

‘Pandhalungan’ People and The Changing Pattern of Religious Authority in Digisphere: A Pilot Project

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ABSTRACT

The extension of public sphere into digital public sphere (digisphere) gives birth to new problematic issues: the problem of relationship (relationship one has with the self –the technology of the self or self-construction –and social relationships between people, and relations between human and their tools), the problem of control, and the most critical, the problem of religious authority.

In general, late modernity has witnessed a general shift of authority from “without” to “within,” from external institutions to personal institution (James Proctor, 2006), even “beyond personal institution.” Accordingly, in the issue of religious authority in digisphere, I would like to argue that Internet have reshaped how people perceive religious authority, which is no more “top-down” (theologian to non-theologian), but bottom-up or cooperative. In the other words, there is the dislocation (experienced not only in the religious sites) and deterritorialization (religious authority not only belong to theologian) of religious authority in the digisphere. These dislocation and deterritorialization in the digisphere give significant impacts on Indonesian inter-religious life, particularly which related to the issue of intolerance among different religious groups, in a way that religion will no more monopolized by one single authority.

In this research, I will see this issue from the perspective of Pandhalungan people. Pandhalungan region refers to a region in the northern coastal areas in the eastern province of East Java with Madurese-background majority. The so-called Pandhalungan people is, culturally, a hybrid society consists of two mixed dominant cultures Java and Madura. Social ethics of Pandhalungan people rooted in the values of two dominant cultures, Java and Madura, among them are: politeness, respect (being respectful to elders and people who has high social class is very important for Pandhalungan people, more over to their teachers and *Kyai*), and high work ethic. Based on those considerations, this research will question to what extent the changing pattern of religious authority in digisphere affects Pandhalungan people’s perception of religious authority (together with their local wisdoms) in responding to the issue of intolerance among religious groups. As a pilot project, this paper will shed the lights on three particular issues: the discourse of religious authority, the phenomenon of *Kyais* (religious leaders) as the representatives of religious authority among society, and the cultural and socio-religious background of the Pandhalungan people.

Keywords: religious authority, digisphere, Pandhalungan, intolerance.

A. Religious Authority in a Global Context

The term religious authority is a complicated term to be discussed. In an academic realm, many approaches may be used to understand the term. In this paper, I will try to put the term in a global academic context by analyzing some theories on religious authority provided by Khaled Abou El Fadl which represents the kind of Islamic formal authority, by Asma Barla and Amina Wadud which represents the gender kind of religious authority and by Max Weber which represents cultural kind of religious authority.

To have a comprehensive understanding of what the term “religious authority” means, first of all, we need to understand the term “authority” separately. Coming from sociological perspective, Max Weber, identifies three ideal types of authority: charismatic, traditional, and rational-legal authority. *Charismatic* authority means belief in the supernatural or intrinsic gifts of the individual. People respond to this kind of authority because they believe that the individual has a ‘special calling.’¹ *Traditional* authority understood as belief in time and custom. People respond to this kind of authority because they value of the past and they believe that time proven methods are the best.² *Rational-legal* authority is belief in procedure. People respond to this kind of authority because they believe that the requirements or laws have been enacted in the proper manner. People see leaders as having the right to act when they obtain positions in the procedurally correct way.³ For the purpose of this paper, I will focus only on charismatic authority.

Weber refers the term “charisma” to either of two types: natural and artificial. The former considered as a gift that inheres in an object or person simply by virtue of natural endowment and cannot be acquired by any means. While the latter means a gift produced artificially in an object or person through some extraordinary means.⁴ At this point, it is interesting to see how Weber explains the different characteristics

¹ Examples of this type of authority include Susan B. Anthony, Adolf Hitler, Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, Golda Meir, and Jesus—notice that it is people’s belief in the charisma that matters; thus, we can have Hitler and Jesus on the same list.

² Good examples of this type of authority are the parents and grandparents, the Pope, and monarchies.

³ A good example of this type is the professor—it does not matter who the professor is, as long as he or she fulfills the requirements of the job. Further explanation on this, please see: Kenneth Allan, *Explorations in Classical Sociological Theory: Seeing the Social World* (London: Sage Publications, Inc., 2013), 199-200.

