

# The Multiple Identities of *Penghayat*: Cilacap and the Moral Politics Issues on the Failure of their Candidate in 2019-Election

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## Abstract

This article discusses the 2019 Indonesia's election with the minority group issues of *Penghayat*. This research discusses their participation in elections, not only as voters but as the candidate nominated by them. However, the candidate nominated by them failed to become members of the DPRD although according to their estimation, the number of voters exceeded the target. An important factor that the failure tendency is related to the multiple identities' issues, which are not only related to ethnicity and religion but also moral politics. This paper does not only criticize the idea of identity politics which describes the uniformity of identity but also criticizes political practices that negate morality.

## Keywords

*Penghayat*; Identity; Morality; 2019-Election

## INTRODUCTION

Some researchers admit that democracy has good values, worthy and valuable (Pendlebury, 1995), for examples in distributive justice (Rummens, 2009), the political power sharing to reducing the level of conflict or sustainable peace (Graham, Miller & Strøm, 2016; Binningsbø, 2013) and have a dignified value concerning the possibility of exercising freedom and equality (Ober, 2012), with the expectation to guarantee human protection rights (Christiano, 1990).

However, an important starting point of a democratic system is participation in elections.

As citizens, the *Penghayat* participate in the elections. They participated in using their voting rights enthusiastically as a form of change from the closeness in the past (Moenawar, Priatna & Santoso, 2019: 76). The numbers of voters are so slow because of the indifference or avoidance of politics in the past.

According to the testimony of the *Penghayat* in Cilacap, they never "the own house" or a political party but Geertz has written that the *Abangan* group is represented through Persatuan Rakyat Marhaen Indonesia or Permai before 1955-election (Geertz, 2013: 157-167). Also, the *Penghayat* tend to be visited by political parties or other candidates who are limited to campaign

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interests to win their sympathy (Mahpudin, 2020: 126).

Although the *Penghayat* has voting rights, few know their participation due to limited research. It relates to the *Penghayat* was seen as a community that was difficult to reach during the campaign because of its remote geographical area with the stigma of being an isolated community with the diversity of languages and cultural-religious practices throughout the Indonesian Archipelago.

Contrary to the other researchers, in this article, the author discusses the *Penghayat* and their candidate in the 2019 elections participation with their case in Cilacap. The author finds a *Penghayat* who was registering as a candidate for a member of the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD) with recognition as a representative of the *Penghayat* and it obtained legitimacy from MLKI-Cilacap in their meeting ahead in campaign time. However, why and how they competed in this election? And what caused his failure whereas according to the MLKI ahead it only needed around 6 thousand votes and it is estimated that there are 55 thousand followers in Cilacap?

The author took an interesting case that showed the *Penghayat* competing in elections and some problems that caused their failure of the 2019 elections. With the various challenges that existed, a legislative candidate stated that he learned from his failure. He never gave up on qualifying for his participation in the 2024-elections. Based on my research, this is closely related to their commitment to reviving the *Kejawen*

belief is not just political euphoria. That commitment is as good as their sense of civic duty or moral obligation. This obligation is driven by the social pressures of their experience and is influenced by the group identity.

