

The Role of Islam in Shaping the Idea of Indonesia

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Abstract: *This study will describe information that Islam plays a role in influencing the struggle in determining the main ideology of the Indonesian people. Some Indonesian Muslim leaders strive to determine the foundation of the country. In studying Indonesian history requires a proper understanding of the role of Islam. Before independence, the movement of Islam in Indonesia was divided into two major currents: traditionalists who developed in the countryside and modernists who grew up in urban areas. The current type of research is critical analysis. This research is based on library research and textual analysis of relevant materials taken from primary and secondary sources on history, development, change and transformation. The results of this study reveal that nationalism does not conflict with Islam and therefore Muslims can apply it in their lives. This is because nationalism can be used to obtain peace among the people whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim. Nationalism will not harm Islam and Muslims in Indonesia because nationalism is part of Islam. They allow the application of man-made laws such as nationalism as long as they are suitable for Muslims. However, their acceptance of Pancasila as a state ideology is a reflection of their commitment to Indonesian nationalism.*

Keyword: *Islam, Indonesia, ideology*

Introduction

The Islam in Indonesia is cultured by Sufism (*tashawwuf*) and Sufi Orders (*thariqah*) which have spread on almost every island such as Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and others. Numerous studies on Indonesian Islam reveal that many sufi order continue to exist in Indonesia prior to 17th century mainly in *Pesantren* led by its *kyai* or *murshid* (master of sufi order) for example Syaikh Muhammad Yusuf al-Maqassari (1627-1699), Syaikh Ahmad

Khatib Sambas, Syaikh ‘Abdal-Ra’uf al-Sinkili (1615-1693) and Syaikh Isma’il Minangkabawi.¹ Those sufi orders, however, considered as religious groups strived to preserve religious Islam through performing congregational practices. They disseminated the views to societies through sermons (*khuthbah*) and Islamic celebrations (*hawl*) every year. Several sufi masters also produced works on *‘aqidah* (belief) and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) to explain religious interpretations among Muslims and also to respond to numerous arising Islamic legal issues in Indonesia.² It is important to note, however, that almost each work of Islamic law draws primarily on Shāfi’ite *madhhab* in view of the fact that the majority of Indonesia Muslims were faithful of this *madhhab*. In addition, many *murshid* studied in Mecca and were taught by scholars of Shāfi’ite *madhhab*.

The influence of *tasawwuf* and *thariqah*, however, decreased gradually by the emergence of some Indonesian Azharite scholars who were influenced by the ideas of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghāni (1839-1897) and Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905). They devoted their intellectual career to propagating their ideas in Indonesia at the beginning of the 20th century. In Sumatera Barat, for example, we find TahirDjalal al-Dīn al-Azhari, Abdul KarimAmrullah, M. Djamil Djambek and Abdullah Ahmad who strived to disseminate the views of ‘Abduh to their students and to the public.³ For Noer, the emergence of ‘Abduh’s views

¹For example, Martin Van Bruinessen in his work argues that despite *Tarekat Naqshabandiah* being the most influential *tarekat* in Indonesia there are some other *tarekat* in Indonesia such as *Tarekat Khalidiyah* and *Tarekat Syattariyah*. See Martin Van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1992). Other studies are: Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII: Melacak Akar-Akar Pembaruan Pemikiran Islam di Indonesia*, (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1994); Alwi Shihab, *Akar Tasawuf di Indonesia: Antara Tasawuf Sunni dan Tasawuf Falsafi*, (Depok, Pustaka Iman, 2009); Ali M. Abdillah, *Tasawuf Kontemporer Nusantara, Integrasi Tasawuf Ibn ‘Arabi dan al-Ghazali: Ajaran Tasawuf Syekh Hizboel Wathony, Mursyid Tarekat Khalwatiyah Akmaliyah*, (Jakarta, Ina Publikatama, 2011).

² Among the famous books of fiqh are *Sirāth al-Mustaqīm* by Nuruddin al-Raniry (d. 1658), *Mir’at al-Thullāb* by ‘Abd al-Ra’uf al-Sinkili (1615-1693), *Sabīl al-Muthadīn* by Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari (1710-1812), *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn* by ‘Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani (d.1789), *Kifāyat al-Ghulām fībayānarkān al-Islam* by Isma’il bin ‘Abd Allah al-Khālidi al-Minangkabawi. See AzyumardiAzra, *JaringanUlamaTimur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII*, (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1999); Abdul Halim, *Politik Hukum Islam di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Ciputat Press, 2005), 85-89.

