

**TRADITIONALIST MUSLIM IN 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION:
EXPLAINING THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN PASAR KLIWON
DISTRICT OF SURAKARTA CITY**

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Acceptance date:
15th October 2020

Valuation date:
15th November 2020

Publication date:
15th December 2020

ABSTRACT

In dealing with Presidential election, Muslim's vote remains to be the big object to both president candidates. Surakarta is the city known for Islam political revival through the establishment of Sarekat Dagang Islam (SDI or Islamic Trading Union) in 1912 as the first organization to fight against colonialism and imperialism in Indonesia. Considering structural functionalism theory, this paper empirically studied the condition of traditional community, including their habit, decorum, and political preference related to political participation. This research aimed to explore the traditionalist Muslim's on Islamic politic knowledge in general election and their role in influencing swing voters and suppressing absenteeism rate. This research employed qualitative method with case study approach using total sample, Muslims of Pasar Kliwon, Surakarta taken using stratified random sampling technique. It is useful to see the real life phenomenon in Pasar Kliwon Sub District where this study was conducted. The result of research shows that traditionalist Moslems have similar political preference. They are very exclusive in identity as a community but is very opened all at once in socializing and accepting other Islam ideology and cultural difference. This research also revealed that they influence the people (community) in political election through religious practices like sermon. This research contributes to social-political research in describing the role of traditional Islam community affecting the political process considerably.

Keywords: Traditionalist Muslim, Habib's influence, Indonesian Presidential Election, Islam Movement, Surakarta.

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INTRODUCTION

Data of Central Java Province's Central Bureau of Statistic shows that Surakarta has 451,882 Muslim populations out of 577,202 total populations in 2016. It means 72.2% of this city's populations are Muslim. This city has two different names: firstly, Surakarta as formal governmental administrative name. In Javanese literal meaning, *sura* means "bravery" and *karta* means "prosperous". Secondly, its name is Solo, the famous call in the world as the Javanese cultural territory and also called the Spirit of Java. Meanwhile, Solo derived from the word *sala* used for the name of village where the palace was constructed. In Indonesian Islamic movement history, Mataram Islamic Kingdom established in 17th century is the embryo of Surakarta Kingdom toward the dissemination of Islam religion now called *Keraton Surakarta Hadiningrat* (Surakarta Hadiningrat Palace). Sri Sunan as the king has a fully powerful legal rule (domination) over his people (S. Margana, 2010). He holds legitimate power over government and religion figures all at once. In social-cultural field, Javanese people hold on a philosophy of being submitted to Sri Sunan as it reflects on politeness norm. As a result, the very massive Islam dissemination in Surakarta is highly affected by Sri Sunan's contribution. Such phenomenon, as shown in Joebagio's (2013) studies, is conducted as well by European kings misusing political language *cuius regional eius et religio*, meaning "the king with (Catholics) religion will be followed by everyone in the area". So, talking about Islam tradition community in Surakarta should be attributed with its history.

Clifford Geertz's study Conducted during 1952-1945 classifies Javanese population into 3 groups: *Abangan Santri*, and *Priyayi*. In this study, Muslim traditionalists belongs to *santri* group. For more specific example, according to Fauzi's (2012) study, traditional Muslim is associated with *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) and Islamic boarding house. However, Dhofier describes more examples of traditionalist Islamic organization such as *Matha'ul Anwar* (MA), *al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah*, and *Persatuan Islam Indonesia* (Persis or Indonesian Islamic Unity). Those groups are not affiliated with one of traditional organizations like *Haba'ib* (Prophet Muhammad's descent), individual within community, and small organizations such as *majlis ta'lim*, *zikir*, and *salawat*. As explained by Yahya (2016), they have missionary media led by *habib* or *kiai* (Islamic intellectual) in *salawat*, *al-Asma al-Husna*, *Burdah*, *Barzanji*, *Diba* ', *Simt al-Durar*, *Tahlil*, *Yaseen*, *Ratib*, and *Manaqib* readings, either partially or entirely. Those are reading characterizing the traditionalist Islam community.

