New Trajectory of *Kyai's* Political Participation in Contemporary Indonesia: Rises, Challenges, and Opportunities

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Abstract

The political roles of Kyai post-1998 political Reformation has always been an interesting theme to be debated. This article discusses the rise, the challenges, and the various opportunities which open the new direction for kyai's political participation in Indonesia post-political Reformation. This article uses the political and social science approaches on qualitative data and literature review regarding kyai's political history in Indonesia. The results show that the openness of the post-Reformation politics opens doors for the kyai to enter electoral politics by using religious authorities (traditional and charismatic authorities in the Weberian perspective) also the extensive support network which follows the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) network, alumni, and tarekat. Kyai's entrance in the post-Reformation electoral politics have opened a new era in Indonesia's political history. A new generation of pesantren figures with good competences in the political views is born. The kyai's participation is basically a transformation from the subject culture to the participant culture.

Keywords: Reformation, Islamic politics, *santri*, traditional-charismatic-legal authority, subject-participant culture

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Introduction

Political reformation is a political phenomenon which happens in almost all countries (Wahab Khalifa 2016;Laremont 2014; Wilson 2009) . It changes the governmental regime and system, and also brought new political actors. *Kyai,* who was defined a mere Islamic figure in Indonesia's traditional Muslim community, often became an important actor in Indonesian politics, especially during the crucial stages of the political world, both before and after independence (Bourchier 2019; Zarkasyi 2008). Similarly, in post Reformation 1998, they did not only become the leaders of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), but they achieved higher political positions, such as becoming Regents, Governors, Ministers, and even becoming the president.

Essentially, a *Kyai* is a teacher or a mentor who teaches religious knowledge and give sermons in the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), *madrasah* (Islamic schools), *Masjid* (mosques), and *Musholla* (small mosques) (Bruinessen, 1990; Dhofier, 1982) . But, between their religious activities, they also have an extensive social role as part of those responsible for the surrounding environment (Horikoshi, 1987). According to Geertz, such a role is called the cultural broker. Cultural brokering is the act of bridging, connecting, or mediating groups of individuals from different cultural backgrounds to minimize conflict or to make changes (Jezewski and Sotnik, 2021; Machmudi 2015; Setiyani 2020).

In the perspective of classical Islamic politics, the *Kyai*'s political behaviors are parallel with the Sunni political perspectives, viewing politics as part of religion (Ciftci, Wuthrich, and Shamaileh 2019). In the Sunni political theory, religion requires political power to avoid difficulties in implementing the sharia (the Islamic laws). It means that Muslims require a certain political support to be able to observe their religion well. Thus, the Sunni political theory concludes that choosing a leader in Islam is *Fard al-Kifayah* (obligatory, yet the obligation fades if other Muslims have carried it out) (Ciftci 2019).

For the *Kyai,* entering politics is a religious task, instead of mere personal interests (Turmudi 2004, 325). In the Sunni political theory, as implemented by Indonesian *kyai,* politics and religion are inseparable (Asfar 2006, 33). They are parable to two sides of the coin – different but inseparable. No wonder, almost all political processes involve the *Kyai* (Pribadi 2013). Moreover, as a religious leader of the society, *Kyai* have influence, mass, mobilization capabilities – a near-perfect capital for a politician (Aspinall, and Meitzner, 2014; Aspinall et al. 2020; Alfirdaus 2013).

Kyai's political roles in Indonesia have historically been expressed long before the independence in 1945. The Demak Kingdom of 1481 was initiated by Islamic missionaries in Java Island, parable to *Kyai*. Some *Kyai* and *wali* (Islamic saints) established the Islamic kingdoms, such as Giri Kedaton Kingdom, Gresik, East Java, established by Sunan Giri (Mustopo 2001). During the Dutch colonialization, many *Kyai* of *pesantren* carried out armed resistances**.** Post-independence, the involvement of *Kyai* in politics increased, as they established political parties and were involved in the first General Election in 1955. In the New Order, the hustle and bustle of national politics always involved *Kyai*, though it may be limited (Amir 2004) due to political marginalization and repressive actions of the Soeharto regime (Crouch 1986). Some influential *Kyai* were checked and jailed (Pauker 1981).

The 1998 Reformation Era brought a new direction in national politics, from repressive to democratic (Bourchier 2019). The *Kyai* used this condition to establish parties, to become legislative members, regional leaders, and the president. The *Kyai*'s political roles are not limited to becoming audience or subsidiary players, as they enter into positions of power through tight competition (Machmudi 2015; Zarkasyi 2008).