³ Further annotation concerning the influence of Muhammad ‘Abduh’s thoughts in Indonesia, see the speech of Haji Abdul Malik bin Abdul KarimAmrullah (Hamka) in accepting an honorary doctorate degree at the University of Al-Azhar on 21st of January, 1958 entitled: “*The Influence of teaching and thought of Syaikh Muhammad ‘Abduh in Indonesia*”. That speech was published by Tinta Mas, Jakarta in 1961.

in Indonesia was actually initiated by Arab traders and preacher who came to Indonesia at the end of the 19th century.⁴

The emergence of the views of 'Abduh had caused an ongoing debate primarily between two religious groups in Indonesia in regard to critical religious issues including independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), imitation (*taqlid*), innovation (*bid'ah*) and superstition (*khurafat*). The religious group referred to as the traditionalist⁵ (*tradisional*) strived to preserve Sufism and sufi orders in view of the fact that these were deeply rooted in the Indonesian religious fabric. On the other hand, the reformists sought to purify religion from any deviation and as such resisted some religious interpretations and practices including *tahlilan* (reading *lailaha illa Allah* together for the deceased), *slametan* (religious ceremony in some important events), *ziyarah* (visiting the grave and praying for the dead) and perhaps the concept of *ijtihad*.⁶ Traditionalists argued that not all scholars can exercise *ijtihad* and as such Muslims should simply follow the rulings of the *madhhab*. On the other hand, the reformists encouraged Muslims to understand religion with reference to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* so as to avoid *taqlid*.⁷

Indonesian Muslim reformists, however, sought to spread their views in the Muslim community through developing a scholarly network and setting of

⁴Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁵Several studies on Islam in Indonesia agreed in classifying socio-religious organizations but may differ in its term. Nahdlatul Ulama accounted as one group that maintains the doctrines which are rooted in Indonesian Muslims while Al-Irsyad, Muhammadiyah and PERSIS are considered as other camps endeavoured in the renewal of Islam. Harry J. Benda labels rural-centered orthodoxy and urban-centered reformism for both respectively, while James L. Peacock named them as traditionalist and reformist. Howard Federspiel, however, calls them traditionalist and modernist, whereas Ronald Lukens-Bull prefers to use Classicalists and Reformists. In this article, the terms traditionalist belongs to Nahdlatul Ulama and reformist will be used for Al-Irsyad, Muhammadiyah and Persatuan Islam. See: Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun, Indonesian Islam Under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945*, (Netherland, N.V. Uitgeverij W. van Hoeve, 1958), 51; James L. Peacock, *Muslim Puritans, Reformist Psychology in Southeast Asian Islam*, (California: University of California, 1978), 109; Howard M. Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology in the Emerging Indonesian State, The Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), 1923-1957*, (Netherland, Koninklijke Brill, NV, Leiden, 2001), viii; Ronald Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad, Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 14.

⁶<http://speedial.com/results.php?f=4&q=pembaharuan+muhammadiyah+persis+nu+dan+masyumi>(accessed in July 31, 2014).

⁷ We may find the views of reformist in many of their prominent scholars who were devoted to Muhammadiyah, Al-Irsyad and PERSIS. Those views, however, will be elaborated more in the following chapter.

religious organizations. The Muhammadiyah was the first reformist religious organization established in 1912 by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta. Its inception inspired Ahmad Surkati⁸ to set up another reformist organization called Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah in 1914. Nine years later, Haji Zamzam and Muhammad Yunus held similar views with Surkati and Ahmad Dahlan and founded Persatuan Islam. As a reaction to the initiative of the reformists, the traditionalist united their scholars under the leadership of Abdul WahabHasbullah and founded NahdlatulUlama in 1926.¹² Later on, religious differences aroused among the two camps, the traditionalists and the reformists, which stirred intense debates among Muslims intelligentsia in Indonesia which provided substantial contributions to the intellectual life in Indonesia and especially on the development of the Islamic legal debate.

