

ISLAM AND LOCAL POLITICS: In the Quest of *Kyai*, Politics, and Development in Kebumen, 2008-2010¹

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Abstract

The involvement of kyai (religious teacher) in political affairs has become prominent after the Indonesia reformation. With his charismatic images and long-maintained religious authority, kyai has amount of capital to easily enroll his self into politics without significant barriers. This becomes more evidence in the Indonesian political sphere after the reformation as the number of kyais serving as leaders in bureaucracy is increasing. However, their inclusion in politics does not always lead to the birth of greater impact on public policy. During the leadership of kyai in the governmental body, Kebumen -as a case study discussed in this article- has experienced late development, indicated by lessening development in terms of public infrastructure and social services.

[Keterlibatan kyai dalam politik muncul secara masif sejak bergulirnya reformasi. Dengan keharisma dan otoritas keagamaan, kyai memiliki modal penting untuk terjun dalam politik tanpa kendala berarti. Inilah yang menjadi sangat jelas terkait peran kyai dalam politik, utamanya dengan semakin banyaknya jumlah kyai yang menjabat sebagai pimpinan birokrasi. Sayangnya, keterlibatan mereka kerap tidak menyebabkan lahirnya kebijakan publik

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yang relevan. Pada masa pemerintahan kyai sebagai bupatinya, Kebumen -yang menjadi lokus tulisan ini- mengalami ketertinggalan dalam pembangunan. Ini setidaknya ditandai dengan semakin melemahnya infrastruktur publik dan pelayanan sosial.]

Key words: *kyai*, politics, and policy implications

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A. Introduction

The rise of democracy has provided a wider opportunity for people to participate in and to compete for political power. It is not difficult to find lay people, religious scholars, artists and academics running for election, both at the local and national levels. Since the democratization era in 1998, the faces of local political leaders have become more diverse. In relation to this, the most difficult question to answer is whether this latter development is capable of delivering more prosperity to the people and enhancing the effectiveness of public policies.

This paper scrutinizes the empirical experience of local politics in which *kyai* (Islamic scholars) get actively involved in political practices. In an area in which Muslims are the majority, and most of them are *santri* (pious Muslims), it is easier for *kyai* to garner political support for winning the election, such as in *Pilkada* (district-head election). However, it is not always the case that the figure of *kyai* as a local government leader would bring more equality, better life and prosperity. Empirical studies in Kebumen, for example, demonstrate the fact that during the administration of *kyai* (2008-2010), the region had experienced decreased economic development, less infrastructure development, and a difficult economic cycle.

This leads to some assumptions in the discussion of *kyais'* participation in practical politics and the implications for development. First, a *kyai*, whose basic role is as moral guardian, seems to face difficulty putting his socio-religious role aside to focus on local development. This does not always mean that a *kyai* does not have the skill and capability of governmental management. They manage their *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in managerial skills; and leadership is needed. Outside

the *pesantren*, they usually have followers in particular areas which form a particular religious community. This also leads us to believe that *kyai* have skills in leadership to manage their followers. Secondly, related to the first point, *kyai* prioritise moral development as a capital for life after death rather than the “worldly” development. *Tauhid* (oneness of God), *ibadah* (worship) and *dakwah* (missionaries) are the areas which are ultimately identical with the role of *kyai* in society,² more than those of local investment, business climate, and micro business. Therefore, rather than strengthening the structure of public policy, *kyai* may prefer supporting *shari’u* law which does not always have a direct impact on citizens’ prosperity as do other worldly businesses.

Although it is understandable, more so with the increased findings of corruption rates since the decentralisation era, there are some problems following such circumstances. On the one hand, this would create bigger support from the advocates of traditional Islamic values. However, in the context in which society is still trapped in poverty, such a style of leadership would induce a counter-productive result, including decreasing support from the constituency. Using a combination of interviews and literature research, this paper tries to elaborate on this issue to gain deeper insights of the relationships among *kyai* as local government leaders, the pace of development, and the further impact on politics and policy. In order to specify its focus, this paper limits its analysis on the role of *kyai* as *bupati* (district-head).

B. *Kyai*, Politics, and Government Performance: a Theoretical Debate

Benedict Anderson’s argument in the article “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture” highlights the interrelationships of religion, culture and politics.³ Initially, Anderson tries to compare the concept of power between those of European and Javanese societies. He scrutinized the daily politics of Javanese people to identify the work of power and how it is associated within the social and cultural context. Although there is

²James Fox, “Currents in Contemporary Islam in Indonesia,” paper presented at Harvard Asia Vision, Cambridge, 29 April-1 May 2004), p. 7.

³Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Culture in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1990), pp. 140-175.

wide criticism of Anderson's comparison between Javanese and European society, Anderson poses an important idea. Anderson does not merely try to address the influence of culture to politics in Javanese society, but more fundamentally illuminates the religious aspect of Javanese people that is reflected in their cultural and social life, which further influences the way the Javanese people perceive and behave in the political sphere. Power in Javanese people that is perceived as concrete for Anderson is very much influenced by the Javanese religious initial beliefs called 'animism'. Anderson's thesis of power accumulation sheds light on the tendency of Javanese people, in general, to compile power in one body.⁴ Anderson's argument is found later on to be helpful by the next scholars to understand the current political dynamics in Java and Indonesia, in general.

Kyai in practical politics, with regard to Anderson's concept of power, provides a clear portrait of how power accumulation works in current Indonesian politics. Without being a politician, *kyai* themselves are already powerful. Recalling Foucault's idea of power and knowledge, the figure of *kyai* represents a source of knowledge which also functions for power reproduction. In daily life, *kyai* becomes a centre of society, being a social reference for political behaviours and a moral guide. Their *fatwa* is heard. Their decisions are followed. They are generally charismatic and the charisma of *kyai*, referring to Max Weber's concept of legitimacy, also becomes a magnet of power which can be used to garner political support.⁵

In relation to this, Ivan Strenski more substantively argues that power and religion is inseparable, as power is embedded within, providing religious institutions access to control the community and creating an intangible form of social structure. As *kyai* are the centre of Islam in the sense of religion as an institution, it is possible to identify the work of power in religion in the figure of *kyai*. Therefore, it is sensible if Strenski

⁴The idea of Sultan HB in Yogya as a governor, for instance, is a portrait of integrated culture and politics. Keeping him out of political office would mean to disregard his function as a protector of society (*pengayom masyarakat*). Thus, power is not to be dispersed, but concentrated in one hand.

