

Filsafat, Etika, dan Kearifan Lokal

untuk Konstruksi Moral Kebangsaan

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Siti Syamsiyatun / Nihayatul Wafiroh:

Filsafat, Etika, dan Kearifan Lokal untuk Konstruksi Moral Kebangsaan

Philosophy, Ethics and Local Wisdom in the Moral Construction of the Nation

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CONTENTS

Kata Sambutan	7
<i>Dr Siti Syamsiyatun</i>	
Pendahuluan	9
<i>Yahya Wijaya</i>	
Dimension of Pancasila Ethics in Bureaucracy: Discourse of Governance	15
<i>Haryo Kunto Wibisono, Linda Novi Trianita, Sri Widagdo</i>	
Filsafat sebagai Perisai dalam Menghadapi: Dekadensi Moral	41
<i>M Ied Al Munir</i>	
Cyberethics: Blogging Ethics Bagi Komunitas Cyber	59
<i>Dewi Puspasari</i>	
Business Ethics Dilemma: Menentukan Kebijakan “Hadiah dan Hiburan” di Indonesia	75
<i>Kemas Fachruddin</i>	
Kesetaraan Gender Orang Pedalaman: Mengungkap Kearifan Lokal Etika Perkawinan Orang Baduy	95
<i>Kiki Muhammad Hakiki</i>	
Towards a Theology of Forgiveness: An Indonesian Catholic Perspective on Responding to Interreligious Conflicts	127
<i>B Agus Rukiyanto</i>	
The Ethics of Enculturation: The Post-Colonial Perspective on Christian Mission in Indonesia	147

Munawir Aziz

Reproduksi Kloning: Ditinjau dari Etika dan Hukum 163

Yulia Fauziyah

Radikalisasi Agama: Kekerasan atas Nama Agama? 177

Willibald Koban

The Use of Religious Issues in Local Head Election (Pilkada): A Lesson from Bengkulu 187

Zubaedi

Membangun Nilai-Nilai Budaya dalam Pendidikan: Inspirasi dari Novel "Sang Pemimpi" Karya Andrea Hirata 207

Rahmani Abdi

Contributors 221

THE USE OF RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN LOCAL HEAD ELECTION (PILKADA): A LESSON FROM BENGKULU

Zubaedi

Abstract:

This article describes the use of religious issues in the election of heads of local government (*Pilkada*). It shows that the local voters are susceptible to the use of religious idioms in practical politics. Their choice is determined not only by the capability of each candidate in promoting his vision and ideas but also by shared religious primordialism. Primordialism is used to attract potential voters by involving religious leaders, publishing religious books such as *Surat Yasin* books decorated with the pictures of candidates, and participating in religious forums such as Islamic gatherings, *istighathah*, and prayer meetings as campaign places.

This involvement is to build political imagination in the name of religion so that candidates are able to arouse people's emotion and persuade them to give their votes without rational consideration. Religious sentiment influences the success of candidates without having to do with political parties.

The article concludes that the use of primordial sentiments by the involvement of religious authorities in local elections will have counterproductive results. The mass of voters will be divided socially and politically, and primordial disparities will result eventually in ethnocentrism. Such consequences should not be accepted. Otherwise, conflicts will be unavoidable.

Keywords primordialism, sentiment, and symbolic interaction

Introduction

Law No. 32 of 2004 on local government changed the system for electing heads of local government (*Pilkada*).¹ Previously, governors or regents (*bupati*) were elected by a local legislative assembly (*DPRD*).² In the new system, people vote directly for their local governors and regents (*bupati*) or mayors (*walikota*).³ The system manifests the development of democracy and democratisation in Indonesia. With local autonomy, local government election has become a medium for decentralising the democratic system. Direct local government election is expected to stimulate new powers supporting democratic processes in local provinces. It is expected that new leaders who are able to produce fresh ideas for the development of their local region and with a high political commitment to people will emerge.

