



THE POLITICAL ETHICS OF KIAI

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Abstract

This study focuses on examining the political existence of the Kyai, the values of their political activism as a constructive critique of political dynamics in Indonesia, which in recent years has become increasingly pragmatic. This study uses a type of qualitative research, the data used are primary data and secondary data. After analyzing field data based on the perspective of political sociology theory, this study finds that political pragmatism in Indonesia is currently clearly illustrated along with the increasingly liberal political practices in Indonesia, thus triggering the birth of transactional politics, money politics, and corruption. The populist spirit behind the Kyai's political activism is clearly reflected in their political struggle which tends to fight for two values at once, namely the value of universality and the value of defending personal rights, in this context are human rights and human dignity, as inherited by Gusdur's political thought, Kyai Ahmad Dahlan, Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, Kyai Sahal Mahfudz and a number of other Kyai figures.

Keywords: *Activism, Kiai, Populism, Pragmatism..*

A. Introduction

Indonesia is a large country with a majority population of Muslims. At least 241.7 million Indonesians are Muslim, this figure is equivalent to 87.02% of Indonesia's current total population of 277.43 million.¹ The size of the Muslim population in Indonesia

¹ Cindy Mutia Annur, "Ini Jumlah Populasi Muslim Di Kawasan ASEAN, Indonesia Terbanyak," 2023, <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2023/03/28/ini-jumlah-populasi-muslim-di-kawasan-asean-indonesia-terbanyak>.



practically influences the social construction of people's lives in Indonesia daily, both in terms of culture, education, behavior, and even the highest social structure, in the context of nationality and statehood, for example. At this level, we cannot exclude Indonesian national and state discourse from religious (Islamic) values and symbols.² Apart from being enshrined in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, as clearly stated in the first point of the Pancasila precepts, there is also a series of experiences and historical evidence.³ Behind the success of the struggle and the establishment of the unitary state of Indonesia at this time, there was a significant national role and contribution from religious leaders, one of whom was the *Kyai*.⁴

In the context of national and state politics in Indonesia, the discourse around *Kyai* is not a new theme. Discussions about him have existed for a long time and have attracted the attention of many groups, especially academics. The amount of attention shows how the figure of the *Kyai* has a quite special position, not only in the socio-religious perspective but also in other social spheres outside

² Muhammad Rijal Fadli and Ajat Sudrajat, "Keislaman dan Kebangsaan: Telaah Pemikiran Kh. Hasyim Asy'ari," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Humaniora* 18, no. 1 (June 16, 2020): 109, <https://doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v18i1.3433>.

³ republika.id, "Hari Lahir Pancasila- Nilai Islam Dalam Pancasila," *Republika Online*, June 1, 2016, <https://republika.co.id/berita/koran/pendidikan-koran/16/06/01/o83ak72-hari-lahir-pancasila-nilai-islam-dalam-pancasila>.

⁴ Kompas Cyber Media, "Peran Islam dalam Pancasila, UUD NRI, NKRI, dan Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," *KOMPAS.com*, March 29, 2016, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/xml/2016/03/29/16470061/Peran.Islam.dalam.Pancasila.UUD.NRI.NKRI.dan.Bhinneka.Tunggal.Ika>.



of it, including in the context of national and state politics.⁵ In the ranks of national heroes, we now know two great religious leaders, Hadratus Syekh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. H. Ahmad Dahlan. Regarding these two figures, all agree that both of them are barometers of Indonesian civilization. The terminology regarding a prosperous nation and archipelago, which is currently a shared noble goal, was born and developed from these two figures. From these two figures, the two largest social organizations which are currently the bastions of Indonesian nationality and civilization, Nahdhatul Ulama' (NU) and Muhammadiyah were born.⁶

Meanwhile, at the academic level, many studies have been conducted on the existence of *Kyai* in political dynamics in Indonesia. Based on tracing past studies, so far the general trend of studies on it can be grouped into three major themes; *First*, the activism of the *Kyai* in the dynamics of the political constellation in Indonesia tends to be seen as a form of real implementation of social responsibility as a religious figure. *Kyai* politics is part of self-dedication to defend the benefit of the people through bureaucratic channels, overseeing and controlling both directly and indirectly to ensure that every policy made by the government is truly in line with

⁵ Sholikah Sholikah and Nurotun Mumtahanah, "Kontribusi Kebangsaan Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari: Membangun Relasi Harmonis Islam dan Indonesia," *Akademika* 15, no. 1 (July 1, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.30736/adk.v15i1.515>.

⁶ Abrina Maulidnawati Jumrah and Syarifuddin Ondeng, "Al Urwatul Wutsqa: Kajian Pendidikan Islam," *Al Urwatul Wutsqa: Kajian Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 1 (2022).



the will and interests of the people.⁷ *Second*, the political activism of the *Kyai* is seen as a form of contradiction in their role and social status as religious figures. This thesis departs from the self-view which sees the *Kyai* as a social role that is purely intersecting with religious values and *sich*. Therefore, in their view, *Kyai* is not ethically justified in being involved in the world of politics, especially so far as political terminology has a bad connotation, synonymous with the power struggle.⁸ *Third*, the political activism of the *Kyai* is often the target of criticism, seen as tending to highlight political interests rather than defending religious values. This is where the negative stigma against *Kyai*'s political activism emerges, accusations of being opportunistic, pragmatic, and the like.⁹

This study has a special interest in complementing or even covering several weaknesses of previous research, taking a different perspective than the previous studies above by focusing on two main issues, namely the value of *Kyai* political activism and political

⁷ Fifi Nofiaturrehman, "Melacak Peran *Kyai*-Santri Dalam Politik Kebangsaan Di Indonesia," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 3, no. 1 (January 24, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.35878/islamicreview.v3i1.63>; Ahmad Aminuddin, Nurma Yuwita, and Gatut Setiadi, "Pesan Politik Kebangsaan Sebagai Rekonsiliasi *Kiai* Pasca Pesta Demokrasi Dalam Perspektif Coordinated Managment of Meaning (CMM)," *Jurnal Heritage* 9, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 135–48, <https://doi.org/10.35891/heritage.v9i1.2557>.

