

The Role of Kyai, Santri, and Nasional (Abangan) in Political Identity Struggle: a Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the implications of the concept of Kyai, Santri, and Nasional (Abangan) in the political struggle of a village. By employing a qualitative approach, specifically an ethnographic approach and a thorough analysis of social construction theory and the concept of identity politics, the author found several results, including those related to identity manipulation in the socio-political context of the village. The supporting system in society causes such unavoidable conditions. The community's power of identity becomes highly regarded, especially those who will run for elite positions in village political contestations. The study results show that the continuity of the Kyai, Santri, and Abangan roles occurs through internalization in social institutions, externalization by the community with symbolic messages as a code for sub-identity, and objectification of intersubjective-structured lifeworld.

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1. Introduction

Cultural dynamics has always been an exciting study that will find newness in every dimension of time. This becomes natural as a consequence of the ongoing process of interaction between subjects. The cultural system's location will also indicate different symptoms, or what we usually call cultural locality. In essence, the form of cultural reality will always depend on the social space in which it is located. It should be noted that it is essential for us to make a definitive statement regarding culture. The writer must adopt one statement as a guardrail. Clifford Geertz, in his book entitled "The Interpretation of Culture," describes culture as a series of networks of meaning contained in it, social actions or symbols related to one another [1]. The connectedness that is projected through symbolic communications then forms a cultural pattern. Culture is an effective form of a society composed of psychological structures as a means for individuals or groups to direct their behavior. It does not stop there. The human action system also cannot be separated from the interaction pattern or reciprocal relationships between humans and the surrounding reality. Human interaction with reality is no longer a subject-object relationship but a relationship between subjects. Intersubjectivity is essential in this event.

Trichotomy is an exciting study to discuss. The implication, in reality, is that they always meet different results or forms according to their respective localities. In a journal compiled

by Shoni Rahmatullah Amrozi, Mark made a different discovery with Clifford Geertz [2]. He took the Yogyakarta area as the research location setting, showing that Yogyakarta is capable of acculturating local and Islamic cultures. This phenomenon can bring the Javanese people to a different cultural level from most other Javanese people.

In Tulungagung, especially the people of Serut village have their local language related to grouping community identities. They are more familiar with the term national people than abangan people. Similarly, they are closer to the term kyai than priyayi. The indication of the loss of the barrier between the priyayi as descendants of nobility and the general public is one of the causes. Even if the term priyayi is attached to the village apparatus, many students also enter it. One of the most convincing spaces for priyayi identity today is the descendants of ulama or religious figures. However, in that context, the village community is more familiar with the term kyai than priyayi. The kyai's family is identical to the term kyai's descendants or kyai's family. Or specifically Gus for male descendants and Ning for female descendants. Again, they are more familiar with the term kyai than priyayi.

The people of Serut recognize the trichotomy of identity with the terms santri, kyai, and national. Based on its locality, identity becomes something very flexible. Not only related to naming, but he can also enter all dimensions of human life. The socio-political aspect has also become a space for identity, or perhaps more precisely, for humans to manipulate identity. Identity in the socio-political context has become a very manipulative object, especially for the Serut village, which is a fanatical religious community. We take the example of the Pilkades contestation. The role of identity seems to be a mandatory requirement for the contestants to be able to win in the village political struggle. Even becoming an influential person in a smaller setting will be very difficult without identity and closeness to the elites. One of the village youth organizations changed its leadership only because its educational background and identity did not match the majority. From this situation, it was appropriate for the researcher to unravel the socio-political process of the religious community of Serut Village, Tulungagung Regency. Social construction, the process of reciprocal relations between humans and the surrounding reality, will be the core of the discussion so that the existence of identity in that context can be revealed. From such a situation, it was appropriate for the researcher to unravel the socio-political process of the religious community of Serut Village, Tulungagung Regency. Social construction, the process of reciprocal relations between humans and the surrounding reality, will be the core of the discussion so that the existence of identity in that context can be revealed. From such a situation, it was appropriate for the researcher to unravel the socio-political process of the religious community of Serut, Tulungagung Regency. Social construction, the process of reciprocal relations between humans and the surrounding reality, will be the core of the discussion so that the existence of identity in that context can be revealed.

