RADICALISING THE TRADITIONALISTS
A Contemporary Dynamic of Islamic Traditionalism in Madura-Indonesia

Ahmad Zainul Hamdi
UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia
ahmadinung@gmail.com

Abstract

The post-New Order Indonesian politics has provided a political opportunity structure for the state towards democratization. It has a double-edged sword: on the one hand democratization could lead to the civic engagement, but on the other hand, it provides a hot bed for the flourishing of anti-civic organization. As for the latter, following the fall of authoritarian regime of new Order in 1998, Indonesians have also witnessed the birth of transnational Islamist and radical organizations threatening the state's integrity and peaceful coexistence of the citizens. Amid the public appearance of these radical organization, an issue of ideological infiltration and sabotage of radical organization upon mainstreaming moderate Muslim organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah do exist. This article tries to reveal the impacts of a such infiltration practices and the extent that radical narratives win the minds and hearts of important Muslim leaders. Taking a closer a look to Muslim leaders in Sampang district in the island of Madura, the centrum of traditionalist Muslim in Indonesian Islamo-landscape, the article finds out that intolerant and radical ideologies do resonate clearly among the leaders. This finding resort as an alarm and counter-narrative to the long-admired Islamic traditionalism as an important backbone for moderate Islam in Indonesia.

[Politik Indonesia paska Orde Baru memberi struktur peluang bagi negara untuk melakukan demokratisasi. Namun, demikian peluan tersebut sebenarnya bermata ganda, bisa menjadi ancama: pada satu sisi, democratisasi mampu melahirkan keterlibatan warga, namun pada sisi lainnya memberi peluang untuk semakin menguatnya kelompok anti-kewargaan. Untuk peluang terakhir ini, masyarakat Indonesia, sejak jatuhnya rejim otoriter Orde Baru pada tahun 1998, dapat dengan jelas menyaksikan lahirnya beragam kelompok Transnatisional-Islamis dan radikal yang menjadi ancaman bagi integritas negara dan keharmonisan hidup masyarakat Indonesia. Di tengah kemunculan kelompok tersebut di ranah publik, isu sabotase dan infiltrasi juga mengemuka; utamanya infiltrasi terhadap organisasi terbesar di Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama dan Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini akan mengulas dampak infiltrasi kelompok radikal dan sejauh mana pimpinan umat Islam terpapar oleh narasi radikalisme. Dengan mengetengahkan studi atas pimpinan Islam di Sampang, satu wilayah di Pulau Madura yang menjadi pusat kelompok Muslim tradisionalis, artikel ini menemukan bahwa narasi intoleran dan radikal cukup mengkhawatirkan. Temuan riset ini tentu saja menjadi peringatan dan sekaligus sebagai narasi bersebrangan dengan anggapan bahwa Islam traditisionalis merupakan salah satu penyanggah utama Islam moderat di Indonesia.

Keywords: *Radicalisation, Islamic Traditionlism, Kyai, Madura*

Introduction

The popular imaginary about the island of Madura connects to the idea of violence and Islamic traditionalism. Madura culture is a combination of "syncretic *abangan*-like" and orthodox *santri* culture.[1] It is an important home to the largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama/NU.[2] The importance of NU to the lives of Madurese

---

[1] Yanwar Pribadi, "An Abangan-like Group in a Santri Island: The Religious Identity of the Blater," in *Religious Diversity in Muslim-Majority States in Southeast Asia: Areas of Toleration and Conflict* (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2014), p. 214–234.

[2] On Nahdlatul Ulama/NU see KH. Achmad Siddiq, *Khittah Nahdliyyah* (Surabaya: Khalista & LTN-NU Jawa Timur, 2006), p. 27; KH. Abdul Muchith Muzadi, *NU dalam Perspektif Sejarah & Ajaran: Refleksi 65 Tahun Ikut NU* (Surabaya: Khalista,

reflects an anecdote saying that being Muslim is tantamount to being NU followers. Another exaggerating tale on Madura Islam also says that while 98% of Madurese are Muslim, only 2% are Muhammadiyah.

The traditionalist Muslim boarding school or *pesantren,*[3] mainly affiliated to NU, is paramount to the making of *santri* culture in Madura. It is where Islamic traditionalism has been maintained for generations and its influences have crossed the geographical boundaries of the island. Almost all important *kyai* (Muslim scholars or *ulama*) in Java take their genealogical knowledge (*sanad*) to famous *kyai* of Madura. The most important *kyai* of Madura is the 19th century Muhammad Kholil bin Abdul Lathif renowned for his nickname *Kyai* Kholil Bangkalan (1820-1925). In Madurese *santri* culture, the authority of a *kyai* in Madura goes beyond their roles as a religious teacher who runs his *pesantren.* A *kyai* is the leader in Madurese society in general which in many cases trespassed the boundaries of his roles as religious scholars.

