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**NO. 322**

**EXAMINING THE GROWTH OF ISLAMIC  
CONSERVATISM IN INDONESIA  
THE CASE OF WEST JAVA**

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**19 JULY 2019**

## Abstract

With 48 million people, West Java is Indonesia's largest province in terms of population. Historically, it has served as the cradle of Islamic conservatism in Indonesia. Modernist Islamic parties and candidates that espouse a purist and orthodox form of Islam always won the free and fair elections in this province. It was also the centre of Indonesia's Islamic rebellion, the Darul Islam / Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII). The Islamic landscape of West Java, however, is not that much different from that of Central and East Java, which is based on Islamic traditionalism. The differences in the socio-political outlook between West Java and other major provinces in Java are due to historical reasons and set it apart from the pattern developed in the others. With the arrival of the new *dakwah* movements influenced by the Islamic transnational forces, Muslims in West Java are embroiled in an ambivalent position. On one hand, the new movements are considered as bringing a renewed sense of vigour for the Islamic *dakwah* in this region, but on the other hand, they are also seen as a threat to the common religious practices there. There are indications that conservative West Java is undergoing a further conservative turn, especially judging by the recent voting pattern in the province. However, there is also signs that the threat brought by the new *dakwah* movements might produce a turnaround away from the deepening of conservatism there.

## West Java: Population, Religion, and Political Antecedents

West Java is Indonesia's most populous province. With 48 million inhabitants, 18 per cent of Indonesia's 260 million people live in this province. Geographically, West Java makes up only 2 per cent of Indonesia's landmass, making it the second most densely populated province in Indonesia after the capital Jakarta. In 2000, Banten was set up as a separate province from West Java. Combined with Banten, which is culturally and ethnographically similar to the dominant ethnic group in West Java, this region of Indonesia has a population of 60 million. This means that almost one in four Indonesians live in the Western Java region. West Java is also strategically situated, since it provides the hinterland of Jakarta.

There are a number of sub-regions in West Java, i.e., (i) the Priangan (also known as the Parahyangan) area, home to the people of Sunda, comprising East Priangan (Ciamis, Banjar, Garut, Tasikmalaya, Kuningan, Majalengka), Central Priangan (Bandung – the province's capital, Cimahi, Sumedang, Purwakarta), and West Priangan (Cianjur, Sukabumi, Bogor); (ii) the North Coast area (Karawang, Subang, Indramayu, and Cirebon); and (iii) the Jakarta hinterland (Bekasi, Depok, and usually some parts of Bogor are also included, as well as Tangerang – that has become a part of Banten province since 2000).

While the Sundanese are the majority group in this province, West Java is actually quite diverse. The North Coast area is influenced by the Cirebon culture that is quite distinct from the Sundanese and is considered as mid-way between the Sundanese and Javanese cultures.<sup>1</sup> The hinterland of Jakarta is also dominated by the Betawi people (the native people of Jakarta), who have largely migrated to the outskirts of Jakarta to give way to developments in the capital city and the influx of migrants from all over the country.

West Java is predominantly Muslims. Ninety-seven per cent of its population confess Islam as their religion. This is in contrast to Central Java and to a lesser extent East Java, where there is a sizeable Christian and Catholic population among its native people due to the Christian religious missionary (*zending*) programmes of the colonial Dutch. In West Java, the colonials (mostly tea planters and government officials) largely kept to themselves. As a result, the number of non-Muslim native people, especially among the Sundanese, is very small, and largely concentrated in the urban centres.

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<sup>1</sup> Even though they live in Java, generally the Sundanese refuse to be called "Javanese". The latter usually refer to people who live in Central and East Java (with the exception of Madura). The Sundanese major kingdom was the Padjadjaran, contemporary of the Majapahit in East Java. The two kingdoms went to war in the Battle of Bubat in the 14<sup>th</sup> century that has left some sense of bitterness, especially on the part of the Sundanese. While the names of Hayam Wuruk (the Majapahit King) and Gajah Mada (the Majapahit Viceroy) are commonly used as street names in major cities in Indonesia, there are no streets or buildings named after these Majapahit's notables in Bandung.

The study of Clifford Geertz in the town of Modjokuto, pseudonym of the town of Pare in East Java in the 1950s, divided the Javanese society into three categories based on religious practices, i.e., (i) the *priyayi* (the royal class), (ii) the *santri* (pious Muslims), and (iii) the *abangan* (nominal Muslims).<sup>2</sup> Compared to the wealth of literature available on the socio-religious aspects of the Javanese society, similar studies in West Java, especially among the Sundanese, are poor, and most are conducted as anthropological studies. Generally, a parallel with Geertz' typology can be drawn in West Java. Like in East and Central Java, West Java is also strewn with Islamic learning institutions (*pesantren*) and their *santri*. In Sundanese term, the *kyai* is known as *ajengan* (or in more familiar term as *Mama*). The *priyayi* is known as *menak*, and even though many *menak*'s religious outlook is syncretic, they are relatively more pious than the *priyayi* in Central and East Java and in several cases they were known to support *pesantren* actively during the colonial era.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to Central and East Java, the number of *abangan* followers, known in Sundanese term as *Sunda Wiwitan*<sup>4</sup> is quite small, and usually concentrated in the eastern part of East Priangan, the seat of the old Padjadjaran Kingdom. There were a significant number of nationalist and even communist voters in the North Coast area during the 1955 election. However, they generally did not follow the Central and East Javanese *abangan* practice. They were drawn to these leftist parties primarily due to the class considerations, as poverty was quite high in that area.

As shall be explained in greater detail in the next part, West Java is the support base of modernist/reformist Muslim parties and groups. In 1955, 23 per cent of Masyumi votes came from West Java, making it the largest contributor of votes to a party that had its power base outside Java. West Java was also the province where the first Islamic rebellion broke out. The Darul Islam (DI — Islamic state) was declared by its leader, Kartosuwiryo in West Java in August 1949. By 1957, the Tentara Islam Indonesia (TII — Indonesian Islamic Army) was able to control one-third of this province. Eventually, the DI/TII spread out to South Sulawesi and Aceh, and with limited movement in Central Java and South Kalimantan. More recently, in the 2014 election, 60 per cent of West Javanese voted for Prabowo Subianto, who was supported by Islamist parties, and support for nationalist Joko Widodo (Jokowi) was a mere 40 per cent. In the Sunda area of West, Central, and East Priangan, these figures ran even higher, with 68 per cent, 63 per cent, and 63 per cent respectively. Jokowi only won in the nationalist stronghold of North Coast, and even here he won only by 53 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> Geertz, Clifford. *The Religion of Java*. Glencoe: Free Press, 1960. Since its publication, there have been a number of critiques of Geertz' typology of the Javanese society. Among the recent ones, see Burhani, Ahmad Najib. "Geertz's Trichotomy of Abangan, Santri, and Priyayi: Controversy and Continuity." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 11 (2017). Doi:10.15642/JIIS.2017.11.2.329-350. Most of the critiques refer to the *Priyayi* as a social class that does not reflect religious practices, as some *Priyayi* may be pious in religious practices and others may be just nominal Muslims.

