

ULAMA AND POLITICS: A Study of Ulama and Santri's Participation in 2019 General Election in Aceh

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Abstract: The existence of *ulama* and *dayah* in political dynamics in Aceh has occurred for a long time, simultaneously with the development of Islam in Aceh. *Ulama* in Aceh has been playing as the main actors behind the successful political indicator in many phases, namely; empire phase, independence phase, new order (*orde baru*) phase until the phase of reformation. The doctrines played by *ulama* through religious languages have received great support from people in Aceh. This study employs the qualitative research approach with three main techniques of data collection, namely interview, observation and documentation. The result showed that there has been the participation from *ulama* and *santri dayah* in Aceh during 2019 General Election (GE). Such participation was reflected from the full support from *ulama* by calling up the political machine from *santri dayah* during 2019 GE, and deciding a political attitude by taking side on one of the candidates by holding a fundamental belief that Islam does not forbid *ulama* to participate in the political practice.

Abstrak: Eksistensi *ulama* dan *dayah* dalam dinamika perpolitikan di Aceh telah berlangsung sejak lama, seiring berkembangnya Islam di Aceh. Dari berbagai fase perkembangan perpolitikan di Aceh, dari fase kerajaan, fase kemerdekaan, fase orde baru hingga fase reformasi telah ditemukan pula indikator suksesnya politik di Aceh akibat permainan aktor utama yaitu *ulama*. *Ulama* melalui doktrin-doktrin yang disebarkan melalui bahasa-bahasa agama, sehingga mendapat dukungan penuh dari kalangan masyarakat di Aceh. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data tiga macam cara yaitu wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat partisipasi *ulama* dan *santri dayah* di Aceh pada Pemilu 2019. Partisipasi tersebut tampak terhadap dukungan penuh *ulama* dengan mengerahkan “mesin politik” yaitu *santri dayah* terhadap Pemilu 2019, dan mengambil sikap politik berpihak kepada salah satu calon dalam Pemilu 2019 dengan landasan utama berpijak bahwa Islam tidak melarang *ulama* berpolitik.

Keywords: ulama, santri, dayah, politics, general election, Aceh

Introduction

One of the most important factors in democracy is an election which is direct, free, true, and fair. Absolutely, the aim is to elect a leader in a more democratic way.¹ The development of democracy Indonesia certainly is closely related with the emerging political behavior and attitudes. Politics, is commonly viewed as a malignant wildwood, yet it is still worthy to get in, for “new players” or even old politicians.²

According to Putra Fadillah, political attitudes is one of the aspects of general attitudes, beside the political attitudes, there are still many attitudes, namely organizational attitudes, cultural attitudes, economical or consumer attitudes, religious attitudes and so forth. Political attitude encompasses internal responses, such as perceptions, behaviors, orientations and belief and real actions like voting, protesting, lobbying and others. Political perception is related to the description of current object; the information, explanation and object description or political situation with certain ways.³ Hence, by taking a political attitude will play in the middle of society and that will have the relation with the socio-political dynamics which is developing, and also with the political circumstances.⁴

In Indonesian context, political election which is related to the religion has been playing since the battle of Indonesian independence. In early national movement, there was *Sarekat Dagang Islam* which represented the Islamic community, whereas *Boedi Utomo* and *Indische Partij* which were secular. Similarly, in 1955, political parties competing in the election owned clear ideology, namely Islam, Christian and Secular. Then, in the following general election, Islamic party still use their Islamic ideology, and use the ideology of Pancasila as well, yet they had the basis of people from certain Islamic organizations.⁵

In Indonesian society, such asin Aceh, the so-called *ulama* are grouped into two main categories, namely the *ulama dayah* and *ulama non dayah*. Most of the people, regarded *ulama dayah* as a role models. *Ulama dayah* are references in practice all religious orders, even in circles certain exceed the permissible limits by religion. While the *ulama non dayah*,

¹Hendro Fadli Sari, “Perilaku Politik Elit & Hubungannya Dengan Kyai-Santri: Dukungan Politik Pondok Pesantren Mabaoul Ma’arif Denayar Jombang Terhadap Pilgub Jawa Timur 2013” (Universitas Airlangga, 2013), p. 1, <http://repository.unair.ac.id/id/eprint/16240>.

²Ikhwan Arifin, “Kiai Dan Politik: Studi Kasus Perilaku Politik Kiai Dalam Konflik Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) Pasca Muktamar II Semarang” (Universitas Diponegoro, 2008), 39.

³Putra Fadillah, *Partai Politik Dan Kebijakan Publik: Analisis Terhadap Kongruensi Janji Politik Partai Dengan Realisasi Produk Kebijakan Publik Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2003), 32.

⁴Syamsul Rijal, “Peran Politik Kiai Dalam Pendidikan Pesantren,” *TADRIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2014), 208.

⁵Nurlatipah Nasir, “Kyai Dan Islam Dalam Mempengaruhi Perilaku Memilih Masyarakat Kota Tasikmalaya,” *Jurnal Politik Profetik* 6, no. 2 (2015), 34, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24252/profetik.v3i2a2>.

havedifferent assessments. To mark the backgroundbehind the scholars, it can also be seenfrom the call that was patched by the community to them.⁶

The leader of Islamic boarding school (*pondokpesantren*) or in Acehnese called *dayah*, has been playing an essential role, more than a teacher. Not only play as the leader in his educational institutions, but also play as the spiritual leader in the society by leading and organizing spiritual activities and rituals.⁷As community leaders, *ulama* will also be present in various public dispute. In social life, conflicts and disputes cannot be avoided occurs, ranging from problems that occur in the household to heavy conflicts, all involving the *ulama* as peacemakers.⁸However, their involvement in their politics of educational institution was motivated by several factors. According to Ahmad Patoni, there were several factors that encouraged the leader of *dayah* or *kyai* participating in the political sector. First, the reason of theology which stated that there is no separation between religion (*ad-dîn*) and politics (*siyâsah*). Second, the reason for *da'wah*, as the media to socialize the Islamic values to people. Third, the factor of political network which is difficult to avoid that force *kyai* to get into it.⁹

