

Dynamics of Islam and The State of Indonesia: Education, Leadership, and Cultural Integration

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Abstract

Islam and Indonesia share a deep historical connection, with Islam entering the archipelago primarily through educational channels. This study focuses on the significant role of Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia, examining their efforts to spread Islam across various levels of society through educational institutions, cultural practices, and social customs. It indicates that the study uses a qualitative approach, specifically through literature study, and applies a text analysis method. The study analyzes various sources such as written texts, pictures, recordings, and both printed and electronic media. This method is appropriate for examining historical, cultural, and educational dynamics, allowing the researcher to interpret and analyze primary and secondary sources related to the spread of Islam in Indonesia and the role of Muslim intellectuals. The result of the study showed that Islam and the state of Indonesia are like two sides of a coin, they are inseparable although Indonesia officially also recognizes other religions over Islam. History recorded that Islam has a historical relationship with leadership, mainly in the context of politics by kingdom cooperation and education effect which generates the effort to preach and spread the Islamic teachings from then until now.

Keywords: Dynamics of Islam, State of Indonesia, Education, Leadership, Cultural Integration

INTRODUCTION

The history of Islam in Indonesia is a rich and multifaceted story that spans several centuries. Islam first arrived in the archipelago through trade routes, beginning around the 13th century, though some sources suggest that it may have reached earlier. It was primarily spread by Muslim traders, scholars, and missionaries from various regions, including the Arabian Peninsula, India, and Persia.

The spread of Islam in Indonesia was gradual, with the first significant influence in the region coming from the traders and scholars of the Malacca Sultanate in the 15th century. This was a period of growing Islamic influence in Southeast Asia, and Islam became a dominant force in the region, gradually replacing Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous belief systems.

Indonesia's diverse ethnic groups and cultures played a key role in how Islam was adopted and integrated into the local traditions. Rather than imposing a single religious

and cultural framework, Islam in Indonesia adapted to the local customs, resulting in the formation of a unique form of Islam, one that combined elements of Islamic teachings with local traditions and practices.

The spread of Islam was also facilitated by the rise of Islamic sultanates across the islands, including those in Aceh, Demak, and Mataram. These sultanates played an important role in consolidating Islamic political power, promoting the religion's teachings, and fostering a unique Islamic culture that would become deeply rooted in Indonesian society.

Islam's presence in Indonesia was further solidified during the colonial period when the Dutch tried to suppress Islamic influence in the region. However, despite colonial efforts to limit the spread of Islam, the religion remained an integral part of Indonesian life. The establishment of Indonesia as an independent nation in the 20th century was marked by the continued dominance of Islam, which is now the religion of the majority of the population.

Throughout its history in Indonesia, Islam has not only been a spiritual force but has also had a significant impact on the political, social, and cultural development of the country. Today, Indonesia is home to the largest Muslim population in the world, and Islam continues to shape the nation's identity, both in terms of governance and daily life.

Islam and the state of Indonesia are two entities that have historical values recorded in the history of Indonesia as a state. Even, Islam is considered a belief that encourages the spirit of revolution to realize the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. Moreover, the spirit significantly removes all kinds of colonization in Indonesia (Farih, 2016).

Historically, Islam is perceived as a doctrine of belief that can change the mindset and behavior, perspective, perception, and response on all issues around. Islam offers peace which is effortlessly accepted by the Indonesians who considered it as the doctrine of belief. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim country that keeps regularly the realization and implementation of Islam comprehensively. Therefore, Islamic followers in Indonesia become a positive example of tolerance implementation for entire religions. Islamic societies in Indonesia are united under the spirit of *Bhineka* (Unity in diversity) based on the philosophy of *Pancasila* (the five principles) that has values of deity for each point (M. Saifullah Rohman, 2013).

Indonesia officially acknowledges other religions. The position of religious followers beyond Islam shows that Islam is not a selfish religion and arrogant, but it recognizes other beliefs and religions that exist a long time before the prophetic of Muhammad SAW and it will last until the end of this world. The prophet Muhammad SAW gives an example or role model for his all Islamic followers, notably during he lived in Medina Al-Munawwarah. At that time, Medina citizens have already some religious beliefs before Islam comes. Thus, the Roman and Persian empire, both have varied ethnicities and religions before the Islamic missionary comes. Furthermore, Islam

also landed in the Malay civilization (Herlina, 2014). Even, a long time before the Prophet Muhammad SAW was inaugurated, People in the Arabian peninsula have religious beliefs which taught from generation to generation. When Islam comes, Islam does not intend to remove other religions that had already existed previously, the other way, Islam sincerely shows itself as a mercy to the universe.