⁴ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 2.

of the prophet and the priest with regard to the charisma they both have. He mentioned that we shall understand “prophet” to mean a purely individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment. At this point, there will be no significant distinction between a “renewer of religion” who preaches an older revelation, actual or supposititious, and “founder of religion” who claims to bring completely new deliverances. Here, the personal call is the decisive element distinguishing the prophet from the priest. The latter lays claim to authority by virtue of his service in a sacred tradition, while the prophet’s claim is based on personal relation and charisma. Fortunately, almost no prophets have emerged from the priestly class.⁵

To make clear of what actually Weber means by charismatic authority, he outlines five principal characteristics of charismatic authority as below:

1. People’s recognition of those who claim for authority is the most important part in measuring the validity of charisma. Psychologically this ‘recognition’ is a matter of complete personal devotion to the possessor of the quality, arising out of enthusiasm, or of despair and hope.
2. Suffering a loss of charisma will lead him to think his god or his magical or heroic powers have abandoned him.
3. The corporate group which is subject to charismatic authority is based on an emotional form of communal relationship
4. Pure charisma will not so much care about economic consideration.
5. In traditionally stereotyped periods, charisma is the greatest revolutionary force.⁶

By its very nature, Weber reminds us that the existence of charismatic authority is specifically unstable. The holder may forego his charisma; he may feel ‘forsaken by his God,’ as Jesus did on the cross; he may prove to his followers that ‘virtue is gone out of him.’ However, only because pure charisma does not know any ‘legitimacy’ other than that flowing from personal strength, that is, one which is constantly being proved.⁷

⁵ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 46.

⁶ Talcott Parsons, *Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Illinois: The Free Press, 1947), 359-363.

⁷ H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

There are at least two important key terms I would like to underline from Weber's explanation on the issue of charisma in general and charismatic authority in particular, which are: believing and recognition. These two attitude toward authority, be it general authority or charismatic, for me are acting as the core determinant of authority to be authoritative. In other words, however great the authority and the charisma that individual has in him or herself,⁸ he/ she will not considered as charismatic and authoritative as long as other people do not believe in and recognize that charisma and that authority.

Unfortunately, I found Weber paid less attention to these two key terms. At this point, we do need to compare Weber's explanation on authority and charismatic authority with other kinds of authority from different perspectives. For the purpose of this paper, in the following discussion, I would like to focus on exploring some theories on religious authority from two different perspectives: Islamic studies and gender studies perspectives.

With regard to the notion of authority from Islamic studies perspectives, El Fadl begins his exploration of the term by stating one of fundamental teachings of Islam that Islam rejects elitism and emphasizes that truth is equally accessible to all Muslims regardless of race, class, or gender.⁹ As it is justified by the Quranic verse saying that there is no superiority of one sex over another or one nation over another, the only criterion for superiority is righteousness.¹⁰ In Islamic tradition, I do agree with El Fadl when he says that Sunni Islam does lack a formal institutional and hierarchical structure of authority. There is no authoritative center other than God and the Prophet, but God and the Prophet are represented by texts. In effect, it is the text that stands as the authoritative center in Islam.¹¹ This then gives birth to some problematic issues related to the authority of the text and the authority of the interpreter of the text.¹²

⁸ Since authority is not only belong to one particular gender.

⁹ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* (England: Oneworld Publication, 2001)

¹⁰ Quran (49:13)

¹¹ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name...*, 11.

¹² There are a lot of scholarly works discussed this issue, among them are: Aisha Y. Musa, *Hadith as Scripture: Discussions on the Authority of Prophetic Traditions in Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (UK: Princeton University Press, 2001), David R. Vishanoff, *The Formation of*

As it is believed by Muslims that during the prophet's lifetime, there was no question that he was recognized as the authoritative voice representing the Divine Will. He was considered the direct recipient of God's revelation, and therefore, he actively became the point of authority for the early Muslim community. As he does not speak from personal desire. It is a divine inspiration.¹³ However, there are some contemporary scholars who problematize the authenticity and authority of Prophet's sayings.¹⁴ With the death of the Prophet, the early Muslim community experienced its first serious crisis of legitimacy and authority. Early Muslim debated and fought over who become the repository of legitimated authority after the Prophet.