Even since Indonesia declared its independence, many of them were appointed as the minister, Member of Parliament, ambassador, and high government officials. The development of *pesantren* depends completely on the personal ability of *kyai*.¹⁰¹¹¹²The great social influence owned by the leader of *pesantren* in society would not doubt his ability in the politic sector. Clifford Geerts in his study in Mojokerto gave the conclusion that the influence of *kyai* was on the implementation of function of cultural realtor. He argued that politically, *kyai* was unexperienced and unskillful, incapable in leading the modern society of nation properly. The involvement of *kyai* in political practice, so far has been the polemic in which one side of party endorsed *kyai* to participate in politic fighting against the opposite party that opposed *kyai* to participate. The first group assumed that *kyai* was

⁶Wahid Wahid, "Peran Ulama Dalam Negara Di Aceh," *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 17, no. 1 (2013): 86, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/madania.v17i1.2845>.

⁷Budiman Arif, "Partisipasi Ulama Dayah Dalam Partai Politik Lokal Pada DPC PA Dan PNA Kabupaten Aceh Selatan" (Universitas Syiah Kuala, 2017), 2.

⁸Julihafnani Nurlaila, "Pengaruh Fatwa Ulama Dayah Dalam Masyarakat Aceh," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 21, no. 2 (2019) : 98-99.

⁹Ahmad Patoni, *Peran Kiai Pesantren Dalam Partai Politik* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007), 153-56.

¹⁰Nurcholish Madjid, *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: Potret Sebuah Perjalanan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1997), 33.

¹¹Wasisto Raharjo Jati, "Ulama Dan Pesantren Dalam Dinamika Politik Dan Kultur Nahdlatul Ulama," *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 13, no. 1 (September 17, 2013): 95–11, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v0i0.2377>.

¹²Asfa Widiyanto, "Islam, Multiculturalism and Nation-Building in the Post-Truth Age: The Experience of Indonesia," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 14, no. 1 (June 23, 2019): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol14no1.1>.

included as the entity who owned the right and political aspiration similar to the rest of citizens. Meanwhile, the opposed group critiqued harshly, with the assumption that *kyai*'s involvement in politics would be more disadvantageous rather than benefits.¹³

This statement was related to the political reality that was considered by many people as "dirty". Hence, when *kyai* and *pesantren* contributed in the politics, they would be dragged in the "dirty" world. The different arguments about how the political role of *kyai* in society became a debatable issue and would never end. Each group would still stand up on their own arguments. Although there was prolonged controversy about *kyai*'s involvement in politics, indeed that could not be deprived. The intensity form of *kyai* in politics could be varied, both directly and indirectly, as could be seen through their involvement in the significant political moments such as GE, President Election or Local Election (*Pemilukada*).

In Aceh itself, the relation between *dayah* and local political dynamics has become an interested issue to be studied in the landscape of Islamic political study in Indonesia. An *ulama*¹⁴ in *dayah* was not only viewed as someone who involved in religious sector, but also as the maker or formers of socio-political power in society.¹⁵ That case could be reflected from the case of the local election in several areas where the candidates of head of district of province along with their vices were racing to gain the support from *dayahin* Aceh during the election. Moreover, *ulama dayahin* Aceh were often asked for their arguments by head of local areas in taking several important policies during their regime. The blessing, approval and opinions politically came from *kyai* were meant as the valid and official reference for head of local districts to run their government.

The involvement of *ulama* in a political party is not automatically build public confidence in the party. In fact on general election in 2019, from the four local political parties that enter the contest, only two parties can form a faction in parliament Aceh. Of the two remaining parties, one of them couldn't form a faction and must join other parties in order to form a faction. While other parties were unable to send their members to the Aceh parliament because the minimum number of votes obtained.¹⁶¹⁷

¹³I. Suprayogo, *Kyai Dan Politik: Membaca Citra Politik Kyai* (Malang: UIN Press Malang, 2009), 20.

¹⁴Abdul Manan and Rahmad Syah Putra, *Teungku Chik Dirundeng: Ulama & Pejuang Di Barat Selatan Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing, 2017), 147-48.

¹⁵Rahmad Syah Putra, "Islamic Education in Sri Ratu Tajul Safiatuddin's Period (Historical Review)," *Ar-Raniry: International Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2015): 120, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/jar.v2i2.7497>.

¹⁶Reni Kumalasari, "Relasi Agama Dan Politik Di Aceh Pasca Konflik Pemerintah Indonesia-Gerakan Aceh Merdeka," *Jurnal Adabiya* 23, no. 1 (February 27, 2021): 14, <https://doi.org/10.22373/adabiya.v23i1.7592>.

¹⁷Mutawalli Mutawalli, "Pergulatan Pemikiran Melawan Arus: Penyempalan Dalam Tubuh Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Muhammadiyah," *ULUMUNA* 11, no. 2 (December 31, 2007): 237-64, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v11i2.401>.

This study attempts to reveal the participation of *ulama* and *santri dayah* in politics, simultaneously elaborate the situation occurred recently in Aceh related to the attractive phenomenon in the 2019 GE. The phenomena appeared frequently was about the support during the political campaign and the vote in some targeted locations which was allegedly able to gain votes as many as possible. There was also an indication saying that the presence of *ulama* and *dayah* in political sector was considered as the part to actualize the noble purposes to mend and fix the “dirty politics”.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive analysis method with the qualitative approach. The method was aimed at examining some issues occurred in the field and to gain some contextual meanings with the current location in which this study was conducted. The use of this method was based on the study objectives which have been outlined that were; describing and analyzing *dayah* and politics in Aceh during 2019 GE. This study was conducted in district of Bireuen and south Aceh during six months, and the subject of this study was the leader of *dayah*, *santri dayah putra* (male students), *santri dayah putri* (female students), and some academicians. The techniques of data collection used in this study were interview, observation, and documentation. These three methods expectedly completed each other to obtain expected information. The author interpreted the data by analyzing and displaying the data in the form of descriptive sentences and the author then verified the data by drawing the conclusion.

