

**Power and Leadership: Javanese Muslim Women Political Leaders and
Local Politics in Java in Post-New Order Indonesia
(Third fieldwork)**

Year: 2010

Place of fieldwork: Banyuwangi, Pekalongan, Kebumen, Semarang

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Key Words: Javanese Muslim women, political strategy, direct local head election

Research Background

My study examines the increasing number of Javanese Muslim women politicians who have been elected in direct local head elections following the Reform Era in 1998. To examine the common features behind their gradual rise, this study seeks to intimately observe the profile, strategy, and policy stand of these women, given their distinct gender identity as women leaders. This study also seeks to uncover the role of Islam as religious belief and its agency in facilitating the emergence of these female politicians. In order to gather comprehensive data, I conducted fieldwork three times: first, from June to August 2009 observing Siti Qomariyah Regent of Pekalongan (2006–2011) and Ratna Ani Lestari Regent of Banyuwangi (2005–2010); second, from January to February 2010 observing Rustriningsih former Regent Kebumen (2005–2010, 2010–2015), who is currently the Vice-Governor of Central Java (2008–2013); and third, from July to August 2010, observing the latest situation of these three women leaders.

Research purpose and aim

The aims of this third fieldwork (July–August 2010) are as follows. First, to determine the latest political situation of these three women political leaders in the lead up to the direct local head election in 2010/2011. Second, to gather important written materials that I was unable to obtain during the first and second fieldworks. Third, to conduct interviews with important respondents with whom I was unable to meet previously.

Fieldwork result and achievements

The main result of this third fieldwork was determining the latest political situation of the three observed women political leaders. For example, Ratna Ani Lestari wanted to continue her leadership and power in Banyuwangi by trying to re-compete in the July 2010 direct regent election in Banyuwangi. I conducted fieldwork immediately prior to and during the election, which enabled me not only to capture Ratna's latest political move, but also to uncover the shifting position of religious

leaders (*kyai*) in the election. Second, I successfully interviewed Wahyudi Pontjo Nugroho, Vice-Regent of Pekalongan (2006–2011), who is paired with Siti Qomariyah. The interview gave me an in-depth understanding of the reason for their coalition, the sequence of their coalition since 2004, the opposition, and the future coalition in the 2011 election. Third, I was able to gather new basic information on the early stage of Rustriningsih's political career in Kebumen through an interview with her former loyalists. This information pertained to her relationship with local *kyai*, NGOs, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) religious position that does not hinder women's leadership, and the trend of Rustriningsih's declining popularity in Kebumen. Fourth, I obtained critical information on the latest political move of Rustriningsih in the Provincial Board PDIP in Semarang Central Java. I was also able to gain an understanding of her position with local women's NGOs in Semarang. Lastly, though faced with various difficulties, I successfully identified the political composition of the House of Representatives in Banyuwangi, Pekalongan, Kebumen, and Central Java in 1987, 1992, 1997, and 1999. This provides an important background to my analyses of the changes in the political landscape where female leaders emerged during and after the introduction of the New Order.

Implications and impacts on future research

By gathering and comparing the profiles of Javanese Muslim women leaders, their political dynamics, and their policy stand in local development, while revealing the centrality of Islam as a set of teachings or agency, my research will provide a rich and more detailed account as well as a wider basis for theoretical debate of the already distinctive features of female leadership in Southeast Asia.



A Giant Picture of Ratna Ani Lestari in one corner of the street in Banyuwangi.

Date taken: July 13, 2010.

Place: Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia.

Taken by: Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi



Wahyudi Pontjo Nugroho, Vice-Regent Pekalongan (2006-2011) during interview.

Date taken: July 23, 2010.

Place: Office of Vice-Regent Pekalongan, Central Java.

Taken by: Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi



Kyai H. Abu Sofyan leader of Pondok Pesantren Al-Hasani, Jatimulyo, Alian.

Date taken: July 29, 2010.

Place: Home of Kyai H. Abu Sofyan in Alian, Kebumen, Central Java.

Taken by: Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi