

# **Power and Leadership: Muslim Female Political Leaders and Local Politics in Java in the Post New Order Indonesia**

Year: 2010

Place of fieldwork: Jakarta, Semarang, Kebumen, Indonesia

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Key Words: female political leader, Islam, sexuality, gender, direct local election.

## **Research Background**

Indonesian women, either in national or local level, gradually seeks central role in politics in the post-New Order (after 1998). Following introduction of the direct election in local government (the Act No. 32/2004), there have been 466 direct local elections consisting 358 elections outside the Island of Java, and 108 elections in the Island of Java from 2005 to 2008. In turn, the number of elected female politicians as the local government heads in the Island of Java is higher (10.18 per cent whom all of them are Muslim) than that of outside Island of Java (4.46 per cent). Therefore, this research will examine Javanese Muslim female political leader's strategy in gaining power in the direct local election in Java after the New Order.

## **Research purpose and aim**

*First*, to examine the factor contributes on the emergence of the Javanese Muslim female political leaders in local politics in Java. *Second*, to examine the Javanese Muslim female political leaders negotiating gender relations with men and women either individual or group to support political stand. *Third*, to investigate reality of normative expectation that female political leaders, should have women's perspectives.

## **Result and achievements by fieldwork**

Primary result of my fieldwork from January 17, to February 17, 2010 is gaining in dept understanding of the profile and strategy of Rustriningsih, former Regent Kebumen (2000-2005, 2005-2008), currently Vice-Governor Central Java (2008-2013), in winning the 2008 direct governor election. The two primary achievements in my fieldwork are: *first*, I successfully gained many old written materials (1870-1941) in National Library of Indonesia Jakarta which contributes in achieving longitudinal understanding of Javanese women's changing identity since early years of Islamisation Java. *Second*, my interview with Rustriningsih and Rustriyanto younger brother of Rustriningsih who are currently Vice-Regent Kebumen (2008-2010), has delivered clear understanding of interplay between sexuality, gender, Islamic symbol and religiosity in direct local election in Java. These finding will help me to unlock the puzzle on the rationale behind the gradual rising of Muslim female political leaders within predominantly NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*, traditional Islamic group) base followers such as Pekalongan. Banyuwangi, Kebumen as my research site.

## **Implications and impacts on future research**

Further implication of the above finding is that my research will provide new perspectives about Islam, women, and democracy. Contradict to common understanding that Islam obstructs women's

participation in public sphere, in fact, my research shows that Islam as religious believe and agency serves as catalyst to the rise of Muslim female political leaders in direct local election in Java in the post New Order Indonesia.



Observation in Office of DPD (Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle) PDI-P  
Central Java in Semarang

Date taken: February 1, 2010  
Place: Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia.  
Taken by: Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi



Picture taking after interviewing Rustriningsih Vice-Governor Central Java (2008-2013)

Date taken: February 3, 2010

Place: Office of Vice-Governor Central Java, Semarang.

Taken by: Bapak ARF



Observation on meeting held by Bureau of Women Empowerment of Kebumen Regency

Date taken: February 9, 2010  
Place: Kebumen, Central Java, Indonesia.  
Taken by: Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi