamlet further away, was then asked to solve this problem. Some hamlet residents regularly attended *pengajian* in the village mosque under *Kiai* Shodiq's guidance. They believed that the *kiai* would be respected by Halim, and that he would

therefore return the stamp. Halim told the *kiai* that he felt insulted because the people no longer respected him in spite of his good leadership, while Gufron was an *anak kemarin sore* (literally, a child born yesterday, inexperienced) who would not be able to carry out his duties. The *kiai* advised Halim to return the stamp because the people needed it, and he suggested that he should wholeheartedly accept the communal decision not to trust him anymore. Halim seemed to be hesitant to agree to the *kiai*'s suggestions. He respected the *kiai*, but at the same time he felt insulted, and in the perception of many Madurese, the *chagrin* (embarrassment) could only be resolved by committing a *carok* towards Gufron. Halim, however, did not commit *carok*. He knew that many hamlet residents or even the whole villagers would turn against him because they favoured Gufron, and he also saw that it would be pointless. Nevertheless, he still refused to return the stamp because he wanted to hold the position for at least another year. The people did not accept this. Finally, a number of villagers went to Khoirul to ask for his assistance in solving the problem.

About six years before, Halim had been in dispute with someone from the sub-district of Kamal. Halim had run over an eight year old child while riding his motorcycle in Kamal. The child was severely injured. At first, Halim did not want to take responsibility. The parents could not accept this. They threatened to kill Halim if he did not take responsibility. Afraid, Halim asked Khoirul to solve the problem. Khoirul demanded that Halim pay all the costs of the child's treatment and asked the parents not to threaten Halim and not to bring the case to the police. Both parties eventually settled the case. Here we see the importance of Khoirul as a mediator. Even if the case had been brought to the police, Khoirul, who had a close connection with the police, would likely have been able to fix the problem, albeit at a cost.

With regards to the 'stamp' issue, since *Kiai Shodiq*'s suggestion was not really taken into consideration by Halim, the people believed that Khoirul would be able to force Halim to return the stamp. They were right. Halim respected Khoirul as an influential figure, and many people believed that Khoirul was a person who was held in awe, someone who is looked up to, and who is not to be trifled with. Khoirul did not physically threaten

Halim, but then many people believed that such a course was not necessary given Khoirul's reputation as a 'retired' *blater*.

What we can conclude from the 'stamp case' is that each local notable has their own authority and their own purview. Although sometimes these different authorities can overlap, many people are aware that each figure has his own distinctive expertise. Disputes are often solved through private arrangements by particular individuals rather than in line with formal sets of rules. Personal struggles between village elites seem to be obstacles to the implementation of more formal, rational policies. This mirrors the conditions of the New Order, something that Schulte Nordholt explains well: the post-Suharto era demonstrates continuities with the New Order era, and the extent to which 'civil society' has managed to organise itself in order to establish a more democratic system is doubtful (Schulte Nordholt 2004: 32).

The most fragile relationship in Bayang is perhaps between the *kiai* who represent the *santri* culture and the *blater* who represent the *abangan*-like culture.<sup>123</sup> That does not mean that they are directly competing with each other over many things. Their religious orientations and practices differ to a considerable degree, but, in daily affairs, they are not so different. During the New Order, despite their non-involvement in the PPP, the *kiai* (mainly *Kiai Shodiq* and some *kiai langgar*) and the majority of the villagers channelled their political aspirations through the PPP. Khoirul, along with a number of *blater* and a minority of the villagers, gave their political preference to Golkar. Political orientations polarised the village. Yet, this polarisation occurred only at times of general elections, especially during campaigns. In present-day Bayang, the division of society during election periods is not as obvious as during the Suharto era. In all elections (*pemilu*, *pilpres*, and *pilkada*) in Bayang, political affiliations do not really matter, as the level of political apathy has increased in the post-Suharto period. Some political factions based on family organisations (clans) and informal connections, ranging from religious groupings (*kelompok pengajian*) to working associations (like fishermen's associations), have been formed. However, these factions are very informal and

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123 This distinction is explained in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

loose, often short-lived. One fisherman highlights this:

*Pak kiai* (Mr. *kiai*, referring to a *kiai langgar* in Bayang) in the 1990s often reminded us to not forget about our obligations as Muslims. *Salat* (five-time daily Islamic prayers), *puasa* (fasting), and *zakat* (giving alms), were the forms of worship *pak kiai* frequently reminded for us to perform, to distinguish us from non-Muslims. When general elections approached, *pak kiai* recommended us to vote for the PPP. He always maintained that it would show the difference between us and non-Muslims if we voted for the PPP. As far as I know, almost all of my friends, the fishermen, opted for the PPP, and we agreed to only vote for the PPP, to show that we were true Muslims. I remember that I was very proud wearing the PPP T-shirt and showed it to some of my neighbours who wore Golkar T-shirts. Now the situation has changed. *Pak kiai* still frequently comes to us to remind us not to forget about our religious duties. However, when the general elections times are coming, he says that the only true Islamic party to pick is the PKB. I forget since when *pak kiai* has been telling us to vote for the PKB instead of the PPP. Perhaps after *Pak Harto* (Suharto) retired [stepped down from his presidency, *sic*]. At first I was confused as to why he wanted us to shift our [political] party. However, I just followed what he said. In the last general elections (2009) I was no longer fascinated by the PKB since my standard of living (he says *penghasilan* - income, he refers to *taraf kehidupan* - standard of living) did not really improve, and so I voted for another party (he does not mention which one, however). *Pak kiai* does not know about it [that he voted for another party, instead of the PKB] and I think it is better if he does not know about it. I do not know why. I just think it is better. Actually, I do not know why I still have to vote since it does not change anything. Although I voted for the PPP, I miss the *Pak Harto* era because at that time life was easier for me (Interview with NH, on 14 January 2011).

Nowadays, the villagers of Bayang have diverse political orientations. Although the majority of the villagers do not clearly know which party to support in general elections or which candidates to vote for during *pilpres* and *pilkada*, as many of them have continuously shifted their political preference in the last two elections, they seem to pay more attention to which party or which candidates not to pick.

There are two overlapping categories of parties and candidates they deem unsuitable. Firstly, those who are not recommended by local notables, even though leaders at higher levels (sub-district to national levels) recommend them. This signifies the importance of local notables as people whom the villagers trust. Even though

higher functionaries are more influential, they operate beyond the villagers' field of view, so their recommendations are unlikely to be followed. *Kiai langgar*, despite their inferior rank to *kiai pesantren* or *kiai tarekat* or other kinds of leaders, are, in fact, closer to the people. If *kiai langgar* maintain their *merakyat* characteristics and show commendable personalities, their political suggestions seem to be followed. This situation demonstrates the importance of charisma, which is still prevalent in the post-Suharto period. Even though various local groups at the regency and provincial levels, such as NGOs, students' associations, and workers' unions, have sometimes taken matters into their own hands when it comes to land occupations, human rights, and corruption, ordinary people in the village have rarely experienced such a post-Suharto 'euphoria' from participation, and have reaped little rewards from being given more access to local governments. Their public participation is still limited to the village level. Therefore, whoever is able to win the support of the villagers, is likely to gain the most followers. The second category of politicians that are not likely to be popular in the village, are those who do not provide the villagers with direct benefits. As the people's political consciousness at the village level increases, by the same token higher-level politics seems to be losing ground in the people's mind. People are not really interested in candidates for official posts or political parties' programmes. If, for instance, an unfamiliar candidate for a regency parliament member campaigns their candidacy in the village's *pengajian*, what the people really expect is something tangible, not just a speech on uncertain programmes or political promises. If the politician takes action, for instance, by partially renovating a mosque, this will be much more effective. This situation obviously demonstrates the high degree of political pragmatism in the village. Leaders cannot expect the same kind of 'obedience' in supra-village politics from their followers.

This partially explains why the popularity of the PPP in the post-Suharto era in Madura has gradually declined. Despite a small number of religious leaders who changed their political aspirations, the drop in votes for the PPP in the Suharto era was not merely influenced by the decline of the authority of leading figures. The results were also partly influenced by state repression

and vote-buying, and indications of electoral fraud (such as in the Sampang riot of 1997), and perhaps more importantly because Golkar's *pembangunan* programmes seemed to attract more people. In the post-Suharto period, there is no political party with as much manoeuvring space in the village as Golkar had, or with the ability to limit the operations of other political parties. All political parties now have the same opportunity to promote and maintain their programmes. The people do not really see the PKB as a replacement of the PPP of the New Order. Some *kiai* still maintain their affiliation with the PPP, while others turn to other NU-affiliated parties, such as PKNU. Political loyalty has been divided. The division reminds us of Barker and Van Klinken's suggestion that evidently, Indonesia's political culture are not integrated but deeply divided between an elite and the rest of society (Barker and Van Klinken, 2009: 18).