Results and Discussion

Participation of Ulama and Santri in 2019 General Election

Having conducted the research, the result of study revealed that there are participations of *ulama* and *santri* during 2019 GE in Aceh. The participations were viewed as their full support to one of the candidates. According to Adjidar, in Islamic politics, it placed an important role as if the twin brother helping each other. In politics, Islam was also becoming the main foundation, like two sides of the same coin, each side is inseparable. The importance of political position even was put just one-line right below the prophecy. “The obedience toward the ruler of political position or leader of people (*ûlilamri*) must be given after the obedience toward Allah and his Rasul.”¹⁸ Furthermore, Adjidar mentioned that Muslims currently and nationally and in Aceh especially certainly need the possession of political position that could support to strengthen the implementation of *Syari’at Islam* in society through numerous policies and regulations that stand along with the Islamic concerns.

¹⁸Interview with A. Matsyah, the Director of Dayah Tinggi Islam Samudera Pase, Baktiya, South Aceh, 7 January 2020.

Political matters importantly, and today, in order to implement *Syari'at Islam* such as worship, law, *mu'amalah*, Islamic finance (economy), it needs a political leader who concerns about Islam. Hence, let us change the mindset, because the politics is not something disgusting, but the matter is how we can be religious in politics, not become political in religion.¹⁹

Why today's people consider that politics is something "dirty", even some people forbid it. Even, *Rasulullah SAW* once became the leader of country in Madinah, and becoming a leader in certain area is considered as the highest political position. Chronic disease attacking Muslim today is due to their blindness toward politics. In fact, long time ago in Aceh, when someone was called as the leader, he must be recognized as the *ulama*.²⁰

Similarly, Tu Bulqaini during interview discussing about the participation of *ulama* and *santri dayah* in politics, mentioned that *ulama* and *santri dayah* were much recommended to participate in politics practically. This aims for creating changes for nation.

In order to realize the alterations, it requires *ulama* to directly involve in political sector practically. When *ulama* and *teungku* stop participating in politics, so it might give the opportunity for uneducated or mafia to be in it. When mafia is already in politics, he/she might design and apply the regulations based on their interests. Why is our Republic currently not fine? That is because it is affected by the absence of *ulama* in politics.²¹

Tu Bulqaini also mentioned that *ulama* and *teungku dayah* were *fardhu kifayah* to be together in the political practice, because it seemed impossible to expect much change if we did not take part in it.²² This statement is accordant with Surah Ali Imran, verse 103, "Hold fast together to the cable of Allah and be not divided. Remember the blessing that Allah bestowed upon you". Therefore, Islam carried an important concept to the *ummat*, that was doing an affair or working together in *jama'ah* to ease finding the solutions, especially in religious affair and life. As mentioned in the Prophet's hadiths: "Must you stand together alongside *jama'ah* and be cautious of disunity" (H.R. *At-Tirmizi*). Similarly, another Prophet's hadiths: "Indeed, *satan* is a wolf to human, as well as wolf to a goat, it will eat the goat separated from the packs, so be careful and be together with *jama'ah*." (H.R. *Ahmad*).

Politics is highly needed in Islam and the involvement of *ulama* in it, with the purpose to fix the benefit for *ummat* from various life aspects. In order to create a successful Islamic politics, it needs a full support from entire people and *santri dayah*. This is accordant with what Umar Al-Khattab said: "Indeed there is no Islam without *jama'ah*, there is no *jama'ah* without the leadership, and there is no leadership without the obedience." (H.R. *Ahmad*).

¹⁹A. Matsyah.

²⁰A. Matsyah.

²¹Interview with Tu Bulqaini, general secretary of Himpunan Ulama Dayah Aceh, 15 March 2020.

²²Tu Bulqaini.

Hence, there is no doubt that nowadays, there are *santridayah*, *teungku*, *dayah* alumni, and *ulama dayah* begin to involve in political practice. They openly show their political affiliation, supporting a candidate of people's representative and the candidate of president and vice president in political competition in 2019 GE. This was for winning Muslims' prominence, and poor people, and purposively to keep the religion from destructive matters, so it took a political power. After that, political power would not endure to keep the religion if it was not attended by the people who understood about religion. That is why, it is necessary to appreciate the presence of *ulama* in political sector as someone who is expert in religion.

That statement was similarly uttered by al-Ghazalî's argument saying that religion and politics, world and here after is closely related. According to him, the purpose of human to be socialized in society is to fulfil the needs and seek merely for the joy of materials, rather than prepare themselves for more prosperous and immortal in hereafter. The world is for religion and religion is to order the world. Moreover, He formulated that religion is fundamental (*ashlu*) and political power is the guard. To keep religion from ruination, it needs a political power. Political power will not be able to keep the religion if there is no one who could understand the religion itself.

For al-Mawardi, sharia (religion) has a central position as a source of legitimacy to political reality, al-Mawardi tries to combine political reality with political ideals as implied by religion, and make religion as a means of justifying political propriety. Thus, al-Mawardi actually introduced a pragmatic approach in solving political problems when confronted with religious principles.²³

M. Yusuf A. Wahab also argued that between politics and *ulama*, they could not be separated in the life as nation and state. All this time in Aceh, there are many digressions caused by the absence of uneducated or pious person. Hence, *ulama* and *santri dayah* in politics are expected for the political party and the politicians should follow the guidance and directions of *ulama* which was admitted widely in society, the moral integrity and knowledge, and was recognized to be released from the political interests. Then, having recruited *ulama* and *santri dayah* in the political events, it would be expected that it could hack and resolve any forms of political digressions, and embed the values of *ulama* in souls of politicians. So, *ulama* is not a symbol, but a religious concept implementation by embedding the *ulama* values, so that they can be the fortress for defending from any political digression, and is not oriented on the personal interests, but all of it is for people's benefits, and not to be disunited.²⁴

Islam does not forbid *ulama* to be involved in politics. The presence of *ulama* in the

²³Rashda Diana, "Al-Mawardi Dan Konsep Kenegaraan Dalam Islam," *TSAQAFAH* 13, no. 1 (May 31, 2017), p. 167, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v13i1.981>.