In relation to politic, traditional-based Muslim also shows off its existence, in either participatory or non-participatory manner. Through *majelis taklim*, according to Mukodi (2016), political education is taught to the community (*umat*) broadly. Furthermore, traditional Islam community in Surakarta, most of which are members of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), is always assumed to support Jokowi - Ma'ruf Amin in presidential election. Because Ma'ruf is a *kiai* (the most respected Muslim scholar in Javanese) and former *Rais 'Aam* (chairperson) of NU with majority

Muslim traditionalist population, they obey what Ma'ruf preferred. On the contrary, traditionalist Muslims not affiliated with NU, such as *Majelis Habib* consisting of Arab ethnic, indicates otherwise. It is confirmed by the presence of vice president nominee, Sandiaga S. Uno in *Haul* (commemoration) of Habib Ali bin Muhammad Al Habsyi's death last December in Pasar Kliwon, Surakarta. Therefore, traditional Islam community plays strategic role in political movement in Indonesia.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN INDONESIA

Farahdiba (2014) said that Indonesia holds on democracy as its governmental system, in which Indonesia becomes the role model for other states in the term of religion community diversity, particularly Islam. It can be seen from Lutfi Makhasin's (2017) study finding that Indonesia as the state with the largest Islam population in the world with a total of 207 million people living peacefully with diverse ethnics and groups. To enforce democracy in Indonesia, general election is an important aspect to the public in general and Muslim in particular as it is the majority religion. Indonesia, according to Fuad (2014), has experienced four politic eras since its independence, liberal democracy or called constitutional democracy (1949-1958), guided democracy (1959-1965), Pancasila democracy under Soeharto's New Order regime (1966) - 1998) and reform era (the collapse of Soeharto's regime, May 1998 – present). The first general election in Indonesia was held in 1955, ten years following Indonesia's Declaration of Independence. As a result, 52 political parties participated in the election and four out of them gained largest vote: *Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI or Indonesian National Party)* 22.3%, *Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia (Masyumi)* 20.9%, *Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)* 18.4% and *Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI or Indonesian Communist Party)* 16.4%. It can be found that 2 (two) Islam parties have successfully occupied the second and third ranks, and accumulatively they gain largest vote.

Epley & Jung (2016) explained that in 1958, during guided democracy era, the number of parties was limited to ten parties remained and considered as representing two ideologies: nationalist-secular and Islam, or Pancasila and Islam party. In that era, both of them have two large objectives: firstly, they want to separate religion from state affairs comprehensively, and secondly, they want to establish an Islam-based state. Naharuddin & Seniwati (2016) stated that during New Order era, democracy process was forced to be stable so that parties are dismissed and thereby only 2 (two) parties are left: *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI or Indonesian Democratic Party)* and *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP or Development Unity Party)*, and independent alliance called *Golongan Karya (Golkar)*. New Order persisted up to early March 1998 when reform occurred and Soeharto handed over the state's rule to B.J. Habibie. A year later, presidential election was held by House of Representative resulting in KH. Abdurrahman Wahid to be President; he is the only President intentionally elected from

Traditional-based Muslim, a community affiliated with NU. However, it persisted for 2 years only following ad hoc session held by House of Representative; since then Megawati Soekarnoputri occupied president position.

