SIBLING RIVALRIES:
Disputing Religious Missionary and House of Worship in Contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract

The issues of religious proselytisation as well as the construction of house of worship are of main contentious topics inciting tensions between religious adherents, particularly between the minority Christians and the majority Muslims in contemporary Indonesia. This article discusses these two inter-religious problems and poses a question to extent that the competition between Muslim and Christians, both in their missionary activities and the building of new house of worship, inflicting inter-religious relation in contemporary Indonesia. Taken some cases as points of discussion, this article further offers that inclusive dialogue and social justice are solutions to minimize—even to prevent—the worsening tension between Muslim and Christians.

[Persoalan dakwah dan pembangunan rumah ibadah menjadi perdebatan hangat yang memicu ketegangan antarpemeluk agama, khususnya antara minoritas Kristen dan mayoritas Muslim di Indonesia kontemporer. Artikel ini mengkaji dua persoalan pokok antarumat beragama ini dan mempertanyakan tentang sejauh mana rivalitas antara Muslim dan Kristen, baik dalam konteks dakwah maupun pembangunan rumah ibadah baru, yang menimbulkan ketegangan antaragama di Indonesia sampai saat ini. Dengan mengambil beberapa kasus sebagai bahan kajian, artikel ini lebih jauh berargumen bahwa dialog inklusif dan keadilan sosial adalah solusi untuk

meminimalisir—bahkan mencegah—memburuknya ketegangan antara dua agama besar tersebut.]

Introduction

Islam and Christianity are sibling as both religions are rooted in the same Abrahamic religion, but, seen from the light of history, the relationship between two traditions often falls into rivalry. As elsewhere, the inter-religious tension involving the minority Christians and the majority Muslims is an old issue and keeps occurring in Indonesia.[1] The tension in many respects expands not only limited to the issue of religion, but also involves ethnic and economic issues. The economic gaps between the minority Chinese Christians for example has manifested itself as a pretext worsening the Muslim-Christian's relationship in Indonesia. It is said that the Chinese Christians are in control of the largest portion of Indonesian economic resources.[2] This economic gap conflates the religious issue and further acceletates the tension between Muslim and Christians in contemporary Indonsia.[3] Sumartana urges that the Christian-Muslim relationship is an old problem which keeps inflicting the interreligous relationship.[4] In many places in Indonesia, such as in Makassar and Papua, where local beliefs are living tradition of a portion of local population, the Muslim-Christians competition for wining the hearts of the local often emerges as the pretext of the inter-religious

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[1] Maryse Kruithof, "Shouting in a Desert: Dutch Missionary Encounters with Javanese Islam, 1850-1910," *Ph.D-Thesis*, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2014.

[2] Chang Yau Hoon, "Mapping Chineseness on the Landscape of Christian Churches in Indonesia," *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2016, pp. 228–247.

[3] Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia, Studies in Christian Mission*, Vol. 35 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[4] Th Sumartana, *Mission at the Crossroads: Indigenous Churches, European Missionaries, Islamic Association and Socio-Religious Change in Java, 1812-1936* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994).

tension.[5] The tension between Muslims and Christians, as Steenbrink argued, centres on the problem of religious conversion, particularly Chritian converts, and new buildings of houses of worship.[6] The problem becomes acute for adherents of these two religions are in competition to perform their missionary activities and compete to build their new houses of worship and accesively decorate their houses of worship.[7] This particularly happens to the case of Muslims who are feeling threatened by the magnificent building of churches.[8]

In addition to theological issue and missionary activities, the building of new houses of worship often deteriorates tension between Muslim and Christians.[9] There are cases where a certain segment of religious adherents prohibit the operation of the building[10] and are numerous houses of worship being damaged by followers of other religions (Muslims damaging Christians' and Christians damaging Muslims' places of worship).[11] This article deals with the problems of

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[5] Hasse Jubba et.al., "The Future Relations between the Majority and Minority Religious Groups, Viewed from Indonesian Contemporary Perspective: A Case Study of the Coexistence of Muslims and the Towani Tolotang in Amparita, South Sulawesi," *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2019, pp. 13-23.