²⁴Interview with H.M.Y. A. Wahab, the leader of Dayah Babussalam Al-Aziziyah Jeunieb, Bireuen, 11 February 2020.

political scene is to maintain *âmar ma'rûf nahî mungkar*, we want to uphold the justice and destroy the tyranny. The values of equity should be fought, politics itself becomes the power to fix the people's benefit. Hence, the point of the preaching (*da'wah*) is Islamic politics by referring to *Fiqh Siyasaah*.²⁵

Ulama and *santri dayah* in Aceh has directly participated in 2019GE, and as the main foundation is to take over the throne or authority which so far has been diverged from the Islamic teachings. Therefore, the presence of *ulama* in the political scene in Aceh expectedly can improve people's condition and to wipe out the tyranny from the ruler. This is in line of what is explained in *Fiqh Siyasaah*, in which the Prophet used the term of politics (*siyasaah*) to organize *ummat*, pay attention to the condition of Muslims by disappearing the irresponsible decisions from the ruler and destroy the evil of infidels upon them. Politics in Islam also functions to organize the society by forbidding and ordering people to follow the Islamic laws.²⁶²⁷²⁸²⁹

The interests from Muslims toward political parties was not only caused by the ability of political parties in keeping and defending the interests of Islam, but it was more because of the typology of Muslims in viewing the relationship between politics and Islam. Another purpose of *ulama* joining the politics is to preserve the prosperous life of the society, so that *dayah* and *santri* could take a direct role in winning the political candidate. Those main factors are the vision and missions which were considered in line with the religious interests that have been fought by *ulama* and *santri*. So, it was reasonable that *ulama* has taken the opportunity in political scene, for instance one of Aceh charismatic *ulama*, Waled Nuruzzahri Yahya or also known as Waled Nu who clearly showed his support on the president and vice president candidate Joko Widodo (Jokowi)-Ma'ruf Amin in 2019 GE. He, as *ulama*, persuaded all *santri* and people of Aceh to vote for Jokowi and Ma'ruf Amin as the new President and Vice President of Republic of Indonesia for 2019-2024. Waled Nu also said that if we see in the religious context, Jokowi has been qualified as the fair leader, not committing the adultery, being drunk and killing people. That was an important key. According to Abdul Hamid in his book "*Umat Bertanya Waled Menjawab* (People ask, Waled answers)". Waled Nu mentioned that the choice made by him in political practice was not consciously happened. He participated in the 2019 GE caused by several

²⁵H. M. Y. A. Wahab.

²⁶Ridwan Hasan, "Peranan Dan Sikap Transformasi Politik Ulama dalam Menghadapi Pemilu 2014 Di Aceh," *Millah* 12, no. 2 (October 25, 2016), p. 511, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.volXli.iss2.art10>.

²⁷Fauzi Ismail and Abdul Manan, *Syariat Islam di Aceh: Realitas dan Respon Masyarakat* (Banda Aceh: Ar-Raniry Press, 2014).

²⁸Abdul Manan, *Teungku Inong & Tradisi Pengajian di Aceh*, ed. Rahmad Syah Putra (Banda Aceh: Lembaga Naskah Aceh, 2017).

²⁹Alfitri Alfitri, "Bureaucratizing Fatwâ in Indonesia: The Council of Indonesian Ulama and Its Quasi-Legislative Power," *Ulumuna* 24, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 367-97, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v24i2.412>.

reasons, namely rules, recommendation, and religious values. In Islam, a leader is a final result and fundamental. The hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah & Abu Daud Prophet said, “If you are making a journey in group, you need to decide one of them as the *imam* (the leader of group)”.³⁰³¹

Referring to *hadiths* above, a leader is positioned in the highest position in the society of Islam. In a structure of organization or human body, leader is like the head. He has a strategically role in organizing the pattern (*manhaj*) and movement (*harakâh*). Leadership in Islam means *al-îmâmah*, *al-râisah*, or *îmarah*. *Al-îmarah* is rooted from the word *imam*, *ar-râisah* is derived from the word *raîs*, and *îmarah* is derived from *âmîr*, which all mean leader. One that differs all postulates above is the scope of the authority or control. *Ar-râisah* is used in any leadership, such as leader in institutions, Islamic schools, formal and non-formal institutions. *Al-îmâmah* is only used for the leadership for country and kingdom. So, there are countries called as *emirates* led by the *âmîr*. The name for the highest authority maker in a country is rarely found. Therefore, electing a leader in General Election becomes something compulsory.³²

The leadership in Islam is a leadership that is based on the law of Allah. So, a leader must be an individual who knows much about Islamic laws. After the Prophet and *imam* or *khalifah*, the leader of Muslim must be held by a *fakih* who is qualified upon the requirements of Islamic laws and is able to deliver *fatwa*. After that, he is required to establish a council of *fiqh* expert to respond for all the needs of Muslims as mentioned by Imam Al-Mawardi in his great work “*Ahkam Sulthaniyah*”.³³

From the candidates of president and vice president elected in 2019’s election, Waled NU’s voting for Jokowi-Ma’ruf certainly was from the track that which one has a deeper understanding toward religion and has an undoubtable track record as the religionist. According to Waled NU, Ma’ruf Amin is an *ulama* that no one can doubt his role. He is the grandson from Syekh Nawawi Bantani and received the trust to lead the highest *ulama* institution in Indonesia, that is MUI (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*). He also becomes one of the important figures in the greatest Islamic organization in the world, that is Rais Syuriah PBNU. Meanwhile, Jokowi is the sample of good and polite citizen, hard worker and used to work at Aceh Tengah, and embarked his furniture business. Becoming a president could not be achieved in simple and instant way. Jokowi is the president who has a close friendship with *ulama* figures, so that the partner candidate Jokowi-Ma’ruf later expectedly

³⁰Interview with Waled Nu, one of *ulama* in Bireuen Regency, 12 February 2020.