By the fourth-tenth century, according to El Fadl, the authoritativeness of the Prophet had become firmly and undeniably deposited in the idea or concept of Islamic law and in the representatives of Islamic law, the jurists of Islam. The jurists had become the repositories of a literary, text-based legitimacy. Their legitimacy based itself on the ability to read, understand, and interpret the Divine Will as expressed in texts that purported to embody the Divine Will.¹⁵

In his efforts to explore the possible meanings of authority, El Fadl first of all, clarified the term by distinguishing between coercive authority and persuasive authority. Coercive authority, according to him, is the ability to direct the conduct of another person through the use of inducements, benefits, threats, or punishments so that a reasonable person would conclude that for all practical purposes they have no choice but to comply. Persuasive authority, on the other hand, is the ability to direct the belief or conduct of a person because of trust. Here, El Fadl reminds us that persuasive authority does not necessarily involve the complete surrender of judgment or an unconditional surrender of autonomy. In fact, a complete surrender of judgement or autonomy often turns into a coercive form of authority.¹⁶ Instead, persuasive authority involves the exercise of influence and normative power upon

Islamic Hermeneutics: How Sunni Legal Theorists Imagined a Revealed Law (Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 2011).

¹³ Quran (53: 3-4) Edip Yuksel, Layth Saleh al-Shaiban, Martha Schulte-Nafeh, *Quran: A Reformist Translation* (USA: Brainbow Press, 2011).

¹⁴ Further discussion on this issue please refer to: Muḥammad Taqī, *The Authority of Sunnah* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1998), Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Mustafa al-Siba'i, *al-Sunnah wa Maka'natuha fi Tashri' al-Islam* (Qahirah: Dar al-Salam, 2006).

¹⁵ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name...*, 12.

¹⁶ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name...*, 21.

someone. Persuasive authority influences people to believe, act or refrain from acting in a certain fashion by persuading them that this is what ought to be. It influences people to believe that acting according to certain directives is consistent with their sense of self-responsibility.¹⁷

In order to make the distinction clear, El Fadl used Friedman's terminology: "being in authority" and "being an authority." According to Friedman, being "in authority" means occupying some official or structural position that empowers a person to issue commands or directives. There is no "surrender of private judgment" in this case because a person may disagree with the person in authority and yet feel that there is no choice but to comply. Obeying "an authority," on the other hand, involves a different dynamic. Here, a person surrenders private judgment in deference to perceived special knowledge, wisdom or insight of an authority. Deferring to someone *in* authority involves deferring to someone's official position or capacity, but deferring to someone who is *an* authority involves deferring to someone's perceived expertise. The distinction is the difference between deferring to a police officer and deferring to one's plumber.¹⁸

Regarding the concept of authoritativeness, El Fadl agrees with Friedman that absolute authoritativeness will often involve an unqualified surrender of judgement. At this point, he emphasizes that being an authority or being authoritative necessarily involves that element of trust, and any behavior consistent with justifying this trust, including the offering of persuasive arguments, will preserve or boost such an authority.¹⁹

To sum up his understanding of the concept of "authoritative," El Fadl goes in line with John Finnis' description of the authoritative which points out the importance of an exclusionary reason, the reason that we will consider the most compelling and the reason that leads us to exclude all other countervailing reasons and it is often the result of an encounter with the authoritative :

a person treats something as authoritative when he treats it as ... an exclusionary reason, i.e, a reason for judging or acting in the absence of understood reason, or for disregarding at least some reasons which are understood and relevant and would in the absence of the exclusionary reason have sufficed to justify proceeding in some other way... this is the focal meaning of

¹⁷ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name...*, 22.

