

KIYAI AND BEJINGAN: LOCAL POLITICAL ELITE AND THE HEGEMONIC CULTURE

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Abstract: this paper examines the issue of effective local leadership within *santri* in relation to the framework of building democratic governance at the local level in the community centre point. The author employs a qualitative research through case study. The main issue of this research is the political role of *kiyai* and *bejingan* in Bondowoso, East Java. This study indicate that the new trend, that is the socio-political power collaboration of the *kiyais* and the *bejingans*, does not have any positive implications for the development of democracy at the local level and for the critical awareness of society. In fact, with this trend, the hegemony and marginalization of the society's political consciousness are relatively increasing. One of the major reasons is, that there are no longer two or more forces to control over each other.

Introduction

This paper is a summary of some of the studies conducted by the author in the district of Bondowoso. The studies seek to examine the issue of effective local leadership within *santri* (Islamic boarding school students) community, in the framework of building democratic governance at the local level in the community center point. The central issue in this research is the political role of *kiyai* (Islamic scholars) and *bejingan* (in Maduranese; in Indonesian it means "thug"), especially in the political contestation of village elections (Pilkades) in Bondowoso, East Java. Departing from the framework of strengthening local democracy at the grassroots community level, this study has a direct link to the need to

strengthen the participation of local leadership in building an effective and prosperous society by means of analysis upon efforts to create a series of initiatives in optimizing and utilizing the local leadership of Muslim community as well as in strengthening social understanding of democracy. Since on one hand, the *kiyais* hold a very important position in the cultural structure of the Muslim community in Java, and on the other, the reality of the existence and the presence of *bejingan* is real and cannot be rejected, this study combines political and cultural approaches to set a theoretical framework.

***Kiyai* and *Bejingan*; Local rural elites**

The first aspect to explore pertains to the figure of *kiyai*. There have been many debates about the conceptual figure of *kiyai*. These are not just superficially recorded in simple debates, *talk shows*, seminars, or small discussion on campuses, but also obviously reflected in further counteracting one another in the exploration through research and publication, such in those research conducted by Clifford Geertz,¹ Hiroko Horikoshi,²

¹ Countless studies and books have been published presenting the figure of *kiyai* as researchcore. For example, the research conducted by Clifford Geertz, which was then published as a book with an Indonesian version entitled *Abangan, Santri dan Priyayi dalam Masyarakat Jawa*. In this book, Geertz sees figure of *kiyai* as a cultural leader who has the ability to communicate and act flexibly in facing the local tradition. This flexibility is the fruit of scholars outlook of the social reality as a platform of hpis missionary agenda. Among the aspects highlighted by Geertz is the "Islamisation" of the *selamatan* tradition. This tradition of *selamatan* bridged the local traditions and Islamic values. (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1983).

² *Kiyai* in the view of Horikoshi is regarded as an informal leader with a more important role than the formal leaders in the community. Horikoshi also criticizes *kiyais'* predicate as cultural brokers, as in Geertz', since according to Horikoshi, *kiyais* can also act as intermediating forces (*intermesary forces*), as well as agents capable of selecting and directing the cultural values empowering the community. This mediator

Zamakhsyari Dhofier,³ Imam Suprayago,⁴ Ali Maskhan Moses,⁵ Nur Syam,⁶ Martin Van Bruinessen,⁷ Abdul Munir Malkhan,⁸ and Moh. Syaeful Bahar.⁹ The phenomena do not merely occur

function can also be played to fortify vulnerable points in the connection the local system and the overall system in a broad scheme.

³ This research based book of Zamakshari Dhofir rejects the theory proposed by Geertz. According Dofir, Geertz's propositions such as that the religious life of *pesantren* is only about "grave and reward" and that life of *pesantren* is "old-fashioned" need to be corrected. Dhofir also denotes the role of *kiyais*. He mass base of the *kiyai* and *santri* community relies on *pesantren* the rural areas wherein the *kiyais* occupy a central position in the social livelihood. This position also makes leadership of *kiyais* upon *santris* and the community culturally rooted. For Dhofir, *kiyais* are in fact a group of elite culturally, socially, politically, and economically. They are a religious teachers and preachers who normally own huge properties of land. Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*, (New York: LP3ES, 1982).