⁵Max Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," in HH Girth and C Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 245-263.

sees that without necessarily being as, or being used by, a political party, religion is already powerful and structural. Religion itself is a political manifestation.⁶

Meanwhile, politics is different arena for sources of power. Politics provides direct access to decision making which deals with almost every human being's business, no matter if they like it or not. Politics also provides tools for directly controlling the regulation of citizens and which is commonly deemed as the most legitimate. From the lens of power relation, the participation of *kyai* in politics can therefore be of a mission of power extension which then is united and centralised in one body, regardless of other considerations of social justice and development for which the *kyai* and his religious institution are campaigning. Referring to Brian Turner, the involvement of *kyai* in politics in the Indonesian context reflects the struggles of symbolic power (religion) within secular power (politics) which inevitably leads to the debate of authority, representation and transmission of cultural symbols into the arena of decision making.⁷

Aside from this, it is admitted that anybody has their own right to either passively or actively participate in politics. However, there is a critical question towards the implication of a *kyai*'s participation in politics on the citizen beings as a whole. The first and foremost question is, "To what extent is it realistic to rely on hope for justice and development on the *kyai*'s shoulders?" The second question is, "Can the role of moral guidance of a *kyai* in societal life be applied in the political arena?" The third question is, "As a *kyai*'s skill is usually related to heavenly business, is it compatible to devote such worldly political business to the *kyai*?"

These questions challenge some common assumptions about politics and power that is firstly underlined by Sir Lord Acton's idiom, "power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely." A *kyai*, whoever it is, is a human being. Therefore, putting political responsibility onto a *kyai*'s shoulders is as equally risky as putting it on another person. Unfortunately, when a *kyai* fails to bear his responsibility, the condemnation and complaints are usually bigger than were expected of a non-*kyai* politician. People usually put greater expectations on a *kyai* to

⁶ Ivan Strenski, "Religion, Power, and Final Foucault," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 66, No. 2, Summer 1998, pp. 345-367.

⁷ Bryan S Turner, "Religion and Politics: Nationalism, Globalisation and Empire," *American Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 2006, pp. 209-224.

improve social justice, given a long disconnect of citizen's expectations and the state's capacity for justice fulfillment, including anti-corruption.⁸ This paper is not supposed to oppose any view that supports *kyai's* involvement in practical politics, but rather to come up with a central question: to what extent is *kyai's* participation in politics effective in relation to governmental performance and development?

The question of "to what extent is a *kyai's* involvement in politics effective in relation to policy implication" is crucial for a few reasons. First and foremost, as Christian von Luebke asserts, current Indonesian politics is still highly dependent on a political leader.⁹ Broken down into more practical spheres, Christian von Luebke argues that there is an associational relationship between the government's performance and leadership style.¹⁰ That is why, as von Luebke argues, despite the equally strong assertion of decentralisation, local governments perform differently. In his research, Von Luebke tries to find out some explanation of why there are some governments that perform well on the one hand, and there are also those who perform badly on the other hand. In von Luebke's findings, as the political system is strongly personalised, it results in inconsistent governmental performance across regions and periods.

Therefore, in current Indonesian governance as von Luebke suggests, governmental leadership is important, although often underestimated, as a policy determinant that can compensate for (or aggravate) weak social checks in a transitioning economy. Christian von Luebke, Neil McCulloch and Arianto Patunru highlight Solo as an instance of the associational relationship between the leadership style of *Walikota* Joko Widodo, which emphasizes informality and relation-based cooperation, with the constructive platform of policy reform it has been entailing.¹¹

Strengthening this, von Luebke emphasizes that in developing

⁸ Jennifer Epley, "Voice of the Faithful: Religion and Politics in Contemporary Indonesia," *PhD Dissertation*, The University of Michigan, 2010, pp. 145-146.

⁹ Christian von Luebke, "The Political Economy of Local Governance: Findings From an Indonesian Field Study," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 2009), pp. 201-230.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

¹¹ Christian von Luebke, Neil McCulloch and Arianto A. Patunru, "Heterodox Reform Symbioses: The Political Economy of Investment Climate Reforms in Solo, Indonesia," *Asian Economic Journal*, Vol. 23 No. 3, 2009, pp. 269-296.

democracies, it is often the case that governmental performance would strongly rely on and be defined by leadership, not only on interest/pressure groups. Von Luebke argues, "...A common finding in comparative policy analyses in Asia, Latin America, and Africa is that public leaders shape policy outcomes by initiating reforms and supervising bureaucratic practices."¹² It is therefore in the context of Kebumen that the reflection of the policy implication of the *kyai*'s involvement in politics, specifically possessing positions as government leaders, needs a thorough thinking, considering that *kyai* in Kebumen society remain a strong reference for their political behaviours.

C. *Kyai*, Politics, and Development in Indonesia from a Historical Perspective

Despite the widespread debate of *kyais*' direct involvement in politics, historical experience has that they have been important in Indonesian politics ever since pre-Independence, early Independence, Old Order, New Order, even until now in the post *Reformasi* era. The phenomenon of *kyai* and politics also portrays an up and down relationship between the state and religion, depending highly on the nature of the administration that rules the government. The below passages provides a glance of the changing faces of *kyais*' involvement in politics and development from era to era. In the past, the role of *kyai* in politics used to be an alternative, a sub-altern or marginalised one, yet at the same time, they became an energiser for the anti-colonialism and anti-government movements.

In current politics, the political role of the *kyai* is expanding. It is not rare to find *kyai* as leaders of political parties, members of a representative body, and even district mayors or governors. This is in contrast with the phenomenon of *kyai* in the colonial era in which *kyai* tried to distance themselves, as far as possible, from practical politics --politics for power in government office, since such a kind of politics was coined as 'dirty' given the state was governed by a colonial institution.¹³ Since then, however, Islam, *ulama* and politics have been colouring the dynamics of

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹³ Anderson, *Language and Power*, pp. 140-175.

