

## **The Waning of Kiai's Role: Transformation from Cultural Broker to Political Broker in Regional Head Election**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the transformation of the role of Kiai in the local political context, focusing on their role as cultural broker to become political broker in Banten Regional Head Election. This research involved a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with Kiai in the Banten area and an analysis of related documents. The study's results found a change in the role of the Kiai from being a cultural broker responsible for spreading religious and cultural teachings to the public into a political broker involved in the political process and regional head elections. Kiai not only acts as spiritual leaders but also become determinants in the local political process, including in the regional head elections. Kiai uses their religious influence and authority to influence political preferences and voter behavior. They also have access to political networks and play a role in coordinating political support for certain regional head candidates. This research provides a better understanding of the transformation of Kiai's role from a cultural broker to a political broker in the political process. This study implies that it is a basis for developing a comprehensive understanding of local political dynamics in Indonesia and the role of religion in the political process.

Keywords: Cultural broker; Kiai; political broker; Regional Head Election.

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi peran Kiai dalam konteks politik lokal, dengan fokus pada peran mereka sebagai penghubung budaya (cultural intermediaries) menjadi penghubung politik (political intermediaries) dalam konteks Regional Head Election (Pemilihan Kepala Daerah) di Provinsi Banten. Penelitian ini melibatkan studi kualitatif yang melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan Kiai di daerah Banten serta analisis dokumen terkait. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa terjadi perubahan peran Kiai dari sebagai cultural intermediaries yang bertanggung jawab dalam menyebarkan ajaran agama dan budaya kepada masyarakat menjadi political intermediaries yang terlibat dalam proses politik dan pemilihan kepala daerah. Kiai tidak hanya berperan sebagai pemimpin spiritual, tetapi juga menjadi penentu dalam proses politik lokal, termasuk dalam pemilihan kepala daerah. Kiai menggunakan pengaruh dan otoritas keagamaan mereka untuk mempengaruhi preferensi politik dan perilaku pemilih. Mereka juga memiliki akses ke jaringan politik dan berperan dalam mengoordinasikan dukungan politik untuk calon kepala daerah tertentu. Penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang transformasi peran Kiai dari cultural intermediaries ke political intermediaries pada proses politik. Implikasi penelitian ini dapat digunakan sebagai dasar untuk mengembangkan pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang dinamika politik lokal di Indonesia dan peran agama dalam proses politik.

Kata kunci: Cultural broker; Kiai; political broker; Pemilu Kepala Daerah.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ideally, the role of the Kiai is analogous to that of social prophets who perceive the path of the prophets (Syari'ati, 1983). The Kiai's role should be similar to when the Prophet preached goodness and virtue and set an example in the social realm. Consequently, the responsibilities of Kiai are fulfilled not only through assemblies, pulpits, and podiums but also through social and political movements involving

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practical actions. The exemplary method (*Uswah Hasanah*) is a religious movement based on the principles of morality, defending the oppressed people (*Mustadh'afin*) and promoting human rights (Wiryawan & Nurdin, 2022). Therefore, they will avoid politics and power, which they view as corrupt by permitting evil to persist. It is Kiai's responsibility to society. In practice, they must also raise the flag of idealism and avoid being swept away by the turbulent waves of pragmatism that prioritize the coffers of power.

However, contemporary studies on the role of the Kiai indicate a shift from the idealized image of the Kiai as guardians of social and political morality. In carrying out their social and political responsibilities, Kiai prioritizes pragmatic concerns. The sarcasm in society regarding the role of the Kiai, who tends to "defend those who pay," is a sign that the Kiai's social position is decreasing. The question is whether political reforms involving democratization, liberalization, and everything else that encourages society to be trapped in a hedonistic, consumerist culture have also affected Kiai, which has advantages over the general community.

Geertz (1960) and Turmudi (2004) conducted a fascinating investigation into Kiai. In "The Religion of Java." Geertz provided a framework for comprehending the influence of Javanese Kiai. Geertz's studies also highlighted Indonesian political issues in general (Geertz, 1960). Nonetheless, his research has received some criticism. Woodward (1989), for instance, argued that Geertz has failed to grasp the nature of the evolution of Islam in Java. While Hodgson (1974), in *The Future of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, saw that Geertz failed because the modernist Islam perspective too influenced him, Geertz succeeded. Despite this criticism, Geertz has made significant contributions to studying Kiai politics. His work is frequently cited in other studies on Islam in Java.

Then, Endang Turmudi (2004), in his work "Perselingkuhan Kiai dan Kekuasaan focuses on the Kiai and Islamic boarding school," examined the Kiai's close relationship with the larger sociopolitical situation. In his study, he discussed three different forms of Kiai: Islamic boarding school Kiai, *tarekat* Kiai, and political Kiai. Additionally, two essential aspects of Kiai's leadership are highlighted. First, Kiai's strong attachment to Islam and, as a result, his charismatic leadership are widely acknowledged. Second, each Kiai's independence. According to their allegiance to various local Kiai, Muslims are socially fragmented due to the independence of the Kiai from other Kiai. It indicates that, according to Turmudi, power has spread. This structural situation generates the possibility of political conflict among the Kiai, thereby exposing the unity of the *ummah*. The firm attachment of the Kiai to Islam has also resulted in numerous political conflicts with religious justifications. Although their research is used as a reference in this study, studies on this topic differ in many ways from the methodology employed.