¹⁸ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name...*, 18-19

¹⁹ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name...*, 21.

authority whether that authority be speculative (the authority of learning or genius) or practical (the authority of good taste, or practical experience, or office...), and whether the authority be ascribed to a man, or to his characteristics, or to his opinion or pronouncements, or to some opinion or prescription which has authority for reasons other than that its author(s) had authority (e.g.... custom or convention).²⁰

The issue of religious authority also attracts women scholars to actively engage in discussing this issue using their feminist-kind perspective. One of the prominent scholars in this field is Asma Barlas, the author of a brilliant book analyzing the authority of women before the Quran, the *Believing Women in Islam*. Barlas strongly encourages women to find the courage (and interest) to continue engaging and interpreting religion, locating their authority to do so in the teachings of the Quran. This because, according to her, religious authority derives not from closing the canon, or even from ‘fixing’ its contents, but from certain ways of interpreting them.²¹

In relation to the issue of religious authority, Barlas warned Muslim believer to not see Islam as patriarchal religion. Moreover, she argued that the teachings of the Qur’ān are radically egalitarian and even anti patriarchal.²² She based her argument on two important points: *first*, that the principle of Divine Unity (*tawhid*) extends to the idea that God is incomparable, hence unrepresentable. Since God is indivisible, God’s sovereignty also is indivisible. No one can partake in it.²³ Here, Barlas sees that this doctrine of Tawahid is vital not only to a purification of our idea of God but also to reject patriarchalized misrepresentations of God.²⁴

Second, The Qur’ān establishes that God is unique, hence beyond representation, and also beyond gender since gender is nothing but a representation of sex.²⁵ At this point, Barlas brightly mentioned that the Qur’ān itself offers us better ways to talk about God by using terms like Rabb and Allah, that have no human counterpart or equivalent. However, It then becomes problematic when those

²⁰ Khaled About El Fadl, *Speaking in God’s Name...*, 22-23.

²¹ Asma Barlas, *“Believing Women” in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 77

²² Asma Barlas, *“Believing Women” in Islam...*, 93.

²³ Asma Barlas, *“Believing Women” in Islam...*, 96.

²⁴ Asma Barlas, *“Believing Women” in Islam...*, 108.

²⁵ Asma Barlas, *“Believing Women” in Islam...*, 100.

terms translated to “King” or “Lord,” which, according to Barlas, not only are androcentric but also fail to convey the sense of creatorship and sovereignty implicit in terms like Rabb and Allah.²⁶

Having the same concern as Barlas, Amina Wadud published her book on Quran and woman which aims to make a 'reading' of the Qur'an that would be meaningful to women living in the modern era. This because, according to her, The Qur'an must be flexible enough to accommodate innumerable cultural situations because of its claims to be universally beneficial to those who believe.²⁷

In the context of our discussion on religious authority, Wadud sees that despite the distinctions between the treatment of men and the treatment of women, there is no essential difference in the value attributed to women and men. For her, man and woman are two categories of the human species given the same or equal consideration and endowed with the same or equal potential.²⁸ They have the same rights and obligations on the ethico-religious level, and have equally significant responsibilities on the social-functional level.²⁹ The relation between them is mutual honour and consultations.

Now, if I may call back the fore mentioned scholars (Weber, El Fadl, Barlas, Wadud) and put them in one table, there are at least two important notes need to be highlighted regarding our discussion on religious authority:

First, Weber's charismatic authority which emphasize the factors of believing and recognition are actually in line with El Fadl's notion on coercive and persuasive authority in a way that both coercive and persuasive authority are the results of the process of believing and recognizing of the people before the authority. Furthermore, I found El Fadl's notion on exclusionary reason is very much helpful for understanding how the process of believing and recognizing take place in an individual. In addition to this, Barlas and Wadud provide complementary explanation to the nature of the authority which, according to both of them, is gender free area. In other word, the understanding of authority should not

²⁶ Asma Barlas, “*Believing Women*” in *Islam...*, 104.

²⁷ Amina Wadud, *Quran and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6. However, I believe that what she meant here is not the Quran itself which is needs to be flexible but our understanding of it.

²⁸ Amina Wadud, *Quran and Woman...*, 15.

²⁹ Amina Wadud, *Quran and Woman...*, 102.

monopolized and applied by only one particular gender to avoid imbalance understanding of the authority and the authoritative.

Second, to conclude this part, I would like to propose one definition of religious authority which I will use it for the remaining discussion in this paper by saying that religious authority is a power (owned by either male or female in form of intrinsic gift) to direct the conduct of other people through satisfying and reasonable religious argument.

