

Moderation of Religiosity in The View of Islam Nusantara

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Abstract. Religion can bring social violence, it can also bring peace. In the context of a multicultural Indonesian society. Religion for its adherents, ideally needs to be presented as a peacemaker. In that context, Islam Nusantara carries the notion of religious moderation as the term: *tawasut* (moderatin) dan *tawadzun* (balance). What size and how the application is, it is the focus of this study. To answer those questions, this study utilizes a qualitative method, based on literary study and discussions with NU administrators Central Java. The result are: (1) how to teach a reconciling religion patterned: a. utilizing local wisdom; b. prioritizing teaching ethics first and the religious law; c. utilizing communal ritual as community meeting and then introducing the adaptive religious. (2) It is through this understanding and teaching that the notion of religious moderation is widespread in Indonesia.

1 Introduction

Religion, when it comes down to earth, often experiences overlap. Overlap between the interests of God, and the interests of those who claim to believe in God. As a result, the sacred message of religion to love and protect the universe can be turned into insulting and damaging. We wonder, is it true that religious teachings as they proclaim in deafening voices? Is it true that religion teaches its adherents to blaspheme by disbelieving people who disagree? Is it true that religion is legitimate to oppress people who have different views? From here we need a new way of how religion lives and is lived by its adherents as a means of peace. This study explores religious wisdom initiated by "*Islam Nusantara*" through a religious moderation format.

An important question to find out is: what kind of historical background is the driving force for the need for moderation? At what level does religious moderation apply and be treated? What means are needed to facilitate the realization of peace through the concept of religious moderation in question.

2 Literature Review

Religion is essentially an acceptance of values and even institutions that are believed to be absolute truths. However, humans are not born from a cultural and religious vacuum [1]. From this point of view, the fate of religion and religious adherents in a plural society is often ambiguous. At certain limits, religion breeds violence, but at other limits from religion also peace can arise. Why is that? According to Huston Smith, because religion confronts the individual concerned with a decisive choice. His calling is to face reality, and to control oneself [2]. Violence, such as radicalism and terrorism, can be understood as a religious call, although in a human sense they are opposites. In other words, radicalism and terrorism are not movements that emerged from a vacuum, but have a background and at the same time become a causative and driving factor in the name of religion [3]. If on the pretext of religion for acts of violence it is permitted, then gradually religion will be abandoned by its people because it is not in accordance with human nature [4,5]. It is better if religion allows injustice to occur, then this is also contrary to its main function, namely *amar makruf nahi mungkar* (ordering to do good and at the same time preventing evil). So how does religion ideally play a role in managing the extreme left versus extreme right tendencies? The answer is at the midpoint or moderation, as echoed by the Nusantara Islam movement [6].

The question is, what and how is the paradigm of religious moderation? And how to implement it, is the focus of this study. To explore in-depth answers, a qualitative interpretive approach is needed.

3 Research Method

To answer a number of questions about what and how religious moderation was initiated by the ulama who are members of Islam Nusantara, data was collected through referential studies written in books, journals, and distributions of NU organizational decisions, and from group discussions with NU administrators and administrators of *Lakpesdam* NU (NU's Human Resources Empowerment Institute) Central Java (May 2022). The results from the two sources are then analyzed

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and compiled into what is called religious moderation, its characteristics, requirements and ways of implication so that the concept with religious moderation is not just a discourse.

4 Result and discussion

4.1 The definition of Islam Nusantara

In this study, “*Islam Nusantara*” is defined as (a) Islam which is understood and practiced in everyday life for the general public of Indonesia; (b) which accommodates local culture as long as it does not conflict with Islamic teachings; and (c) specifically instigated by NU scholars, according to the theme of the 33rd NU congress in Jombang, East Java on 1 – 5 August 2016. Among them from the congress, Islam Nusantara has been further strengthened as a characteristic of Islamic life in the archipelago which characterized by being persuasive rather than confrontational with local cultures in the archipelago. How the Islamic Nusantara religious model, from this study produces three indications, namely (a) how to introduce and broadcast Islam to the community; (b) the religious spectrum includes three important things, namely faith (*aqidah*), Islam (sharia), *ihsan* (sufism). Each is guided by mujtahids; Based on that guide, the form of religion is moderate and tolerant.

In other words, Islam Nusantara is Islam which in terms of *furu'* (branches) is sociological in the sense to be applied in the lives of various people. In this diversity, an emphasis on the benefit of the people to be able to live together in harmony is recommended. While in the main problem (ushul; core), Islam Nusantara still refers to the Koran, al hadith, ijma 'and kias.

If there are problems between people of different religions or of the same religion, the differences are resolved through dialogue. This means, adherents of Islam Nusantara not only accept pluralism but also build it. In Alwi Shihab's language (quoted by Kamil, 2022) "pluralism not only recognizes the existence and rights of adherents of other religions, but is also involved in trying to understand differences and similarities".