This article discusses and analyzes the post-1998 Reformation political rise, challenges, and new opportunities of the Indonesian *Kyai*. The authors believe that the *Kyai*'s entrance to politics is not merely due to worldly motives, even though it cannot be ignored if we analyze the political actors' actions, but it is also motivated by certain theological perspectives which regard politics as inseparable from religion. This argument does not have to be sensed in the tight framework of Sunni politics, but it can be extended to more substantial spiritual values, where justice, equality, and even democracy is viewed as religious callings which must be manifested through political struggles. Even so, when the *kyai* enter politics, they must maintain and balance religious and political authority. The two are regarded as ideal to be juxtaposed, though difficult to practice. In this last case, a *kyai* maintains his two authorities through religious charisma and strong network with other *kyai* and *pesantren* alumni.

Political Participation as a Theoretical Framework

The study on political participation is inseparable Almond and Verba's analyses on political culture, regarding political orientations, behaviors, and values reflected in the people's political attitudes and behaviors. Every citizen self-identifies with stately symbols

and institutions, political figures, legal instruments from political systems, and their roles in the political system. The citizen's orientation patterns in the political systems determine the political culture classification types (G. A. Almond and Verba 1989). The orientation includes the cognitive, affective, and evaluative aspects directed to the political system, input and output aspects, and also to some individuals as political actors.

There are three kinds of political culture: (1) the parochial culture: individuals or groups that are not in politics, unaware of the government nor their policies, unaware of their involvement in the political process, (2) the subject culture: they are aware of the state, the politics, and the policies' impacts but are merely recipients of policies, (3) the participant culture: aware of the government, political processes, output (Almond and Verba 1989; Dalton and Welzel 2014). They listen to the political activists' opinions of the state. They express their interest in the political process by giving voices through political institutions. Even so, Almond and Verba realize those three cultures are ideal based on their periods, and the three are not always present in every era.

The participant culture concept opens the road to the political participation theory. According to Almond and Verba, 'Political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that . . . aim at influencing the government, either by affecting the choice of government personnel or by affecting the choices made by government personnel.' (G. A. Almond and Verba 1989, 3–4) Then, participation is, "the action or fact of partaking, having or forming a part of,". Then, that concept is strengthened and extended by other researchers (Teorell 2006; Brady 1999). Participation is related to the decision-making process, program execution, obtaining of benefits, and program evaluation. Political participation is the active participation of a person or a group of people in political life, by choosing a state leader, both directly and indirectly, and to influence public policies. Such activities include voting in general elections, participating in public meetings, becoming members of a party or an interest group, and contacting the state officials or the parliament members (Budiarjo 2007).

The political participation may be grouped into: (1) Active participation, includes making a proposal on a public policy different from the existing policies, giving criticisms and suggestions on policies, paying tax and choosing governmental leaders; (2) Passive participation is obeying the government, accepting and implementing their policies (Dalton & Welzel 2014).
Political participation may also be categorized based on the number of actors: (1)

Individual participation: personal; (2) Collective participation: the citizens' collective activities in influencing the authority, which is differentiated into: (a) conventional political participation, like the general election; (b) non-conventional collective participation: unauthorized strike, the control of public buildings, and riots (Midgley 1986). In terms of its aggressiveness, the collective participation is divided into: (a) the strong action, which must fulfill these conditions: it is anti-regime in the context of violating the regulations on a normal political participation (violates the law); it may disturb the governmental function; and is a collective activity carried out by the non-elite; (b) the weak action (Almond & Verba 1989).

Dynamics of *Kyai's* Political Participation

In the modern Indonesian literature, *Kyai* is a figure identical to religious matters – as teachers, mentors, and *pesantren* owners (Geertz, 1960). This was initially the role of Islamic missionaries, called the Wali Songo (The Nine Islamic Saints), who spread Islam in the Java island from the 13th to the 15th century. The great *kyai* in Java have knowledge genealogy from Wali Songo. The *Kyai* then established Islamic education centers called *pesantren.* This may be seen from the case of Kyai Kasan Besari's *pesantren* in Tegalsari Ponorogo established on 1726-1749, regarded as a pioneering *pesantren* in Java (Lombard 2005).

