

Muslim-Christian Relation on the Basis of Christian Village in Malang, East Java, Indonesia: Socio-Theological Reconstruction for Building Religious Harmony

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Abstract

Inherited by a long history of fluctuating relations between Muslims and Christians, both communities are suspicious each other if among them being the ruler, it will curb religious freedom for others. I argue that power and majority domination does not always deprive religious freedom for other groups. This paper focuses on the socio-theological reconstruction of Muslim minority and Christian majority for building religious harmony, although the relation was colored by conflict and violence in New Order Era. The portrait of Muslim-Christian relations in two different era. In the New Order era characterized by conflict and violence, because they both departed from the doctrine of religious sentiments existing in each holy books and majority domination. In the Reform Era, portraits of the relation became more harmonious, because of the transformation of a community views of the two religions on exclusivism toward inclusiveness. Strategies and models of teaching the Muslims involve an inclusive approach, values of universality in Islam, and the tolerance to the Christian culture. While the teaching strategy adopted by the Christian community is doing reconstruction of religious theology through the rearrangement of Christian teaching to be more inclusive to other religion. The strengthening of harmonious relations between Muslim and Christian in Peniwen marked by increasing religious awareness, cooperation in various aspects of life and theological reconstruction to be more tolerant, inclusive and humanistic.

Keywords: Muslim-Christian relations, fluctuations, conflict, harmony, Christian village

1. Introduction

In East Java, the term of the Christian village refers to a village, hamlet or hamlets that the majority of its people are Javanese Christian, it also commonly called as Christian Church of East Java (*Greja Kristen Jawi Wetan/GKJW*) (Christian elite, August 23, 2014, Interview). In the beginning, the Christian village was a forest which was opened by the Christians under the instructions of the Dutch government. Historically, the Christian presence in Peniwen cannot be separated from the history of Dutch colonialism affiliation with Christian (Protestant). Peniwen is one of four Christian villages in Malang, besides Sitarjo-Sumbermanjing, Swaru-Gondanglegi, and Pujiharjo-Ampelgading, which is predominantly populated with Christian. On August 17, 1880, Peniwen forest opened by 20 people led by Kiai Sakejus for Christian settlement. In 1883, Rev. Kremer, Kendal Payak, A.V. Leven, and A. Setirum formalized the establishment of the new Christian settlement. Since then, Peniwen officially known as the Christian village and became one of the 11 churches in GKJW Regional I of Malang ("Tim Penulis GKJW", 2001: 5). Peniwen is one of 41 villages and hamlets for Christians spreading in Indonesia. In the New Order era, the relationship between Islam and Christianity in the village is often in conflict, but along with the change of political system in the Reform era, it tends be harmonious relations. This is reinforced by the shift in theological paradigm of each community.

2. Method

This study used a phenomenological approach. The data were collected by using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. This study was about the Christian in Peniwen village including in the District of Kromengan, Malang, East Java, Indonesia. This study was conducted based on several academic considerations: 1) Peniwen is one of the village in the Malang regency which is inhabited by the majority of Christian people which has a unique community and local wisdom; 2) as a rule, the villages in Malang regency is dominated by people who have religious affiliation to Islam, so it is necessary to understand the conditions and the possibility of "psychological burden" of Muslims as a minority group, especially everything related to propaganda and ideology; 3) the history of the Christian village of Peniwen influenced by the conflict and the harmony among religious believers resulted through a number of cultural terrain. Data analysis was performed circularly and repetitively between the collection and analysis of data simultaneously with the principles on going analysis. For maintaining academic honesty and avoiding bias, the study carried out triangulation methods and sources, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Conflict and Harmony in the Relation between Muslim and Christian in Peniwen