The idea that wants to be realized behind the diversity of religions that are embraced by the Indonesian people is "how Indonesia is a big building, where each person can live and live comfortably in it". This is a moderate and tolerant way of religious life, as the concept that is used as the basis of ethics (character) developed by Islam Nusantara: *tawasuth* (moderate), *tawazun* (balanced; proportional), and *l'tidal* (perpendicular; fair). These three principles are useful and are used not to let go of their roots but also not to stick to them, as is the rule in making decisions: *al mahafdatu alal qodimus sholih wal aqdu bil Jadidil ashlah* (maintaining existing traditions, and taking new findings that are believed to bring goodness).

4.2 Religious preaching by utilizing existing local wisdom

To create peace in people's lives, preachers (professors of Islam) cannot use one-sided methods (monologue) but must also consider what the socio-cultural community is being targeted by means of dialogue. Socio-cultural considerations here include cultural knowledge, including existing traditions. This pattern is a strategy inherited by Walisongo, especially by Sunan Kalijaga.

Sunan Kalijaga teaches religion to the community by paying attention to and utilizing three things. First, using the terminology of existing public trust as the entry point. For example, when the target community is not familiar with the concept of God, but they prefer the term Sang Yang Wenang, then the term is welcome to use, while cultural dialogues are slowly carried out. Second, the socio-cultural approach takes precedence over the sharia approach (law; religious norms). One of the cultural approaches is through arts that people like, such as *wayang* art. Third, take advantage of ritual traditions, not eliminate them. The concept of *sekaten*, for example, is a smart practice of Sunan Kalijaga how to introduce Islam in terms of community culture. *The sekaten* tradition, which is a ritual that runs every month of the Prophet's birthday, is carried out by Sunan Kalijaga to introduce the sentence of monotheism, namely *sahadatain* (two sentences of sahadat) which reads: *La ilaha illa-LLahu, Muhammadur Rasulullah*. (I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). Not only that, Sunan Kalijaga also uses Javanese traditional arts such as in the song *sluku sluku bathok* (according to the Javanese tongue) even though the original form is *usluk - usluk bathnaka* (cleanse your mind) and so on.

According to NU scholars, Sunan Kalijaga's da'wah strategy is in line with the substance of the meaning of Islam *rahmatan lil alamin*. In that da'wah, the emphasis is on substance (preferred message), not religious formalities, so that it is easily accepted because it is *tawasuth* (moderate).

4.3 Religious Moderation and Tolerance

Moderation and tolerance refer to the reality of diverse societies, where followers of different religions interact and greet each other. These two attitudes and traits are only present sincerely if they are based on the belief that every religion for its adherents is true. Thus, the truth of each religion is relative absolute. Islam is true for Muslims. Likewise for Christianity is true according to the beliefs of Christians, and so on. This attitude is justified in the language of religion as well as in the language of the state.

Therefore, the principles of Pancasila and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia for NU scholars are understood as final. From this angle, NU scholars chose to position religion with the state as being substantive, not formalistic. In substantive thought, the task of the state is to guarantee the rights of its citizens, such as: the right to practice religion according to their beliefs; justice, democracy, respect for people's lives and property are guaranteed by the state.

If there is a dispute between the people and the state, as well as between religious adherents, it needs to be resolved by deliberation and dialogue, not enmity and hatred. This is the dogma of "*fa ahsin kama ahsanallahu ilaika*" (meaning: do good to Allah's creatures, as Allah has done good to you (Surat al-Qasash: 77) which is used as a reference for Islam Nusantara in living together as fellow citizens. Through this view, NU clerics teach the concept of brotherhood into three categories: fellow human beings; fellow Indonesian citizens; and brothers in the same religion.

5 Conclusion

Islam Nusantara in the construction of NU scholars is the Islam of the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah (*aswaja*) sect. In determining the legal basis, Islam *aswaja* is guided by the Koran, the hadith, and recognizes the role of the companions of the prophet, especially: Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, Umar bin Khattab, Uthman bin Affan, and Ali bin Abi Talib. While the basis of religious understanding and practices rests on the *aqidah ahlussunnah wal jamaah*. The doctrine stems from three core role models: following al-Asyari and al-Maturidi schools of monotheism, following one of the four schools of *fiqh* (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hambali), especially Shafi'i; and follow the way set by al-Junaidi al-Baghdadi in tarekat or tasawuf.

Such a flow of religious understanding is taught in a persuasive manner, not confrontational with the customs of the target community. This is in accordance with the purpose of religion itself as the hadith of the prophet: *Bu'istu liutammima makarimal akhlak* [the prophet] was sent by Allah, none other than to perfect morals]. The message of this hadith is that before Islam was introduced to the community, basically the community already had a traditional culture. Therefore, Islam does not simply eliminate local customs, but dialogues to sort and choose, then unite and perfect.

Dialogue understanding means using a persuasive approach, which prefers to find common ground based on emic perspectives (society views) and etic (religious normative teachings). This teaching process has made the religious understanding and practice of Nusantara Islam as the idea of the NU scholars to be moderate and tolerant.

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