The word *Kyai* came from Javanese – *Yai* and *Ki* – used to call a highly respected old person (Dhofier, 1982). Then, it became a way of calling religious teachers in villages, developing into a general way of calling religious teachers in *pesantren*. It is a socio-religious title which determines one's prestige in the society. In the Sundanese culture of West Java, the *Ajengan* is a more popular term. Meanwhile, in Aceh, the terms *guruta/anreguruta* are more popular (Isbah 2020, 70–72) – and the term *Teungku* has an equal meaning with *Kyai* (Wahid 2012, 247). Meanwhile, in West Nusa Tenggara it is known as *tuan guru.* The Javanese people also acknowledge the name '*Gus'* for the *Kyai*'s sons meaning 'the young *Kyai'.* Yet, it may be attached to a person who has become an elderly *kyai*, like Gus Dur (the nickname of a former Indonesian president) is more familiar than Kyai Abdurrahman Wahid.

The *kyai* title is different from the ulama title as the former is natural, meanwhile the latter is due to a position in a religious organization, for example as an administrator of Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI/The Indonesian Islamic Scholar Assembly; (Hasyim 2020;

Ichwan 2005)or because of the profound religious knowledge from pursuing education in that field (Tayob 2010). In some Islamic countries, there are other terms such as *mufti* and *imam* with different meanings.

There are three varieties of *Kyai* based on their knowledge and authority, namely *Kyai pesantren*, *Kyai kampung* (of villages), and *Kyai pengulon* (headman). Kyai *pesantren* leads or owns *pesantren* or traditional Islamic education institutions in Indonesia since the 18th century. They teach classic Islamic books or *kitab kuning* (Anwar 2020b). *Kyai kampung* teaches the Holy Koran, gives sermons, and leads Islamic activities in villages, such as *slametan* (communal feast)*, tahlil* (praising God) and *Yasin* (reading the *Yasin* chapter) events, or sending prayers to the deceased ancestors. They do not own Islamic boarding schools, yet their presence is very vital in the society (Alfirdaus 2013; Setiyani 2020). Meanwhile, the *Kyai pengulon* is an administrative official in Islamic weddings and divorces at district-level Religious Affairs Office (Yusuf and Taufiq 2020). They generally work as civil servants. Their social roles are rather limited, though they may simultaneously be *Kyai kampung* or *Kyai pesantren*. The *Kyai pesantren* and *kampung* are mostly affiliated with NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia.

The studies on *Kyai*'s political participation is inseparable from NU's history as a political party in the 1955 General Election, which involved the *Kyai* (Bruinessen, 1995). This marked the *Kyai*'s relations with processes of electoral politics. In 1973, the NU party fused with PPP due to the New Order's policy of political party simplification (Bush 2000). This NU-PPP fusion ended in NU Muktamar (Islamic Convention) in Situbondo on 1984. There was the Declaration to return to the Khittah NU 1926—where NU refocuses on da'wa, education, and the society (Damm 2018) , led by KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (commonly known as Gus Dur) General Manager of Nahdlatul Ulama Great Administration (PBNU) and Kyai Ahmad Shiddiq as Rais Am Syuriah PBNU. This group developed the jargon, "NU is everywhere and will not go anywhere", showing that NU will not be structurally tied to PPP and may affiliate with any political power (Bush, 2000). It resulted to two *Kyai* groups: those consistent with the Khittah and those supporting the PPP.

Even so, it does not mean the *kyai* affiliated with the 'Khittah' group do not participate in politics during the New Order Era. Even, some regard the 'Back to Khittah' as actually a high-level political game played by NU under Gus Dur's control. The bargain

between NU and the New Order regime was clearly visible. At the end of the New Order Era, NU arrives as one of the strongest and most respected civil opposition powers.

Thus, it is no wonder that post-1998 Reformation which was marked by the fall of the Soeharto Regime, the Khittah NU group led by Gus Dur established the PKB (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa/*The National Awakening Party) party, facilitated by PBNU. Gus Dur's decision to establish PKB is often questioned by his oppositions as it is deemed as a violation of the Khittah (Rickard 2009). Through PKB, Gus Dur succeeded to become Republic of Indonesia's fourth president in 1999. Various internal PKB conflicts led some *kyai* to establish new political parties, or to join other existing parties (Bush 2000).

