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Author: Pribadi, Yanwar

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Chapter 8

Conclusion

Since independence, the Indonesian government seems, for the most part, to have neglected Madura, and so the island has become one of the disadvantaged areas in the larger Java-Madura region. Even during the *pembangunan* era of the New Order, the island, in comparison with other regions in East Java, had a weak economy. Due to infertile land, limited economic activities, and inadequate development of human resources, the local economy was too weak to absorb the abundance of labourers that resulted from the high population growth during the New Order. Indeed, quality of life was so poor that, until the 1970s, about seventy per cent of the Madurese population was illiterate. In general, Madura scored low on the social indicators for education and employment. Moreover, in areas such as health, food and nutrition, and human settlement, Madura was also underdeveloped compared to other regencies in East Java (Rachbini, 1995).

That does not mean, however, that the government did not take any action to solve these problems. Through Presidential Decree No. 55/1990, the government planned to build the Suramadu Bridge, which would connect the islands of Java and Madura. The government also asserted that the development of the bridge should go hand in hand with the establishment of industrial estates on the island, especially in Bangkalan. Bangkalan was also included in the urban development policy of the 1990s in order to support Surabaya economically, and it became part of the urban industrial development of East Java, called Gerbangkertosusila (an abbreviation of the cities of Gresik (or Gresik), Bangkalan, Mojokerto, Surabaya, Sidoarjo, and Lamongan) (Rachbini, 1995: 209). Moreover, in order to solve its stagnant agriculture, that is to say, to achieve self-sufficiency in rice, the government felt that

agricultural innovations, such as building dams for irrigation, needed to be introduced to Madura. Most rice fields in Madura were only planted in rainy seasons due to the lack of an irrigation system. One of the potential areas to introduce an irrigation system was Banyuates sub-district in Sampang regency. The idea was based partly on the fact that the Nipah River, 21.77 km in length and primarily flowing through the sub-district, could be the main source of the dam. In addition, the rainfall in the district was relatively high for Sampang. The plan was to flood the areas surrounding eight villages in the sub-district. After the site was flooded and the dam was built, it was expected that the farmers in the area would change their crops to adjust to the soil and the source of water, so that eventually they would benefit from the dam. It was also expected that the dam would become a tourist attraction that would benefit many people in the surrounding areas as well.

Such efforts to transform Madura into a better-developed region were not without problems. This study has shown the multi-faceted realities of the New Order's development programmes to 'modernise' Madura and the reactions that arose in response to the programmes. Following the shift away from the Suharto administration to a series of more democratic ones and several policy changes, the bridge was finally inaugurated and opened for the public in 2009 after construction was re-started in 2003. However, by the end of 2010, the dam was still under construction following postponement due to the violence of 1993.

Twenty years of history (1990-2010) of the relationships between Islam and politics in Madura is simply impossible to capture within the limits of this study. Therefore, only certain aspects of Islam in Madura, which have significantly influenced the daily situation, are highlighted. Important political actors, such as the *kiai*, the *blater*, and the *klebun*; *pembangunan* programmes that were met with popular resistance; various elections; and events surrounding village politics on Madura are covered. This study examines the relationships between Islam and local politics in Madura and explains that they are understood as an aspect of centralisation during the New Order and decentralisation during the post-New Order. The transformation from one administration to another on Madura, however, should not be understood as an

automatic shift from an authoritarian rule to a democratic one. The processes have been marked by many undemocratic changes, continuities, repetitions, and developments in Madurese society.

Outlining aspects of Islam in Madura

Nowadays, despite their rather changed perceptions of modern education, Islamic associations, and men of religion, Madurese people continue to preserve their sacred values, as the main three elements of the *santri* culture, the *pesantren*-the NU-the *kiai* networks in Madura have had a great influence over society, in both religious and worldly domains. The people share the view that Islamic law (*shari'a*) is fundamental to daily life and thus must be integrated in all aspects of life. However, like Islam in other places in Indonesia, the characteristics of Islam in Madura are also emphasised primarily, but not exclusively, by aspects such as mysticism and local cultures. These traditional cultures are principally bonded by a strict obedience to *kiai*. Obviously, the *kiai* appear to have become vital figures that connect the three staples of the *santri* culture: the *pesantren*, the NU and the *kiai* themselves.