Indonesian politics.¹⁴ Sidik Jatmika's findings, based on empirical research in Kebumen, also told us that political reform has provided opportunity for *kyai* to get involved in politics and compete for a seat, both in the legislature and executive positions.¹⁵

In the pre-Independence era, *kyai* became the locus of the anti-colonial movement. Sartono Kartodirdjo highlights that the role of religion in politics is an important clue for the significant role of *kyai* in Indonesia's political movement.¹⁶ *Kyai* often stood in the front line in fighting against the colonial government seen as an infidels, contaminating Islamic life, campaigning Westernisation, and threatening *kyai* as the central figure of Muslim society. In Kartodirdjo's view, political economy seems to be more striking, as in the case of the peasant rebellion in Banten, rather than religious issues. The peasant rebellion was purely about an agrarian and agricultural conflict between the indigeneous peasants of Banten and the colonial government. However, *kyai*'s role in mobilising the peasants to confront the colonial government, elevating the discourse of anti-Westernisation within, indicates the strong power the *kyai* had at the moment. The *kyai*'s resistance to the colonial government is basically a part of fulfilling the social expectations of fighting against injustice. Referring to Anderson, the *kyai*'s political distance from the center of political power heightens the charisma of the *kyai*, strengthening his position as the center of society.¹⁷

In the Old Order era, the role of *kyai* became more apparent and can be identified from the *kyai*'s thick political involvement in the political parties. Not only as backup, but the *kyai* also became a machine of the Muslim parties. The Soekarno era provided a fertile opportunity for *kyai* to get actively involved in politics. Such a kind of circumstance was possible to construct as President Soekarno had the very nature of

¹⁴ Martin van Bruinessen, "Liberal and Progressive Voice in Indonesian Islam," in Shireen Hunter (ed.), *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity* (New York: ME Sharpe, 2009), pp. 187-202.

¹⁵ Sidik Jatmiko, "Kiai dan Politik Lokal: Studi Kasus Reposisi Politik Kiai NU Kebumen, Jawa Tengah Memanfaatkan Peluang Keterbukaan Partisipasi di Era Reformasi," *PhD Dissertation*, Gadjah Mada University, 2005, p. 6.

¹⁶ Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasant Revolt of Banten in 1888* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1966), pp. 140-175.

¹⁷ Anderson, *Language and Power*, pp. 17-93.

leadership that was deeply compromising, which passionately sought to accommodate pluralistic views in politics, and strived to harmonize them in one national spectrum, namely *Nasakom* (nasional, agama, komunis—nationalism, religion, and communism). This indicates the crucial role of the Muslim parties and *kyai* as the main drivers of those priorities in Indonesian politics.¹⁸

Meanwhile, during the New Order, there was a systematic exclusion of the role for *kyai* in politics. *Kyai* were isolated to handle only social and cultural matters. Soeharto's political ascent to taking over political power from Soekarno led to a contrasting political atmosphere from those of Soekarno's in relation to the role of *kyai* in practical politics. Soeharto concentrated power in his hand through the formation of a government party, namely *Golongan Karya* (Golkar). Soeharto, who imposed a repressive approach in running his administration, had changed the face of Indonesian politics dramatically.

The fragmentation of the orientation of *kyai* in politics then started. Some *kyais*, who were in direct confrontation with the government, had to face threats and intimidation, being subjects of subversionism. Some of them were even brought for imprisonment. Some others, then, further preferred to be silent, considering their community's safety. Nonetheless, there were some figures of *kyai* who finally chose to join with Golkar, but indeed without a crucial role in decision making. Some people even argue that in this case, the government only made use of their popularity to collect votes. Regardless of those diverse arguments of Soeharto, people seem to affirm that *kyais* were a marginalized entity, excluded from politics, and being an object of Soeharto's development policy.¹⁹

The era of *Reformasi* beginning in 1998 opened wider opportunities for *kyai* to express their political aspirations. Some people see this positively as it encouraged wider, equal involvement of *kyai* on the political stage. Some others see this negatively since instead of strengthening political Islam in Indonesia, *Reformasi* has entailed an excessive impact sharpening the fragmentation in Muslim political community. The birth of many Islamic parties since the *Reformasi* era distracts from Islamic politics in

¹⁸ Rizal Sukma, *Islam in Indonesian Foreign Policy*, (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5-7.

Indonesia, rather than uniting it. Support for the PPP, the only Islamic party during the New Order, sharply decreased during the Reformation era (1999 onward), especially following the formation of the PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa) and the PBR (Partai Bintang Reformasi). This similarly happened when Muhammadiyah established PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional), NU followers established PKNU in addition to the existent PKB, and Masyumi followers established PBB (Partai Bulan Bintang). The further impact is the fragmentation between Muslim politicians getting more exposure than those in previous times. Although some people refuse to admit that the rise of those parties is representative of the fragmentation of Muslim ideologies, some others remain unable to ignore this as a validation of the Muslim divide in Indonesia.²⁰ The impeachment of President Gus Dur in 2001 would eventually foster regret from the pro-democratic activists who deemed him the most successful president in promoting justice and would also give us a more clear picture of the incompleteness of Indonesian political Islam. Strong fragmentation within the Muslim political parties, as well as civil/social organisations for Buehler, seem to be the most prominent explanations of unconsolidated Islamic politics in Indonesia.²¹

In local politics, *Reformasi* opened new space for *kyai* to take a wider part in direct political contestation. It is not rare anymore to find *kyai* leading a government body, either as *bupati/walikota* or *wakil bupati/walikota* (district-head/mayor or vice district-head/vice mayor). Such a political phenomenon also happened in Kebumen.²² The *kyai* in Kebumen, in Jatmiko's research findings, is seen as a successful arrival to the political stage with significant triumphs as vice *bupati* in 2000-2005 and 2005-2008/2010.²³ Some people see this as progress in Indonesian Islam politics. Some others do not agree with this idea as the *kyai* is seen

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

²¹ Michael Buehler, "Islam & Democracy in Indonesia," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2009, pp. 51-63.

²² Jatmiko, *Kiai dan Politik Lokal*, p. 334.

²³ A couple of Rustriningsih-Nashiruddin won indirect election of *bupati* in 2000-2005, and won again in direct election for the 2005-2010 term. However, as Rustriningsih won the direct governor election in 2008, she had to act as Central Java vice governor in 2008-2013 term. As such, Nashiruddin had to replace Rustriningsih as *bupati* during the remaining term (2008-2010).

as only being made use of by greedy politicians as a political machine to win votes in the election.²⁴ Jatmika's findings identify positive and negative implications of *kyai* involvement in politics, including the discord between the *kyai*, other *kyais* and NU masses.

However, as Jatmika only explored the political implication of *kyai* involvement in practical politics and not trace further how it affects public policy as a whole, it needs further elaboration. This paper tries to identify such a problem to highlight whether and how *kyai* can play a significant role in decision making and bring greater impacts in policy reform. This will help us identify whether *kyai* could make a difference in politics given the 'speciality' attached to them, particularly as religious figures where expectation and trust are usually higher values than compared to other politicians.

D. A Brief Review of the Social and Political Setting of Kebumen Since *Reformasi*

In politics, Kebumen is known as one of the important 'red' areas in Central Java Province. 'Red' means to be dominated by the PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan). In addition to PDI-P dominance in the local representative body, the success of the PDI-P in Kebumen can be clearly seen in the success of its cadre, Rustriningsih, winning the Pilkada (district head election as *Bupati*-district head) in 2000 and 2005, and Pilgub (governor election as vice governor) in 2008. The southern coastal areas of Kebumen are identified as the main areas of PDI-P supporters.