This article discusses contemporary Islam in Madura, focusing on *kyai* and their Islamic narratives on violence, issues of toleration, and radicalism. It poses a question the extent that *kyai* is exposed to the narratives of intolerance and violence. This study is a grounded empirical research as its main sources were collected from the field. To do so, in May-September 2019, I conducted both face-to-face and in group interviews and a series of Focused Group Discussions (FGD) with important Muslim leaders in Madura, mainly *kyais,* security officers, and government officials, and Muslim students. All these fieldworks activities were carried out in the district of Sampang.

2007), p. 69-73.

[3] Abdurrahman Mas'ud, *Intelektual Pesantren: Perhelatan Agama dan Tradisi* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2004), p. 9; *Pesantren* or *Pondok Pesantren* are Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. They consist of *pondok*, mosque, *santri*, teaching of classical Islamic texts and *kyai*, Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *The Pesantren Tradition: A Study of the Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of the Traditional Ideology of Islam in Java Tempe*, AZ: Arizona State University Program for Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series.

Located in the mid-part of the Madura Island, Sampang is less-developed compared to other districts in the island of Madura. Livestock and petty farmers are two dominant bread-winning activities of the people of Sampang. Importantly, contemporary Sampang is the place for a violence against the Shia community.[4] In 2012, thirty-seven houses belonged to the Shia community were burned. The 2012 attack against the Shia community killed one and dozens of Shia believers were injured. Another casualty is the public discrimination against Shia as its members are driven out from the villages which led to the exodus of Shia community to other cities in East Java province.[5]

Considering the importance of NU in Madura culture, the aforementioned incident clearly contrasts to the long-held belief that NU is one of most importance pillars of peaceful and moderate Islam[6] and the most important component of Muslim civil society in Indonesia.[7] This article further argues that there has been a shifting terrain of Islam in Madura. As far as, Muslim leaders in Sampang are concerned, they are exposed to the narratives of intolerance and radicalism. Preserving the authenticity of religion, thus exclusion of the others, is the grand narrative which costed live casualties and begs further definition on moderate and anti-moderate—if not to mention intolerant and radical—in Islamic discourses. Moreover, as this article demonstrates, there has been a shifting ideological and organisational affiliation among the Muslim leaders in Sampang. Though NU is still the dominant organisation to

---

[4] Shia is a theological branch in Islam and takes its root to the first year following the death of the Prophet Muhammad.

[5] Muhammad Afdillah, "Dari Masjid ke Panggung Politik: Studi Kasus Peran Pemuka Agama dan Politisi dalam Konflik Kekerasan Agama antara Komunitas Sunni dan Syiah di Sampang Jawa Timur," *Thesis*, UGM, 2013; Ahmad Zainul Hamdi, "Klaim Religious Authority dalam Konflik Sunni-Syi'i Sampang Madura, *Islamica*, Vol 6, No. 2, 2012.

[6] Azyumardi Azra, *Indonesia, Islam, and Democracy: Dynamics in a Global Context* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2006), p. 60-64.

[7] Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, n.d.).

which the Muslim leaders ascribed, the contemporary development of Islam in Sampang could temper this assumption. There has been an intermingled organisational affiliation among the Muslim leaders; thus the distinction between the traditionalist NU and other radical groups is blurring, particularly when they come to the issue of religious authenticity and minority Muslim groups like the Shia community in Sampang.

Notes on Conceptual Frames

Before I proceed to the main discussion of this article, some important conceptual frames would be discussed briefly. The discussion aims to provide a theoretical umbrella for the main discussion and field-findings. The below notes on theories are essential as giving a clearer understanding on working concept of the article. The notes are devoted to two important discussions: the conceptual distinction between *ulama* and the Islamist and significant concepts on radicalism.

Bridging the Unbridgeable: the Islamist and the Ulama

Current scholarly works particularly make a clear distinction various manifestations and interpretation of Islam. One of often-used theoretical concepts to define Islamic interpretation is through the excessive distinction between the moderate and radical Islam.[8] Jamhari, for instance, defines radical Islam through institutional development in contemporary Indonesia and point to groups who strive to implement *sharia* law.[9] The moderate on the other hand, Freedman argues, refers to the groups of Muslim who strongly advocates for democracy and civil rights.[10] Nevertheless, the distinction between radical and moderate Islam has been misleading as excluding the fact that the two may flourish the

---

[8] Judith Miller, "The Challenge of Radical Islam," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 2, 1993, pp. 43.

[9] Jamhari, "Mapping Radical Islam in Indonesia," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2003, pp. 1–28.

