

BOOK REVIEW

Dynamics of Ancestral Religious Recognition in Religious Politics in Indonesia

Yogyakarta: CRCS UGM, 2017

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ANCESTRAL RELIGIOUS RECOGNITION AN EFFORT TO BUILD INDONESIA WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION

Juridically Indonesia has identified itself as a religious country. An important element which states that it is manifested in Pancasila as the foundation of the state in the first principle, namely the belief in the oneness of God. The formalization of the element of belief in all of the nation's history is not a flawless one. One of the criticisms that is not taken seriously by most components of the nation is a derivative form of the first polarized first principle in the birth of official religions recognized by the state. Polarization is arguably very exclusive, which eventually, will deny the existence of other beliefs that grow in the community. As a consequence, there arises a pejorative narrative in all its forms to those outside the official state religions. Even the most unnecessary things happen, as violent acts which very likely result from the exclusive polarization.

We must honestly admit that the polarization of the principle of the oneness of God in the form of official religions is the blemish behind the religious image of this nation. In practice, many people are converting in a forced way from the belief of their conscience to those of the country's choice. The camouflage lasted decades and it was not categorized as part of intimidation. Samsul Maarif as a religious observer in Religious Studies Program and Cross Cultural in his book *Dynamics of Ancestral Religious Recognition in Religious Politics* presents a comprehensive segmentation of the view of religion and politics twist as well as historical development from Old Order government until today.

The polarization of religion in its exclusive form is part of the Dutch political

heritage. It is related to the Dutch interest to know for sure the existence of contestation among its colonies, not to mention that there has been religious clustering adopted by society. Historically the clustering of religions stems from a contradiction between Islam and *adat* (customary law) and the second is the contestation of *santri* and *abangan*. The conflict continued until the time of Indonesian independence, including during the period when the state constitution was formulated. As a climax, the words religion and belief are included in the 1945 Constitution or Constitution. This section explicitly begins as the advent of religious politics.

As the first result of the religious politics, it emerges to form a new understanding in the midst of society that puts Islam as the protocol of official religion recognized by the state. As a further consequence, religion and *adat* become two sides to obtain a legal definition of the intent of religion itself. Nowadays, the society is also divisive, one group has a modern orientation that puts religion as an enforcement effort based on scripture without any slightest compromise with anything outside the scriptures, including the custom. The second group is a community that has a traditional-contextual orientation that puts religion and *adat* side by side. As long as *adat* does not contradict religious principles, *adat* is placed as an enriching element of religion.

Both the first and second community groups, in fact, have entered the trap of the Dutch political policy. As a climax, custom and religion are then polarized exclusively and are completely different between the two. The sanctity of religion and indigenous wisdom which is actually part of the wealth of this country has gradually become two things that continue to be hostile against each other. Ultimately driven by political forces, the official religion forcibly annihilates all forms of wisdom that are found in *adat*. Where the category of *adat* is a religion that is degraded by political interests into customary definition, so that constitutionally it does not have a place in this country. In Syamsul Maarif language the degraded religion is called the ancestral religion.

The concentration of the ancestral religion is the main material fact studied by Syamsul Maarif with the historical approach. It is intended to measure the patterns of constitutional acceptance and discourse over the course of the seventy years. Therefore, in his book *Dynamics of Ancestral Religious Recognition in Religious Politics in Indonesia* Syamsul Maarif divided it into three parts. The first part, is the early discourse of the emergence of religious politics beginning with the filing of the official religious protocol which in this case is Islam as the majority religion at the time. As the initial discourse that accompanies religious politics is the discourse of Islamic puritanism. Attempts of thought and movement that stick out in the form of thought of true and

false Islam on the basis of the theological and sharia, without any attempt to accommodate the wisdom of the existing local religions.

The strife of *santri* and *abangan* increasingly brought about the birth of political movements. The revitalization then spurred on the discourse of the Islamic State and the Secular State. The idea of an Islamic State is driven by *santris* who insist that the state's construct is the integration of religion and politics without separating from each other. While the secular state is the idea of the *abangan* group that presupposes the construct of a state is a government that separates between politics and religion. Luckily ideological tensions could be brokered by Sukarno through his speech on June 1, 1945. Soekarno proposed a compromise, independent Indonesia is not an Islamic State, not a secular state but a Pancasila state. The proposal was received positively by many circles, so that on June 22, 1945 the organizing committee of the principles and the purpose of the Indonesian state submitted its work, which then the work is known as the Jakarta Charter.

The Jakarta Charter seems to have been entirely independent of the efforts and influence of the ideology of the Islamic State. Because in the charter there is an exclusive expression on the seven most popular words in the Jakarta Charter; "the Divinity, with the obligation to observe the Islamic Shari'a for its followers". The seven-word phrase according to Supomo potentially created negative impact on inter-religious relations and existence of customary laws. Based on the objection, then Pancasila was born as we know it today. The rejection of the Jakarta Charter does not necessarily lead to *santri* to stop there. As a further effort, the *santri* proposed the establishment of the Religious Department as compensation for the removal of seven words in the Jakarta Charter. On January 3, 1946 the Department of Religious Affairs was officially formed. At that time, the Department of Religious Affairs was a form of Islamic identity in this country.

