



*Islam, State and Society in Indonesia: Local Politics in Madura*

YANWAR PRIBADI

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Taking into account the historical concept that always presents continuity and change, *Islam, State and Society in Indonesia: Local Politics in Madura* examines the factors that have shaped and characterized the development of Islam and contemporary politics in Madura, and recognizes and describes the forms and aspects of the relationship—between Islam and politics; between state and society; between conflict and accommodation; between piety, tradition, and violence in the area; and the form and character of the process of democratization and decentralization in local politics. With research spanning the period of 1990 until 2010, the author Yanwar Pribadi has produced a study that fills the vacuum of local political history and Islam in Indonesia.

This topic is complex, and spans discussions of the position of *juragan* (rich people), political affiliation, *kiai/ulemas* (clerics), diasporic communities, *syahbandar* (harbor masters), state intervention, and the existence of the Shiite sects in a Madurese community dominated by Sunnis. There are at least three important elements of the *santri* (pious Muslim) culture inherent in the Madurese community: Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) representing elements of traditional Islamic education; Nahdlatul Ulama (or NU) representing Islamic organizations; and *kiai* representing Islamic figures. All these three intertwine and form complex relationships between Islam and politics as practiced in Madurese society.

This problem then leads to another important question: does Islam in Madura have different characteristics and forms than Islam from other regions in Indonesia? To a certain degree, the difference exists.

In this regard, *kiai* is the main actor in Madura state–society relations. Together with other groups of local leaders, such as *blater* (local strongmen) and *klebun* (village heads), they color social, political, economic, and cultural life, contributing to the dynamics of society. In this book, he explains that the aspects of Islam in the culture of Madurese society are very strong, so politics at the local level cannot be separated from the aspects of Islam. At the very least, there are three main actors at play: the *kiai* (clerics); *blater* (the jagoan); and *klebun* (village head)—all related and

influencing the other.

Life in Madura villages are not free from conflict, whether between village officials and clerics, or among individuals throughout the region. The villagers themselves are divided into several loose groups, and have different orientations and interests.

Officials take advantage of their abilities and resources, but government officials and *kiai* seem to challenge each other, openly or not, in an effort to secure their own interests. Local governments, via village officials, have tried to reduce the political influence of the *kiai*, especially during general elections. Meanwhile, through a network of Islamic boarding schools and NU, the government has succeeded in convincing grassroots communities of the importance of development programs. Yanwar Pribadi notes that at the village level, the support of clerics is important when it comes to involving villagers in the implementation of government programs. This claim is supported by Elly Touwen-Bouwsma's study (1992).

Yanwar Pribadi also highlights the three main elements of the Madurese *santri* culture: *pesantren* representing Islamic educational institutions; NU representing the majority of Islam; and the *kiai* (as religious leaders) who symbolize the leader of Islam. All three have become traits, and are central elements of Islam and politics in Madura. The *kiai* are greatly needed by the government to ensure that development and politics run smoothly at the grassroots level. In the nineteenth century, the *tarekat kiai*, *pesantren kiai*, and other religious figures—such as the *guru ngaji* (Koran teacher), *imam* (prayer leader), *juru kunci* (guardian of the cemetery), *merbot* (gatekeeper of the mosque), *modin* (muezzin), and *naib* (sub-district head)—could increase their role and position in the village. This is still true for those involved in regulating religious life in the villages, including maintaining Islamic boarding schools. They are all needed especially during ritual celebrations, which are still held and maintained to this day.

In clear and great detail, Yanwar Pribadi describes the influence of Islam on Madura. First, Islam forms the Madurese community as “communal piety.” Second, Islam is integrated into all the habits and traditions of the fertile Madurese people (a traditional island). Third, Islam must deal with the culture of the Madurese community, which is also dubbed the “island of violence.” The third description is a stereotype that is often inherent in the identity of the Madurese community. Of course, being stereotypes, they are not always accurate, but they are not always wrong, either.

In my opinion, Yanwar Pribadi was able to explain effectively the historical context of the development of Islam in Madurese society, and how it formed a culture of resistance to the rulers, especially the New Order. This resistance can be seen in how the Madurese community rejected several development projects promoted by the New Order government, such as the Nipah Reservoir and Suramadu Bridge. In the case of the Nipah Reservoir, the authorities opened fire on residents and claimed casualties.

According to the author, both the Nipah Reservoir and the Suramadu Bridge developments

were considered by the *ulamas* and Madurese figures to have a negative influence on the Madurese people who held firm to Islamic values. They believed that industrialization and entertainment areas threatened places sanctified by society.

Yanwar Pribadi goes on to discuss how the position of the Madura people could be observed from the results of Huub de Jonge's research, which was later recorded as "Madura in the Four Eras." In addition, the political affiliation that occurred in the two eras he studied showed complex differences. In the First Era, the political affiliation of the people in the New Order was dominated by Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (Party of United Development or PPP) with little Golongan Karya (Golkar Party or Party of Functional Groups). The Second Era is the Reformation period, during which the influence of the Islamic party began to fade. In the Third Era, the author turns to the Shia issue, stating explicating that he did not include this element in his research, considering that this issue had only recently occurred in 2012, two years after his research was conducted. The assumption is that the basis of the conflict between the Shia and NU circles was theological differences. However, it cannot be denied that socio-economic jealousy also contributed to the problem.