[10] Amy L. Freedman, "Civil Society, Moderate Islam, and Politics in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Journal of Civil Society* Vol. 5, No. 2, 2009, pp. 107–127.

same socio-cultural-political context that allows them to establish an intense contact and collaboration. Thus, there is likely a shared vision between the two, such as the need to protect and preserved Islamic tradition. Both radical and moderate Muslim are indeed in the same boat in terms of their conservative ideas to preserve the authenticity of religion.

The misleading distinction also appears in the scholarly discussion on Islamic activism. Scholars generally divide Muslim authority into the Islamist and *ulama.* As for the *ulama,* they are particularly an expert of Islamic knowledge and tradition, mainly on classical Islamic studies. For many, *ulama* is the holder of Islamic authority and the most authoritative persons to speak about Islam. *Ulama* is often defined as the guardian of Islamic tradition, thus they are particularly conservative for protecting the tradition of the past.[11] The Islamist on the other hand is preferably a Muslim political activist rather than a Muslim scholar. Despite the fact there is a Muslim scholar who happens to be a political activist, they differ in terms orientation. If the *ulama* preserves Islam in terms of ideas, the Islamist on the other hand strive to implement the religious texts into the contemporary realities. In other words, the character of traditional *ulama* is conservative but politically passive and otherwise the Islamist. An *ulama* tends to limit their authority on the textual boundaries of Islamic tradition, but the Islamist make current situations as their prime reference while bringing the past as the ideal form of contemporary society. The Islamist strive to bring the past into the present. Nevertheless, both Islamist and *ulama* are having the same orientation: the need to protect the past through the present, but they differ in the scale of Islam in contemporary societies.

---

[11] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Pluralism, Democracy, and The *Ulama*," Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 69; Alexander Bligh, "The Saudi Religious Elite (*Ulama*) as Participant in the Political System of the Kingdom," Syafiq A. Mughni (ed.), *An Antology of Contemporary Middle Eastern History* (Montreal, Quebec, Canada: Indonesia-Canada Islamic Higher Education Project, t.t).

Furthermore, *ulama* is also renowned for, partly because of their conservative orientation, their rejection on progressive and liberal ideas. Liberalism has been seen as a threat to Islamic tradition because calling for rationalism and locating revelation at the margin of Islamic discourse. *Ulama* and the Islamist are in the same boat while judging progressive and liberal ideas. While *ulama* sees the danger of liberalism upon the faith, the Islamist tend to reject liberalism because of the issue of westernisation. They oppose the position of reason within progressive and liberal ideas. For the Islamist and *ulama,* reason can only operate within the limits of revelation and reason should be used in areas where there is no explicit revelation.[12] As Muhammad Qasim Zaman writes, religious conservatism happens to be a meeting point between *ulama* and the Islamist. They are indeed in collaboration to win the zeal of Islam and to protect Muslim from liberal ideas.

Apart from the reaction against progressive and liberal ideas, politics is another factor that unites the *ulama* and the Islamist. Although traditional *ulama* are mainly apolitical, they are likely to be involved in politics when the legitimacy and political control of the government weakens. According to Arnold H. Green, controlling the government often invokes the politics of *ulama,* thus blurring the distinction between the concept of *ulama* in traditional sense and the Islamist. When the government has an effective and strong control over the community, *ulama* tend to be politically passive. Green further argues that the politics of *ulama* particularly occurs in a context where the state's authority is absent or decreasing. The *ulama* would likely react as a shadow state as taking over the roles belonged to the state.[13] Thus, the *ulama* is acting as that of the Islamist. However, the preceding statement does not mean

---

[12] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 171-172.

[13] Arnold H. Green, "Political Attitudes and Activities of the *Ulama* in the Liberal Age: Tunisia as an Exceptional Case," Abubaker A. Bagader (ed.), *The Ulama in the Modern Muslim Nation-State* (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1983), p. 175.

that the *ulama* and the Islamist are indistinguishable. The relationship between the two is complex, often contradictory and in competition. The Islamists often accuses the *ulama* of ignorant about the real problems of the modern world. The Islamic knowledge of *ulama* is considered as old-fashioned and the *ulama* has failed to synchronise their knowledge to contemporary worlds and to answer current problems. The *ulama* on the other hand confesses their Islamists counterpart as having insufficient academic qualifications to interpret texts of Islam (Qur'an and *sunna*); thus unauthoritative to speak on behalf of Islam.[14]