⁸ Zainuddin Zainuddin, "Kiai Dan Politik: Implikasi Dan Masa Depan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Di Sumatera Selatan," *Briliant: Jurnal Riset Dan Konseptual* 4, no. 3 (August 31, 2019), <https://jurnal.unublitar.ac.id/index.php/briliant/article/view/347>; Vellayati Hajad, "Politik *Kiai* Dan Resistensi Sosial," *Jurnal Public Policy* 1, no. 1 (November 23, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.35308/jpp.voio.700>.

⁹ Clifford Geertz, "The Javanese *Kijaji*: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 2 (1960): 228–49; Martin van Bruinessen, *NU, Tradisi, Relasi-Relasi Kuasa* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1994).



pragmatism in contemporary Indonesia. The concept of value in this study includes the thoughts and attitudes of the *Kyai*'s political alignments which are directly related to issues of nationality, populist issues, and moral strengthening. The concept of pragmatism here implies various current political thoughts and maneuvers that tend to prioritize instrumental values rather than ethical values, are oriented towards short-term needs, and prioritize the interests of certain groups or groups over collective interests (read: the people) so that the stage of our political constellation loses its degree. quality.¹⁰

To make this study structured and systematic, the discussion in this study focuses on answering three important questions, namely; What are the populist values contained in *Kyai* political activism in Indonesia? What is the political reality in Indonesia today? How to understand the value of *Kyai* political activism as a critique of political pragmatism in contemporary Indonesia? The data collection and theoretical analysis activities in this study were carried out by emphasizing the discussion aspect to explore and describe the political activism of the *Kyai* and the populist values contained therein, a description of current political dynamics in Indonesia as political pragmatism strengthens among the elite

¹⁰ H. Heath Bawden, "What Is Pragmatism?," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 1, no. 16 (1904): 421–27, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2011902>; Endah Yuli Ekowati, "Pragmatisme Politik: Antara Koalisi, Pencalonan, Dan Calon Tunggal Dalam Pilkada," *Jurnal Transformatif* 5, no. 1 (May 7, 2019): 16–37, <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.transformatif.2019.005.01.2>.



politicians and political parties, an analysis of the values populist political activism of the *Kyai* as a critique of the face of Indonesian politics. At the practical level, this research is expected to provide strategic recommendations to all parties to strengthen political democratization in Indonesia which is truly built based on democracy, both at the procedural and substantive levels.

In general, the significance of this research is based on the hypothesis that the political constellation in Indonesia is currently facing a crucial problem due to the strengthening of pragmatism, both political constellations at the executive and legislative levels, at the central and regional levels. The argument underlying this hypothesis is based on three empirical findings in the field; *first*, the strengthening of money politics, that the political stage in Indonesia in recent years has tended to run unhealthy, especially since the implementation of the open proportional system of elections which has caused the political reality in Indonesia to become liberal and tend to be capitalist.¹¹ *Second*, the strengthening of liberalization practices and political capitalization in Indonesia is reflected in the massive number of corruption cases, both in the executive government circles and in the board members. In Indonesia, the high rate of corruption has a strong correlation with the high political costs that must be incurred by each candidate when they want to run for election, both legislative and executive elections. *Third*,

¹¹ Miftah Faried Hadinata, "Jejak Pragmatisme dalam Politik di Indonesia (Era 2009 – 2017)," *Jurnal Kalimah* 16, no. 2 (September 1, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v16i2.2872>.



pragmatism is actually a shift in political values from its substantial meaning or understanding. For this reason, the most ideal solution to overcome it is to return politics to its khittah or authenticity. The meaning of khittah here is the spirit and values of populist political activism, as practiced and demonstrated by the *Kyai* when fighting for Indonesian independence. In this context, populist politics exemplified by the *Kyai* becomes a kind of ideal view as well as constructive criticism of the current political reality to realize democracy based on its true meaning and meaning.

B. Methods

Methodologically, this study is a literature-based research conducted based on qualitative research. The selection of a qualitative method is based on the nature and character of the research problem, which in the view of the researcher can only be revealed and the answer obtained if a qualitative approach is used. As revealed by K. Denzim (1994), qualitative is a type of research that emphasizes how to work on the depth of meaning, has a dynamic character and is flexible in the field. With this elastic nature, the qualitative approach is considered effective enough to be used as a methodological tool to explore and explain various research problems.¹² In the context of this study, the research problem in question is the phenomenon of political pragmatism in

¹² Norman K. Denzim, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publication, 1994).



contemporary Indonesia and the populist political values of the *Kyai* as a critique of it.

As for the data, the types and sources of data in this study all come from secondary data. In this case, electoral statistics were obtained from a number of institutions, both governmental and non-governmental. In addition to statistical figures, secondary data in this study is also in the form of bibliographical information obtained from various sources such as journals, articles, and information media channels, both print and online, which were published in the 2004-2023 period. In order to ensure its credibility and objectivity, the researcher limits all sources of bibliographical information in research while still paying attention to the main research issues, namely the issue of *Kyai* populist politics and the phenomenon of political pragmatism in Indonesia.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The Concept of *Kyai*

In terms of etymology, the word *Kyai* has a number of meanings; designation for alim ulama who are known to be clever in the Islamic religion; designation for teachers of occult sciences such as shamans and so on; special summons for district heads in South Kalimantan; appellation begins with the name of an object that is considered lucky, such as weapons, gamelan, and so on, finally; pseudonym for a tiger. In the context of this study, the desired meaning or understanding of the *Kyai* in this study is more directed towards the first version, namely the *Kyai* in his position as an



Islamic scholar.¹³ Figures or figures who have deep knowledge and insight into religion, understand and understand religious affairs starting from teachings to practice, so that they often become references and religious references for the surrounding community. In a number of areas in Indonesia, the status of a *Kyai* has a special place and social position, he is considered as part of a symbol of the sacredness of religion so that his existence invites respect and obedience from the surrounding community, for example.