Perhaps the oldest and most distinguishable tie, which has existed for hundreds of years, is the relation between the *pesantren* and the *kiai*. Though *kiai* are able to extend their influence beyond the *pesantren*, without a *pesantren* a Madurese *kiai* is like a captain without a ship. The second important relationship is the one between the *pesantren* and the NU. *Kiai* of the NU remain convinced that *pesantren*, even in their most modern form, are still the most appropriate place to undertake religious learning and secular education where *santri* are educated to follow the four *madhhab* (Muslim school of law) and scriptural classical Islam. Establishing a *pesantren* will ensure a *kiai*'s personal reputation as a guardian of Islamic values. Last but not least, there is the tie between the NU and the *kiai*. The NU has provided the *kiai* with extensive networks to link them to the wider world. In turn, the NU enjoyed large mass following when their *kiai* were able to attract villagers to vote for their party, the NU, and later on the PPP, the PKB, and the PKNU. Despite their traditional features, the *pesantren*, the NU and the *kiai* that form the *santri* culture have never been an anti-modern force, nor have they opposed democratic principles.

In fact, the three elements have continuously identified Islam not just with personal faithfulness, but with creating social institutions that are vital to solving conflicts in Madurese society.

Political actors in an island of piety, tradition, and violence

There are two crucial actors in local politics in Madura: the *kiai* and the *blater*, both of which are presented in this study. In present day Indonesia, religious life has not been integrated into the politics of the state, and although a number of religious leaders occupy bureaucratic positions, most religious elites in Indonesia are not affiliated with the bureaucracy. However, they do continue to play important roles in Indonesia. In Madura, *kiai* are without doubt the main actors in state-society relations. They have become cultural, economic, and political brokers. By keeping their distance from the state, the *kiai* have been successful in maintaining their positions in society. They have been aware of the possible risk of being alienated and isolated not only from their followers, but also from their horizontal networks among religious circles. More importantly, they are concerned that their high position in society may gradually fade away if they do not keep their distance from the state. For some *kiai*, utilising their positions and personalities is a tool to gain and preserve positions and status. For others, focusing on religious matters is the decisive means by which they continuously adapt to changing situations, along with the rapidly changing administrations in Indonesia.

The *blater* have displayed various roles, from being power brokers to perpetrators of cultural violence. These strongmen should also be described as entrepreneurs of protection, individuals who offer protection to various groups, ranging from commoners to political parties. They can also be defined as local strongmen who benefit from local insecurity to gain employment, gain reputation, and spread their social and political power when they become involved in politics. *Remo* is their distinctive characteristic that counteracts the elements of piety promoted by the *kiai* and *santri*. In fact, the tradition is so distinctive that it seems that no other strongmen in Java are even comparable with *blater* as far as their counteraction against *santri* cultures goes, at least when we

look at the prevalence of *remo*. To be sure, Madura is not only a *santri* island.

The importance of the New Order's *pembangunan* in Madura

When it comes to the *pembangunan* programmes of the New Order, the authoritarian governments, such as the New Order administration, were very important as they vigorously intervened in all aspects of development. In New Order Indonesia, development was associated with rapid industrial transformation and efforts to narrow the large gap between the middle and working classes, the peasants, and other city dwellers. In reality, development policies significantly benefited small components of society: bureaucrats and state-backed entrepreneurs. On the other hand, they neglected larger parts of society. Moreover, state intervention in development policies generated varied results.

In the Nipah dam incident and the Suramadu Bridge affair, the state neglected people's rights and ignored *kiai*'s authority. The rejections of the Nipah dam and *industrialisasi* occurred in the last years of the Suharto administration. In order to accelerate economic growth, potential development sectors needed to be maximised. Areas near Java were seen as potential regions to be industrialised, as the main part of the economic growth came from the manufacturing industry and was financed by foreign investment. This view was generated in part by the fact that some parts of Java were quite saturated with industrial estates while areas near Java were relatively 'untouched'. The *industrialisasi* policy in Madura was also derived from this point of view. Since the governments at all levels neglected certain segments of society and attempted to apply the development policies in one, rigid way, it seems obvious with the benefit of hindsight that the government would face rejections. The landowners at the Nipah dam site, together with a number of *kiai*, led by *Kiai* Alawy, protested against the unjust process of land acquisition and the shooting incident that took four lives. The Bassra *ulama* rejected the introduction of industrialisation and the establishment of industrial estates in Madura. However, the rejections are not best identified as resistance to *pembangunan*. The rejections are best described as the dissatisfaction of segments

of society towards the undemocratic and authoritarian policies of *pembangunan*.