Radical and Radicalisation

There has been a changing meaning among scholars on Indonesian Islam when it comes to the term "radical". The 'radical' term did not imply any negative connotation however as we read through the work of a Japanese scholar Mitsuo Nakamura when reviewing the politics of NU in the 1970s.[15] Nevertheless, along with the proliferation of religious violence and terrorism in a global context, the term 'radical' has been imbued with a new meaning denoting a reserve to violence. Radical does not merely imply a stand or attitude demanding a fundamental transformation, but it also connotes an act of violence for that change. The US-based civil society organisation, The International Republican Institute (IRI), uses the word 'radical' in two generic terms: radical cognitive and radical behaviour. Cognitive radicals refer to whomever who approves of violence but avoiding to take a part in any violent action. In contrast, radical behaviour is referring to anyone who resorts to any act of violence while participating in the action on the basis of the ideology they believe in.[16]

[14] Ahmad Aziz, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1964* (London, Bombay, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967).

[15] Mitsuo Nakamura, "The Radical Traditionalism of the Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia: A Personal Account of the 26th National Congress, June 1979, Semarang", *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1981, pp. 200-201.

[16] Team, *Violent Extremism in Indonesia* (Washington: The International Republican Institute, 2017), p. 4.

The term radical, according to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English,* is similar to the word 'militant' which means "the use force or strong pressure to arrive at a certain goal."[17] The term 'militant', as Abdullah Saeed suggests, is also often used interchangeably with the label *jihadist.*[18] As for the term 'Islamic radicalism', it particularly refers to an Islamic movement that struggles to radically change the structure of societies. The term is attributed to any Islamic movement that strives to fundamentally reform or change socio-cultural-political of societies. The group particularly demands both the establishment of an Islamic state and the codification of *sharia* as the state law and resorts to violence acts for arriving at these aims.

Nevertheless, there are also differences between radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. Radicalism is a mode of thought of literalism, intolerance, anti-system, and revolutionary. When these four indicators are translated into any violence act, thus changing the scale from radicalism to extremism. Likewise, when violence is intended for an act of terror, the scale expands into terrorism. At processual level, the transformation from radicalism—and Islamic radicalism—to terrorism needs a close examination. Fathali M. Moghaddam identifies four stages of radicalisation which culminates to terrorism. *First*, the emergence of the perception of injustice or disparity contradicts with idealism which leads to frustration. *Second,* the frustration further initiates anger against whomever perceived being responsible for the injustice. *Third*, the state of responsibility and justification for violence acts emerges and leads to the participation in the acts of terrorism. *Finally*, dehumanizing the enemy in order to justify their violence victims.[19]

---

[17] AP. Cowie (ed.), *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 784.

[18] Abdullah Saeed, "Trends in Contemporary Islam: A Preliminary Attempts at a Classification", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 97, 2007, pp. 398.

[19] Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," *The American Psychological Association*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 2005.

Clark Mcauley and Sophia Moskalenko explain four levels of radical subjects: *sympathizers*, those who agree, even if they do not take part in the violence, *supporter* who justifies acts of violence committed by those who want to achieve their goals, and *activist* who are involved in illegal activities. The activists provide things needed by those who want to achieve their aim by illegal means: recruitment, provide political or financial supports. The *radical* are people who are not only convinced but they are also willing to commit acts of violence and other illegal actions.[20]

The Muslim Leaders in Sampang: A Closer Look at the Narratives

The spectrum of narratives of Islam in Sampang extent from intolerant, radical, to extremist narratives.[21] These spectrum particularly develops because of the feeling-threatened and global conspiracy against Islam. The Muslim leaders in Sampang believe that non-Muslims, especially the Christians and the Jews, are in a continuous conspiracy to destroy Islam. They particularly points to the global politics, to the political dispute between Palestine and Israel, and military supports of the US for the acquisition of Palestine lands to the Israel. This global reference draws a conclusion the Muslim hatred towards the Jews and the Christians and an ample instance of Western repression against the Muslim world. The Quranic verse (QS. al-Baqarah: 120) that reads "*Walan tarḍhā ʿanka al-yahūdū wa lā al-nasārā ḥatta tattabiʾa millatahum* (and never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion)" is often invoked as

---

[20] Clark Mcauley & Sophia Moskalenko, "Measuring Political Mobilization: The Distinction between Activism and Radicalism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2009.

[21] The Wahid Foundation, *A Measure of the Extent of Socio-Religious Intolerance and Radicalism within Muslim Society in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Wahid Foundation and Lembaga Survei Indonesia, 2017).

a textual reference for the Muslim hatred towards the Jews and the Christians. Moreover, the Muslim leaders in Sampang also include the *murtad* (apostate from Islam) as their equivalent enemies to the Jews and the Christians.[22] Thus, it is not surprising that the Muslim leaders in Sampang highly contest the presence of non-Muslim—*kafir* in their word—in their surroundings. They challenge the plan for building new churches, despite the local government has granted permission. They are particularly worried that the church becomes a mean of Christian proselytization.