Nationalism and Pancasila

The Republic of Indonesia has been formed through long process of struggle accredited to Indonesian society and its scholars who strived to lay down the primary rules for a united national life over a wide range of religions, ethnicities and races. The *'ulamā'* led their community to resist Dutch colonialism while striving to unite them within the big family of Indonesia. They also played an active role in creating a society that is faithful, intelligent and with good morals in order to develop family and community life within the country.

Religious organizations, however, sought to defend the resolve made by Indonesian scholars throughout their social and political activities among Indonesians including the efforts of *dā'i* in local villages. They believe that Islam is essentially harmonious with time and space (*shālih li kulli zamān wa makān*) and as such represents the strength to educate humans and societies in their different cultures. In view of those differences, however, there was much disagreement among scholars in regards to the implementation of Islamic principles because they strived to accommodate different socio-cultural conditions (*ahwāl al-ijtimāiyyah*). The aforementioned framework promotes tolerance through which various differences including religious differences in

⁸ Ahmad Surkati was born in 1874 and originated from Sudan. He came to Indonesia in 1911 with Syaikh Muhammad al-Thayyib al-Maghribi and Syaikh Muhammad bin Abdul Hamid Assudani to teach in schools under the direction of *Jamī'at al-Khair* in Jakarta for three years. Due to the internal conflict with leaders in *Jamī'at al-Khair*, Surkati resigned from schools of *Jamī'at al-Khair* and founded a new school namely *Al-Irsyad al-Islamiyah* on 6th of September 1914. The school was the embryo of the reformist organization with a similar name. See: M. Mukhsin Jamil, *Nalar Islam Nusantara*, 129-130.

Indonesia were addressed. For them, the Republic of Indonesia is the best form to unite various tribes and religions and to forge a united nation based on nationalism. They have an obligation to keep nationalism in accordance with the conditions of Indonesia itself, especially in regards to implementing the *shari'ah* among Muslims.⁹

In working the idea of Indonesia, Muslim scholars in Indonesia suggested their society to defend the independence through *fatwā* giving. NU, for example, rejected the request of the Dutch government for support in the Second World War. NU believed that the request made by the Dutch was to occupy Indonesia. For NU, Indonesian Muslims were not obligated to support the Dutch in their war. Another key aspect in NU stand on Indonesian nationalism is their rejection of the Dutch's request to donate blood (blood transfusion). Asy'ari (d. 1947), a leading figure of NU, issued a *fatwā* prohibiting any help for the Dutch.¹⁰

In the early period of independent Indonesia, NU contributed to the defense of the nation against the Dutch troops' efforts to reoccupy Indonesia. The return of Dutch troops angered leaders of NU. On October, 22nd of 1945, Hasyim Asy'ari declared the resolution of Jihad (*Resolusi Dihad*) in which he declared that the fight against the Dutch colonialism was an obligation upon Muslims to defend Islam and the country. In view of the resolution, scholars encouraged Muslims to continue their struggle in the way of Allah (*al-jihād fī sabīl-i-Allāh*) and defend the independence of the Republic of Indonesia and the religion of Islam.

When the efforts of liberation from colonialism were close to success, Soekarno, the first President of Indonesia, raised the idea of Pancasila¹¹ as the state ideology. For Feillard, Pancasila was concluded from a long discussion in Muhammad Yamin's residence with three key Islamic figures, namely K.H. Wahid Hasyim and Kyai Masykur, and the other was Kyai Kahar Muzakkir. This long discussion resulted in five principles, later adopted by Soekarno as the

⁹ LTN, *Solusi Problematika Aktual*, 187.

¹⁰ Solichin Salam, *K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari Ulama Besar Indonesia*, (Jakarta: DjayaMoerni, 1963), 47.

¹¹ Pancasila is the Indonesian national ideology consisting of five principles (Lima Sila): Belief in the Divinity of God; Just and Civilized Humanitarianism; Indonesian National Unity; Democracy Guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives; Social justice for all the people of Indonesia. Some works pertaining to Pancasila including its history see Haji A. Salim and M. Roem, *Ketuhanan Y.M.E. & Lahirnya Pancasila*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Bulan Bintang, 1977); Eka Darmaputra, *Pancasila and the Search for Identity and Modernity in Indonesia Society: A Cultural and Ethical Analysis*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988).

state ideology.¹² In view of the participation of organizational leaders, Feillard argues that the existence of religious and nationalist organizations in Indonesia was influential to determine the main ideology for Indonesia.