Nevertheless, the supporters of PDI-P in Kebumen not only come from *abangan*,²⁵ as commonly identified, but also come from *santri* (pious Muslims, generally known as 'the green' or 'white' society), who are generally known as the Muslim parties' masses.²⁶ Syamsul, an informant whose wife is a *Fatayat NU* activist, asserts that not all PDI-P supporters are from *abangan*. He said:

Not all PDI-P supporters are *abangan*. Like an activist of *Fatayat NU*,

²⁴ Concluded from several interviews in Kebumen during June 2010.

²⁵ Generally perceived as non-pious religious believers, although eventually many of them are the loyal followers of *Kejawen*; a traditional religion of Java.

²⁶ 'Green' refers to symbolic color of Islam, while 'white' refers to the idea of being religious.

which is basically a PDI-P cadre, she chose Mega in the latest presidential election and not SBY. It is a common phenomenon. In the southern coastal areas, PDI-P is dominating, meanwhile most of the people there are Anshor, *santri*, NU, Fatayat.

This is what makes the PDI-P in Kebumen relatively different from other areas, specifically Solo and Semarang. In these two regions, the PDI-P is identical with *abangan* voters. Some people believe it is the success of Rustriningsih in embracing popular sympathy that she could drive the voters, including those from the *santri* community, to vote for her affiliating party.²⁷ However, some others argue that the role of *Kyai* Nashiruddin Al Mansyur is inseparable from Rustriningsih's success given the typical characteristics of Kebumen society that are deeply dependent on the figure of *kyai*. In relation to this, another informan, namely Rimba said that:

It is too difficult to identify what kind of people support Nashiruddin. To say NU is not one hundred percent true because the NU party is usually PKB, or PPP, meanwhile Nashir himself is PDI-P. At first Nashir was PKB, but then moved out to PDI-P for quite long time—and this is believed to contribute to the Kebumen NU people's affiliation to PDI-P, and finally moved out to Demokrat in 2009-2010 elections.

Therefore, it is not a surprise if someone argues that no matter the success of the PDI-P, the NU mass is also counted as important in Kebumen politics. The socio-political characteristics in which *kyai* still have a role as the central figures in society and become the reference of the voters in political decisions has led to the competition amongst parties, not only the Muslim, but also the secular ones like Demokrat and Golkar, to attract *kyai* to be the members of their advisory boards or committees. In the election of 2009, for example, Partai Demokrat was successful to persuade Nashiruddin to join with them and he left the PDI-P, the party he had embraced for almost a decade.

Nashiruddin was then elected as a chief of the Demokrat Party and was successful to increase the number of Demokrat seats in the

²⁷ One of my interviewees, Ny. Syamsul, told me that there are many members and committees (*pengurus*) of Fatayat NU that became PDI-P voters although NU is usually associated with PKB. Ny. Syamsul herself is one of the Fatayat NU committee, so she can identify which Fatayat NU branch became supporters of Rustri/PDI-P.

DPRD (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah), compared to those of 2004. Of course, PKB is still important as NU's party. However, Nashiruddin still seems to become the central figure of society and is seen as more influential than the PKB itself in mobilising political support. The influence of Nashiruddin as Demokrat's leader in Kebumen politics, can be simply seen in the election of 2009, in which the increase of Demokrat's seats impacted a decrease in PDI-P and PKB's seats. Other important parties in Kebumen are Golkar, PAN, PKNU, PPP, PKS and Gerindra, but they never significantly defeat the dominance of PDI-P and Demokrat under Nashiruddin's leadership.

In relation to this in terms of social life, generally speaking Kebumen can be called a *kota santri* (city identical with Islamic culture). There are hundreds of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Kebumen. In daily life we can see that almost all of the Kebumen women wear veils (*jabab*) and *gamis* (female Muslim clothes) and men usually wear *kopyah* (Muslim hat) and sometime *sarung* (sarong). They are also very active in Islamic and social activities like *koranic* studies (*pengajian*), *tablilan* (an Islamic activity to pray collectively for families that have passed away), and *arisan* (community saving). The *santri* in Kebumen not only becomes the dominant ingredient of Kebumen society, but they also hold an important role in Kebumen's economy, including trading, infrastructure companies, and industries.²⁸

Nonetheless, we cannot leave out the *abangan* because they are also significant in number in Kebumen. They consist of *tukang becak* (pedicab drivers), *buruh tani* (farming labourers), and *kuli* (workman). Generally speaking, the *abangan* in Kebumen are known as poor and marginalized. *Abangan* obviously becomes the most important voters for PDI-P. In some cases, *abangan* were used to counter some protests against Rustriningsih's administration in relation to corruption and social disparity. A group of informants say that when a number of people from various NGOs came to the Bupati/DPRD office to protest Rustri's particular policy, the *abangan* were the ones who firstly came to defend.²⁹ In current politics, there is no clear data on how *abangan* orients their

²⁸ An interview mentions that there are Haji Faliq who own many shops in Kebumen, Haji Yahya who own some home industries, and other *hajis* who often win project tenders in Kabupaten Kebumen.

²⁹ Based on interview with Rimba, Aris Panji and Murtajib, 15-16 June 2010.

political support since Rustriningsih and her family failed in both the 2009 and 2010 elections (legislature and district-head election).

E. *Kyai*, Politics, and Development in Kebumen (2008-2010)

The following discussion deals with the performance of *kyai* as district-head in Kebumen politics. It addresses a number of issues in relation to the question of the extent *kyai*'s roles in politics delivered a positive impact on society in general.

1. *General Overview of Government Performance during Nashiruddin's Term*

KH. Nashiruddin Al Mansyur's administration (2008-2010) was basically a continuation of Rustriningsih's. Nashiruddin Al Mansyur had been accompanying Rustriningsih to be her vice *bupati* both in the first and second terms (2000-2005 and 2005-2010). In 2008, Nashiruddin replaced Rustriningsih as *bupati* since Rustriningsih had to move to Semarang after winning the governor's election in July of that period. Rustriningsih becomes the vice governor, accompanying Bibit Waluyo as governor in 2008-2012.

Being led by two contrasting styles of leadership within a short period makes it easy for the Kebumen people to compare. Generally, people feel that there seems to be a consistent decrease of the quality of government performance as time went by. Since Kebumen was led by Rusti for the second time, there seemed to be problems that started to arise. Besides the indication of the problem of transparency in some local infrastructure projects, internal conflict in PDI-P was believed to affect the quality of *bupati* performance. Problems got worse when Nashir replaced Rustringsih after she won the election for governor; not only relating to conflict of interests among politicians, but also weakening concern for economic development and service provision reform.