Presidential election was held for the first time in 2004 when Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected to be President in two rounds with 61.2% votes, while Megawati as his opponent gained only 38.8% vote. In contrast to that in 2004, Presidential Election in 2009 was held in one round only, in which SBY-Boediono gained 60.80% votes, while Megawati – Prabowo gained only 26.79% and Jusuf Kalla - Wiranto 12.41%. Furthermore, in 2014 Joko Widodo - Jusuf Kalla won the presidential election. The next Presidential Election, according to M Khoirul Fata (2018), would be more dynamic because both candidates: Jokowi - Ma`ruf and Prabowo – Sandi have same support bases from Islam community. Consequently, the Presidential Election of 2019 would be a moment to attract Muslim votes, particularly the traditional ones'. Even Jokowi-Ma'ruf was carried on by Islam parties such as *Partai Kebangkitan Nasional (PKB)* and *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP)*. Both parties are closely related to Islam large organization, *Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)*, building on traditional Muslim community particularly in Java Island. Meanwhile, Prabowo-Sandi was carried on by *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS or Justice and Prosperity Party)* and *Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN or National Mandate Party)* identical with moderate Islam community. Fata (2018) found that PAN has similar culture and emotion to Muhammadiyah's, while PKS is the extension of *tarbiyah* group's arm. The participation of Islam community in presidential election is so far the factor mostly affecting one of candidates, particularly Traditional-based Muslim, most of which are distributed throughout Java. However, the existence of Muslim groups tends to decrease because their next generations are affiliated with modern-based Muslim, particularly in this information and technology era.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative study with a case study approach. This study explored the role of traditional Islamic community in the Presidential election. The geographical location chosen was Pasar Kliwon District, Surakarta, based on Muhammad Ridwan's (2015) study finding that most Arab descents are described as still traditional in religious activities. Traditional community on which we focus is those actively involved in the *Taklim* of *Habib* (descendants of Prophet Muhammad) while at the same time *Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)* is often associated with an organization, the members and sympathizers of which are traditionalist. There are four Islamic communities, each of which consists of two official officers and their jamaah (followers) we involve in this study. Those are *Majelis ArRaudhah (MAR)* established by Habib Novel bin Salim Alaydrus, *Majelis Ryadh (MR)* established by Habib Alwi bin Ali Habsyi, *Majelis Bustaanul Asyiqin (MBA)* established by Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf, and *Masjid Jami' Assegaf*

(MJA) established by Habib Ali bin Hussein Assegaf. The researcher took sample from those places as most of their followers in Surakarta live there. This study used a stratified random sampling technique dividing the population into several levels and randomly selecting the final subjects proportionally from different strata as described in Table 1. To obtain data, we used in-depth interview with the study participants using structured interview. The researcher recorded 10 interviews with different respondents; each interview lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. The question consists of 26 question instruments are arranged thematically by the subject matter. In addition, this study also used a model of participant observation where we act sincerely like members of traditional Islamic groups by participating in their activities for one month. The validity of interview data modification was based on the valuation conducted by senior lecturer of Sociology at the University of Sebelas Maret (UNS) who is an expert in political sociology field. The mass of data has to be organized and somehow meaningfully reduced or reconfigured through Creswell's technique. Subsequently, to see the difference of opinion about the phenomena, the researchers analyzed data through environmental triangulation corresponding to Alan Bryman's triangulation method. Thus, we associated one variable with another from the results of data processing and presented it in descriptive form.

Table 1 Research Participants

Code	Sex	Position	Domicile
Q1	Male	Secretary General of MJA	Surakarta
Q2	Male	Follower of MJA	Sragen
Q3	Male	Follower of MJA	Surakarta
Q4	Male	Officer of MAR	Surakarta
Q5	Male	Follower of MAR	Surakarta
Q6	Male	Officer of MR	Surakarta
Q7	Male	Follower of MR	Surakarta
Q8	Male	Officer of MBA	Surakarta
Q9	Male	Follower of MBA	Kudus
Q10	Male	Follower MBA	Semarang

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research consisted of three sub discussions: firstly, portrait of traditional moslem community focusing on social approach in Islam, tradition, and proselytizing material dissemination. Secondly, it is their political preference corresponding to what delivered in the sermon they attend. Thirdly, it represents their role in Presidential election in Surakarta City. Those three sub discussions are interrelated and create unique Islamic political movement pattern.

1. *Majelis* (Meeting)' Activity and Effect

Traditional Islamic community is identical with their active participation in Islam learning, called *majlis taklim*. As suggested by Q1, Q3, Q6, *majlis taklim* activities they attend routinely have daily, weekly, monthly, and annually schedules. Most *majlis* (meetings) explain Islam thought usually referring to Islamic curriculum used in many Islamic boarding schools (*pesantrens*) throughout Indonesia; in addition, discussion on social problems is also inserted. It is in line with Sarbini's (2010) study finding that through delivering Islamic messages constituting the *majlis*' main activities, proselytizing (*dakwah*) actually functions as character creation.