Even so, in terms of terminology, the term *Kyai* has a religious meaning or meaning. Referring to Zamakhsyari Dhofier's explanation (1994), according to him, a *Kyai* is a title given by society to people who are experts in Islam and own or become leaders of Islamic boarding schools and teach classic books (*Kitab Kuning*) to their students.¹⁴ When referring to this definition, there are at least three important keywords; first, *Kyai* is a special designation that contains indexicality meaning honor or even nobility. Second, the title or designation of a *Kyai* is not hereditary or inherited but comes and is given by the community based on his own insight and expertise in the field of Islamic religious knowledge. This definition is antithetical to the general view in society which tends to interpret *Kyai* as a social status based on family relations or descent (*trah*). In Indonesia, until now this thesis is difficult or even indisputable

¹³Zainuddin Syarif and Abd Hannan, "Kearifan Lokal Pesantren Sebagai Bangunan Ideal Moderasi Islam Masyarakat Madura", *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 14, Number 2 (1 March 2020): 220–40).

¹⁴Zamakhsari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1994), 32.



because where there is an absolute pesantren there are *Kyai* and *nyai* as leaders.¹⁵

Apart from the description above, in the socio-religious context in Indonesia, most agree that the pinning of the status of a *Kyai* is based on his social role and function, it can be divided into three spheres, namely: 1) *Kyai* is a personal figure who has high spiritual values and levels because of his closeness to the god of the universe.¹⁶ *Kyai* in this figure is a social status that represents the highest peak of spirituality, that *kiai* can know all the power and majesty of God; 2) *Kyai* is a term for anyone who has great concern for religious matters; 3) *Kyai* is a designation for those who have a position as a leader or leader of a pesantren religious institution.¹⁷ Therefore, it needs to be emphasized here, that not all *Kyai* have pesantren but every pesantren is absolutely and can be definitely led by a *Kyai*.¹⁸ In public religious discourse in Indonesia, the term *Kyai* is the most widely used category. That is, those who receive the title of dominant *Kyai* have a position as pesantren leaders or at least have

¹⁵"The Pesantren Tradition: The Role of the *Kyai* in the Maintenance of Traditional Islam in Java" 06, no. 01 (2012): 20.

¹⁶ Ahmad Mukri Aji, Harisah, and Mukri Syarifah Gustiawati, "Position of *Kyai* in Traditions and Ideologies of Traditional Waqf in Maduranese Communities", *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology* 29, no. 7 (2020), 730–37.

¹⁷ Ahmad Mukri Aji, Harisah, and Mukri Syarifah Gustiawati, "Position of *Kyai* in Traditions and Ideologies of Traditional Waqf in Maduranese Communities", *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology* 29, no. 7 (2020), 730–37.

¹⁸Muhammad Latif Fauzi, "Traditional Islam in Javanese Society: The Roles of *Kyai* and Pesantren in Preserving Islamic Tradition and Negotiating Modernity", *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 6, no. 1 (1 June 2012): 125.



students who study with him, both students who have the status of bats or students who choose to stay.

It's just that, it is important to underline that even though genealogically the term *Kyai* is thick with religious figures, at the practical level the role and influence of *Kyai* does not just stop at the religious aspect. More than that, the *Kyai* play a central role in many social aspects of people's lives, not least in the socio-political aspect. Regarding the role and influence of the *Kyai* in the dynamics of the political constellation in Indonesia, the author will describe it specifically and in depth in the next sub-discussion.

B. Historical Review of *Kyai* Activism in Political Dynamics in Indonesia

The history of our civilization as a nation that is known by nature to be plural and plural cannot be excluded from the existence of a charismatic but only figure named *Kyai*. *Kyai*, who in the popular sense we understand as Islamic religious figures, have contributed and contributed greatly to various fundamental aspects of society. Not only in the socio-religious field, but also in other fundamental aspects related to education, the economy, and the cultural system.¹⁹ In the ranks of national heroes, we now know two great religious leaders, Hadratus Syekh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. H. Ahmad Dahlan, from the two of them, were born the two largest social organizations, Nahdhatul Ulama' (NU) and Muhammadiyah. Since

¹⁹ Fifi Nofiaturrehman, "Melacak Peran *Kyai*-Santri Dalam Politik Kebangsaan Di Indonesia."



their inception, these two organizations have proven to have quite clear track records in their efforts to build civilization and care for Indonesian national weaving. And don't forget either, before KH. H. Asy'ari and KH. H. Ahmad Dahlan is known to the public as a great and influential figure, both of them were first known as a well-known *Kyai* santri in Madura, namely Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan.²⁰

Beyond that, apart from Hadratus Sheikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan, there are also many other names, who historically have contributed greatly to the history of the nation and civilization of Indonesia. At least, when referring to the data in the Directorate of Heroism, Pioneering, Solidarity, and Social Restoration (K2KRS) of the Ministry of Social Affairs, there are at least eight (8) national heroes who have a self-figurative background as a *Kyai*, namely: KH Ahmad Dahlan (1868-1923); KH Samanhudi (1987-1956); KH. Agus Salim (1884—1954); KH. Zainul Arifin (1909-1963); KH. Mas Mansyur (1896-1915); KH. Wahid Hasyim (1914-1953); KH. Zainal Mustofa (1899-1944). As a big respect and acknowledgment for their services, we know the names above today as national heroes.²¹

²⁰ Rusman H Siregar, "Kisah KH Hasyim Asy'ari dan KH Ahmad Dahlan, Dua Tokoh Satu Guru," SINDOnews.com, Agustus 2021, <https://kalam.sindonews.com/read/515546/70/kisah-kh-hasyim-asyari-dan-kh-ahmad-dahlan-dua-tokoh-satu-guru-1629356923>; Muhyiddin, "Guru Para Kiai, Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan," Republika Online, February 2, 2021, <https://republika.co.id/share/qnwm5p366>.

²¹ Ciputra William, "8 Kiai Bergelar Pahlawan Nasional, Ada KH Hasyim Asyari hingga KH Ahmad Dahlan," KOMPAS.com, January 19, 2022, <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2022/01/19/101200578/8-kiai-bergelar-pahlawan-nasional-ada-kh-hasyim-asyari-hingga-kh-ahmad>.



