

# Political Relations And Sufi In Development Political Communication (Case Study In Pelalawan, Indonesia)

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## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the relationship between politicians and Sufis in building political communication. Sufi with its classical tradition has built a system of absolute hierarchy; therefore, obedience to the person is part of the religious principle of the Sufis. In the next span of time, Sufism developed into a Tariqat group. In this phase, a spiritual figure is born as the sole holder of the line of command who determines the direction of policy in all matters, including political affairs. It was for this purpose that two-way political communication was formed, with Sufi congregations and politicians. This paper aims to reveal the relationship between Sufi congregations and politicians in Pelalawan Regency, Indonesia. In order to solve this problem, an approach was made through observation and interviews with the congregation of the Tariqat and politicians. The results obtained from this study indicate that the role of the murshid towards the Sufi congregation is no longer significant as evidenced by the ineffectiveness of political communication. The factor that greatly influenced this failure was the growth of materialist and hedonistic attitudes among the Sufi congregation.

**Keywords:** Relations, Political Communication, Politicians, Sufi

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## INTRODUCTION

Sufis and politicians are two things that are always seen paradoxically. Political life that tends to be mundane and materialistic is a fundamental reason for Sufis to stay away from it. Meanwhile, many politicians view that Sufi life will only curb creativity and political ambition, be exclusive and asocial. Therefore, being a Sufi, for some people, means apathy towards worldly things and even tends to be secular, (Robert Rozehnal: 2007) including in the political field. However, some Sufis actually used their congregation to mobilize the masses and achieve political goals. On the other hand, there are also many politicians who build political communication with Sufis, such as during a democratic party.

During its development, the Sufi community, which is organized in a tariqat, has formed emotional bonds through certain personalities. (Muzayyin: 2020) This then gave birth to the flow of tariqat such as the Naqsabandiyah, Syathariyah, Saziliyah and Samaniyah. This Tariqat then developed rapidly and spread widely in Muslim countries. (Muhammad Djakfar: 2018) One of the places where the tariqat was developed is Pelalawan district, an old country that started as the center of the kingdom of Pekan Tua, then continues to change and finally now has the status of a district. In this place, one of the Tariqat schools is growing and developing, namely Naqsabandiyah.

Pelalawan's specialty as a center for the development of the Naqsabandiyah order is due to the murshid figure of Tuan Guru Syekh H. Abdus Somad, the Naqsabandiyah murshid disciple who received direct lineage from the murshid Tuan Guru Shaykh Haji Abdul Ghani al-Khalidi who brought the sysyid lineage of Syekh Sulaimanyah al-Khalidi directly from Zuh Sulaimanyah al-Khalidi. Through this murshid the Naqsabandiyah tariqat entered and developed in Riau starting from Koto Tengah, Godang Island in the westernmost province of Riau and spread along the river to the East to the old town of Pelalawan. Murshid Tuan Guru Syekh H. Abdus Somad in Pelalawan has an important role in the development of the Naqsabandiyah Order. Tariqat congregations who are scattered throughout the sub-districts in the Pelalawan district are part of this charismatic figure. It is this reality

that opens up great opportunities for the intensity of political communication between the Sufi and politicians in Pelalawan.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

In every political process, political communication occupies a strategic position. In fact, political communication is expressed as the "lifeblood" of the political process. How could it not be, various political structures including political parties obtain political information and political support through political communication. The presence of religious institutions such as the Tariqat institution is always used as a means of political communication between politicians and Sufis (a term given to the Tariqat community) at any political event. Communication of politicians and Sufis increases in intensity because in the Tariqat there is "one command" from the murshid to his congregation to mobilize political support for certain politicians.

