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RELIGION AND REGULATION IN INDONESIA

Gregorius Sri Nurhartanto

Faculty of Law, Atma Jaya Yogyakarta University, Indonesia

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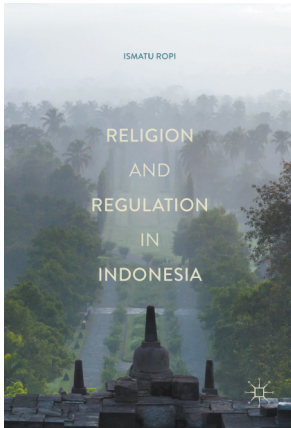
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RELIGION AND REGULATION IN INDONESIA



The book “Religion and Regulation in Indonesia” written by Ismatu Ropi is very interesting because it can envisage the religious life and its regulation in Indonesia completely, starting from the period before Indonesia independence until present. This book analyses the state regulation on religious affairs in modern Indonesia, focusing on understanding its history and consequences to citizen’s religious life.

The book divided into fifteen Chapters, and starting with examines the relationship between state and religion. As a state based on Pancasila the existence of “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” becomes very important. Indonesia is not a religious country and not a secular state. Indonesia is the country with belief in one God (*Berketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*).

As a plural country, Indonesia guarantees religions to live in Indonesia and to protect the religious freedom. Religious life in Indonesia became a part of Indonesian tradition life at the beginning, but after that become a part of political identity in daily life. It can be traced in religious life during the Dutch colonial era, including the existing of inter-religious relationships.

Before the independence of Indonesia, there was an interesting debate by the founders of the republic (the founding fathers) about the status of religion and its role in the Indonesian state system. This debate is about the model of the Indonesian state will become a religious state or a secular state. The debate emerged after Soekarno delivered a speech on the birth of Pancasila (June 1, 1945) in front of BPUPKI. Sukarno as chairman of “Tim Sembilan” also proposed Jakarta Charter which added seven words “with the obligation to enforce Islamic law for its followers” behind *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*. The addition of seven words gets “opposition” from non-Muslim figures. Finally, the compromise of the seven-word formula was abolished, and Pancasila was approved. As a state of “*Berketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*”, Indonesia affirms itself not as a religious state or a secular state. All religions recognized by the Government of Indonesia as equal.

In order to guarantee religious life in Indonesia, the Indonesia affirms that Indonesia is a State based on “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” and everyone has the freedom to embrace and worship based on religions and beliefs. The principle “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” who became the First of Panca Sila as set out in the 1945 Constitution and 1950 is more of a “bridge” between nationalist groups which tends to make Indonesia a secular state and a majority Islamic group tend to want to be an Islamic state. The fundamental thing about “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” is related to consistency among Islamic scholars in interpreting believing in one God context in the life of the state. Regardless of the different views among the founding fathers, Islamic scholars like Hamka accept the Panca Sila as the foundation of State. He asserts that “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” is the wider backbone of the Panca Sila. Other Islamic scholars such as Agus Salim also agree that the real God of the Almighty is no other the translation of monotheism and in line with the teachings of Islam. Similarly, Muhammad Natsir asserts that believing in one God is the spiritual, moral, and ethical basis of the nation and state. The interesting point presented in this chapter, particularly in relation to two fundamental reasons why Muslim activists were concerned to this point, First to

build of self-confidence after the experience of the difficulty to establish an Islamic state and incorporating Islamic symbols in a constitutional system. Secondly, in order to give a significant influence of Islam in the constitutional system. The book is also intended to refute the arguments of the earlier period by Christian figures like Rosin, who was the idiom as a syncretism compromise between Islamic, Javanese and modern assumptions of religion, and therefore open to any interpretation or meaning. Soepomo as the nationalist gives a point of view that “the whole article implies the belief of the Indonesian nation in the belief the One God Almighty. In the contrary, Mohammad Yamin interpreting article 29 of the 1945 Constitution as freedom of religion and belief according to Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Balinese Hinduism. Yamin affirms “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” more to the teachings of the scriptures of each religion.