As Rustriningsih firstly led Kebumen, there was strong encouragement to improve the government's performance. She invited experts from universities to help her to construct the design of governance reform. She launched a program "Selamat Pagi Bupati" (Good Morning, Bupati) to let citizens directly have a talk with the government every morning. She was also very active to visit people in

the grass root level to absorb aspirations and identify citizen's problems that needed responses from the government. During the first term, Rustriningsih was seen to be relatively successful to bring some crucial progress to Kebumen's development.

This is, however, not to say that Rustriningsih was without weakness. Many people argue that Rustriningsih was not able to maintain the consistency of her administration's performance. As can be seen from the graph, in the second term (2005-2008/2010), people started to identify the trend of the decreasing quality of Rustriningsih's leadership. Some corruption cases were revealed, although not directly accusing her and bringing her into judicial charge. She started to become directly involved in internal conflicts of PDI-P, strengthening her political dynasty—but not always successfully, and building a crony network for tackling Kebumen's infrastructure development. Nonetheless, people could still access the "Selamat Pagi Bupati" program which enabled political communication with the government, as well as some reforms Rustri had initiated including village government budgeting (ADD).

However, when Rustriningsih won the Central Java governor's election and had to sit in the vice governor's seat in Semarang accompanying Bibit Waluya, the elected governor, there seemed to be a sharp contrast in the government's performance that people could feel. Nashiruddin, her predecessor, previously her vice *bupati*, was seen to be unable to maintain the quality of governance as performed during Rustri's terms.

To some extent, people even found that public service was getting worse. People saw that the public services ran very slowly, became expensive, never showed eagerness to serve, and were not kind/friendly (*tidak ramah*). There were some times when people had to wait for about 3 months to get their KTP administered. For birth certificates, people had to wait about 1 year. The very slow response in public service had made everything difficult, as it correlated with other administrative matters. For instance, if people wanted to access social incentive programs, such as BLT (Bantuan Langsung Tunai), BOS (Bantuan Operasional Sekolah), or to administer their marriage, they were required to show their official ID card and other documents. Therefore, this was very much unhelpful. Relating to this, Syamsul said that:

In a leaflet, it was said it was free of charge, like through BOS (Operational Assistance for Schools). In fact, there are still many items to be paid, such as uniforms, and the like.

Another problem was found in relation to education and health services. Although directly dealing with the citizen's basic needs, these offices looked to be left behind. They were not able to show good service and PR (public relation), as well as did not have a clear policy orientation. Wardopo exemplified:

Public service in the government hospital still needs to be monitored. There are many complaints regarding the services.

Strengthening this assertion, respondents added the information that service in the public hospital (RSUD) there seemed to include deliberate efforts to make an image of the public hospital as bad because of its formal officers (administrative officers, midwives, doctors, etc.). The goal is clear, namely in order to orient the citizens to buy health services from private hospitals and doctors with a more expensive cost. Ironically, the paramedic in private hospitals was just the same as those in the public hospital. The health equipment in the public hospital was also better than that of the private hospital's.³⁰

Nonetheless, not all people agree with the argument that *Kyai* Nashiruddin was even worse than Rustri in undergoing governing processes. Murtajib, for instance, asserts that he can accept the way Nashiruddin managed the government. For Murtajib, the slow performance of Nashiruddin cannot be separated from the fact of the relatively short period available for Nashiruddin to pursue leading the Kebumen government. Murtajib says:

Nashir only continues what Rustri had set up. In her earlier term, it seemed that Rustri was willing to learn governing Kebumen. However, political complexity in PDI-P has absorbed her energy,³¹ that later she looks reluctant to learn again for reforming Kebumen policy, and it has implication on the government.

By asserting this, Murtajib tries to show how the changes happened

³⁰ As Aris Panji asserted, based on an interview on 15 June 2010.

³¹ The political complexity the informant meant is an internal conflict in the PDI-P on the party leader election, followed by conflict about who should be seated as vice bupati. Rustriningsih's contention to place her brother, Rustriyanto—Aan, was finally accomplished, although leaving too many questions.

during Rustriningsih's term until Nashirudin's. In Murtajib's view, in her early term, Rustriningsih was recognised as a hard worker and an active learner. However, the political complexity in PDI-P, in Murtajib's view, had trapped Rustri into a hard situation that caused Rustri's focus to be squeezed into her group's interest, rather than into the improvement of government performance. Rustri's political tricks had in fact induced crucial influence in the quality of government later on. Thus, when Nashiruddin replaced Rustri, it is understandable that Nashiruddin found great difficulty to fix the government's performance. Murtajib states:

As a vice *bupati*, at first Nashir seems to be given some spaces to exert his authority. However, prior to election 2004, Nashir was left (by Rustri). Yet, Rustri was forced to embrace Nashir since she realized that Nashir's influence in society is still strong.

However, Murtajib said that Nashir had a very different style of leadership compared to that of Rustriningsih. For Murtajib, although he agrees that Nashir performs quite slowly in governing Kebumen, Murtajib did not see this as part or indication of Nashir's failure. It is instead, for Murtajib, a deliberate choice of leadership style of showing the people of Kebumen people a clean way of running the government. Despite the very harsh critiques from the people regarding the very slow pace of economic development in Kebumen during Nashir's term, this shows how straight Nashiruddin played a political game in Kebumen. Murtajib said:

Different people have different opinions about Nashir. Some people say that Nashir is slow in responding with local investment. For some others, as local investment is usually identical with corruption, Nashir's refusal is seen as an effort to avoid corruption. In Pilkada, Nashir's refusal of being offered some amount of money for campaign, was understood as over-confidence, while for the others, it is part of political carefulness and cleanliness.

Such an argument shows us that Nashir's slow performance in governing Kebumen is confirmed, compared to his previous counterpart, Rustriningsih, both in her first and second terms. Nashir's performance is seen as worse even than Rustri's second term which was seen to be prone of criticisms from people who started to identify the degradation in performance of Rustri's administration. For some people, Nashir's inaction in the name of avoiding corruption and dirty politics was a

disadvantage to Kebumen's development. Yet, there are also some people who see Nashir's decreased performance differently and they try to understand some reasons behind those inactions. Not all people see Nashir's slowness in undergoing governance as an indication of Nashiruddin's failure or deem it as a bad thing. Some people, somehow, saw such a phenomenon as a commitment of Nashir to create a clean government in Kebumen.