The portrait of Muslim-Christian relations in the Christian majority community in Peniwen can be classified into

two periods, namely the New Order era and the Reform Order era. In New Order era, the relation was dominated by the conflict. Peniwen Muslims as minorities who were often oppressed in social and religious aspects. They never greet each other, and even showed hospitality. Religious activity in a number of places of worship surrounding the villages also often get a rough treatment and threats of weapons. In those years, the Muslim minority community were not able to feel the joy of worship, even in the feast days. In contrast to the very festive celebration of Christmas, they cannot feel the celebration atmosphere of "Idul Fitri" in the village. In addition, there was also a violation of religious freedom. If there were couples who want to marry a Muslim, they should get out of from Peniwen. ID card-making as a Muslims also difficult to be owned, because they must be written in the ID card as a Christian. But since the 2000s, this condition gradually getting better, the Muslim villagers could have an identity card as Muslim. Violence committed by Christians often done in the name of religion as their legitimacy. On the contrary, Muslims are also often fought in the name of religious fanaticism. It seems that both communities are similarly assuming their primordial theology which are rooted in their cognitive systems and behavior. Therefore, the rivalry proselytizing between Islam and Christianity in Peniwen commonly happened to fight for influencing and increasing adherents. Norsena (2001:31) states that religious concepts are often the main source of conflict between human beings. It is inevitable that a number of religious texts did regulate the issue of violence and war. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, Yahweh-called God in the Bible-described as the "God of War", as described in Psalm 18: 40- 41.

In Islamic perspective, there is a concept of jihad which means warfare. Therefore, some observers see that religion is the source of conflict, or at least give legitimacy to various social conflicts [Johnson, 1997: 82-124, Beuken & Kuschel, 1997). Others concluded that the religions give a principle that legitimizes the murder. There is a view in Islamic and Christian (even Jewish) tradition that is God kills people, and orders people to do the same. Therefore, no doubt that the emergence of a wrong understanding on the text between Islam and Christianity lead to religious conflict, and continue to the climax into a social conflict. Rahardjo (2010: 369) also sees that the religious conflict as a logical consequence of the emergence of fundamentalist, applied for both Muslims and Christians. Symptoms of fundamentalism also appeared in the Jewish people in Israel, and among Hindus in India. Fundamentalism is the source of conflict. These symptoms or tendencies is recognized in Islamic circles, which raised the liberal Islamic movement to dilute fundamentalism. Therefore liberal Islamic groups are not part of a conspiracy of capitalism or Western imperialism, but a response to the emergence of fundamentalist movement that occurs in religious traditions. Based on his research, Juergensmeyer (2000) argues that the rise of religious violence caused by the presence of fundamentalists in Islam, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist.

In Peniwen context, religious conflicts of fundamentalism also became one of the trigger of Muslim-Christian conflict in the New Order era. Conflict involving religion as its trigger, requires serious attention. Anticipatory measures for the sake of peaceful religious life in Indonesia in the future should be taken into account. If it is ignored, as happened in the New Order era, there will appear more serious problems in the nation, and become a thread for state development. Changes in political constellation map of the New Order era towards a more democratic reforms also became one of important entities for increasing overcast the conflict in Peniwen. Muslim elite states the relation between Islam and Christianity in Peniwen transformed into a significant recovery. Socio-religious confrontation happened because of exclusivism approach, but today it subsided and harmoniously resolved. It results religious inclusiveness for Peniwen society increasingly open.

Since the 2000s, the relationship between Islam and Christianity in the village gradually improved no longer tinged conflict, neither violence nor disharmony. Socio-religious confrontation that used tapered now been eased and well resolved. The harmonious relationship configured through the celebration of religious holidays (Christmas and Eid), socio-religious rituals such as "*bersih desa*", "*selamatan*", and mutual cooperation to improve village infrastructure. This condition is actually as expressed by Gus Dur as a cultural terrain that allows the creation of religious harmony [Wahid, 1998: 51-60]. Since the improved relations between Muslims and Christians, they visit each other during the "Idul Fitri" and Christmas. This phenomenon is not new in Peniwen and surrounding villages as a cultural terrain for building religious harmony.