Rafael Raga Maran in his Introduction to Political Sociology states that political communication is not something specific and separate from the social communication model, therefore the basic patterns follow social communication patterns. Political communication is communication that involves political messages and political actors, or is related to power, government, and government policies. Therefore political communication is something important, without effective political communication, political activity will lose its shape. (Rafael Raga Maran: 2007)

Political communication is intended as a process and activities to form political attitudes and behaviors that are integrated into a political system using meaningful symbols. Furthermore, what will be produced through political communication is the formation of an activity that enables the realization of political ideals, including efforts to win an event such as the struggle for a seat in the House of Representatives. To realize such ideals, according to Dan Nimmo, political communicators need to be present, because organized group spokespersons and opinion leaders play an active role in political communication. Political communication, which is the linking of political thoughts that live in society, be it the

thoughts of internal groups, associations, agencies or sectors of government political life, is very dependent on three things, namely, First, presenting the general style of participation. Second, the motive that underlies activities, the third is the consequence of participating in one's role in politics. (Dan Nimmo: tt)

Alfian as followed by Hafied states that what is meant by political communication is connecting all parts of the political system, so that aspirations and interests are converted into various policies. If the communication runs smoothly, naturally and healthily, the political system will achieve a high level of responsiveness to the development of the aspirations and interests of society in accordance with the demands of the times. (Hafied Cangara: tt)

Quoting the opinion of Karl W. Deutsch in Michael Rush and Philip Althoff, political communication is the transmission of politically relevant information from one part of the political system to another and between social systems and political systems as dynamic elements of a political system. (Michael Rush and Philip Althoff: 2008)

Political communication cannot stand alone except through other assistance called political channels. According to Rafael, political channels consist of three elements, namely mass media, interest groups and interpersonal contacts. Mass media such as newspapers, magazines, tabloids, television and radio are the main channels of political communication. The format of political information through the mass media can be presented in an attractive style, language and images so that it has its own appeal and can be adjusted according to the trends of the target group. Apart from the mass media, political communication channels can be made through interest groups. This second element is usually combined in one forum, ties such as political parties and positions. Bonds within the same party and structure in office allow for good communication in an effort to place common interests.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a field research on the community of Tariqat followers and politicians. The theory used in this study is based on the concept of elite, group and power as organizing principles which states that "a small group of people who are capable and therefore occupy a position to rule, and a large number of masses are destined to be ruled. (SP. Varma: 2010) The population in the study consisted of figures and congregations of Naqsabandiyah and pimpinan and political party administrators in Pelalawan district. Because the population number cannot be known with certainty, the sample in this study was determined based on purposive sampling. Data collection was carried out by interview and documentation. Data were analyzed based on qualitative data.

#### DISCUSSION

##### **Politicians and Sufi Political Communication in Pelalawan Regency**

Political communication can be in the form of personal or inter-group contacts. Relationships are an effective way to create public opinion. This channel actually acts as a channel of political communication between politicians and Sufis in Pelalawan Regency during the general election party. Pelalawan Regency is one of the oldest Malay countries and was founded in 1726. This country has long-standing emotional ties with Sufi figures. It has

been recorded that until now (Saleh Jasit: 1999) religious policies are always synonymous with murshid decisions as the highest authority in Sufi life, (Ahmed M Elnahas, et.al: 2016) including in making political decisions.

When Pelalawan was still a sub-district within the Kampar district, this area was the largest contributor to the United Development Party (PPP). The vote acquisition for the party bearing the Ka'bah has started to decline since the 2004 General Elections. This party, which is synonymous with the party of the Tariqat, continues to experience a decline in the number of votes. The last three elections in 2009, 2014 and 2019, the United Development Party was unable to rise to become a major party to win parliamentary seats in Pelalawan Regency. This party was abandoned by its own supporters, namely the Naqsabandiyah Jamaah.

##### **Factors Affecting the Communication of Sufi Politicians**

The intensity of communication of Sufi politicians in Pelalawan runs very well at every election event. Politicians scramble for the opportunity to be able to meet the murshid tariqat and khadam tariqat in every surau suluk. Murshid and khadam are flooded with guests with various visions, missions and promises. The realization of political communication between politicians and Sufis in Pelalawan with votes is as shown in the table above. The United Development Party, as an affiliated party of the Jamaah Tariqat, has lost a lot of votes in the last three legislative elections.

The Head of the Pelalawan United Development Party Branch Management, a congregation of the naqsandiyah tariqat as well as a close family of the murshid, resigned as chairman of the PC PPP Pelalawan and moved to the Golkar party as chairman of the Golkar Party branch board because he failed three times in a row to win the Pelalawan DPRD seat. This failure was interpreted as a sign that the line of command of the authorities in Pelalawan's naqsabandiyah order was not running.

