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## STATE AND RELIGION: INDONESIA CASE

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### Abstract:

*The debate between Islam as a religion or ideology and the political wheel in the New Order regime is full of dynamics. From the beginning of the New Order until the late 1980s, it can be said that Islam in Indonesia was largely outside the arena of power (Sukamto, 2008: 4). However, in the early 1990s Suharto as president began to embrace Islam. The change in the regime's attitude had an impact on the emergence of various Islamic studies and in the end came into contact with art groups. One of them is the theater group in Jakarta, led by Zak Sorga, namely Teater Canvas, which in the end transformed the ideology of its performance into an Islamic Theatre. The question in this research is how is the process of ideological transformation of the Canvas Theater performance and why did the Canvas Theater perform an ideological transformation in its performance?*

*This research is a qualitative research using an ethnographic approach which intended to see how the process of transforming ideology of performance in one of the theater groups in Jakarta, namely Teater Canvas. In this research, researchers used interview data, performance script and news clippings about the performance, or exclusive news about the Teater Canvas which was taken from October 2019 to July 2020. After obtaining data from the performance script, documentation, news clippings and interviews, the next step is to classify the data according to the problem under research, then the data is arranged, organized and grouped. The results of this study are the process of transforming the ideology of the Teater Canvas performance which consists of three phases: The initial ideological phase of the performance, the ideological transition phase of the performance, and the new ideological phase of the Teater Canvas performance.*

**Kata Kunci :** *Teater, Transformasi, Pertunjukan, Ideologi*

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## STATE AND RELIGION: INDONESIA CASE

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### **Abstrak:**

*Perdebatan antara Islam sebagai agama ataupun ideologi dengan roda perpolitik di rezim orde baru penuh dengan dinamika. Masa awal Orde Baru sampai akhir tahun 1980-an bisa dikatakan bahwa Islam di Indonesia banyak berada di luar arena kekuasaan (Sukamto, 2008: 4). Namun di awal tahun 1990-an Suharto selaku presiden mulai merangkul kalangan Islam. Perubahan sikap rezim tersebut berdampak pada munculnya berbagai kajian-kajian keislaman dan pada akhirnya bersentuhan dengan kelompok kesenian. Salah satunya adalah kelompok teater di Jakarta yang dimotori oleh Zak Sorga, yaitu Teater Kanvas yang pada akhirnya mentransformasikan ideologi pertunjukannya menjadi sebuah pertunjukan Teater Islami. Yang menjadi pertanyaan dalam penelitian adalah bagaimana proses transformasi ideologi pertunjukan Teater Kanvas dan mengapa Teater Kanvas melakukan transformasi ideologi dalam pertunjukannya?*

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana proses transformasi ideologi Teater Kanvas dari ideologi alienasi menjadi Teater Islami. Dari proses tersebut penulis ingin mengetahui penyebab teater kanvas melakukan transformasi ideologi dalam pertunjukannya dan melihat dampak transformasi ideologi tersebut terhadap pertunjukan mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi yang bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana proses transformasi ideologi pertunjukan pada salah satu kelompok Teater di Jakarta, yaitu Teater Kanvas. Dalam penelitian ini peneliti menggunakan data wawancara, naskah pertunjukan dan beberapa kliping pemberitaan seputar pertunjukan, ataupun pemberitaan eksklusif tentang Teater Kanvas yang diambil pada Oktober 2019 hingga Juli 2020. Setelah memperoleh data dari naskah, dokumentasi, kliping berita dan wawancara, langkah selanjutnya adalah mengklasifikasikan data sesuai dengan permasalahan yang diteliti, kemudian data tersebut disusun, dianalisis dan dikelompokkan. Hasil penelitian ini adalah proses transformasi Ideologi pertunjukan Teater Kanvas yang terdiri dari tiga fase, yaitu; fase ideologi pertunjukan awal, fase transisi ideologi pertunjukan dan fase ideologi baru pertunjukan Teater Kanvas.*

**Kata Kunci : Teater, Transformasi, Pertunjukan, Ideologi**

## Introduction

Most of Durkheimian sociologists believe that, along with modernisation and rationalisation, the role of religion will fade away and be diminished to the point of just in private sphere<sup>1</sup>. This is precisely true if we look at the role of the Church which underwent drastic changes in Europe during the Enlightenment, which Barnett<sup>2</sup> accurately termed 'anticlericalism period'. This anticlericalism became known as the secularisation movement which presupposes a separation between state and religion. However, what happened in Europe was not the case in the Muslim world, especially during the post-colonialism era where there were demands to make Islam the basis of the state which later became known as Islamism Movements. Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world followed by Pakistan and India, experienced this process in the early days of its independence. In fact, to a certain degree, this demand is still echoed by a small group of Indonesian Muslims today.