It is argued that direct election of local leaders is better than, and even corrective to, indirect election, which was considered as being fraught with corruption, collusion and nepotism (*KKN*). In the old system, money politics and collusion were common among the political elites. Conversely, direct election is considered to produce local governments with strong popular support. It also creates high accountability and responsibility of local government and better public services. Good governance will be realised since people participate directly in policy making processes (Sugiarto, 2007). Direct local government election is a precondition for local government and political equality at a local level.

However, implementing direct local elections does not automatically materialise substantial changes in the traditional political system. It is still fraught with primordial issues: tribal, religious, racial and inter-group (called SARA).⁴ This can clearly be seen in local election cam-

¹ *Pilkada*: Pemilihan Kepala Daerah (local government election).

² *DPRD*: Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (local assembly).

³ See the rules and regulations of direct local head election as set up in articles 56-118 in Constitution No. 32 of 2004 (Megawati, 2004: 33-63).

⁴ SARA: ethnic group, social group, and religion.

paigns. Success in gaining people's votes depends not only on the candidates' capability of offering concepts and visions to people but also on their sharing their religious orientation. The masses may even have their own options, unconnected with political parties or political loyalties. In some places, political parties do not greatly influence the party candidates. The people elect their own leaders based on religious sentiment and ethnicity.

In practice, local government election is not only an electoral process but also a political process in which democracy is the basis of struggle. Primordialism is an effective means to attract people in political processes. Drawing on this primordialism, candidates for local leadership consolidate their power to build political imagination in the name of tribes, religion, races, and intergroup. By playing on people's emotions, they mobilise their support without taking rationality into consideration. Local political elites who have no basis of religious mass organisation often ask Muslim religious elites for support.

Individual as well as institutional support mobilisations are undertaken with the assumption that individual rationality will fall in line with institutional rationality. There is an assumption that the political choice of individuals is similar to that of religious leaders (Purwoko, 2006). The extraordinary engagement of religious authorities and the use of religious idioms will be counterproductive (Asmuni, 2005), however, dividing voters into separated social and political groups. It will lead to primordial conflicts and primordialism.

This use of religious issues reflects immature political behaviour. The use of religious issues in rational democracy is in fact irrelevant, especially in the relation of Muslims and non-Muslims. The use of Quranic verses in politics is aimed at getting votes, not at explaining the meaning of those verses (Abdullah et al., 2008: 227). The understanding of Quranic verses in this context is basically exclusive since it intends to

uphold certain political camps. A certain understanding seems intolerant to the others.

The involvement of religion in politics can be seen in the mounting visits of political elites to religious communities and leaders, such as Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and Islamic scholars (*kyai*). Political elites make use of religious moments such as Friday sermon and Islamic gathering as indirect places of political campaign. Religion in this respect is simply a symbol or slogan, which is clearly not enlightening for the Muslim community (*umma*). Whereas religion is an instrument through which the bulk of problems facing society must be solved.

Symbolic Interaction Perspective

Islam is laden with symbols that can be used to uphold various political interests. The presence of religious symbols in political arenas is a kind of politicisation and radicalisation of religion in politics. It is a plausible and important means to attract the sympathy and support of constituents. Islam supplies a Muslim's political life with myriad religious symbols effective in politics to mobilise the mass of people either to uphold or to overthrow a regime. This has been so since the era of the Caliphates until modern times (Asmuni, 2005).

Although the use of religious symbols is valid in a democratic state, it should bring with it an empowering of democratic life. The efflorescence of the use of religious symbols in politics is due to the understanding and attitude of Muslims towards politics. For most Muslims, politics cannot be divorced from religion. This fact makes politicisation of religion unavoidable. As a consequence, some devout Muslims feel it necessary to defend their religion (from non-Muslims) through politics.

In their campaigns, the future local heads prefer to use religious symbols for several reasons. In the first place, religious arguments in politics are considered more effective than others. A religious argument in politics is a religious explanation without religious content (Abdullah,

2008: 227). It gives theological legitimacy to political actions and motivates people to support the actions. Religious issues and symbols become simulation media through which political interests are achieved.