⁴ Imam Soeprayogo in his dissertation, *Kiai dan Politik di Pedesaan (suatu kajian tentang Variasi dan bentuk Keterlibatan Politik Kiai)*, a Doctoral Dissertation at Airlangga University in 1997, sees that *kiyais'* role and responsibilities upon religion, the state and society all together often cause a conflict of interest which puts the *kiyais* in a difficult position. This difficult position occurs when the government and the society are in a position of opposing each other. If *kiyais* fail to place themselves as part of the society and as defenders of the public interest, it is very likely that they would be avoided by the community and the *santris*. This means that they will lose their source of authority and their legitimacy as *kiyais*

⁵ See Ali Maschan Moses, *Nasionalisme Kiai, Konstruksi Sosial Berbasis Agama*, (Jogjakarta, LKiS, 2007).

⁶ See Nur Syam, *Pembangkangan kaum Tarekat*, (Surabaya, LEPKISS, 2004)

⁷ See Martin Van Bruinessen. *NU Tradisi Relasi-Relasi Kuasa ; Pencarian Wacana Baru* . (New York: LKIS, 1994).

⁸ Ses Abdul Munir Malkhan, *Runtuhnya Mitos Politik santri* , (London: Rinneka SIPRESS, 1992)

⁹ The research conducted by Moh. Syaeful Bahar in Bondowoso and Situbondo examines the political conflict of *kiyais* and its implications on the social integration of the community. Kiyais' political conflict in a massive scale brings about tensions

within the contemporary present, but they have been there much earlier. This suggests that featuring *kijais* as subject figure in a research still makes an interesting exploration and is worth doing. The dynamics of existence, role and assessment of *kijais* continue to occur rapidly, and such situation is undetachable from the social, political, legal, and constitutional settings and frameworks, as well as the power communication patterns.

Some studies performed by the author in previous years, such as in a research conducted in 2007 concerning the political conflict of *kijais* and its implications on the social disintegration of society, and a research on the perception of *kijais'* sons on their fathers' choice to engage in political activities in 2010,¹⁰ clearly illustrates the *kijais'* various facets. During the New Order (Suharto's era) *kijais* tended to stay away from political activities,¹¹ as politics was regarded as

and conflicts in the wider community. The impact does not only befall the political and social sphere, but extends to the realm of religion. This study found some astonishing facts, such as divorces triggered by difference preference of *kijais* in political choices, the construction of new mosques because of the internal political tensions among the board due to different political affiliation, and closing of public roads.

¹⁰ This study reveals the fact that there are various perceptions of *kijais'* sons on *kijais'* political activities. At least, there are two extremes, the pros and cons. These two oppositions propose strong arguments. for further exploration see Moh. Syaeful Bahar, *Studi Fenomena Perbedaan Persepsi Putra Kiai (Gus/Lora) Terhadap Peran Sosial Politik Kiai dan Pesantren*, (Surabaya, Lemlit IAIN Sunan Ampel, 2 010).

¹¹ There are many reasons why scholars should keep a distance from politics, some assume that taking part in the political world during the New Order era useless. Politics will not effectively maintain the faith, as in fact it has been co-opted in a single door and power interest, namely that of Suharto's. Therefore, political choices are considered ineffective. Cultural pathways are considered much more promising in providing space for empowerment and strengthening of community and religion. In fact, in some cases wherein *pesantren* and *kijais* "desperated" to move closer to the "

taboo. However, with the collapse of the New Order and the opening of political space for public expressions for *pesantren* community (*kiyais* and *santris*), *kiyais'* involvement in politics becomes a commonplace.

The debate about political *kiyais*¹² and *kiyais'* politics¹³ still leaves a room of sharp differences, especially among those who support and reject the involvement of *kiyais* in politics. Those who support the *kiyais* involvement see some underlying reasons; such as that Islam is a perfect teaching, and therefore the separation between religious and the worldly affairs, as in the perception of secular ideology is a huge mistake and hence needs a serious alteration. In, this light, *kiyais* as an elite group of people who have proven their integrity are viewed as appropriate figures for and even obliged to take parts in politics. This outlook asserts that *kiyais'* involvement in politics will result in positive implications for the development and direction of the political constellation.

Kiyais are entrusted as the keeper of morality and divine values in the political process and products. This argument is not just based on religious texts that explicitly picture the figure of *kiyais* as extraordinary individuals, such as in the Prophet's hadith: *al ulama' warastatul Anbiya* (religious scholars are the

whirlpool of political rulers" by joining in Golkar, the risk of abandonment and isolation by society is unavoidable. See Endang Turmudzi, *Perselingkuhan Kiai dan kekuasaan*, (Jogjakarta; LKiS, 2004).