³¹Abdul Hamid M. Jamil, *Umat Bertanya Waled Menjawab: Pemikiran Teungku H. Nuruzzahri*, vol. 2 (Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing, 2019), 11.

³²M. Jamil, *Umat Bertanya*, 12.

³³M. Jamil, *Umat Bertanya*, 13.

would be synchronized in their work, especially in terms of the harmony amongst people with varied religion in Indonesia. Besides, Ma'ruf Amin once became the Presidential Consideration Board in communion of religion sector.³⁴

Therefore, during the presidential campaign in 2019 GE, one of the issues emerged by the Waled NU was related to the Islamic values adhered by Jokowi and Ma'ruf Amin which no need to be questioned any more. He often conveyed it through religious lecture, and he persuaded people to use their sanity and change their way of thinking. One of the examples was about being avillage head,³⁵ as follow:

Pilehsoe yang seunang and ikoetsoe yang meunang (Electing those who are happy and follow those who win). In my political context, I have got useful advices in my life. I embarked my small business in DayahMudiMesra, Samalanga with Abon (Hasanoel Bashry), the political power in Indonesia was dominantly ruled by Golkar (one of political parties in Indonesia). People were helpless due to 31-year regime of president of Soeharto. Until one day before the local election, there was one legislative candidate supported by Abon from Golkar party. Abon asked the teacher council to follow his instruction. Yet, there was someone who was opposite with Abon. He saw that Abon did not show a firm standpoint because Abon supported the opposed and considerably bad party. Then, he maintained the campaign to confuse the voters to support the candidate coming from PPP party, one of the Islamic parties. Abon was not happy toward the attitude of that teacher; Abon trusted him as an educated figure. Eventually, the glamour of his knowledge was faded away and gone until today.³⁶Honoring the figure of teacher is the most important factor in guaranteeing students' success in teaching and learning process. Teacher is like a doctor for the sick people, if the suggestions are ignored, so he will take the consequences, the pain and sorrow. In the traditionally educational culture, showing respect to the teacher is permanent rule. There is a belief for *ureung meudagang*, if there is no approval or bless from the teacher, they will be unlucky and faithless.³⁷

Moreover, Waled Nu mentioned that the reason he fully supported the partner of Jokowi-Ma'ruf in 2019 GE was because Waled Nu had a close relationship with KH. Ma'ruf Amin as his senior when they were at Jombang, East Java. Academically and intelligently, K.H Ma'ruf Amin was one of the teachers of Waled Nu. Therefore, long time before he was trusted by many people to be the candidate of vice president, Waled Nu had frequently met, maintained *shilaturrahmi*, discussed and learned with him. As the student, Waled Nu had to help his teacher in any circumstances related to the policies determined by him, including his willingness to be the vice president.

So, it was reasonable for Waled Nu to be directly involved as the supporter and stood

³⁴Interview with Waled Nu, one of *ulama* in Bireuen Regency, 12 February 2020.

³⁵M. Jamil, *Umat Bertanya Waled Menjawab: Pemikiran Teungku H. Nuruzzahri*, 15.

³⁶M. Jamil, *Umat Bertanya*, 28.

³⁷Interview with Waled Nu, one of *ulama* in Bireuen Regency, 12 February 2020.

as the campaigner in Aceh, even he was willing to attend every activity and provide the place for Jokowi-Ma'ruf to do the campaign, started from outdoor for people of Aceh, to the several recitation places. Even Waled Nu came with his own personal vehicle, filled gas with his own money, and did not receive a single penny for campaign from anyone. Not because the temptation of getting a certain position, authority, and money. Yet, all he had done was by hoping the bless of Allah for the good sake of people in Indonesia, especially in Aceh.³⁸

The role of *ulama* is not simply understanding and digging the messages in *al-Qur'an* and *Hadiths*, but also thinking laws that could be applied in the society; implementing the law which seemed to be difficult accepted by people who just knew about religion or people who just converted to Islam. That kind of situation is what *ulama* want to achieve, for improving the quality of people's life. Both *ulama* and *ra'is* (leader) had been closely related that must not be separated. *Ulama* must always stand by alongside the leader; reminding for committed mistakes, motivating when stuck, and giving solutions of problems faced. So that, it can be said that the role of *ulama* or other religious figures is to be the leader's advisor by making the concepts for the sake of community.

The purposes that were wanted to be achieved by religious figures through political practice in order to fix people's lives should be appreciated. In fact, the alterations would be prodigious when *ulama* become the advisor of the leader rather than becoming the leader themselves. The reason is because, in realizing the good alterations in community, it requires not only the knowledge of religion, but also the skill and ability to design an Islamic governmental system. If *ulama* showed inability in change the system, then all the inputs and bright ideas would be less absorbed and received by one or two people standing by us. Finally, those ideas would be used for nothing. Meanwhile, all the systems are tightly depending on the central government (president). If the central government does not approve, then the expected ideas cannot be implemented. Besides, if we see the current political context, there are few people who understand about religion. If someday there will be many Islamic scholars sitting in important roles in the government, then it is somehow a good chance for *ulama* to be the leader of *ummat*.