Christianity as the religion of the majority in Peniwen already practice the values of "Pancasila". They no longer act extremely against the Muslim minority. The Christian community is no longer staged proselytizing against the Muslim community, and similar to what the Muslim minority did. Both prefer to cultivate religious adherents rather than multiply each other, as well as in the mandate of "Pancasila" and the 1945 Constitution that respects religious plurality. Since the 2000s, the relationship between Islam and Christianity in Peniwen is becoming a portrait of eligible relation to serve as a role model of religious tolerance that is ideal for areas that are prone to conflict and religious violence, such as Poso, Ambon, and East Nusa Tenggara. In this context, the Christian elite also stated that the post-Reformation, in Peniwen there is never happened again any religious conflict between Islam and Christianity. It has become the choice and will of the people. Conflict before the Reform era due to mistake of the perspective of looking at the reality of religious harmony in each respective religious doctrine. Christians and Muslims have a view that departs from excessive suspicion between one to

another. The Reformation Order with its open democratic system could be a blunder, because the people are given space that is more freely in expressing the conflict to the surface. Therefore, Indonesian efforts to raise public awareness of the importance of unity and tolerance between religious communities become a national agenda to be realized. Indonesia aspires to the realization of a society that loves peace and is bound by a sense of national unity to build a pluralistic country. National unity is no longer limited by barriers of differences in ethnicity, race, religion, class, interests, and other social categories. Therefore, the concept of which is suitable for the Indonesian context is the concept of civil society.

The civil society is actually derived from the concept of political Islam that has historically been practiced in the early days of Islamic rule under the control of the Prophet Muhammad. Political reality at the beginning of the Islamic community (the time of *al-Salaf al-Salih*), according to Madjid [1999: 24] has the political reality of building a democratic and participatory honor and respect to public spaces, such as freedom, human rights, participation, and social justice. Historical form of socio-political system, known as the Medina Charter, is a formulation of the principles of an agreement on life together in the socio-political among Muslims and between Muslims with other groups in the city of Medina. Discourse and political action of Islam in Indonesia will be realized by embracing political ideals as the time of the Prophet, so it will be able to record the glorious history that can be enjoyed not only by a party of Muslims but also by other groups. Because the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, then the most suitable value for coloring this country is Islamic values.

Islamic values are universal and inclusive. It can sustain the building of political will of Muslims in Indonesia. It also can be enjoyed by all people of all faiths. Political Islam that emphasizes on democracy, equality, respect for human rights, social justice, and uphold the ethics and morality are very suitable to be applied in this country. That condition is similar to Muslim elite's statement that the work done by the Muslim minority in Peniwen in building religious harmony after the Reform era is created by making a persuasive approach and tolerance. This fact is relevant to the perspective of Islamic theology on interreligious harmony. Theology of religious harmony based on the essence of man and of humanity that sees a positive and optimistic. According to Islam, humans are descended from a common origin, namely the descendants of Adam and Eve (Azra, 2006: 92). Although originating from a common ancestor, then man becomes tribes and nation-states, with characteristic culture and civilization respectively, so as to encourage them to know each other and foster appreciation among one another. In God's eyes, the difference in values of humanity in the view of Islam is not determined skin color and race, but it depends on the individual piety (al-Qur'an, 49:13). *These arguments* are the basic normative of Islamic perspective about the unity of mankind, which will encourage the development of human solidarity. Qur'an also did not forbid Muslims to do a good and give part of his property to the non-Muslims who are not hostile to or expel Muslims from the country (Shihab, 1996: 365-367). In the hadith, it also mentioned that Islam requires his people to do a good and to respect the rights of neighbors, without distinction of religion. Even the attitude of respect for the neighbors it is one of the quality parameters of faith to Allah and the Last Day. This hadith is reinforced by another hadith that states: Who is hurt "dhimmis" (non-Muslim minority groups sheltering under Islamic rule) means he hurt me (Rachman, 2010: 92).

In the above context, Christian elite also reveals that Christian relationship with Islam in Peniwen is very good. This is because the doctrine of religious harmony in the Bible requires Christians give shelter to the majority of the minority. This statement have relevance to the biblical theology of religious harmony. The humanity in the perspective of the Bible is God's great family. Harmony among religious people understood as a reflection and manifestation of God's mercy in Jesus Christ, in communion with His Holy Spirit. Guild was revealed through church called "ecclesia", those called and sent out by Jesus Christ to testify about his name, unto the uttermost the earth (Kis.1: 8) and thus there is no reason to convince themselves to serve only in the wall (building) church. Churches concept of harmony among religious believers is a mirror to the Triune God, which His unity is real, but at the same time his diversity is also evident, so it is not possible to blend or mix, Christian theology also rejects to address God with religion and rejects the religious absolutism and at the same time means God is relative. From some facts and theoretical concepts above, we can conclude that between the Muslim minority and the Christian majority prefer to foster religious quality rather than fight each other in order to multiply its adherents, because it is the mandate of "*Pancasila*" and the 1945 Constitution which emphasizes religious plurality.