Today, therefore, there is no single political party that is capable of integrating the villagers or, to be precise, the *nahdliyin*. The PPP's heyday in Madura is obviously over, at least if we look at the results of three general elections in the post-Suharto period. Although that party seems to have attempted to offer better programmes during campaign times, the exodus of many of its most influential leaders to the PKB and the PKNU and some to non-Islamic parties, has turned the PPP into an average political party. It is clear that the decline of the PPP was not caused by the inability of its functionaries to run that party, but mainly because the establishment of the PKB attracted many religious leaders—as true leaders of the PPP—to switch their allegiance to the PKB. Here we see that, as in the New Order, many people are still attracted by the popularity of religious leaders. Therefore, for certain people who are in favour of certain *kiai* in the PKB, it is likely that they will opt for that party. Meanwhile, for others who are the followers of certain *kiai* in the PPP, it is most probable that they will maintain their support for that party. It also holds true that there is no single village notable who is capable of incorporating mass support in one single party and that relationships between village notables in supra-village politics are less prominent.

Communal concerns and village politics, however, differ significantly from supra-village politics. Village notables may

form loose relationships if it is mutually beneficial to do so. A case from Pamekasan confirms this assertion. On 22 April 2011, hundreds of *blater* from Sampang were mobilised by the *klebun* and village officials of Palengaan Laok village, Pamekasan to protect the re-opening of a village polyclinic (*polindes*). The *blater* were accompanied by a number of *kiai*. Prior to the re-opening, the polyclinic had been sealed by the villagers because the midwife in charge was reallocated to another village by regency officials. The villagers were fond of the midwife and could not accept this. The re-opening was successful as the feared *blater*, the respected *kiai*, and the *klebun* who held the official authority cooperated together, while the villagers did not take any action. However, the next day the polyclinic was re-sealed by the villagers because their demand to get the midwife back was still not met.<sup>124</sup> This clearly indicates that village notables can, occasionally, form loose and mutually beneficial relationships, while at the same time it also shows that in the post-Suharto period the villagers have more ability and courage to protest against village officials or higher authorities if their concerns are not taken into consideration. It does not mean, however, that during the New Order villagers did not have any opportunity to voice their concerns (the Nipah dam incident illustrated in Chapter 5 is a perfect example of how villagers protested against the government's plan). It is the more democratic socio-political circumstances in the post-New Order that have given more opportunities for villagers to do so.

A wide gap between village leaders and official bureaucrats, however, is still prevalent and it seems that this aggravates political tensions during crucial moments, for instance, during village head elections or special cases such as the 'stamp' case in the hamlet of Semplok. While the New Order rural elites were privileged clients (*anak emas*) of the state during the New Order, rather than part of the purely capitalist class, whose opportunities to accumulate and rule depend on their crucial links with higher authorities (Antlöv, 1995: 6-7), the decentralisation era—despite its policies to give more space to village bureaucrats to form village regulations—does not really provide village officials with ample opportunities gained

124 *Kompas*, 23 April 2011. <http://regional.kompas.com/read/2011/04/23/04120753/Bidan.Idaman.Dipindah.Preman.Dikerahkan>, accessed on 24 August 2011.



from these enhanced powers. During the New Order, village leaders were recruited to represent the government's client organisations based mostly on their affiliation with higher authorities, and so their administrative authority increased gradually, as these state clients were granted privileged access to state funds (such as agricultural subsidies and organisational funding). This condition was an attempt to secure the support of a village middle class that acted as a vehicle for state intervention and monitoring, and as an executor for Golkar, as representatives of the electoral machinery of the state (Antlöv, 1995: 7).

In the post-Suharto period, these *anak emas* of the state no longer exist. The *klebun*, village officials and village notables tend not to become informal underlings, but rather formal subordinates whose relationship with their superiors are no longer completely affected by the principles of *Asal Bapak Senang*. Even if *anak emas* exist, the extent to which they can secure state funds has been limited by more binding laws and regulations. Moreover, as the post-Suharto period has witnessed instability and insecurity alongside political change, the informal ties between village leaders and higher authorities have proven to be very loose and unstable, and are often hampered by political configurations at higher levels. Despite a number of exceptions, it no longer seems common in Madura for 'state-sponsored' *kiai* and *blater* to be coddled by higher authorities, as happened during the Suharto administration.

The social and political roles held by village bureaucrats in the New Order now seem to have shifted into the hands of other local notables; that is, the religious and cultural figures. Village leaders are expected to preserve the values of the village and act as brokers who bridge the gap between the population and supra-village politics. In order to do this, village leaders need to be community-oriented. They have dual commitments: as neighbours and community representatives, on the one hand, and as agents of governments and members of the village elite on the other. Consequently, this has posed dilemmas for village leaders who are trapped between village realities and state ideology, or between an image of the exemplary centre and the reality of administrative periphery (Antlöv, 1995: 9).