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between Islam and the state of the Republic of Indonesia, focusing on the development of Islam from Indonesia's independence to the Reformasi (Reformation) era. This includes analyzing how Islam has influenced political, social, and cultural aspects of the state during these periods and examining the dynamics between Islamic principles and the governance of Indonesia. The motivation for conducting this research stems from the desire to understand the intricate relationship between Islam and the state in Indonesia. This topic is significant because it sheds light on how Islamic values and principles have influenced the nation's political, cultural, and social landscapes. Additionally, the unique integration of Islam into Indonesia's diverse society offers valuable insights into the coexistence of religion and state in a pluralistic nation. Exploring this topic further allows for a deeper appreciation of Indonesia's historical journey and provides a framework for understanding the role of religion in shaping modern states.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method by utilizing a literature review approach. Some issues in terms of Islam and the Indonesian context become the main point of the study. The researcher tracked a huge variety of valid, reliable, and trusted data sources and references such as journal articles, books, and other scientific sources, that contain the dynamic of Islam in Indonesia and its complexity and heterogeneity. This study tried to investigate in depth and detail the dynamic and constellation of Islam in Indonesia through many viewpoints, notably from the point of view of politics and religions. Furthermore, the researcher identified, classified, and categorized the obtained data based on the focus of this study. Afterward, the researcher analyzed the data and yielded the findings via descriptive narrative. Finally, the findings from the serial stages will precisely answer the problem of the study namely how is the relationship between Islam and the state of Indonesia through comprehensive perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The relationship between Islam and Indonesia is realized by how those two entities are connected. It is relevant due to Islamic followers are the majority in Indonesia. In consequence, all Islamic issues in Indonesia tend to be sensitive and potentially cause conflicts. This fact is in line with the reality that Indonesia has various ethnicities, races,

cultures, religions, and other entities which need to be aware of many things. Otherwise, conflict among different ethnicities will inevitably happen. Nevertheless, all possible and prospective answers and options must be applied. Counter threats are urgently needed to apply to prevent and remove all forbidden ideology and transnational group understanding that is not suitable for the cultural background and genuine characteristics of Indonesia.

Furthermore, the relationship between Islam and Indonesia has been realized via intellectual contributions and *ulama* (Islamic scholars or Islamic clerics)'s role in spreading the Islamic religion. This is a long time ago accomplished by the *Walisono* (the term refers to nine Islamic scholars in Java island in the past) who preached religious teachings (Islam) in the Indonesian archipelago in moderate and tolerant ways. They are categorized as Islamic clerics with the principles of *Ahlussunnah wal jamaah* (Islamic section refers to the teachings from the Qur'an, hadith, and prophet's companions).

The spread of the Islamic religion was done through a cultural approach. Islam does not directly prohibit and ruin the old tradition in society, even if it is not in line with Islamic teachings. Islam accommodates and integrates the local cultures and traditions under the Islamic color. For example in the context of Islamic education, the subject philosophy, is affected and synchronized by Islamic principles (Dalimunthe, 2014).

History recorded that the journey of Islam and the state of Indonesia since Islam's entry until now shows serial dynamics and clashes. This condition is unavoidable. During the new order, the condition was worsened by religious paradigms and transnational organizations coming to Indonesia. It is triggered by democracy euphoria which is opened after a long term closed by the regime. Right after democracy opens the door, various ideological philosophies and transnational religious organizations grow massively and uncontrollably. This reality drives a clash between Islamic groups and others, including between traditional Islamic groups and modern Islamic groups.

The transnational Islamic movement by utilizing many ways and approaches also infiltrates many institutions, including educational institutions. This can be tracked by how they recruit new members to join their group. Their religious thoughts are transmitted to various levels of society. This is an emergency condition and needs to be countered by a moderate Islamic group. The worse thing is that there is no nationalism concept in the transnational group. Therefore, Islamic organizations with nationalist concepts urgently needed to save the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia from their potential threat.

However, the correlation between Islam and the state of Indonesia appears in how they both connect. There are a lot of studies about Islam and the state of Indonesia regarding their problems and dynamics. Many scholars conducted a study about those two entities. Moreover, they classify the Islamic followers' typology into various types based on the epistemology of study they are concerned about. It means that the classification they made is suitable for the analysis and exploration of the phenomenon of

Muslim society diversity in Indonesia. It is not only a certain religious thought but inseparable from various religious thoughts.

The aforementioned explanation above shows that Islam and the state of Indonesia are like two sides of a coin, they are inseparable, although at the same time Indonesia officially also recognizes other religions besides the Islamic religion. Nonetheless, the historical record presents that Islam has a great history of leadership in spreading Islamic teaching now and then, either in kingdom leadership or in formal education. This proves that the Islamic literature treasure in Indonesia potentially can be much further explored.