[6] Karel Steenbrink, "Catholics in Majority Muslim Indonesia, 1945-2015: Between a Closed and Exclusive Community and Concern for The Common Good in an Open Society," Chr. G.F. de Jong (ed.), *Het Koninkrijk Festschrift Tom van Den End* (Heerenveen: Groen, 2005).

[7] Masdar Hilmy, "The Politics of Multicultural Citizenship: Problems, Challenges and Prospects of Civil Religion Institutionalization in Indonesia," *JICSA (Journal of Islamic Civilization in Southeast Asia)*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2016, pp. 1-13.

[8] Mujiburrahman, "Historical Dynamics of Inter-Religious Relations in South Kalimantan," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2017, pp. 145-174.

[9] Asfinawati. "Advokasi untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Keyakinan: Peluang, Keterbatasan dan Strategi Masa Depan." Zainal Abidin Bagir (ed.), *Mengelola Keragaman dan Kebebasan Beragama* (Yogyakarta: CRCS UGM, 2014), p. 49–59.

[10] Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, et.al., *Disputed Churches in Jakarta* (Jakarta: the Asian Law Centre and the Centre for Islamic Law and Society at the University of Melbourne, The Paramadina Foundation (Jakarta) and the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS), Gadjah Mada University, 2011.

[11] Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, *Alam, Pola-Pola Konflik Keagamaan di Indonesia (1990-2008)* (Jakarta: Paramadina-MPRK UGM-The Asia Foundation, 2009.)

Muslim-Christian relationships seen form socio-religious context.

Social Conflict of Muslim-Christian

Horizontal conflict between Muslims and Christians is an urgent issue. But even so, in the midst of a tense conflict situation, there are still sparks of peace that emerge from local community initiatives. For instance, at a time when the conflict and violence that occurred in Ambon with the victims of more than ten thousand people still occurred, an initiative emerged to forge peace by civilians with Christian and Muslim backgrounds.[12] The Christian and Muslim communities in Ambon engaged in collaborative efforts within the framework of humanity to recover from the aftermath of the violent conflicts that ravaged both communities.[13] They jointly fostered peace, which was shattered by horizontal conflicts in Ambon.[14] The tension in the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia may be afforded to the contestation fought over the public sphere between the two largest missionary religions in Indonesia.[15] The Christian-Muslim relationship, accordingly, requires social ethics in order to alleviate the ongoing tension based on religious, political, or economic perspectives.[16] Inter-religious social ethics between the two largest religions (Christianity and Islam) in Indonesia is of utmost

[12] Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Religious Violence and Conciliation in Indonesia: Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas* (London: Routledge, 2016); Raja Juli Antoni, *Religious Peacebuilders: The Role of Religion in Peacebuilding in Conflict-Torn Society in Southeast Asia*, Australia, 2014.

[13] Tonny D Pariela, "Social Capital as the Basis of Biosecurity Management Systems," *Learning Communities: International Journal of Learning in Social Contexts*, No. 2, 2008, pp. 197-205.

[14] Tonny D Pariela, "Political Process, Public Policy, and Peace Building Process: Case of Ambon City, Maluku," *Regional Development Policy and Direct Local-head Election in Democratizing East Indonesia. Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO)*, 2007, pp. 101-124.

[15] Bernard Adeney-Risakotta, "Public Sphere in Indonesia: Politics, Economy and Religion in Public Spheres," *Social Ethics in Inter-Religious Interaction* (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2015).

[16] Zuly Qodir, "Social Ethics and Inter-Religious Dialogue in The Contestation of Public Sphere in Indonesia," *Social Ethics in Inter-Religious Interaction* (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2015).

importance so that issues of mistrust or suspicions may be reduced.