This study seeks to analyze the transformation of the role of Kiai in the local political context, focusing on their transition from cultural broker to a political broker in the context of the Regional Head Election in Banten Province. It is necessary to examine the role of the Kiai or ulema as an informal leader of the Muslim community to comprehend the position of the Kiai as an informal leader of the Muslim community. Changes in the lives of Muslims will impact the conduct of the Kiai leadership and their relationship with society.

This analysis reveals a general pattern in Kiai's leadership, which explains the limits of Kiai's political influence in society. Even though the Kiai's position is still generally undisputed, their influence in the political realm demonstrates that there has been a shift. The influence of the Kiai in politics is restricted to those with strong emotional connections to the Kiai.

As holders of religious authority, the Kiai are in a respectable position to influence and direct the behavior of their congregation. However, Kiai's influence is rendered meaningless when his authority is regarded as incompatible with his religious authority position.

## **METHOD**

This study examines Kiai in local politics, focusing on their role as a cultural broker to become a political broker in the Regional Head Election in Banten Province. This research involves Kiai, who are actively involved in political activities and have significant influence in the region's Islamic community. They become key informants that can thoroughly understand the transformation of their role in local politics.

This research employed a qualitative approach and a case study research design (Stake, 2005; Toloie-Eshlaghy, Chitsaz, Karimianfn, & Charkhchi, 2011; Zainal, 2007). The qualitative method permits researchers to comprehend and explain the phenomenon of Kiai role shifting in greater detail and depth. The design of the case study will enable the researcher to collect comprehensive data regarding the role of the Kiai in the context of regional elections in Banten Province.

This research collecting data is in-depth interviews with Kiai involved in political activities. It will be simplified, grouped, and analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques to identify the essence, main themes, and emerging patterns. The analysis results will be used to provide a deep understanding of the transformation of the role of Kiai in the context of local politics and Banten Regional Head Elections.

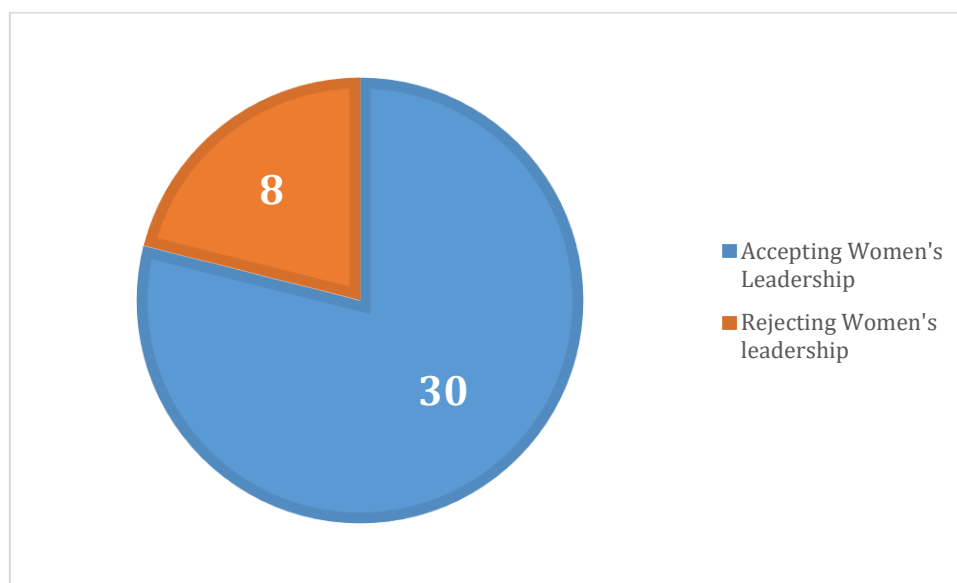
## **RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION**

### **Kiai as legitimizer**

The attitudes of the Kiai regarding the approval and rejection of female leaders varied during the Banten Governor Election. Some Kiai are receptive to the presence of women as regional leaders, believing that gender has no bearing on a person's ability to lead. Regardless of gender, they emphasize the significance of meritocracy and competence in selecting leaders. On the other hand, some Kiai deny and consider female leaders contradictory to religious values and customs. They believe women should perform a role in the home and refrain from participating in public political affairs. In the Banten Governor Election, the conflict among the Kiai who accept and reject female leaders reflects the diversity of perspectives on gender and leadership in contemporary society.

Figure 1 represents the attitudes of 38 Kiai toward female leaders. Eight Kiai in this sample reject female leadership, while thirty Kiai accept female leadership. The rejection of female leaders refers to the belief that women should not occupy political leadership positions. Meanwhile, acceptance of female leadership refers to the belief that women have the right and ability to become effective and competent leaders.

