

Pesantren's Kyai and the Fragmentation of Religious Authority in a Muslim Peripheral Territory

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ABSTRACT

It is often assumed in society that the 'true' Islam is the one that is in the classical Arab heartlands, such as Mecca and Egypt. At the same time, Islam in a peripheral area such as in Java and Sumatra is a less Islam. In this case, the Arab Muslims are considered the most authoritative figure to speak about Islam, and ulama (Muslim scholars) from Indonesia are less authoritative when speaking about Islam. In fact, there are many ulama in Indonesia who are highly knowledgeable about Islamic sciences, thus authoritative to talk about Islam. One of them is the kyai (religious leader) of a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) in Ambarawa (here called, Pesantren Ambarawa), nicknamed Gus Balighin. This article is aimed to describe the scientific backgrounds of the kyai of Pesantren Ambarawa, and examine the degree of his religious authority. Results of the study show that the kyai had studied Islam in many pesantren in Lampung and in Java for more than 20 years, all of which have connected him to the established chain of scientific transmission of Islamic learning in Indonesian Islam. This study also finds out the he has played significant roles in the development of religious organizations in his surrounding communities. This article concludes that the number of pesantren he had visited, the length of time he had spent to study Islam, the continuity of his chain of scientific transmission of Islamic learning to the established community of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia, and his role in organizational Islams in his community, all has contributed to the production of his authority, both among his students in his pesantren, and among lay people in his community. Thus, the kyai's authority is unchallenged especially when he conveys his messages about Islam.

Keywords: *Religious authority, kyai, pesantren, Muslim periphery*

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, there are many assumptions saying that the truest Islam comes from the Arab regions, so that Arabic scholars are considered more authoritative in conveying Islamic teachings. At the same time, Islam in peripheral areas is considered less correct, thus ulama in peripheral areas of Islam are considered less authoritative to speak about Islamic teachings. The reason of such assumption is that they considered that the Islam in the classical Arabic heartlands is similar to Islam that was first taught by the Prophet Muhammad, whereas the Islam in the peripheral areas are no longer the same as what the Prophet had taught in the Arabic lands.

But the fact is that many ulama in the peripheral regions of Islam hold rich knowledge about Islamic sciences, thus challenging our assumption about their lack of authority for speaking about and in the name of Islam.

According to Weber, authority can be interpreted as an ability to make others willing to accept and do what we want, even though they might not be agreed upon, or even opposed to it. Whereas Soekanto argued that authority is interpreted as the power that existed in a person or group

of people who received support or recognition from the community.[1, p.76]

Researches about authority of the *kyai* have been widely conducted, including Turmudi,[2] Fealy,[3] Sunarwoto,[4] and Kiptiyah,[5] According to Turmudi, authority of a kyai is decided by his *nasab* (line of ancestry), that is, of a pesantren family.[2] In contrast to Turmudi, Fealy argues that kyai's religious authority is built on traditional authority in the form of religious knowledge.[3]

Some studies have also discussed the role of kyai in peripheral Islamic regions (Indonesia) who has a high religious authority for speaking about and in the name of Islam. Among them is Yuliah who wrote "KH Jihad Resolution. Hasyim Ash'ari; Fatwa Jihad KH. Hasyim Ash'ari and its implications in the November 10, 1945 War in Surabaya".[6] This study discusses the authority of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in governing all pesantren students (*santri*) and various elements in society for *jihad* (holy war) against the Western invaders. Also, Kiptiyah in her "Celebrity Kyai and New Media", discusses the role of a kyai in preaching Islam through social media such as You Tube.[5]

Different from the above researches, this study discusses the authority of an ulama in conveying the truth of Islam in Pringsewu, Lampung. This ulama is the kyai of Pesantren

Ambarawa Pringsewu, KH. M Mubalighin Adnan, who is familiar with the nickname "Gus Balighin". He is a young figure who holds a high religious authority both in his pesantren and in his surrounding environments.