¹² The terms political *kiyais* normally addressed to *kiyais* who plunge into practical politics.

¹³ The terms politics of *kiyais* often attached to the pattern, ways, approaches and political behavior of *kiyais*.

heirs of the prophets) and the words of Allah in QS Fatir 28: *min innama yakhsallahu 'ibadihi al' ulama* (verily the fearful of God among His servants are the knowledgeable). The argument is also constructed based on modern logic through analysis and scrutiny of political scientists, such as presented by Alfi Khair, a PPP activist, in his writing *Kiyai in Politics is a Necessity*. Alfi quotes Azumardi Azra at the point that politics is not a subject to avoid but rather it should be dealt with. With politics and its result (power), religion will be better guarded.¹⁴ Even more, in this work Alfi wrote a relatively provocative proposition: “Prohibiting involvement in politics means reducing the comprehensive and universal features of Islamic teachings (*rahmatan li'alamin*).

Supporting argumentations for *kiyais* in politics are also based on a number of previous research findings. Among these findings are such as that of Horikhosi, which states that *kiyais'* leadership has strong roots in the community so that as informal leaders, they are far more influential than formal leaders such as *lurahs* and heads of village. Horikhosi judgment was taken as a basis in building arguments by proponents of political *kiyais*. A small discussion between the author and a party activist friend about the topic of *kiyai* in politics is quite interesting to disclose here. According to this friend, the involvement of some influential *kiyais* in East Java such as the late KH. Abdullah Faqih, KH. Mas Subadar, KH. Ali Maschan Moses, KH. Padu Mansour, the late KH. Sofyan and KH.R. Fuad Amin in practical politics is a form of rational

¹⁴ <http://binapersatuan.com/opini-2/kiai-berpolitik-sebuah-keharusan/>, retrieved on 7 April 2012.

choice. Their main capital is their well established prominent persona. This friend assertively argues that the advantages of *kiyais'* involvement in politics can be perceived at once, especially in times wherein multidimensional crisis become a common phenomenon in this country.

Some features of the abovementioned main capital are: first, their spiritual aspect. With their solid and stable spirituality, *kiyais* are expected to have a better political manner and objectives than those of other politicians. *Kiyai* politicians are expected to bring about positive impact on the political process and product. This aspect of spirituality will tell between *kiyai* politicians and other politicians. Their political target is not just power and temporary worldly interest, but much further beyond to the afterlife accountability. Chaotic national politics will be recovered if politicians perceive politics the way *kiyai* politicians perceive it, in that their conducts are not only justified in the world, to their constituents, but will also be validated in the Hereafter, before Allah the Almighty.

The second feature is their social aspect. That is, with the existing social capital, it will be much easier for the *kiyais* to convince the public about their political target. While pointing out some *kiyais'* victory in the elections in some areas, this fellow researcher continued to build up his arguments.¹⁵ To his

¹⁵ Some examples of cases pointed out by this friend are such as the easy victory obtained by H. Saifullah Ilah, Sidoarjo Regent supported by formal *kiyais* of PCNU as well as cultural *kiyais*, the National Awakening Party, wherein the majority of the board are *kiyais* and *santri*. Other examples of easy victory are such as those of K.H. R. Fuad Amin in Bangkalan, HR Nur Floreal in Sampang, KH. Kholilurrahman in Pamekasan, KH. Busyro Karim in Sumenep, H. Dada in Situbondo, H. Amin Said Husni in Bondowoso, H. Hasani in Pasuruan, H. Anwar Anas in Banyuwangi and H. Hasan Aminuddin in Probolinggo.

concern, the social capital of the *keiyais* is much more effective than the political capital owned by party cadres and political brokers. High level of public trust is the main capital for *keiyais* to enter politics.

The third capital is the accessibility of *keiyai* figures in the midst of society. The society no longer doubts *keiyai* figures, believing that *keiyais* will never trade religion for worldly interests. Therefore, people tend to be obedient to the political choice of the *keiyais*. From the abovementioned capitals, the fourth capital will be resulted, namely the economic capital benefits. With the involvement of *keiyais* in politics, political costs and expenses will be much economical. If the phenomenon of money politics become a commonplace and "should" be gone through by other politicians, by involving *keiyais* in the struggle for political power the money politics is no longer there. Society would not have a political transaction with the figures they highly respect.¹⁶

But not all parties agreed that *keiyais* should step down to conduct practical politics. Some of the reasons often proposed are such as that in politics one should stand at one extreme, that is the point of interest, wherein the interest might