<sup>3</sup> On the *Menak-Ulama (Ajengan)*'s relationship, see Lubis, Nina Herlina. "Religious Thoughts and Practice of the Kaum Menak: Strengthening Traditional Power." *Studia Islamika* 10 (2003). Doi:10.15408/sdi.v10i2.629. Another interpretation of the Sundanese sociological divide is class-based, between *Menak* (aristocrats) and *Somah* (commoners, who are generally tied to *pesantren*). See Yahya, lip Dzulkifli. "Tradisi Ngalogat di Pesantren Sunda (Dialect Tradition in Sunda *Pesantren*)." In *Politik dan Postkolonialitas di Indonesia (Politics and Postcolonialism in Indonesia)*, edited by Budi Susanto, S.J., 267–308. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> On *Sunda Wiwitan*'s belief system, see Indrawardana, Ira. "Berketuhanan dalam Perspektif Kepercayaan Sunda Wiwitan (Belief in God in the Perspective of Sunda Wiwitan)." *Melintas* 30 (2014). <http://journal.unpar.ac.id/index.php/melintas/article/view/1284/1254>

## Islam in West Java: Traditionalist Religious Practices, Modernist Political Outlook

Islam expanded through West Java in two episodes and through two sources. The initial entry was made through Cirebon, which was part of the expansion of Demak Sultanate, the first Muslim sultanate in Java, to many parts of the island. Demak was eventually able to subdue the Hindu Mataram Kingdom, which was the remnant of the once-powerful Majapahit and dominated Java, especially the trading posts of the northern coast, including Cirebon. 1482 marked the first wave of Islamisation of West Java with the establishment of the Islamic Cirebon Sultanate independent from the rule of the Hindu Padjadjaran kingdom by Sunan Gunungjati, and is considered as one of the Nine Wali (*Wali Songo*) spreading Islam in Java. The second wave of further Islamisation that eventually led to the establishment of Sunda *pesantren* took place in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the already Islamised Mataram Sultanate occupied West Java that was in a state of disarray after the fall of the Padjadjaran Kingdom. At the height of its power in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic Mataram was the undisputed ruler of Java, spanning from west to east. At the fringe were Banten and Dutch-controlled Sunda Kelapa, which had already been renamed Batavia by the Dutch. Sultan Agung sought to wrest control of this port city from the Dutch, but failed to do so.

The establishment of the *pesantren* system in West Java, therefore, occurred in parallel with the growth of these schools in East and Central Java. Since they came from the same source, the belief systems of these *pesantren* are similar. In fact, prior to the Dutch colonisation, most *pesantren* in West Java used Javanese language in instructions rather than the local language of Sundanese.<sup>5</sup> Like their brethren in East and Central Java, the West Javanese *pesantren* are also considered as following the *ahlussunnah wal jamaah* (aswaja — Sunni tradition). Also like in East and Central Java, the followers of the *pesantren* and their kyai (or in Sundanese word, *ajengan*) are typically rural commoners. However, unlike in East and Central Java, there are a small number of commoners that practice *abangan* rituals in West Java. Known as the followers of Sunda Wiwitan, they are concentrated mostly in the eastern part of East Priangan. Also unlike in East and Central Java where the *priyayi* class were predominantly *abangan*, many of the Sundanese *menak* also hailed from *pesantren*, and thus were generally friendlier to the *pesantren* than their East and Central Java brethren.<sup>6</sup>

Many anthropological scholars have observed that Islam came to Java without changing the fundamental existing societal structure. The tradition of the *pesantren* was inherited from the learning institutions of the previous Hindu era that was occupied by teachers (*kyai* or *ajengan*) and students (*santri*) living in the same compound, and interacting not only pedagogically but also socially. They

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<sup>5</sup> Yahya, lip Dzulkifli. "Tradisi Ngalogat di Pesantren Sunda (Dialect Tradition in Sunda *Pesantren*)." In *Politik dan Postkolonialitas di Indonesia* (Politics and Postcolonialism in Indonesia), edited by Budi Susanto, S.J., 267–308. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2003. Also interview with Kiagus Zaenal Mubarak and lip Dzulkifli Yahya, West Java Nahdatul Ulama Provincial Board, Bandung, 6 March 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Zimmer, Benjamin G. "Al-'Arābiyah and Basa Sunda: Ideologies of Translation and Interpretation among the Muslim of West Java." *Studia Islamika* 7 (2000): 37. Doi:10.15408/sdi.v7i3.702.

were based mostly in rural areas.<sup>7</sup> These institutions often offered critical views to the rule of the *priyayi* class.<sup>8</sup> The arrival of Islam provided a new substance to this societal structure, but the structure itself remained largely unaltered. In the *priyayi* class, Mataram rulers almost readily changed their religious allegiance from Hinduism to Islam, without transforming the pattern of relationships between rulers and followers, and in most cases without changing the traditions of the courts. In the *pesantren*, Islamic creeds merely replaced the Indic religious values, without causing any meaningful alteration to the existing social structure, especially to the *kyai-santri* pattern of relationship.

The similarity is also reflected in the religious practice applied in these West Javanese *pesantren* that is identical with those in East and Central Java. Like their brethren in other parts of Java, the religious teaching in the West Javanese *pesantren* is also based on mastery of the “yellow book” (*kitab kuning*). These series of books contain the teaching on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqih*), creeds (*aqidah*), ethics (*akhlak*), and importantly spiritual mysticism (*tasawwuf*). The West Javanese *pesantren* also perform *tahlilan* (praying sessions in honour of the dead usually by citing the Surah of Yasin of the Holy Qur’an), and *ziarah kubur* (visiting graves and uttering prayer). They also celebrate the *Maulid Nabi* (Birthday of the Prophet).

The abovementioned practices are considered as heretical by the modernist Muslims. These Muslims comprise the other major parts of the Indonesian Muslims. The modernist Muslim movement in Indonesia was influenced by a similar movement in the Middle East, brought about by reformers Muhammad Abduh, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, and Rashid Ridha in Egypt at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This reform movement in Islam was the product of Western colonialism in the region. It started initially as a soul-searching intellectual movement seeking to comprehend the “defeat of Islam by the West”, which was how colonialism was generally viewed in this quarter. The result was a set of ideas that encouraged Muslims to embrace modernity through mastery of science and technology. It sought to “catch up” with the West by reviving the intellectual traditions that had become the hallmark of Islamic civilisation prior to its decline in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This movement identified the problem with Muslim societies as having its root within the societies themselves. It criticised the societies for moving away from the true spirit of Islam as practiced during the time of Prophet Mohammad and engaging in irrational and superstitious activities. It also attacked the huge wealth gap between the ruling aristocrats and the masses, arguing that the message of Islam necessitated that the organisation of Muslim societies be based on egalitarianism.<sup>9</sup> In short, this movement sought to reform, purify, and

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<sup>7</sup> Various names have been used to refer to these people. The teachers were known in pre-Islamic societies as “*begawan*,” “*resi*,” or “*ajar*,” while the students as “*cantrik*.” After the coming of Islam to Java, the teachers became known as “*kyai*” and the students “*santri*.” Despite the change, the Islamic references remained locally rooted as these words were not Arabic in origin. See Anderson, Benedict Richard O’Gorman. *The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture*. Cornell University Press, 1972. Reprinted in Anderson, Benedict Richard O’Gorman. *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990. p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Ben Anderson refers to the people of the *pesantren* as “the ruler’s critics.” See Anderson (1972), pp. 63–67.