The leadership of PC PPP Pelalawan who replaced him was a Muhammadiyah board who did not have a background as a tariqat congregation and even tended to see this as something new. The position of chairman of the PC PPP Pelalawan led him to the seat of the Pelawan DPRD for the 2014-2019 and 2019-2024 periods. This success is interpreted as a sign to strengthen evidence of the failure of the line of command of the authorities in the Naqsabandiyah order of Pelalawan.

The former chairman of PC PPP Pelalawan and his successor had a perception that political communication between politicians and Sufis was hampered by a very dominant factor, namely industrialization which gave birth to attitudes of hedonism and materialism.

The communication of politician-Sufi in Pelalawan came from Islamic-based parties such as PPP. (Junaidi Purba: 2017) According to PPP politicians, this is because the party politicians bearing the Ka'bah symbol are "new players" who do not yet have an effective communication channel even though emotionally there is a "closeness" between them in their Islamic aspects. Besides them as "new players" in the political arena, according to them, the failure of Sufi-politician communication is due to the impact or influence of "liberalism". The consequence of this ideology is that the Jamaah Tariqat gives its choice to anyone from any party, not having to choose a party based on Islam. A further consequence of this liberalism is a change in life orientation which leads to worldly

pleasures. When this situation becomes a life orientation, the murshids and their congregations will give their political support to politicians who are economically established.

In contrast to Islamic-based party politicians, party politicians who are not based on Islam, especially "ruling" parties such as Golkar, see intense political communication between Sufi-politicians. (Nazaruddin: 2017) According to them, the intensity of political communication is due to various factors including; kinship factors, teacher-student relationship factors, and economic factors are no exception. In relation to the implementation of the legislative elections in Pelalawan in 2014, the intensity of political communication between Sufi-politicians did not show that there is a "one command" from the murshid to his tahriqat congregations to provide support to certain politicians, but to give them freedom to make their choice. This is because among the politicians who will "fight" on the pillig are students or congregations of Tariqat from different parties. Thus the dominant factors in the politician-Sufi relationship in Pelalawan are kinship and economic factors. (Burhan: 2017)

The magnitude of the economic factor determines the support for politicians, shows the strong influence of the ideology of "liberalism" as mentioned above, and this influence also "penetrates" to religious institutions including the institution of Tariqat. In 2014, Pelalawan district held a legislative election. The parties participating in the election were actively involved to get their representative seats in the Pelalawan DPRD for five years. As a result, 35 candidates were elected to the Pelalawan DPRD for the 2014-2019 period after the Pelalawan KPU completed the plenary counting of district votes.

Table. 1

List of Acquisition Seats for the Pelalawan Regency DPRD in 2014 Based on the Electoral District

No	Electoral District	Chairs Amount	Information
1	One	12	Bandar Seikijang District, Langgam District and Pangkalan Kerinci District
2	Two	9	Bandar Petalangan, Bunut District, Pelalawan District, Teluk Meranti District and Kuala Kampar District
3	Three	6	Ukui District and Kerumutan District
4	Four	8	Pangkalan Lesung District and Pangkalan Kuras District
<b>Amount</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>12 Districts</b>

Table. 2

List of Acquired Seats for the Pelalawan Regency DPRD in 2019 Based on the Electoral District

No	Electoral District	Chairs Amount	Information
1	One	7	Pangkalan Kerinci District

2	Two	9	Bandar Petalangan, Bunut District, Pelalawan District, Teluk Meranti District and Kuala Kampar District
3	Three	6	Ukui District and Kerumutan District
4	Four	8	Pangkalan Lesung District and Pangkalan Kuras District
5	Five	5	Bandar Seikijang District and Langgam District
<b>Amount</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>12 Districts</b>

Electoral District, with a total of 12 seats in 2014, covers the electoral area of Bandar Seikijang District, Langgam District and Pangkalan Kerinci District. In 2019, electoral districts were divided into 5 constituencies consisting of Bandar Seikijang and Langgam districts with a population of 54,979 people fighting for 5 council seats.