The *Kyai* post-Reformation political participation is rather variative. There are at least three *Kyai* groups in the politics – those affiliated with PKB and PPP (in the start of the Reformation, they were also affiliated with PKU, SUNI, and PKNU parties); those affiliated with nationalist parties; and those who are not structurally part of any political parties, but are involved in political processes, especially as legislative candidates, head of the region candidates, and they provide help, support, and facilities for the success of a candidate (Baswedan 2004). It leads to variations of the *Kyai's* political participation (Bush, 2000). *First*, as political party leaders who elect themselves as legislative members or as executive leaders. *Second,* as political party leaders who do not elect themselves. *Third,* as political party administrators, either electing or not electing themselves. *Fourth,* non-political party administrators, electing themselves as legislative members or as executive leaders. *Fifth,* giving support, help, and facilities towards a candidate's success. *Sixth,* evaluating the government's leadership.

Democratization of post-Reformation politics have brought many *kyai* to enter the political world with new roles. The constellation of national politics, the parties' internal political dynamics, the competition between politicians in electoral politic events, and the unstable institutionalization of democracy led to dynamics of the *kyai*'s political participation. This does not include the fact that even though they have entered politics, *kyai* are demanded to fulfill their religious roles, which are not always in line with political demands.

Rises and Challenges of *Kyai's* Political Participation

The Reformation results to the rise of *Kyai*'s political participation. This rise cannot be separated from the New Order regime's repression towards Islamic political

power – even though the success of that era cannot be separated from the Islamic support, especially the the *Kyai pesantren* though Ansor youth organization which contributed in eradicating PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*/The Indonesian Communist Party) (McGregor 2009; Schawarz 1994) ;Robinson 2017). The *Kyai*'s role was vital in mobilizing the society oppose PKI (Machmudi 2008, 72–74). Yet, this support was not enough for the regime at that time to trust the *kyai* to take a significant role in the state management as one of the Islamic political powers.

To weaken the potentially threatening political powers, the New Order regime under General Soeharto's leadership implemented the *depolitization* policy (Zarkasyi 2008, 241). The *depolitization* program started with the simplification of political parties, where Islamic parties, including the Nahdlatul Ulama party, was combined into PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*/Unified Development Party); nationalist-secular parties became PDI (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*/The Indonesian Democratic Party); meanwhile, pro-government group was Golongan Karya (Golkar), which participated in the general election, but did not identify itself as a political party (Woodward 2008). Apart from Golkar, the regime also inserted the military as legislative members, with the composition of 20%. The regime discarded Islamic political power through the *depolitization* and party fusion policies (Meitzner, 2016). Worse, many political repressions were carried out so that the *Kyai* in PPP would move to Golkar. They were intimidated by the military and the police officers, and some were even detained as they were deemed to instigate the government (Schawarz 1994).

Apart from that, to prevent the rise of the Islamic politics, the New Order issued the Law No. 8 of 1985 which obliged all organizations including the political parties to use the Pancasila principle. This was based on the history on the Old Order era, where the Islamic parties that participated in the General Election, such as NU, Masyumi, Parmusi and PSII used Islam as their ideologies. The regime's fear had a basis as the 1971 General Election results in the New Order era showed that religion-based parties had a rather great support from the society, especially NU (18,56 %) and Parmusi (5,5 %) parties (Fossati 2019). Before that, the religion-based political parties were highly critical; some even undermined the government, like Masyumi (McGregor 2009; Zarkasyi 2008). Apart from the political parties, the largest religious organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah led by *Kyai* and ulama' must also adapt.

Then, the New Order then softened to the Islamic groups at late 1980's. The peak was the establishment of ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*/The Association of Muslim Scholars Indonesia) in 1990. Yet, most NU *Kyai* led by Gus Dur rejected to join it, as it was deemed as the regime's way to trap Muslims (Salim 2011; Jones 2013). Through his spokesperson, Gus Dur and other Islamic figures regard that ICMI's establishment was for the regime's momentum political interest. They perceive that ICMI will cause a new religion-based sectarianism – an unhealthy thing for Indonesia's nationalism development in the future.