Some Kiai who oppose women in leadership believe that women's participation in leadership positions, from the neighborhood level to the presidency, is forbidden (*haram*) in Islam. They argue that female leaders can harm themselves and others. Several actions, such as *ikhtilat* (free intermingling of men and women) during campaigns, *khalwah* (close proximity) during lobbying, gatherings outside the home during official visits, etc., were deemed immoral and inappropriate for a leader to perform. It is stated as the conclusion of the Joint Fatwa of the Kiai in the Bahtsul Masail Forum.



**Figure 1 Kiai's Attitude Toward Female Leadership**

K.H. Qurthubi Jaelani, one of the Kiai who denied female leadership, expressed his disagreement with Prof. K.H. Said Aqiel Siradj, who allows women to run for president. In his treatise, he discovered discrepancies between *mufasirin* (exegetes) of the Qur'an and *muhadditsin* of hadith verses. He believed that Prof. K.H. Said Aqiel Siradj sought justification through various ambiguous arguments, possibly because he favored certain presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

In discussions about female leadership, it is essential to acknowledge the diversity of Islamic perspectives and interpretations. Multiple academicians and scholars' research have generated different views recognizing that women can become political leaders under specific conditions. It is necessary to engage in open dialogue and conduct comprehensive research to get a more inclusive and equitable understanding of the role of women in political leadership.

Some Kiai's acceptance of women as leaders demonstrate that there are various interpretations of Islamic law regarding female leadership. They argue that the ban on women becoming preachers or leaders just applies in worship, such as if there are no capable males to serve as prayer leaders. In the context of coalition and democratic political leadership, they believe women can be successful leaders.

In addition, research and scientific studies have highlighted the advantages of having women in political leadership. Based on a study conducted by Profeta (2017) found:

Not only is gender diversity beneficial, but efficiency gains result when women are highly qualified, more responsible, and less prone to corruption than men. The result is higher quality institutions and organizations, positive effects on outcomes and performance, and a new policy agenda.

This finding demonstrates that female leaders can contribute significantly to creating a more just and inclusive society.

Some Kiai who accept women as leaders also contemplate the Pancasila state, in which every citizen, regardless of gender, religion, or ethnicity, has the right to become a leader and be elected. They emphasize that within the context of the Pancasila state, there is no restriction preventing women from undertaking political leadership positions. However, remember that this perspective refers to the context of global life, not religion, which may have different rules and laws.

Female leadership and Islamic law must continue to be the topic of comprehensive and in-depth discussion. Dialog among scholars, academics, and the public can help resolve different viewpoints and foster inclusive political leadership. By maintaining openness and tolerance in this discussion, we can strengthen democracy and respect every individual's right to participate in political life.

Kiai's role as a legitimizer has a significant impact in the Banten Regional Head Election politics. They play a significant role in influencing public opinion and beliefs about female leadership through the dissemination of various points of view and fatwas. Although some Kiai reject female leadership, it is essential to note that some also believe that female leadership in a democratic context is acceptable if it is coalitional and meets the specified criteria. Further discussions and research are necessary to achieve an inclusive understanding and bridge various societal opinions.

Moreover, the decisions and perspectives of the Kiai in Banten Regional Head Election politics reflect the diversity of Islamic perspectives and the significance of a contextual approach. Society must recognize various viewpoints and interpretations of religion, including female leadership. However, it is essential to promote open dialogue and respect for various points of view to reach a common understanding and respect individuals' religious and political rights. Consequently, the role of the Kiai as a legitimizer in the Banten Regional Head Election must be balanced with an inclusive framework of thought that respects human rights and democratic principles.

### **Kiai as Opinion Leader**

The *mubalig*, or Islamic preacher, is one of the religious-social roles of the Kiai (Halim, 2018; Qodim, 2023; Zulkifli, 2013). Effective communication skills are also required to become a trustworthy preacher who can attract the attention of the congregation or the Muslim community (Gendron, 2017; Rohmatulloh, As'ad, & Malayati, 2022). Their communication skills enable the congregation or audience to accept the religious messages they convey. Consequently, a Kiai serving as a preacher is a great and accomplished communicator. However, when the Kiai conveys da'wah, it is not only what he says that affects the audience but also his condition. He cannot demand that the audience focus solely on what he said; instead, they focus on who conveys it. Consequently, sometimes the person who speaks is more significant than the statement itself. People are more interested in the characters than in the topic. Even if the opinion or appraisal of a Kiai regarding a person's character is identical to that of an ordinary person, it will be more acceptable. Unquestionably, in a society where the Kiai still holds influence, they can become opinion leader, including in political activities such as Governor elections. Kiai has the ability to influence public opinion due to their status as opinion leaders. Therefore, it is not surprising that political leaders and politicians utilize, not to mention rent them, to represent their interests. Using interpersonal communication networks, they approach the Kiai who are willing to assist verbally or in person.