Q1 and Q2 participating in *majlis* argued that it is the largest help God ever gives because through this they can be close to Islamic intellectuals, particularly *Habibs*. In addition, they said that if they want to be close to Prophet, they should be close to their descendants. It motivates them to hold religious activities because just like Q3, Q5, and Q7, they want to get better Islamic understanding through *majlis*.

To maintain the existence, the number of preachers is determined and selected by the officers corresponding to *madzab* prevailing commonly within community. It is in line with Q1 mentioning the importance of selection intended to avoid conflict between Islam communities with varying currents, because *majlis* particularly MJA has been the reference to all Islam tenet currents. Preachers are prohibited from insulting other Islamic currents and should be in line with *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* and still prioritize religious discourse as the main subject. As cited from Q1, after the elected preachers deliver preach in MJA, they will be the respected figure within community later; it is because of MJA existence as the pioneer of Islam dissemination by *Habib* in Surakarta City. Therefore, each of preachers having taught in MJA is considered as having good credibility and in-depth understanding on Islam.

Islam activities held by *majlis* seem to have different portions and roles. Q1 and Q8 said that not all *majlis* focus on religiosity discourse. For example, MJA has *majlis* schedule in the morning and at night everyday topics of *tasawuf* using *Al Hikam* book by *Ibn Athaillah Al Iskandari*, *sirahnabawi* using *Allimu Awladakum Bi Mahabbati Baiti Ahlul Nabi* usually used in colleges in Hadramaut, Yaman, *IhyaUlumuddin* by Imam Ghazali, and *Tafsir Al Jalalain* for *tafsir* material. Meanwhile, MAR, in which Q4 and authors have participated directly, talks about actual social phenomenon and self-development. Preachers do not use any book as reference but focuses only on giving what is considered as important to Islam communities generally, including politic issues. On the other hand, MBA has unique delivering method and elaborates *shalawat* as the media of proselytizing. The meaning of *shalawat* to traditionalist, according to Kholil Mawardi (2009), is how to fill in their creed. Particularly, reading *shalawat* is a half of obedience value to Allah and

Prophet, and is a worship done in order to always be close to Allah. Similarly, we found that from the beginning of session, a variety of *shalawat* versions are sung fully by *marawis* music performer. Koespratama (2016) said that Marawis music is Islamic art due to cross-cultural process of Middle East culture entering into Indonesia.

Considering the observation conducted, traditionalist Islam community has identical and easily recognized fashion style, e.g. wearing sarong, white shirt, and white rimless cap (*peci*). Perhaps they always wear white clothing to imitate Habib who always appear with all-white clothing. It is confirmed by Q7 saying that one form of respect to *Habib* is to imitate their fashion style, and Fiske (2011) stating that dressing is a media used by an individual to express their shared perspective on others. However, they do not force other followers to dress like them. Q2 and Q5 said that originally they even do not wear white clothing, but having attended the *majlis* frequently, they want to wear what the members of *majlis* usually wear. Such condition is also useful to identify which members have joined for a long time and which ones have just joined the *majlis*.

Furthermore, in addition to serving as proselytizing center, the existence of *majelis* also plays social role. MJA, according to Q1, has religious social program, '*sebarkan salam, beri makan*' (greeting, feeding)'. The program aims to distribute Islam values by involving such communities as farmers and tricycle (*becak*) drivers. The implementation procedure is as follows: administrators of *majlis* sit down together and discuss daily topic. Then, a preach comes to teach and to improve their understanding on Islam, particularly about basic worship procedure, as it is a fundamental aspect in Islam, and then they eat together. Ihsan (2008) said that cultural approach in proselytizing is defined as the elaboration of values contained in Qur'an and sunnah in the form of idea, material, behavior, and norm. Applying this value means that an individual has undertaken his religiosity very well.

In social interaction aspect, they attending regularly will be more tolerant to other different Islam thoughts and perspectives. To them, as suggested by Q8, it means a harmonious relationship with neighbors with different perspectives on Islam. It is confirmed with a variety of cross-*madzhab* and other Islam currents also attending the *majlis* forum. Q1, Q4, Q6, and Q8 said that they allow other Islamic currents to attend any religious activities. They assume that indeed *Habib* has never prohibited anyone from coming and he instead invited preachers with different background there improving their understanding on religion. Thus, in the term of social attitude, they accept well and can ward off exclusivity.