<sup>9</sup> On the intellectual roots of this movement, see Armstrong, Karen. *Islam: A Short History*. London: Phoenix Press, 2000. pp. 121–33.

modernise Islam.<sup>10</sup> The religious practices of the traditionalists are sometimes branded by the modernists as *takhyul* (irrationality), *bid'ah* (deviant practices), and *khurafat* (superstitious practices).<sup>11</sup> The differences between these two schools of thought in the Islamic practice in Indonesia define not only the fault line in the social life of Indonesians, but also, as we shall see, in the politics of the country, including in West Java.<sup>12</sup>

A number of scholars term these two groupings, along with nationalism, as streams of political thinking in Indonesia or political *aliran*. Clifford Geertz defines *aliran* as “a political party surrounded by a set of voluntary social organisations formally or informally linked to it.”<sup>13</sup> Taking a more anthropological outlook, Ben Anderson defines it as “a distinctive, integrated cultural outlook, together with its organised and unorganised (but potentially organisable) adherents.”<sup>14</sup> Irman Lanti combines the two definitions by referring to *aliran* as “a distinctive politico-cultural set of beliefs, represented in the public sphere by a number of social organisations, and in the political sphere by a political party.”<sup>15</sup>

On the social organisation side, the modernists set up Muhammadiyah in 1912. Through Muhammadiyah, the modernists built a network of schools that taught both Islamic and secular subjects. At the time, the modernist school system even rivalled the formal education system set up by the Dutch colonial administration. Muhammadiyah also established women, student, and youth wings, as well as a disaster relief organisation that would later be transformed into hospitals and polyclinics. From the 1920s, Muhammadiyah became the first comprehensive and the largest social organisation in Indonesia.<sup>16</sup> The vanguard organisation of Islamic traditionalism is the Nahdatul Ulama (NU), set up in 1926. NU was an amalgamation of two previous social and educational organisations, the Nahdatul Watan established in 1914 and Tashwirul Afkar in 1918. While NU also established a number of health service establishments, it was primarily known for its network of *pesantren* that provided the education for rural population and became the alternative to the modern school system set up by the Dutch.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For these reasons, the adherents of this movement are interchangeably known as reformist, purist, and modernist Muslims. Nowadays they are often referred to as Islamists, conservatives, and even sometimes radicals.

<sup>11</sup> In the old Indonesian (pre-1973) spelling, these elements were written as *tachjul*, *bid'ah*, and *churafat*, popularly abbreviated as TBC. TBC is also a popular short form of tuberculosis, a common illness among Indonesians. By associating these practices with an illness, the reformists tried to point out that they were common among Indonesians and must be combatted.

<sup>12</sup> On the theological differences between the traditionalists and modernists, see Prasetyo, Hendro, and Ali Munhanif. *Islam & Civil Society: Pandangan Muslim Indonesia* (Islam and the Civil Society: the Views of Indonesian Muslims). Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama bekerjasama dengan PPIM-IAIN Jakarta, 2002. ch. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Geertz, Clifford. “The Javanese Village.” In *Local, Ethnic, and National Loyalties in Village Indonesia: A Symposium*, edited by G. William Skinner, 37–41. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.

<sup>14</sup> Anderson, Benedict Richard O’Gorman. *The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture*. Cornell University Press, 1972. fn. 85.

<sup>15</sup> Lanti, Irman G. “The Elusive Quest for Statehood: Fundamental Issues of the State, Political Cultures, and *Aliran* Politics in Indonesia.” PhD thesis, Vancouver: Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of British Columbia, 2004. pp. 68.

<sup>16</sup> Benda, Harry J. “The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945.” *The Hague and Bandung: W. van Hoeve Ltd.* (1958): 47–48.

<sup>17</sup> On the history of the NU, see Choirie, A. Effendy. *PKB Politik Jalan Tengah NU: Eksperimentasi Pemikiran Islam Inklusif dan Gerakan Kebangsaan Pasca Kembali ke Khittah 1926* (The PKB as the NU’s Middle Road

On the political side, Islam influenced the effort of nation building in Indonesia since the very beginning. Sarekat Islam (SI), established in 1912, was one of the first independence movements in Indonesia. It was set up by the modernists to propagate Indonesian nationalism along with its nationalist counterpart, Budi Utomo. SI was the dominant organisation until its split into red (leftist/communist) and white (Islamist) factions in 1920. Another modernist organisation would fill this void, Majelis Islam A'laa Indonesia (MIAI — Indonesian Islamic Council), set up in 1937. During the Japanese occupation that provided some space for Indonesians to establish organisations, MIAI was transformed into Masyumi (Majlis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia — Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims) in November 1943.<sup>18</sup> The Masyumi was the umbrella organisation of both the modernists and traditionalists. NU was one of the constituent organisations of the Masyumi when the latter was declared as a political party after independence in 1945. But tension was growing within the party as the traditionalists viewed this as modernist dominance, especially in the party's central leadership. A split between the two *aliran* then became inevitable. In 1952, just three years prior to Indonesia's first election, the traditionalists announced that they left Masyumi and declared NU to be a political party.<sup>19</sup>

In West Java, NU arrived in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Despite the similarities in the religious practices among Muslims in West Java to those in East and Central Java, the traditionalist institution was not well received in this region. NU held a non-cooperative stance to the colonial administration at that time and this strategy was received widely in East and Central Java as a part of opposition and criticism towards the *priyayi* class who aligned themselves closely with the Dutch administration. But in West Java, the colonial administration was relatively more successful in establishing a better rapport with the *pesantren*. This was partly due to the closer relationship between the *menak* and *ajengan* in West Java compared to the often-adversarial relationship of *priyayi-santri* in East and Central Java. It was also due to the relatively more pervasive presence of Islam in this region where even the *menak* class had a close affinity to the *pesantren*, hence the need for the colonial administration to be more accommodating to Muslims in order to stave off rebellion in the rural area. Rural West Java at that time produced one of the most important commodities for the Dutch through its wide expanse of tea plantations. As a result, in 1930s for instance, in West Java, there was an institution called "*izharu baiatil muluk wal umara*" that was formed to handle the affairs of Muslims, led by *Ajengan* K.H. Suja'i. Many *ajengan* joined this institution, and they were known as the

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Politics: Experimentation of Inclusive Islamic and National Movement Thinking After the Return to the Oath of 1926). Jakarta: Pustaka Ciganjur, 2002. ch. 2; Daman, H. Rozikin. *Membidik NU: Dilema Percaturan Politik NU Pasca Khittah* (Aiming at the NU: the Dilemma of the NU's Political Game after the Oath). Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2001. ch. 2.

<sup>18</sup> On the circumstances surrounding the establishment of Masyumi, and the role of the Japanese occupation force, consult Benda, Harry J. "The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945." *The Hague and Bandung: W. van Hoeve Ltd.* (1958): ch. 5-7.

<sup>19</sup> On NU's withdrawal from Masyumi, see Daman, H. Rozikin. *Membidik NU: Dilema Percaturan Politik NU Pasca Khittah* (Aiming at the NU: the Dilemma of the NU's Political Game after the Oath). Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2001. pp. 94-103; Choirie, A. Effendy. *PKB Politik Jalan Tengah NU: Eksperimentasi Pemikiran Islam Inklusif dan Gerakan Kebangsaan Pasca Kembali ke Khittah 1926* (The PKB as the NU's Middle Road Politics: Experimentation of Inclusive Islamic and National Movement Thinking After the Return to the Oath of 1926). Jakarta: Pustaka Ciganjur, 2002. pp. 77-83.

*ulama kaum*.<sup>20</sup> So, when NU arrived in West Java with its non-cooperative stance, it was deemed as a foreign element seeking to undermine the power and influence of the *ulama kaum*.<sup>21</sup> During the Japanese occupation, these traditionalist *ajengan* formed their own institutions, known as the Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI) – which later became the Persatuan Umat Islam Indonesia (PUII) and joined MIAI. Another institution that was formed was the Al-Ittihadiyah Islamiyah (All). PUI and All then joined Masyumi after independence. In 1952, as NU left Masyumi, these West Javanese traditionalists did not follow suit and instead solidified their position within Masyumi by creating a fusion between PUII and AAI to form the PUI, reverting to the old name.<sup>22</sup>

In Indonesia's first election in 1955 where NU contested independent of Masyumi, it garnered 14 per cent of the votes in West Java and mostly concentrated in Tasikmalaya and Cirebon areas where most of the NU *pesantren* were situated. This was less than half the votes attained by Masyumi that won this election by 39 per cent of votes, and even less than the votes received by the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI – Indonesian Communist Party). This situation has not changed much until in recent years. The 2014 presidential election saw Prabowo, who was nominated by Islamist parties, win handily over Jokowi who was backed by a combination of nationalist and traditionalist parties, with a vote difference of nearly 5 million. Prabowo won 60 per cent of the votes in the province to Jokowi's 40 per cent share. If combined with the votes from Banten province that was separated from West Java in 2000 but was part of the latter in 1955 election, the difference of votes between the two candidates in 2014 election became almost 6 million.