¹⁶ The election cases in Situbondo and Bondowoso make concrete examples of this argument. H. Amin Said Husni's victory in Bondowoso and H. Dada's in Situbondo supported by KH. Sofyan Mifathul Arifin and his son in law KH. R. Khalil As'ad do not have much deal with "money politics." The success to help the candidate two *keiyais* run with the concept of "*ngalap berkah*", hoping blessing from both of them. Even more, not infrequently the team must spend from its own political expense to help candidates supported by *keiyais* win.

be very likely different from the one at the other extreme point. Yet on the other hand, many parties (the society) deserve continuous moral service from the *keiyais*. In this regard, politics will have an impact on restricting and separating *keiyais* into some narrow frames of interests. Even more, for political reasons, it is very possible that at certain points *keiyais* will be in opposition with the society.

In addition, the proposition that the involvement of *keiyais* in politics aims to improve the national politics is considered too cliché. The opponents of political *keiyais* argue that involvement of *keiyais* in politics will afflict the *keiyais* themselves with practical political pitfalls. Instead of coloring the politics, what actually happens is that *keiyais* are dragged into "dirty" streams of the politics. Not infrequently, *keiyais* have to deal with legal authority and are despised by the society.¹⁷ Thus, *keiyais'* choice to enter politics is a big mistake, non strategic step, and brings about split within the community.

Discussions about the involvement of *keiyais* in politics are getting warmer and sharper when, in political reality, especially in the local politics, not only *keiyais* and politicians that take parts in the play. There are several other interest groups with strong ambitions to grab power and to be involved in the

¹⁷ For instance, the sases of KH. Madani Farouq in Jember who was convicted by the court for corruption during his role as the head of the Parliament in Jember, H. Fathorrosyid, former head of the Parliament of East Java who was also convicted for corruption, and the late KH. Jusbakir, former Regent of Pasuruan who also stumbled on a legal case. Although, according to some observers, these three cases are not pure mistakes or crimes, but rather of political slander or political trap successfully set by his political opponent.

competition by joining the local political contestants. One feature which is often neglected by researchers is the role and involvement of *bejangan*.¹⁸

Like the *kiyais*, the *bejangan* group also has a strong influence in the community. Even more, the range of influence and charisma of this group also resembles that of the *kiyais* as it is not limited within strict geographical lines. The size of the *bejangan*'s effect and influence can be closely measured, as it is determined by some certain means such as the property owned, the ability to organize crimes such as theft and robbery, the strength of the network, cleverness in avoiding and escaping from police arrestment, experience in the 'black world', as well as magic and capability in martial arts.

Bejangan group's existence is not always in an antagonistic position to the public. Some parts of the society see that the presence of these groups in their community brings about meaningful advantages. One of these advantages which is in a straight line visible is the security of the village. In the communication and interaction patterns of the *bejangan* group there is an utterly strong principle of commitment and solidarity (*padeh ajegeh ben matorok*). That is to say, among the *bejangan* there has been an unwritten agreement that they are prohibited to commit crimes around the area where they live. Furthermore, this group also preserves mutual commitment and solidarity to not committing crimes, such as theft and robbery, in the area that has been 'controlled' by another *bejangan* group. They do *matorok* (mutually entrusting their respective areas) in order not

¹⁸ The term *bejangan* refers to a group of people committing crimes such as theft, gambling, and robbery.

to expand each 'region'. Therefore, the existence of *bejingan* can determine the security factor of a village.

The *bejingan*'s legitimacy as a security control of a village becomes more penetrating when the group has a social media to establish its hegemony. As the *keiyais* employ religious rituals as a social media to maintain their influence,¹⁹ *bejingan* set cockfighting or cow contest for gambling events as their social media. The greater a *bejingan* dare to bet the more apparent his wealth is, and consequently the stronger his legitimacy as a 'big *bejingan*' to be.

The social base of *bejingans* can be born from all social stratification criteria. Other words, the group is not always born from uneducated *bejingan* communities, for in some cases *bejingan* figures are individuals who has completed formal education. In the same manner, not all of these *bejingans* were born and raised in economically insufficient families; many of them grew up in all-sufficient families. Furthermore, not all of them have religious illiteracy background, as some *bejingan* figures are of renowned boarding school graduates.