Furthermore, another interesting phenomenon is that those attending in *majlis* in fact also attending other *majlis*. As suggested by Q7 and Q2, they attend MAR and MJA on different schedules. Traditional-based Muslims actually attend the *majlis* in the attempt of learning and getting more in-depth understanding on religion. As aforementioned, each of *majlis* has main different

preach, so that they are interested in preach in other majlis. In addition, they also involve family and relatives to join the *majlis*. It correlates closely to Talcott Parson's structural functionalism theory stating that all components of community are interrelated creating a structure. Thus, it can be concluded that those attending the *majlis* is a structural entity unity assembled together by a religion association.

2. Habib's influence on Politics

All research participants said that MAR, MR, MJA, and MBA all specify the criterion that a President should be Muslim. To them, President is an individual who will be the role model to the community. He should be able to protect his own community. As a Muslim, majority informants said that President must fight for his people and it is better for his policy to be in line with the *ulamas* (Islam scholars) instruct, because *ulama's* statement is the appeal of goodness, about either religion problem or community behavior requirement. It is a very fundamental problem in determining a President, particularly for Indonesia with the largest Muslim population in the world. Viewed from religion perspective, non-Muslim President candidate is prohibited from being elected. In this study, we revealed that a Muslim tend to vote parties or candidates with Islam background compared with those having different religion.

Considering the data obtained from Q1, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, and Q8 when they were asked about who is the more rational candidate they vote; whether or not they have positive behavior individually but is surrounded by evil people or surrounded by good people but they have personal behavior not as good as his neighborhood, it can be seen that they prefer candidate with positive personality despite evil people in his surroundings. The phenomenon is basically not an ideal choice because all informants have their own weakness. However, most informants assume that the candidate with personal positive effect still have more ability of guiding their environment to the better one.

As suggested by Q1, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, and Q8, the candidate of president should have background as same as theirs. It refers to their loyalty to *habib* in all aspects. They think that *habib* is on the top position in social order all says and behavior of which should be imitated, including political preference. This assumption tends to create fanatic compliance and to make them the exclusive group and to think other different political view wrong. It confirms Hanafi's (2018) study finding that a group tends to attempt to justify their group's view, despite some proponents not understanding the logical reason behind their agreement. Then, they sometimes underestimate others who do not agree with their political preference despite with the same religion. Particularly they believe in truth based on *habib* as the only source of truth.

However, Q1, Q5 and Q8 did not highlight politics as the main focus of discourse in the *majelis*. They listened to the preachers and the material often discussed is only religion issue. Similarly, majority informants stated that it rarely discusses other issues than religion. Although social phenomena are also discussed in the *majelis*, it can be understood that social phenomena are discussed briefly and as not in detail as the religion issues, particularly the very sensitive political issues. Political competition in gaining Muslims' vote is getting tighter due to the participation of religion leaders who support and promote candidate of president and vice president they choose. This situation of course makes Muslims have varying perspective on this matter, from those feeling secure when the state's supreme leadership is occupied by a scholar to the declination against the involvement of religion leader instead lowering the electability of candidate of president and vice president. To make choice in presidential election, they are more confident with the choice as same as *Habib*'s. it is, of course, in line with Boland's (2014) study discussing Islam community typology in viewing politics-Islam relationship (the relationship between politics and Islam). There are typologies presented: ideological, charismatic, and rational. Typology found by authors in Pasar Kliwon is charismatic typology, assuming that Islam community chooses political party to follow attitude and behavior of an individual it admires surrounding.

Q1, Q4, Q6, and Q8 stated that topic of presidential election has been discussed several times in the sermon. What is discussed in the *majelis* is not to choose one of candidates, but how a Muslim's attitude is to interpret the presidential election and criteria that can be used as reference. Discussion among the followers is usually discussed after the *majelis*, thereby it is not relevant to the material delivered by the preacher. In data collecting process, we found a follower distributed campaign leaflet to the people around the mosque. The candidate legislative member is a member of a *majelis* who has been on duty in Local Legislative Assembly of Surakarta City for one period and is not nominating himself at province level. As suggested by Q3 and confirmed by Q1, few followers and officers are engaged in politics. Most candidates come from PKS. Majority informants said that entering into politics is actually important to Muslim, as long as it is not included into the sermon in the *majelis* focusing on religion issue only. It is in line with Ernas and Muhammadysah's (2010) study stating that there are some forms of political involvement in Islam institution, one of which is participating directly as practitioner or political actor serving as administrator or activist in certain political party.