3.2. Socio-Theological Reconstruction for Building Religious Harmony

3.2.1. Inclusive Propagation for Muslim Minorities

Da'wah" is an attempt to convey or call dogmatic internally and externally teaching of Islam to the Muslims. In the perspective of Islam, preaching is a theological necessity. "*Da'wah*" has vital position for continuing the existence of Islam itself. According to Muslim elite, preaching done in Peniwen is to blend in the social activities of the Christian community. The concept of *lakum dinukum wa liya din* is an excellent Islamic teachings in the context of building religious harmony in Peniwen. It has relevance to the idea of inclusiveness in Islam proposed

by Nurcholish Madjid. If religious diversity is not supported by the open and plural religious views, and inclusive attitudes, hence, most likely the difference would be daunting for the survival of the entity religious life in Indonesia, especially in areas where the percentage of adherents of each religion is imbalanced. This allows the emergence of tyranny and arrogance of the majority against the minority. Therefore, inclusiveness of Islam could be religious ideas and attitudes that are relevant in establishing harmony in diversity (Sukidi, 2001: xi).

The conflict and riot will not happen if each religion to be inclusive, open, tolerant, and understanding. One possible solution is by fostering an inclusive attitude within their respective faiths. Differences do not have to be removed and replaced uniformity. Differences must be respected and valued as something different. Different perspectives has its own way in the street and to the Truth True. Likewise every religion has its own ways and methods of approaching the Truth True. If one religion is not wise to generalize ways and methods in other religion, there will be a conviction and the imposition of religious beliefs, which means that there have been violations of human rights are upheld in all religions (Madjid, 1995: 41). In a society in which there are differences in religion, culture, and ethnicity such as in Peniwen, it should uphold the free communication of coercion and domination so that a democratic multicultural society. Therefore, we need an inclusive attitude that can establish communication without distortion and manipulation. The strategy of propaganda for the purpose of mature faith, can avoid religious suspecting behavior to everyone else, but they will do useful work for humanity. In this context, the role of religious leaders is very important, because they are role models for their respective communities. Obedience and adherence to the elite religious community are the reflection of the strong culture of traditional societies, especially those based in rural villages.

3.2.2. Propagation is a means to spread the values of Islam as a mercy for all the worlds

Islam is a religion that comes with the purpose of giving affection to the universe. Islam is a mercy for all the worlds (*rahmatan li al-'alamin*), which provides coolness, peace, safety, and prosperity not only to the adherents, but also to other people, even to all beings and the universe. Islam teaches mankind how to deal with and implement life pluralistically. In History of Islamic religious of the Prophet Muhammad era, the religious community has been formed and become a public awareness at the time (Rahardjo, 2010: 370). *Rahmatan li al-'alamin* is the most fundamental concept in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. He served as a spreader mercy for the entire universe. Explicitly can be understood in the word of God: "And we sent thee (Muhammad), but to (become) a mercy to the worlds" (the Qur'an, 21:107). The word "*rahmah*" has the same root with *Rahman* and *Rahim* that is the nature of God that 'Merciful' and 'All-Merciful'. This meaning is very appropriate to describe the attitude of love both of God and of fellow human beings (Abdullah, 2014). Universal Islamic values and inclusive political building will be able to sustain the Muslims in this archipelago which can be enjoyed by all people of all faiths. Political Islam which emphasizes the importance of democracy, equality, respect for human rights, and social justice as well as ethics and morality are very suitable to be applied in this pluralistic country. The concept is devoted to the realization of love that spreads in as many human beings on earth. If Islam had spread by the sword, guns, and violence, Islam would not be desirable and attractive again. If Islam is the imposition of the will, destruction of places of worship, hate the sinner without affection and give a solution, then Islam has lost its adherents. Violence, terrorism, and suicide bombings by a group of Muslims in the name of defending the religion of Allah, it is tarnishing the image of Islam as a religion of peace, love, and nurturing all beings (Armstrong, 2000: x-xi).

