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## **THE DYNAMIC ROLE OF RELIGIOUS FIGURES IN THE DIFFUSION OF COMMUNITY FOREST DEVELOPMENT: A Study of Phenomenology on Madurese Community in Probolinggo Regecny**

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**Abstract:** *One of the causes of the successful development of community forests in Probolinggo Regency was the participation of religious leaders. This study explored the dynamics of the role of religious leaders in the development of community forests. Through a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach and a Naturalistic paradigm, it was found that religious leaders carried out dynamic roles from the pioneering period to the period of obtaining international ecolabel certificates. From this discovery, three propositions were drawn to which after inter-relation between the concepts, two substantive theories were drawn, namely (1) Followers' Need-Based Visionary Leader Theory, dan (2) Theory of Change-and-Innovation Enabling Leader Quality (Attributes of Change-and-innovation Enabling Leader).*

**Keywords:** *Community Forest, Innovation Diffusion, Transformational Leader, Charismatic Leadership*

## INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, forests have experienced a massive degradation (Anonymous, 2006; Wibowo, 2006) which continues to this day (Baplan in Agus, Noordwijk, Rahayu, 2004). To mitigate the impact of forest degradation, the Indonesian government issued a policy of the National Movement for Land and Forest Rehabilitation (GNRHL) where similar activities have actually been carried out since 1946.

However, the activities aimed at rehabilitating forests and critical land by the Research and Development Agency of the Ministry of Forestry and CIFOR were deemed to have failed in achieving their objectives (Wibowo, 2006:72-76). Research and Development of the Ministry of Forestry and CIFOR (2005 in Wibowo, 2006:168-169) concludes that from a technical point of view, reforestation activities are no longer problematic. The low success experienced by the rehabilitation program is caused more by the institutional aspect, namely social institutions have not been fully able to direct the dynamics of the community. Thus, motivators, dynamists, and accelerators are needed which naturally can be accepted in the midst of people's lives themselves.

The recommendation then found its proof in the phenomenon of the successful development of community forests in Probolinggo District, especially in Tiris and Krucil District. In these two sub-districts, community forests can be developed on an area of no less than 6,000 hectares with tree stands dominated by *sengon* (*paraserianthes facataria*) plants. Of the 6,000 hectares, 152.6 hectares have obtained a Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) certificate from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) based in the UK. One of the success factors for developing community forests in Probolinggo Regency is the involvement of religious figures in its development. This study intended to uncover, analyze, and interpret the role dynamics of religious figure in the diffusion of community forest development in Probolinggo starting from its establishment to the period of international ecolabel certificate administration.

In the phenomenon of innovation diffusion, Wejnert (2002) proposes a conceptual framework for the variables that influence its success. The

variables are divided into three major components, namely the characteristics of the innovation, the characteristics of the innovator, and the characteristics of the environment. Wejnert notes that studies on the characteristics of innovators are still little done.

This mapping of variables in the diffusion of innovation complements what Rogers (1983) stated that the factors influencing the process of innovation diffusion are the innovation, change agents, sources of information, and early adopters. From these factors, Rogers put forward the basic premise as a model for the diffusion of innovation by stating that access to information is an important factor influencing the decision to participate or not (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971). Regarding access to this information, Glendinning, Mahapatra, and Mitchell (2001) who conducted research on the success of community forest development in India stated that contact with change agents as intermediaries between the agency and the client, has a great influence in leading the community to accept or reject new ideas in the form of community forest development. Through the intermediary functions of the change agent in the form of (1) building the need for change, (2) strengthening relationships with clients, (3) diagnosing problems, (4) growing the desire for change in clients, (5) translating desires be an action to change, (6) stabilizing change, and anticipating discontinuity, (7) building client independence, the role of change agents is clearly significant influence on the success of the spread and adoption of an innovation or new idea.

