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## **Yanwar Pribadi, *Islam, state and society in Indonesia; Local politics in Madura***

Choirul Mahfud

*Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember, Surabaya, choirul.mahfud@its.ac.id*

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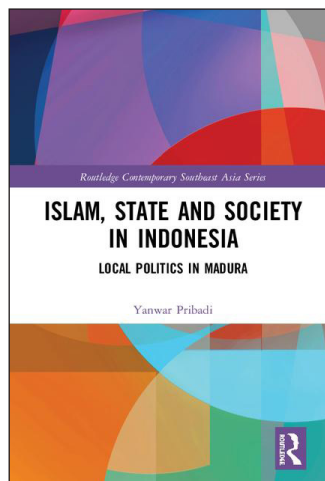
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**Choirul Mahfud**

Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember, Surabaya  
choirul.mahfud@its.ac.id

The topic of Islam and Muslim societies in the Island of Madura is often viewed as a peripheral discourse compared to that on Islam and Indonesian Muslims in the island of Java. Hence, it has often largely been ignored. The reason is that Islam in Madura is embedded in all aspects of life in the island. In his new book, Yanwar Pribadi explores the relationship between Islam, state, and society in Indonesia with a focus on local politics in Madura. He chose Madura as the subject of his research because of the prevalence there of some of the crucial problems recurring in discourses on Islam: Muslim politics, violence, and conflict in Indonesia.

The author notes that the arrival of Islam in Madura happened at almost the same time as it did in Java. Islam was brought to these regions by traders from other parts of Southeast Asia also from Gujarat, India, and Arabia.

From time to time, the image of Madura as a “*santri* community” has emerged more strongly, especially because almost every Madurese house has a *langgar* or *surau*, a place for families to pray or worship. In short, the Madurese are synonymous with Islam. Nevertheless, some of them do not practise Islam. Interestingly, this book also offers an analysis of the socio-cultural and socio-political life of Muslims in the context of authoritarian and democratic politics.

Yanwar Pribadi seems to take a different position to that of previous researchers who tended to look at the “one face of Islam” in Madura as reviewed and written by De Jonge (1995), Koentjaraningrat (1972), and Mansurnoor (1990). Most of the previous researchers have thought that Madura was an island characterized by religiosity and pious people. In general, most academics have also drawn the conclusion that Islam and Muslim society in Madura are monolithic rather than pluralistic. The book shows that there are “many faces of Islam” in Madura, especially within the purview of the *kyai*, traditions, culture, political orientation, and violence.

My understanding is that Yanwar Pribadi has also chosen to emphasize that the role and the position of *kyai* in Muslim politics in Madura is shaped by personal charisma and its concomitant power to influence the society. Indirectly this personal aura makes the people dependent on the *kyai*. This

dependence on the *kyai* extends beyond religious matters, it also enters the political domain. Consequently, the emergence of the local political oligarchy in Madura has inevitably been intertwined with the existence of a dominant religious culture.

Yanwar Pribadi argues that in Madura, the involvement of *kyai* has been visible in every democratization agenda from years gone by, even down to the present day. Some *kyai* in Madura are involved in practical politics, for instance, as regent of Sumenep and as chairmen of and representatives in the Sumenep DPRD (1999-2004 and 2009). Pamekasan is a city famous for its Gerbang Salam (Gerakan Pembangunan Masyarakat Islami or 'Islamic Community Development Movement'). He acknowledges that the position of *kyai* in Madura has always been very central to the society. *Kyai* is an honorary title given by the community to a respected figure to acknowledge his extensive knowledge, especially of religion. The author also states that a *kyai* who possesses the appropriate intellectual and moral capabilities will be able to manage his community by teaching the message of moral values either in socio-religious activities in *pesantren* or Muslim societies in Madura.

The socio-political formula of the *kyai* still used in Madura upholds the two main strengths of leadership: capability and charisma. Madurese clerics emphasize that their role is to maintain a harmonious relationship between the *kyai* and the *santri*. They claim that this has been a vehicle for the transference of moral messages justified by religious values, such as *baraka*, *tawadu'*. Hence, this is the chief instrument in the armoury of these clerics in maintaining the authority of their leadership over the *santri* and the ordinary Madurese community.

Yanwar Pribadi also discovered that the problems of violence and the dynamics of religiosity in the Madurese community are controlled by two main actors, namely: the *blater* and the *kyai*. These groups can be seen as twin regimes with the power to redirect discourse, culture, tradition, and networks of power in the community. Because of his legitimacy, the *blater* as the controller and manager of instruments of violence often captures the hegemony of the public. The violent groups represented by the *blater* have also earned their own respect because they have acquired the soubriquet of great people or *angko* in Madurese. Any candidate for obtaining the status of *blater* must master martial arts or *pencak silat* and be proficient in wielding a traditional weapon such as a *clurit* or *caro*. They are also said to have acquired the cloak of invulnerability and are immune from attacks with sharp weapons.

I think this book uses a combined method, namely: history, ethnography, anthropology, archival and document studies, and fieldwork conducted during time spent in Madura, a few months from 2009-2011. The author tries to highlight the "uniqueness of Madura" by using a chronological analysis of certain events such as the election of village heads, regents, governors, and presidents. He also makes a structural analysis of conflict between the clerics, *blater*, politics, and violence by interviewing various informants, testing his findings against related documentary sources.

This book can be said to be important to understanding a new way of researching and exploring Madura because it uses ethnographic methods. It does not get stuck too deeply in data that are too comprehensive. Interestingly, in discussing what has happened in the area of Bangkalan-Madura, Yanwar Pribadi shows that understanding political ethnography is no longer constrained, and that it was also essential to his research to probe how ethnography reviews power more deeply.

Here, I think that paradigmatically this book provides a new perspective on understanding Madura in relation to Islam, politics, and society. The book can be read and used as a reference by researchers as well as policy makers for political reasons in order to understand the whole concept of Madura and Indonesia.

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