Secondly, most Indonesian people are strongly attached to religious symbols in which religion has not yet become their true way of life. As Nurcholish Madjid says, most Indonesian Muslims are still confined to religious symbols. They will protect their religious identity at all costs but they are susceptible to symbolic persuasion. Thus, it is not surprising that candidates take advantage of religious symbols in order to gain as many votes as possible from Muslim groups.

To grasp the use of religious issues and symbols in local head election, it may be helpful to employ the theory of symbolic interaction formulated by George Herbert and supported by Herbert Blumer and Leslie White. The theory seeks to understand culture through human behaviour as expressed in communication. Symbolic interaction places more emphasis on the meaning of cultural interaction in a community. The essential meaning is manifest in cultural communication among local people. During the communication many meaningful symbols reveal themselves; then it is the task of readers to find out those meanings.

They find that individuals interact with each other through symbols including signs, signals, and words. Herbert Blumer (1962) and Erving Goffman (1959) are other sociologists of interactionism who view that the essence of symbolic interaction as an activity that typically belongs to humans, i.e. communication or symbolic exchange of given meaning (Mulyana, 2001: 68). The theory of symbolic interactionism suggests that meaning comes out of social interaction processes. The meaning for somebody emerges from the ways in which others behave toward him. Thus, in symbolic interaction meaning is considered as a social product.

In symbolic interaction, society consists of individuals interacting, grasping, interpreting, behaving, and creating. Individuals are not an array of dispositions, but dynamic actors who are always in the process of

becoming. Society is not something static “already out there now” that always influences and forms our selves. It is an interaction process. Individuals have mind and self. They are involved in social processes through experiences and social activities. The whole process of interaction is symbolic, in which the meanings are made by human minds. We share those meanings with each other. Our definition and perception of social world as well as our response to reality are made through interaction processes (Suprpto, 2007).

In the theory of symbolic interaction, there are four premises. First is that humans can create and use symbols. Secondly, humans use symbols to communicate with each other. Thirdly, humans communicate through role taking. And, fourthly, humans are created, survive and change according to their ability to think, define, reflect and evaluate. According to Geertz, religion is a symbolic system through which moods and motives are strongly, wholly, and long confirmed in human beings. Conceptions of order are formulated by a certain rule to reflect reality. As such, emotions and motives uniquely exist (Turner, 1974: 327-330).

Messages and cultural significance are expressed through symbols (Spradley, 1997: 121). Cultural knowledge is used to understand and construe symbols hidden behind popular terms as well as other symbols. Symbols can include words or speeches, flags, body motions such as hand waving, devotional places such as mosques or churches, or important events such as marriage. Thus, a symbol represents an object or an event pointing to something. A symbol can imply whatever we feel or experience.

The Use of Religious Issues in Local Government Elections

The enactment of Constitution No 32 of 2004 on Local Government Head Election Tingkat I and Tingkat II introduced direct election in the province of Bengkulu. People responded to this direct election positively

as an opportunity to select the best candidates to may meet their expectations and the need of local development.

In 2005 the political atmosphere in Bengkulu intensified after the emergence of figures who openly declared themselves as candidates. Four pairs of candidates for governor and vice-governor competed in the local head election. They were Agusrin M Najamuddin / HM Syamlan; Muslihan / Patrice Rio Capella; Sudirman Ail / Syahrir AB; M Salman / Drs. Sumardiko; and Kurnia Utama / Khoirul Amri (Zulkarnaen in Interview, 2008).

The campaign period lasted from 14 to 23 June 2005. The first round of voting was on 27 June. In the second round of campaigning held during 25-27 September, each success team (*Tim Sukses*) agreed on avoiding mass mobilisation and stopping general meetings. The agreement was put in the *Berita Acara* (meeting report) signed by both sides. After the meeting on Wednesday 21 September on the campaign time schedule for the second round, Parsadaan Harahap, member of KPU Bengkulu Province,⁵ stated that both success teams agreed on the campaigning system, which was then put into KPU Decree (SK) No. 66. This stated that the acknowledged campaign was a limited gathering attended by 250 persons and face-to-face dialogues attended by 200 persons.