Soeharto's fall marked a new era in the Indonesian politics. Islamic groups, including the *kyai* community entered the political world. There were at least 17 new Islamic parties which participated in the first post-Reformation General Election on 1999, and some of the big parties led by *Kyai* were PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa/The National Awakening Party), PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan/The United Development Party) and PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional/The National Mandate Party) (Baswedan 2004). Apart from that, there were Partai Bulan Bintang/ The Crescent Star Party (PBB), Partai Keadilan/ The Justice Party/Prosperous Justice Party and other small parties which did not pass the parliamentary threshold in the 2004 election due to inadequate support (Woodward 2008). In that era, Gus Dur was chosen as the president after obtaining support from the Islamic parties in the parliament. He defeated Megawati from the party which won the general election, PDIP. Gus Dur's election as president marked a new era in *kyai'*s politics in Indonesia, where the *kyai* are not only regarded as leaders of *pesantren* nor as servants of the ummah, but they also compete in achieving various prestigious political positions.

But this is not easy for the *Kyai*. Decades of political repression make many of them unprepared to enter politics. Lack of competence in managing the government led to the unideal development of some regions led by *kyai* (Machmudi 2008). Their entrance to electoral politics which led them to obtain various political positions is not deliberately simultaneous with the birth of a democratic political climate and culture, neither an accountable governance. Some of the regional leaders with the *Kyai* background were even involved with corruption and ended in prison, as what happened to Bangkalan Regent**,** Kyai Fuad Amien (Karim 2000).

The *Kyai*'s role in politics caused high expectations from the people on a political leadership model which upholds morals, egalitarian values and are moderate. This is not without reason as apart from being a religious leader who always preach for the observation of religious values, the *kyai* are also known as *pesantren* leaders who are so far known as having an inclusive, moderate, tolerant, and non-absolute style of Islamic leadership (Fealy 2007). Unfortunately, it is not seldom for these high expectations to end in disappointment. In the end, this destroys the people's belief to the *kyai* who enter politics.

The fall of the *kyai's* charisma also happens due to their entrance in politics which is not followed by moral values in their political behavior. The congregation which was before loyal as the *kyai's* followers felt abandoned when the *kyai* become busy with their political interests. The *kyai's* incompetence in balancing their roles as religious leaders and as political actors decreases their charisma. Even, a *tarekat* dissolved when the *kyai* was busier with his political interests, as what happened to Kyai Jauhar Nehru in Kediri (Anwar 2020a).

Apart from that, the Kyai faced the strong challenge of political nepotism in the current of power or in leading political parties. It is a political phenomenon which often happen in countries without a strong democratic institutionalization. This also happened to post-Reformation Indonesia, where the democratic process has only entered its initial stage. They are not seldom faced with the strong pressure of their families and friends' interests. Gus Dur recruited some close people during his presidential period, including Matori Abdul Jalil, Alwi Sihab, Muhaimin Iskandar and Hasyim Wahid as ministers or as political party leaders (Hamayotsu 2011). In the end, this resulted to conflicts between friends and families, for instance Alwi Sihab vs Choirul Anam, Muhaemin Iskandar vs Ali Masykur Musa, and even between Muhaemin Iskandar vs Yenny Wahid (Gus Dur's daughter) who fought for the leadership position in PKB (Yunanto and Hamid 2013).This conflict then resulted to the birth of some new parties, such as PKNU (Partai Kebangkitan Nahdlatul Ummat/The Party of Nahdlatul Ummat's Awakening) led by Choirul Anam, and PIB (Partai Indonesia Baru/The New Indonesia Party) led by Yenny Wahid.

Even with these challenges, the *Kyai's* political role becomes more apparent, giving contributions to the democratic process. The challenges do not decrease the *Kyai's* desire and practical roles – even, it further matures their political performances, especially in managing internal conflicts.

Political Roles and Contributions of *Kyai*

The *Kyai*'s political participation became more extensive since the 1999 General Election (Zarkasyi 2008). The political openness resulted from the 1998 political Reformation led the *Kyai* to form political parties and to be more extensively involved in stately activities (Fossati, 2019), compared to their roles in the previous eras. For instance, during the New Order, their political participation was only limited to PPP with a marginal strength in the parliament. Meanwhile, the *Kyai's* participation in Golkar was only as leaders or members of political wings under the aegis of *Majlis Dakwah Islamiyah* (MDI/The Islamic Da'wa Assembly) (Meuleman 2011). Some were central or regional legislative members without reaching top offices. They were generally used as the regime's political legitimization instruments. Different from the previous eras, after the Reformation, the *kyai* had the space to build a new vehicle by establishing parties – even reaching the highest position in the government.