Even so, when talking about democratic political issues in Indonesia, the existence and role of the *Kyai* cannot be underestimated. There are quite a number of historical records that prove how *Kyai* have played a big role there. *Kyai*, in his capacity as an Islamic religious figure and a community figure, has colored the discourse on democracy in Indonesia, both at the theoretical and practical levels.²² At the theoretical level, the *Kyai* have made a major contribution in creating a variety of ideas about nationhood and statehood, many of their big and fresh ideas about civil society that are oriented towards defending and pro-populist society have been born from them. From Hadratus Sheikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, we now know and know how loving the nation and state is part of faith. From the figure of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gusdur) we were taught in a moral democracy, that there is no power and position that needs to be defended desperately, which can give birth to conflict, conflict, and bloodshed.

As for the practical level, the role and contribution of the *Kyai* in the sector of strengthening democratic politics in Indonesia is evident from their involvement when they 'hand in' in overseeing national issues. In fact, if we want to go back a few decades, long before Indonesia got its independence status as it is now, the role and contribution of the *Kyai* have been felt since then.²³ Even so, when

²² Muhamad Mustaqim, "Politik Kebangsaan Kaum Santri," *Jurnal Addin* 9, no. 2 (2015).

²³ Ahmad Royani, "Pesantren dalam Bingkai Sejarah Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Indonesia," *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* 2, no. 1 (June 30, 2018): 121, <https://doi.org/10.33852/jurnalin.v2i1.75>.



Indonesia was experiencing great political turmoil in 1998, which at that time was marked by the resignation of Suharto after 32 years in power. Several years later, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, who was the best cadre figure from among the *Kyai* of his time, himself appeared on the national stage and was surprisingly elected as the fourth president. Of course K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid was not the only figure from among the *Kyai* who existed at this time, there were many other names who made a big contribution politically. In the current democratic political discourse, the real contribution of the *Kyai* towards strengthening democratic politics in Indonesia, at the practical level, is reflected in KH.H. Maruf Amin, who in fact was born and grew up from a *Kyai* environment.

It's just that, the wider the faucet of democracy along with the implementation of the multiparty democratic system or the totality after the 1998 reform, the discourse around the role and social (political) activism of the *Kyai* is increasingly varied and often reaps pros and cons. Especially at this time, the *Kyai*'s political attitudes and choices experienced massive fragmentation as a result of the political decisions of some of the leaders who wanted to establish a new party. The experience of the splitting of the political axis of Islamic parties that occurred in the 1950s seemed to be repeated again in the post-reformation political transition periods. And sure enough, in this period many new political vehicles with Islamic religious elements emerged, the choice of joining and changing



parties became wide open.²⁴ Meanwhile, political parties with non-Islamic ideologies took advantage of this situation to make a profit by establishing an Islamic religious wing organization, which was deliberately designed as a special post for *Kyai* groups to enter and join their political movement.

The increasingly heterogeneous political affiliations among the *Kyai* have made it almost difficult for them to have one voice in addressing various political issues, even though in a democratic political atmosphere differences at this level are quite normal. At certain limits, on the one hand, this condition has a positive impact on the independence of the *Kyai*'s political activism, with the *Kyai* becoming more flexible and autonomous in exercising control over the wheel of democratic politics in Indonesia so that it keeps running on track. This was proven when the *Kyai* became a counterweight as well as a defense wall when the communist political movement emerged which at that time attempted to infiltrate sporadically in the final seconds of Soekarno's leadership. In this event, the political stance of the *Kyai* was split into two camps, some of them supporting the government while others were in the opposition route. And who would have thought, through these differences they could control the course of Indonesian power so that it was safe from the clutches and domination of the communist groups.²⁵

²⁴ Lili Romli, "Partai Islam Dan Pemilih Islam Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Penelitian Politik* 1, no. 1 (2014): 40–43.

²⁵ Alim Bathoro, "Redupnya Peran Politik Islam di Masa Demokrasi Terpimpin; Studi Kasus Pembubaran Masyumi oleh Presiden Soekarno," *Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan* 2, no. 02 (2018).



C. *Kyai* Politics, Their Role and Influence on Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia

In the Indonesian context, it is impossible to exclude democratic political discourse from the existence and role of the *Kyai*. Long before Indonesia embraced the multiparty democratic system as it is today, the *Kyai* had long taken their place and played a significant role in the maturing process of leadership contestation in Indonesia, both leadership contestation at the regional level (city, district and province) and contestation at the national level. At the national level, the real role of the *Kyai* in the process of strengthening the democratic political system in Indonesia is clearly illustrated by their contributions, both those carried out directly, such as taking part in the structure or institutional structure of political parties and certain public office structures. Even the indirect political activism that they put into the form of thoughts, ideas, and conceptions about nationality and statehood, the relationship between religion and nationality, the relationship between religion and the universality of humanity. Regarding the relationship between religion and state, we know the big concept of Hadratus Syekh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, who stated that loving the country is part of faith.²⁶ In terms of the relationship between power and wisdom, we learn from the figure of the simple attitude of K.H. Abdurrahman

²⁶ Nur Rofiq, "Telaah Konseptual Implementasi Slogan Hubb Al-Wathan Min Al-Iman KH. Hasyim Asy'ari dalam Pendidikan Karakter Cinta Tanah Air," *Jurnal Keluarga Sehat Sejahtera* 16, no. 32 (December 30, 2018): 44, <https://doi.org/10.24114/jkss.v16i32.11924>.



Wahid that there is no position in the world that needs to be defended desperately, with acts of brutalism and (political) thuggery in the form of conflict, conflict, and bloodshed as if justified.