Furthermore, the search for dynamic and heterogeneity of Indonesian society is maximized, notably Muslim as the majority group in Indonesia. This point is valuable capital to accelerate the improvement in many sectors. However, those problems may cause decadence due to the incapability to explore the available potential. The problems are worsened by religious fractions which lead to disunity among different religious sections and thoughts. The clash and conflict caused by religious thoughts are unavoidable. Therefore, unifying the different elements of Muslim society is needed to uphold *Bhineka* (unity) and tolerance. Although in the previous time, the clash of different ideologies and religious thoughts frequently clashed and on some occasions, caused conflict among them.

DISCUSSION

Indonesia is one of the large houses of Islam. The dominant number of Islamic followers in Indonesia reaches around 88,2% of 201,2 million Indonesians (Ahmed, 2011). It indicates that Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim population country. This condition represents an image of Muslims in Indonesia that must be an example of how quantity must be in line with quality. However, there are some challenges and dynamics within the Muslim community in Indonesia. Consequently, the contribution of Islam in the context of diversity in Indonesian society is not debatable. The potential chance of clash and conflict is inevitable due to diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, and religion.

Regarding the mentioned reality, religious polarization is perceived as a challenge, mainly in terms of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslim communities. It is stated by (Kersten, 2017), that the polarization itself occurs due to many factors, some of the strongest ones being political context and Indonesian culture. However, although challenges and conflicts ruin the religious relationship and social life among citizens, the role of *bhineka* (unity in diversity) is the solution to remove those negative problems.

Post the new order government collapsed, the discussion and study of Islam elevates in terms of scientific research. Besides, the term '*santri baru*' (new student at an Islamic boarding school) arises due to the appearances of Muslim intellectuals on Islamic campuses in Indonesia such as IAIN and UIN (IAIN: Islamic state institute, UIN: Islamic

state university). This reality shows that a new atmosphere of Islamic study in Indonesia rockets, most importantly by the Muslim intellectual actors (Kersten, 2016). In addition, that phenomenon is considered as an impact of the collapse of the new order government toward the reformation era. During the new order government, many Islamic mass institutions and organizations are restricted and restrained in their freedom of aspiration, ideas, and thoughts. In the reformation era, all aspirations and opinions from various Islamic groups and organizations are freely expressed by everyone. When it happens, new problems arise particularly dealing with the religious landscape in Indonesia.

On the other hand, many transnational Islamic organizations in Indonesia, such as *Hizbut Tahrir* (Fox, 2004). The post-era of the new order government is a momentum for the transnational organization to enter Indonesia, which it never occurs in previous times. This condition becomes a serious problem for religious life in Indonesia namely the clash between the group of traditional Islam and modern Islam. It also shows the inevitable diversity of different Islamic groups in Indonesia. Even within one religion, for example, Islam has also many different groups and sections. Therefore conflict is unavoidable.

The study is not only limited to the context between Islam and the state of Indonesia but also studies on the change in religious practices and thoughts, cultures, and economy. One of them is studied by Greg Fealy who discovered that Islamic economics becomes a trend in Indonesia. Dealing with this reality, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) gives a perspective on the status of *halal* (allowed) on a certain thing, for instance in the issue of *halal* and activity of Sharia Economic in Indonesia, in terms of Indonesia nowadays, transforms into a trend, notably for Muslim society (Fealy & White, 2008).

Based on the aforementioned discussion, there are a lot of home works and problems dealing with Islam and the state of Indonesia clash. Although in this context, many problems appear, there is also an alternative solution to overcome those clashes. For example, the concept of *Islam Nusantara* (Islam refers to the local values and local culture in Indonesia), is expected to create an Islamic image with moderate, tolerant and applying the Islamic teachings based on *Ahlussunnah wal jama'ah* (Mubarok & Rustam, 2019). *Islam Nusantara* comes as a realization of moderate Islam that is taught by *Walisongo* and other Islamic scholars. Because of their contribution, Islam is well accepted by large societies in Indonesia.

In the context above, *Islam Nusantara* has certain characteristics namely a timeless concept that is adaptable in all eras by implementing tolerance values on diversity, respecting established traditions, behaving progressively suitable with the latest era development, and liberating without restraining a certain entity. This is an alternative way to solve diversity in sections and entities in Islam, including those who implement Islamic politics in Indonesia.

Through detailed analysis, Islamic politics holds an important issue in religious study in Indonesia. For example in dividing two different Islamic groups accomplished by Geertz: *santri*, *priyayi*, and *abangan*. *Santri* is a Muslim entity with a religious

background, meanwhile, *abangan* is a Muslim who applies Islamic teachings in the nominal way (who does not apply Islamic teachings fully), he/she mixed with traditional values (Assyaukanie, 2011). Whereas Allan Samson also classified Islam in Indonesia into two entities, the modern group and the traditional group (Hindley, 1976).