The anti-Christian sentiment is not only translated into the rejection of non-Muslim in the neighbourhood, but also incites a political imagination of Indonesia as an Islamic state. To do so, the Muslim leaders in Sampang often frame non-Muslims as the *dhimmi* (the protected non-Muslim). In Islamic tradition, the concept of *dhimmi* refers to "protected non-Muslim". It connotes the obligation of the Islamic state to provide protection for non-Muslim lives and properties in exchange for loyalty to the state. This narrative appears clearly in the words of an interlocutor saying that "Christians must be obedient to Muslims or Islamic leaders."[23] In the Indonesian political system, rather that discrimination based on religion, every citizen regardless their identities and religion has equal rights in terms of politics and public lives. The non-Muslim has an equal right to be appointed as political leaders and government officials as with their Muslim counterparts.

Beyond the inter-religious relation, the Muslim leaders of Sampang demonstrate also a degree of frustration by the national politics. As the result of their preference for Muslim favouritism, the Muslim leaders of Sampang felt that the Indonesian government keep marginalising Muslim and demand for Muslim favouritism in the government position. Consequently, the government is perceived as an unjust government, even

---

[22] Interview with one of *kyai*, May 23, 2019.
[23] Interview with one of Islamic teacher at SMA Negeri Sampang, May 24, 2019.

worst as a government that oppresses Muslims. They further blamed the government for being failed in protecting the Muslim from the threats of Christian missionaries. For them, the root of the Muslim problems is democracy. Indonesian democracy has facilitated rooms for non-Muslim to exercise their political power and religious mission, while sacrificing the rights of Indonesian Muslim, the dominant religious group. They particularly believe that non-Muslim keeps embattling Islam and Muslim societies; thus if the non-Muslim *kafir* is in power, the Muslim would suffer from injustice.[24]

As consequence of democratic denial, the Muslim leaders of Sampang argue that the schematic of *sharia* is the solution. The word *sharia* is a powerful magnet to many Muslim leaders in Sampang. One of interlocutors further said that he and the *ulama* of Sampang often gave advices to the Head of Sampang District to implement *sharia* through regional regulations (Peraturan Daerah/*Perda*) copying its district neighbour Pamekasan that successfully announced the slogan of *Gerbang Salam,* a stepping stone to implement *sharia* law in the region.[25] For this cause, many Muslim leaders in Sampang show their organisational affiliation to a radical Muslim organisation Front Pembela Islam/FPI (the Islamic Defender Front). They particularly see the FPI as the truthful Indonesian Muslim organisation that struggles to protect Muslims and to implement the *sharia* law for the country.[26] The branch of FPI in Sampang on the other hand sees the supports as an opportunity to expand its influence. Moreover, one of important elites of the local Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI (the Council of Indonesian Ulama) in Sampang clearly demonstrates his support for the FPI's sweeping activities to places that they consider as facilitating sinful acts.[27] Thus it is not surprising that

---

[24] Interview with one of board of NU of Sampang, May 19, 2019.

[25] Ahmad Zainul Hamdi, "Syariat Islam dan Pragmatisme Politik: Studi Kasus Penerapan Syariat Islam di Pamekasan Madura," *Agama dan Kontestasi Ruang Publik: Islamisme, Konflik, dan Demokrasi* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2011).

[26] Interview with one of *ustaz*, May 25, 2019.

[27] Interview with one of board of MUI Sampang, May, 23 2019.

the FPI also plays important roles in the public hatred against the Shia community in Sampang. Again, the issue of religious orthodoxy is a key issue behind the public rejection towards the Shia community. And the FPI has been at the forefront for this cause and currently its influence and Islamic interpretation keep resonating and expanding among Muslim leaders in Sampang.[28]

Actors, Networks and Strategies

As the above discussion, we see intolerance narrative and radical ideologies resonate clearly among Muslim leaders in Sampang. The FPI plays decisive roles for winning the hearts and minds of traditionalist Muslim.[29] According to a police officer in Sampang, the FPI has been an organization with many followers in Madura and its influence eclipses the NU.[30] The local branch of FPI in Madura was established 2004. The founder of FPI, a hadrami Rizieq Shihab, officially launched the Bangkalan branch of FPI in Blegah-Bangkalan and ever since the organisation has developed rapidly.[31] Supported by a wealthy entrepreneur Nasir Zaini who serves also as an influential leader of Ikatan Keluarga Madura (IKAMRA) and Forum Madura Bersatu (FORMABES), the FPI established its branches in other districts in the island of Madura. As a return, Rizieq Shihab appointed Nasir Zaini as the coordinator of FPI in Madura.