One of the important political vehicles of the *Kyai* is PKB's establishment. This party was established under PBNU's mandate on on July 23rd, 1998 in Jakarta, initiated by Kyai Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), Kyai Ilyas Ruchiyat, Kyai Munasir, Kyai Mustofa Bisri, Kyai Muchit Muzadi (Bush 2000, 76). Then, the party leadership was filled by Kyai Ma'ruf Amin and Kyai Cholil Bisri as Head and Vice of Syura Assembly, and Matori Abdul Jalil and Muhaimin Iskandar as the General Manager and Secretary General.

PKB's participation in the first 1999 General Election obtained the third rank (12,6% from the total votes) (Fossati 2019, 120). It led Gus Dur to become President and also gave several ministerial positions to the *kyai*. Apart from that, some *Kyai* also occupied regional-level political positions such as becoming governors and mayors. In this era, the *Kyai* did not only encourage other people to elect or to be elected, yet they also became the party leaders and even personally elect themselves to become legislatives and executives (Alfirdaus 2013; Zarkasyi 2008). Apart from PKB, the *Kyai*'s political roles were also expressed through PPP, especially after it was led by Hamzah Haz with NU background (1998-2007). Some *Kyai* involved in expanding the party include Kyai. Maimun Zubair (Rembang) and Kyai Alawi Muhammad (Madura). In the 1999 General Election, PPP was placed in the fourth position, obtaining 10,7% of the total votes (Hamayotsu 2011). It placed some *Kyai* in strategic positions, both in the central and in the regional governments. After the 1999 General Election, vote obtainment of PKB and PPP

experienced high and low tides, parallel with the impacts of internal conflicts due to the fight to become the parties' leaders, and the strengthening of new nationalist parties which also developed the nationalist-religious platforms to attract the Islamic constituents.

Apart from PKB and PPP, the *Kyai* also participated in other political parties. Some were Islamic-based ones such as PAN, PBB and PKS, and others were part of nationalist parties such as Golkar, Demokrat, Hanura, Nasdem and even PDIP. Yet, their positions were not as strong compared to those in PKB and PPP, if viewed from the basis of support, as voters were from NU and *pesantren*. Some *Kyai* figures have become legislative administrators and members of national-secular political parties, such as Kyai Hasib Wahab and Kyai Ahmad Roziki (PDIP), Kyai Slamet Effendy Yusuf, Kyai As'ad Umar (Golkar). There are also some *kyai* who entered the secular-nationalist parties through their wing organizations, in line with the tendency to develop these religion-based wing organizations (Fossati 2019).

The stories of *Kyai* in the political contests are not only about successes but also about failures. Kyai Hasyim Muzadi and Kyai Sholahudin Wahid who competed in the 2004 Presidential Election experienced failures. The former partnered up with Megawati as the Presidential candidate, meanwhile the latter partnered up with Wiranto. This competitive contest was participated by four candidate pairs of Presidents/Vice Presidents. In the preliminary election, the two passing pairs were Yudhoyono-Jusuf Kalla and Megawati-Hasyim, and in the end Yudhoyono-Jusuf Kalla won. During that political contest, Kyai Muzadi was the General Manager of PBNU in the 1999-2004 period and the administrator of the al-Hikam Islamic boarding schools in Malang and Depok. Meanwhile, Kyai Sholahudin was an administrator of PBNU and an educator of Tebuireng Jombang *pesanten*, brother of Gus Dur. Meanwhile, Jusuf Kalla was an NU South Sulawesi administrator and figure.

Aside from the developing political dynamics, the post-Reformation political participation of *kyai* has given new colors to Indonesia's politics. For example, many parties believe that Gus Dur has given a significant contribution to the post-Reformation Indonesian democratization process. Even though his ruling period was only two years, but he gave great contributions to the nation's next journey, including revoking the Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967 and issuing the Presidential Decree No. 6 of 2000 on the Kong Hu Cu religion's acknowledgement, and also establishing Chinese New Year an official national holiday (Freedman 2003, 447). Apart from that, Gus Dur also carried

out a great breakthroughs, for example by eradicating the militia's dual function Meanwhile, the freedom of the press started with the issuing of the Law No. 40 of 1999 at President Habibie's time, enhanced by Gus Dur, stopping the freedom of expression castration for 32 years during the New Order regime.