In the context of Pilkades, the *bejingan* group is always actively involved in the space of competition and kontestance. This group does not just serve as a support group of one or more candidates; in certain occasions, they are even involved as financial source to support a candidate in the election of the head of the village. In a research on Pilkades Conflict

¹⁹ Abdur Rozaki, a lecture at UIN Jogjakarta, concludes that such behavior is a form of *keiyais*' hegemony over the society. See further in Abdur Rozaki, *Menabur Kharisma Menuai Kuasa: Kiprah Kiai dan Blater sebagai Rejim Kembar di Madura*, (Jogjakarta; Penerbit Pustaka Marwa, 2004).

conducted in 2009, some reasons and models of this group's engagement in the Pilkades. At the very least, this group does not want to lose influence if the elected village head is not of its affiliates. For this reason, the option to engage further in Pilkades becomes an unavoidable choice.²⁰ The problem is, on the other hand, the community of students and *kiyais* similarly presume that winning the position of the head of the village is a crucial point. For the *kiyais*, the government at village level as the ground model of the Indonesian Republic system should be maintained and won. The *kiyais* feel that if the head of the village is in favor of religion, the welfare of rural communities will be more easily developed. In contrast, if the head of the village is not familiar with the concept of religion, then the essential element in leadership, namely the trustworthiness, will be far from reality.²¹ The difference in viewpoints, interests, and material as well as non-material concerns of the *kiyais* and the *bejingans* become an intersected, which then turn into a consolidated configuration that opens conflict awareness and then allow manifested conflict to take place and hence bring about violence.

The phenomenon of fighting for influence between the *kiyais* and the *bejingan* in this context of Pilkades often leads to serious conflict. Theoretically, such conflict is naturally

²⁰ The involvement of *bejingans* as donors and bettors in Pilkades sharpens and prolongs the Pilkades conflict. The simple logic to explain the situation is that the bettors and donors do not want their candidates to lose, which means losing not only self-esteem and influence but also money put in as a bet. See the research reports by Moh. Syaeful Bahar, *Identifikasi Potensi dan Anatomi Konflik Pilkades di Desa Grujagan Kidul Kabupaten Bondowoso*, (Surabaya, Lemlit IAIN Sunan Ampel, 2009).

²¹ Interview with KH. Sholehuddin on 2 April 2012.

potential, since differences in orientations could make a major stimulant for a bigger clash.²² The situation is, Pilkades conflict occurs in a very narrow conflict space, hence the conflict potential is intensified and thereby occurs more frequently. The situation is greatly different from that of the national political conflict, where the conflict space is exceedingly wide and large.

The Elections; Contestation and Rural Elite Competition

As the setting of this study is the village governance, especially in the context of contestation and competition of Village Head Election (Pilkades), it is necessary to scrutinize the position of Pilkades from the political, legal and social viewpoints. Critical efforts are among the entrances to understand how the actual implementation of Pilkades in practice. Is it true that the Pilkades system has resulted in strong and healthy government, or contrarily, it only causes shocks as well as endless socio-political conflicts in rural communities?

The Pilkades itself is actually a product of the 'reformation' which assumes that the village governance in the New Order era was filled with exploitations and marginalization. As in Decree No. 5 In 1979, the government determined villages as the representatives of the central government's interests, and this is evident in the report system applied on the

²² According Syafri and Pujo Sumedi, there are three sources of social disharmony that can lead to conflict, namely; 1) access to economic resources and to the means of production, 2) social and cultural borderline expansion, 3) conflict of political, ideological and religious interest. Syafri Sairin dan Sumedi, *Telaah Pengelolaan Keresasian Literatur Luar Negeri dan Hasil Penelitian Indonesia*, (Jakarta:Ministry of KLH and UGM, 1998), 13.

village heads' governmental pattern. According to the Act, the village heads are not directly responsible to the people who elected them. Rather, they are accountable to the superior government, that is the Regent or the Mayor through the sub district head. This weak position of villages is considered less reflecting substantial democratization. Criticism and new construction for village government were popping up when the reformation movement succeeded in defeating the New Order government. One of the successful proposals is the enactment of Decree No. 22 of 1999 which was then amended by the emergence of Decree No. 32 of 2004.²³

In addition to the existence of BPD, another mandate of the new decree law is concerning the process of democratization of village, namely Pilkades. To abridge the implementation, the government issued Regulation no. 72 in 2005 to regulate the mechanisms and processes of the Pilkades. For instance, in article 43 in the decree it is stated that the mechanism of Pilkades should be implemented through some stages. These stages comprise: 1) BPD notifies the Village Head about the official expiration term in a written form 6 months prior to the due date. 2) BPD manages the Village Head electoral process in a maximum of 4 months prior to the official expiration term. The mechanism is then followed by the formation of a Village Head electoral board.