Data on the seat acquisition of Pelalawan Regency DPRD seats in 2014, 2019 electoral one covering the Bandar Seikijang, Langgam and Pangkalan Kerinci sub-districts received 12 seats, with the following classifications:

Table. 3  
List of Parties, Acquisition of Legislative Seats in Pelalawan Regency Electoral Districts One and Two

No	Party	Acquisition of Electoral Seats 1		Acquisition of Electoral Seats 2	
		2014	2019	2014	2019
1	Demokrat	1	-	1	1
2	Gerindra	1	1	1	1
3	Golkar	2	1	3	2
4	Hanura	1	-	1	-
5	Nasdem	1	-	-	-
6	PAN	1	1	1	1
7	PBB	1	-	-	-
8	PKB	-	-	-	1
9	PDIP	2	2	1	1
10	PKS	1	1	-	1
11	PPP	1	-	1	1
<b>Amount</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>

Processed data 2019

The spread of vote acquisition as shown in the table shows that there is no party that dominates the vote acquisition in electoral one which covers Bandar Seikijang District (31,908 people), Langgam sub-district (29,797) and Pangkalan Kerinci District (111,385) even though when viewed from a population perspective (173,090) Jiwa) in 2019, electoral district one ranks first as the biggest contributor to the party. This even distribution of votes is an indicator of the heterogeneity of society and the loss of the Malay identity engraved in the sultanate's tradition as well as the loss of an acceptable figure.

The results of the legislative elections in 2014, 2019 are electoral districts of Bandar Petalangan District, Bunut District, Pelalawan District, Teluk Meranti District and Kuala Kampar District with 9 seats in the region who will sit in the legislative seats. One of the most densely populated areas is because it is the largest industrial area in Pelalawan, namely PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP), a company owned by Asia Pacific Resources International Limited (APRIL) founded in 1992.

In terms of quantity, electoral districts are dominated by the votes acquired by the Golkar Party. This position can reflect that the Golkar party has almost no significant competition in the struggle for voter sympathy in the democratic arena for the election of members of the Pelalawan Regency DPRD in 2014, 2019. , Teluk Meranti District and Kuala Kampar District with a population of about 83,196 people.

When viewed from a geographical aspect, the sub-districts that are included in the second electoral district are areas that are directly related to river routes as the main transportation in the past. With this point of view, it can be ascertained that the people in the five sub-districts in the electoral district can be ascertained that the majority of them are indigenous people or local residents as the Pelalawan Malay community.

Meanwhile, when examined from a cultural aspect, Malay kinship has formed an emotional relationship to maintain the Malay existence in the former Pelalawan sultanate, so that the touch of people who take one step, being elevated simultaneously can easily unite perceptions including in determining good choices for the House of Representatives and regional head election.

As the capital of Pelalawan district, Pangkalan Kerinci is inhabited by various communities, apart from indigenous people, immigrants from various tribes and ethnicities who live in the district capital. The heterogeneous society in the capital city of Pelalawan Regency has not yet found figures, figures, role models of traditional leaders, as glue that can be used as role models. Therefore the decision to make choices is based on personal tendencies.

Table. 4

The Population of Election Election of DPRD Members in Pelalawan Regency in 2019

Electoral District	District	Population / Soul	Amount
1	Bandar Seikijang	31.727	133.522
	Langgam	23.252	
	Pangkalan Kerinci	78.543	
2	Bandar Petalangan	14 106	83.196

	Bunut	15 071	
	Pelalawan	19 214	
	Teluk Meranti	16 786	
	Kuala Kampar	18 019	
3	Ukui	38.764	62.051
	Kerumutan	23.287	
4	Pangkalan Lesung	31.147	88.917
	Pangkalan Kuras	57.770	
<b>Amount</b>		367.686	367.686

Processed data 2019

Table. 5

List of Parties and Acquisition of Legislative Seats in Pelalawan Regency Electoral Districts Three, Four and Five

No	Party	Acquisition of Electoral Seats 3		Acquisition of Electoral Seats 4		Acquisition of Electoral Seats 5	
		20 14	20 19	20 14	20 19	20 14	20 19
1	Demokrat	-	-	-	1	-	-
2	Gerindra	1	1	1	1	-	-
3	Golkar	3	2	3	2	-	2
4	Hanura	1	-	1	1	-	1
5	PAN	1	1	1	1	-	1
6	PDIP	1	1	1	1	-	1
7	PPP	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	PKS	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	PKB	-	1	1	1	-	-
Jumlah		6	6	8	8		5

Processed data 2019

The electoral area (Dapil Tiga) consists of two sub-districts, namely Ukui District and Kerumutan District. The six-seat Golongan Karya Party won votes in electoral three of its competitors, such as Gerindra, PAN and PDIP, which only got one representative in the legislature. The voters in electoral district are also very heterogeneous. The existence of oil palm companies and plantations brings in many factory workers and oil palm plantation farmers, therefore the emotional bonds formed based on ethnicity or ethnicity are not too thick.