3.2.3. Tolerance of Minority Muslim against Christian Majority

Tolerance is willingness to tolerant and forgiving. The meaning of tolerance in accordance with the ideals of Islam is teaching followers to spread the love. Therefore, Islam is a religion of mercy, then in every aspect of Muslim life must radiate the values of compassion and respect for others. The spirit of tolerance that exists in Islam has been done by Muslim elite and Muslim communities to the majority of Christians in Peniwen Village. According to him, tolerance carried out by Muslim of Peniwen is tolerance of social and cultural terrain. In the Qur'an, many texts that explain the idea of pluralism which requires Muslims to respect others. God who wants his creatures not only differ in physical reality, but also differ in ideas, beliefs, and religion as it is called in some of his words. Among these are: "If thy God had willed, He could have made the people who one, and (but) they are always different [the Qur'an 11: 118]; "Had Allah willed you made him one people alone" [the Qur'an 5: 48]. Thus, it is clear that the similarity or uniformity in religion and belief are not desired by God. In another verse stated: "There is no compulsion in religion" [the Qur'an 2: 256]. Thus, it is understood that in addition to prohibit coercion for someone to embrace a religion or a religious convert, God also gives freedom to everyone. Because the path of right and wrong has been stretched by God, the choice left to each person to follow the path of faith or disbelief, with all its consequences. With very beautiful words, God explained the truth and falsehood or belief and disbelief is in the Qur'an 13: 17 (Depag RI, 1971).

In the context of Islamic history, life with full of tolerance has been practiced since the time of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina while leading. All religions, Islam, Judaism and Christianity can coexist peacefully. Life with full of tolerance is supported by a shared commitment contained in the Charter of Medina. The Charter consists of 47 chapters that have significant meaning for the creation of civil society that upholds

plurality true. Among the moral and universal meaning contained in the charter is the socio-political unity under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad, which is capable of reducing selfishness tribes, ethnicity and groups involved in the conflict for not less than 120 years. It is also caused by the personality and figure of Muhammad's wisdom and fairness in making decision (Watt, 1976). The principle is maintained even when the era of the caliphate after the death of the Prophet, even after Islam crossed into territory in Europe, namely Sicily and Spain and conquered the Indian subcontinent. History of Muhammad's spirit is exemplary in upholding the principles of pluralism, a reference is valid for the creation of a modern society that wants pluralism and multiculturalism become a positive and constructive force for progress of the nation and the state. Religious practices that performed by Muslim minority in Peniwen, within certain limits, also seems to be inspired by the *tasamuh* (tolerance) spirit which has been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, tolerance in Islam has a normative base and strong historical, though in practice, the lives and relationships of religions experienced fluctuations and ups and downs. Therefore, the teaching of religion and religious experience must be understood as two related but distinct entities. Proportionally, understanding and attitude can certainly prevent conflict and violence in the name of religion.

The violence is contrary to Islamic principles that guarantee and protect the basic human rights of five (*al-dharuriyat al-khamsah*), which include: freedom of religion, life protection, protection of offspring or generation, freedom of thought, and the protection or guarantee of property ownership. Jasser Auda (2008: 55) believes that the goal of Islamic law became a very basic fundamental principles and at the same time became a methodology in the analysis based on the systems. Therefore, Auda replace the classical paradigm of *Maqasid* as initiated by al-Ghazali and al-Shatibi that emphasizes the protection and preservation toward a new paradigm that is more emphasis on the development and right. Empirically, the development and fulfillment of the five basic human rights can be controlled and verified by achieving the human development index (HDI), as proclaimed by the United Nations (Abdullah, 2010).