The crisis of Pilkades often arises in the process of formation of this electoral board. Some elements of society

²³ Among the crucial change from law No. 22 in 1999 to law UU No. 32 in 2004 is the function of the village council (BPD) in Law 22 in 1999 to Village Consultative Body (BPD) in Law 32 in 2004. These changes have the consequence of a reduction in the function of supervision and control of BPD.

mandated to engage in this Pilkades electoral board often biasly work for their own interests. Tensions of interests and supports for different candidates often continue to accompany along the Pilkades process. One of the studies conducted by the author in Bondowoso district in 2009 clearly outlines the potential and the anatomy of Pilkades conflict. This research, conducted in Grujukan Kidul village, led to conclude: *first*, the villagers, who are accustomed to prioritizing harmony in their daily lives, are not fully prepared to engage in an open competition such as in a liberal democracy.²⁴ The competition space for Pilkades is very narrow, it is literally contrary to those of the General Election for the legislatives, President, Governor, and Regents, wherein the supporters and the campaign winning team for each candidate or party in the competition do not encounter each other face to face to suppress the intensity of the conflict. This situation is in contrasts with the constellation and competition that take place in Pilkades. Every action taken by any team will always be monitored by the opposing teams. The restriction of the competition space ultimately stimulates the attitudes of attacking and counteracting each other.

The second note is the discovery of enduring latent factors, such as political culture with the dimension of zero sum game, weak mentality in supporting fairness, and weak village structure in maintaining independence. The findings indicate that the village structures are often trapped in the misconduct

²⁴ Exploration on how the behavior of rural societies in building harmony has been conducted by Darmawan Salman, in his book *Sosiologi Desa, Revolusi Senyap dan Tarian Kompleksitas*, (Jakarta, Nalar, 2013).

of supporting a candidate. This is one of the dominant conflict stimulants in Pilkades. To put in other terms, the village structure and the Pilkades organizers are considered to be biased by way of cheating with one of the candidates and hence prompt jealousy on the side of other candidates.

The third note, there needs to be a correction upon the implementation of Pilkades mainly related to the application of procedures for its implementation which tends to be liberal. The spirit of liberal democracy imposed in Pilkades seems to clash the local wisdom. Harmony, tolerance, openness, egalitarianism, and mutual trust and care, which have been filling the atmosphere of the village, must collide with the logic of liberal democracy emphasizing competition and procedure.

In addition to the above notes, there are some quite interesting research findings to be presented in this paper, that is, the conflict potential which had been previously existed before the Pilkades system was implemented. These potentials comprise *first*, poor understanding of the meaning of democracy, contestation and competition. This unpreparedness on the part of the village community is incarnated in the form of emotional and blind support. *Secondly*, the village elite conflicts which occurred long before the Pilkades was implemented. This conflict is actually apart and has no direct link with Pilkades. However, the Pilkades arena which provides rooms of supports in the community becomes a new conflict arena and sharpens the village elite conflict which had been previously there. This village elite conflict becomes a stimulant for Pilkades conflict, which includes conflicts among religious leaders, landowners, politicians of the same election areas in the Parliament of Bondowoso, and *bejingans*. *Third*, the involvement

of fortune seekers as part takers in the Pilkades competition. The partakers who speculate in Pilkades do not only come from Bondowoso surroundings, but also from various districts in East Java such as Malang and Lumajang. The amount of goods or money put on is extremely diverse, ranging from only hundreds of thousands to hundreds of millions Rupiah. The greater the value of the stake invested, the greater the role of the partakers in Pilkades conflict. To these fortune seekers, the main point of their involvement is to secure their betting money or goods. For the losing parties, the Pilkades conflict will be one of the reasons to crash their opponents, while for the winners, all power and means will be employed to support the victory of one candidate in the hope of winning the bet.