The mobilization of the masses to get the most votes in electoral districts is very much influenced by the working relationship between employers and workers, both in factories and on plantations. Several large companies that have a large voting period, such as: PT. Sari Lembah Subur (oil palm plantation + 2 PKS) UKUI and Kerumutan, BUMD Tuah Sekata (oil palm plantation), PT. Mekarsari Alam Lestari a subsidiary of PT. Darmex Agro Grop (Kerumutan). (www.direktorisawit.com. Retrieved 14 September 2019), PT. Indosawit Subur (oil palm plantation + 2 PKS) UKUI, PT. Gandahera Hendana (oil palm plantation + PKS) UKUI. (Repository.uin-suska.ac.id. Retrieved 14 September 2019)

The success of the Golkar Party in electoral districts is greatly influenced by the company's strong emotional ties with employees and the company's relationship with officials who are in fact party administrators. This emotional connection has formed a golden triangle between government, companies and workers.

The geographical condition of the sub-district which is included in the electoral districts of five of these districts with the original inhabitants of the Pelalawan area who has cultural ties to regionalism and religious values. Bandar Seikijang sub-district with a population of 31,727 people and Laggam sub-district with a population of 23,252 get 5 seats in the 2019 legislative election 8 seats. The social conditions of the people in electoral districts are not much different from those in electoral districts. The dependence of workers on the company has formed compliance and loyalty between workers and the company. Likewise, the communication and relations between the company and the government are linked so as to create one-way communication on common choices. Various factors as mentioned above reflect that an emotional bond will be formed through several knots such as:

1. Kinship ties
2. Work ties
3. Political ties

Kinship ties occur along river flows which in the past have been the artery for transportation. Many of the people who inhabit the river flow still survive, they are the Malay Pelalawan clan which has long been known as the Pelalawan Sultanate and is still thick with the Malay race and culture of Pelalawan. This activity is a great asset for the top leaders of the country, the Regent and as the leader of the Golkar Party to direct the community towards a common goal.

Likewise with work relations, the dependence of workers with their work on the company is not due to proportions but rather due to the fulfillment of life's needs. The difficulty of getting a job along with the high demands of necessity causes many workers to work outside their eligibility. Another problem that is quite decisive in choosing a job is educational background and skills. Limited human resources mean that there are no more promising options for finding work and income.

The accumulation of various problems faced by workers both in companies and in plantations, then bears sweet fruit for entrepreneurs and policy makers. Entrepreneurs get comfort and protection, while those in power get support morally and materially. The realization of this interrelation made the government party in power significantly superior, namely 11 legislative seats in the 2014 legislative elections of Pelalawan Regency and winning 9 seats in 2019.

## CONCLUSION

Along with the implementation of the election of legislative members in Pelalawan District, there has been an intensive political communication of Sufi politicians. Various communication strategies and communication channels are carried out by politicians, both individually and collectively, through candidate-bearing parties that are favored to gain votes from Sufi groups who are members of the Naqsabandiyah chain led by Mursyid Tuan Guru Syekh Haji Abdus Somad bin Tuan Guru Syekh Haji Ja'far. Emotional ties and lines of command in the tariqat system with the sami'na wa atha'na pattern are targets that are used as strong reasons for politicians to fight over the Sufi era.

The reality of the communication of Sufi politicians turns out to be no longer effective, because the hierarchical pattern found in the Naqsabandiyah order in Pelalawan in the 2014, 2019 legislative elections did not go as expected, this is more due to the large influence of the existence of the industry which changes the attitude of life of the Sufistic religious community towards a materialist and hedonic.

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