Since 2004, Nasir Zaini has been actively recruiting new members of the FPI. Importantly, he tried to convinced the Muslim leaders to join the movement. He successfully invited one of most important *kyai* in Madura, *kyai* Abdullah Schal, the great-grand son of the 19th century

---

[28] Interview with one of *kyai*, May 23, 2019.

[29] Saifuddin, "Kekerasan Atas Nama Tuhan: Studi Kasus Kekerasan FPI Yogyakarta," *IN RIGHT: Jurnal Agama dan Hak Asasi Manusia*, Vol 1, No 1, 2011.

[30] Interview with one police officer, May 21, 2019.

[31] Mohammad Tikno Muyono, "Dakwah Front Pembela Islam (FPI) di Kabupaten Bangkalan: Studi Kualitatif tentang Gerakan Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar," *Thesis*, IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2009.

most influential *kyai* Kholil Bangkalan.

Abdullah Schal is the leader of Pesantren Syaichona Cholil I. When his *pesantren* celebrates *haflahat al-imtihan wa al-ikhtibar*, the annual celebration of the pesantren on 3 September 2005, Abdullah Schal invited Rizieq Shihab to deliver his sermons. Hundreds of important *kyai* in Madura attended the celebration which turned to be a field for the FPI recruitment. By the eve of the celebration, tens of attending Muslim leaders pledged their loyalty to the FPI. Ever since, the FPI was massively expanding and establishing many branches in the Island of Madura. As the FPI's influence is successfully escalating, the organisation reserves as an important Muslim organisation in the Island of Madura. Not only that the FPI has attracted many important Muslim leaders, but also it has enhanced its political position in local politics. Thus, during the local election, almost every candidate for the head of district (*bupati*) is seeking for the FPI's political supports.[32] In returns, as one of police officer in Sampang said, FPI finds a massive support from local politicians. This is one of the reasons why the FPI is almost untouchable by the laws. In addition, the supports of important *kyai* who serve as elites in the FPI further complicates the law supremacy.[33]

Moreover, the FPI in Sampang actively build its organisational networks through joint-activities with local organisation, such as the Aliansi Ulama Madura/AUMA. The AUMA was officially by KH. Zubair Muntashor on 31 October 2015 at Pesantren Nurul Kholil Bangkalan.[34] Despite the fact that firstly inaugurated in Bangkalang, the AUMA has its office in Lenteng Village in Pamekasan. The organisation has established its branches in many cities in the Island of Madura and a renowned *kyai* Jakfar Shodiq serves as the chairman of AUMA in Sampang. There has

---

[32] Interview with one of Sampang Ministry of Religion officers (KUA), May 22, 2019.
[33] Interview with one police officer, May 21, 2019.
[34] Luthfi Bashori, "Deklarasi Aliansi Ulama Madura (AUMA)," *http://www.pejuangislam.com/main.php?prm=karya&var=detail&id=1090*, accessed August, 27 2019.

been a shared leadership between the AUMA and the FPI. The leaders of AUMA are also important elites in the FPI.[35] The chairperson of AUMA in Pamekasan is *kyai* Ali Karrar Sinhaji. Together with activists of the FPI, *kyai* Karrar and the santri of Pesantren Ma'had Islami Darut Tauhid (MISDAT) were involved in the attack against the Shia community. actions that led to the burning and expulsion of the Shia Sampang. Likewise, a member of the advisory board of AUMA *kyai* Abdullah Khon Thobroni is the chairperson of the FPI in Madura. *Kyai* Thobroni further transformed his Pesantren Roudlatul Muta'allimin al-Aziziyah II as the base of FPI in Madura. Thus, there has been shared elites, joint-activities, and offices between the FPI and the AUMA. Thus, it is not surprising that my interlocutors said that "both the FPI and the AUMA are the same organisation."[36]

Besides the FPI, the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia/HTI is a secretly growing organisation in Sampang. Since the Indonesian government officially declared the HTI as a prohibited organisation, the state law does not prevent the HTI's activists to clandestinely disseminate its transnational ideology. The HTI is particularly active in southern part of Sampang and its influence particularly resonates among students of secular schools, wealthy individuals, and government officers.[37] For one of my interlocutor, the HTI successfully infiltrated local political parties, educational institutions, and Islamic organizations as well as the government bureaucracy. Even the NU in Madura failed to escape from the HTI's influence. The mode of infiltration surely further complicates the state's effort to recognise the banned HTI activism. Despite the fact that the HTI expands the organisation's influence to a wider society and other Muslim organisation, there has been no record of its activist in any criminal activities which is in contrast to the FPI.[38] Both the