B. *Kyai*: The Portrait of Religious Authority in Indonesia

After we discussed the concept of religious authority which generally means the power to direct people through satisfying and reasonable religious argument, in this subsection, I will discuss about the *Kyai* as the representative of religious authority in Indonesia. To begin with, I would like to provide Joseph Raz's explanation on the types commonly used for explaining the nature of authority. There are at least three types of it:

1. The basic standard explanation consists of identifying the conditions that are in fact either necessary or sufficient for holding effective (*de facto*) authority. In addition to this, Raz reminds us not to abandon other important considerations: under what conditions people can obtain or hold authority, under what circumstances a community is likely to accept the authority of some persons, and what these conditions are for, what it is to have authority or to be in authority.
2. The second type is by describing the necessary or sufficient conditions for holding of legitimate (*de jure*) authority. Accordingly, the concept of authority is to be explained by explaining how claims to authority can be justify. Moreover, they do not presuppose the claims to authority can in fact ever be justified, but merely point out how they are to be justified.
3. Some people believe that authority must be defined by reference to rules: that a person has authority means that there is a system of rules, which

confers authority on him. Here, Raz urges us to clarify which rules confer authority and which do not.³⁰

Learning from the above three types, this subsection will elucidate the notion of religious authority of the *Kyai* within three important considerations: *first*, the conditions of the *Kyai* for holding the authority (including the circumstances a community is likely to accept their authority and how do the *Kyai* use those conditions for, *second*, how claims to *Kyai*'s authority can be justified, and *third*, system of rules, which confers authority on the *Kyai* (including an explanation of which rules confer their authority and which do not).

- **Conditions of the *Kyai* as the religious authority holder: how and why.**

In Javanese rules of language, the term “*Kyai*” originally used to indicate three different positions:

1. As an honorific title for some particular items that are considered as sacred; for example, "*Kyai Garuda Kencana*" used for a Gold Carriage in the Yogyakarta palace;
2. As an honor for the parents in general
3. As an honorific title granted by the society to an expert in Islam, who has or be a leader of the *pesantren* and teach the classical books to their *santri* (students)

With their expertise in Islamic knowledge, the *Kyai* often seen as individuals who can understand the greatness of God and the secrets of the universe, thus they seems to have an unaffordable position, especially by the lay people.³¹ They are, at the same time, charismatic religious authorities who are believed to have unique abilities to communicate with God, as channels through which God's mercy and blessing enter society. Not only the *Kyai* themselves who are considered as so but also, the position of *nyai* (*Kyai*'s wife) in a *pesantren* also shares the same consideration. She is a revered figure, and serves as something of a foster mother to young *santri*. In *pesantren* where there are female *santri*, she plays a leading role in

³⁰ Joseph Raz, *The Authority of Law: Essays on Law and Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5-10.

³¹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 56.

their religious training. Moreover, the children and subsequent descendants of *Kyai* are believed to inherit his sacred characteristics.³²

In a *pesantren*, the *Kyai* becomes a single leader who holds almost absolute authority which makes him the most respected one in that environment.³³ He is the sole power center that controls the environment and at the same time, is the role model for the *santri*. He is like a king whom all of his commands become valid constitutional laws in his kingdom. He has the right to impose penalties on students who violate the terms of his commands according to normative rules applied in *pesantren*.

Society's great trust in *Kyai* and his ability to solve social, psychological, cultural, political, religious problems, are of many factors put the *Kyai*'s position in line with the elites and be part of social and political structures in society.³⁴ Even more, I see it is not an exaggeration here to say that the *Kyai* has the same cultural position with the position of the feudal nobility who commonly known as *Kanjeng*, whom considered as having the things that are not owned by anyone else in the society.³⁵ This clearly seen from the presence of Javanese kingdoms aristocratic characteristic which can also be found in the traditions of being respectful in the *pesantren*. In such manner, it will be hard to separate feudalism from *pesantren*'s tradition as it is hard to pull out feudalism from a kingdom's setting.³⁶

Regarding the question of circumstances a community is likely to accept their authority and how do the *Kyai* use those condition, will be put in our discussion about Pandhalungan people.