The author sees the post-Reformation contexts have a positive impact on the *Penghayat* competition in the 2019-election. In the midst of an issue, they are non-religion with various negative stigmas and citizens' rights issues. In the 2019-Workshop of Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia, Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama (Lakpesdam-NU), some *Penghayat* said that there was a bad stigma, but they have a bargaining position in Cilacap. The author has seen Rani, a Legislative Candidate of the Golongan Karya (Golkar) Party visited (*Sowan*) in their prostration (*Sujudan*) in ritual place (*Sanggar*) and *Penghayat* effort to bargaining if Rani wants to be chosen. This paper discusses the *Penghayat* competition in 2019, to my knowledge, other studies do not focus on this study. Also, to explain the dynamics of the political area and cultural-religious relations and the multifold (multilayer) or multiple identity issues in the election system practice. This study is important for enriching the literature on *Penghayat*, "politics" and the challenges of their struggle in the Reformation era with democratization discourse. In addition, this study is interesting to discuss the plural Indonesian society and still discrimination, and the social-spiritualist movement in Indonesia.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The author uses the fieldwork data and literature study. The author obtained fieldwork data through observations and interviews. My fieldwork on the *Penghayat*-Cilacap lasted one year but the focus of my research on their involvement in the Election was within five months, from March 2019 to July 2019. The author then analyzed, interpreted and concluded the results of participatory observation and interviews with the analysis concepts.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Discussing the cultural-identity problems and political relations in the *Penghayat* participation in the election is not easy because it relates to the history, the geographic distribution, and the structural obstacles of them and the electoral system. It needs some concepts for their analysis. That is the moral obligation in electoral participation and the multiple identities related to the electoral practice's political moral issues.

### The Moral Obligation in Electoral Participation

The health of a democracy is often seen from an indicator of the level of turnout at elections. The democratic process allows encouraging the habit of voting and ensuring the representation of their interests (Wagner, Johann & Kritzinger, 2012).

Electoral participation is influenced by various factors that are the demographic or factors of age (Wagner, Johann & Kritzinger, 2012) and gender (Mlambo, Kapingura & Meissner, 2019), geographic or nature factors (Yandri,

2017), the social status and economics, the parent's political affiliation, the organizational experience, the trust in the government, the mass media dissemination and informal discussions (Halim, Muhlin & Salam, 2018), the variation in voter perceptions of party policy positions and bargaining results (Meyer & Strobl, 2016), the features of electoral law, the characteristics of social situation, voters' motivation and political mobilization (Šiber, 2004). Other researchers discussed how turnout varies with electorate size depends largely on the distribution of net voting costs across the electorate (Hansen, Palfrey & Rosenthal, 1987: 16). Another factor is digital media with the advent of social networking sites and online political tools participation (Boulianne, 2018).

Election participation is not only related to those factors but also affects individual life satisfaction. Thus, electoral participation as part of political participation is likely to influence civic life (Weitz-Shapiro & Winters, 2008). There are other opinions that satisfaction with democracy and the level of election is in a temporal perspective. There is an expression of satisfaction and an expression of dissatisfaction through the ballot (Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2016). However, the author prefers to agree that electoral participation is important in the democratic process with its dynamics. Electoral participation requires the idea of commitment from party organizations is not just campaigning, lobbying, or protesting. This

commitment is not the only individual but the collective commitment.

In the 2019 Election in Cilacap, a Candidate from *Penghayat* has a strong commitment to the election succeeding. Its commitment to the struggle for the rights of them. The commitment has also been a valuable factor in their participation in the elections in Cilacap, to other factors such as the struggle for economic and status mobilization. They also hope that the election results will provide significant changes to various public policies. The solidarity feeling and good state citizens push their vote and the moral responsibility is the basis of their obligation.

The moral obligation is encouraging an increase in *Penghayat* votes in the election and encouraging a candidate to accept his nomination to become a legislative candidate even though it failed due to their multiple identities.

### **The Multiple Identities and The Moral's Issues in Electoral Practice**

Classically, identity is not a manifestation of eternity but is mediated and configured by the history present and the relationship between the history (Lianeri & Zajko, 2008: 4). This means that identity transcends its limits through trans history or change. The community reads classical texts but uses different belief systems, languages, cultures, or multiple readings (Lianeri & Zajko, 2008: 4-6).

The classic idea of identity does not conflict with modern ideas about it. The identity construction of an identity genealogy and the situation's negotiation is possible in classic and

modern ideas. In modern idea, the cultural plenitude comes then for rewriting, relating to the hierarchy of attributes, interests, and ideals. It also has to do with the ideological function, the political implications of identity and the instrument of propaganda. Thus, identity cannot be separated from culture and cultural changes (Lianeri & Zajko, 2008: 5-8).