In the second round of the election of the governor of Bengkulu on 1 October 2005, PKS (Justice and Prosperity Party) and PBR (Reform Star Party) nominated Agusrin Maryono Najamudin and HM Syamlan (entrepreneur and religious leader respectively) who won the first round with more than 23 percents of total votes. The other candidates were Muslihan Diding Sutrisno and Patrice Rio Capella (former regent of North Bengkulu and regent of Rejang Lebong, and vice-chairman of DPRD Bengkulu, respectively) nominated by PAN (National Mandate Party).⁶

⁵ KPU: *Komisi Pemilihan Umum* (commission for general election).

⁶ Agusrin Maryono Najamuddin and HM Syamlan won the gubernatorial election of Bengkulu Province 2005. Their winning was decided in a plenary meet-

Prior to the gubernatorial election in Bengkulu, open campaigns and others were organised. Each candidate designed political strategies to attract the sympathy of masses of voters. Muslims in Bengkulu are the most significant constituency, numbering 95.98% of the electorate. Therefore political tactics were oriented to them. One of the tactics was to involve religious leaders (*ulama*) and religious teachers (*ustadh*) as vote getters. The involvement of these religious leaders cannot be divorced from their religious expertise or their grass-roots followers. Such involvement was regarded as effective in getting many voters. Based on the available data, tens or even hundreds of the *ulama* participated as members of campaign teams.

The pair of Agusrin M Najamuddin and HM Syamlan recruited local prominent *ulama* and *ustadh* such as Basuki Ali, Sudirman, Zarkasyi, Hamdani Nasution, Dani Hamdani, Rusydi Syam, and Kadir Dali Monte. HM Syamlan himself was a prominent member of the *ulama* in Bengkulu. He was the secretary of the local branch of MUI (Council of Indonesian Ulama) Bengkulu. He was known for his command of Arabic and religious knowledge and actively involved in *dakwah* (Islamic proselytising activities) in Bengkulu. In addition, he had wide, solid and rooted networks among members of his religious gatherings. Besides religious gatherings, he conducted a *halaqah* (religious group of study) in which warm brotherhood was firmly established. Taking this into political consideration, he had a lot of Muslim constituents in Bengkulu.

During the 2005 election, local MUI members were involved in political competition. They often made statements endorsing certain candidates and weakening the rivals. The following quotation illustrates how they played a significant role in the campaign.

ing of KPU Kota Bengkulu on 11 October 2005. Agusrin and HM Syamlan got 52.053 votes or 54.30% of total accepted 96.764 votes. This pair, nominated by PKS and PBR, defeated another pair of candidates in the second round, Muslihan / Rio, nominated by Partai Demokrat, who got 45.70% or 43.801 votes. A month after their election, Agusrin left PKS and became general head of Partai Demokrat Bengkulu (id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agusrin_Maryono_Najamuddin).

“Ulama in Bengkulu Province like KAD, AH and HN have deliberately or not been taken advantage of for political interests during Pilgub of Bengkulu Province. They were invited to deliver religious gathering, admonitions, and prayers for salvation in various moments organised by candidates of governors and vice-governors” (Zulkarnaen in Interview, 2008).

Attempts to get votes from Muslims were also made by making use of religious tenets. The campaigning team of pair of Agusrin-Syamlan who consisted of *ulama* and *ustadh* often cited such verses as: *quu anfu-sakum wa ahliikum naaran, qulil haqqa wa lau kaana murrana, fatazaw-waduu fa inna khaira zaadit taqwa, ud’uu ilaa sabiili rabbika bil-hikmah, wal takun minkum ummatun yad’uuna ila al-khairi*. In addition, this pair also used Islamic symbols to get as many votes as possible. They published banners decorated with Islamic messages such as *adil dekat kemakmuran* (justice is close to prosperity), *pemimpin yang adil pemimpin yang dicintai rakyat* (just leaders, leaders beloved by people), and *saatnya Bengkulu berubah* (it is time for Bengkulu to change). The banners were put on main street corners, roadsides, alleys, walls of houses, market centers, office buildings, and elsewhere.