Apart from the two above-mentioned phenomena, today's reality shows that secularisation has never become a global phenomenon, likewise, Islamisation does not fully occur in Muslim-majority countries. In other words, neither extreme secularisation nor extreme Islamisation exists nowadays. However, religion remains an important factor in the social, cultural and political domains<sup>3</sup>. Hence, to understand the relationship between religion and state is not that sufficient to simply use the theory of secularisation or Islamisation, but it should be seen from multidimensional factors. Nieuwenhuis proposes, at least, three dimensions in understanding these relations, namely, religion's role in the state domain, government's role in the religious domain, and several other domains (social and cultural domain) shared between state and religion.

This article will discuss the relationship between religion and state in Indonesia using

the Nieuwenhuis's three-dimensional framework. In general, Indonesia is a country with a majority Muslim population which was independent from Dutch colonialism in 1945. With a population of around 270 million, Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Sequentially, this article begins with a discussion of why Indonesia cannot be deemed to be a secular or an Islamic state, followed by several analyses of the relationship between religion and the state in the three dimensions already mentioned.

## Why Neither Secular nor Islamic State?

The argument for the impossibility of thorough secularisation in the relationship between religion and the state is the fact that humans, both socially and culturally, cannot be separated from religion. Chavura<sup>4</sup> poses three hypothetical questions to prove such impossibility: are politicians and judges never being informed by a religious perspective?; Is society totally not influenced by religious teachings when arguing or voting in the public sphere?; Are prevailing laws, norms, and ideologies totally unrelated, historical or otherwise, to religious teachings or philosophies?

In contrast to Chavura, Nieuwenhuis argues that, assuming that religion is not a panacea for all social problems and not something totally dangerous, the only reason why the relationship between religion and state is important to be discussed in the context of democracy is because it is related to how to guarantee freedom of religions. In a completely secular country, freedom of religions will never exist, because the assumption behind is that people do not believe in The Supreme Being, while in a religious country, there will only be one religion, while other religions appear to be marginalized.

In the Indonesia context, the impossibility of separating religion and state is absolutely

correct for two reasons: first, history records that since the 3rd century BC, Indonesia has experienced unique processes in the interaction between religion and state. The arrival of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Protestantism and Catholicism had an impact on the emergence of various political and state systems and cultures which changed over time. This complex and multi-layered interaction between various religions has led to the eclecticism of traditional religions and countries (India, Persia, Arab and Europe) in a synthesis form that creates “tension and coexistence” of the relationship between religion and state<sup>5</sup>. This is different from what happened in Europe where there was “tension and separation” of religion’s role (Church) in the state. Second, the role of religion in the struggle for independence was very central in mobilising and radicalising Indonesian society against the colonialists, therefore marginalising this role only in the private sphere is tantamount to betraying the struggle of the nation's heroes<sup>6</sup>. One example for this is the call for a “Jihad Resolution” uttered by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari in 1945 which triggered the heroic resistance of the Indonesian people against the Dutch colonialism in Surabaya on November 10 which was later celebrated as National Heroes Day<sup>7</sup>.

The two facts above explain why Indonesia made Pancasila (Five Basic Principles) as the basis of the state, not secularism or Islam, the majority religion. Pancasila is a synthesis of the localised religions and the nation state system brought by the colonisers from Europe. In other words, Pancasila is in between the secularism and Islamism movements.<sup>8</sup>

### **Religion’s Role in State Domain**

Nieuwenhuis roughly made indicators for this model of the relationship between religion and state by looking at whether religious symbols are used by the state and whether the recruitment of government employees is based

on one's beliefs. Definitely, both questions will be easily answered in the Indonesian context due to the fact that, in the 1945 Constitution article 29, it is explicitly stated that the State shall be based on the belief in the One and Only God and guarantees freedom of religion. In addition, the requirements for becoming a civil servant have nothing to do with one's religious beliefs. In practice, several things can be mentioned, such as the use of religious greetings in official state events, the commemoration of religious holidays held by the state, such as the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday and the public celebration of Christmas.

In the role model of religion in the state, although it has been explicitly stipulated that the state is based on divinity, the question is whether this role should be in a formal form (formalism) or only in the form of ethical morals (substantialism). This has always been a polemic, particularly for Muslims, since the beginning of Indonesian independence until now. The centre of the dispute is the "Jakarta Charter" (the Pancasila formula in its original form) in which it was called the obligation of Muslims to implement Islamic teachings. Admittedly, there are also a small number of Muslims who demand the establishment of a caliphate, although politically and socially this is highly unlikely<sup>9</sup>.