However, the identity problems are how the idea of identity contradicts between the eternal or multiple characters. The classical ideas potential to be a marker of transcultural cosmopolitan values, but the challenge is related to the diversity that allows them to emerge from local cultural values. This is related to the cultural context, academic discipline, and political praxis and debating about universalism, multiculturalism, and identity politics (Lianeri & Zajko, 2008: 9-15).

The identity manifests one's obligations in electoral participation. Electoral participation is not only influenced by education but also views on his group identity. It is related to how these feelings or a sense of struggle or suffering or social pressure. The rational behavior to vote is also influenced by the cultural values of his ethnic and religious groups. That is why identity politics often functions to change one's preferences (Dalglish, 2013).

However, the problem is that a person cannot be separated from his interactions with many identities. Within the multiple identities, several identities are also influenced by economic and class interests that may

conflict with each other's interests. In plural societies, identity is constructed by people thinking, planning, and conscious in plural characters (Kymlicka, 1998).

Thus, the political identity which has become a cultural value is also important in understanding how one's choices are in electoral practice. Individuals become dual because of their will, the subjectivity of their humanity who wants to become rulers. Their beliefs can persuade individuals or subjective factors relate to morality or honesty (Dalglish, 2013). This means that the values about politics influence the preferences of one's choices. In the hierarchy of values, it understands even though it is not explicitly conveyed. To resolve domination and exploitation, politics is a struggle but good politics is also important to support the continuation of one's political preferences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Penghayat*, Identity and the Electoral Participation

*Penghayat* is not only a moral revitalization movement, but it is in the socio-political context and the identity issues. In Cilacap, in the Sunday-Kliwon meeting, we can see that the effort to manage their multiple-identity and create the collective identity of 29 *Penghayat* Organization (Khoirnafiya, 2019). However, the Paguyuban Resik Kubur Jero's (PRKJ) existence, which joins the MLKI indicates the ambivalence about *Penghayat*.

Anak-putu of PRKJ in several meetings at MLKI seemed absent. We

can get information that they are busy in their activities and rituals, but also those who confused about their participation as *Penghayat*. A woman in Pesanggrahan Village considered her Muslim, and she uses a hijab (*kudung*), and she was confused when she was asked to represent the *Penghayat*. She even knows earlier that they were part of the *Penghayat* in the past few years.

PRKJ is an organization with big followers in Cilacap. PRKJ refers to the *Banakeling* kinship with around 55 thousand according to MLKI-Cilacap verse, but Agus as Kyai Kunci of Kroya said that they are around 12.500 people base on membership ritual (*mlebon* tradition), there are not inventory data. They live in Kalikudi, Adipala, Kroya, Kesugihan, Binangun, Daun Lumbung, Nusawungu, and other areas as part of the *Banakeling* Descent (*Trah Banakeling*). But, the PRKJ registered at MLKI with the center in the Kroya sub-district. Nevertheless, they believe that their ritual Centre in Jatiwaringin when the Kyai *Banakeling's* home and death are buried. PRKJ of *Penghayat* became part of Himpunan *Penghayat* Kepercayaan or HPK in 2000.

Are *Anak-putu* is *Penghayat*? Even some of the *Banakeling descent* claim to be Muslims, but according to the MLKI administrators, they are *Penghayat*. *Banakeling descent* could not yet be open as a *Penghayat* because of the historical fear factor that they as the *Kejawen* people chose to run to save themselves from being chased by soldiers during the Islamic Kingdom in Java. Therefore, *Banakeling* descant claims to be Muslim so that their safety is guaranteed.