Religious leaders are charismatic elites (Hinnebusch, 1984; Trigg, 1981; Turner, 2007). Kiai can form opinions about the candidates they support or against those who are their political opponents by employing specific religious arguments. For instance, their supporting Wahidin Halim emphasized that the mayor of Tangerang was a clean, firm, and accomplished bureaucrat, whereas other Kiai referred to Wahidin as arrogant and parsimonious. In contrast, they characterized Atut as a figure close to them and the Islamic boarding school and cared about them. These opinions were then disseminated to the public to create a favorable or lousy image. As a charismatic figure, the Kiai has the persuasive power to guide, invite, and influence their followers or community cognitively, affectively, and psychometrically (Flynn & Staw, 2004; Gardner & Avolio, 1998). The Islamic boarding school students and their congregation will readily believe in the Kiai's opinion or viewpoint due to the patron-client or "father-man" relationship

(Barcson, 2015; Pelras, 2000; Scott, 1972). The loyalty of the Islamic boarding school students and their congregation to their Kiai are intertwined, as the Kiai is believed to grant them lifelong safety and comfort (Elefson, 2009; Fauzi, 2012). Therefore, if Kiai says, "The sky is red," the students agree, even if from their perspective, "The sky is blue." The charismatic power of the Kiai, which is intertwined with the patronage network between the Kiai and the Islamic boarding school students, can be described as "charismatic patronage" power. This authority derives from the charisma of the Kiai as a religious elite, whose authority is based on a patron-client relationship with the Islamic boarding school students, distinguishing it from the power a warrior traditionalist-patrimonialism possesses. Warrior's influence is not due to charisma but instead to tradition and violence based on patronage relationships with their martial arts college students.

In Banten, where some people still adhere to religious traditions of *ahllus sunnah waljama'ah*, not to mention the religious traditions of the *nahdliyyin*, the surrounding community, particularly the Islamic boarding school students and their congregations, generally follows the opinion of the Kiai. As stated by the Chairman of the Banten MUI, KH M. Romli, the Kiai in Banten occupy a prominent position in society. As a result, particularly the traditional Kiai in rural areas greatly influences the community. Moreover, Kiai Romli (Personal Communication, April 12, 2013) stated,

The community makes them role models, guides, and helpers in trouble, such as household and daily difficulties. Usually, they consult the Kiai for advice, especially in rural regions and urban areas. If they are confused, they finally ask the Kiai. So, even though sometimes the Kiai is neglected, when people encounter difficulties, they also turn to the Kiai. As a result, the role of the Kiai in Banten remains crucial to this day. Possibly, the Kiai is always involved in political activities. Consequently, if a candidate for the legislature, a regional head, or even a presidential candidate is close to the Kiai, it is anticipated that the Islamic boarding school students and the surrounding community will also follow Kiai's opinion on this candidate. Today, it is simple for people to obtain information through various mass media and social networks, but they are also skeptical of what they hear. Thus, Kiai's opinion is frequently used as a filter to sort through the numerous, often contradictory opinions.

Based on the preceding description, it can be deduced that an opinion leader's endorsement of a particular gubernatorial candidate will almost undoubtedly contribute to the candidate's public image or charisma and vice versa. Consequently, each candidate or his success team is constantly vying to approach the Kiai, particularly those with broad influence, to generate a favorable public opinion for the candidate by providing diverse supporting evidence. Typically, these opinions are conveyed through interpersonal communication or in public settings, such as seminars, before being disseminated by the mass media. As is typical in a contentious election for Governor, there is overlap between the opinions of one Kiai and the others. Therefore, the opinion conflict among the Kiai was inevitable.

Those who supported Atut Chosiyah's candidacy as a political party member made numerous efforts to increase her electability. In addition to the opinion of intellectuals or academicians, the opinion of the Kiai also contributes to the development of imagery. The Kiai who support Atut Chosiyah appears to want to create the impression in the community that religious development in Banten advanced rapidly under her leadership. It signifies not only her great concern for the advancement of Islam in Banten but also her closeness to the Kiai and – more importantly, in the eyes of the Kiai – her willingness to take their counsel. The statements frequently cited by the Kiai, which they also frequently used as an excuse to support Atut, are the massive printing of the Al-Qur'an Mushaf Al-Bantani distributed to teachers of the Qur'an, Kiai throughout Banten and Banten communities in general (Nurmajah, 2020), and the provision of grants distributed through the government of Banten Province to assist religious institutions in carrying out their programs (Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama, 2011).

Meanwhile, the Kiai who support Wahidin Halim frequently characterized the mayor of Tangerang as a figure who is honest and not corrupt, a dependable bureaucrat who has demonstrated success in building Tangerang City, and who is straightforward, determined, and morally upright. Even Arifin Amin, a Kiai from Cibodas District, Tangerang City, identified Wahidin Halim as a leader who possessed the qualities inherent to the Prophet Muhammad, namely *siddiq*, *tabligh*, *amanah*, and *fathanah*, and who has repeatedly received awards from the central government (Arifin Amin, Personal Communication, April 15, 2013).