Other scholars' opinions such as Mark R. Woodward classified Islam into five groups. *First*, indigenous Muslims. This classification is exclusively cited by Geertz then who mentioned it as *Muslim abangan*. *Second*, traditional Muslims, and this is represented by *Nahdhatul Ulama*, and in the political context, it is represented by *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (National Awakening Party). *Third*, Modern Muslims and this is represented by *Partai Bulan Bintang* (The Crescent Star Party), *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperous Justice Party), and *Partai Amanat Nasional* (National Mandate Party). The last two groups, as mentioned by Woodward, are considered intellectual movements which do not affiliate with any certain political party. They are known as Islamist groups or fundamentalist groups and neo-modernism groups.

Furthermore, The Muslim classification made by Robert W. Hefner is divided into two groups namely Civil Islam and Regime Islam. Civil Islam is also known as the group of Muslims that support the values of democracy, freedom, pluralism, and civil rights. Meanwhile, regime Islam is a group of Muslims founded by Suharto. They are considered as a group of anti-democracy, repressive, and authoritarian (Hefner, 2000). Some scholars criticized the classification. They perceive that the classification is not absolute. The same criticism had been expressed by Greg Fealy to Hefner over the Principle of Civil Islam. From that issue, the classification of Muslims in Indonesia varies due to diversity and problem complexity.

The problems of various religious thoughts that grow and invade Indonesia can be solved by applying moderate Islam. Islamic education in Indonesia is a relevant and strategic way to strengthen religious moderation which has been integrated among Muslims in Indonesia (Suharto, 2017). Moreover, Muhammad Abduh in his perspective on the philosophical foundation of Islamic education stated that it is necessary to reform constructive Islamic education (Dhalimunthe, 2010). Islamic education is applied in some religious educational instances and institutions in Indonesia should be able to give teaching learning based on moderate Islamic values. Meanwhile, fundamentalists and Islamists also maximize the sources they have to spread their ideology via educational institutions they have. Therefore, counter-action against the spread of ideology belonging to fundamentalists and Islamists must be stopped.

Trans-national Islamic education becomes a serious threat and problem to Islam's sustainability in Indonesia. They grow and develop since the beginning of 1998 and entered Indonesia by spreading their ideology. Moreover, Transnational Islamic education is also perceived to contradict national educational ideology. Accordingly, it is homework for the government to solve dealing with countering the dangerous ideology. Otherwise, it will radically grow and encourage a huge number of masses to join and

participate in their group.

And the last is political interest which always triggers many problems in Indonesia. For example, as written by (Abuza, 2006; Ahmed, 2011; Baswedan, 2004; Hindley, 1976; Porter, 2002). They elaborated on how Islam and politics are connected and intertwined with each other. The endless debate and issue re-appears when Islam is viewed through a democratic lens. However, Islam in Indonesia has gone through serial dynamics and it never stops at a certain phase. The discussion on the continuity of Islam and politics, Islamic politics, politicized Islam, and the relationship between Islam and Indonesia has frequently stimulated polemics and problems in Indonesia. Therefore, good elaboration through analysis and in-depth discussion on the theme and focus related to Islam and Indonesia must be conducted to reach a comprehensive understanding. In the end, religious information and phenomena in Indonesia can be guarded based on established rules and standards of how to respond and treat appropriately and proportionally.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia has a variety of ethnicities, races, cultures, and religions. Those entities and diversities, for Indonesia, are supposed to be a plus point to step forward into positive development and maturity. As time flies, Islam and Indonesia connect due to their dynamic and context. Although they both frequently clash with each other in many chances, they complete and influence one another. In this context, Islam and Indonesia become two united power that develops and grow for betterment. It means that the connection between them both is not only perceived to navigate potential conflict but also significantly affects the positive change and development due to the goal of realizing a civilized society.

Furthermore, the characteristics of Indonesians are various, likewise Muslims. This point is supposed to be beneficial power to accelerate the development of nation and state. Even though there are many challenges and problems, those are not entirely barriers to keep struggling toward principle and developing the transformation. Therefore, keeping peace and unity inter elements of the nation is an absolute key to do. The last, it is a normal phenomenon of the clash between Islam and Indonesian diversity. There is a lot of homework to solve and find an alternative answer regarding the clash of issues as aforementioned previously. In consequence, all problems that hit Indonesia due to the clash of two different entities, Islam and local characteristics, appropriately and relevantly can be solved. Although the conflict is vulnerable and inevitable, the spirit of optimism for living in peace and a safe country is the right option for Islam in Indonesia contributes much in all aspects and stands by a moderate, tolerant, and graceful look.

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