Yanwar Pribadi, *Islam, State and Society in Indonesia: Local Politics in Madura*. London / New York: Routledge [Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series], 2018, xvi + 221 pp. ISBN: 9781138202542, price: USD 155.00 (hardcover).

Political studies about Madura are scarce in Indonesian, let alone in English. It is, therefore, gratifying that recently a very interesting study was published about local politics on this island, covering the period of the final years of the New Order regime (1990–1998) and the first years of the Reformation (1998–2010). In it, the author examines the political relationship between Islam, the state, and society by focusing on three types of local leaders: the *kiai* or religious leader, the *blater* or strongman, both of whom are informal leaders, and the *klebun* or village head, a formal leader. He shows the extent of their political room for maneuver during the autocratic New Order and the years of *Reformasi* that followed, when processes of democratization and decentralization began, as well as how they were able to use these for their own benefit and that of their followers. The author combined archival and library research in Indonesia and abroad with anthropological fieldwork on Madura, spending about 12 months in the West-Madurese regencies of Bangkalan and Sampang in 2009 and 2010–2011.

Of the three types of local Madurese leaders, the *kiai* without doubt command the greatest respect, and are often more powerful than the other leaders. The *kiai*, who head Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), are especially influential. Almost all Madurese are Muslims, the majority of whom, according to the author, are *santri*, pious orthodox believers. A minority are nominal Muslims (*abangan*), who are still deeply attached to certain pre-Islamic elements or other traditions that contradict Islam. Although the author is aware that the range of variations in religious belief is much greater than this, he often falls back on this now obsolete dichotomy.

The *blater* belong to a different world. They are local strongmen, who as fixers, racketeers, and private security guards operate in the twilight zones of society. They are fond of bull races (*kerapan sapi*), gambling, and *remo*, typical *blater*-feasts, where participants dance with men dressed as women, drink alcohol, and raise money for the host's new ventures. Occasionally competitors may challenge each other at these feasts. Pribadi sees these activities as manifestation par excellence of *abangan*-like culture, and considers the strongmen as its "main guardians and supporters," a debatable observation given the data the author presents. It might be better to call the *blater* a controversial, more or less tolerated group of potentially violent entrepre-

neurs with an *abangan* orientation. Thanks to their physical strength, audacity, and intimidating behavior, they are useful intermediaries and henchmen.

Not much is said about the village heads (*klebun*) in the introductory chapters, and it might have been better if this figure's position was considered at greater length. Traditional village structure in Madura differs in various respects from that in Java and, as a result of centuries long indirect colonial rule, Madurese village administration has followed a quite different course of development than did communities in areas under direct rule.

Having discussed the characteristics of the local leaders, the author turns to their role in opposing or embracing two development projects for Madura in the final years of the New Order. The first of these concerned the building of an irrigation dam on the Nipah River in the regency of Sampang, which led to protests by local peasants who were not consulted about the confiscation of their land. As the *klebun* were already taken in by higher authorities, the local population sought support from local *kiai*, who were eventually able to convince the government that the villagers' interests had to be taken into account. The second project consisted of the building of a bridge between Surabaya and Madura as well as the establishment of an industrial area at the western end of the island. This plan, which was again well received by the authorities, led to serious discord among the *kiai*. Some of them, organized through the Association of Friendship of Madurese Pesantren Ulama (*Bassra*), were worried about a possible negative impact the bridge might have on traditional Madurese norms and values. They also feared that Javanese workers might be hired in preference to Madurese ones in new founded industries. Others, however, thought that opening up the island would benefit the population generally. In this case, the conflicting parties were eventually able to reach a compromise after the start of the *Reformasi*, which led to a better understanding of the aspirations and frustrations of the Madurese population.

The core of the book consists of a number of chapters about elections at the national, provincial, regency (*kabupaten*), and local levels before and after the fall of Soeharto. The process of *Reformasi* led to significant changes in election procedures. After having been banned for about thirty years, new political parties were again permitted, and the president, governor, and regent were henceforth to be elected directly, while village heads could no longer be chosen for life. Besides setbacks, these changes also created new opportunities for the local leaders under discussion here. Strangely, the author pays no attention to national elections that were held after 1997. Although he argues that the influence of the *kiai* at this level in the post-Soeharto period has increased, while that of the *blater* has diminished, he doesn't prove this assertion with data.

Much more convincing is his analysis of the races for governor, although here too he does not include all the contests that took place in the post-New Order period. In 2008, in any case, the *blater* and *klebun* played no role of importance in the election of the governor of East Java, while the *kiai* appear to have been extremely active during this campaign. As there were more Islamic parties than before, which moreover supported different pairs of candidates (for the positions of governor and vice-governor), they had a strong negotiation position vis-à-vis the candidates that were seeking their support.

Absolutely fascinating is the description of the roles *kiai*, *blater* and *klebun* played in regency (*kabupaten*) elections, and the activities of the first two in local elections. Pribadi gives an example of the election for a regent and vice-regent in Bangkalan in 2008, in which the contest was primarily between the previous regent, a scion of a prominent *kiai* family with a *blater*-image, who was supported by a conservative Islamic party, and his former vice-regent, who was supported by secular parties. The old regent retained his position, having maintained close contacts with both *klebun* and *blater*. The elections for a *klebun* are illustrated by a case of a competition between a *blater* and a son of a former village head. The *blater* who behaved well during the three month long campaign, and began to give donations for religious ceremonies, was able to win with a small margin. These examples make clear that *kiai* and *blater*, whether out of commitment or opportunism, not only fight for others, but also themselves stand for election to government positions.

Although Pribadi's book is an important and inspiring contribution to the study of political developments in rural areas that, like Madura, are not optimally integrated in the larger society, a few critical remarks must be made. In comparison with the *kiai pesantren*, the author does not pay enough attention to the small village *kiai* and the leaders of mystical groups, who often are the real representatives of the *abangan* tradition. He also does not say much about the interrelationships between these three types of *kiai*. Amazingly, he does not mention that Bassra had for years advocated an independent province of Madura. With regard to the *blater* many questions remain unanswered. Nowhere does he go into detail about their background and their illegal or criminal activities. In his exposition on the use of violence by this group he does not differentiate between honor killings (*carok*) and other types of homicide. He criticizes earlier authors who had written on the subject, without adding anything of importance. It is a pity that he did not do more fieldwork among the *blater*. The author is in any case more familiar with the craft of historians than he is with the participant observation techniques of anthropologists. It is a pity that he does not explain why there are hardly any *blater* in Eastern Madura while Western Madura is crawling with them. It is also regrettable that

there is no comparison with the results of studies of political developments in other parts of Indonesia, notably rural areas. Last but not least, it is remarkable that he considers Madura as “an island of piety, tradition, and violence,” while political violence on the island is significantly lower than in other parts of Indonesia, and cultural violence such as *carok* is primarily restricted to certain circles and localities.

Huub de Jonge

Radboud University Nijmegen (retired)

h.dejonge@maw.ru.nl