

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the relationship between Indonesian *kiai* ('*ulama*: religious leaders) in Jombang to their wider social and political situation. There are three kinds of *kiai* discussed in the thesis, that is the *pesantren kiai*, the *tarekat kiai*, and the *kiai* involved in politics. Two important aspects of *kiai* leadership are highlighted. The first is the strong attachment of the *kiai* to Islam. As a religious leader, this attachment to Islam has resulted in his leadership being generally seen as charismatic. One might therefore pose the question as to whether a change in society's political and social attitudes has an effect on the pattern of *kiai* leadership. The second is the independence of each *kiai* and hence the specific following he maintains. This independence from other *kiai* indicates that Muslims in Jombang are socially fragmented along the lines of allegiance to various local *kiaiship*. This means that the authority of the *kiai* is dispersed. This structural situation creates the possibility of conflict. The unity of Muslim society as a whole can be threatened when conflicts occur between *kiai* especially in the field of politics. The persistent attachment of the *kiai* to Islam, moreover, imbues any political conflict with religious justification.

I argue in this thesis that the charismatic authority exerted through the leadership of the *kiai* in Java has limitations in terms of its legitimacy. At the very least it has boundaries that determine areas or circumstances for its legitimate expression. These boundaries are normative and are loosely expressed by the concept of 'to struggle for Islam'. This concept can be used by any *kiai* follower or by groups within society tacitly to evaluate a *kiai*. As holders of charismatic authority, the *kiai* can often induce action or emotional responses from their followers since they are held in the high regard. However, in certain situations such authority may be rendered useless when the *kiai's* entrenched lines of authority are perceived to deviate from a socially accepted religious base. At this point followers have a possible basis to challenge the legitimacy of the *kiai's* pronouncements particularly on social and political issues. Voting in a general election is a good example. The *kiai's* encouragement to support a party other than the Islamic party, for example, has incurred negative responses from followers. A few *kiai* have even been deserted by a large number of their followers because of their political stand.

This thesis further argues that the *kiai's* influence in politics is not as strong as in other domains. Despite his being a charismatic figure, only a minority of followers feel compelled to follow the *kiai's* political example. Differences between the *kiai* and his followers in relation to political behaviour are common, especially after the transformation of the Islamic political party. Nevertheless, the role of the *kiai* in general remains important in the eyes of Muslim society, since the

kiai is in the forefront guarding the morality and the religious orthodoxy of Muslim society.