Apart from Gus Dur, Kyai Ma'ruf Amin -- 2019-2024 Vice President – contributed in developing sharia economy and sharia banking in Indonesia. Formerly, he was the Chairperson of Indonesia's Muslim Scholar Assembly (MUI) and also the Chairperson of the National Sharia Board (*Dewan Syariah Nasional*/DSN), the government's only partner in formulating sharia economy policies. MUI's position strengthens after Kyai Ma'ruf's ruling. He was appointed by President Yudhoyono as a Presidential Advisory Council member (Bourchier 2019). During his ruling as the Vice President, the development of the sharia economy became the main priority (Saat 2019).

Apart from that, the Ministry of Religion position is mostly led by *Kyai*. At the start of the Reformation era, this ministry was held by Kyai Tolchah Hasan, a *pesantren* figure and an NU administrator. Then, it was succeeded by Prof Said Agil al-Munawar at President Megawati's time. At President Yudhoyono's time, this ministry was held by Kyai Maftuh Basyuni, a bureaucrat with the *Kyai* background. The next ministers were Surya Dharma Ali and Lukman Hakim, both are PPP politicians and family of *Kyai*. At the start of his second period, President Jokowi trusted Fakhrur Rozi, a retired General, to lead Ministry of Religion. But, at the end of 2020, he was substituted by Kyai Yaqut Cholil Qaumas, Chairperson of Ansor, a wing organization of NU and son of Kyai Cholil Bisri Rembang, the founder of PKB. From the seven ministers, only one did not have the *Kyai* background. This situation is highly different from that in the New Order era, where for 32 years, no Ministers of Religion were *Kyai*.

The 1998 political reformation is a road to reach the maturity of *kyai*'s political processes. Social capital and experience in interacting with socio-political powers makes their position stronger and more considered. This situation leads to a new phase after experiencing high and low tides, from rising, falling, and rising again.

New Phase of Kyai's Political Participation

How the *Kyai* simultaneously maintain religious and political authorities is always a hot topic to discuss. In Weber's perspective, authority is defined as "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons."

Based on its source, there are three kinds of authorities: (1) rational, based on normative legal regulations, (2) traditional, based on traditional beliefs, and (3) charismatic, based on one's certain trusted characters (Weber 1978, 212).

The *kyai*'s authority is basically traditional and charismatic. They are complied with by the congregation based on *santri'*s traditional values in respecting teachers. The *santri* do not regard them as mere Islamic teachers, but are also the road to safety. Meanwhile, the politicians' authority is sourced from legal regulations, where the people's compliance is due to the existence of sanctions for law-violators.

It is not easy for a *kyai* to play those two roles harmoniously. On one hand, they are *pesantren* administrators and caregivers with various activities and responsibilities in teaching the students religious knowledge. But on the other hand, they have activities in the public spaces in managing political parties. Some even become legislative or executive state officials with demands which sometimes against the *santri* norms (Isbah 2020). The kyai carried out some methods to play these two authorities. Some regard politics as side-activities and prioritize *pesantren* activities. But there are those whose political positions become a profession, leaving *pesantren* affairs and submitting it to other family members (Alfirdaus 2013). The second model is usually chosen if the *kyai* must temporarily move to the capital city or the provincial capital as a demand of the politics. Even so, they never really let go of their *pesantren* responsibilities and still monitor it from afar.

Even so, the *kyai* still depend on their traditional and charismatic authorities as important capitals in entering politics. It must be remembered that authority is always related to the person's interests (Haugaard 2018, 18). Apart from the religious motives which encourage *kyai* to enter politics, the interest of power cannot be ignored when discussing *kyai* in politics. For them, political interests are easier to reach by using their traditional and charismatic authorities. *Kyai'*s traditional authority is sourced from *pesantren* and religious institutions such as *tarekat, majlis ta'lim,* and formal education institutions. Muslims enroll their children to deepen religious knowledge in *pesantren,* even up to college. After graduating from it, the alumni take part in more extensive professional and communal spaces. Some even establish more *pesantren* and educational institutions (Pribadi 2013). From this process, a strong network of alumni was formed through satellite *pesantren* which support one and another. The *pesantren* network is also made through marital ties, as easily found in Jombang, Madura, Rembang, Kediri, and other places (Turmudi 2004).