Anything happened in India is the initial capital to see that the same phenomenon also occurs in this study which was conducted in rural areas of Indonesia with a paternalistic culture where religious figures (e.g., *pesantren* caregivers) are the driving force. From the experience of LPES and Frederick-Naumann-Stiftung who carry out community development in rural areas in Indonesia by partnering with *pesantren* caregivers, the format adopted is the placement of religious figures as culture brokers: in contrast to the concept of change agents as previously described.

Geertz (1960) stated that as a cultural intermediary, *kyai* has an important contribution to eliminate the cultural shock when two cultures meet with unequal powers: the great tradition which is a cultural predicate. Monotheistic, Mecca-centered, and international Islam and little tradition which is a polytheistic culture, an agrarian, and local Javanese area. The vital role of religious figures in the development of Indonesia as a nation-state in the future. In Geertz's view (1960), it is still important. However, the *kyai* are

faced with two choices, namely to continue to adhere to the existing tradition, namely to take a distance from things that smell like government, or seize opportunities as a teacher-politician that requires him to have the skills to link between urban and rural traditions. In Geertz's view, both options are equally risky. The first option risks the erosion of the *kyai's* role in state administration. Meanwhile, the second option carries the risk of taking steps to change the attitude of the *kyai* towards politics and changing the curriculum in Islamic boarding schools to capture opportunities in the administration of the state. All of this needs to be taken to maintain the role of *ulama* as culture brokers who are able to mediate between great culture (great tradition) and small culture (little tradition) in Indonesia. However, Geertz implicitly predicted that the role of *ulama'* in the development of New Indonesia will be eroded and disappeared; remembering that the second choice in its proposition will remain difficult for *ulama'*.

In the next decade, Geertz's proposition was refuted by Dhofier (1983) and Horikoshi (1987) who conducted a research in the 1970s, in the following decade Mansurnoor (1990), Dirdjosanjoto (1999) also conducted a research on the role of religious figures. Both Dhofier (1983) and Horikoshi (1987) made important findings, namely that the existence of *kyai* and *pesantren* was proven to still exist, and their position and role remained important in the development of New Indonesia.

One of the important factors in maintaining the existence and role of the *kyai* is that the position of *ulama* in Indonesia is different from that of their colleagues in the Middle East. In the Middle East, *ulama'* is part of the bureaucracy; while *ulama'* in Indonesia is not part of the bureaucracy (Horikoshi, 1987; Mansurnoor, 1990). In other words, the role of *ulama'* in society is determined by their ability to serve the needs of society; not by his ability to serve the country. Therefore, as long as the *ulama'* still serve and are needed by the community, their roles are still needed.

The results of Horikoshi's (1987) research on the sustainability of the role of religious figures become more complete when combined with the results of Dhofier's (1983) research on the important aspects of *pesantren* tradition that can maintain the popularity of the *kyai*, and the *kyai's* view of society and the future. The important aspects that influence in maintaining popularity in society are that the *ulama'* build a special mechanism consisting of ideological unity, family networks, and political sects (religion); and his ability to carry out self-transformation according to the demands of society.

Furthermore, the ability of religious figures to maintain their role in society was further refined by Mansurnoor (1990) who conducted research in Madura. In Mansurnoor's (1990) study, it was found that the success of the *ulama'* in maintaining their social role was due to their readiness to respond to the changes that occurred: the more well-informed a scholar is, the more careful he is and, the more favorable the reactions he takes. Therefore, Mansurnoor proposed a proposition in the form of categorization of *ulama'*, namely conservative, adaptive, and progressive.

It can be seen that religious figures will still have their place in society if religious figures remain in their position as culture brokers, namely *istiqamah* (consistent) and *i'tidal* (standing upright) to serve the people in achieving the goal of improving their condition; not turn around to serve the needs of other agents that are completely outside the mandate given by the community. It is clear that there is a theoretical gap that needs to be revealed, namely: do religious figures in the development of community forests in this study act as change agents as in Rogers' concept (1983) or as culture brokers in Geertz's (1960) concept?