West Java was the province where the first Islamic rebellion broke out. The DI/TII movement that eventually spread to a number of provinces<sup>23</sup> was initiated in West Java and persisted for nearly one and a half decade. The rebellion and the establishment of the Negara Islam Indonesia (NII – Indonesian Islamic State) were led by Kartosuwiryo. Kartosuwiryo was one of the independence activists. Since 1930s, he was already involved in Islamic independence movement, first with Sarekat Islam, where he became Vice-Chair for the West Java chapter and then later helped found Masyumi after independence. He was responsible for setting up the Dewan Pertahanan Umat Islam (Defence Council of the Islamic Community) in West Java in 1947 and served as Masyumi's representative in the Council. This Council functioned largely as the central command for groups of militias (*laskar*)

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Mubarok and Yahya. Also see Yahya, lip D. *Ajengan Cipasung: Biografi K.H. Moh. Ilyas Ruhiat* (The Ajengan of Cipasung: Biografi K.H. Moh. Ilyas Ruhiat). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pesantren, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Mubarok and Yahya. There could also be a historical explanation that can be offered. The conflict between the Sundanese and the Javanese that occurred during the Battle of Bubad in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the occupation of West Java by Mataram have left a bitter aftertaste, especially among the Sundanese. The Sundanese' lack of enthusiasm of the arrival of an institution from East Java might be seen in this light.

<sup>22</sup> On PUI's history see Persatuan Ummat Islam. "Sejarah Singkat." Accessed June 21, 2019. <https://pui1952.wordpress.com/tentang-pui/>

<sup>23</sup> From West Java, DI/TII rebellion flared up in Central Java led by Amir Fatah in April 1949, in South Sulawesi led by Kahar Muzakkar in August 1953, Daud Beureueh led the rebellion in Aceh in September 1953, and Ibnu Hajar in South Kalimantan in late 1954. In fact, at the height of the rebellion in the period leading to 1955 election, DI/TII controlled the largest area known in the history of Indonesia's regional rebellions after the PRRI/Permesta rebellion that started in 1957. On the analysis of Indonesia's regional rebellions, see Lanti, Iman G. "The Restive Margins: Comparing Indonesia's Approaches in Handling Its Regional Rebellions." Working Paper manuscript, unpublished.

made up from among the santri in the West Javanese *pesantren*. These *laskar* were divided into two groups, i.e., the Sabilillah and the Hizbullah, which had been formed at the end of the Japanese occupation. They were considered parts of Masyumi's military reaction towards the Dutch's attempt to recolonise. In West Java, they were particularly loyal to Kartosuwiryo.<sup>24</sup>

The rebellion started as a result of the Renville Agreement in January 1948, which dictated the Siliwangi (West Java) Division of the Indonesian National Army (TNI) to evacuate West Java and move to the Republican areas in and around Yogyakarta in Central Java. Kartosuwiryo and the Islamic *laskar* vehemently rejected this agreement and vowed to fight the incoming Dutch in West Java. Kartosuwiryo then proclaimed the NII on 20 December 1948, a week after the Dutch "second police action" against the republican capital of Yogyakarta. But even after the Dutch left Indonesia in 1949 and after the return to the unitary state from the federal arrangement brokered by the Dutch in 1950, DI/TII remained active and the task to quell the rebellion fell onto the TNI, who was previously allied with the *laskar* in fighting the colonial Dutch. DI/TII was only subdued when Kartosuwiryo was apprehended in 1962.

The interesting aspect about this rebellion is that Kartosuwiryo and his followers, far from being followers of Islamic orthodoxy as one would imagine from perpetrators of violent extremism in today's world, were actually faithful practitioners of Islamic traditionalism. In 1940, Kartosuwiryo established the Institut Supah (or Suffah Institute) in Malangbong, Garut. Suffah is usually considered as the root word of tasawwuf and sufism (mysticism). This is a practice that is common among traditionalist adherents but considered heretical by orthodox, purist Muslims which comprise the majority of Masyumi's followers. Not only that, like any other syncretic Javanese, when Kartosuwiryo was captured in 1962, he had in his possession a number of paraphernalia, such as magical heirlooms, dagger, and swords, known to the traditional Javanese society as providing the owner with magical power and mystical authority.<sup>25</sup> A diary of one of the TII fighters who fell to the hands of the TNI also indicated that there were practically no religious indoctrination sessions held in the TII encampments. The diary even mentioned mystic practices practiced widely among the fighters.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the support from the rural community of West Java enjoyed by DI/TII for so long might be inferred from the belief that Kartosuwiryo was a holy man in possession of supernatural knowledge and was bullet-proof, indicating the high degree of superstitions that are closely associated with the abangan or traditional Muslim practices.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Dijk, C. Van. *Rebellion Under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia*. Leiden: Brill, 1981. pp. 70–81, 84; Formichi, Chiara. *Islam and the making of the nation: Kartosuwiryo and Political Islam in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Indonesia*. Leiden: Brill, 2012. pp. 112.

<sup>25</sup> Dengel, Holk H. *Darul Islam dan Kartosuwiryo: Angan-angan yang Gagal* (Darul Islam and Kartosuwiryo: Failed Dreams). Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1995. pp. 144–145; Jackson, Karl D. *Traditional Authority, Islam, and Rebellion: A Study of Indonesian Political Behavior*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. pp. 22–23.

<sup>26</sup> Jackson (1980), pp. 17. In fact, the association of DI/TII with Islamist agenda and the creation of the ideology of Darul Islamism escalated only after political Islam was suppressed under the Suharto's New Order regime. See Ramakrishna, Kumar. *Radical Pathways: Understanding Muslim Radicalization in Indonesia*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2009, pp. 83–86.

<sup>27</sup> Boland, B.J. *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*. Leiden: Brill, 1971. pp. 62.

This situation where the religious practice is traditionalist but the socio-political outlook is modernist, which continues to this day, is acknowledged by NU activists in West Java. According to them, the term of cultural vs structural NU is exceptionally relevant here, albeit with a different twist. This terminology was coined during the New Order era as a reaction of NU *vis a vis* the regime's attempt to garner support from this organisation, which many saw as politicisation of the NU. The structural NU was given to the NU leaders and activists who agreed with it, while the cultural NU referred to those who preferred to remain outside of political sphere and conduct social and educational activities.<sup>28</sup> Another interpretation of the structural vs cultural divide lies in the position of individuals in the NU's formal organisation. Those who occupy any position in the NU's national or local organisation are considered as "structural", and those who do not are considered as "cultural" category.<sup>29</sup> In the context of West Java, this typology is less relevant. Here cultural NU refers to the *santri* and *ajengan (kyai)* in the *salafiyah* (traditional) *pesantren*, whose religious practices are in conformity with the traditionalist' tenets, regardless of whether they are actually members of NU, while the structural NU simply refers to those that are card-carrying members of NU, regardless of whether they are part of the NU's functionaries in the formal organisation in the province.<sup>30</sup> They usually refer to this phenomenon as sharing the common religious practices (*amaliyah*), thinking (*fikrah*), and spirit (*ghirah*), but different in the movement (*harakah*).<sup>31</sup> A number of *salafiyah kyai* in West Javanese *pesantren* admitted these commonalities and differences with NU. In the words of one kyai:

"We think that NU has the best teaching for religious practices, but we also think that Muhammadiyah has the best thinking for social life."<sup>32</sup>

## The Arrival of New *Dakwah* in West Java: Between Accommodation and Resistance

Indonesian society has been undergoing religious revivalism. This is especially true among Muslims, who underwent the so-called "*santrinisasi*" process.<sup>33</sup> Like all social processes, *santrinisasi* did not happen overnight. In fact, its roots can be traced back to late 1980s and early 1990s when Nurcholis Majid established Paramadina – initially as a religious study group for the urban middle and upper class, holding the study sessions in various upscale hotels in Jakarta. The fall of Suharto and the New Order regime could also, at least partially, be attributed to the increased assertiveness of Muslims,

<sup>28</sup> Hasyim, Syafiq. "Kemenangan Islam Struktural (The Victory of Structural Islam), *Tashwirul Afkar* 4 (1999): 3.