Besides Waled Nu, it was also found other *ulama* who actively participated in politics in Aceh during 2019 GE, namely Abu Tumin. He confessed his caring and love to President Jokowi *I love Jokowi. I send my prayer for a future great leader for Indonesia. Only Allah knows who will be the good one,*" Abu Tu Min said when welcoming Hasto and the company in district of Bireuen. The participation of *ulama dayah* in 2019 GE absolutely had attracted many people. Consequently, many people coming from various background joined actively in General Election and visited *ulama* for their approval and bless to support them in the political journey.

³⁸Waled Nu.

Another example, similar case experienced by Abu Hasanoel Bashry known as Abu Mudi. He also participated actively in political practice when the researcher personally met him at a recitation moment of conceiving the *Kitab Tuhfatul Muhtaj* before thousands of teachers, alumni and people located in Mesjid Pho Teumeureuhom, Dayah Mudi Mesra Samalanga complex, District of Bireuen.³⁹ On that occasion, Abu Mudi stated that:

The people and community of *dayah* should take part in every sector, including in the government and political sector, as the member of Executive, Legislative, or another role. This is for actualizing the spirit of *tafaqquh fiddin* in working and teaching as suggested by the late Abon Aziz.⁴⁰

From the statement above, it could be concluded that, Abu Mudi had ordered all the *dayah* alumni to take part in every sector of life, including in the political scene. Hence, it became the sign for all *ulama* or other religious figures must actively participate in political practice. Abu Mudi also directly instructed through his religious lecture for the *dayah* alumni to support and assist all the sectors in *dayah* who take part in political sectors, and all *dayah* alumni for not being anti-politics and not being too fanatic toward it, so that many kinds and educated people would be in many sectors and they would not be slaved by their own lust and greed. The audience in that occasion were also persuaded to fully support one candidate during 2019 General Election.

For 2019, we voted both for national as the candidate of member of people's representative (DPR-RI Election Area 2) from Gerindra (political party) is Ruslan M Daud and Tgk. Fakhrurrazi Hamzah as the candidate for DPD RI that we supported and helped for winning them.⁴¹

Moreover, Abu Mudi also mentioned several names of other *alumni dayah* who participated as the candidate of the member of legislative for DPR in district and province level, DPRK and DPRA to be helped to win them, while saying one advice in the Acehese language. "*Cap bakbinteh, labangbakpapeun, kiban yang Abu kheunbeksagaitatuka.*" (Brand stamped on the wall, the nail is stick on the board, what Abu has said will never be changed), Abu said it while smiling. That saying also became the sign for the doctrine for turning back from *ulama*.⁴²

Meanwhile in coastal areas in southwest of Aceh, Syeikh Haji Amran Waly as the leader of *Dayah Darul Ihsan*, Labuhan Haji, South Aceh and as the leader of *Majelis Pengkajian*

³⁹ The recitation was spread from many social media; WhatsApp, YouTube, and others.

⁴⁰ Mandate from Abu Hasanoel Bashry also known as Abu Mudi in the video clip of recitation, in which in that video, Abu Mudi declared his support in front of thousands of alumni and followers attending the celebration of *Haul* Abon Aziz on February 14th, 2019. He also persuaded all alumni of Mudi Mesra Samalanga to support Ruslan M. Daud and asked all followers led by the alumni of Mudi Mesra in each area in Aceh.

⁴¹ Mandate from Abu Hasanoel Bashry or also known as Abu Mudi in recitation

⁴² Interview with Abu Mudi, the leader of Dayah MUDI Mesra, 10 February 2020.

Tauhid Tasawuf (MPTT) in South East Asia, also took an action in the politics by supporting one of the candidates in 2019 General Election. Even, in every *dzikir* occasion (*Rateb Siribee*) of Syeikh Haji Amran Waly also persuaded thousands of the followers for the votes to succeed the 2019 GE by recommending one name. For example, when the visit from Abdullah Puteh (former governor of Aceh) to *Dayah Darul Ihsan* to ask for the support as the candidate of senator/member of Regional Representative Council of Republic of Indonesia from Aceh, Syeikh Haji Amran Waly welcomed him positively, in fact there were many names that previously came to him. Yet, Abuaya acted normally.

Even, the Sheikh welcomed Abdullah Puteh by preparing thousands of followers of *Dayah Darul Ihsan*. Abdullah Puteh tried to get along with all the followers by doing *zikir siribee*. After *zikir*, the Syeikh allowed Abdullah Puteh to deliver a speech for saying his intention to move forward to Senayan as the senator candidate from Aceh. Having received the permission to deliver his intention, Abdullah Puteh directly asked for the support from followers from there, even as a charismatic *ulama* in Aceh and in South East Asia, Abu Amran Waly convinced his followers to vote for Abdullah Puteh on the following April 17th.

When the researcher interviewed Syeikh Amran Wali about his reason to support Abdullah Puteh to become one of the senators from Aceh at Senayan, Syeikh Haji Amran argued that Abdullah Puteh always became one of the figures that always defended and fought for Muslims in Aceh. So that, the Sheikh felt convinced to fully support Abdullah Puteh openly. This was not the first time the Sheikh supported Abdullah Puteh. During the election of governor of Aceh in 2000-2004 period, the Sheikh also supported him. It seemed that they both have maintained a strong emotional relationship.⁴³

From several examples above, the conclusion that could be drawn was the advices from *ulama* served as the guide in social life essence and also in politics. This because the *ulama* were considerably accurate and proper in analyzing something. It certainly was agreed that *penutoh* from *ulama* becomes the foundation of people in Aceh to take action even during the political party of 2019 GE. The recruitment for *ulama* toward the general election became the strong prove that the role of *ulama* in politics was very significant, not only in the spiritually religious affair but also in the socio-politics.