## RESEARCH METHOD

The answer to the problem in this research requires a holistic approach to the object and sees it as a unified natural context, not partial. Isolation or elimination of the natural context under study will cause the phenomenon to be separated from its context. In addition, considering that in all natural contexts, there is human and cultural involvement, and that humans must use data to obtain data as instruments, because only human instruments have a high degree of adaptation, and they can reveal the cultural content and the interwoven meanings.

As a consequence, considering that each natural and cultural context that develops in it has its own characteristics, the results of this study can only be interpreted idiographically, that is, there is no pretension to seek generalizations: at best it is only limited to providing insight into the possibility of transferability or the possibility of giving the same meaning to phenomena with the same characteristics (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:124). Therefore, the research method that was suitable for this research was a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach in the naturalistic paradigm.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed that the success of community forest development in Probolinggo Regency was caused by the alignment of steps in the three supporting elements, namely PT. Kutai Timber Indonesia (PT. KTI), and farmers who own land, as well as religious figures who mediate these two elements. During the pioneering period, the roles displayed by religious figures were as filters for the incoming culture, as mediators, communicators, and investors. At the next stage, namely during the growth period, the role that emerges is the role as an organizer (organizer) is more dominant, in addition to the role of arbitration, namely as a conflict arbiter. Finally, during the processing of international ecolabel certificates, religious figures still carry out their roles as organizers and arbitrators, while the role of religious scholars is merely non-active symbolic leader in the administration of international ecolabel certificate.

In other words, the research results show the phenomenon that (1) religious figures participate and have an important role in the development of community forests in Probolinggo Regency, (2) the involvement of religious figures is followed by the participation of farming communities in the research area on a massive scale, and (3) in the continuum of time from the pioneering period to the international ecolabel certificate management period, the quality of the role of religious figures has decreased from the role of decision-making, decisive, and active to only symbolic roles. Departing from these three phenomena, three questions emerge which will become the basis for formulating propositions. The three questions are (1) what motivates religious figures to be involved in community forest development, (2) why is the involvement, support,

From the theoretical reflection, it can be explained as follows. The spirit that moves religious figures to develop community forests is the spirit of *tasharruf al imam manuthun bi al mashlahab* (all leader policies must refer to the welfare of the people), and are aimed at achieving a good area, and always under the protection of Allah the Almighty (*baldatun thayyibatun wa rabbun ghafur*). Therefore, all formats and programs that are counter-productive to this goal will be opposed. Unless the format can be adapted to this value, it will still be against it. In other words, the key word to invite the involvement of religious figures in the community forest development program, so that later it can be expected to invite followers to participate in this program is the content of improving the people's economy. Without this, religious figures

will take one of two positions: either they do not care or they will block the program.

**Proposition I:**

Religious figures are willing to be involved and support the community forest development program only if the program has the content of improving the economic conditions of the people.

Furthermore, considering that community forest development must be developed on people's lands, this program must have community support on a massive scale. The findings of this study have proven that the involvement of religious figures can mobilize community support and involvement on a massive scale.

Based on the study, information was obtained that the success of religious figures to gain support from the community on a massive scale was due to what they are doing was a real problem in the community as well as solution was also given, so that when religious figures have to become investors in realizing this program, it was due to the fact that the community really needed an investor to empower them; not investors who were driven by the motive to only obtain a profit.

This kind of role can be done only if religious figures remain consistent in their traditional roles as culture brokers, namely middle men who bridge two cultures to reduce conflict, and making changes (Geertz, 1960). This kind of role is almost impossible when the religious figure shifts to the role of change agent in Rogers' concept (1983), because the main task of the change agent is to make changes as desired.