- **Justifying *Kyai*'s religious authority**

In Indonesian history, particularly during Dutch colonial era, any cultural, political and social activities in the name of Islam were being restricted. This then has made Islam found difficulties to play its (political) role, in urban areas in Java.

³² Bianca J. Smith and Mark Woodward, "Introduction: de-colonizing Islam and Muslim feminism," in Bianca J. Smith and Mark Woodward (eds.), *Gender and Power in Indonesian Islam: Leaders, Feminists, Sufis and Pesantren Selves* (Routledge, 2013), 11.

³³ Pradjarta Dirdjosandjoto, *Memelihara Umat: Kiai Pesantren-Kiai Langgar Di Jawa* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1999), 156.

³⁴ Mujamil Qomar, *Pesantren...*, 29.

³⁵ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Bunga Rampai Pesantren* (CV. Darma Bhakti, 1974), 20.

³⁶ Mujamil Qomar, *Pesantren Dari Transformasi Metodologi Menuju Demokratisasi Institusi* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2002), 29

As the consequence, the centers for studying Islam were moved to rural areas where the *Kyais* build and develop the *pesantren*. Interestingly, most *Kyai* in Java assumes that a *pesantren* might be considered as a small kingdom for the *Kyai* where he owns a position of the holder of an absolute power and authority in that *pesantren*. None of the students who can resist the power of the *Kyai* (in his *pesantren*) except the other *Kyais* who have a greater influence.³⁷

There are, according to Solahudin, two inherent attributes of a *Kyai*: Islamic scholarship and *pesantren* leadership. Other related attributes supposedly possessed by a *Kyai* including *ahli ibadah* (totally devout), and *muballigh* (Islamic preacher). They may also act as a kind of consultant on religious matters.³⁸ Today, many prominent scholars in society also got the title of "*Kyai*" although they are not leaders of *pesantren*. Due to a strong connection with *pesantren*'s tradition, the title of "*Kyai*" usually used to refer to the scholars from Muslim traditionalists.³⁹ *Kyai* is not a title that formal education offers for, but it is society who voluntarily offer.⁴⁰

In addition, according to *pesantren*'s tradition, someone's expertise can be measured by the number of the books being studied and the *ulama* he/she learned from. The popularity of the *Kyai* and the number of qualified books taught in a *pesantren* become the distinguishing factor between one *pesantren* to the other.⁴¹

- **Systems behind the *Kyai*'s religious authority**

Regarding the relationship between *Kyai*'s religious authority with the local Javanese system of belief, it is interesting to found that according to the concept of the Javanese state organism, the king is regarded as a symbol of a microcosm, or a country. In Javanese' thoughts, a cosmic divided into two: micro-cosmic and macro-cosmic. The micro means the human world or the real world and the macro means the supernatural. The king in this sense was regarded as a link between the two forms of the cosmic. During the Hindu kingdom, the king was even considered as a manifestation of divinity in the microcosm of life. Then Islam came and changed the

³⁷ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 56.

³⁸ Dindin Solahudin, *The Workshop for Morality: The Islamic Creativity of Pesantren Daar at- Tauhid in Bandung, Java* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), 41.

³⁹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982), 55

⁴⁰ Simuh, *Islam dan Pergumulan Budaya Jawa*, (Jakarta: Teraju, 2003), 66

⁴¹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 22.

whole picture of this local belief. The state authorities then, were no more able to monopolize the symbol of the power of the macrocosm in the Javanese cosmological view. Since Islam is the official religion of the Javanese, the authorities now have to compete with the Muslim religious authorities (the *Kyais*) in more complex form of power hierarchy; For *Kyais* who all his life led a religious life activities, are also gaining political influence.⁴²

In global context, particularly in 19th century, *pesantren* became an inseparable part of what so called Islamic scholarliness community, but still with its genuine Indonesian culture elements. The *santri* and *Kyai* were reading the same classical religious books as their Muslims brothers in this world have. This gives significant impact on the development of *pesantren*, the international network of the *ulama* makes *pesantren* becomes a well-established educational center and Islam orthodoxy, more over, it provides a solid foundation for a process of making *ulama* as an influential social elite. The international dimension of *pesantren*, particularly Mecca, makes *ulama* and *pesantren* gain more authority not only in religious matters but also in socio political problems.