***Kiyai* and *Bejingan*; Vote Getter and Endorsers**

Almost certainly all Pilkades contestants always make use of the *kiyais*' or *bejingans*' services as vote getters and endorsers. Of course the campaign models and styles employed these two entities are different. The *kiyais* choose to employ religious language and symbols in persuading public perception to support and vote for a candidate, while the *bejingans* prefer intimidation and security issues as their approaches. Borrowing Gramsci's term, the two entities seek to influence the consciousness of the voters to follow their will. The practice of domination of *kiyais* and *bejingan* over the public consciousness is apparently always successful. The soundest reason for this is the low level of education as well as the economic independence of the community.²⁵

²⁵ K. J. Holsti, *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory* (1985)

Various practice of religious rituals, such as *yasinan*, *tablilan*, *istighasab* and *tibaan*, are among the approaches the *kiyais* choose to consolidate support for the candidate, Whereas the *bejingan* choose to move through crime and terror networks established under their control. In an interview with one of the *bejingans*' authority, the author noted some common practice of terror they frequently carried out are such as; stealing cattle, stoning the houses of the residents they suspect of not supporting the *bejingans*' candidate, or damaging the agricultural crops or the society. Those crimes and terrors serve as messages which were intentionally sent by the *bejingans* to villagers. The messages at least mean: *first* that the safety and comfort of a village depends greatly on the *bejingans*. Are they going to commit the crime in the village or outside the village? *Secondly*, that without the 'protection' of the *bejingans*, safety and tranquility of the village is impossible to be realized. *Third*, that the village leader should coordinate or make agreements with the *bejingan* group in order that they do not commit crimes within the village

Because the power of the *kiyais* and the *bejingans*' hegemony, it is almost certain that all candidates competing for Village Head or their team of succession will use the services of *kiyais* or *bejingans* in getting voters. The candidates or their campaign teams' attitude of involving the services of *kiyais* and *bejingan* can be theoretically explained. Among the noticeably sound explanations is the theory of political marketing. Some of the main concepts in the study of political marketing, such as branding image, political segmentation, political positioning, and orientation of the customer can be employed to explain the

involvement of the *kiyais* and *bejingans* in the context of Pilkades.²⁶

A candidate supported by the *kiyais* would want a positive image of himself, such as that he is a candidate with *santri* character, honorable manner, honest, trustworthy and pious, in that he is fitting to the mandate as a leader. On the other hand, a candidate who seeks support from the *bejingans* has the goal of forming an image of a strong leader who is ready to provide security and comfort for the villagers. The image branding option is corresponding with the results of the candidates' study concerning the segmentation of the voters. Low level of economy and education are the reality of the voters which must be seized. To their judgment, the voters are of relatively weak society and hence can be easily mobilized, as they do not have the ability to criticize every existing social phenomenon.

According to Gramsci, the hegemony will increasingly flourish when the way of life, the way of thinking, and the viewpoints of the society tend to follow those of the elite. In fact, at certain level the society members are competing to imitate the way of thinking as well as the behavior of elite group dominating them. With hegemony, the compliance of the lower level community will be easily obtained by the elite (*kiyais* and *bejingan*). This compliance is evenly corresponding to the lack of critical thinking within the society.²⁷ Interestingly, the

²⁶Regarding Political Marketing, Firmanzah offers a comprehensive presentation in his book *Marketing Politik, Antara Pemahaman dan Realitas*, (Jakarta, Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2012).

²⁷ A. Pozzolini, *Pijar-Pijar Pemikiran Gramsci*, (Yogyakarta, Resist Book, 2006).

kiyais and the *bejingans* also include a variety of attributes and instruments to strengthen their own image to convince that they are reliable village elites and thus must be obeyed. Resembling a theater stage, as illustrated in Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory, the *kiyais* and *bejingans* have neatly prepared their front stage. It ranges from their choice of words, manners of speech, choice of clothing, to carefully selecting individuals to be involved in their stage.

As the village's elite groups who were competing to gain sympathy from the voters, the *kiyais* and *bejingans* always maintain impressive appearance showing their being authoritative as well as powerful. In carrying out communications, they always include expressive and dramatic attitudes or actions. This style is adopted as an attempt to convey their personal message toward others. Authoritative, pious and charismatic figuration is expected to be attached upon the image of the *kiyais*, therefore, some features such as like a turban, prayer beads, and *sarong* are often put on by the *kiyais*. On the other hand, the *bejingans*, hoping to succeed in forming an impression of being strong, brave, and dignified, choose to dress up in black and to speak in heavy and powerful voice.

Collaboration: A New Tendency

Another interesting finding in this study on *kiyais* and *bejingans* in the context of Pilkades is the tendency of change in relationship between *kiyais* and *bejingans*. The common features are such as that they have been countering each other face to face in the conflict space, fighting for influence and hence split into two clear demarcation lines wherein the *kiyais* represent the

‘white’ group and the *bejingans* represent the ‘black’ group. These two entities, by all means and approaches, have successfully proved themselves to be the village’s elites who are always referred to by villagers in determining their political choice. In some Pilkades cases, the fractures the society’s social integration is obvious. A large number of the society follows the *bejingans* while another large number of them follow the *keiyais*.