Another Islamic symbol used in the campaign was stickers upon which the greeting sentence *assalamu’alaikum* was written down. Under the sentence were slogans *adil* (just) dan *peduli* (care). The stickers were freely distributed to potential voters. Moreover, they participated in socio-religious activities so as to attract the vote of Muslims. On various religious occasions and in various religious places, they distributed Islamic books authored by *ulama* such as Ibnu Taimiyyah, Ali Syari’ati, Sayyid Qutub, al-Maududi, and others together with the PKS logo, including the stickers with the pictures of the pair of candidates.

Under the PKS banner, the pair campaigned via various institutions and channels. By establishing Ma’had Rabbani and *halaqah* in mosques, PKS promoted Agusrin-Syamlan. In university campuses, PKS estab-

lished KAMMI (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia). In economic institutions, PKS organised PKPU which had favoured programmes such as free medical treatment, free mass circumcision, and others. Through its education institutions, such as SDIT and SMPIT, PKS relentlessly campaigned for Agusrin-Syamlan. In short, PKS optimised that all institutions and channels support Agusrin-Syamlan.

BKMT⁷ was another place where Agusrin-Syamlan campaigned. Members and officials of BKMT were presented with uniforms, *rebana*, *jilbab* and *mukena*. To attract Muslim voters, this pair paid donation to several mosques from five thousand, one million, to two million.

Business centres were also used to campaign. PKS activists sold *jilbab* and other Muslim clothes directly to the mass of people. During the transactions, they conveyed messages urging support for the pair. In their messages, they said that families who consisted of four voters were called to give three votes to other candidates and one vote to Agusrin-Syamlan (Zulkarnaen in Interview, 2008). The Agusrin-Syamlan success team struggled relentlessly for them. PKS as their political vehicle mobilised the masses by organising Islamic gatherings (*pengajian*) attended by such figures as Tifatul Sembiring (PKS President), Daud Rasyid (Dewan Syuro DPP PKS), and Didin Hafifuddin (Pengurus PKPU).

In their campaign, this pair declared their commitment to better changes for Bengkulu in economic, social, bureaucratic and educational sectors. They promised to organise a test of civil servant candidates (CPNS) that is clean, transparent and free from KKN by prioritising quality. In addition, they campaigned for equality between men and women, with women as equal partners in developing Bengkulu Province.

Muslihan and Patrice Rio Capella were another pair competing in the election. Nominated by PAN and PBB, they recruited prominent *'ulama*

⁷ BKMT: *Badan Kontak Majelis Taklim* (contact body of the Council for Islamic Learning)

and *ustadh* for getting votes. Among them were HM Asy'ari Husein, Disman Datok Kayo, Drs. Syafrizal Rahim, HM Syakirin Indar Ali, Zulkarnain Dali, H Syafrudin Labay, Amir Hamzah, and KH Muntakim. The campaigning team of this pair quoted such Quranic verses as: *wa'tashimu bi hablillahi jamiian wa la tafarraquu, la in syakartum la azidannakum, ta'awanu 'ala al birri wat taqwa wa laa ta'awanu 'alaa al ismi wa al 'udwaan* to endorse and legitimate the candidacy of Muslihan and Patrice Rio Capella.

The former head of Panwaslu of Bengkulu, Drs. Sakroni, said that the election 2005 was coloured by the excessive use of religious tenets by the candidates to justify their candidacy in front of Muslim voters. Sakroni said: "Religious tenets had been used in the campaign of gubernatorial election 2005. They were usually delivered to the audience and at certain moments" (Sakroni in Interview, 2008).