The contradiction between substantialism and Islamic formalism, after the preparation for independence, continued in the parliamentary course in 1955 where members of the Masjumi party as representatives of the Islamic ummah at that time fought for the re-inclusion of the clause "the obligation to carry out Islamic law for its adherents" into the Pancasila text. The theological and sociological arguments presented by Masyumi could not be accepted by political opponents such as the Indonesian National Party (PNI) and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) so that the struggle to

formalise Islam into the Indonesian Constitution failed again.<sup>10, 11</sup>

After experiencing suppression during the Old Order (Soekarno era) and the New Order (Soeharto Era), efforts to formalise Islam continued after the Reformation Movement in 1999, but the support of the Indonesian people for Islamic parties was minuscule, not enough to make law amendments in parliament. Instead, louder voices on Islamism were issued by trans-national Islamic organisations, such as HTI, Ikhwanul Muslimin Indonesia, and other radical Islamic organisations outside the Parliament.<sup>12</sup>

### **State's Role in Religious Domain**

The failure of the Islamism movement to formalise Islam in Indonesia does not at all mean that the role between state and religion is diametrically separated. In fact, from the very beginning, the Indonesian Independence Preparatory Investigation Agency (BPUPKI) and the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence (PPKI) had proposed the formation of a special ministry related to religion which Yamin referred to as the 'Ministry of Islamiyah' which is now so-called The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). The proposal was only realized a while after Indonesia's independence, to be precise at January 3, 1946. This confirms that secularism in Indonesia does not necessarily make religion just a private matter.

MORA actually is a replacement for the Islamic surveillance bureau that existed during the Dutch and Japanese times. This was born out of concerns that there was resistance to colonial rule, not just serving the Muslims. MORA has several directorates representing 6 religions formally recognised by the state. However, because nearly 90 percent of Indonesia's population is Muslim, this ministry is often identified with the ministry of Islam.<sup>13</sup>

The role of the state through MORA is so massive in term of the number of employees

and offices it has in each province, district and sub-district that are tasked with registering marriages (only for Muslims), supervising da'wah (preachers) and education (madrasas and pesantrens), gathering zakat, and serving the pilgrimage (hajj). Likewise, the religious courts which were under the ministry of religion prior to 2004 were in charge of serving Muslims in the event of disputes, especially in marriage, inheritance (waratsah), and zakat and waqf.<sup>14</sup>

Not only madrasas and pesantrens, MORA also controls Islamic tertiary institutions, such as UIN, IAIN, and STAIN. These institutions are all financed by the state through the state budget. The use of public funds for these institutions was also occasionally provided by other ministries and local governments through social assistance funds or the like. The state budget for the ministry of religion, before the 2020 pandemic, was the third highest among ministries, reaching 62.2 trillion rupiah.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, even though it is no longer in third position, for the 2021 fiscal year, MORA receives a budget of 67 trillion rupiah.

With the strengthening of the trend of Islamic conservatism and intolerance after 1998, MORA has a new task in preventing the development of this trend and developing a tolerant attitude among Muslims culturally. Meanwhile, law enforcement and security measures are taken over by the police and judicial institutions. State intervention to Muslims in overcoming Islamic conservatism is a very important strategy, because religion is often used as a basis for legitimacy for radical and intolerant actions, besides the fact that Indonesian society has a variety of values and different customs that are prone to causing conflict and disintegration disrupting the country's development process.<sup>16</sup>

According to Bruinessen (2018), the involvement of the Indonesian state in religious affairs, especially Islam, can be accepted because of the fear of communists and leftists

who are considered a major security threat to the national security, however, at the same time, also because of worrying about Islam as a political force. This is what explains why sometimes Muslims are mobilised and accommodated, but sometimes their political rights are limited or even repressed. This relation model of state and religion often falls into supporting for certain Islamic communities and ignoring the others considered to threaten the national security. In this regard, the starting point is national security, not merely religious freedom in democracy as was meant by Nieuwenhuis. Hence, the problem is how to balance the interests of the state and pluralism of society without neglecting democratic values. This might be what Nieuwenhuis meant: "separation where necessary, 'using for' where acceptable, and supporting diversity where justifiable"<sup>17</sup>

War against, and prevention of, Islamic extreme conservatism (puritanism) are necessary for developing countries that need stability in development. Therefore, the option of preventing Islamic extreme puritanism through cultural ways is the most likely, so that the state does not violate human rights and other democratic principles. In this sense, cooperation between the state and moderate Islamic organisations is inevitable. Supporting these organisations is a choice that must be made, even though, in a democracy that guarantees freedom of religion, the state should take a neutral position. In the context of Indonesia, state cooperation with moderate Islamic organisations, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), in fighting Islamic conservatism and radicalism must be understood as a synergy (mutual-symbiotic relation) to maintain national stability through peaceful means by improving social situations and developing human resources, in addition to rectifying some religious teachings that were manipulated only to legitimise certain groups actions.