The next inevitable consequence after the establishment of the Department of Religious Affairs is the constitutional consequences which led to the establishment of civil registration law such as marriage registration conducted in the Office of Religious Affairs, not in the Office of Civil Registry. Implicitly the religious department is a special institution that serves the religious rights of Muslims, although in its development the religious establishment has provided directorates for religions other than Islam. Tensions and group antagonism especially between *santri* and *abangan* continue to roll. In other segments, the possible assumption is inevitable that the religious department is an institution that often serves the interests of the *santris*. In some cases religious deposition is often used as an institution to suppress *abangan*

movements by restricting religious activities beyond constitutional definitions issued by the religious department. Syamsul Maarif explicitly mentioned that the state has been infiltrated by institutionalized religious politics.

From then on public opinion has been controlled institutionally, so that the society easily says which is religion and which is not. All the *abangan* efforts related to beliefs are rawly attributed to non-religious elements. At the same time, the government explicitly distinguishes its citizens in religious and non-religious categories. In the second part, in this section Syamsul Maarif described the *abangan* attempts to maintain the existence of wisdom and belief by sheltering on some other political forces, including shelter under the auspices of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The choice is certainly not the right choice, but also cannot be blamed for it. Because the constitutional *abangan* group with its various beliefs does not have the space for expression, so once they get a better choice, the *abangan* group that originally belonged to the Muslim category converted to Christianity and even became a communist.

A boomerang for *santris* who constantly suppress the *abangans*. So there was an inevitable violence, which was later widely understood historically as the savagery of the PKI. Implicitly, this historical notion is not entirely communist, but it is the accumulation of *abangan* saturation that loses its existence due to formal and non-formal pressures. The choice to be a communist is the only option that makes the *abangan* more comfortable, for only the PKI at that time was close to *adat*, at least formally the PKI as the only party that revived the folk arts such as *ketoprak*, *ludruk*, *reog*, etc. In response, the *santris* in the New Order period compromised with the government, so that the revival of the *abangan* movement together by students and the government could slowly be crushed. On the other hand, culturally the *santris* continue the Islamic movement by continuing to lead Muslims to become orthodox Muslims, not only culturally. In 1968 the *santris* again voiced the Jakarta Charter, but unfortunately the effort was intertwined with the government at that time. But at least, the *santris* still get a better room than the *abangan*.

The New Order led by Soeharto at that time did not want to make mistakes like the Old Order led by Sukarno. Therefore, a concrete effort successfully undertaken by Soeharto was to place the ancestral religions equivalent to the official religions with the appropriate conversion of symbolism. For example as one of his instructions was, changing the term *kebatinan* into *belief*. The idea is quite constructive, and then the new order created a new political machine with the Golkar Party being a formal umbrella of the growing ancestral religions. On the other hand, the new order continued to conduct political provocation by defending the issue of PKI and communism, it was intended to maintain

harmony with the *santri* who could not be marginalized. The issue of the PKI and the formation of the Golkar party are two interconnected fortresses to affirm the continuity of the new order which then ran for up to 32 years.

The third part, Syamsul Maarif described the efforts of the ancestral religions that find a new foothold called Human Rights. The effort explicitly emerged in the reform era of 1998 precisely after Soeharto stepped down. A surprising statement from the group on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) stated “we do not recognize the state, if the state does not recognize us”. This statement is the accumulation of disappointment against the policy of the new order that is still considered halfhearted to accept the existence of the ancestral religions. But on the other hand, reforms not only open the faucet of freedom for *abangans* that are identical with *adat*, but also open opportunities for the *santri* to rise again freely. At the same time, human rights discourse has also become a significant footing ground leading to religious organizations and conservatism agendas. Even then, the conservatism agenda was successfully managed to get overwhelmingly dominant among Muslims. Such insistence and domination slowly and surely succeeded in pushing the MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) to issue a fatwa of *haram* against leberalism, pluralism and secularism.

In this case, the fate of the ancestral religions is again at stake, for it has been attributed as a forbidden part. Constitutionally, a new regulation containing the requirement of the ancestral religion must always be supervised by Law No. 16 of 2004 concerning the prosecutor’s office on article 30 verse 3. Next comes other formal regulations that implicitly narrow the space for the ancestral religions. A simple government awareness to recognize the ancestral religions is gradually improving, although in Syamsul Maarif’s words it is still half hearted. Because in reality some ancestral religions still have difficulty in obtaining public services. Even to the discourse of omitting the religious identity in the Citizen Identity Card column is still classified as a half-hearted policy discourse. In conclusion, the existence of religion and its legitimacy should not be led to the discourse of the *santri*, *abangan*, PKI, Muslim and infidels. But beyond the political sentiments there is a more noble objective that is the issue of discrimination that should disappear from this country.