In addition, they also used other Islamic symbols such as street banners and stickers. Street banners upon which *bismilliahir rahmaanir rahiim, coblos pasangan Muslihan-Rio* was written were placed everywhere in public corners. Stickers with *assalamu'alaikum, laa tukallam qabla as-salam* were distributed to potential voters. The pair of Muslihan and Patrice Rio Capella published *Yasin* books with a thankful preface by Muslihan and distributed pieces of Quranic books decorated with the pictures of Muslihan-Rio. Doubtlessly, all these were to attract Muslim voters. By doing so, they tried to convince Muslim voters that they were eligible to lead the province.

The campaigning team of Muslihan-Rio campaigned at Islamic circles and gatherings (*pengajian* and *majelis taklim*), attending Islamic day festivals, visiting *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), and meeting with Muslim leaders either from NU or Muhammadiyah. One of the Islamic gatherings attended was Lembaga pengajian al-Hidayah Propinsi Bengkulu. A respondent told us as follows: "Lembaga pengajian al-Hidayah was used by pasangan Muslihan-Rio in gubernatorial election

2005. This gathering under the banner of Golkar was the place to socialise and campaign their candidacy” (Zulkarnaen in Interview, 2008). The appearance of pictures of candidates in the Quran books conveys various messages. Among them is to symbolise their closeness with Muslim voters they hoped would elect them.

Each pair of candidates used their own Islamic issues. However, they agreed in paying more attention to the polygamy issue. This can be seen in a debate held by KPI of Bengkulu.⁸ All candidates declared their disagreement on polygamy. The moderator of the debate witnessed as follows.

“At that time I was the moderator. The debate was attended by thousands of attendees. I still remember, what the candidates answered when asked by audiences about their attitude towards polygamy. In response to polygamy, the governor candidate Agusrin M Najamuddin as well as the vice-governor candidate Patrice Rio Capella attending at that time stated [that they] didn’t agree on polygamy” (*Ibid*).

The engagement of the *ulama* as vote-getters results in a dilemma. In one hand they have to act based on Islamic precepts; on the other hand, their involvement in politics is fraught with intricacies. They will divide into political blocs as a result of different political interests. While the *ulama* use such religious terms as *wajib* (obligation) or *haram* (forbidden) in political senses to get votes for their candidates, the mass of people construe the terms in their religious connotations related to God’s reward and punishment. The use of religious symbols for power politics will reduce religion and at the same time people will be confused. What is important then is that candidates do not exploit religious symbols.

Jali Afandi, a member of Golkar party, views the use of religious symbols in political campaigns as normal, especially in religious communities, as well as in local election. However, according to him, there

⁸ KPI: *Komisi Perempuan Indonesia* (commission of Indonesian women)

are several points to consider including: (1) not to use Quranic verses or Muhammadan sayings for political purposes; (2) not to use the Quran and Muhammadan tradition as political tools; (3) not to sacrifice Islam for getting votes; and (4) not to incite political rivals. He suggests that to attract the voters, candidates must behave as well as possible, showing their excellences, and offering programmes people need (Affadi in Interview, 2008).

According to Rahmaini SP (head of women section of DPW PKS Bengkulu), the use of religious symbols is an attempt to optimise the role of Islam. In a society with a Muslim majority, the use of religious symbols is a must. In general, people get sympathy from virtues and religion is a virtue. Thus, getting sympathy through religion indicates that people return to their origins (*fitra*), considering their basic need, i.e. religion (Rahmaini in Interview, 2008).

For Rahmaini, PKS as a proselytising party – in the campaign period or not – devotes its efforts to elevating Islamic teachings, calling people to return to Islam, and teaching them Islamic teachings. It is not then surprising for the masses if PKS calls them to join a religious activity as part of its campaign. They do not even feel manipulated to support a political purpose. For them, it is normal for an Islam-based party to act in this way.