2. Method

As a guide, the method used by the researcher is qualitative with an ethnographic approach. The purpose of this qualitative method is to unravel the conditions of a real context by leading to a detailed and in-depth analysis according to data or events in the field. Qualitative research is a type of research whose findings cannot be achieved by statistical procedures or other quantitative means. In Farida Nugrahani's book entitled Qualitative

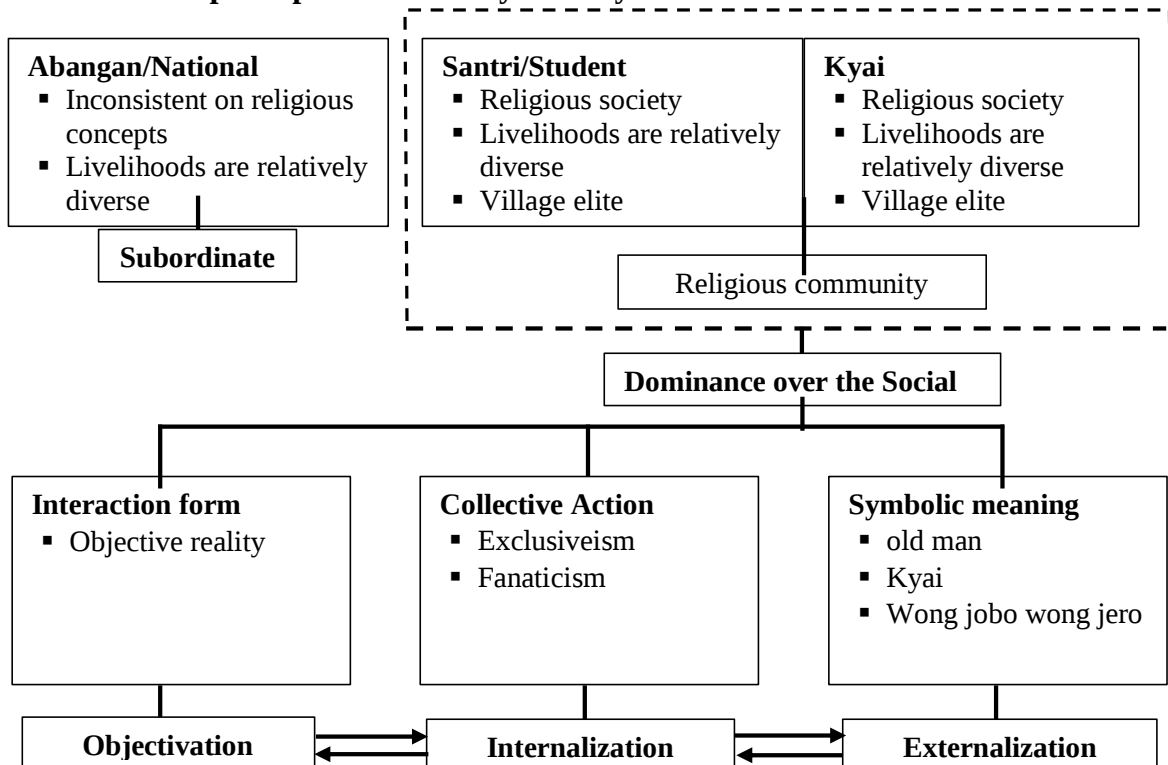
Research Methods, Strauss and Corbin stated that qualitative research is a research model that can describe the social dynamics of society, historicity, behavior, organizational functionalization, social movements, kinship relations, and so on [3]. In addition, the researcher also uses an ethnographic model as an approach. Reeves in Cresswell's book qualitative research methods describes ethnography as a type of approach that collects in-depth data from various aspects of people's social life [4]. This approach is carried out through observation, interviews, and scientific documentation to produce detailed and comprehensive explanations of the reality in society.

3. Results and Discussion

The conceptualization of santri, priyayi, abangan used by Clifford Geertz became the initial milestone for the author to unravel the common thread in the incident. However, one thing that needs to be emphasized is that researchers do not adopt it conceptually as an analytical tool. The decision to bring the thoughts of Clifford Geertz to this paper is merely to carry out a dialectical process between the ideas of santri, priyayi, abangan and the surrounding reality. From this process, it is hoped that researchers will find novelties related to the concept of santri, priyayi, abangan based on locality.