According to them, *Banakeling* descent mostly does not the Islam pillar practice or the Islamic sharia and tend to the ancestors' rituals. Other narration from the PRKJ leader claimed they are original *Penghayat* though related to the Banyumas region with *Banakeling's* ancestor. Base Priyadi (2008) stated that *Banakeling* with Banyak Tole figure was a disobedient figure to his father. The iniquity began with his disbelief when he decided to apostate from Islam in the *Babad Pasir* text. Thole's disbelief was hidden in disbelief that his father did not realize. He only pretended to follow his father to convert to Islam, but it turned out that it was only a strategy. The infidelity in the *Babad Pasir* text is an attempt to free from the Demak influence that has colonized *Pasirluhur* so that an independent kingdom's status has been lost.

When the author confirmed the *Banakeling* figure as a murderer of his father and an apostate from Islam, an *Adiraja*-women was seen holding back his anger. Still, he did not confirm anything by saying it is a secret. Another opinion of them in Pesanggrahan village that they are Muslim with an Islamic ID card, that their book was Turki that meant noble teachings which verbally (unwritten) from generation to generation (*Tuture Kaki*) and *Jiping* (*Ngaji Kuping*) from what they heard. There is also an opinion that they are *Islam-Kejawen*, *Aboge-Islam*, and *Blangkon-Islam*. They also carry out the teachings of *Sunan Kalijaga*, Wali Songo. The author also received the recognition that they are Islam from the secretary of Lakpesdam-NU Cilacap. That is

referring to the statement of Mbah Kuntang of the *Banakeling* descent in Kalikudi. The secretary of Lakpesdam-NU's statement is similar to the son-in-law statement in Pesanggrahan Village that worked as the *Penghulu* (village headman) said that their Islam had different characters, *Islam-Ma'rifat* or *Islam-Hakikat*, which were teachings by *Kyai Kunci* and *Bedogol*.

Whatever the controversy about their confession narrative, the MLKI management made them potential voters who would support the candidates proposed by MLKI as candidates for the Cilacap Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) through the Nasional Demokrasi (Nasdem) Party as a party that also supports Joko Widodo's candidacy as President in 2019-Election. MLKI nominates the MLKI-Cilacap secretary.

The nomination of these candidates is related to the reasons narrated by the MLKI management. Basuki, *Penghayat* leader in Cilacap said that they needed to know about politics. Their stigma would not crush them as atheists, godless people, and finally labeled as PKI no longer existed. *Penghayat* compact to make Jokowi become the Head of State again, he is happy seeing the results of calculations of more than 70 percent in Cilacap. According to him, participation in politics was not underestimated with great enthusiasm but made progress with learning in the NU and the Muhammadiyah organizations with political parties. If *Penghayat* did not engage in politics at all, the people would be deceived. By the

situation, *Penghayat* must have representatives to enter the system. Therefore, he said that in 2019 was an agenda with the *Penghayat* and not only visited by people to pay 50 thousand, and then they leave them.

The Basuki's statement and then The Basuki's statement and then responded to by Muslim, a puppet master, a Candidate. He said that his representative as a candidate was part of a noble program in the political year, so he tried to enter as legislative candidates to represent the electoral districts 6. He said that it was a test case because he knows what practical politics is related to aspiration channels. MLKI assigned him. At first, he just laughed weighing his situation and conditions that existed but because of the agreement, so he enters politics. He said that politically if you do not take political action, they are rolled by someone else.

### **Why is There Failure?**

Basuki felt proud of *Penghayat* in Cilacap. He assumes that Cilacap was the district in Central Java that had the highest of Central Java. He said that the number could be seen from the mass of the PRKJ from the KK (Family Card) that he counted 55 thousand, even if he calculated the total could be up to 150 thousand people, estimated even there are 27 organizations. Based on that estimation, *Penghayat* has big supporters as social capital. However, why the Candidate is failed?

Basuki felt slapped because his Candidate gets few voters through PRKJ mass. He hopes the together reflection of *Penghayat* contribution. Regarding why

in practice this failure occurred, Basuki did not yet know it. This made me look for answers through observations and interviews with *Banakeling* descent, which became their mass base where Candidates nominated to represent them in district 6 were their life. Because they cannot be open to other than their members based on descent or kinship, it is important to listen to their narration in their conversation to know why they did not choose Candidates from the proposed MLKI.