3. Political Role of Traditional-Based Muslim

Q1, Q4, Q6, Q8, Q9, and Q10 stated that they involve their house environment to elect candidate of president and vice president corresponding to proselytizing attended. Every community has its own objective in doing proselytizing, so that

they play direct role dramatically as a political agent. Having attended the *majelis*, they will share their Islam knowledge and political message massively to their family, neighbor, and close friend. They argued that sharing the knowledge they have means that they have attempted to do good deed. Similarly, in presidential election, the informants stated that they also invite people surrounding to elect a candidate of president and vice president compatible to their choice based on *habib*'s recommendation. As a conclusion, they campaign for consistently as has been delivered in the *majelis* and it is considered to be very effective to minimize absenteeism.

Foremost, all informants agree that they have no relationship with any candidate of president. However, candidates come to *majelis* several times. Q1 said that the candidate coming to *majelis* is normal particularly in campaign period. Majority respondents stated that it does not matter as long as the candidates do not campaign for openly before the *majelis*. So far, party officers or candidates coming to the *majelis* should obey the rule prevailing. In addition to having no relationship with the candidate couple, this *majelis* is not affiliated with any organization. It is in line with Fata's study (2018) finding that political elites and candidate of president have political legitimacy often manifested into political visit forms in certain religion party or Islam scholars. Q1, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, Q9, and Q10 stated that campaigning for a candidate of president is basically a proselytizing movement as it increases Muslims' vote in political domain. As suggested by Q3, *habib* have often said that the communities should not only elect obligatorily but also support completely the candidate Muslims. Moreover, traditional Muslims' obedience to *habib* is still becomes reference in determining the vote in general election.

CONCLUSION

Traditional Islam Community in Pasar Kliwon District is the hegemony of Arab descents living in Surakarta. Considering the data obtained from interview and participatory observation, this research is divided into some sub chapters: firstly, portrait of traditional Islam community focusing on social approach in disseminating Islam, tradition, and proselytizing material represented by a variety of *majelis* distributed anywhere with varying proselytizing approach. *Majelis* is like a non-formal religion school to Surakarta City people becoming to which all Muslim community life problems refer to. They have typical dressing such as *sarung*, white shirt and white *peci*; secondly, their political preference corresponding to what is delivered through the proselytizing they attend. The presence of *majelis*, in addition to giving understanding on *aqidah* and *fiqh*, also informs the importance of political participation to Islam communities. Moreover, the presidential election of 2019 very replete with religion issue inherent to both candidates of president and vice president. The more the support given by religion leaders, the higher is the legitimacy of president candidate in raising Muslim

communities. Most Muslim communities in Indonesia are traditional groups distributed in rural areas. In this case, *habib* is on the top position in social order, all says and behaviors of which, including his political preference, should be imitated. The third sub chapter addresses the role of traditionalistic Muslim in presidential election in Surakarta City. Traditionalistic Muslim serves as political agents disseminating their Islam knowledge and political message to their family, neighbor, and close friend. They argued that sharing the knowledge they have means that they have attempted to do good deed.

This research's finding also complements the investigation on the role of Islam scholars (*ulamas*) or *habibs* as the culture intermediary within community in 1950s. Muslim scientists integrating into science transformation and Islam culture massively now experience the similar transformation from cultural to political role. Traditional Muslim community serves as Islam political agent appealing the election of president and vice president candidates embracing Islam religion correctly. It is considered to be very effective in minimizing the absenteeism rate as it makes religion issue the main message. Their role equally affects the community to gain vote. Thus, this research finds one of important values in which traditional-based Muslim is closely related to preachers and followers. This relationship is called the highest respect, absolute and unceasing respect or obedience.

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