2. *Assessment Aspects of Governmental Performance in Nasiruddin's Term*

Before going more deeply on the discussion as to what extent *kyai's* participation in practical politics is effective to both governmental performance and development, there is a need to scrutinize each *bupati's* vision so that the differences in focus and policy orientation can be analysed.

During the involvement of Nashiruddin in government office, Kebumen's policy orientation is clear, namely a religious society. The assertion of a religious society in *bupati* visions (from the words "*masyarakat yang agamis*—religious") can be seen as a political sign of what kind of politics was taking place. The religious aspect reflected in Kebumen's vision can be assumed as a result of Nashiruddin's involvement in top executive seats. Nashiruddin's personal figure as a religious scholar can be apparently identified to influencing how such a vision was set up. When Nashiruddin was replaced by Buyar through *Pilkada* in 2010, Buyar set up a very different vision for his administration. There is no more specific assertion of the words "religious society" as can be found during Rustri's first and second terms, as well as Nashiruddin's term. From this point we can later understand why the government performance differs from a leader to another.

Secondly, it is also important to take into account how people compare the leadership of each *bupati* and how it had an impact on citizens. Besides the general overview of the government's performance, the main aspect to compare is usually economic development. It includes government services, both documentary services and social services, that relate to the fulfillment of citizens' basic needs.

In general relation to Nashiruddin's performance in government, people perceive that there is some decrease between Rustri's first and

second term, even compared to Amin Soedibyo's. Although Amin Soedibyo led Kebumen when the government system, in general, was characterised by a centralised model, people could still acknowledge Amin Soedibyo's efforts to improve Kebumen's economy. Amin Soedibyo's strengths for some people are especially identified from his concerns to local industries. Meanwhile, Rustriningsih was seen more active in improving Kebumen's infrastructure, despite the very critiques of Rustri's high political economic contention in development projects, especially in Rustri's second term. People feel that during Rustri's terms, unemployment decreased and local economic activism was operating at a relatively stable pace.

During Nashiruddin's term, development was seen stagnant. Nashiruddin was seen passive in encouraging local investment and not responsive to public demand for public services and policy reforms. Buyar, Nashiruddin's predecessor, on the other hand, had not been able to achieve some breakthroughs until about one year after he won Pilkada, at which time this research was still being conducted. It clearly shows that the point of how Kebumen experienced different states of being along with the changes in the leadership styles of the *bupati*. In relation to this, the below parts try to discuss more specifically the issues that people use as a parameter of how government performs. Those aspects include perceptions on economic development, public services, and social service provisions.

3. Government Performance on Economic Policy and Development

The change of bupati from Rustriningsih to Nashiruddin in 2008, for some people, did not bring any crucial impact changes in policy. Some people felt that there seemed to be stagnance in economic development. Those who could mostly feel the impact were small scale entrepreneurs, such as brick and roof industry owners in villages. Syamsul and Alifah are examples of people who were aware and responded to the indication of the slowing down of economy. Alifah argued that the government did not seem to strive to support small scale entrepreneurs, for instance through microcredit. Alifah felt that it was difficult to access bank loans and government assistance even though she deeply needed them, especially facing the economic hardship. Alifah said "government assistance to

small and medium enterprises is not accessible enough, the bank interest is too high that industry runs so slowly.” Being asked to what extent the government supported local entrepreneurs, Alifah said that it was too limited. Alifah stated “the support is insufficient. Moreover now, in Nashir’s term. It’s too far from people’s expectations.”

Alifah further explained her argument that during Rustriningsih’s terms, development projects were tremendous. People could mostly be employed; local industries could run well, so that it induced local development. Alifah said:

In Rustri’s term, the government was active in developing infrastructure. Local industry gained benefits from this—as Rustri used local products to support her development policy. People were employed, although with low salaries. Compared to Nashir, Rustri is far more...(progressive) in local development.

Alifah added that Nashir had a very different style of leadership compared to Rustri in terms of responsiveness to the citizen needs. With simple words, Alifah said “too far, (Rustri) is too far (better than Nashir). (Nashir) is unable to respond quickly (as Rustri) and develops the economy very slowly.”

For Alifah, Nashiruddin is responding to citizen demands too slowly, meanwhile such a kind of policy could influence the economic well-being of Kebumen as a whole. In Nashiruddin’s term, therefore, the degrading economy could be apparently captured. It is not only Alifah who felt the degrading quality of governance during Nashir’s term. Syamsul, who runs a small business on brick and roof making, asserted a similar thing. Being asked about the development policy, Syamsul said that “Rustriningsih’s policy is prioritised on infrastructure. This is similar to Suharto’s policy. But people were advantaged.”

Syamsul argues that the policy orientation of Rustriningsih is clear, despite the wide critiques addressed to her. Rustriningsih, in Syamsul’s views, strongly encouraged infrastructure development that enabled the people in the villages to access public facilities. Syamsul added that the road development initiated by Rustriningsih had brought greater opportunities for other sectors’ development, especially the local economy. Although there was still a lack of human resource development and education, such kinds of policy still gave advantages to the people.

Syamsul said that:

Roads were developed reaching the isolated villages and people were enabled to access the market. Nonetheless, the weakness of such a policy was a lack of attention to Human Resource Development like education. The government was too focused on physical facilities.

Thus, compared to Rustriningsih, in Syamsul's views, Nashiruddin's policy orientation is rather unclear. For Syamsul, Nashiruddin seems to be willing to orient Kebumen towards religion, but does not really look seriously at responding to Kebumen's problems. To some extent, as Syamsul argued, such a kind of policy orientation could lead to failure in answering citizens' needs. Syamsul said that:

This term (Nashiruddin's term) seems to focus on religion, moral development. It is inseparable indeed from his background as a religious scholar and *santri* (pious Muslim). Therefore, when being asked about the contract teachers' salary and recruitment to PNS, he suggested to be patient, wait and pray as it is part of the central government's responsibility. This was disappointing.

Syamsul criticized the way Nashiruddin governed Kebumen. For him it meant inaction. Such a leadership style for Syamsul could be a disadvantage to society as it overlooked many opportunities to advance their lives. Syamsul argued:

...the foundation that he builds is religion, given the strong religious background he has. He relies on everything from God. (It is important) but does not show to be striving for (reform). Moreover, if we talk about the economy, it's not being touched at all ...(by Nashiruddin's policy).

Not only different from Rustriningsih, Nashiruddin is also different from Amin Soedibyo who led Kebumen in the late New Order era (1995-2000). Syamsul said in terms of encouraging local economic development, especially for small and medium enterprises:

If Rustri focused on infrastructure, and Nashir on religion, Amin Sudibyo focused on local products. He was very active in promoting local products, such as roofing materials, souvenirs, and local foods through local exhibitions that invited investments from the national level. There is no such *bupati* like Amin.