Santri, priyayi, abangan, in the context of village communities, become identities that cannot be separated from social and political life. Identity becomes a kind of pride to show the existence of his self. Social status is easily obtained when individuals have the same attachment as the majority, especially when they have more than sufficient material capital and closeness to the elites. Even today, individuals who play an essential role in the village are people categorized as previously mentioned. The following is a concept map as a brief overview of the analysis of reality:

Chart 1: Concept Map of Community Identity Construction in Socio-Political Context



The concept map above describes the interaction pattern between the village community and reality according to the ongoing construction. The dialectical process between Clifford Geertz's thoughts regarding Santri, Priayi, Abangan, and reality has given rise to new languages and logic according to their locality. Santri, Kyai, National, or Abangan are social identities that are closely attached to the village community. From that grouping, each has a definition, character, and special activities as well as identical. Here is the explanation:

3.1. Trichotomy of Santri, Kyai, National based on Locality

Before an in-depth discussion regarding santri, kyai, national or abangan is carried out, answering the orientation of the grouping may need to be conducted so that the discussion does not widen into something inappropriate. This paper's three classifications emphasize the social dimension rather than religious rituals.

The dynamics of flexible life make the social space in specific groups or communities change from time to time. As experienced by the santri, Clifford Geertz, in his book "Santri, Priayi, Abangan in Javanese Society," explains that the identity of the santri is attached to a society with high religious discipline as well as being close to the market or merchant environment. In a minority of cases, such conditions can be justified. However, it is too narrow when used as an absolute reference because every social reality in a specific area will always have its locality. In the Serut village community, for example, students who are identical to Islam or religious communities in the socio-economic context cannot simply be grouped as market residents. Besides their role as traders, the agricultural, plantation, and livestock sectors are also important land for them to carry out their economic role. Not even a few become village officials, from minor roles, such as the head of the youth organization to the village head. The diverse and flexible economic roles make their social activities not only related to market residents. Things like that also make students' social status more complex to penetrate Geertz's logic regarding students who are identical to the market. The diverse and flexible economic roles make their social activities not only related to market residents. Things like that also make students' social status more complex to penetrate Geertz's logic regarding students who are identical to the market. The diverse and flexible economic roles make their social activities not only related to market residents. Things like that also make students' social status more complex to penetrate Geertz's logic regarding students who are identical to the market.

When examining Geertz's logic, the second identity that emerges after santri is priyayi. In the same book, Clifford Geertz describes priyayi as the nobility or descendants of nobility who dominate the bureaucratic structure. Seeing today's conditions, the social status and the role of priyayi are appropriate to be questioned. Especially when looking at the locality of the millennial community in Serut village, who began to be alienated by the term priyayi. The social system of society tends to give space to kyai rather than priyayi. This does not seem surprising if you see that most of them are religious. As a religious figure, the kyai also has an important role in the socio-political aspects of the village. In other words, they are important subjects that play a role in the bureaucratic aspects of village government and other social systems of society. An argument that is more or less the same as Geertz's point regarding priyayi. However, the author's consideration of categorizing kyai in trichotomy, other than on the basis of locality, is also related to their complex roles in the socio-economic

dimension. Kyai has a very significant role in the social system of the village community. His high knowledge in the realm of spirituality makes the existence of the village kyai quite respected. The speech of his advice by the community is something that is very important to be heard and implemented. Seeing that the majority of the Serut village community is religious, such an event becomes something, not at all surprising.