The Fourth Era concerns the Madurese diaspora in the country—in this period, Yanwar Pribadi reveals that their influence was not very visible in terms of politics, but was influential in terms of culture; Madurese diaspora in other places tended to "lose" their identity.

In terms of state intervention on the Madurese community, the author explains that the state did not interfere too much in the violence that became entrenched in Madura. He also details the situation and conditions of Madurese society in the context of the previous period, particularly the eighteenth century, Indonesia's colonial era. He further pointed out that the Madurese community has long been loyal to the VOC company (the Netherlands colonial company), even becoming a "political leader" of the pro-VOC company parties in the face of rebellions. This continued until the twentieth century, when Madura was one of the important areas in Java.

The author asserts that Madura has never run out of resources, although this claim runs contrary to the results of the late Prof. Dr. Kuntowijoyo's research on Madura's social changes. The ecological perspective adopted by Kuntowijoyo affirmed that environmental and ecological conditions greatly influenced the formation of the culture of the Madurese community (Kuntowijoyo 2002).

The author shows how regional experience in dealing with Islam and politics can illuminate the socio-political trajectory of other developing Muslim countries presently experiencing a comparable and rhythmic transformation of democracy. He explains that he chose to conduct his research on Madura because it had one of the most complex relationships between Islam and politics during the last years of the New Order and the first years the post-New Order in Indonesia, and because it is a strong Muslim region with a very strong history of religious and cultural traditions.

The volume consists of eight chapters. The first contains an introduction explaining the influence of Islam in the local level of society in Madura, as well as from a national perspective to the Southeast Asian region. In Chapter Two, Islamic and *santri* cultures are explained in detail and link the *kiai* as important figures in the Madurese community. Chapter Three next discusses the position of the clerics as leaders in Madura: *kiai* is the ultimate leader who represents the local people's powers. Regarding the strong influence of religion on Madurese society, Madura was nicknamed "Serambi Medina" (Madina Porch), which juxtaposed with Aceh's "Veranda of Mecca."

Chapter Four, Yanwar Pribadi discusses local strongmen, as well as a tradition of violence that is deeply rooted in the culture of the Madurese community. The subsequent chapter then explores the development of Islam that influenced the resistance of the Madurese community toward development. Chapter Six goes on to examine electoral politics (elections) that reflect the political affiliation of the actors, especially the scholars. The affiliation is influential from the provincial level (*pilgub*), to the district (*pilbup*) and the village (*pilkades*).

Chapter Seven goes in depth about how village politics is a battleground for influence, given that the village is a "source" of basic-level power, and has complex relationships in building reputation, network, and influence. Chapter Eight concludes the volume, covering several aspects, namely: the transformation of Madurese society; aspects of Islam; political actors; Soeharto's New Order development politics; electoral politics; village politics; and the socio-political trajectory of the Madurese community.

Based on a wide range of field research incorporating anthropological and historical approaches, *Islam, State and Society in Indonesia* makes an important contribution to the analysis of Islam and politics in Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and the future socio-political trajectory of other developing Muslim countries experiencing similar and comparable democratic transformations. It is useful for academics, researchers, and students in the fields of religion and politics in Asia, especially politics, anthropology, and the history of Southeast Asia.

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### ***Monastery, Monument, Museum: Sites and Artifacts of Thai Cultural Memory***

MAURIZIO PELEGGI

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“How plausible [. . .] is it to assume the existence of a shared Thai cultural memory?” (p. 4). This is the promising question that sets Thailand historian Maurizio Peleggi’s latest work, *Monastery, Monument, Museum*, into motion.

The monograph carries on with the author’s previous work on material and visual culture in the kingdom with a narrative that aims to bring memory studies into a dialogue with a vast array of Thai sources. Peleggi’s ambitious goal is to “conceptualize cultural memory not as a storeroom or archive of tangible and intangible materials, but, rather, as a dual process of recollection and reinscription,” whereby “(a)ny memorial act—individual as well as collective, concrete as well as symbolic—modifies the preexisting mnemonic landscape either by adding to it or by intentionally altering it” (p. 5). The author has also made the ambitious choice to consider sites and artifacts ranging from rock art to street art installations, and over a period spanning the pre-modern and contemporary.

Monumental in scope, *Monastery, Monument, Museum* makes for a surprisingly fast read. The Introduction makes up 9 pages, and there are eight chapters of approximately 20 pages each, which organize the book into three distinct parts.

The first part of the book, “Sacred Geographies,” explores Thai cultural memory by focusing on devotional art in the pre-modern and the early modern era. Chapter 1 takes the reader to sites across the kingdom that have been inscribed by religious myth—whether in the form of Buddha’s footprints or relics. Peleggi shows that myth becomes a form of memory that is embodied in the landscape. This is illustrated in the way that Thai Buddhists engage with sacred sites in an attempt to harvest the kind of magical potency that inhabits them (*saksit*).

The next chapter examines Buddha images that are regarded as embodiments of potency, and attributed magical powers and personalities. The author explores the circumstances under which apparently controversial processes—like the looting, displacement, replacement, borrowing, copying, and breaking of Buddha images—do or do not result in a loss of such extraordinary qualities.