Meanwhile at the regional level, the real role of the *Kyai* in building a democratic political configuration in Indonesia can be found in their role or social status, which so far has been known as a social group—to borrow the language of Antony Giddens—organic intellectuals. In this position, regardless of all the various pros and cons that exist in it, it must be acknowledged that the figure of the *Kyai* has a role and function that is central enough to increase voter participation at the grassroots level, so that the democratization process can run thoroughly and optimally. Apart from that, the existence of a *Kyai* figure also becomes a kind of local wisdom, in which various frictions and social conflicts can be controlled and resolved. Not only that, in a number of areas the existence of *Kyai* is trusted by the community as mentors who carry political messages from 'the sky'.²⁷ *Kyai* becomes a problem-solving actor when the process of communication and political negotiations is tough and deadlocked. In several areas, many *Kyai* are trusted by the community to occupy strategic positions in certain political office structures. If examined from the perspective of social capital theory of leadership, of course the mandate is given on the basis of its social reputation as a figure whose integrity and leadership spirit has been tested. In the perspective of Weber's trichotomy of authority, the

²⁷ Khoirul Rosyadi, *Mistik Politik Gus Dur*, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Jendela, 2004), 34–67.



leadership of the *Kyai* in certain public positions, both at the regional and national levels, is actually an ideal typology because there are integrated three models of authority at once, namely traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal authority.

Historically, the claim that *Kyai* have made a major contribution to strengthening democratic politics in Indonesia has actually started since Indonesia was in the early stages of independence. At this time, they (*Kyai*) were known to be keen to arouse and mobilize the people's struggle, initiating the birth of a national resistance movement from the grassroots against the colonialists so that it led Indonesia to achieve its independence as it is today.²⁸ Some of them fought through ideas, associations, movements, education, and some were even directly involved in the field, commanding troops against colonialism, which at that time wanted to control and seize Indonesia's sovereignty. History records that the struggle of the *Kyai* in their efforts against the invaders lasted for quite a long time. During this time, they fought earnestly and totally, sacrificing their energy, thoughts, time and materials, even risking their lives and lives. One form of their movement and struggle was the Jihad Resolution incident on 22 October 1945, which at that time was led by hadratus Syekh KH. Hasyim Ash'ari. In its history, this historic event is known as an extraordinary political event, which then triggered the birth of the 10 November 1945 movement in Surabaya. This incident resulted in quite fundamental

²⁸ Royani, "Pesantren dalam Bingkai Sejarah Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Indonesia," 122–27.



changes to Indonesia's political landscape at that time, and even penetrated the global geopolitical conditions and situation. So great was the role and contribution of the *Kyai* for this event, that now we immortalize it as an extraordinary incident, which we know as the commemoration of National Santri Day.²⁹

When Indonesia achieved its independence as a fully sovereign country, the democratic political role and contribution of the *Kyai* continued. In the old order era under Soekarno's leadership, we can find the great contribution of the *Kyai* in the political activism sector in many figures such as KH. Wachid Hasyim, K.H. Achmad, Sjaikhu, and K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri, Prof. Dr. H. Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah Datuk Indomo (Buya Hamka), K.H. Hasan Basri, and KH. Master. At this time, it can be said that the *Kyai* were quite successful in carrying out their social and political activism well, beautifully and elegantly. Even though at that time the *Kyai* were experiencing quite heavy and repeated political trials, one of which was the splitting of the Islamic political power axis into two camps, between the modernist and traditionalist camps. Politically, the traditionalist *Kyai* tend to move closer to the government, while the modernists prefer to keep their distance as an opposition group. However, even though the axis of their political power (the *Kyai* group) at that time was divided into two different poles, this did not necessarily eliminate the substance

²⁹ Zakiya Darojat, "Rational Jihad: Measuring Rationality of Jihad Resolution," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Culture and Language in Southeast Asia (ICCLAS 2017)* (International Conference on Culture and Language in Southeast Asia (ICCLAS 2017), Jakarta, Indonesia: Atlantis Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.2991/icclas-17.2018.4>.



of their political struggle as a social axis. In fact, when President Soekarno issued the Guided Democracy policy, not long after his political policy was carried out, the traditionalist *Kyai* asked and suggested that Soekarno return to the 1945 Constitution.³⁰ At the end of the Old Order era, they carried out sporadic maneuvers to seize power in Indonesia, which at that time was still under Soekarno's command.

In the New Order era when the Suharto-style militarism regime was in power, the existence and role of political activism among the *Kyai* could not be excluded from it. In this era, the pattern and political landscape among the *Kyai* were still the same as before, namely they were still fragmented into two poles, between traditionalists and modernists. The difference was that during this period the modernist *Kyai* tended to approach and form coalitions with the government. On the other hand, the traditionalists kept their distance by positioning themselves as the opposition party. In this era, Suharto's New Order regime implemented military supremacy by maximizing the strength of the army, imposing strict measures and even clamping down on freedom of assembly and expression. Meanwhile, when the people felt shackled by Suharto's military-style political policies, the *Kyai* group became one of the grassroots political forces that emerged to the surface. They openly criticized and resisted Suharto's authoritarian policies, which he

³⁰ Jainuddin Jainuddin, "Islam dan Politik Orde Lama; Dinamika Politik Islam Pasca Kolonial Sejak Kemerdekaan Sampai Akhir Kekuasaan Soekarno," *SANGAJI: Jurnal Pemikiran Syariah dan Hukum* 3, no. 2 (October 14, 2019): 226–37, <https://doi.org/10.52266/sangaji.v3i2.470>.



considered inconsistent with the pillars of democratic political development, particularly with regard to freedom of association and expression of opinion in public.³¹ In this line, we know the figure of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid as a *Kyai* figure from among the most vocal traditionalists, Suharto's main enemy who was known for daring to challenge the political policies of the rulers of his time.³² Of course the name K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid is not the only figure in this ranks. There are also names of other figures such as KH. H. Bisyri Sansuri and KH. Idham Chalid. These names, regardless of the political dynamics and pros and cons that occurred at the time, were all part of the influential Islamic religious figures of the time. Has a long and clear track record and history, especially at the institutional level and strengthening democratic politics in Indonesia.

The rolling of the 1998 reforms brought a new direction to the face of Indonesian politics, since the fall of the New Order regime led by Suharto, Indonesia's political system and governance have undergone significant changes, both at the constitutional and institutional levels. One of the changes that occurred was the implementation of a multi-party presidential system of government, replacing the semi-presidential system adopted by the previous regime. Adopting a practical multi-party system makes

³¹ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Old State, New Society: Indonesia's New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 42, no. 3 (1983): 477–96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2055514>.