Other things that prove that religious figures are positioned as culture brokers, not as change agents are that all processes from the testing phase to implementation are diagnosed in the perspective of the interests of the people. These roles are a set of reflection of the position of religious figures as culture brokers, namely people who stand in the midst of two cultures, and interpret one culture into another reciprocally. This concept has become a pressing point in the Hallowel concept (Michie, 2003). When a person has moved from one culture to another, then he has shifted from the role of a culture broker, because he has become a part of the culture where he has moved.

In this study, the religious figures did not take steps to make a shift. This is in line with the results of previous studies by Dhofier (1983), Horikoshi (1987), and Mansurnoor (1990). These results indicate that, in the context of religious figures in Indonesia, the role of culture broker is carried out with loyalty to the people who give them a mandate (Horikoshi, 1987). Therefore, in carrying out various actions to bridge (intermediary act), or mediate between two cultures, religious figures must remain in the corridor of protecting, empowering, and defending the people; not be an agent of a party, government, or company. When it is done, the mandate received by the people will be revoked by any invitation, and his orders are no longer heeded (Turmudi, 2003). This can happen, because religious figures in Indonesia are not part of the bureaucracy. Therefore, his authority is a mandate from the people; not a mandate from the government (Mansurnoor, 1990). This is different from the clerical institution in several countries in the Middle East where the *ulama'* is an official bureaucratic institution belongs to the government.

Being consistent in their position as a culture broker, religious figures can build a trust in their circle. In this study, the trust was well maintained. The followers of religious figures in this study stated that religious figures did not deceive the people (*ta' co ngocob*) which was proven by their courage to sacrifice and take risks when there was a loss on the development of the community forest they pioneered (risk takers). Furthermore, in their work, religious figures always carry out transformational leadership, namely change, dream, empower, model, and love. A clear example for this series of transformative steps are vacant land, community forests, *paroan*, investors, and *tasharruful imam al al raiyyah manuthun bil maslahah*.

The following proposition can be drawn.

### **Proposition II:**

The invitation of religious figures to the community to develop community forests will get wide acceptance only if religious figures are consistently in a position as culture broker and transformational leadership.

Finally, the nature of the roles of religious figures in the continuum of community forest development from the pioneering period to the processing of international ecolabel certificates has decreased. In the pioneering phase,



the role of religious figures is decisive, decision-making, and active. Furthermore, in the growth phase, these roles are no longer decisive even though they are still active. Finally, in the ecolabel certificate processing phase, the roles of religious figures are symbolic and inactive roles. The form of the role is the role as filter, mediator, investor, arbitrator, organizer, and symbol. All roles are carried out in a position as a culture broker, and implemented in change, dream, model, empower, and love that all of these are attributes of *transformational leadership*.

Furthermore, about the cause of the decline in the role of religious figures from the role of decision-making figures and active to symbolic and inactive figures in the continuum of community forest development from the pioneering period to the period of obtaining international ecolabel certificates, religious figures had a role as decision makers, and were active. This role lasted for three years, from 2003 to 2005. However, in beginning of 2006, the role of religious figures began to decrease. At this time, the development of community forests is entering a period of growth, and is taking steps to apply for an international ecolabel certificate. Due to the high strict administrative and field technical demands from international ecolabel certification agency, PT. KTI must place two professionals.

This matter has a negative impact on the role of religious figures. There was a zero sum game for religious figures, because they had to share roles with these two professionals. It means that a new subsystem in Parson's view (in Ritzer and Goodman, 2003:133) has been formed. The emergence of new subsystems in a system is a sign that there has been a growth in the system, because when society changes, new subsystems are differentiated (Luhmann in Ritzer and Goodman, 2003: 250). This is in line with the purpose of differentiation, namely to deal with changes in the environment. We understand that the complexity of the environment then demands differentiation in the system. Otherwise, the system will be overwhelmed by the complexity of his environment, collapse and cease to exist.

Based on previous explanations, a third proposition is proposed as follows.