<sup>29</sup> Masyhuri, Muhammad. "NU dan Paradigma Teologi Politik Pembebasan: Refleksi Historis Pasca Khittah (NU and the Paradigm of Political Liberation Theology: Historical Reflection on Post-Khittah)," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 1 (2016).

<sup>30</sup> Note that this characterisation is held only among NU's functionaries and activists in the province. Many of *ajengan* and *santri* in the West Javanese *salafiyah pesantren* may well reject this.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Mubarak and Yahya. See also ePustaka Islami. "Inilah Amaliyah, Fikrah, Harakah, dan Ghirah NU." November 21, 2017. [www.islamnet.web.id/2017/11/inilah-amaliyah-fikrah-harakah-dan.html](http://www.islamnet.web.id/2017/11/inilah-amaliyah-fikrah-harakah-dan.html).

<sup>32</sup> Interview with K.H. Muh. Hasyim from Pesantren Miftahul Ulum, Subang, 23 January 2019.

<sup>33</sup> The word came from the root word "*santri*" (pious Muslims). Note that the adjective "isasi" in the English-influenced Indonesian means becoming, reflecting the fact that the individuals undergoing a process of transformation from being non-religious to religious. This remains true until today where the majority of the followers of the new *Dakwah* movements have undergone *santrinisasi*.

especially the modernists.<sup>34</sup> That said, only after the fall of the New Order did this movement of Islamism gain momentum. Various Islamist groups that had hitherto been put under tight scrutiny and largely operated underground now resurfaced. While the establishment (or rather re-establishment) of Islamic-leaning parties that contested the free and fair election in 1999, such as Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB — Crescent Star Party), Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN — National Mandate Party), and Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB — National Awakening Party) were hardly a surprise due to their antecedents in pre-New Order political parties and groupings. However, the arrival of a new player, Partai Keadilan (PK — Justice Party) and the fact that it performed well during the election startled many students of Indonesian politics. In fact, PK (which later transformed into Partai Keadilan Sejahtera — Prosperous Justice Party — PKS) was the manifestation of the long years of cultivation of Islamism in Indonesia's campuses through the *Jemaah* or *Gerakan Tarbiyah* (Educational Movement) since 1980s and 1990s.<sup>35</sup> This was then followed with the arrival of various other groups. Hizbut Tahrir entered Indonesia at about the same time as the Tarbiyah movement and also penetrated campuses, primarily the campus of Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB — Bogor Agricultural Institute) and quickly spread to other campuses. Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) rejects the Indonesian state and propagates the establishment of a *khilafah* (caliphate) in Indonesia as part of the larger khilafah in the Muslim world. In 2000, HTI conducted an International Conference on Islamic Caliphate, which was attended by 5,000 participants from various parts of the world.<sup>36</sup> Almost similarly, the *salafi* movement was also met with enthusiasm from campuses. The movement, supported by the Saudi government, espouses the purist form of *Wahabi* Islam. The Wahdah Islamiyah as a leading salafi institution was established as a mass organisation in 2002. The Saudi government also funded the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Bahasa Arab (LIPIA — Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences) with its large campus in the southern part of Jakarta since 1980. But the Institute became particularly active in *dakwah* (religious propagation) movement since early 2000s. LIPIA is known to produce salafi oriented *ustadz* (religious teachers). A home grown institution, the Front Pembela Islam (FPI — Islamic Defender Front) was also a product of *Reformasi* era (as the post-Suharto period is generally referred to). FPI was initially established as a vigilante group with close links to the security establishment. Since early 2010s it has grown to be a credible organisation and claimed a membership of 7 million across Indonesia, and were the main organisers behind the *Aksi Bela Islam 212* (2 December 2016 Action to Defend Islam) against then Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) who was perceived as uttering blasphemous comments against Islam. Another movement which gains progressive numbers of followers is the *Jemaah Tabligh*. This movement is popular among the younger generation because it has been responsible for the phenomenon of "*hijrah*" (migration from non-Islamic to Islamic lifestyle) among public figures, such as musicians and movie artists. The movement is non-political and while promoting further

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<sup>34</sup> See Lanti, Irman G. "The Elusive Quest for Statehood: Fundamental Issues of the State, Political Cultures, and *Aliran* Politics in Indonesia." PhD thesis, Vancouver: Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of British Columbia, 2004. ch. 5.

<sup>35</sup> On the interesting phenomenon of the PK, see Damanik, Ali Said. *Fenomena Partai Keadilan: Transformasi 20 Tahun Gerakan Tarbiyah di Indonesia* (Justice Party Phenomenon: The 20 Years Process of Transformation of Tarbiyah Movement in Indonesia). Jakarta: Teraju, 2002.

<sup>36</sup> On HTI, see Ward, Ken. "Non-violent extremists?: Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63 (2009): 149–64. Doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/10357710902895103>.

*santrinisasi* in Indonesia, especially among the young, urban, middle class, does not seem to harbour any political ambition. That said, the majority of its followers supported Prabowo's candidacy in both 2014 and 2019 elections.<sup>37</sup>

All these different organisations hold different views about Islam and its role in Indonesia. But all propagate for the same objective of the application of *Syariah* (Islamic law) in Indonesia.<sup>38</sup> These new *Dakwah* groups now enjoy virtually the same level of popularity in Indonesia as the previously existing groups with much longer presence and tradition, such as NU, Muhammadiyah, and *Persatuan Islam* (Persis — Islamic Union) in the case of West Java. M.C. Ricklefs even calls this movement as "Revivalists", and puts it alongside the Traditionalists and Modernists as the Islamic streams in Indonesia.<sup>39</sup> One of the distinctive features of the new *Dakwah* movements is the use of information technology. They are particularly active in using social media in their activities, such as Whatsapp, Facebook, and Twitter. Many new *ustadz* have a dedicated media team that record their *tabligh* and *ceramah* (sermons) engagements and then post them online, which can be accessed through Youtube by anyone. Many of them even have their own Youtube channels with millions of followers.<sup>40</sup> This signifies the urban young middle class nature of this movement, which continues on the tradition since 1980s of attracting the educated Indonesians towards the new *Dakwah*.

These new movements have entered West Java since their inception. University campuses in West Java, such as IPB, Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB — Bandung Institute of Technology), Padjadjaran University, and others have long been the hotbed of these movements. These movements have also penetrated the general society. The link with the Middle Eastern institutions, mainly Saudi-funded ones, is mainly done for the purpose of networking based on similarity of thoughts (*fikrah*) and the method of *dakwah* (*manhaj*). The connection with the main clerics of the Middle East, such as Dr Yusuf Qardhawi for the Tarbiyah movement and Syekh Abdullah Bin Baaz for the Salafi movement, is mainly done electronically nowadays. However, all the individuals of the new *Dakwah* movement in West Java who were interviewed claimed that they maintain a high degree of autonomy and organisational independence. They rarely receive contribution from outside of West Java, leave alone outside of Indonesia. Their main source of income comes mostly from members' contribution and some forms of businesses that the organisations run.

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<sup>37</sup> On *Jemaah Tabligh*, see Aziz, Abdul. "The Jamaah Tabligh in Indonesia: Peaceful Fundamentalist." *Studia Islamika* 11 (2004). Doi:10.15408/sdi.v11i3.596.