In the Bengkulu gubernatorial election 2005, the use of religious symbols in the forms of stickers, brochures, and banners seems less striking than in the form of virtues such as the call to Islamic gatherings and voluntary services (*kerja bakti*). In addition, PKS distributed stickers with Islamic messages such as *Assalamualikum*, prayer of riding, prayer of going, and others. The stickers were put out with the pictures of the candidates. In response to the ethics of using religious issues, Rahmaini suggests that what must be considered are *syariat* (Islamic) rules and human rules (set by KPUD). So long as these rules are not broken, the use of religious issues is allowed.

Politically, the use of religious issues is not the only factor that influences voters. Factors such as the local origins of figures and familiarity are significant as well. Syamlan's was victorious as vice-governor of Bengkulu not merely because he was a religious leader. He was also known for his credibility, so that people considered him eligible to be elected. In addition, his pair, Agusrin, attracted great support from non-religious factors. In short, religious factors are not so significant in attracting Muslim constituents in local elections in Bengkulu. They know best who are eligible to lead. They tend to choose their own preferences. As Rahmaini said, "Leaders are symbols of their people" (Rahmaini in Interview, 2008).

Conflicts and the Use of Religious Issues

Various discourses emerged during the gubernatorial election in Bengkulu. Many ways were used to attract voters. Among them was publication and distribution of the Quran books with the pictures of candidates, *Yasin* books with prefaces by candidates and other Islamic books. This outreach was vividly political by nature.

This was also true for the publication and distribution of a manual devotional book entitled *Mengapa Kita berpegang Teguh pada Islam Faham Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah dan Mazhhab Syafi'i*.⁹ The book was distributed not only for guidance of Sunnite Muslims, but for getting masses of voters as well (BSW, 1999).

The publication of this book is interesting since it was done by DPD I Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (Perti) Bengkulu. Compared with the use of religious verses to attack the rivals, the publication of the book seems more elegant in the sense of helping Muslims with a devotional guide book. However, both methods have the same political implications. Ideally, Perti is an Islamic organisation which is concerned with

⁹ Why We Adhere to the Islamic School of the Followers of Muhammad's Tradition and Community and Shafi'ite School.

the teaching of Islam and education. However, in the election it involved in political intricacies by publishing the book to support a certain pair of candidates.

To members of Islamic parties such as PKS, the use of religious issues and symbols in election seems natural. For instance, Triono, an advocate of the party, thinks that the use of religious issues and symbols in local elections in a Muslim-majority society such as Bengkulu is acceptable. The candidates can recruit religious leaders, attend Islamic learning circles, donate *pesantren* or other voluntary social organisations, and distribute stickers and banners. What is not allowed is to politicise religious symbols such as Quranic verses or Muhammadan sayings to back up the candidates, or to interpret them according to certain political interests, or to mobilise the masses to vote for certain candidates (Triono in Interview, 2008). According to Triono, virtually all political parties participating in the gubernatorial election of Bengkulu 2005 made use of religious issues in their campaigns. The difference was only in degree. The most overt use of religious issues and symbols was by PKS and PBB. For these parties, it would be strange to speak no Islam in their campaigns.

Jali Affandi, a member of the Muslihan campaign team, states that the gubernatorial election of Bengkulu took place peacefully, despite religious issues coming up. Affandi said that so far the use of religious issues was not a factor of emerging conflicts. There was no agitation, provocation or even clash in religious issues in the election. Conflicts only happened when provocateurs triggered the masses (Affandi in Interview, 2008). The provocateurs might use religious issues as well as others. This is also affirmed by Triono and Rahmaini, both of PKS.