### **Proposition III:**

The role of religious figures will remain stable only if religious figures are seen by the community as loyal to the community and have scientific capacity in related fields.

The relationship between the elements that are the pre-requisites of the three proposed propositions, namely improving the economic conditions of the people, the position of culture broker, transformational leadership, loyalty and partiality to the people, and mastery of knowledge in related fields, and the dynamics of the role of religious figures had addressed that the relationship between the pre-requisite of improving the economic conditions of the people with the dynamics of the role of religious figures has a relationship called as as a means-end relationship ( $x$  is a way to do  $y$ ), where the role or role of religious figures as  $x$  and improvement of the people's economy as  $y$  (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 340). The pattern of the relationship between these two concepts is that religious figures will take a part in the community forest development program, because this program is considered capable to realize the ideals of improving the economic conditions of the people.

Furthermore, the relationship between improving the economic condition of the people with the concept of culture broker, transformational leadership, loyalty to the people, and mastery of knowledge in related fields are inseparable from the concept of the dynamics of the role of religious figures; considering that the latter concept is the goal of the previously mentioned concept. Therefore, in the next construction, it is impossible or not, it must depart from the point of discussion between the concept of the dynamics of the role of religious figures with the concepts of culture broker and transformational leadership; between the concept of the dynamics of the role of religious figures with the concept of loyalty in favor of the people and scientific mastery of religious figures in related fields; and between the concept of *culture broker* dan *transformational leadership* with the concept of loyal partiality to the community and mastery of knowledge in related field.

From the theoretical reflection, the dynamic role of religious figures in the social system in rural communities in Indonesia is largely determined by the consistency of their attitude as a culture broker and their vision and transformative roles in society (Horikoshi, 1987; Mansurnoor, 1990). The shift in the position of the *kyai* from a culture broker to an agent from external forces will result in a loss of trust from the public and a loss of public respect to him. This is because the authority possessed by religious figures comes from the community, not from the state unlike religious figures in several countries in the Middle East or in some countries in African (Horikoshi, 1987;

Mansurnoor, 1990; Turmudi, 2003). As a result, it is predictable that the religious leader will lose his influence in society. Therefore, the relationship between consistency as a culture broker and the dynamics of the role of religious figures is in a cause-effect relationship (Lincoln and Guba (1985: 340). The consistency as a culture broker affects the dynamics of the role. religious figures. When religious figures are consistent in the position, the trust from the community will still exist; On the other hand, when a religious figure shifts from a position as a culture broker to an agent of external forces, it is not promising for a trust of the people.

This cause-and-effect relationship also occurs between the concept of transformational leadership and the dynamics of the role of religious figures. The ability of religious figures to remain *expert power* and *referent power* is caused by their superiority in the field of knowledge (Humphrey, Pryor, Haden, Oyler, 2009), so that a clear vision of the future emerged (McLaurin, and Al Amri, 2008; Choi, 2006; Rom and Pliskin, 1999). The vision is obtained from an understanding of the surrounding environment (Takala, 1998; Trahan, Burke, and Koonce, 1997), leading religious figures to have referent power, or to be admired (Humphreys, Pryor, Haden, and Oyler, 2009).

Furthermore, the followers' admiration for this leader is fostered by the ability of religious figures to envision the future, communicate the vision, and implement the vision (Conger and Kanungo, 1998) or envision the future, empathy, empower, and awareness of leadership functions (Choi, 2006; Knoop, 2006). In addition, this ability must then be re-proved by religious figures through some attitudes, namely trustworthy, competent, forward-looking, and risk-taker (Conger and Kanungo, 1998). The integrity of these actions and behaviors is completely interpreted as challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling the others to act, modelling the way, and encouraging the heart (Kouzes and Posner (1987). Kertajaya (2010) further summarized this phrase into change, dream, empower, model, and love.