The important thing to be discussed in Ismatu Ropis’ book after the debate and differences of view between the founding fathers relating the essence of God Almighty is highlighting the role of government through the Ministry of Religion Affairs (MORA) in the period 1945-1965. The Ministries who have the main task to organize religious life become harmonious. The establishment of MORA cannot be separated from Islamic groups who still want “a safe haven” to incorporate Islamic values in the life of the country. Many observers believe that MORA was formed to neutralize the disappointment of Islamic groups who feel unaccompanied by the disappearance of the seven words of the Jakarta Charter. MORA is more directed towards maintaining unity and harmony, particularly for the majority of Muslims still cannot accept the separation of religion and state. MORA expanded its authority by enacting marriage law, especially for Muslims. Furthermore, MORA also organizes and supervises religious education in public schools. After the promulgation of the 1950 Constitution, MORA also dealt with the issue of Islamic marriage and pilgrims, religious education in schools and giving input to the government related to religion and maintaining the ideology of the nation based on “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*”. Even in the future MORA is more concerned with issues institutions associated with Muslims. In the 1960s there was even a criticism of MORA that tended to “make the care of Islamic religiosity of the essential duty of the state,” or to promote Islam as the state’s sole religion. Another interesting point is about the dynamics of the Indonesian Communist Party and the emergence of the local beliefs/local religions (*kebatinan*) in Java until the formation of PAKEM (Supervisory Trust of the Society of Local Beliefs in Society). The supervisory body to oversee those local movements, the establishment of PAKEM becomes a milestone for further state scrutiny of religious beliefs in Indonesia.

MORA’s role for “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” in public life and for “watching over individual freedom and giving guidance and support” so as to promote healthy religious movements “is not easy to do. This is related to the existence of thinking in many Indonesian Muslim writings there are different categories of religion. Religion can be divided into two categories: the religion of *samawi* (the revealed religion comprised of the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and the religion of *ardhi* or religion *budaya* (the non-revealed religions denoting all religious tradition outside the Abrahamic). Another thing that also needs attention is the enactment of the Presidential Stipulation Number 1/PNPS/1965 on the Prevention or Misuse and/or Religious Vilification signed on 27 January 1965. The socio-religious and political factors surrounding the enactment of the Act were clear. One of the reasons for the application is the rise of a variety of local beliefs. For many, the unprecedented development of the social disorder, national disintegration and religious “confusion” in society.

In the Suharto era, MORA was increasingly used to install the dominance of Islamic values against other groups. The G30S-PKI (Communist Party) coup d’état has brought the military, community groups including religious groups to fight the

PKI. At the same time, in economic development, Suharto saw that Islam was a “threat” to the development and therefore they were marginalized. Many Islamic scholars see that the minority groups occupy a prominent position in the Suharto regime, and the missionary role actually influences the modernization of Indonesia toward Christianity. It was a religious sentiment that later became the basis of Islam against Suharto’s modernization which greatly emphasized political stabilization and economic development, including using religion for fundraising such as zakat. MORA also did to cut subsidy on hajj, where every person who has to hajj pilgrimage must pay full. On the other hand, Suharto always embraced Islamic groups to joint for combating the PKI and its followers. To convince the Islamic group to support his program, Suharto always stresses that that religion was not only a driving force for development but also a precursor to advancement (*kemajuan*), and that without religion a person would lose his or her goal in life and feel the emptiness in the noise of material advancement.

Suharto regime is known as a regime that very capable of controlling the lives of its citizens both in the public and private sectors, including in terms of religious life. In this book the author is able to illustrate the shrewdness of Suharto governing his people through many religious rules (see diagram on page 142). Suharto in the 1970s also began to shift the traditional Muslim figure from an important position to the military. Suharto made MORA a place to moderate Islamic figures like Mukti Ali who always prioritize dialogue with other religions. He believes that dialogue will lead everyone adherence to his religion and respect for other people’s religion and religious freedom. The role of MORA shifted under Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara, an Active Lieutenant General who belonged to Suharto’s inner circle. Alamsyah has assumed that the local believer is not a new religion in Indonesia and it is only a part of the culture, so the management is incorporated into the Ministry of Education and Culture. Alamsyah is also famous for his Trilogy Harmony doctrine (Trilogy Religious Harmony). The New Order era is also known as a regime that prohibits the development of heretical sects (“Splinter” Group), including the development of Confucianism. In addition, the New Order also discussed the status of people who are “not religious” in Indonesia (The people with no religion).