When there are pros and cons attitudes among the audience regarding issues, Kiai's role as an opinion leader becomes more important. This circumstance is known as the emergence of public opinion. As common knowledge, public opinion is formed when many members of a society engage in contentious debates about issues that interest them, with each side ardently defending their own opinions and attitudes. Each participant in the discussion has opposing perspectives and arguments on the issues they care about. Therefore, in a communication context marked by this controversy, the parties anticipate opinion leaders to deliver their perspectives. Because opinion leaders such as Kiai are believed to have the ability to direct opinions and communicate messages, as well as persuade and influence the behavior of the public.

### **Kiai as Campaigner**

The main role of a Kiai is to teach their students the Qur'an or other literature (Hasan, 2008; Roslan Mohd Nor & Malim, 2014; Thahir, 2014). They do not, however, continue to languish in their Islamic boarding school while waiting for people to seek their advice or appeal to them. Kiai also frequently leaves the Islamic boarding school to deliver public lectures or religious discourses. *Mubalig* is Kiai who frequently spreads religious messages (Hidayaturrahman & Putra, 2019). In addition to the routine agenda, these religious speeches will be used to commemorate major Islamic holidays, such as the birthday of the Prophet, Isra' Mi'raj, Nuzulul Qur'an, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Islamic New Year (Hijra), and other events, such as weddings, circumcisions, thanksgiving, *halal bihalal*, and others. The greater Kiai's popularity, the more crowded his lecture schedule will be. In other words, the Kiai in Banten generally participates in extra-Islamic boarding school lecture-giving activities. However, not all Kiai can become in-demand preachers, as they must also master rhetoric or the art of speech (Hudaeri, 2011, p. 97). and have a broad and profound understanding of Islamic teachings. The Kiai's capacity to speak in public enables him to become an advocate for the candidate he supports. This study revealed that one of the significant roles performed by Kiai in the 2011 Banten Regional Head Election was as campaigners.

Through their role as preachers, the Kiai in Banten covertly conducts their campaign activities. This hidden campaign is typically inserted in the middle of religious lectures or assemblies, including those conducted regularly for the Islamic boarding school students and their congregation, as well as public recitations or *tabligh akbar* commemorating Islamic holidays or certain events such as *halal bihalal*. Kiai, who supported Atut Chosiyah-Rano Karno, Wahidin Halim-Irna Narulita, and KH Jazuli Juwaini-Makmun Muzakki ran this covert campaign.

At the *halal bihalal* event held by the Banten Government in the courtyard of the Al-Bantani Mosque, Banten Central Government Area, on September 7, 2011, KH Mahmudi, Chairman of the MUI of Serang City, on the sidelines of his spiritual sermon, invited hundreds of attendees, namely employees civil servants within the Banten Provincial Government, to support Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah who is running for re-election. Amid his speech, Kiai Mahmudi emphasized, "If you want to continue the

development of Banten, support Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah." Before delivering his lecture, while greeting Atut at the restaurant, Mahmudi wished "success for Atut as the current and future governor."

Covert campaign at the *halal bihalal* event, also conducted by Riza Azizah, an Al-Azhar University graduate from Cairo, Egypt, posing as a young preacher. He also encouraged the audience to support Atut on that occasion. Riza stated, " *Aje kelalen* (Javanese Serang, signifying "do not forget") on the sidelines of his lecture. Banten is fertile and prosperous under the stewardship of the angelic-looking Ratu Atut Chosiyah. Continue! Agree?" The audience agreed in unison.

Kiai Abdul Rojak, who confessed he rarely participates in public campaigns -- even if he claimed to be merely curious and observing -- was among those who frequently conduct covert campaigns at his recitation events. Nevertheless, he thought it was customary for Kiai to appear publicly as a campaigner. He favored an indirect method of campaigning, such as recitations or informal gatherings. He stated, "People frequently inquire where the Kiai is. I simply instruct them. Initially, I mentioned that there are this candidate, that candidate, and another candidate. Simply choose the option that provides the most benefits. They already know whom I voted for. Perhaps, they just wanted to confirm. I have never assembled congregations for a political campaign. Only when I have assignments at the assembly I mention them even subtly. For instance, let us pray for the election of a trustworthy leader. People already know the trustworthy leader" (Abdul Rojak Junaedi, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

K.H. Abdul Karim Ismail was one of the Kiai who conducted an intensive covert campaign or "indirect" campaign in Cilegon City, for instance, through FUTMAC forums, lectures at the recitation assembly, sermons, lectures at Islamic holiday celebrations, or other events at the mosque. "On such occasions, we do not typically mention identities. However, we must provide an explanation or description so that people can guess whom we are referring to," stated Kiai Abdul Karim Ismail (Abdul Karim Ismail, personal communication, July 8, 2013). He stated that most Kiai in Cilegon City are members of recitation assemblies and support Atut Chosiyah.