---

[35] Interview with one of Sampang Ministry of Religion official, May 22, 2019.
[36] Interview with one police officer, May 21, 2019
[37] Focus Group Discussion (FGD), May 13, 2019.
[38] *Ibid.*

FPI dan the HTI exercise the same infiltration method. Winning the aspiration of *kyai* and recruiting him into the movement are a likely preferred method of mobilisation.[39] This strategic mobilisation is closely related to the central position of *kyai* in Madurese culture. Thus, it is not surprising that both the HTI and the FPI develops rapidly in Sampang. My interlocutors admitted that the member of FPI in Sampang reaches to 10.000 activists, while the HTI has around 500 activists. The activists of the FPI particularly centres in the northern part of Sampang, such as in the area of Karang Penang, Robatal, Ketapang and Sokabonah, whereas the FPI dominates in the Southern part of Sampang.[40]

Even though having been maintained as the guardian of Islamic traditionalism in Indonesian Muslim landscape, contemporary *kyai* in Madura has to face the attempts of both the HTI and the FPI to join the movements. As for my interlocutors, some Muslim leaders in Sampang were vulnerable to the HTI's *khilafah* campaign. The idea of establishing a global Islamic government under the banner of *khilafah* is an interactive ideological alternative for some my interlocutors. The failure of the Indonesian state to distribute economic resources properly and wars in many Muslim countries are references to justify the *khilafah* doctrine. Likewise, they are in the same boat when seeing the need of implementing *sharia* law for Indonesian Muslim. One of respected *kyai* further acknowledged that both the NU and HTI could be partners to implement *sharia* and to establish a global *khilafah*. Furthermore, he claims that the HTI opts of the opinion of Islamic traditionalism. The organisation does not challenge Islamic rituals, such as *tahlilan, dhibaiyah* and *yasinan,* which are popular among the traditionalist Muslim.[41] Another respected *kyai* who serves as an important leader of the MUI in Sampang further admitted his close relationship with the members of HTI. Despite unwillingly conveying his participation in the HTI, he maintained that

---

[39] Interview with one of *kyai*, May 23, 2019.
[40] Interview with one of Sampang Ministry of Religion official, May 22, 2019.
[41] *Ibid.*

the HTI and the NU are in agreement on the Sunni theology of *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*. In politics, rather that opting the opinion of the NU on the Pancasila state, he stressed the HTI's political campaign: that the Muslim government should be based on Islam and *sharia* as the constitution of the state.[42]

Thus, the rapidly growing influence of the FPI and the HTI, through the methods of widening networks to the NU's bases of *pesantren* and important *kyai,* serves as an alarm to the traditionalist NU. The NU's influence in the society has been confronted by the HTI and the FPI that actively carried out mobilisation activities. As an anecdote says "*kyai* in Sampang are NU, but thousands of *santri* are the member of FPI". The growing organisation structure of the FPI and the HTI in the heartland of Islamic traditionalism reserves indicates a challenge to the slogan of the NU as the backbone of moderate Islam. Thus, as this article argues, there has been a massive radicalisation among the traditionalist Indonesian Muslim. The FPI and the HTI are two leading organisations in contemporary Sampang that successfully winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim leaders in the region.

Conclusion

The proliferation of radical ideologies that circulates around the Muslim leaders, particularly the *kyai,* indicates a challenge to circulate the form of moderate Islam in Sampang. It tempers the long-admired slogan that *kyai* is the guardian of Islamic traditionalism and serves as one of main pillars of moderate Islam in Indonesia. Thus, as this article suggests, there has been a cross-cutting ideological point and, in scholarly speaking, a conceptual fallacy to over emphasis on the organisational structure while sacrificing the cultural aspects. The Muslim leaders of Sampang for instance has demonstrated a high-degree of radicalisation and they find the radical Muslim organisations as their organisational

---

[42] Interview with one of board of MUI Sampang, May, 23 2019.

alliances to the NU. Religious conservativism is the meeting narrative where the radical and the traditionalist are likely in agreement. One of ample indication of religious conservativism is the call for protecting the orthodox Islam -the truthful understanding of the religion- and the place of *sharia* in the public sphere. This religious conservativism further leads to a cross alliance -both ideological and organisational- between the traditionalist and the radical. As far as the Muslim leaders in Sampang are concerned, their Islamic interpretation surely mirrors the ideological underpinning of the radical, despite the fact that they are the members of the traditionalist NU. This finding reserves as a warning-alarm for the traditionalist NU for the massive radicalisation in Madura, the heartland of Islamic traditionalism in Indonesia. Despite the fact that terrorism narrative does not resonate among the Muslim leaders, their radical and intolerant narratives resorts as a first step for further acceleration that could potentially echo the terrorist's agenda.