It is important for village leaders to be accepted in the village

and to form good relations with other village leaders, and they have to present themselves as the guardians of traditions in order to achieve this. During the New Order, political events were disguised within a cultural framework of meaningful symbols. Political meetings and ideological messages were given ritualised and symbolic forms that people could easily recognise. The government operated through a successful appropriation of community and patriotic norms that were expressed in ritual meals, community assemblies, religious events, and popular dramas (Antlöv, 1995: 10). Nowadays, despite some camouflaged efforts to convey their messages, it seems now that the government is more overt in translating their programmes to the people. Programmes, such as Jamkesmas and Raskin are not implemented in disguise. It is true, however, that some village officials will try to benefit from uneducated villagers by mistranslating government's programmes.

Finally, in religious spheres, despite many differences between the *kiai*, on the one hand, and the *klebun* and the *blater*, on the other hand, these two sides are not mutually exclusive. They form important segments of society who share common interests and jointly safeguard the common values of the people. In the Madurese tradition, the common values of the people are translated as Islamic and cultural values. While the *kiai* focus on common Islamic values, such as *khaul* and *tahlilan*, the *klebun* and the *blater* promote and strive to maintain festivities that are likely to be frowned upon by the *kiai*, such as *kerapan sapi* and *sabung ayam*.

Consequently, it is not uncommon that some *santri* become spectators in *kerapan sapi* or *sabung ayam*, while it is not surprising to see the *klebun* and the *blater* in *khaul* and *tahlilan* or the presence of a low-level *kiai* (*kiai langgar*) as the one who leads the ritual in the *klebun* and the *blater*'s personal religious events, such as *slametan* held to bless members of their family in rite of passage ceremonies. However, we should note that their mutual participation in seemingly opposing occasions should not be understood as signs of conversion or submission to the 'other side'. Most importantly, these are the standard practices in Madura. The people are always highly aware that they have their own spiritual beliefs that may be at risk from other values, but they stand firmly in their own beliefs. This is in line with Van Dijk's argument that in Java, it would be a

mistake to treat 'Javanese' and Islamic beliefs as complete opposites (Van Dijk, 1998: 229). Moreover, we should not downplay the villagers' resilience and agency. As Antlöv argues, 'villagers are not merely passive receivers of official propaganda or observers of development programmes. They are also members of a community and, in the final analysis, agents of their own lives' (Antlöv, 1995: 9).

## Conclusion

The New Order, with its authoritarian rule hindered democratic processes at all administrative levels. Formal representatives of the state often interacted awkwardly with village populations. The village head, who was expected by the government and the people to bridge the gap between communal concerns and villagers' issues with higher authorities and to become a powerful patron for his villagers, often ended up alienating himself from the local populations. In fact, these village heads were often guilty of misappropriating public goods for private interests. Village notables, despite their non-formal leadership, were frequently able to link the local populace with supra-village politics. Whether it was the village head or the village notables who connected society with the larger world, all village leaders struggled to preserve patronage and the various forms of patron-client relationships which became so prominent during the New Order.

The village, as the lowest administrative tier in Indonesia, appears to be accepting the spirit of decentralisation with less enthusiasm. Despite a number of laws and regulations that have favoured the position of the village, such as the laws and regulations that stipulate the presence of a village parliament (BPD) and allows it to establish its own village regulations (*peraturan desa*), the village is still considered as a peripheral area, designed to cater for the demands of urban societies. In politics, the village is regarded as a potential source of votes for political parties and political candidates for official posts rather than as a potential equal partner for development. In a way, this political circumstance has perpetuated the patronage pattern that was institutionalised during the previous administration. Consequently, political affairs in the village have been arranged through personal relations and

private arrangements rather than through the rule of law. This is in line with Schulte Nordholt's argument (delineated at the beginning of this chapter) that the present decentralisation era is not synonymous with democratisation of the government system.

In Madura, village politics has been an arena of alliances as well as competition between village leaders: the *klebun* who represent formal authority, the *kiai* who embody religious authority, and the *blater* who carry cultural authority. The relationships between religious leaders, local strongmen, and village officials in the village in Madura have been complex since the colonial era. The struggle for influence within these village elites is not only centred on opportunities for private material benefits, but also on political competition which is loosely organised, pragmatic, and often mutually beneficial in nature. Their continuous presence in the post-Suharto period reflects their constant influence over society, and their presence actually fits well within ongoing state formation. Village politics in Madura is characterised by its typical rural nature. The presence of traditional local leaders is highly apparent in their struggle for influence, in connecting the local community with the outside world, and in defining the appropriate values and norms for the village residents. In the struggle for influence, Islamic symbols, wealth, and genealogy are extensively used to win the supports of the villagers, while patronage and personal relations become the prevalent pattern in relationships with the villagers.