These conflicts of interest between the *keiyais* and the *bejingans* in the Pilkades political context sometimes do not end at the end of the Pilkades event. Not infrequently, the clash continues to take place outside the Pilkades episode. They do not only oppose each other in terms of strategies to win public sympathy, but also deploy various resources they own to outperform each other. The two entities also carry out communications with political forces of and socio-cultural resources. For instance, the *keiyais* have a closer political communication with parties initiated by *santri* background partakers such as PKB, PPP, PKS and PAN, while the *bejingans* have a closer political communication with PDI-P and Gerindra.

An interesting feature to discuss at this point is the phenomenon of a shift in the relationship between the *keiyais* and the *bejingans*. Previously their classic relationship tent to be *vis a vis*, but then some degrees of political events in the village and district level in Bondowoso has changed the relationship scheme. The powerful magnetic fields of politics, especially at the level of Pilkada and Pilkades, drag a number of the local elite forces down to the political arena. Accordingly, it then becomes more difficult to map the political forces in the two

firm demarcation lines such as black and white, good and bad, *kiyai* and *bejingan*. For the reasons of winning and losing, not infrequently the *kiyais*, who were connoted as of the 'white' group should open communication with the *bejingans*, who were connoted as of the 'black' group. That is to say, for the benefit of power politics, *kiyais* or *bejingans* should no longer restrict their stand position or the entities they have to deal with, as their position becomes more flexible depending on the consideration of their political interests.

There are some reasons that can be inferred from the above phenomena, among which are that the *kiyais* and the *bejingans* begins to realize and understand their positions in the local political scene and that positioning themselves in conflict will not benefit their position in the society. On the contrary, by promoting collaboration both entities realize that it is easier to communicate with any community groups. Another reason is that the local conflicts, both of Pilkades and Pilkada have opened new and more conflict space. These conflicts often occur in an institution, such as among *kiyais*, politicians, and *bejingans*. These internal conflicts force them to strengthen their positions and bargaining power by collaborating with other socio-political forces.

The major question is whether the new phenomena show a positive trend for the development of democracy and society empowerment. The findings of this study indicate that the new trend, that is the socio-political power collaboration of the *kiyais* and the *bejingans*, does not have any positive implications for the development of democracy at the local level and for the critical awareness of society. In fact, with this trend, the hegemony and marginalization of the society's

political consciousness are relatively increasing. One of the major reasons is, that there are no longer two or more forces to control over each other.

A Proposal: Kiyais as Organic Intellectuals

Learning from Gramsci's proposal for the behavior of the hegemonic ruler, then opposing the hegemony culture (counter hegemony) should be put in experiment as an alternative solution to develop a more powerful and healthier local village democracy. According to Gramsci, resistance to the hegemonic culture must be started from the world of education, both formal and non-formal. More educated people should be directly involved to contribute to the education of rural communities. Educated or intellectual communities, should have the courage to put themselves in the position of organic intellectual, namely well-educated group who participate in introducing critical ideas in the community and actively supervise these critical ideas to increase their implementation.

The participation of this group of organic intellectuals in shaping public critical awareness is believed to have a direct impact on the quality of the local democracy at village level. Rural communities, through a series of stages in the process of counter hegemony, will come to realize their rights and obligations. They will understand the position and site of the responsibilities and privileges they have. This community empowerment through organic intellectual agents can be carried out through several stages.

To the author's view, *kiyais* as a well-educated group in the society have a tremendous opportunity to take part in this group of organic intellectuals. They have all the prerequisites to

speed up the process of community empowerment, especially on the aspects of community trust and compliance. *Kiyais* should return to their role and main function, that is, as community educators. They are obliged not only to enlighten with normative values but also to provide ongoing supervisions on all aspects of the community, like the role of the Prophet in his day. Positioning *kiyais* as organic intellectuals is actually not difficult, because in their record of accomplishment within the frame of the nation's history, *kiyais* has managed to participate as one force in this organic intellectuals group. At the time of the struggle for independence, the spirit and passion of nationalism and anti-imperialism were among the teachings successfully implemented by the *kiyais* in the community. Even more, when the nation is stuck in a pattern of authoritarian ruler, the *kiyais* showed their success again in implementing critical spirit of opposition in the midst of the society so as to give strength control on the ruler.

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