This paper explores the depth of the Islamic knowledge of the kyai, and the role he has played in developing his pesantren institution, all of which became the backgrounds for the production of his religious authority. To answer this problem, this study focus on the followings: description of authority and the *kyai*, the scientific genealogy of the *kyai*, and activities of the *kyai* for developing Islamic organizations in his community.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative method. It will focus on the figure of Gus Balighin, especially on how he has obtained his Islamic knowledge, how he has develop his pesantren, and how both his knowledge about Islam and his role in developing his pesantren, give influence to the production of his religious authority. Data for this research are gathered through library research, participant observation, and interviews.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1. Authority of Kyai

According to Soekanto, authority is a power that exists in a person or group of people who get support or recognition from the community.[7]

According to Weber, there are three types of authority possessed by any leaders, namely charismatic, traditional and racial-legal authority. In charismatic authority, the authority possessed by a leader is based on charisma, that is, a special ability possessed by someone which is beyond the power and ability of human beings in general.[8] Whereas traditional authority is not based on special ability, but because the person has power and authority which has been institutionalized in, and even believed by the community.[9]

Kyai is a religious figure who holds a central position in society. His position is related to his status as someone who has extensive religious knowledge and has a lot of wealth channeled for the benefit of the people.[4] Therefore, traditionally a kyai cannot be separated from pesantren, as an institution for studying religion and about the meaning of life. In this environment, there are still many people who do not have the opportunity to participate in religious studies in the pesantren due to various activities. So a kyai plays a very important role in preaching in the community, such as a routine weekly recitation of the Qur'an conducted at the community's mosque.

Kyai is the central figure in every pesantren. The centrality of the kyai in pesantren is not only because of his Islamic

knowledge, but also because he is the one who carries the mandate to nurture and lead the pesantren.[10] Kyai is a charismatic figure who is believed to have extensive religious knowledge. Besides that, kyai in *pesantren* is seen as charismatic by the community, and his authority should not be contested: this has become a determinant variable for the sustainability of pesantren. In that case, kyai can also be called as the agent of change in society, who plays an important role in the process of social changes.[11]

As a religious figure, the kyai certainly make an effort to create his own religious authority. According to Meir Hatina, kyai's authority is not only based on his religious knowledge, his position as a pesantren's lader, and his ability to deliver a *dakwah*, but also on his charisma obtained through his piety and daily attitudes.[9] This opinion is also supported by Sunarwoto. According to him a community will respect the kyai because of his personality and attitude, not merely because of his religious knowledge.[4] In contrast to the above opinion, according to Fealy, kyai's authority is obtained mainly from his religious knowledge, especially in the field of monotheism, jurisprudence and Arabic grammars.[12]

The authority possessed by the kyai helps him play his role in religious fields. Many kyai in Indonesia are considered authoritative to speak about Islam, such as KH. Hasyim Asyari, who was known for his authoritative fatwas (religious advice). This is evidenced by his fatwa on "Resolution of Jihad" which was delivered on October 22, 1945, commanding all pesantren's students and all elements in Muslim societies to join the holly war (*jihad*) against the Dutch troops and its allies. It is from this fatwa, that the famous 10 November battle broke out in Surabaya.[10] In addition, Kyai in Indonesia who is quite authoritative in conveying Islam is KH. Anwar Zahid, as his preaching is always a big hits in social media such as You Tube.[9]

The authority of a kyai can be constructed through the roles that the kyai has played in his community. With this authority, the kyai become highly respected among the wider community. Public respect to the kyai is not solely due to his knowledge, but because of his figure and character, which come out of his personal charisma. With his charismatic authority, the kyai becomes a role model in all his actions. In addition, as a charismatic authority holder, the kyai can stimulate his followers to do any thing he commanded, because they are under his influence and authority.[13] In other words, charismatic authority is a more legal-rational authority amid the growing society. Therefore Weber included the term charisma as part of the important factors to the production of authority, one that is a more revolutionary comparing to the traditional authority such as religion, holiness and spirituality.[9]

Thus, the strength of the religious authority of a kyai can be sourced from the charisma, which can be obtained from a broad scientific perspective. For this reason, it is necessary to discuss clearly the scholarship of a kyai who is a figure in a pesantren or in the community.