<sup>38</sup> Mietzner, Marcus. "Fighting Illiberalism with Illiberalism: Islamist Populism and Democratic Deconsolidation in Indonesia." *Pacific Affairs* 91 (2018): 267–8.

<sup>39</sup> Ricklefs, M.C. *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History c. 1930 to Present*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2012. pp. 498–9.

<sup>40</sup> On analysis of the social media used by the new *Dakwah* movement, see Rusli, Nurdin. "Spiritualising New Media: the Use of Social Media for Da'wah Purpose within Indonesian Muslim Scholars." *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 3 (2013). Doi:dx.doi.org/10.15642/jki.2013.3.1.%25p. On an example of how social media is being used among the followers of the Tarbiyah movement, see Nisa, Eva F. "Social Media and the birth of an Islamic social movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in contemporary Indonesia." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (2018): 24–43. Doi:doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2017.1416758.

In the past, several clerics from West Java studied in a number of Middle Eastern institutions, mostly in Saudi Arabia. Syeikh Nawawi al-Bantani from Banten was among the first from West Java who studied in Mecca at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A number of PUI's founders, such as Abdul Halim and Ahmad Sanusi, also studied in Mecca. This tradition continued with activists of the new *Dakwah* movement. A number of them studied in various institutions in the Middle East. Hilmi Aminuddin (former Chair of the Advisory Body of PKS) studied at the Medina University, Saudi Arabia. So did Yazid bin Abdul Qodir Jawaz (second generation Salafi) who studied at the University of Imam Muhammad Ibnu Sa'ud. The founder of HTI Abdurrahman al-Baghdadi was a cleric from Jordan who eventually resided in Bogor. A number of *pesantren* leaders interviewed in this research, such as Maksum Abdurrahman (of Pesantren Nurussalam, Ciamis), Abdullah Muadz (of Pesantren As-Syifa Alkhoeriyah, Subang) and Ahmad Syaikhu (former Head of PKS West Java provincial board), also studied in the Middle East.

That said, a great majority of traditionalist *ajengan* in West Java were trained locally. Pesantren Miftahul Huda in Manonjaya, Tasikmalaya is the primary learning organisation producing hundreds of *ajengan* who eventually established their own *pesantren*, not only in West Java but throughout Indonesia. As a traditionalist institution, the learning method in Manonjaya followed that of the traditionalist *pesantren* brethren in Central and East Java, which relies heavily on the memorisation of the kitab kuning (yellow book). The founder of Miftahul Huda, K.H. Choer Affandi, is a former protege of S.M. Kartosuwiryo, the leader of DI/TII. Both Choer and Kartosuwiryo never attended any Middle Eastern educational institution and instead received most of the religious tutelage from the local traditionalist *ajengan*.

### ***West Javanese ambivalence towards the New Dakwah Movement***

From the interviews conducted with a number of leading Islamic figures in the province, there is a degree of ambivalence towards the arrival of these movements. The West Javanese would like to claim themselves as a society that is open to guests coming from outside and to new ideas. There is a saying in the Sundanese culture that the Sundanese are "*someah, hade ka semah*" (friendly, kind to guests). With respect to Islam, it is true to the extent that the new ideas do not pose an affront to the conservative values espoused by the society. So for instance, the liberal ideas of marriage equality and even acceptance of homosexuality would be a tremendously difficult sell for the West Javanese. Despite plurality in the cultural makeup across the different sub-regions of West Java, the society is pretty homogenous with regards to religion. In the 2016 publication, the West Java Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs identified that 93 per cent of West Javanese were Muslims, with the non-Muslims population concentrated in the urban centres, particularly the capital city of Bandung, and Jakarta hinterland cities of Bogor, Bekasi, and Depok.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the issue of election of Ahok (a double minority) as Jakarta Governor, for instance, is considered baffling for most West Javanese.

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<sup>41</sup> Data taken from *Provinsi Jawa Barat Dalam Angka 2016* (West Java Province in Figures, 2016), Badan Pusat Statistik, Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2016.

According to a number of leading Islamic figures interviewed, West Java contributed the vast majority of the participants of the Aksi 212 demonstration in Jakarta.

When asked the question relating to their threat perception, they perceive the presence of Syiah, Ahmadiyah, and the liberal Muslims as bigger threats than the new *Dakwah* movements. The *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (DDII) even initiated the establishment of the *Aliansi Nasional Anti Syiah* (ANAS — National Anti-Syiah Alliance).<sup>42</sup> Most of the traditionalist-conservative *ajengan* interviewed hold an ambivalent view towards the new *dakwah* movements. On one hand, they perceive that their proponents came from among their midst and that the traditional *pesantren* maintain a cordial and good relationship with them, and are often engaged with them on open discussions and other activities. Some of them even perceive that these movements contributed towards improving the understanding of Islam and may further consolidate the piousness among the population in practicing Islam.<sup>43</sup> None of them speak openly about the new *dakwah* movements in the language that reflects the presence of ominous and imminent threat, and even point out the necessity to maintain Islamic unity among the different groups. Here we can see the creed of West Javanese as being friendly and open to new ideas coming from outsiders in full swing. On the other hand, however, the traditional *pesantren* still regard the new *dakwah* movements as the others, reflecting a misinterpretation of Islam, but there is a need to continue engaging with them, not only as an effort to correct the misinterpretation but also to keep the Muslim brotherhood (*ukhuwah islamiyah*) intact.

The notable exception on this point comes from the West Java Provincial Board of NU. Like the other non-NU traditional *pesantren*, the NU provincial board sees the new *dakwah* movements as representing religious belief and practice that is different from those practiced by majority of the West Javanese. However, unlike the others who see the potential of collaboration with the movements, NU sees a more serious threat posed by them. In order to tackle this, NU takes several active measures such as launching awareness campaigns about the “danger” that the new movements present. These communications are directed towards the general public but more importantly towards the NU-affiliated *pesantren* in the province, producing new generation of *ustadz* that are expected to counter the high popularity of the new *dakwah* movements’ *ustadz*. Separately, the NU extensively uses social media to reach the new generation, and do offline activities like the commemoration of *Hari Santri* (*Santri Day*). NU also seeks to establish collaboration with the provincial board of Muhammadiyah and Persis to tackle these movements, which has been met with lukewarm response, understandably. But interestingly, as a part of the nation-wide introduction of the concept of Islam Nusantara (archipelagic Islam), the West Java board took an active part in promoting NU’s values internationally, such as to Malaysia, Afghanistan, several Middle Eastern countries, and other countries in the region.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Dr. Hadiyanto Abdul Rachim, President of the West Java Chapter of the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII), Bandung, 25 January 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Suhada, Chair of West Java Provincial Board of Muhammadiyah, Bandung, 7 March 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Mubarok and Yahya.

Yet, almost all the traditional *pesantren* in West Java feel the pinch that comes from the extensive use of social media by the new *dakwah* movement. While there continues to be a digital divide in the country, Indonesia is one of the countries in the world with extensive use of social media. Around 150 million of its population (around 58 per cent) are internet users, making it the third highest internet user country in Asia-Pacific and fourth in the world. More than 80 million of the internet users are accessing it through their mobile phones. Around the same numbers are active users of social media. Around 70 million Indonesians are Facebook users (around 27 per cent of its population). The popular four social media outlets for Indonesians are Youtube, Facebook, Whatsapp, and Instagram. Annual growth of social media users in Indonesia is 23 per cent. With this type of statistics, it is no wonder that social media has been used widely for *dakwah* purposes. The lack of clear authority structure among most of the new *dakwah* movement creates an open space for its followers to use social media in the most creative way possible. At the same time, public access to religious information is also open and provides an avenue for instant answers to daily questions. The use of social and audio visual media for *dakwah* purposes has become a recent trend in Indonesia, including in West Java. The most famous of West Javanese' kyai with national appeal, K.H. Abdullah Gymnastiar (also known as Aa Gym), combined the use of regular teaching via his *pesantren* in North Bandung (Pesantren Daarut Tauhid) by airing on a TV channel (MQ TV) and on the radio (MQ FM). A young Bandung-based ustadz, Hanan Attaki, uses social media extensively through his network of Pemuda Hijrah. He appeals mostly to the millennial generation by using twitter, facebook, and websites, combining it with occasional *pengajian* (religious gathering).