Furthermore, in the next chapter, author tries to disclose the role of Government manages the tension of religious life in Indonesia. The New Order’s interference in religious affairs, though driven by a desire to maintain social harmony, paradoxically ended up exacerbating tensions between and within religious communities. This condition can be reflected in managing the tensions between Islam and Christianity relating the existence of missionaries, and the mutual agreement of the Islamic, Catholic and Christian leaders including the establishment of the place of worship. In addition, the author also mentioned with the existence of P4 (Guideline of Internalization and Implementation of the Panca Sila). Another interesting point is the issue of Ahmadiyya (a reformist Movement) in Indonesia. As acknowledged by Islamic scholars Mukti Ali and Deliar Noer that Ahmadiyya literature contributed to open the horizon of Islamic leaders in the decade. In Indonesian history, the relationship between the Ahmadiyya group and other Indonesian Muslim organizations have been complex and marked by long-lasting contention and disputation. The controversy about the Ahmadiyya gets momentum during the New Order regime. The peak situation is in 1981 when the Saudi Arabia Government requested MORA to ban Ahmadiyya.

In the next chapter Ismatu Ropi explains the condition in Indonesia relating how the majority Islam dominates the rights of minorities. It can happen because, in the decade of 1980, Suharto turned his course by getting closer to the Islamic group. In order to maintain his power, the regime became more accommodative to Islamic demands and symbols and turn in systematically into the state system. Suharto demonstrated his religious piety by going to Mecca for the first time to perform the hajj in 1991.

It becomes the entry point of the domination of Islam over the rights of minorities. The author also links to the condition after Suharto step down by discussing the emergence of major Islamic parties. Post-New Order, in the reformation era, the system of government changed completely with directed towards decentralization (regional autonomy), this era is also marked by the increasing of Sharia Law (Islamic Law) in local regulations.

Ismatu discusses the old issues have caused controversy in Indonesia such as the case of establishment the house/place of worship, Ahmadiyya, until the judicial review to the Constitutional Court against Law Number 9/ PNPS / 1969 on Blasphemy in next chapter. During Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono become the president of Indonesia, he issued a new Joint Decree by the Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Internal Affairs Number 9 of 2006 and Number 8 of 2006. In general, this 2006 Decree, as far as reducing possible religious conflict was concerned, was better constructed if compared with the previous one. The Joint Decree consisting of 30 main articles, for example, relating with the FKUB (The Interreligious Harmonization Forum); the requirement for permits to establish places of worship; the procedure for resolution of disputes occur, the procedure of reporting; and the procedure of Decree implementation. Public attention on the Ahmadiyya became more intensive after the attacks in 2005 in Parung West Java and an incident in Cikeusik Banten in 2009. The Ahmadiyya took a number of violent, with increasing numbers of attacks and intimidation on Ahmadiyya properties and Ahmadiyya communities from 2003. Relating to this issue, the Government issued a Joint Ministerial Decree by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Attorney-General and the Minister of Internal Affairs on June 9, 2008. At the end of this chapter concludes with unraveling the phenomenon of Legal Jihad.

The last chapter (chapter 15) contains the conclusions. The reader can see the redline of principle "*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*" as the foundation of the life of Indonesian religion with all its problems from the past to the present.

Overall the book "Religion and Regulation in Indonesia" written by Ismatu Ropi is recommended for reading.

Note : Ismatu Ropi made a different meaning when translated FKUB (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama) to be Forum Komunikasi Umat Beragama.

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