All of these will place religious figures to the trusted person in the community, and that transformational leadership influences the dynamics of the role of religious figures. In addition, the concept of loyalty and patiality of religious figures to the people and mastery of knowledge in related fields has a means-end relationship:  $x$  is the way to do  $y$  on the concepts of culture broker and transformational leadership. To prove consistency as a culture broker, religious figures must be consistent in placing their loyalty to the people who

give them a mandate; not to turn back to be an agent of external forces. When it happens, they will be alienated in the community (Mansurnoor, 1990).

The theory generated from this study has resulted a view on how to involve religious figures in the development of community forests, and how to ensure that this role can survive in the development of community forests in the continuum from pioneering to obtaining international ecolabel certificates. The first is the theory that results from the inter-relationship between the role of religious figures ( $x$ ) and the economic improvement of the people ( $y$ ). The relationship pattern is means-end ( $x$  is the way to do  $y$ ). The theory is the ***Followers' Need-Based Visionary Leader Theory***.

"The role of religious figures in the development of community forests is aimed at improving people's economy."

The second theory is a theory obtained from the results of the inter-relation between the concept of culture broker ( $x$ ), and the concept of transformational leadership ( $x$ ) with the dynamics of the role of religious figures ( $y$ ) which is built in a cause-effect pattern ( $x$  is the cause of  $y$ ); and a theory that is built from inter-relationship between the concept of loyalty to the people ( $x$ ) and the concept of culture broker ( $y$ ) as well as the concept of mastery of knowledge in related fields ( $x$ ) with the concept of transformational leadership ( $y$ ). The theory is the Theory of Change-and-Innovation Enabling Leader Quality (***Attributes of Change-and-innovation Enabling Leader***):

" The dynamics of the role of religious figures are influenced by the ability of their consistency in holding a position as culture brokers proven by their loyalty to the interests of the people, as well as their ability to carry out transformational leadership that requires mastery of knowledge in related fields."

## CLOSING

As a final conclusion, this study provides theoretical implications in the form of finding the need for a culture broker as a substitute for change agents in the implementation of the diffusion of innovation in rural communities in Indonesia, and finding a common thread on the debate about the ability of religious figures (kyai) in Indonesia to continue to play a role in the state order. nation. The common thread is in the concept of position consistency as a culture broker and the concept of transformational leadership. Therefore,

the resulting theory supports the proposition of Geertz (1960), Dhofier (1983), Horikoshi (1987), Mansurnoor (1990), Dirdjosanjoto (1999), and Turmudi (2003).

The practical implication of this research WAS in the form of suggestions to the government, namely the need to design community forest development patterns in collaboration with religious figures. In this collaboration, religious figures should still be placed as transformative culture brokers; not a figure who is absorbed as a government agent; moreover, the format of the cooperation is more transactional. The involvement and active role of religious figures in the development of community forests in this study had been proven to be able to spread and could help to accelerate the adoption of this innovation in rural communities, so that the intended religious figures could be invited to built a partnership with the government. In addition, the issues or content in the community forest development program needs to prioritize to improve the local community's economy. When this issue is forwarded and corresponded, there is a great potential for religious figures to join in this program. Some contents other than improving the community's economy, such as conserving natural resources will be treated, because it is considered purely government affairs. On the other hand, when the content and format implemented in the community forest development program actually interfere with the interests of improving the local community's economy, it is not impossible that religious figures stand in the forefront to screen the program. Besides, to improve environmental conditions especially the destruction of forests in Indonesia, the government as a change agency needs to make a more planned and measurable program specifically aims at producing religious figures who can be government partners in implementing community forest development program. The experience of LP3ES and P3M in the 1980s can be used as an initial reference in implementing this program.

Finally, there is a necessary for some suggestions to religious figures in order that their role will remain significant. They also need to immediately increase their capacity, so that they can work on various niches that stretch from guaranteeing nature conservation to community empowerment. When it is done, the religious figures will have a sustainable role as Professor Wangari Maathai in Kenya.

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