³² Greg Fealy and Robin Bush, "The Political Decline of Traditional Ulama in Indonesia: The State, Umma and Nahdlatul Ulama," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 42, no. 5 (2014): 536–60.



Indonesia's political landscape more flexible and dynamic.³³ If in the previous regime the stage or showcase of political constellations at the national and regional levels tended to be rigid and exclusive, thus making the process of democratization in the leadership contestation title (rolling class) run in half measures. However, now the situation has changed drastically, even radically, with the implementation of a multiparty system or total democracy. With it, political unions among civil society are no longer limited to the dominant group, the political window in the election process for public office is no longer served by the same party. Sure enough, it wasn't long before the reforms rolled around, a few years later many new political parties emerged with more varied forms of ideology and political understanding, including parties based on the Islamic religion. Interestingly, not a few of the names of the new Islamic parties above were born at the initiation of the *Kyai*.³⁴

The increasing penetration of Islamic parties in the Indonesian election after the 1998 reformation became a breath of fresh air, this indicates that the democratization process is moving in a better direction. Moreover, in a democratic political system, political parties serve as pillars which are not only important, but also fundamental. This position was obtained because political

³³ Lihat Vedi R. Hadiz, 'Retrieving the Past for the Future? Indonesia and the New Order Legacy', *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 28, no. 2 (2000): 11–33; Lihat juga Rachael Diprose, Dave McRae, and Vedi R. Hadiz, 'Two Decades of Reformasi in Indonesia: Its Illiberal Turn', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49, no. 5 (20 October 2019): 691–712, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1637922>.

³⁴ Azyumardi Azra, "The Islamic Factor in Post Soeharto Indonesia," *Profetika* 1, no. 2 (1999): 154–64.



parties are a form of expression of freedom to associate and convey thoughts. It is through political parties that the political rights of every citizen can be legitimately channeled, both the right to vote and the right to be elected. Also through political parties, citizens' political participation can be accommodated.³⁵ Democratization is considered good when the participation process is high. Vice versa, when participation is at a low rate, the democratization process is in an unhealthy condition. On the basis of this reading, we can draw a conclusion that when a number of *Kyai* initiate the establishment of a political party, they are actually strengthening the political structure of democracy itself. Therefore, the fragmentation of the *Kyai*'s political power axis during the post-reform political transition period due to the emergence of new Islamic parties does not necessarily reflect a bad situation. Rather, it is part of the process of consolidating political infrastructure at the institutional level in order to achieve a more established and solid degree of democracy, both structurally and substantially.³⁶

Meanwhile, the political heat and chill amid the booming of new parties that appeared at the first presidential election since the 1998 reforms finally resulted in a surprise. Unexpectedly, the name KH. Abdurrohman Wahid (K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid), who

³⁵ S. C. Stokes, "Political Parties and Democracy," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (June 1, 1999): 243–67, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.243>.

³⁶ Gideon Rahat, Reuven Y. Hazan, and Richard S. Katz, "Democracy and Political Parties: On the Uneasy Relationships between Participation, Competition and Representation," *Party Politics* 14, no. 6 (November 1, 2008): 663–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068808093405>.



incidentally was born and grew up from among the *Kyai*, was elected as the 4th President of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia through the General Session of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) in 1999.³⁷ The election of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid as president at that time—again, regardless of the various pros and cons of politics that occurred at that time—was seen by many as a sign of the success of the political activism of the *santri* and *Kyai* groups, as well as an affirmation of the existence and great contribution of the *Kyai* in guarding and strengthening politics. Indonesian democracy. Of course, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid is not the only figure among the *Kyai* in this era who has dedicated his mind and energy to helping Indonesia go through periods of political transition. There are still many other Islamic religious figures or figures who also have a contribution that is no less big. Some of them we know the name KH. Hasyim Muzadi, KH. Matori Abdul Djalil, KH. Salahuddin Wahid, and also KH. H Makruf Amin, who currently holds the position of vice president. In the case of KH. H Makruf Amin, his candidacy as Jokowi's vice president in 2019, was also not without debate and controversy. Various political stigmatizations that are negatively biased and full of sarcasm are aimed at him, being opportunistic, pragmatic, even to the point of being accused of being the actor behind the splitting of Islamic political votes in the 2019 election.³⁸

³⁷ R. William Liddle, 'Indonesia in 1999: Democracy Restored', *Asian Survey* 40, no. 1 (2000): 32–42.

³⁸ Amirullah, "Kubu Jokowi Berang Ma'ruf Amin Disebut Memecah Suara Umat Islam," *Tempo*, September 17, 2018,



D. The Problem of Pragmatism Practices in Political Dynamics in Indonesia

Pragmatisme Political pragmatism is not a new term in the context of politics in contemporary Indonesia, this term has existed for a long time and has even become a subject of discussion which is always brought up from time to time, especially when the momentum is ahead and/or in the middle of a political constellation event, both constellations at the executive and legislative levels. in central to regional elections. In many global political situations, including in Indonesia, the use of the term pragmatism is full of negative or bad meanings, reflecting attitudes, behaviors, and ways of thinking that prioritize instrumental values over ethical values, emphasizing aspects of extensionism rather than essentialism, material rather than immaterial, prioritizing realism perspectives. rather than idealism. Concretely, pragmatism bases the paradigm of thinking on aspects of usability rather than aspects of value (value). Another pragmatic language is opportunistic and materialistic. Philosophically, the construction of pragmatist thought is built and shaped through Marxian thought and philosophy, in this case the philosophy of dialectical materialism and historical materialism.