Syahril Abror was another Kiai who often did covert campaigning, such as at recitation events or Islamic holiday commemorations alone or along with Atut Chosiyah. Syahril acknowledged that he frequently accompanied Atut's visits, not only in his area in Cilegon but also in other areas; or at certain events, such as with village heads. Mrs. Atut typically invited Syahril to speak with village heads, Kiai, and community leaders during these visits. Syahril's message was as follows:

It will be annihilated if we choose a not expert leader for this Banten. *Idza wussidal amru ilaa ghairi ahlihi fantadziris-sa'ah*, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said. When selecting governors, neither gender is considered. What is essential is aptitude. So, let us join together. Never deceive one another. If we lie, we will be annihilated. Sure. Nor should we reveal the name of the ship that will set sail. If we, as passengers, cause the ship to spill, we will all perish. You should be cohesive (Syahril Abror, Personal Communication, July 18, 2013).

They tied covert campaigns in the form of recitations, public lectures, stickers, calendars, headscarves, Muslim shirts, sarongs, wall clocks, *yasin fadhilah* books, and even notebooks for elementary school children with the names of the candidates written or illustrated on them. An image of the candidate was also printed on the packaging for the distributed food, such as on mineral cups and bread wrappers. Members of the candidate pair's campaign team frequently attended the recitation event, which, in addition to disseminating outreach materials, also provided the congregation with modest transportation funds. The transportation allowance was also distributed during special meetings with Qur'an instructors, *madrassa* teachers, elementary school teachers, school principals, village heads, and PKK (Family Welfare Empowerment) cadres. During a meeting with village heads, their officials, and PKK cadres in Anyer



District, for instance, in addition to hearing Atut Chosiyah speak about the success of Banten's development, the audience also received fees in different amounts due to their respective positions in the Village head office.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to recitation assembly, Kiai participated in open-field campaigns as a campaigner. K.H. Abdul Karim Ismail and K.H. Syahril Abror were Kiai supporters of Atut Chosiyah who frequently served as campaigners. Kiai Abdul Karim had appeared on stage with Atut in Kramatwatu, Serang, and Cilegon. "Especially when I am campaigning in Cilegon, I always accompany them," said Kiai Abdul Karim (Abdul Ismail, Personal Communication, July 8, 2013). In addition to custodians of Islamic boarding schools and administrators of many religious organizations at the local level, there were various religious professionals. Kiai Abdul Karim was also well-known as a religious preacher who traveled around delivering sermons. Syahril Abror's ability to lecture prompted him to become one of Atut's top campaigners.<sup>2</sup> Syahril Abror added:

Being a candidate is routine because I am a public speaker. I typically give speeches at the celebration of weddings and the birthday of the Prophet. As an organizational administrator, I must defend Ms. [Atut] as a consultant for the Banten Golongan Karya party and the Banten Provincial Ulama Satkar chairperson. I accompany her and take the stage in front of the audience. I am giving a speech. She, Mrs. Atut, and I visit Tangerang City, where I make several visits. I also performed at Kresek, Tangerang, her place, as she could not attend. We inquired with the committee. "Where is she?" "She does not arrive. There are representatives." Actually, these people, the community here, are aware of who serves alongside her; the speaker. Even if she did not come, I said, there was already a representative. It was me. "However, she usually brought an envelope (fee), but I did not bring it. Although there was no envelope, there was no gift; the event continued for her sake (Syahril Abror, Personal Communication, July 18, 2013).

Kiai Muhtadi Dimyathi and Kiai Qurthubi Jaelani were two of the Kiai who advocated for the Wahidin Halim-Irna Narulita couple. In truth, Kiai Muhtadi was never absent from campaigning with Wahidin in several Banten cities and subdistricts. "I don't want to support Wahidin lukewarmly. Completeness is required. Therefore, I always campaign with him in Tangerang, Lebak, Pandeglang, and Serang" (Muhtadi Dimyathi, Personal Communication, July 7, 2013). In addition to campaigning on stage, Kiai Muhtadi distributed leaflets with pro-Wahidin statements. The "Brief Minutes of the 2011-2016 Banten Governor Election" contains the Banten ulema's decision prohibiting women from holding leadership positions. Kiai Muhtadi included a handwritten and signed statement. May 9, 2011, the statement was: "My identity is H. Muhtadi. Dr. H. Wahidin Halim is the only remaining Governor for the 2011-2016 term. Please give assistance and support." Kiai Muhtadi included his mobile phone number in his statement (Aziz, n.d.).

The Kiai was also a collective organizer and motivator in the Banten gubernatorial election. Previous research has demonstrated that the Kiai has the potential to catalyze societal transformation.

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<sup>1</sup> This information was sourced from PKK cadres who attended a meeting with the Banten Governor at the Mandalika Hotel, Anyer. Serang

<sup>2</sup> In addition to campaigning for Atut, Syahril Abror also campaigned for Iman Ariyadi when he ran for mayor of Cilegon, Ratu Tatu Chasanah, Atut Chosiyah's younger brother, who was running for Serang deputy regent, paired with Taufiq Nuriman. He said, as in the campaign for Atut, in the campaign for mayor and regent candidates he always issued his campaign trademark, 'Let there be no lies between us' (Syahril Abror, Personal Communication, July 18, 2013).