In the socio-economic context, the kyai has a more complex role than the priyayi, which Clifford Geertz identifies with the world of bureaucracy. Although there are kyai who is also of noble descent, like priyayi, their activities are not just wearing horse glasses, just playing on the bureaucratic aspect. Apart from the descendants of ordinary people or nobles, in general, kyai, besides working as village officials, also play a role as farmers, traders, breeders, and so on. Their livelihoods are so complex that their social status is also diverse. Village officials, local community leaders, and religious leaders are some of the roles of kyai in the social system of the Serut village community. From the diversity of status, one thing that needs to be considered is that in the socio-political context, the voice of the kyai will be very heard. In fact, it is not uncommon for them to volunteer themselves as contestants in political competitions, whether as head of the RT or candidate for village head. It is evident from the data that the village head in the previous period was an individual with the identity of a kyai, and then at this time, he has also been replaced by his own descendants. This data is sufficient to prove that the identity of the kyai will greatly affect the social system of the village community. In short, the kyai and their descendants will have a very big chance to become the village elite. Like a lotus flower that grows in murky water, the identity of the kyai in religious communities is very respectable. It is evident from the data that the village head in the previous period was an individual with the identity of a kyai, and then at this time, he has also been replaced by his own descendants. This data is sufficient to prove that the identity of the kyai will greatly affect the social system of the village community. In short, the kyai and their descendants will have a very big chance to become the village elite. Like a lotus flower that grows in murky water, the identity of the kyai in religious communities is very respectable. It is evident from the data that the village head in the previous period was an individual with the identity of a kyai, and then at this time, he has also been replaced by his own descendants. This data is sufficient to prove that the identity of the kyai will greatly affect the social system of the village community. In short, the kyai and their descendants will have a very big chance to become the village elite. Like a lotus flower that grows in murky water, the identity of the kyai in religious communities is very respectable.

The final subject that needs to be discussed in Geertz's trichotomy is abangan. Abangan, in Clifford Geertz's logic, is identical to a group of people who lack consistency in carrying out religious orders. A brief description of the religious spirit of the abangans seems to suit today's conditions. Symptoms of this kind are quite easy to find among the people of Serut village. However, they tend to recognize such people with national terms. In other words, phenomena in reality really exist. Only the terminology then adjusts the locality. Apart from historical truth, on the spiritual dimension, the religious spirit of the abangans of Geertz's ideas more or less corresponds to the nationalities in reality. However, the suitability of the spiritual aspect is somewhat different when examined in other dimensions. The national community in the surrounding environment tends to be positioned as subordinates. A people

who have little room to play an important role in the world of village bureaucracy. Identical social systems tend to position the nationals as marginalized so that they do not have the opportunity to act as elites or community leaders, even if they are just youth leaders. This kind of situation was experienced by the head of the newly formed youth organization, who was soon replaced by other individuals simply because their educational status and identity did not match the elite. Just call him *tengwe*, the name of the head of the youth organization, which was categorized as a nationalist and was later replaced by a close neighbor of one of the village's important elites.

In socio-economic activities, nationals tend to have diverse work histories. If Geertz only identifies *abangans* in agricultural activities, the national category is not something like that. The national community, besides working as farmers, also has an important role in other economic sectors such as trading, raising livestock, gardening, and so on. The categorization of the Serut village community into the three identities above is not a mathematical concept. That is, flexibility is no longer a surprising thing. This logic is basically in line with the concept of dynamic events along with the passage of time. Especially when it comes to the locality, the novelty will always be found in each particular area. As the concept of *santri*, *priyayi*, *abangan* by Clifford Geertz was adopted as the basis, then the author found a novelty according to its locality. *Santri*, *Kyai*, and *National* became a new trichotomy according to the locality of the Serut village community.

The flexibility of *santri*, *kyai*, and *national* is an important consideration to be discussed. A mathematical concept is a theory or concept that maps reality based on social facts. Concepts like this are clearly not appropriate if we talk about the locality. The fusion of two identities into one term has become something that is not surprising. *Santri kyai*, or *kyai santri* is a very natural event. In general, the students will explore religious knowledge at one of the village *kyai* or at the village *madrassa*. Likewise, the descendants of the *kyai* will be required to hold the title of *santri*, gather and study together with other *santri* to study religious knowledge before becoming *kyai*. In fact, it is not uncommon for nationals who are basically not too close to the spiritual world. In social life, they will also follow environmental traditions to recite the Koran. Such a phenomenon will be very easy to find in nationals who are still in their pre-teen age. Javanese Islamic acculturation traditions are identical to religious people. In fact, the national community is also willing to follow them. It is not a surprising sight when the nationals come to be invited to a *yasinan*, celebration, and so on.