Leadership obedience is a tradition that exists in *Banakeling* descent. The political-economic life and religiosity, the various teachings, and ritual practices are the leader's authority. The direction of *Bedogol* influence the enthusiasm of the *Banakeling* descent to participate in casting their votes. I saw enthusiasm when talking about the time when they cast their votes for a few hours. They spoke to me that they would lose if they were not voting their candidate Joko Widodo to become President. This enthusiasm also shows up in their young children in Adiraja village. Since some of them are still not literate, their parents will ask their children to write their choice on their hands to remember the name on the election paper. Their choice for Joko Widodo was supported by various narratives about his being seen as a chosen human (*Satria Piningit*). Another narrative is Pak Jokowi is believed to a moderate vision of Islam. However, there are widespread issues about Jokowi in the 2014-election, for example, not being a good Muslim and the puppet president is circulating (Tyson &

Purnomo, 2017). The fact, the results of the recapitulation of the counts, Jokowi-Ma'ruf won the votes in Cilacap Regency. Jokowi-Ma'ruf got a vote of 775,304 votes, while Prabowo-Sandiaga received 289,706 votes from 1,065,010 voters.

In contrast to the Jokowi figure who is widely known for *Banakeling* descent, the candidate from MLKI is less well known for his personality even though he was present in the midst of *Banakeling* descent during the campaign period. This is because the candidate does not openly promote himself in the midst of his presence. In addition, the Nasdem party, which serves as its vehicle, is less well known by the *Banakeling* descent than the Partai Demokrat Indonesia-Perjuangan or PDIP party which has long dominated their territory. The PDIP party in its victory when I was in Adiraja was making a puppet show as a form of gratitude for its victory. This party also brought one of the figures of *Banakeling* descent, Amin Noorhadi, to become a member of the Cilacap DPRD. They chose the candidates base on their kinship relationship.

The popularity factor was not the only reason for not choosing the Candidate. The image of the candidate whom some *Banakeling* descend know is a kind, simple, polite, and protective person is not comparable with gossip about their past experiences that some people are claiming to be MLKI members who sell their voice. They are traumatized and disappointed be an object by those with interest in obtaining money gain. I found that their question: then is the current candidate not just the

same project person? Their problem that shows distrust as a result of their experiences seems to have not been able to change prospective representatives' image. They are still worried about the events that have passed.

Moreover, they not understood the candidate figure closely. Are gifts or money then not important? This is not the most important question for them because there is confidence in most candidates looking for money and positions from their candidates. The important thing is how they are competent and honest (Caselli & Morelli, 2004). Here, the trust value becomes important in addition to other factors in vote.

In election practice, identity is in the dynamics. They related to beliefs or possible choices because of their multidimensional expressions and subjectivity such as social-political status and bureaucracy or citizenship as "symbolic construction" (Jenkins, 2008). Even though the State makes the standard of their term, *Penghayat* discourse is no single defined. There are terms that them, pure and impure of *Penghayat*. The identities' configurations vary and have a frequency on politics, cause integration, and conflict (Hopkins, 2011). The Multiple-identity of *Penghayat* is conflict potency. Conflicts can arise when personal identity is not according to the definition of mainstream collective identity. This means that Jokowi's victory as a figure that carries a minority is not directly proportional to the party which is the flag of the minority representative, has a more significant impact than the party



label, the contrary, the Candidate figures with NASDEM as 'new' party label is still failing than brand premium in the district, including the Islamic party. The Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) Party was still won 135,668 votes than PKS 63,618 votes, PPP 80,471 votes, and PAN 75,712 votes. The PDI-P which won 196,462 votes and the Golkar gained 170,909 votes. PDI won (over) than Gerindra 131,366, Democrats as many as 59,934 votes and NASDEM Party, which also won as many as 58,890 votes.