The view of Muslim scholars in regards to Pancasila can be traced throughout the *fatāwā* and activities of its leaders, especially Wahid Hasyim throughout the struggle to establish the state ideology before independence. The meeting of BPUPKI¹³ witnessed the contribution of Wahid Hasyim to the formulation of the state ideology. Pancasila including other issues such as the Indonesian constitution were discussed in the meetings of BPUPKI. On July 10th, 1945, BPUPKI accepted a text later known as *Piagam Djakarta* or the Jakarta Charter¹⁴ agreed upon on June 22nd, 1945 by the Committee of Nine consisting of Nationalists: M. Hatta, M. Yamin, A. A. Maramis and Soekarno; and Muzakkir, Wahid Hasyim, AbikusnoTjokrosujoso, AgusSalim from the Islamist group. In the introduction of the *Piagam Djakarta*, the basis of Pancasila was included in addition to the *Sila* (basis) of Belief in One Supreme God: “with the obligation to carry out *Shari’ah* for adherents of Islam” (*dengan kewajiban menjalankan sjariat Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknja*). This addition was known as ‘the seven words’ which faced serious reactions from Christians of Eastern Indonesia.

Interestingly, a Japanese navy officer¹⁵ proposed to Mohammad Hatta that the people of Eastern Indonesia would prefer separation from Indonesia if

¹² Andree Feillard, *NU vis-à-vis Negara: Pencarian Isi, Bentuk dan Makna*, (Yogyakarta: LKis, 1999), 32-35.

¹³ The Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI –*Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*) was an organization set up on April 29th, 1945 by the Japanese administration occupying Indonesia. During its meetings, a constitution for Indonesia was drafted and Soekarno’s Pancasila as the foundation of the new state was endorsed. See St. Sularto and Dorothea Rini, *Konflik di Balik Proklamasi: BPUPKI, PPKI dan Kemerdekaan*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2010).

¹⁴ Jakarta Charter is the script prepared by the committee of nine for introduction (preamble) of Indonesian Constitution 1945 (UUD 1945 - *Undang-Undang Dasar* 1945) on June 22nd, 1945. Ultimately, the script became the official introduction for UUD 1945 after some meetings held by the committee. Later, some Nationalist leaders rejected the seven words “with the obligation to carry out Sharia for adherents of Islam (*Dengan Kewajiban Menjalankan Syariah Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluk*). On the other hand, some Islamist leaders strived to maintain ‘the seven words’ in the constitution. Therefore, this issue became a keen discussion before Indonesia’s independence. For further elaboration see EndangSaifuddinAnshari, *Piagam Jakarta 22 Juni 1945 dan Sejarah Konsensus Nasional Antara Nasionalis Islami dan Nasionalis Sekular Tentang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia 1945-1959*, (Bandung: Perpustakaan Salman ITB, 1981).

¹⁸ There are some different reports in regards to the name of the Japanese Navy officer who came to Mohammad Hatta. Taher argues that Laksamana Maeda who came to Soekarno and

the seven words of the Jakarta Charter are not be removed from the Constitution. Hatta summoned Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Kasman Singodimedjo, Teuku Mohammad Hasan and Wahid Hasyim as the four members of PPKI¹⁶ which represented Islam. They, ultimately, decided to eliminate those seven words and based on the proposal of Wahid Hasyim, the words “*Yang Maha Esa*” (The One) were added to “*Ketuhanan*” (Divinity). For him, the addition of the word *Esa* (one) which means the Oneness of God (*tauḥīd*) is one of the affirmations of Islamic value and as such Muslims have accepted the change of ‘seven words’ to ‘Esa’.²¹

The position of Wahid Hasyim was appreciated by some NU scholars and was officially approved by NU as well. The NU, however, in its National Conference of Scholar of Nahdlatul Ulama (*Musyawaharah Nasional Alim Ulama Nahdlatul Ulama*) in 1983, issued a *fatwā* in which it announced “The Correlation between Pancasila and State”. The *fatwā* sums up the views of NU in regards to Pancasila which they perceived as a mutual concept agreed upon by all society members including people from different groups, tribes and religions in Indonesia, and as such represents the basic framework of statehood.