Physical conflicts between supporters of candidates did not happen in the election. Small incidents occurred such as damaging pictures of candidates and stickers, and taking banners off by rivals. Fatwa war was another form of conflict. During the election, a number of conflicting

fatwas were issued to attack each other such as *jangan pilih yang tidak beriman* (don't choose the unbeliever), *jangan pilih yang tidak bertanggung-jawab* (don't choose the irresponsible), *jangan pilih yang tua* (don't choose the old) and *jangan pilih yang lama* (don't choose the incumbent). The fatwa *jangan pilih yang tidak beriman* seemed to refer to Sudirman Ail who was a policeman by profession. The same fatwa was *jangkalan berdiri, tidur saja menyusahkan, apalagi nanti kalau nanti menjadi gubernur* (let alone standing, even his sleep will make [us] trouble; more is when he becomes a governor). The fatwa *jangan pilih yang tua* connoted the candidates who were old. And the fatwa *jangan pilih yang lama* referred to the candidates who were previously bureaucrats (regents).

It seems difficult to avoid using religious issues and symbols in local head election, since religion as a source of truth, morality and ethics has proven to become an effective political commodity. However, political discourses and political practices based on religious issues can lead to fanaticism and exclusivism among religious groups. The excessive use of religious issues and symbols in local elections will create disharmony and social disintegration by separating religious communities from each other.

For political processes to create a democratic system, the use of religious issues and symbols must be reduced. People should be called to rational politics by looking at programmes offered by political parties or candidates and the extent to which the programmes may meet their basic needs more than sectarian and ideological issues. Popular candidates who offer programmes for prosperity deserve to be elected more than those who use religious issues for campaign.

Coordinator of JPPR (Nasional Jaringan Pendidikan Pemilih untuk Rakyat), Adung A Rochman said that although often less effective, many candidates still take advantage of religious symbols to pursue power (Niza dan Fardhi, 2006: 3). A survey by Lembaga Survey Indo-

nesia (LSI) affirms Rochman's statement. Eight of ten Muslim respondents believe that democracy is the best political system. Islamic parties promoting religious issues and symbols for political purposes are less attractive (Mujani, 2006).

A survey by JPPR published on June 2006 shows that out of 213 local head elections organised, only 2.68 per cent were won by a coalition of Islamic parties (6 regions); 4.91 per cent (11 regions) were won by Islamic parties without coalition; 22.27 per cent were won by national parties without coalition (51 regions); 32.59 per cent were won by nationalist parties (73 regions); the biggest number of regions were won by nationalist parties in coalition with religious (Islamic) parties. Given that Indonesian politics is still heavily primordial, political education becomes urgent. People must be able to distinguish clearly between politics and religion. Only by doing so will they be free to make their own choice based on rational awareness. And politicising religion would no longer be effective.

Conclusion

The use of religious issues in the gubernatorial election in Bengkulu 2005 showed itself in various ways: recruiting *ulama* and *ustadh* for campaigns in religious gathering by giving religious admonitions (*tausiyah*), leading prayer of salvation, *istighathah*, and making political statements in mass media. In the election, religious issues triggered certain conflicts, such as tension among supporters, fatwa or statement war, destroying symbols by rivals, damaging pictures of candidates and stickers, and removing rival banners.

The local head election in Bengkulu shows that religion is still used to gain political power. As a consequence, religion is subject to political interests and cannot play a unifying role for Muslim communities. Candidates for local heads – regents, mayors, and governors – would be better to avoid using religious issues for political purposes. Things would

be worse if politicising religion happen in conflict areas. Taking all this into consideration, political education for mass-people is a must in order to become rational voters, not emotional voters.

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Interviews

Interview with Zulkarnain, 5 September 2008.

Interview with Sakroni, 3 September 2008.

Interview with Deva Musri, 3 September 2008.

Interview with Jali Affadi, August 2008.

Interview with Rahmaini, July 2008.

Interview with Triono, July 2008.

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Filsafat, Etika, dan Kearifan Lokal untuk Konstruksi Moral Kebangsaan: Philosophy, Ethics and Local Wisdom in the Moral Construction of the Nation

This volume in the Focus series is the result of a partnership between Globethics.net and the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), Yogyakarta, a consortium of three universities: Universitas Gadjah Mada, State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga, and Duta Wacana Christian University.

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