Such is the reality in the social context that seems to be experiencing a little, even a contrast, when it touches on the political aspects of the village. We will not find such a dynamic identity in social and political life. Their social status will be very calculated in a contestation, especially for them as contestants. Identity becomes a kind of attachment that is very calculated to show one's existence, even if it is in the contestation of village sub-organizations, such as the election of youth leaders.

3.2. Identity Construction in Social Reality

This section generally discusses the dominance of the *santri/kyai* as well as the construction process in social reality. As explained in the previous section, identity has become a mandatory attachment for the community to show its existence in the surrounding

environment. The reality that occurs is basically the result of a dialectical process between the community and various events around it. The following is a detailed explanation regarding the process of identity construction in social reality from the perspective of Peter L. Berger:

3.2.1 Externalization of Symbolic Meaning

The first stage that will be discussed in this section is the process of externalizing symbolic meanings by society. At this stage, language becomes an object that is manipulated by meaning or, perhaps more precisely, by the knowledge capacity of society. The knowledge capital of the community really plays an important role in the process of meaning. Objects that basically stand alone will then have a subjective meaning when such symptoms occur. The subjective meaning as a result of people's thoughts will then become a collective meaning that is mutually agreed upon so as to create a collective identity. Furthermore, these identities will be institutionalized into a group so as to create an identical identity in a particular group. The following languages are manipulated in the process of constructing community identity:

1. Old man

The meaning of the reality related to this is not only seen from the age factor but also from the knowledge. Spirituality or knowledge of religious values is the science in question. Regardless of the truth of the social actions taken, people who are categorized as old and whose lives are strict with religious values will be considered old people. In other words, the old people are not just the elderly but also seen from the quality of their religious knowledge.

In reality, this old wong will be highly respected for its existence. They are one of the village elites. Apart from being the imam of the congregation at the nearest prayer rooms, his various advice (the local people call them sermons) will be taken into account by religious people. In the bureaucratic aspect, for example, the voices of these elders will be heard every time the village government formulates a work program and activities that invite other people. Even in the pilkades contestation, people who want to run for office get as many blessings as possible from this old man. I do not intend to exaggerate, but its role as an elite is indeed too strategic to mobilize the masses. In fact, any contestant that this old wong wants will easily win the contest.

The process of getting the support of old people is not easy. In general, they only want students or people who have the same identity as them. This then makes it quite difficult for the nationals to build emotional relationships with the old people. The concept of the old people in the context of reality does not provide complete space for the nationals.

2. Manut Kyai

It is clear that this second symbolic language is closely related to the santri and kyai groups. In general, santri are indeed educated to have respect for the kyai. That feeling then creates an attitude of obedience in the students. Ethics is indeed fairly positive when viewed from the relationship between the two. However, we need to know that such conditions will be very effective, as well as pragmatic, when manipulated for political purposes.

In the socio-political dimension, the term *manut kyai* tends to be politicized by village politicians for their interests. However, there is one thing that becomes a locality and it should be noted that not everyone is able to mobilize the masses through the *kyai*. The emphasis is on identity. Social systems tend to give space to identity rather than money. Therefore, not all individuals can be accepted by the *kyai*. Especially in the *pilkades* contestation or other village political events, the *kyai* tend to see a common identity before wanting to. In this context, the nationals do not have the same space as the *santri* group. Once again, they are subordinated by a system formed by the term *manut kyai*.

3. Wong jobo wong jero

This term is closely related to one of the religious groups in the village. In short, they consider other individuals outside the group to be *wong jobo*. Meanwhile, members of the community who are in the same category as him are *wong jero*. In social life, this organization is considered to have high solidarity with fellow *wong jero*. However, such conditions seem to be turning in contrast when they are associated with outsiders (they consider the term *wong jobo*). The strong solidarity between each other is considered not to have an applicative form to *wong jobo*.

In the socio-political context, this concept is considered very effective in mobilizing the masses, especially the *wong jero*. Solidarity is the key to carrying out such an agenda. The strong bond makes the members of the *wong jero* voluntarily sell their loyalty to each other.