Etymologically, the word pragmatism comes from the Greek, pragma, another version says it comes from the word, pragmatikos,

<https://pilpres.tempo.co/read/1127300/kubu-jokowi-berang-maruf-amin-disebut-memecah-suara-umat-islam>.



which means action or action.³⁹ As for terminology, the term pragmatism has a number of meanings, namely the belief that the truth or value of a teaching (understanding, doctrine, idea, statement, utterance, and so on), depends on its application for the benefit of humans; understanding which states that everything is not fixed, but grows and changes continuously; view that provides a useful explanation of a problem by looking at cause and effect based on facts for practical purposes.⁴⁰ Simply put, pragmatism is synonymous with philosophy of action and action. That the degree of truth of something depends on the extent to which it has an impact or benefit to human life in real terms and in practice, not in terms of understanding and abstract meaning. Therefore, for pragmatism, truth and usefulness in human life must contain real or factual principles, not abstractions of values, ideas, ideas, concepts, principles, and the like. Thus, based on the definition above, the term pragmatic politics can be interpreted as a political paradigm that bases itself on material interests, putting aside the collective values and principles of society. As a consequence, the political narrative that is built tends to be reduced to material things, so that in the end it is power and interests.⁴¹

³⁹ Leanne M Kelly and Maya Cordeiro, "Three Principles of Pragmatism for Research on Organizational Processes," *Methodological Innovations* 13, no. 2 (May 1, 2020): 2059799120937242, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799120937242>.

⁴⁰ Jack Knight and James Johnson, "Political Consequences of Pragmatism," *Political Theory* 24, no. 1 (1996): 68–96.

⁴¹ Roberto Frega, "Pragmatism and Democracy in a Global World," *Review of International Studies* 43, no. 4 (2017): 720–41, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210517000080>.



In Indonesia, the strengthening of pragmatic politics is clearly illustrated as the increasingly dynamic politics weakens the commitment of political actors to hold fast to the ideology and values of the people. Political attitudes and decisions that they build to produce understanding and agreement between the people and their representatives (social contract) tend to lead to transactional ways.⁴² Actions and political attitudes are built on the basis of cost-benefit calculations, not on shared ideals and interests rooted from the grassroots (the people). At the practical level, the strengthening of pragmatic politics in Indonesia can be traced along with the increasingly massive use of money politics, the increasingly strong practice of domination of power based on family political networks (dynasties), the massive practice of single candidate pairs in local head elections for the sake of the status quo, and most What is clear is the still high number of practices of abuse of power and authority in the form of criminal acts of corruption and the like. Regarding corruption, although corruption in Indonesia is classified as a classic and old problem, its existence continues to haunt and haunt every government institution, both at the executive and legislative levels.⁴³

⁴² Ratna Rosanti, "Political Pragmatics in Indonesia: Candidates, the Coalition of Political Parties and Single Candidate for Local Elections," *Jurnal Bina Praja* 12, no. 2 (December 16, 2020): 153–65, <https://doi.org/10.21787/jbp.12.2020.153-165>.

⁴³ Mimi Kartika, "Riset: Delapan Calon Tunggal Dinasti Politik Menang Pilkada," *Republika Online*, April 13, 2021, <https://republika.co.id/share/qrge4b328>; Ahmad Siboy, "Desain Penguatan Kualitas Politik Dinasti dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah," *KeadilaN Jurnal Fakultas Hukum Universitas Tulang Bawang* 18, no. 2 (2020).



In this regard, a study conducted by Transparency International, Indonesia has a corruption perception index (CPI) score of 34 from a scale of 0-100 in 2022. This score makes Indonesia the 5th most corrupt country in Southeast Asia, and is ranked 110th on a global scale. It is far behind from neighboring countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, which are listed as first and second ranked countries respectively with relatively high GPA rates.⁴⁴ In the case in Indonesia, the low IPK in Indonesia is caused by the still massive acts of corruption in government ranks, especially in the people's representative body or parliament, which is currently listed as the most corrupt state institution in Indonesia. Statistically, this claim is reinforced by data from reports from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), that since the KPK was founded in 2004 until December 2022 the total number of corruption cases that have been brought to justice by the KPK has reached 1,479. Interestingly, based on the background or institutional background of the perpetrators, as many as 343 are members of the people's representatives both at the central and regional levels. This number places the council as the institution with the second most corrupt actors after the private sector (370).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Cindy Mutia Annur, "Indonesia Negara Terkorup Ke-5 Di Asia Tenggara Pada 2022," *katadata.co.id*, 2023, <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2023/02/02/indonesia-negara-terkorup-ke-5-di-asia-tenggara-pada-2022>.

⁴⁵ Prayogi Dwi Sulistyono, "Indeks Persepsi Korupsi Indonesia Merosot Tajam," *kompas.id*, January 31, 2023, <https://www.kompas.id/baca/polhuk/2023/01/31/indeks-persepsi-korupsi-indonesia-merosot-tajam>.



The big question now is, why is the practice of corruption and abuse of power in politics (policy) in Indonesia still high? Even though so far, since the implementation of a totality and multi-party democratic system after the 1998 reform, the political system and state administration in Indonesia have undergone changes and strengthening in order to suppress corrupt practices, both legally and institutionally. At the level of law, Indonesia has issued specific rules and regulations related to the prevention, prosecution and handling of corruption as contained in Law (UU) Number 20 of 2001 concerning Amendments to Law Number 31 of 1999 concerning Eradication of Corruption Crimes. Likewise at the institutional level, since 2004 the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has been established as an anti-corruption body that is independent and free from the influence of any power in carrying out its duties and authorities.⁴⁶

Thus, when referring to this fact, it is clear that the strengthening of corruption practices in policy and governance politics circles in Indonesia, is actually not just an institutional and legal issue, but there are other variables that are no less important and influential, namely the existence of a shift in the political paradigm. To be precise, the shift from idealism to pragmatism. The term idealism here necessitates the meaning of political nobility and sacredness. In a modern democratic system, this nobility and sacredness is translated into people's values, that democracy is a

⁴⁶ Wijayanto, *Korupsi Mengorupsi Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2009).



translation of a governance system that originates from the people, is carried out by the people, and leads to the people.⁴⁷ Historically and sociologically, the Indonesian nation is actually no stranger to politics based on populist values, because this has been integrated into the body and blood of the Indonesian nation and state through the political spirit of the former fighters. The fighters and political actors from among the *Kyai* are no exception.