3.2. *Scientific Genealogy of the Kyai of Ambarawa Pesantren*

The kyai of Ambarawa Pesantren is K.H. Mubalighin Adnan. Nicknamed Gus Balighin, he is one of the young kyais in Lampung today, who hold a highly authoritative outlook to speak about Islam, both in his pesantren and its surrounding environments. His authority in conveying Islam, made him so respected by the students and the community.

He is the son of a charismatic kyai in East Lampung, KH. Muhammad Adnan. KH. Muhammad Adnan is the son of KH. Rahmad Djaja Ulema, one of the famous and charismatic scholars in Lampung, who first established Attaqwa Pesantren in East Lampung.[11] From the pedigree of the descendants of the kyai's family, it is no wonder that kyai Balighin is highly respected among his santri, even when he was still a child.

The authority of Gus Balighin cannot be separated from his backgrounds, one that arouse a sense of admiration and respect among his students and ordinary people in his community.

Gus Balighin is the central figure of Ambarawa pesantren and of the Ambarawa people in general. His fame is due to his well-known richness and depth in religious knowledge, which is a result of more or less 20 years of scientific travelings from one pesantren to another pesantren in Lampung and Java.

He first studied about Islam to his own father, KH. Muhammad Adnan at Tribakti Attaqwa, East Lampung. Here he learned the basic teachings of Islam, before he started his scientific traveling to a number of pesantren in Java.

He first went to Kediri, to study in Pesantren Darussalam, led by KH. Imam Faqih As'ari. The kyai is known for his uninterrupted chain of scientific transmission (*sanad*) all the way up to the prophet Muhammad. Below I outlined the sanad of Gus Balighin from the lineage of K. Imam Faqih Ansari:

KH. M. Mubalighin Adnan - KH. Imam Faqih As'ari (Kediri) - KH. Hasyim Ash'ari (Jombang) - Shaykhona Kholil Bangkalan (Madura) - Syech Mahfudz At-Termasi - Muhammad Nawawi Al-Bantani - Ahmad Khotib Sambas (Kalimantan) - Imam Ad-Dasuqy - Imam Bajury - Abu Abdillah Muhammad As-Sanusi - Abidin al-Izzy - Muhammad Bin Umar Fakhur Raazi - Abdul Hamid Assyeikh Irsani - Abu Hamid bin Muhammad Al-Ghozali (Imam Al-Ghozali) - Al Imam Abdul Malik Imam Haromain Al-Juwaini - Al Imam Abu Bakar Al-Baqilany - Al Imam Abu Abdillah Al-Bahily - Al Imam Abu Hasan Al-Asy'ari (founder of Ahlussunnah Waljama'ah) - Al Imam Abu Ali Adzuba'i - Al Imam Abu Hasi Adzuba'i - Al Imam Abu Huzail Al-Alaq - Al Imam Ibrohim Annadhom - Al Imam Amr bin Ubaid - Al Imam Wasil bin Atho' - Muhammad (son of Sayyidina Ali from his second wife Kaulah bin Ja'far - Sayyidina Ali bin Abi Tholib - Sayyidul Wujud Sayyidina Muhammad Saw.[9]

Then he continued his education to another leading scholar in Indonesia, namely KH. Maimoen Zuber at Ponpes Al-

Anwar Sarang, Rembang, Central Java. Gus Balighin's scientific pedigree from KH. Maimun Zubeir is as follows: KH. M. Mubalighin Adnan - KH. Maimun Zubeir (Rembang) - KH. Abdul Karim Lirboyo (student of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari Jombang) and KH. Mahrus Ali Lirboyo. Then the KH teachers. Maimun Zubeir in Makkah Al-Mukaromah: Sayyid Alawai bin Abbas Al-Maliki, Sheikh Al-Imam Hasan Al-Masysyath, Sayyid Amin Al-Quthbi, Sheikh Yasin bin Isa Al-Fadani and Sheikh Abdul Qodir Al-Mandily.[9]

And finally when he was a university student at IAIN Surabaya, he also studied to KH. DR. Imam Ghozali Said, at An-Nur Student Boarding School in Surabaya.[9]

Gus Balighin has a myriad of expertise in Islamic sciences. This is due to the length of time he had spent to study Islam, and also because of his family backgrounds as Muslim scholars. Gus Balighin has spent his time in *pesantren* for studying Islam for more than 20 years in East Java and Central Java. He entered the boarding school since young age, which is around the age of 9 years. Seeing the long study time in boarding schools, certainly he must be knowledgeable about Islam.