According to Clifford Geertz, as a cultural broker, Kiai significantly impacts society (Geertz, 1957). Politically, a Kiai is categorized as someone who lacks experience and professional skills (Faridl, 2003). However, socially, it has been demonstrated that they can connect the diverse Islamic boarding school and local community interests with the outside world. A study by Horikoshi (1987) demonstrated the power of the Kiai as a source of social transformation, not only in the Islamic boarding school community but also in the surrounding community. As a figure who is frequently identified as possessing charismatic influence within their society, the Kiai is also viewed as possessing an "extraordinary" capacity to move society, particularly when it comes to making political decisions.

### **The Transformation from Cultural Broker to Political Politik Broker**

The political change reflects social change (structure) and agent behavior patterns in a specific medium of power relations. Therefore, changes in power will result in a shift in the political orientation of the agents and their respective political agendas. When a regime can endure for a sufficient time to permit adequate socialization and resocialization of its citizens, a change in values is inevitable. It implies that the new values offered by a regime, which result in a shift from old to new values, will be effective if the new regime can socialize the new values offered. An interesting example is when the New Order regime introduced pragmatic values with the jargon "economic yes, politics no" to replace the old values that place politics as an integral part of life and ideals or politics that rely on ideology. Physical development that emphasizes growth economics has made the process of political pragmatism even more effective.

Based on numerous analyses, this strategy appears meaningful, particularly in mitigating the negative effects of "political sects" spreading. These are consolidating the priyayi's dominant position in the state bureaucratic apparatus, incorporating Islamic boarding school students into the government bureaucracy, and applying the floating mass concept (Magenda, 1990). The government's efforts are viewed as successful because economic development or modernization as its overarching framework has contributed to a decline in group fanaticism and the radicalization of religion and political ideology. Moreover, society's general orientation is becoming more rational, pragmatic, and secular.

However, when a society views politics as nothing more than a market transaction process, the negative repercussions are also not insignificant. Momentary political transactions displace the fundamental value that supports the democratic process in the form of attachment between voters and those elected, which is the pillar of elite accountability to the public. The increase in money politics cases that has accompanied the regional election process demonstrates the post-reform instrumental rationality of the Indonesian people. Thus, a culture of pragmatism in politics becomes not only the exclusive domain of those who need to learn more about politics but also of the authorities who should be carrying the banner of idealism.

In the terminology of Ali Shariati (1983), the Kiai, as a social elite, are social prophets who perceive the path of the prophets. The Prophet not only preached morality and virtue but also set a social example. The prophetic mission is carried out not only through assemblies, pulpits, and podiums but also through social and political movements. The exemplary method (*uswah hasanah*) is a soft-power religious movement consisting of upholding exemplary morality, the defense of the *mustadh'afin*, and protecting human rights. Therefore, they will avoid corrupt politics and power by allowing evil to persist. It is Kiai's social responsibility. Practically, they must also sail the banner of idealism, avoiding the tumultuous waves of pragmatism that prioritize the power coffers. Although history has shown that the involvement of 'ulama' in politics frequently causes them to become complacent and lose on the battlefield, this is not always the case. The author describes the circumstances surrounding the numerous catastrophes that

have damaged Kiai's reputation in the political arena. When Kyai are tempted by alluring power, the implications can weaken the Kiai's commitment and critical reasoning or make them hesitant to recognize this reality, thereby preventing them from fulfilling their prophetic role as guardians of "moral power."

In 1984, these failures were visible at its Muktamar in Situbondo when the Kiai-ordained NU was no longer bound to political parties. The Kiai believed that they and their organization (NU) had fallen, so they were compelled to delineate the initial path laid out by its founders in 1926. During the 2004 presidential election, their political opponents confused Kiai's political beliefs. It is not an isolated issue but is closely related to the value stream in politics, a more substantial concern. Political agents, such as the Kiai, have become more pragmatic in their political roles due to the impact of the decline of political sects and the increase in commercial value.

Even before independence, the Kiai became the spearhead and link between the political elite at the party level, the Islamic boarding school students, and the grassroots populace during the era of the Old Order. When the Kyai established a socio-religious organization and, through the organization, launched a political movement to protect the people, they became the spearhead. Ricklefs explained that rural people view Sarikat Islam as a means of self-defense against a presumably monolithic local power structure that they cannot confront rather than as a modern political movement (Ricklefs, 2005, p. 348). Then, during the multi-party era, several NU Kiai and other Islamic forces formed Masyumi and separated when it was impossible to fight for diverse constituent interests through the Masyumi Party.