Another prominent Muslim scholar like Natsir approved Pancasila as the ideology of Indonesia. Natsir explained his positive view regarding Pancasila in 1954, a year before the election of 1955. For him, Pancasila does not contradict the teachings of Islam because the values inherent within the five principles of Pancasila are relevant and familiar to Islam.¹⁷ Nevertheless, if Pancasila were to be interpreted wrongly, then it will contradict Islam. For him, Pancasila is one formulation that is appropriate with Islam. Therefore, Pancasila should be the shadow of Islamic teaching such as the principle of Belief in the Divinity of God which must be interpreted by *tawḥīd*, and principle of Social Justice which must be based on kindness among humans (*iḥsān bayna al-nās*).¹⁸

reported the objections of Christians from Eastern Indonesia regarding the inclusion of Piagam Djakarta. See Tarmizi Taher, *Aspiring for The Middle Path: Religious Harmony in Indonesian*, (Jakarta: CENSIS, 1997),

¹⁶ The Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence (PPKI – *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*) is a committee which officiated the preparation of Indonesian independence. This committee consisted of 21 members who succeeded to legitimize Indonesian Constitution and chose the first President and Vice President of Indonesia. See Feillard, *NU vis-à-vis Negara*, 39-40.

¹⁷Natsir, *Capita Selecta Jilid II*, (Jakarta: BulanBintang, 1978), 212-216.

¹⁸Natsir, *Tinjauan Hidup*, (Jakarta: Widjaja, 1957), 48.

Natsir, however, reminds Muslims of the fact that despite the parallels existing between Pancasila and Islam, it does not mean that Pancasila is itself Islam or that Islam is itself Pancasila. For him, Islam is broader than the five principles of Pancasila because those only reflect partial teachings of Islam. The implementation of Islam is the practice of Pancasila and as such through Islam, Pancasila will remain alive in Indonesia. Hence, Pancasila should not be used as an instrument to hinder Islamic reform movements such as PERSIS and Muhammadiyah from struggling to render the state more Islamic as long as their struggle is legitimate and democratic.¹⁹

Natsir also states that Muslims should not separate themselves from politics, and as political activists, they would be unable to set themselves apart from Islam. For Muslims, the establishment of Islam cannot be separated from the establishment of society, nation and freedom.²⁰ Islam legislates laws for humans, which provide an absolute regulatory criterion for human affairs. These statements show that Natsir accepted Pancasila as an instrument through which Islam can be applied as an ideology of the state.

Conclusion

The aforementioned information reveal that, according to Muslim scholars, nationalism does not contradict Islam and as such Muslims may apply it in their life. This is because nationalism may be used to obtain peacefulness among societies whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims. Moreover, they maintain that nationalism will not jeopardize Islam and Muslims in Indonesia because nationalism is part of Islam. They allow the application of man-made laws such as nationalism as long as they are appropriate for Muslims. Their acceptance of Pancasila as the state ideology, however, is a reflection of their commitment to Indonesian nationalism.

They accept Pancasila as a “gentlemen’s agreement” between elite politics when they sought to determine the state ideology. For them, Pancasila is a better solution to avoid disagreement between religions and societies in Indonesia including Islamists, nationalists and communists. Therefore, Wahid Hasyim agreed to eliminate “the seven words” which elucidated that Islam is a religion protected by the state. Hasyim believes that the elimination will not alleviate the role and importance of Islam in Indonesia because the first principle indicating the oneness of God refers to Islam alone.

¹⁹Pepen Irpan Fauzi, *Dinamika*, 82-83.

²⁰ Natsir, *Capita Selecta II*, 157

Hasyim as well as Natsir argues that Muslims may accept Pancasila as long as it is interpreted within the Islamic perspectives such as *tauḥīd* and *ihsān bayna al-nās*. For them, through Pancasila, Muslims have to struggle to disseminate Islam within the state because Pancasila will remain alive under the implementation of Islam. It seems that Natsir encourages Muslims to employ Pancasila as the main instrument to achieve the main goal that is the implementation of *sharī'ah*. In working out this goal, Muslims must play an active role in political activities, especially to debate with nationalists and communists and to influence government policies in order to benefit Islam and Muslims in Indonesia[].

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