The rejection by certain segments of society, especially the *kiai*, maximised the use of cultural and Islamic symbols. In the Nipah dam incident, issues such as the flooding of mosques, sacred graveyards, and inherited lands were central. Nevertheless, the inappropriate land prices were actually the decisive factors that drove the people to protest against the land acquisitions. In the Suramadu Bridge affair, issues such as demoralisation and incompatibility with Islam became main arguments of Bassra *kiai* when voicing their concerns over the *industrialisasi*. One notion was the un-readiness of Madurese to accept *industrialisasi* since they lacked adequate education to fulfil positions in the manufacturing industry. Another important notion was the fear of the negative side effects of *industrialisasi*, which could bring immorality to Madura, such as the introduction of modern cultures that would destroy the local cultures, or worse, the emergence of brothels such as those in Batam.

Experiencing elections in Madura

Elections in Madura are an arena of contests, mainly between religious and cultural powers, in which the competing parties make extensive use of Islamic symbols in interactions with the people. Despite the fact that this may seem a manipulative practice, the use of Islamic symbols is actually considered necessary by the people, as the Madurese strongly identify with Islam. Different segments in society responded to these elections in different ways. Local politics in Madura has long been a field in which local leaders obtain power. The ongoing process of state formation, including policies such as democratisation and decentralisation, has allowed for the emergence of new autonomous local leaders. In Madura, the *kiai* and the *blater* persistently strive for influence and have their own interests and their own means by which to maintain power, influence and social status. During the Suharto administration, collaboration between the *blater* and the state apparatus appeared mainly in the socio-political realm. This minimised the political role of the *kiai*. Since the collapse of the Suharto administration, the *kiai* have been able to strengthen their visibility in the political

constellation, and have come to possess important positions in various public domains. In this political sense, it is not uncommon for *kiai* to build alliances with the *blater* in order to strengthen their power. Therefore, the term ‘contesting authorities’ in Madura can represent the contests between the *kiai* and the *blater*, or between these two groups and the state. In Madura both situations have continuously occurred.

Defining local politics in Madura under the New Order

Local politics in Madura in the New Order and the post-New Order is marked by recurrent processes in which Islam and local cultural elements coexist, flourish, interlace, and strive in complex, pragmatic, and mutually beneficial relationships. It is impossible to explain how and why Islam and local cultures, and groups of local leaders influence and characterise local politics in Madura in one single formula. All the contemporary actors of local politics in Madura—groups of local leaders—have been engaged in the formation and transformation of political culture on the island since the New Order. The actors are part of larger configurations of interdependent individuals within Madurese society and Indonesian society at large. The socio-political formations of local politics in Madura have been exercised by local leaders, who each play their part. These local leaders have employed and promoted Islamic symbols and cultural elements to reinforce their positions in society.

Having replaced the Old Order, the New Order is seen as an authoritarian era. As was the case in other places, the Suharto administration also maintained an authoritarian style in Madura. Nevertheless, despite its authoritarian style, the government did not always have an easy time maintaining its influence in Indonesian society. The era itself should not only be seen as an absolute static phenomenon, as many people believe, but rather as an era of autonomy in which many regions could create a relatively different political and cultural atmosphere from that in Jakarta. However, after 1966, it seems that almost no group in Madura was immune to the influence of the New Order administration. Groups of local leaders tended to avoid direct confrontations with the local authorities; instead, many chose to be subjugated and formed

patron-client relationships with regional or central authorities. For many people, the era was characterised by an authoritarian interventionist developmental state. The Suharto administration managed to maintain a balance between groups of local leaders on the one side, and the state on the other. Following the collapse of the Suharto administration, despite a few exceptions and changes, the circumstances have remained relatively the same. Groups of local leaders have survived the transformation processes and, in fact, they have successfully maintained their respected positions and have exercised domination over the legitimate use of religious authority for the *kiai*, physical force for the *blater*, and formal leadership for the *klebun*, within a given territory.