Apart from *pesantren,* there are also *tarekat* organizations led by *Kyai*. Sometimes, the *tarekat* leader also leads *pesantren*, such as Kyai Asrori of Kedinding, Surabaya; Kyai Mustain Romli of Peterongan, Jombang; Tuan Guru Turmudzi of West Nusa Tenggara; Habib Luthfi bin Yahya of Pekalongan, etc. *Tarekat* congregations have some branches in several cities, with tens until hundreds of thousands of members. One of the main characteristics of the *tarekat* members is the compliance to the teacher or *Mursyid* (Syukur and Muhaya 2015, 215).

Apart from *pesantren* and *tarekat* institutions, some Kyai manage *majlis ta'lim* which organize a routine Koranic recitation both at their homes or elsewhere (Fauzi 2012). The late religious lector Kyai Zainudin MZ, who is known as the missionary (*da'i*) of a million congregations is a*Kyai* who neither has *pesantren* nor *tarekat*. There are also those who manage educational institutions for all levels, up to the university level (Setiyani 2020). This fourth group of *Kyai* is spread in many villages and cities with extensive influence.

The *kyai's* political authority often depends on the strength of their religious authority, which now depends on the following people's change of awareness. As long as the tradition of respect and compliance based on the *kyai's* traditional values and charisma are maintained in the *santri* community, the *kyai's* political authority can still be maintained. Even though there are dynamics in the *santri's* communal life, but the traditional values are well-maintained, especially in the *pesantren* communities. In the middle of the various challenges towards the *kyai* authority, especially with the rampant emergence of *salafi* Islamic scholars (Wahid 2012). the *kyai's* authority is still maintained. Even, the *Kyai's* institutions improvise and adapt with external changes, for instance by providing various non-religion study programs as demanded by the modern society. Some even developed economic wings through cooperatives, retails, loans, and even sharia banks as a method to compete in the modern economy (Syukur & Muhaya, 2015; Fauzi, 2012). Generally, the people's trust towards the *pesantren* does not decrease, proven by the still-high interests and numbers of *santri.*

Through the *kyai* authority, the post-Reformation political participation of *kyai* has opened a new era in Indonesia's political history. A new generation of *pesantren* figures with good competences in politics is born. The *Kyai's* political communication does not only depend on PKB and PPP. This opens a more extensive role for the *kyai's* political

participation. This is also possible with Indonesia's political change, where many nationalist-secular political parties shift, with different motives and degrees, to become nationalist-religious due to the great niche of Muslim voters.

Conclusion

Basically, the *kyai* obtained their authority from the maintenance of traditional values on respect and compliance to Islamic scholars among the *santri* community. In this community, the compliance to *kyai* is often absolute, as in line with the tradition of the relations between the *mursyid* and the followers in *tarekat*. A *kyai* does not only teach Islamic knowledge, but they are also a road to security in the Hereafter. Another important authority of the *kyai* is sourced from charisma. Different from a General's authority, for instance; the kyai's authority is sourced from the people's voluntary acknowledgement. In the context of the kyai figure, this acknowledgement is not only limited to measurable qualifications, such as profound knowledge, but it also encompasses their special characters as a person who is close to God. This latter belief then creates the kyai's charismatic authority. These two authorities become important capitals for the kyai to enter politics. If a kyai succeeds in obtaining a certain political position, he will collect three authorities in hand.

The *kyai's* entrance to the political world is basically a transformation from subject culture to participant culture. As an actor who is responsible for the congregation's religious life, *kyai* acknowledge that state policies influence the people's lives including in the religious aspect. This awareness then transforms into active politics through their involvement in establishing political parties or in fighting for strategic political positions if there are opportunities, due to the change of the national politics. The 1998 political reformation opens opportunities and spaces for *kyai* to enter politics and to participate in political processes just like politicians in general.

With the various dynamics which are not seldom disappointing, the *kyai's* entrance to politics gave birth to a new era in Indonesia's political history. The movement initiated by the precedents more than a decade ago has led to the birth of educated *pesantren*-based figures who confidently enter politics. Because of good education, they have the competence to become successful politicians, not merely depending on their traditional authority and charisma.

Even so, the *kyai* with political career are continually faced with demands to balance the religions and the political authorities. It cannot be denied that the religious

authority is their initial portal in politics. Their ability to maintain religious authorities is a crucial key in the sustainability of their political career. The *pesantren*'s flexibility in facing changes, combined with the tradition of the *santri*'s compliance, also the extensive *pesantren* alumni network are important factors for the *kyai* to maintain their political careers. Because of that, no matter how high their political careers are, they can never let go of their traditional authority and charisma, which are *pesantren* and *tarekat*.

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