When they were asked by the researcher about their reasons to participate in politics, *ulama* and *santri dayah* believed that it was important for adding the role of *ulama* in politics, and Islam would never ban it. *Ulama* becomes the teachers and role models for *ummat* in improving the quality of their attitudes. Waled Nu confirmed that Islam did not just encourage people to do praying, fasting, performing hajj and alms, or maintaining

⁴³Interview with Sheikh A. Waly, the leader of *Dayah Darul Ihsan* in Labuhan Haji, South Aceh, 10 February 2020.

the relationship between human and God. Islam came in every sector of human's lives. In political sector, Islam advised to do it properly, without intimidating and bribing. *Ulama's* presence here is to erase the intimidation, fraud, and bribe in politics by offering the solutions. This is what we call as politics of *ulama*.⁴⁴

Moreover, Waled Nu explained the decadence of morals occurred in Aceh society, especially in adolescence. The negative spread of immoral anywhere has forced the religious figures to nominate themselves as the policy makers. The aim was to nobly fix people's morals, teenagers and overthrow the immoral foundations standing on the land of Porch of Mecca. Therefore, it is important to fix it through a political participation of *ulama* and *santri dayah*. Their participations were needed as the political machine in order to uphold the truth of Islam.⁴⁵

Similarly, Abu Mudi mentioned that *ulama* and *santri dayah* in politics, contextually in 2019 General Election was necessarily done as a manifestation to re-actualize the truth of Islam in Aceh. We could not let the control of this country would be held by immoral person. Besides, politics in Islam is closely related with the nation. The first Islamic country, *Madinah* as a momentous history of Islam. War and the contribution in politics became the earliest lesson to create a country, received by the people in *Madinah* during the first government in first year of *Hijriah*. Hence, the role of *ulama* was to save Islam as the religion of Allah to be enforced in the universe.⁴⁶

Additionally, Abu Mudi said that the existence of a country (government) became the first principle to necessitate *ulama* to be involved in politics. Without a country, Islam would be out of the line, so that it required to defend country in the context of politics or "siyasa" for every single Muslim. This context was also analogized (to be *qiyas*) with Imam during prayer congregation. There is a unity of *shaf* (line), the movement of *raka'at*, *takbir* and *salam* which were done systematically and well-organized, led by *imam*. The prayer could not be proceeded without the presence of *Imam*, vice versa. Therefore, Politics in Islam is considered as *jihad* on the path of Allah done together by defending the religion of Allah and Islam to provide a true fair leader.⁴⁷

Therefore, from the arguments above, it can be concluded that if we carefully analyze deeply about the concept of participation of *ulama* and *santri dayah* in 2019 GE, *ulama* in Aceh who participated to be involved in the political practice were motivated to elevate *Kalimatullah*: defending and preserving the truth of Islam as the manifestation of the kingdom of Allah in this universe, honoring and standing up Muslim from the oppression and betrayal from despotic people.

⁴⁴Interview with Waled Nu, one of *ulama* in Bireuen Regency, 12 February 2020.

⁴⁵Interview with Waled Nu, one of *ulama* in Bireuen Regency, 12 February 2020.

⁴⁶Waled Nu.

⁴⁷Interview with Abu Mudi, the leader of Dayah MUDI Mesra, 10 February 2020.

This was also called for allowing politics in Islam and for *ulama* by outlining the motivations and intentions aimed for the politics itself, that is, fighting against the ruthlessness, and to respect the place of worship, to guarantee the freedom, to erase the defamation and hoax and to guarantee the freedom of everyone to adhere and perform their believes and religion,⁴⁸ based on the Qur'an(9: 13): “Will ye not fight a folk who broke their solemn pledges, and purposed to drive out the messenger and did attack you first? What! Fear ye them? Now Allah hath more right that ye should fear Him, if ye are believers.”

Abuya Amran Waly added that the involvement of *dayahin* politics in very important. This was for presenting the leaders in Aceh who were obedient and righteous based on the Islamic teaching. Without any support from *santridayah* and society, all the noble purposes would be hard to achieve. The political fundamentals done by *ulama* was also based on the Islamic laws and Islamic teachings, in which the tenets and values of Islam could not be applied perfectly and completely (*kaffah*) without the presence of proper leader. So, politics run by *ulama* served to carry the trust from Allah SWT to perform the religion, and to preserve Islam.⁴⁹

Santri dayah were very obliged to participate actively in succeeding 2019 General Election in various ways, based on the background and roles played by *ulama*. There were several models from the involvement of *dayah* occurred recently, among others were: First, involved actively as practitioner and political actors as the member of organization and activist in particular political party. That kind of model directly involved the elite of *dayah*, those were, *ulama*, *Teungku dayah*, their families and seniors who maintained a harmony relation with *ulama*. The direct involvement gave greater political opportunities for elite *dayah* to reach a better political position. That position expectedly could provide political space to fight for the people's interests and *dayah*, because those political positions would determine the policies and programs for development.

For instance, Teuku Raja Keumangan in Nagan Raya nominated himself as the candidate for legislative member in people's representative in Aceh won the 2019 General Election for the following 10 areas (Aceh Jaya, Aceh Barat, Nagan Raya and Simeulue). If it was analyzed well, there was indication and powerful influence from religion factor, especially *ulama dayah*, that was because he is the grandson from Abu Habib Seunangan in Peuleukang, East Seunangandistrict, Nagan Raya.⁵⁰

Another example, it could be seen from the victory reached by Ruslan M. Daud as

⁴⁸Abdul Manan and Rahmad Syah Putra, “Hoax ‘Image-Building,’ and Democracy in Aceh,” in *Proceedings of the 19th Annual International Conference on Islamic Studies, AICIS 2019* (Jakarta: AICIS, 2019), 1–10.

⁴⁹Interview with Sheikh A. Waly, the leader of Dayah Darul Ihsan in Labuhan Haji, South Aceh, 10 February 2020.