Some traditional religious leaders in West Java have already felt the pressure caused by social media. The erosion of authority of the *ajengan* becomes a common phenomenon now in West Java, except for *pesantren* in the most rural setting. It is not uncommon for the *ustadz* and *ajengan* to be posed critical questions by the attendees of religious congregation (*pengajian* or *majelis ta'lim*) who challenge the teaching by comparing it to the information they access through the internet.<sup>45</sup> Realising this challenge of erosion of authority, many *ustadz* and *ajengan* from a number of *pesantren* are now involved in the usage of social media for their *dakwah*, either programmatically such as the PW NU with a wide network of TV penetration, websites, and other mediums or incidentally in which the *pengajian* or *majelis ta'lim* are recorded by the attendees and then uploaded onto Youtube or other social media. It is likely that the future battle for the hearts and minds of West Javanese Muslims, especially for the millennial generation, will take place in the cyberspace.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Dr. Tiar Anwar Bachtiar, INSIST (*Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilizations*), Sumedang, 22 January 2019.

## The Future of Politics in West Java: Conservative Turn in Conservative Land or Traditionalists' Structural Inroad?

Many scholars of Indonesian politics have asserted that Indonesia is currently undergoing a conservative turn, especially among its Muslim population. Leonard Sebastian and Andar Nurbowo, for example, argue that the rise of conservative Islamic forces has deep and pervasive consequences for Indonesian politics and it comprises a phenomenon that has a long-term impact on Indonesia's future.<sup>46</sup> Martin van Bruinessen's edited book discusses about what comprises and causes the conservative turn in Indonesian Islam by looking into experiences of a number of organisations in several parts of the country.<sup>47</sup> Robert Hefner confirms this observation by asking questions of the lack of resistance against this encroaching *santrinisasi* by the *abangan*.<sup>48</sup> Marcus Mietzner even posits that this phenomenon and the lack of proper response from the nationalist government have rendered a deconsolidation of Indonesian democracy.<sup>49</sup> Van Bruinessen, on the other hand, argues that the response will probably arrive from the traditionalist Muslims, rather than through the government by the indigenisation of Islam through the concept of Islam Nusantara.<sup>50</sup> How would this phenomenon play out in West Java? Would we see a further conservative turn in the historically conservative land? What is the potential of a counter-narrative to the new *dakwah* movements to emerge in West Java? What are the consequences for politics in the province, which given its size as Indonesia's largest province, no doubt will have significant impact on national politics.

As alluded to at the outset of this paper, the political attitude of the West Javanese contradicts that of their neighbours in East and Central Java. This is probably a reflection of the historical rivalry and stories of domination and subjugation between the two peoples of Java. While they share religious beliefs and practices, the socio-political outlooks between the two are markedly different. The comparison in the voting pattern between NU and Masyumi's voters in the 1955 elections in the three provinces is illustrative of the difference.

West Java	Central Java	East Java
Masyumi 74%	NU 72%	NU 75%
NU 26%	Masyumi 28%	Masyumi 25%

<sup>46</sup> Sebastian, Leonard C., and Andar Nurbowo. "The 'Conservative Turn' in Indonesian Islam: Implications for the 2019 Presidential Elections." *Asie. Visions* 106 (2019).  
[www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/sebastian\\_nubowo\\_indonesian\\_islam\\_2019.pdf](http://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/sebastian_nubowo_indonesian_islam_2019.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> Bruinessen, Martin van. *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Hefner, Robert W. "Where have all the *abangan* gone? Religionization and the decline of non-standard Islam in contemporary Indonesia." In *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, orthodoxy, and religious contention in Java and Bali*, edited by Michel Picard and Rémy Madinier. London: Routledge, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Mietzner, Marcus. "Fighting Illiberalism with Illiberalism: Islamist Populism and Democratic Deconsolidation in Indonesia." *Pacific Affairs* 91 (2018).

<sup>50</sup> Bruinessen, Martin van. "Indonesian Muslims in a Globalising World: Westernisation, Arabisation, and Indigenising Responses." *RSIS Working Paper* 311 (2018).

A similar voting pattern is apparent again during the presidential election in 2014, which pitted the modernists' backed Prabowo Subiyanto and the nationalist-traditionalist candidate Jokowi.

West Java + Banten	Central Java	East Java
Prabowo 59%	Jokowi 67%	Jokowi 53%
Jokowi 41%	Prabowo 33%	Prabowo 47%

This pattern of voters' preference in West Java is further consolidated in the 2019 presidential election, which saw a repeat of the 2014 election between the nationalist Jokowi paired up with the traditionalist cleric K.H. Ma'ruf Amin and Prabowo, who now paired with a Muslim businessman Sandiaga Uno.

West Java + Banten	Central Java	East Java
Prabowo 60%	Jokowi 77%	Jokowi 66%
Jokowi 40%	Prabowo 23%	Prabowo 34%

Despite the major loss that Prabowo has experienced in Central and East Java, which handed over the victory in 2019 election to Jokowi, West Java's stance as an Islamist province remained unchanged. Prabowo even increased his share of votes in this province, which combined with Banten, reached 60 per cent.

If we compare between the tables above, one can infer that there is a decreasing level of conservatism in West Java nowadays, compared to 1955. It should be noted, however, that there is a time-lag of more than 60 years between the 1955, and 2014 and 2019 elections, including the 32 years of New Order rule that tended to be less cordial towards Islamic modernism at least for the good part of this period. The other changes that have taken place between 1955 and now are population growth and influx of migrants, especially to the Jakarta hinterland of West Java. If in the 1955 elections, West Java had roughly around 6 million voters, compared to Central Java with 10 million, and East Java's 11 million – for the 2019 elections, West Java's voters already surpassed those of the other regions in Java, with around 33 million registered voters, compared with 31 million in East Java, and 27.5 million in Central Java. If combined with the Banten province, that in 1955 election was still part of West Java and sociologically still has a lot of similarity to the mother province, this figure reaches around 41 million, which comprises 21 per cent of all voters in Indonesia. West Java (and Banten) contributed around 28 per cent of all votes attained by Prabowo in the 2014 elections and this increased to 29 per cent in the 2019 elections, which is higher than the 23 per cent

vote contribution from the region to Masyumi's votes in 1955 elections.<sup>51</sup> Hence, this is a plausible argument for deepening of conservatism in the province, despite all the migration that has taken place in the interim.

The contemporary regional divide among West Java's regions also did not change much from 1955. The DI/TII's regions of Priangan remain unchanged in their political behaviour and the relatively more nationalist-traditionalist stronghold of the North Coast remains a "red" area.<sup>52</sup> The data below from the 2019 presidential election is indicative of this phenomenon.

### Number of votes attained in the 2019 presidential election in West Java (including Banten) Per Sub-Region

Sub-Regions/ Districts/Municipalities	Candidates			
	Prabowo/Sandi	Percentage	Jokowi/ Ma'ruf	Percentage
<b>West Priangan</b>				
Sukabumi District	1,012,116	72%	400,644	28%
Bogor District	2,035,552	70%	862,122	30%
Sukabumi Municipality	139,106	70%	61,835	30%
Cianjur	775,354	63%	461,787	37%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,962,128</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>1,786,388</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Banten (without Jakarta Hinterland)</b>				
Serang	649,982	70%	275,251	30%
Cilegon Municipality	177,568	70%	76,455	30%
Serang Municipality	266,505	70%	116,702	30%
Lebak	489,793	65%	260,148	35%
Pandeglang	443,323	63%	263,523	37%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,027,171</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>992,079</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>East Priangan</b>				
Tasikmalaya Municipality	314,247	74%	111,785	26%
Garut	1,068,444	72%	412,136	28%
Tasikmalaya District	729,024	71%	302,132	29%

<sup>51</sup> All election related-data is drawn from the website of the Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU — General Election Commission) at [www.kpu.go.id](http://www.kpu.go.id).