Describing village politics and local politics in the post-Suharto era

It has been more than a decade since Suharto's rule ended in 1998, and Indonesia has since experienced a dramatic shift in political constellations. In the time since this transfer of power, the Indonesian nation has sought to formulate and implement wide-ranging reforms that aim to democratise and improve governance systems, as well as remedy the wounds left by the administration among peripheral societies marginalised by the New Order administration. One way of doing so has been the decentralisation of the functions of the Indonesian government. Ironically, while the reformation process is still taking place, one 'pathological feature' of the previous administration, patronage, appears to have become a characteristic of the post-New Order era. Indeed, patronage has even become a more widespread feature of the political system along with the persistent general assumption that official positions will be used for purposes of personal or in-group benefits (Mackie, 2010: 82-83). This patronage pattern is not static because it has been affected by state-building processes and, by the same token, it has influenced these processes. At some point, patronage is inherited from the New Order, while its roots can be traced back to pre-colonial times. What we see here, then, is a 'changing continuity' that will help to explain the problems connected to decentralisation and the establishment of regional autonomy (Schulte Nordholt, 2004: 30-31).

In Madura, village politics has been an arena of alliances as well as competition between village leaders. Their leadership strategies in village politics are most clearly visible in their efforts to win the support from the villagers. Using his official post, a *klebun* may be able to mobilise villagers to obey village and regency regulations imposed upon the people and to mobilise the population for his own private purposes. Making use of his religious-spiritual influence, a *kiai* may be able to rally villagers in the name of God. A *kiai*'s position of authority is, in fact, firmly grounded in and associated with the village as opposed to higher tiers of society. Finally, utilising his feared and admired standing, a *blater* may be able to direct his clients who are dependent on his influence and power. This is even true for prominent *blater*, who may have close ties to the *aparats* (state security forces) and *pejabat* (state officials).

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 the ongoing state formation. Decentralisation, for example, allows for the emergence of a politically autonomous brand of local leaders. The way they survive and continue to exercise their influence in society is not surprising. There are two rather different reasons for that. Firstly, it shows that they are highly capable of adjusting to the continuously changing political atmosphere of the Indonesian state. Secondly, they continue to be needed by society to safeguard and preserve its values and norms. The first reason indicates that the creation of a strong civil society is still hampered by the presence of an ineffective state system,¹²⁵ while the second

125 According to Michael van Langenberg, the state system is made up of the executive government, the military, the police, the parliament, the bureaucracy and the courts and thus it can be perceived as a network of institutions, by means of which the rulers of a government attempt to control civil society and manipulate the means of production, distribution and exchange, in pursuit of declared national and community interests (Van Langenberg, 1994: 122).

reason suggests that the religious and cultural values and norms of the Madurese are their last strongholds in coping with modernity.

Village politics in Madura is characterised by its typically 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 support from the villagers, while patronage and personal relations become the prevalent pattern in relationships with the villagers. These characteristics are important parts of village life in Madura because they show the prevailing living conditions circumstances accepted based on general agreements between all segments of society. Therefore, even though in the contemporary period the Madurese no longer overly and blindly honour their local leaders, and sometimes are even critical of these leaders, the importance of these leaders in Madura is as great as ever.

Reflecting Islam and local politics in Madura

It can be concluded that Islam has firmly established its position within local politics in Madura. Islam has been used and promoted by its supporters against secular state policies. Moreover, what might have been the case in Madura, as happened quite often in other places in Indonesia during the New Order, is that the state disregarded opposition by Muslims who made use of religious symbols, at least in terms of the rejection of *industrialisasi* and the Nipah dam incident. That is not to say that the state disregarded religious leaders and Muslims in general. At the same time, local syncretist cultures and traditions have been well preserved by their vigorous supporters. In fact, it seems that there have been no state policies that imperil these cultures and traditions. Moreover, through the co-optation of many *blater* and *klebun* during the New Order, who became the most avid supporters of the *abangan*-like culture, the state might have indirectly stimulated local syncretist cultures and traditions. Via their determined supporters, these two cultures have continuously coexisted up to present day. Unlike contemporary Aceh or Banten, which have been perceived as regions with a very strong Islamic adherence and which seem to

be increasingly *shari'a* oriented, Madura tends to cling strongly to Islamic values and norms without denying the presence of local syncretist cultures, and in fact the supporters of each culture show that Islam and local traditions can live side by side.