Even though they are fellow religious people, the solidarity of the *wong jero* really does not give space to the *wong jobo*. Even at the mosque as a means of worship as well as a social space for religious people, their property is forbidden to be visited by people outside the *wong jero*. Seen the author had experienced a similar thing when entering the area of the mosque *wong jero*. Not long after worshipping at the mosque, the floor where the writer was standing was immediately cleaned with water and a piece of cloth. In this context, the nationals, as well as *wong jobo* do not have the same space as *wong jero*.

3.2.2 Objectivation Process (Village Community Objective Reality)

Symptoms of objectivation appear basically as a consequence of the externalization process. An event in the intersubjective world that undergoes a process of institutionalization. More specifically, individuals in society interact with each other with their respective subjective patterns. In reality, the process of interaction between the three groups of people (*santri*, *kyai*, national) with subjective values will then create subjective realities based on the thoughts of each group. Language as a product of thought is then institutionalized in reality. These completely subjective symbolic languages will become a kind of separate reality outside society. The actualization of the old *wong*, *manut kyai*, *wong jobo wong jero*, and so on has created an identical reality outside the community. This independent reality is then called objective reality or objectivation. The elders, *manut kyai*, *wong jobo wong jero*, and so on have become identical discourses that further strengthen the barrier between *santri*, *kyai*, and nationals.

3.3.3 Collective Action in the Internalization Process

As we know, the process of internalization can be interpreted as an appreciation of certain subjects to reality. A circular process in which the objective reality produced in the externalization process is then reinterpreted by the general public. The initially distant reality will then be subjective, attached to the subject when the meaning process occurs.

The continuity of the identity of the santri, kyai, and national is a phenomenon that is not so surprising. Especially in the socio-political context, the emergence of manipulative languages is the spearhead for them to show their existence and, at the same time, clarify their distance from other groups. For elderly people, manut kyai, wong jobo wong jero, and so on, the majority of these languages are quite identical to the santri/kyai. On the one hand, such a social system has quite radically given little space to the nationals/abangan. Fanaticism has become a common phenomenon inherent in the santri-kyai. Even though they are quite friendly on the socio-economic dimension, they become very exclusive to other groups in the context of village politics. Such fanaticism has been the background of the process of subordination to the nationals, especially in the socio-political context.

a. Fanaticism

Excessive pride does not seem to be a surprising thing in truly subjective reality. Political and manipulative languages become one of the instruments for identity to bind individual solidarity and loyalty in it.

b. Exclusiveism

The fanaticism described in the previous section at an advanced stage will lead to closed attitudes towards other groups. Things like this have become a common sight whenever observations are made by researchers. Not infrequently certain groups consider other people as infidels, wong jobo, and other political languages whose appearance has further clarified the distance between groups.

4. Conclusion

Santri, priyayi, abangan have become concepts related to the social system of Javanese society. In fact, the trichotomy initiated by Clifford Geertz will always find novelty according to their respective localities. In setting the location, the author succeeded in carrying out a dialectical process between the concept of Geertz's trichotomy and social reality. As a result, santri, kyai, and national have become a trichotomy that is identical to the situation in which the author conducts research.

The process of categorizing society into three terms santri, kyai, and national does not mean breaking unity in identity conflicts. On the other hand, this kind of condition basically happened before the arrival of the researcher. The struggle between the three becomes an unavoidable sight. On the social dimension, the existence of santri/kyai as elites and their groups tends to benefit more than the nationals/abangan. Thus, people who are categorized as national will find it very difficult to carry out their political participation, even if it is in a contestation class for the election of youth leaders. The domination in the structural, as well as the cultural context, has really made the national/abangan people experience symptoms of subordination.

The identity politics inspired by the community increasingly shows its permanence when language is manipulated as an instrument. These languages emerged as a product of the

externalization process. Identical languages such as wong senuh, wong jobo wong jero, manut kyai further clarify the barrier between the three. Santri, kyai, and national have become identical languages that are manipulated by political interests. Such a phenomenon, on the one hand, will greatly benefit the elite and their group, as well as create a special space for minorities. The special space referred to in the previous sentence is marginalization, while the minority in question is the national/abangan.

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