Different from Rustriningsih who focused on infrastructure and Nashiruddin who placed more weight on religious things than the others, for Syamsul Amin Soedibyo prioritised local industries. From the late Soeharto era until early *Reformasi* (up to 2000) when Kebumen was led by Amin Sudibyo, as Syamsul said, the government looked to strongly encourage local investment and industry. Syamsul, as an owner of a *genteng* home industry (roofing made from clay, which is very popular in Kebumen), said that he knew well the implications of such government policy would have on the local economy.

In Syamsul's view, Amin Sudibyo was the kind of *bupati* who was active in promoting local products. Amin was seen to intensively invite small industry owners to participate in local product exhibitions. Syamsul also saw that Amin was diligent to promote products from Kebumen, such as *genteng* (roofing), *pandan* leaf-made souvenirs, and banana crackers (*keripik pisang*) to the outsider regions. Yet Syamsul realised that the government in Amin's era was more dependent on Jakarta, typically associated with a product of centralisation in the New Order. However, Amin is seen to be better than Nashiruddin in affecting the impact of his policy on the development of the local economy.

4. *Government Performance on Public Service*

Not only known as being active in pushing infrastructure development, such as roads, hospitals, bus stations, schools, and government offices, Rustriningsih was also known for being proactive in government reform. In the first term of Rustri's administration, the bureaucracy shifted to become more disciplined (on-time), served citizens very well (citizens had never experienced a time in which the government was able to complete KTP (Kartu Tanda Penduduk, identification card) administration service within 30 minutes and free of charge) and also responding with an E-government breakthrough.

However, entering the second term, there seemed to be a performance quality decrease in the Rustriningsih administration. Document registration got more complicated and time consuming. There was no response, as well, to citizens' complaints sent via *sms* and email although the government had announced an e-government program. "*Selamat Pagi Bupati?*" also seemed to have no impact on the government's

performance. There was no clear follow up to all the input from citizens' complaints and ideas. People even came to the conclusion that the bureaucracy's mindset had not yet changed. Prior to the end of her administration in 2008, people even were suspicious that Rustriningsih had let corruption occur through the bus terminal, hospital, southern coastal area road building project, and the government office development project. There was also suspicion in transparency of disaster relief funds. The hospital, south coast roads, and bus station building were suspected to include unfair tender and problematic land acquisition.³² In relation to this, Aris Panji, a local NGO activist asserted that:

What was called as one stop services in fact is not 'one'—*pelayanan satu pintu tapi praktiknya berpintu-pintu*. Maybe there was progress in Rustri's earlier term. However, in terms of collusion, yesterday and today are just the same.

In relation to this, Alifah adds that, "It is burdening the society". Further, Syamsul argues that entering Nashiruddin's term, the condition afterwards was even worse. Syamsul said:

If you want everything done faster, you have to pay higher. That practice is still applied until today. Otherwise, you have to wait for a long time. For birth certificate administration, you even have to wait until one year, you are charged for ten thousands rupiah. However, if you want it done faster, you have to pay around twenty five thousands rupiahs or fifty thousands rupiahs. Identity card (KTP) is just the same. My colleague registered a KTP on December and has just been done in February. Many brokers in society and bureaucracy. Not only in Rustriningsih's term, but such kind of things also remains the same in Nashiruddin's term.

Nonetheless, Syamsul realizes that besides the problem of leadership style, politics surrounding the government office was also complex. Syamsul argues that since the resignation of Rustriningsih, politicians were in conflict over the position of vice *bupati*, followed by a PDI-P internal conflict about the party leader election. As Rustriningsih started to apply dynasty politics in which she tried to promote her brother, Rustriyanto, to the position of vice *bupati* and the PDI-P leader

³² *Kompas*, "PNBK NU Laporkan Dugaan Korupsi Bupati Kebumen, 11 June 2008, and "Pembebasan JLS Kebumen Terkendala Sengketa Lahan", 19 May 2009.

of Kebumen, as well as other families in legislature candidatures, conflict between the PDI-P activists became sharpened. For Syamsul, this clearly distracted Nashiruddin's focus and influenced the quality of governmental performance because Nashiruddin himself was also a PDI-P politician. Reviewing the tendency of Rustriningsih to rebutte Nashiruddin's position, Nashiruddin finally resigned from the PDI-P and moved to Demokrat prior to Pilkada 2010. Syamsul clarifies:

Bupati (Nashiruddin) is not able to be a central figure in government, unlike Rustri when governing Kebumen, as Rustri practiced a spoil system in bureaucracy. Nashir does not have roots in bureaucracy. He is alone and could not control the government. Nashiruddin too deeply uses religion for his political campaign, which sometimes does not have a direct implication to policy improvement.

In addition to Syamsul, Wardopo, a journalist, argued that the progress of reform was too slow. Some departments might develop quite well, whilst some others continued the undergoing of government just as business-as-usual. Wardopo said:

Progress is not congruent between one department and the others. The government has not been in touch with the issue of transparency, although the program of public service reform has been announced. KTP registration could take two weeks to get done, which is ideally finished in one or two days. Birth certificates could take months. Meanwhile, there are still many people who, in isolated areas around 40 kilometers from the city, have to come and come again to the government office to register.

In terms of business licensing, although often referred to as a pro-reform government and even gained some awards on public service and budgeting, some local businessmen admit that it remained uneasy to register business licenses during both the Rustri and Nashir administrations.³³ The process of licensing businesses is often time consuming, complex—not as easy as the leaflet said—and there is uncertainty in terms of cost and time-range information. Joko, a worker in handicraft industry, explained that price is negotiable depending on how fast we would like the license registration to get finished. KPPT

³³ Yahya, based on an interview on 16 June 2010, and Dariman based on an interview on 15 June 2010.

(*Kantor Pelayanan Perijinan Terpadu*—one stop services office) does not function properly.

In relation to this, some people saw that the government needed to be more strongly assertive in responding to local investment. However, instead of creating some breakthroughs, the government experiment to apply a 5-working-days system (Monday-Friday 07.30-16.00) was seen as counterproductive to creating an investment climate. Meanwhile, businessmen were usually very busy Monday-Friday and had their spare time to survey investment potential during the weekend. If the government is not available on these days, of course, Wardopo explained, the government would lose the opportunity to expand its economy. Different people, nonetheless, had a different experience. There are people who see that nowadays, business licensing is easy. What is not easy for them is to start and run a business, especially relating to small enterprise credits. Syamsul argued that in this case, the role of government to support and protect local business seemed to be absent.