There are at least two factors behind the process of institutionalizing the *ulama* in 19th century, beside the international experience that we have talked about before. These two factors are sufism and tarekat. These last two factors provide a fertile land for the development of socio religious activities which place *ulama* in a more authoritative place, not only in religious area but also in social and political arena. A sufism's doctrine to be total obedience to a teacher (*murshid*) significantly contribute to place *ulama* not only in a strategic place but also makes them a single actor who determines almost every single parts of *pesantrens'* life. In a *pesantren*, *ulama* appear as the sole authority who monopolize religious interpretations, moreover, as 'the embodiment of religious understanding' itself. Not only criticism which is absent from the *santri*, but also a reluctance to accept other teachings than those given in pesanteren where they studied. *Kyai* regarded as a channel of God's grace to his disciples in this world and the hereafter.⁴³

⁴² Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 58.

⁴³ Jajat Burhanuddin, "Ulama dan Politik Pembentukan Umat: Sekilah Pengalaman Sejarah Indonesia," in Jajat Burhanuddin dan Ahmad Baedowi (eds.), *Transformasi Otoritas Keagamaan: Pengalaman Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama in collaboration with PPIM-UIN Jakarta and Basic Education Project DEPAG, 2003), 20-21.

In addition, the social reality of the rural areas people, more or less, make *Kyai*'s religious authority acknowledged not only in *pesantren* but also among society where he lives. People in that area have a very high level of trust to the *Kyai*. They depend for their living on him which sometimes it goes beyond religious boundaries. Through his *pesantren*, a *Kyai* acts as a formulator of social reality based on Islamic terms. This condition furthermore supported by the practical oriented of the Islamic teaching style in which the materials being taught related to daily life.⁴⁴

Another system builds *Kyai*'s religious authority is the way the *Kyai* maintain their identity which, according to Dhofier, there are at least three things done by the *ulama* to create their unique community's identity: (1) establishing a tradition which regulates that immediate family is the most eligible to be a successor.(2) developing a network of endogamous marriage alliances among *Kyai*'s family; and (3) develop a tradition of transmission of knowledge and intellectual transmission chain among *Kyais* and their families. In this way, the *Kyai* defines themselves not only as different community from the Muslim community in general, but also place themselves as spiritual guides and finally as the social elite.⁴⁵

C. 'Pandhalungan' : A Glance of Socio-Historical Context

The word 'Pandhalungan' etymologically comes from Javanese word means "a big kettle".⁴⁶ The cultural symbolic understanding of the word Pandhalungan means area contains of various ethnic groups with different cultural backgrounds which then create a new cultural typology that accommodate those cultures inside it. The administrative geography of Pandhalungan area consists of Pasuruan, Probolinggo, Situbondo, Bondowoso, Jember, and Lumajang.

Historically, the emergence of Pandhalungan culture can be traced back to the history of the development of Jember city where in 19th century, the liberalist, who confronted the policy of cultivation, initiated "the system of interprise" which then

⁴⁴ Jajat Burhanuddin, "Ulama dan Politik Pembentukan Umat", 22.

⁴⁵ Jajat Burhanuddin, "Ulama dan Politik Pembentukan Umat," 23-24.

⁴⁶ Prawiroatmodjo, *Bausastra Jawa-Indonesia I*, as cited by Ayu Sutarto, "Sekilas tentang Masyarakat Pandhalungan," paper presented in *Jelajah Budaya* held by Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Yogyakarta (7-10 August, 2006).

gave birth to the spread of the private plantations in Jember. With the emergence of those private plantations, there was a huge migration from Madura island and Java to Jember city where that two different cultures come together and create what is now known as Pandhalungan culture.⁴⁷

Pandhalungan cultural region refers to a region in the northern coastal areas in the eastern province of East Java with Javanese and Madurese-background majority. The so-called Pandhalungan people is, culturally, a hybrid society which means a new civilized society comes of two mixed dominant cultures Java and Madura. However, because of the lack of studies and references talked about Pandhalungan, understanding of the term “Pandhalungan” is still unclear and yet there is no valid reference of when this term first used in Indonesian history. Harry Yuswardi simply defines Pandhalungan as (a) the mixing of Java and Madura cultures and (b) Madurese people who born in Java and adopted Javanese culture. this definition according to Kusnad looks over simplifying. He argues that Pandhalungan culture is a result of a long social process and an intensive dialogue between different cultures that go hand in hand with the society. this confirms the understanding of Pandhalungan as “a big kettle” (as it is mentioned in the first paragraph) where people from various ethnics and cultural backgrounds come and interact each and further create a new culture called as Pandhalungan.