Bibliography

Afdillah, Muhammad, "Dari Masjid ke Panggung Politik: Studi Kasus Peran Pemuka Agama dan Politisi dalam Konflik Kekerasan Agama antara Komunitas Sunni dan Syiah di Sampang Jawa Timur," *Thesis*, UGM, 2013.

Aziz, Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1964*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Azra, Azyumardi, *Indonesia, Islam, and Democracy: Dynamics in a Global Context*, Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2006.

Bashori, Luthfi. "Deklarasi Aliansi Ulama Madura (AUMA)." *http://www.pejuangislam.com/main.php?prm=karya&var=detail&id=1090*, accessed August, 27 2019.

Bligh, Alexander, "The Saudi Religious Elite (Ulama) as Participant in the Political System of the Kingdom," Syafiq A. Mughni (ed.). *An Antology of Contemporary Middle Eastern History*, Montreal, Quebec, Canada: Indonesia-Canada Islamic Higher Education Project, t.t.

Cowie, AP. (ed.), *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. Ed. IV. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Dhofier, Zamakhsyari, *The Pesantren Tradition: A Study of the Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of the Traditional Ideology of Islam in Java Tempe*, AZ: Arizona State University Program for Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series.

Freedman, Amy L. "Civil Society, Moderate Islam, and Politics in Indonesia and Malaysia." *Journal of Civil Society* Vol. 5, No. 2, 2009.

Green, Arnold H., "Political Attitudes and Activities of the Ulama in the Liberal Age: Tunisia as an Exceptional Case," Abubaker A. Bagader (ed.), *The Ulama in the Modern Muslim Nation-State,* Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1983.

Hamdi, Ahmad Zainul, "Kalim Religious Authority dalam Konflik Sunni-Syi'i Sampang Madura, *Islamica,* Vol 6. No. 2, 2012.

_____, "Syariat Islam dan Pragmatisme Politik: Studi Kasus Penerapan Syariat Islam di Pamekasan Madura," *Agama dan Kontestasi*

Ruang Publik: Islamisme, Konflik, dan Demokrasi, Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2011.

Hefner, Robert W. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, n.d.

Jamhari, "Mapping Radical Islam in Indonesia," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2003.

Kirmanj, Sherko, "The Relationship between Traditional and Contemporary Islamist Political Thought," *Middle East Review of International Affairs,* Vol. 12. No. 1, 2008.

Mas'ud, Abdurrahman, *Intelektual Pesantren: Perhelatan Agama dan Tradisi*, Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2004.

Mccauley, Clark & Sophia Moskalenko, "Measuring Political Mobilization: The Distinction between Activism and Radicalism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2009.

Miller, Judith. "The Challenge of Radical Islam," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 2, 1993.

Moghaddam, Fathali M., "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," *The American Psychological Association,* Vol. 60, No. 2, 2005.

Mulyono, Mohammad Tikno, "Dakwah Front Pembela Islam (FPI) di Kabupaten Bangkalan: Studi Kualitatif tentang Gerakan Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar," *thesis*, IAIN Sunan Ampel, 2009.

Muzadi, KH. Abdul Muchith, *NU dalam Perspektif Sejarah & Ajaran: Refleksi 65 Th. Ikut NU*, Surabaya: Khalista, 2007.

Nakamura, Mitsuo, "The Radical Traditionalism of the Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia: A Personal Account of the 26th National Congress, June 1979, Semarang," *Southeast Asian Studies,* Vol. 19. No. 2, 1981.

Pribadi, Yanwar. "An Abangan-like Group in a Santri Island: The Religious Identity of the Blater." In *Religious Diversity in Muslim-Majority States in Southeast Asia: Areas of Toleration and Conflict*, Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2014.

Saeed, Abdullah, "Trends in Contemporary Islam: A Preliminary Attempts at a Classification," *The Muslim World,* Vol. 97, 2007.

Saifuddin, "Kekerasan atas Nama Tuhan: Studi Kasus Kekerasan FPI Yogyakarta, *IN RIGHT: Jurnal Agama dan Hak Asasi Manusia,* Vol 1. No. 1, 2011.

Siddiq, KH. Achmad, *Khittah Nahdliyyah*, Surabaya: Khalista & LTN-NU Jawa Timur, 2006.

Team, *A Measure of the Extent of Socio-Religious Intolerance and Radicalism within Muslim Society in Indonesia*, Jakarta: Wahid Foundation and Lembaga Survei Indonesia, 2017.

Team, *Violent Extremism in Indonesia*, Washington: The International Republican Institute, 2017.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, "Pluralism, Democracy, and The Ulama," Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005.

_____, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change,* Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002.