In contrast, the term pragmatism presupposes the practicality of ways, materials reduce ideas, and goals or symbols reduce values.⁴⁸ Therefore, in order to restore the meaning and understanding of politics to its substance, in addition to strengthening legal and institutional approaches, it is no less crucial to restore the political paradigm to its core, namely politics that truly bases itself on people's values, as fought for by Indonesia's founding fathers. It is in this context that, in fact, the paradigm and thought of the *Kyai* behind their political activism which has historically been proven to prioritize populist values, can become a criticism as well as a strategic solution in order to return the meaning of politics in Indonesia to its nature, in line with the populist principles and principles which have so far become main spirit of the modern democratic system.

⁴⁷ Fredick Broven Ekayanta, "Ideology and Pragmatism: Discourse Factors in Infrastructure Development in Indonesia's Jokowi-JK Era," *Jurnal Politik* 4, no. 2 (March 31, 2019): 297, <https://doi.org/10.7454/jp.v4i2.229>.

⁴⁸ Knight and Johnson, "Political Consequences of Pragmatism," 73–78.



E. *Kyai's Democratic Politics as a Criticism of Political Pragmatism in Indonesia*

Quoting Ahmad Baso's explanation in his book (2023), *Historiography of Khittah and Politics of Nahdlatul Ulama*, the populist principle of *Kyai* political activism contains a political meaning that focuses on the dimensions of benefit (goodness) and rejection of evil (mafsadah).⁴⁹ At the practical level, the dimension of benefit in the *kiai's* populist political thought includes two important aspects. First, the aspect of universality, that the *Kyai's* political activism has an inclusive spirit to accommodate all the rights and needs of the community related to social welfare regardless of and considering social background, be it religion, ethnicity, nation, and skin color. Concretely, the politics of universality necessitates the presence of the people as a whole, and in the context of *Kyai* political activism, this spirit of universality can be explored and found in the political thought of *Kyai Sahal Mahfudz*, who is popularly known as *ummatan politics*. At first glance, this term has a different editorial from the word or term populist, but definitively and in the context of its use, this term contains the same substance and spirit, namely the spirit of universality. Second, the personal aspect, that the struggle and political activism of the *Kyai* does not only contain universal values, but also at a personal level, in this case their defense and struggle for human values and human rights (HAM).

⁴⁹ Ahmad Baso and Makruf Amin, *Historiografi Khittah Dan Politik Nahdlatul Ulama* (Jakarta: Yayasan Garuda Bumandhala, 2021), 12–34.



Regarding universality and the defense of human dignity, we all know a figure named K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid. A humble and simple figure, but has a very great spirit of nationalism and statesmanship. His thoughts on the state and nationality went beyond the thinking of his time.⁵⁰ His ideas and fresh ideas about human dignity go beyond his existence, even beyond what he gives to his group. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid is a charismatic cleric with a myriad of achievements, his defense of the people need not be questioned. The meaning of democracy as a political system and governance system based on the principles of freedom, justice and equality, he truly upholds. According to him, without justice, equality, and openness, a process and course of political leadership becomes flawed, flawed in the eyes of humans and flawed in the eyes of religion (God), and because of that, this kind of model and tradition of political leadership must be resisted and annihilated.⁵¹ At the practical level, his efforts in fighting for and upholding democratic political values can be seen clearly from his attitude and critical thinking towards a number of political policies of the Suharto regime, which at that time used military-style power tools to silence opposition groups, which he considered threatening and disrupting the way of the Order's power. just then. Through his message of universality and humanity, Gus Dur teaches us to always be

⁵⁰ Abdul Muchit Fajar and Hotrun Siregar, MSi., "Pemikiran Politik Abdurrahman Wahid tentang Demokrasi di Indonesia," *Jurnal Communitarian* 3, no. 1 (September 13, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.56985/jc.v3i1.141>.

⁵¹ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita, Agama Masyarakat Negara Demokrasi* (Jakarta: The Wahid Instiute, 2006).



democratic in a moral way, that there is no power and position that needs to be defended desperately, which can give rise to conflict, conflict and bloodshed.

F. Conclusion

Based on the description above, there are a number of main points which are the conclusions of this study. First, the history of the birth, development and maturation of democratic politics in Indonesia cannot be separated from the existence of *Kyai* political activism. The role and major political contribution of the *Kyai* have existed for a long time and have taken a place in national history in Indonesia, even since Indonesia has not yet achieved its independence as it is today. When Indonesia was under the political pressure of imperialism from colonial countries, the *Kyai* appeared to the surface to consolidate at the grassroots, initiate movements and command resistance. Even now, the role and value contribution of the *Kyai*'s political activism continues and continues to actively oversee the political dynamics and development of Indonesia, both directly and indirectly. Second, that in the last decade, the practice of pragmatism in political dynamics in contemporary Indonesia has been increasing from year to year. This is indicated by the increasingly wild phenomenon of political liberalization in the form of transactional politics and money politics, which has been exacerbated by the high number of cases of abuse of power and misappropriation of state assets in the form of corruption and the like. It is in this context that, in fact, the paradigm and thought of the *Kyai* behind their political activism which has historically been



proven to prioritize populist values, can become a criticism as well as a strategic solution in order to return the meaning of politics in Indonesia to its nature, in line with the populist principles and principles which have so far become main spirit of the modern democratic system. Third, the importance of making the *Kyai's* political activism a critique of political pragmatism in Indonesia, because historically the *Kyai's* political struggle instilled two values at once, namely the value of universality and the value of personal defense. In the value of universality, the role and politics of the *Kyai* can be found in their political enthusiasm which always shows an inclusive political attitude and a politics of equality. Prioritizing the interests of the nation and the good of the people as a priority over others. This can actually be traced to the history of their struggle and involvement in political dynamics in Indonesia, both before and after independence. As for the level of equality, the value of the *Kyai's* political activism is clearly illustrated from their paradigm and political thinking which upholds the spirit of justice, as instilled by Gusdur. This is at the same time an explanation and confirmation of the *Kyai's* political defense and alignment with personal rights, especially those that touch the value of human rights (HAM) as a form of human dignity.

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