⁵⁰Interview with Teuku Raja Keumangan, the member of House of Representative, 25 January 2020.

the member of legislative from PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa) in 2019 GE. His success was also because the main factor that he had a closely emotional relationship with charismatic *ulama* from Aceh, Abu Mudi, Waled Nu and other *ulama*. This statement was also confirmed by Waled Nu in the interview, in which the victory of Ruslan M. Daud was one of the proves of successful political attitudes played by *ulama* and *dayah* in Aceh, and by fully supporting and recommending to vote for himself as one of the members in legislative member. This success expectedly could cooperate with *ulama* and other stakeholders in Aceh and in central government in Jakarta to gain the aspiration from *ulama* and for the national development.⁵¹

Another statement was said by Ruslan M. Daud in the interview in which he nominated as the candidate of legislative member for the support from *ulama* and *santri dayah* in Aceh. He really thanked to the *ulama* in Aceh, especially Abu Mudi, Waled Nu and other groups of *ulama* and *dayah*. Absolutely, his first assignment is to accommodate and struggle for the aspiration from *ulama* and *dayah* in Aceh.⁵² Under the command of *ulama*, initiating various religious activities that were benefit by political party to socialize his political visions. In many cases, *dayah* held many religious events supported by the certain political power involving Muslims massively. This was reflected from the management of *ulama* meeting held by *dayah*. The activity under the theme of *shilaturrahmi* was supported by a politician of a party and also the son-in-law of *ulama* and the leader of *dayah*. One of the examples was the celebration of Birthday of Prophet Muhammad, the death of Charismatic *ulama* in Aceh, *dzikr akbar*, and so forth.

The political legitimacy often manifested in the form of political approval in a party or certain political figure that did not come from the *dayah* scope. This could be seen from the presence of numerous candidates of legislative member to *dayah*, started from district or from provincial level, either from local party in Aceh or from national party. This factor was considered important because in ideological and traditional political system, religious legitimacy was highly needed, and the reputation of a good Muslim, obedient and maintain a harmony relation with *ulama* and to decide the electability of political practitioner. Accordingly, *dayah* often received “order” political visits, candidate of legislative member, vice president, or communities of political party that are in the battle. All of this was done to gain the popularity and reputation as good Muslim amongst the religious community or in *dayah* in Aceh. This was necessary to gain the trust from society, because the *fatwa* of an ‘*alim* that they believed in meaning one” decision word” that could not be revised and compared.⁵³

Senior Researcher Populi Centre Afrimadona mentioned that, *ulama* has a powerful

⁵¹Interview with Waled Nu, one of *ulama* in Bireuen Regency, 12 February 2020.

⁵²Interview with Ruslan M. Daud, the member of House of Representative, 15 February 2020.

⁵³Saidin Ernas and Ferry Muhammadsyah Sirefar, “Dampak Keterlibatan Pesantren dalam Politik: Studi Kasus Pesantren di Yogyakarta,” *Kontekstualita* 25, no. 2 (2010): 207.

influence in politics, especially in 2019 GE; the election of legislative, President and Vice President. According to him, “Interesting enough, a factor of leader and religious figures are a significant factor to initiate a remarkable movement.” He added that the phenomena of religious figures contributing in gathering the support which have been happening for a long time ago until today. “Because religion still becomes a decisive factor. Our consequent thinking is still in the identity frame and all things related to the religion are still dominant in our people’s thinking.”

This Researcher Centre also once conducted a survey themed Religious Centric Voting by using the data of Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS) showing that in 2007 to 2015, there have been significant changes toward the factor of religion in electing a leader. “We see the religious participants significantly increase the possibility of someone to tend to choose a leader based on their religion. This is happening because society is facilitated by the several religious activities held in their environment. The religious programs like recitation and so on do affect.”⁵⁴

Because of that, when Muslims perceive that taking part in politics is the same with the taking part in Islam, that character will push the arrival of religious figures as the political figures. By having a political party is the also same with choosing Islam, and then, the obedience in politics means being obedient in performing the teaching of Islam. While the topology of charismatics assume that Muslims choose a political party, follow someone’s attitude and behavior admired in his surroundings. So that, the involvement of *dayah* in politics, really has proven that every *ulama* and *dayah* have their own ways.

Conclusion

There was the participation of *ulama* and *santri dayah* in 2019 GE in Aceh. The participation appeared in their full support to one of the candidates in 2019 GE. The motivation that encouraged *ulama* and *santri dayah* to participate in politics was their main foundation that Islam would never forbid *ulama* to participate in politics. The existence of *ulama* and *santri dayah* became a magnet in the event of 2019 GE, not because of the massive number of *santri* and its popularity but because of the powerful influence of *ulama* in society. *Ulama dayah* became the locomotive to carry people’s voice. *Dayah* was not simply seen by the votes of *santri* in it, but their social influences. *Dayah* led by charismatic *ulama* along with their *santri* became the first target of Muslim basis in Aceh, because the influence of *ulama* would affect the choice of *santri*. The cultural relationship between *santri dayah* and *ulama* was basically between teachers and students in *tarekat* (sufi order), which was *sami’na waatha’na* (listening and following). The honor and obedience

⁵⁴Ayo Bandung, “Peneliti: Ulama Cukup Berpengaruh Dalam Politik Termasuk Pemilu 2019,” Ayo Bandung, 2019, <https://ayobandung.com/read/2019/04/12/49549/peneliti-ulama-cukup-berpengaruh-dalam-politik-termasuk-pemilu-2019>.

of students to the teacher was an essential component. When *ulama* had decided their option, so it could be predicted that all *santri* also decided the same. There of, the influence of *ulama dayah* in politics was very influential, especially in succeeding the activities of *santri*'s political participations. Therefore, it was unquestionable in politics, many leaders had maintained a close relation with *ulama*, and even the leaders appointed them as their personal advisor. That was because the spiritual power of *ulama* that owned the followers were expected to protect and preserve their dominance. The presence of *ulama* in governmental environment was expected to bring the blessing, and as important as being able to strengthen the leaders' legitimacy in the society.

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