### **State and Religion in Social dan Cultural Domain**

The role of Islamic organisations in the struggle for Indonesian independence was significant, such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, al Irsyad, the Islamic Union (Persis) and so on. These organisations were instrumental in uniting the Indonesian people which were very plural and prone to division. After independence, the role of these Islamic organisations remains important, covering the fields of education, economy, social, culture and politics. In the field of education, many schools ranging from elementary schools to high-quality universities were established by Islamic organisations. In the economic field, the presence of the People's Credit Union (BPR) and Baitul Mal which is owned by Islamic organisations has contributed to improving the poor's economy level and to remain the sustainability of small and medium enterprises. In the social sphere, these organisations build mosques, hospitals, orphanages and nursing homes. Meanwhile, in politics, these organisations have produced politicians who are active both at the regional and national levels.

Everything that these organizations do is in line with Indonesia's national development goals. Therefore, the state provides support in the form of financial and physical development. An example of this support is the Pesantren Operational Assistance aimed at, among other things, purchasing stationery and paying for electricity, telephone and internet (Kementerian Agama RI 2019). Indonesian secularism does not in turn negate cooperation between the state and religious organisations.

### **Conclusion**

Indonesia is neither a secular and nor an Islamic state. Secularism in Indonesia cannot separate Islam with the state, however, Islam cannot become the basis of the state because of the pluralistic background of the Indonesian

people. The relationship between the state and Islam takes shape mutual symbiotic relation.

Islam is accommodated in state in-which Islamic traditions, such as commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and Eid al-Fitr are become official state agenda. In addition, MORA is a form of state involvement in religion to meet the interests and needs of religious communities.

Regarding the trend of the increasing Islamic conservatism since 1998, MORA collaborated with moderate Islamic organizations to culturally prevent the occurrence of extreme radicalism within the Muslim community.

**Catatan kaki:**

<sup>1</sup> Seidman, S. (1985) 'Modernity and the Problem of Meaning: The Durkheimian Tradition'. *Sociological Analysis* 46 (2), 109

<sup>2</sup> Barnett, S.J. (2018) 'The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity'. *The Enlightenment and religion: The myths of modernity* 1–244

<sup>3</sup> Nieuwenhuis, A.J. (2012) 'State and Religion, a Multidimensional Relationship: Some Comparative Law Remarks'. *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 10 (1), 153–174

<sup>4</sup> Chavura, S. (2010) 'The Separation of Religion and State: Context and Meaning'. *Nebula* 7 (December), 37–46

<sup>5</sup> Ali, M. (2019) 'Agama Dan Negara Di Indonesia Dalam Perspektif Sejarah'. *Abad, Jurnal Sejarah* 03, No.2

<sup>6</sup> Farih, A. (2016) 'Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Dan Kontribusinya Dalam Memperjuangkan Kemerdekaan Dan Mempertahankan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia ( Nkri )'. *Walisongo* 24 (2), 251–284

<sup>7</sup> Saputra, I. (2019) 'Resolusi Jihad: Nasionalisme Kaum Santri Menuju Indonesia Merdeka'. *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* 3 (1), 205

<sup>8</sup> Ali, M. (2019) 'Agama Dan Negara Di Indonesia Dalam Perspektif Sejarah'. *Abad, Jurnal Sejarah* 03, No.2

<sup>9</sup> Fox, J. (2008) *A World Survey of Religion and the State*. 1st edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Nurdamarsah, T. (2018) 'Politik Masyumi Di Masa Demokrasi Parlementer 1950-1959'. *HERODOTUS: Jurnal Pendidikan IPS* 1 (01), 21–28.

<sup>11</sup> Siregar, I.F. (2013) 'Sejarah Pertumbuhan Dan Perkembangan Partai Masyumi (1945-1960)'. *Thaqāfiyyāt* 14 (1), 89–113

<sup>12</sup> Jufri, A. (2018) *Konsepsi Politik Islam Dan Realitas Relasi Islam Dan*. 18 (2), 42–55

<sup>13</sup> Boland, B. (1971) *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*. The Hague: Springer Science-Business Media.

<sup>14</sup> Bruinessen, M. van (2018) 'The Governance of Islam in Two Secular Polities: Turkey's Diyanet and Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs'. *European journal of Turkish studies* (27)

<sup>15</sup> Bruinessen, M. van (2018) 'The Governance of Islam in Two Secular Polities: Turkey's Diyanet and Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs'. *European journal of Turkish studies* (27)

<sup>16</sup> Ropi, I. (2019) 'Whither Religious Moderation? The State and Management of Religious Affairs in Contemporary Indonesia'. *Studia Islamika* 26 (3), 597–601

<sup>17</sup> Nieuwenhuis, A.J. (2012) 'State and Religion, a Multidimensional Relationship: Some Comparative Law Remarks'. *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 10 (1), 153–174



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