The instrument that binds the position together as spearheads and intermediaries is not "money or power" but rather idealism, particularly defending believed ideals. If Kyai NU promotes traditional Islamic perspectives, Kiai Muhammadiyah emphasizes contemporary ones (Noer, 1987, p. 15). The relationship between the Kiai and the constituents, or the Kiai and the Islamic boarding school students, is firmly established in a social formation known as the patron-client relationship. Consequently, during the period of the New Order, the government deemed the Kiai essential for their new role as cultural broker. The position of the Kiai is very strategic because it is used during elections to attract Islamic boarding school students' votes (vote gathering) and as an intermediary for disseminating development ideas to the community and capturing aspirations from the grassroots community. Even so, this position as an intermediary is frequently criticized, mainly when the Kiai is used to collect votes, as it gives the impression that they are merely instruments of power.

In Imam's Tolkah (2001), several authors who have recently attempted to advance their work by advancing their views that still consider stream politics to be strong can be found. On the other hand, other political scientists, such as Maswardi Rauf (2009), believe that the current politics is no longer powerful or has waned. Suppose Imam Tolkah (2001) believes that Gus Dur's resignation reflects the sect. Abardi (2009) views the strong desire to include the seven words in the amendment and efforts to include the substance of religious teachings in legal formation in Indonesia. In that case, it demonstrates the strength of sect politics. According to Maswardi Rauf, others view the conflict as shifting to distinct policy orientations that are no longer due to sect politics (2009, p. 43).

Due to political reforms, Golongan Karya and New Order parties can no longer work together. The monolithic political structure based on patron-client ties collapses along with Kiai's political role as a vote gatherer and cultural broker. It becomes a political fact relevant to Indonesia with a measurable probability level. Endang Turmudi's intriguing study, *Affair of Kiai and Power* (2004), found that Kiai's role as a vote gatherer is still prevalent but not as a cultural broker. Turmudi's research found that the secular party's victory over the Islamic party was due to Kiai's new political role as an intermediary between constituents and the secular elite. The Kiai's problem, which Turmudi feels involves money, has perverted

its role of connecting the ummah to Islamic leaders. The Kiai is caught in the elites' money politics to win elections. Money, not the Kiai, buys votes. Suppose the concept of vote gather and cultural broker relies more on leadership issues, in which the Kiai is positioned more as a leader of the ummah in the patron-client relationship between Kiai-Islamic boarding school students, as explained by Clifford Geertz (1957). In that case, the role of the Kiai in the context of the effective use of money politics is not due to the cultural role of the Kiai. However, instead of the role of the Kiai, who controls social networks, it makes them communicate with the government, perform religious rituals, and help write rules.

The Kiai affects the village judgments locally. The Kiai mediates community and local government interests in this role. As Clifford Geertz called them, these liaisons, or cultural intermediaries, help the government and society get along. These informal figures act as government-community intermediaries. Harmony between the *Ulema-Amaro-Ummah* (Scholars-Government-Community) and reciprocity will increase this integration aspect. If the three disagree, it causes conflict. The political elite then uses this position as a cultural broker to gain support from the Kiai's informal figures. The political elite can contact the grassroots community more quickly than politicians without intimate ties to the Kiai. The Kiai's behavior might also increase their cultural influence. The Kiai can communicate with the community since they are patrons in the patron-client relationship. The community accepts the Kiai without oppression, like informal leaders. In this instance, the Kiai is a cultural leader, and society is a cultural follower. Therefore, those under their influence will imitate Kiai's political and social behavior.

Every member of the community will comply with the Kiai's directives. In order to maintain their faith, the Kiai constantly modify their fatwas. Fatwa is a source of integration for Islamic society because, in addition to providing legal certainty, it provides community assurance. It includes the selection of community leaders and the observation of their Kiai selecting their candidate pairs.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study presents significant findings regarding transforming Kiai's role in Indonesia from a cultural broker to a political broker. The important finding is that political and social changes influence the political perspective of the Kiai in society. They became politically active by capitalizing on their influence and credibility as religious and community leaders. As a political broker, the Kiai serves as an intermediary between the political elite and the grassroots community, influencing the political support of the people within their sphere of influence.

This study highlights the significance of understanding the transformation of Kiai's role from cultural to political broker in the Indonesian political and social context. These results cast light on the significance of the Kiai's influence as religious and community leaders in swaying the public's political support. However, this study's limitations must be considered, and further investigation is expected. With a greater comprehension of the role of the Kiai in this political transformation, it is hoped that we find a way to preserve their integrity and responsibility as religious and social leaders in the face of persistent change.

There are limitations to this research. This research only examines Kiai's role in the Banten governor election in Indonesia. Hence its conclusions should not be generalized to other contexts. This study sheds light on the Kiai's role as political broker in the Banten governor election but does not address their role as religious and community leaders. This research has also not examined the overall effects of this transformation on political and social dynamics as a whole. For a better understanding, more Indonesian regions should be investigated. This transformation also affects Kiai's moral leadership and political integrity. By overcoming these limitations, future research may extend its geographical range and

consider various aspects of the Kiai's role in politics to gain a deeper understanding of the transformation of their role in Indonesian politics and the implications for maintaining their integrity and commitment as moral leaders in a broader context.

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