There are nonetheless people who see that Nashiruddin is better than Rustriningsih in terms of promoting a clean government. The decrease in infrastructure projects is seen as a result of Nashiruddin's carefulness in managing the government. Some people believe that Nashiruddin is a clean man. Kholid Anwar, for instance, argued that Nashiruddin deliberately chose not to be too active in triggering infrastructure projects because he knew very well how dirty this sector of business in Kebumen is. He tried to avoid the risks of bad government practice (corruption and unfair project competition) which he believes as not right. In addition, people believe that this does not mean that Nashiruddin does not care for his citizens. Nashiruddin was widely known as humble and kind. He brought a kind of informality to the government which made it easier for Kebumen citizens to see him without complicated bureaucratic procedures. This is something rare to find in the current Kebumen bupati.

5. *Government Performance on Social Services (Health and Education)*

Equally, people feel that there is no crucial breakthrough in health and education policy despite the intense effort to rebuild a new hospital and some schools in Kebumen. In health service, there are still

some extra payments asked by the officers although there is already an Askeskin (*Asuransi Kesehatan untuk Rakyat Miskin—health insurance for the poor*), that guarantees healthcare service. There are also some difficulties in administering Askeskin for patients who come from poor families. People clearly understand that good infrastructure is not enough for healthcare service if the quality of the services provided were not good. Wardopo asserted:

Two of the government's priorities are health and education. We talk about health first. There is already a commitment actually. The performance of the health office looks to get better. However, the supporting system in the bottom lines is still problematic. In this area, there is still a need for change.

Wardopo added that the government program of health assistance for the poor sometimes did not work due to the red tape typical of the health servants. Wardopo gives an example:

Jamkesmas (Social Health Insurance) sometimes does not help much for the surreptitious procedure of administration. The latest case, which is hidden by the state hospital, in which a patient finally committed suicide for not being able to pay the hospital bills, clearly shows us how difficult it is for the poor to access healthcare although there is already health insurance subsidized by the central government.

Dealing with this, Aris Panji commented:

There seems to be a deliberate action to undergrade the quality of health service in public hospital. The aim of this is possibly that the patients would have a bad image of the public hospital and that they would prefer a private one. Meanwhile, the medical staff who work in both hospitals are just the same.

Aris Panji continues his argument that the government's choice to build a new hospital somehow sounded insensible. Aris Panji emphasized that there was already a public hospital in Kebumen. Aris Panji suggested that rather than building the new one, it might be better to use the money for improving the services of the existing hospital. Aris Panji provided another example that there was still a need for training the hospital staffs in public relation skill, as well as to improve the hospital's equipment and laboratory facilities. Therefore, Aris Paji asserted, the new building

basically did not really answer the people needs. Unfortunately, finding out the miss-targeted policy of infrastructure, Nashiruddin seemed to prefer inaction. This was contrary to his jargon of “*yassirū wa lā tu‘assirū*” which means “make everything easy and do not make it difficult”.

Besides the health sector, weakness can also be found in education. First of all, as Wardopo argued, the government had placed people with insufficient capabilities in the education office and that is why it they could not tackle the complexities in education issues. For Wardopo, such a problem arose as a result of a spoils system that had been practiced for the aim of political group benefit. In addition, the fundamental but common problem which also exists is that people still face difficulties in accessing education. Agreeing with Wardopo, Eko, who is active in policy advocacy, argued that although there was already BOS (Bantuan Operasional Sekolah—School Operational Aid) to assist with the school’s financial resources, free education was never provided. Meanwhile, in another aspect, Syamsul added that teachers employed by contract face big problems with salary. They were paid very low, about Rp 100.000 per month, while there was no guarantee that they would be recruited as formal permanent employees, i.e. becoming a civil servant.

Those complexities are, indeed, not exclusive enough to be indicative of Nashiruddin’s failure. However, there is a continuity of problems which Nashiruddin has been unable to answer and deal with. People put their great expectations in Nashiruddin to be more assertive in controlling and improving governmental performance, but there was no clear response to this fulfillment from Nashiruddin’s administration. As the slowing pace of government reform occurred quite significantly in Nashiruddin’s term, it is not a surprise if people tended to believe that Nashiruddin was not effective enough in managing Kebumen’s governance.

F. Conclusion

The phenomenon of *kyai* to be involved in political contestation since *Reformasi* is something unavoidable. Historically, *kyai* were marginalised and used by the authorities to support their development policy, but not to share power distribution. The critique toward the political exclusion of *kyai* to be active in politics was possible during

the Soeharto era. As *kyai* were seen as a threat for Soeharto's ruling government and for the potential of social movement that *kyai* might inspire --to fight against the injustice and repression Soeharto committed-- it was not rare for Soeharto to judge *kyai* as subversive. The *dakwah* (mission) of *kyai* was often spied upon in anticipation of the widespread anti-government discourse. *Kyai* during the Soeharto's era were massively weakened.³⁴ Therefore, *Reformasi* was seen as bringing good news for the future of political openness. Some *kyai* positively responded to the kind of democracy *Reformasi* offered to get their power back by being active in politics. Jatmika's finding is confirmed because since *Reformasi*, the politician/*kyai* phenomenon was mushrooming. His point of questioning who gets what and how with those *kyai* involved in politics becomes sensible to bear in mind.

The experience in Kebumen told us that sometimes being led by a *kyai* does not always bring a greater impact on the improvement of social welfare. The way Nashiruddin led Kebumen in the perspective of public policy reflects inaction, disadvantaging the citizen, although it was done in the name of keeping himself away from political collusion and corruption. The first and foremost question is, "to what extent is *kyai*'s participation in practical politics effective to government performance and development?". Using the experience of Kebumen, therefore, it tends to be negatively answered. There is no guarantee that being governed by a clean person, the government will be clean, unless those leaders were able to transfer his abilities of maintaining self-cleanliness into the wider scope of government institutions. Otherwise, their participation in practical politics would mean nothing.

Thus, it is not a surprise if most of the participants being interviewed in this research answered that in terms of leadership effectiveness, Rustriningsih was better than Nashiruddin. This is indeed not to argue that Rustriningsih was without weakness. In many occasions, informants also addressed their disappointment to Rustriningsih for the cronyism and dynasty politics she practiced, especially in her latest administration. People generally related the ineffectiveness of Nashiruddin's leadership with his religious background which is perceived as prioritizing religious

³⁴ Johan Meuleman, "Dakwah, Competition for Authority and Development," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Vol. 167, No. 2-3, 2011, p. 242 and p. 257.

values more than worldly business, even in the midst of great demand for economic prosperity.

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