<sup>52</sup> The usage of colour-codes has indeed returned to the lexicon of Indonesian politics. The green or white colour usually denotes the modernist-Muslim areas, and the red colour represents the nationalist dominated areas. Interview with Dr Bachtiar.

Kuningan	376,259	60%	252,373	40%
Ciamis	440,240	59%	303,323	41%
Majalengka	425,877	55%	346,980	45%
Banjar Municipality	55,732	47%	63,295	53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,409,823</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>1,792,024</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Central Priangan</b>				
Purwakarta	406,988	72%	155,863	28%
West Bandung	649,988	64%	359,220	36%
Cimahi Municipality	214,452	64%	120,813	36%
Bandung District	1,246,921	62%	778,826	38%
Bandung Municipality	867,945	58%	621,969	42%
Sumedang	408,929	57%	310,579	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,795,223</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>2,347,270</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Jakarta Hinterland</b>				
Bekasi District	1,046,487	64%	593,424	36%
Bogor Municipality	399,073	64%	228,112	36%
Tangerang District	1,079,010	62%	669,423	38%
Depok Municipality	618,527	57%	464,472	43%
Bekasi Municipality	752,254	55%	617,907	45%
Tangerang Municipality	562,963	55%	464,992	45%
South Tangerang Municipality	390,370	49%	411,030	51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,848,684</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>3,449,360</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>North Coast</b>				
Karawang	779,266	57%	584,682	43%
Cirebon Municipality	93,036	47%	103,878	53%
Subang	392,882	42%	537,114	58%
Cirebon District	449,455	35%	823,900	65%
Indramayu	282,349	29%	707,324	71%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,996,988</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>2,756,898</b>	<b>58%</b>

Legend: Banten Districts/Municipalities

Prabowo also won in Banten. The only place that Jokowi won in Banten was in South Tangerang Municipality that has seen a major influx of migrants and the sprouting of middle-upper class residential complexes, comprising primarily of ethnic Chinese minority groups.

Compared with the results of the 2014 elections, Prabowo's share of votes have increased across the sub-regions, with the greatest increase in Banten, where Jokowi's running mate, K.H. Ma'ruf Amin actually hailed from, from 59 to 67 per cent. This is in spite of the major campaigns conducted by Jokowi in West Java and big support received from the Governor and Vice-Governor of the province. However, with what actually transpired in the *abangan* and traditionalist provinces of Central and East Java in the 2019 elections, the interesting phenomenon of increased share of votes for Jokowi also happened in the North Coast of West Java, which is traditionally regarded as the "red" area of West Java. Here, Jokowi has increased his share of votes from 53 per cent in 2014 to 58 per cent in 2019.

The electoral data above which indicate a similarity between the results of the 1955 and 2019 elections has signified the tenacity of the *aliran* division in West Java and Indonesia despite the generational difference in time. It has also indicated a deepening of the modernist roots in West Java and has implied a conservative turn in the conservative land of West Java. This observation has also been confirmed by all the interviewees, who have made the assertion that there is an increased level of piety in Islamic practices among West Javanese, even among the *menak* class and urban population who in 1955 tended to vote for the nationalists. It has also confirmed the position of the North Coast as the least-modernist area. But even here, the modernist share of votes has almost doubled, from around 23 per cent voting for Masyumi in 1955 elections to the 42 per cent garnered by Prabowo.

However, the story does not seem to end here. Ironically, it is the presence of the new *dakwah* movements that carries the potential to turn around West Java. Theologically speaking, these movements present a deepening of a puristic form of Islamic orthodoxy, one that is commonly associated with the modernist *aliran* in Indonesian socio-political life. Therefore, it is natural to assume that these movements will grow in a fertile land of West Java where the political outlook has always been modernist. However, there is a compelling reason to argue that this may not be the case. It is important to be mindful that in terms of religious practices West Java continues to be a traditionalist land, dotted with *salafiyah* (traditional) *pesantren*. In the word of West Java NU activists, these *pesantren* comprise a cultural NU, albeit not structural (card-carrying members of NU).<sup>53</sup> The presence of the movements influenced by external powers from Saudi Arabia and the Middle East without undergoing sufficient acculturation process has been met with varying degrees of resistance. All the *pesantren* leaders interviewed regard these movements as "the others", which may present an affront to the long-practised Islamic creeds of the West Javanese *pesantren*.<sup>54</sup> Like its national leadership, the West Java board of NU is at the forefront of efforts to stem the growth of new movements through several programmatic offensives. However, perhaps more importantly, there have been serious efforts to incorporate the cultural NU *pesantren* to the structural fold by a series of

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Mubarak and Yahya.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with K.H. A. Muiz Syihabuddin Masthuro, leader of the Pesantren Al Masthuriyah, Sukabumi, 8 February 2019.

engagement that are meant to sensitise the *pesantren* on the danger that new movements pose to the way of life of the West Javanese traditional *pesantren*.<sup>55</sup>

This effort is complemented from the political side. The election of Uu Ruzhanul Ulum as the Vice-Governor of West Java seems to provide a boost for Jokowi's campaign in the modernist province. Uu ran on the ticket of *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (United Development Party — PPP), an Islamic party which supported the candidacy of Jokowi in 2014 and 2019 elections. Uu is the grandson of K.H. Choer Affandi, an alumni of the Suffah Institute and a former DI/TII commander who was considered as the confidant of Kartosuwiryo. Upon receiving pardon from the government following the cessation of hostilities, he established Pondok Pesantren Miftahul Huda in Tasikmalaya. Miftahul Huda is the largest *pesantren* in West Java with nearly 2,000 branches all over Indonesia.<sup>56</sup> It commands significant influence on vote-getting in West Java, even during the New Order period. Uu is actively running the campaign for Jokowi in the province and in doing so seems to run counter to the political interests of the new *dakwah* movements. However, there are sceptics on the efficacy of Uu's move. There even seems to be lack of consensus in the elite circle of Miftahul Huda on whom to back in this year's elections.<sup>57</sup> Many also doubt the selection of K.H. Ma'ruf Amin as Jokowi's running mate in the 2019 presidential election as the right choice. Ma'ruf is regarded as lacking experience in the government, and as a social-conservative he is sometimes even seen as not getting full support from the NU circles where he hailed from. The selection of Ma'ruf as Jokowi's running mate has been the source of criticism coming from the opposition side, widely supported by the new *dakwah* movements. These sceptics appeared to have been proven right with the lack of progress made by Jokowi in the province in the 2019 election.

With the abovementioned recent developments in West Java, it will be critical to observe what will transpire in the future power play in the region. The last two elections have proven West Java as continuing to be a conservative province in Indonesia. But, of course, the trajectory will not stop at those elections. It will continue to be shaped and formed in the years ahead. Are we actually witnessing a further conservative deepening or are we looking at the juncture where the table is being turned in West Java? A continuous research enterprise to gauge the degree of conservatism in this important province is critically necessary. Being the largest province in Indonesia, developments in West Java will have a tremendous effect on Indonesia's future.

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with Mubarak and Yahya.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Ustadz Husnul Latif, Secretary of the Executive Board of Pesantren, Miftahul Huda, Tasikmalaya, 28 March 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Dr. Bachtiar.

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