Gus Balighin is expert at Mantiq (logic), Nahwu (Arabic grammar) and Sharaf (Arabic syntax). He also mastered Hadith (prophet tradition), Tafsir of the Qur'an (Qur'anic exegesis), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Ilmu Tauhid (theology), Balaghoh (sort of semantics), and Sufism.[9] He has mastered almost all of *kitab kuning* (Arabic classical books of Islam) studied in the pesantren. Even if we visit his residence, we will see hundreds of books from the small ones to the voluminous books that are displayed in the bookshelves that he places in the living room. This shows the extent of his knowledge in the field of Islamic religion.

Here is a small portion that the author can present about the books that have been mastered by Gus Balighin:

- Nahwu and Sharaf book: Mukhtasor Jidan, Al-Imrity, Alfiyah Ibn Malik, Ibn q Aqil, Mutammimah, Nadhom Maqsud, Kaylani, etc.
- Book of Fiqh: Mubadi Fiqh, Fathul Qorib, Fathul Mu'in, Bajuri, Bidayatul Mujtahid, etc.
- Hadith book: Arbain Nawawi, Bulughul Marom, Riyadus Sholihin, Mukhtarol Hadith, 3. Sahih Bukhori, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Tirmidhi, Sunan Abu Dawud, Sunan Ibnu Majah, Fathul Baari, etc.
- Tafsir book: Tafsir Jalalaen, Tafsir Munir, Tafsir Ibnu Katsir, Tafsir Baidowi, etc.
- Islamic history Book: Khulasoh Nurul Yaqin, Sirah Nabawiyah
- Book of Sufism: Ihya Ulumuddin, Syarah Hikam, Minhajul Abidin, etc.

- Other books: At-targhib, Bidayatul Hidayah, Daqo'iqul Akbar, Durotun Nasihin, Jamius Shogir, Jawahhirul Kalamiyah, Kifayatul Ahyar, Minahu Saniyah, Nashoihul Ibad, Usfuriyah, Ta'limul Muta'lim, and many more the books that he controlled.[11]

3.3. *His Activities in Islamic Organizations*

Gus Balighin's position in the community's Islamic movements was also a significant factor to his religious authority. Because by seeing his position, the public became increasingly convinced that he was worthy of being a role model in the field of religion and spirituality, and his orders must be considered.

Gus Balighin's position in Islamic organizations includes:

- As a caretaker of the Tahfidzul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School Foundation Mathlaul Huda Ambarawa, Pringsewu Regency.
- As chair of the Indonesian Ulama Council of Ambarawa District, Pringsewu Regency.
- As Murshid (a Sufi master) of Badal Toriqoh Qodiriyah Wa Naqsabandiyah Ambarawa.[11]

4. CONCLUSION

This paper concludes the following. The kyai's authority can be based on traditional authority and charismatic authority. Kyai Mubalighin Adnan, or Gus Balighin, is an ulama who holds both authorities. The source of his authority comes from the breadth of his religious scholarships and the strength of his involvement in Islamic organizations. His knowledge was obtained by studying religion since young age in Lampung, and through to his older age in the island of Java, for approximately 20 years. His teachers, KH. Muhammad Adnan; KH. Imam Faqih As'ari; KH. Maimoen Zuber and KH. DR. Imam Ghozali Said, all has connected him to the established chain of scientific transmission of Islamic learning all the way up to the Prophet Muhamamd. As this gives him a title of authority, as such is only enhanced by his activities in Islamic organizations: making him authoritative to speak about Islam both among his pesantren students, and before the people in his pesantren community.

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