3.3. Inclusive Propagation Strategies of Christian Majority: Reconstruction of Religious Theology

Reconstruction of religious theology is a missionary strategy undertaken by the Christian community fosters an inclusive attitude and love one another. According to Christian elite (August 24, 2014, Interview), propaganda strategy adopted by Christian majority in Peniwen through reconstruction in building religious harmony, performed by rearranging the teachings of Christian missionaries brought to contextualize the religious beliefs and indigenous communities. It is also based on the term "*umma*" referred to Jesus not only Christians, but also non-Christian people. Thus, according to him, the position of Jesus as savior is also universally applicable. The fact that happened in this Peniwen apparently also in accordance with the spirit of Documents of Vatican II, especially the Declaration of non-Christian Religions, urges Christians to carefully and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, promoting the spiritual, moral and values in the society and culture of people of different religions (Ongong'a & Akaranga, 2015:124-127). Salvation is thus not only monopolized by the Christians, but also allows offered by other religions (Knitter, 1985: 126-127). This is relevance to the doctrine of the Bible that supports religious harmony. The Bible states that God is always greater than what can be captured and understood by any religion. The implication is that Christians should not close the door for fellow human beings of other religions. True harmony is only born of appreciation of essential similarity between humans, as an expression of faith and manifestation of obedience to God. Nevertheless, it should not discourage spirit of missionary zeal. Therefore, religious harmony should not be opposed to freedom and the mandate of God to love (Matt. 22: 37-40), and does not need to be contrasted with the mandate of God to witness and preach the gospel (Matt. 28: 19-20). Thus, the church's mission to convert religion must not threaten the harmony, so as to create a balance between dynamic and creative harmony with responsible freedom.

In the realm of praxis, theology of religious reconstruction was manifested in the life of the Christian majority in Peniwen. They guarantee religious freedom for minority Muslims. Efforts to build relations with other religious communities based on the awareness that God and man is always involved in a relationship. It means God greet (approach) and people who want to respond it responding to the greeting. Christians have a spiritual rest that is Trinitarian, namely: God the Father that His love knows no boundaries of space and time (cp. Matt. 5:45); Jesus Christ's word and his work devoted to the interests of many people from various backgrounds (cp. Mrk.7: 24-30; Lk. 10: 25-37; Jn. 10:16); and the Holy Spirit that His work reaches a variety of areas of human life (cf., Jn. 3: 8) (Setiawan & Soetapa, 2010: 590). In the New Testament and the Old Testament states that God revealed himself to his chosen people as the only God and the God of the nations (Deut. 6: 4, 4:35, 39; Isa. 43: 10-11). Therefore, God's covenant with Moses declared: "I will be your God and you shall be my people" (Lev. 26:12) that preceded his covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15: 17-21; 17: 1 -14), Noah (Gn. 9:16), Adam (Gen. 1-5), David (Ps. 89) and Al-Masih, is an agreement with the whole of humanity and the whole world. Thus, the history of salvation is not limited to one religious community alone, but covers the whole of mankind (Utomo, 2006: 11). Togetherness and brotherhood that exists between the Christian majority and Muslim minority in Peniwen an expression of awareness of the importance of developing an inclusive religious

attitude and pluralist. Conflicts that occur because of prejudice and selfishness which are built into the mindset of these communities, especially in the New Order era, are transformed theologically and sociologically and foster true brotherhood that offers harmony in diversity.

4. Conclusion

The conflict between Islam and Christianity in Peniwen that occurred during the New Order, due to the dominance of the majority against the minority and religious sentiments are constructed of an exclusive theological doctrine. Muslim and Christian communities have the awareness to dig inclusive doctrine in the sacred texts of each religion and aware of the importance of respecting the culture and local wisdom to create harmony in diversity. This is realized through a propaganda strategy that is inclusive and humanistic. The Muslim community did theological reconstruction with an inclusive approach to stem exclusivism, spread the universality of Islamic values as the spirit to love each other, and socio-cultural tolerance in response to Christian culture. The Christian community also perform a theological reconstruction through contextualization of Christian teachings with the conditions of indigenous peoples and reformulation of the meaning of “*umma*” (people) that includes non-Christian people, so that the position of Jesus as savior is also universally applicable. Thus, although the Muslim - Christian relations at the base of the Christian village was once characterized by conflict and violations of religious freedom, but the two communities has finally realized the importance of cooperation in various cultural terrain and theological reconstructing a more tolerant and inclusive .

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