Talking about Pandhalungan, according to Raharjo, not merely shows it as a hybrid but also as a multicultural society. despite the fact that are some new cultures resulted of the hybrid Java and Madura cultures, there are also some particular cultures of each ethnics preserved in the same space and time. The Pandhalungan people, in their every day life interaction, remained committed to carry out their cultural activities in accordance with their respective identities for the sake of preservation of identity and, ethnic absolutism.⁴⁸

Social ethics of Pandhalungan people rooted in the values of two dominant cultures, Java and Madura, among them are: politeness (people should be "*andap*

⁴⁷ Edy Burhan Arifin, “Pertumbuhan Kota Jember dan Munculnya Budaya Pandhalungan,” paper presented in Konferensi Nasional Sejarah VIII, (November 2006).

⁴⁸ Christanto P. Raharjo, “Pandhalungan: Sebuah ‘Periuk Besar’ Masyarakat Multikultural,” paper presented in *Jelajah Budaya* held by Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Yogyakarta in Jember, (13 Agustus, 2006).

asor," humble towards others. Although they oftenly seen as rude people, but actually they highly respect the norms of politeness), respect (being respectful to elders and people who has high social class is very important for Pandahulungan people, more over to their teachers and *Kyai*), and high work ethic (Pandhalungan people has high work ethic standards together with Ethic and job mobility is very high among Pandhalungan people, underpinned by sincerity, diligence and their perseverance in life, not only among men but also women.

There are some common characteristics of the Pandhalungan people:

1. They are traditional agrarian people who are in the stage between traditional and industrial society where traditions and myths dominantly take place in their daily lifes.
2. They maintain their common social norms and not eager to go across the lines of common traditions.
3. Adaptable, Expressive, paternalistic (they behave according to their leaders) and have solid family relationship

From the geo-politics and geo-socio-cultural point of view, Pandhalungan people stay in the area which been a basis for cultural Muslim and the *abangan*. The first supported by the existence of the *kyai* and the *ulama* and the second supported by the political figures and the figures who actively engage in the practice of particular religious beliefs.

Through its further development, Pandhalungan culture is heavily influenced by Islamic nuances. This because in this region, *ulama* and *Kyai* do not only play their role as religious leader but also as a public figure who has strong connection with various political forces which then makes people obidient to their religion and at the same time, make them more obidient to their religious teachers and *Kyai* than their local authorities.

The *Kyais* in Pandhalungan society have significant role not only in maintainaing the religious harmony among different religious background but also

they are act as the main actors to prevent any ethnical conflicts in Pandhalungan area. This because they kyais as the religious leaders are the role model of the society.⁴⁹

Conclusion

This paper discussed three particular aspects: first, the discourse of religious authority which generally means a power (owned by either male or female in form of instrinsic gift) to direct the conduct of other people through satisfying and reasonable religious argument. Second, the phenomenon of Kyais (religious leaders) as the representatives of religious authority among society which shows vividly how the religious authority being manifested and understood in a particular context. And third, the socio-historical context of ‘Pandhalungan’ people which briefly shows how this hybrid society, with its unique socio-cultural characteristics, was formed and keeps maintain their social relation. Also the role of the kyais as the religious leaders in maintaining the harmony of socio religious life of the society.

As a pilot project, this paper is only a first step of a bigger context of how the kyai’s (as the religious leader) religious authority in a real public sphere negotiates and being contested with the coming of ‘digi-God.’

⁴⁹ Nuril Endi Rahman, “Konflik dan Kecemburuan Sosial antara Etnis Tionghoa dan Masyarakat Pandhalungan di Daerah Besuki-Situbondo,” *Proceeding of The 5th International Conference on Indonesian Studies* (2013).

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