In other words, personality as a moderate and pro-minority person is still beneficial in the climate of the 2019 elections. Still, it must be supported with full trust for the Candidate of their party. The candidate of *Penghayat* must more effort to learn the Indonesian system. Mbah Narso as *Penghayat* who has experienced said that he enters the political realm starting in 2004 with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle or PDI-P vehicle. He said that being a Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat member was not easy now, especially in the information technology or IT era. In this IT-era, the campaigns through are spontaneous media. It is meant as *Jer Basuki Matwa Beo* which means all success requires sacrifice. He said that the legislature candidates from the *Penghayat* needed to strengthen themselves in the interests of Indonesia's people.

In the failure of the Candidate are subjected to their political networks, their resources, and organizational competence or communication skills (Poletti, Webb & Bale, 2019). It is a

matter of political awareness, commitment, and the moral obligation of the Candidate as stated by Basuki and the multiple identity factors that can also encourage political participation and the votes given by his voters. The non-uniform identity of the *Penghayat* led to the failure of their Candidate in the 2019-elections.

## CONCLUSION

The term of *Penghayat* is still rare compared to Jawa Islam or Islam Jawa. This term also has multiple interpretations because of the definition and who is part of them. These multiple-identities have implications for general elections. It is related to their representation as a minority-stigmatized group because it is often considered heretical out of the main religious aspects.

In Indonesia, history noted that *Penghayat* tried to define them as part of *Kebatinan* and then become *Aliran Kepercayaan* with RI MPR Decree No. IV/MPR/1973-22 March 1973. However, the Constitutional Court Decision Through the Constitutional Court Decision Number 97/PUU-XIV/2016 (MK 97/2016), the Constitutional Court (MK) on *Penghayat Kepercayaan* in the local Cilacap case pushed them into a clearer category, with a pure category, with Identity KTP indicator which indicates that they are *Penghayat*. Their submission to the Constitutional Court was motivated by their obligations. They are still marginalized and use their marginalization to maintain their cohesion, sad stories about their

labeling, persecuting and destroying their places.

However, it is not easy to draw them to the pure category of *Penghayat* with various factors, including history and fear which creates an openness to the identity of the *Penghayat*. The multiple identities of the *Penghayat* are social facts. This is what makes the data validity of the number of *Penghayat* difficult.

The absence of data validity on the number of *Penghayat* (Hamudy & Rifki, 2020: 49). In Cilacap, the narrative of claiming about 55 thousand people with the largest base *Banakeling* descent as *Penghayat*. This estimation has made the MLKI management version believe the Candidate of them can qualify as a member of the DPRD. They said that they exceed the target of success. However, the results show that the proposed candidate failed in the 2019-election. The author finds an important factor is that the failure tendency is related to the multiple identities' issues, which are related to ethnicity, religion, and the promotion, the media, kinship, experience, and political morals. The developing narrative is *Penghayat* should hold the values of kindness and honesty. If the *Penghayat* does not refer to these values, it is considered that they do not manifest the *Penghayat*. The narrative spreads widely along with rumors of the lack of cohesiveness.

The results of the study show the power of identity politics in the religious group movement in Indonesia. But the shape is various and does not appear prominent. The political actors in

everyday politics construct and reproduce the identity for their interest. Politics in everyday practice occurs naturally even though eventually constructed and reproduced for certain interests. The kind of diversity in ethnicity, place, religion, even class is the development of the initial idea of bounded and homogeneous identity. The power of identity when constructed and reproduced in ideology narration related to solidarity.

Perhaps this will become a challenge for *Penghayat* in the future so that various issues of multiple identities become a concern in their nomination the next time. However, after all, the participation of followers and their candidacy in the elections is a positive idea in Indonesian democracy, their involvement in electoral competitions, from allergic behavior in the past. Politics is a historical struggle that must be passed to obtain their citizenship rights and minimize their negative stigma.

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