In Indonesia, freedom of religion is a fundamental right guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution in article 29 verse 1 stating that every citizen is free to choose their religion and belief, which is protected by the constitution. As such, a strict regulation that does not violate the rights of citizens is required in the life of the state and society. In further, the relationship tension between Christians and Muslims must transition into a relationship of mutual understanding, and nothing restriction should be imposed by the majority group upon minority groups.[17]

A wisdom approach by holding religious dialogue within the framework of practices of theology must be conducted intensively to understand and respect differences evident in Christianity and Islam mutually. There should be no more mutual suspicions among Christians and Muslims, and followers should not perpetuate proselytization methods calling upon religious conversion and blaming the religious views others adhere to. Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia, immersion into others' feelings, and understanding differences are among the keys. In society many social conflicts with a sword to killing like in Ambonese and Poso Indonesia. Religion and social conflict manifest with political issues. Radicalism and rebellion its many cases related to religious affiliation.[18]

The Houses of Worship

Issues on the construction of house of worship continue to be

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[17] Zainal Abidin Bagir, et.al., *Membatasi Tanpa Melanggar: Hak Kebebasan Beragama Atau Berkeyakinan* (Yogyakarta: Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS) Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2019).

[18] Robert W Hefner, "The Sword against the Crescent: Religion and Violence in Muslim Southeast Asia," *Religion and Conflict in South and Southeast Asia* (Britania Raya: Routledge, 2006), p. 43-60; Mark Woodward, "Religious Conflict and the Globalization of Knowledge in Indonesian History," *Religion and Conflict in South and Southeast Asia: Disrupting Violence* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), p. 85-104; David W Montgomery and John Heathershaw, "Islam, Secularism and Danger: A Reconsideration of the Link between Religiosity, Radicalism and Rebellion in Central Asia," *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2016, pp. 192-218.

a problem. When the Muslim communities intend to build houses of worship (*mushala* or *masjid*) in the middle of Christian communities, they tend to be rejected. This is also the case when Christian communities attempt to build churches, Muslims tend to refuse. Although the construction of houses of worship by the two largest religious communities in Indonesia may be completed without rejection, difficulties in building churches are a more frequent occurrence than the building of mosques in Indonesia.[19]

House of worship is a serious issue as it functions as a symbol in the two Abrahamic religions. Conflicts instigated by issues relating to houses of worship had occurred in various places throughout Indonesia, for example, a church burning occurred in Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara in 2001. The building of a Catholic Church was rejected in Bantul in 2010. Rejection of the Indonesian Christian Church in Yogyakarta happened in 2019. In Aceh, the building of a church was prohibited by the Muslim community in 2019. In Klaten, a Catholic Church was prohibited from renovating and building by a group of Muslims in 2020. A case of vandalism also took place in the Pangukan Catholic Church in Sleman, Yogyakarta in 2020. In Jepara, the renovation of a Catholic church was also prohibited by a group of Muslims in 2020.[20]

The cases of prohibition and vandalism of houses of worship above indicate that these buildings hold a substantial meaning to Christians and Muslims alike. For Christians, houses of worship function as a symbol representing the existence and piety of religious followers in performing their worship, and they, accordingly, require a place of worship to attend every Sunday. Meanwhile, for Muslims, their places of

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[19] Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, et.al., *Disputed Churches*…

[20] Stanley Adi Prasetyo and Teresa Birks, "Background and Political Situation in Aceh," *The Role of Democracy for Peace and Reconciliation*, 2010, pp. 47-72.; Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, et.al., *Disputed Churches*…; Resi Pramudita, *Pergulatan Identitas Kejawaan Gereja Kristen Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Universitas Sanata Dharma, 2019); Muhammad Ansor, "We Are from the Same Ancestor: Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Aceh Singkil," *Al-Albab: Borneo Journal of religious Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2013, pp. 3-24.

worship symbolize close proximity and attachment to God every time they engage in acts of worship.[21] The presence of such houses of worship is of utmost importance to the followers of both religions, which similarly maintain the mission to spread their teachings to the congregation up to the grassroots level. Local governments and religious figures with authority hold a substantial role in relation to houses of worship and religious communities.[22]

The 1997 houses of worship destruction case in Situbondo, East Java is the most prominent case observed in Indonesia. The destruction of significant churches along the road and in the city of Situbondo shows that there is a problem relating to the building of Christian houses of worship among the Muslim community. The issue that developed was that the Christian community received financial support from international organizations, so they were able to build grand and luxurious churches. While in fact, the congregation members were few and they do not live in the area. Whereas the Muslim community had difficulty in receiving support to build mosques, leaving their mosques small and unattractive despite the significantly larger amount of followers.[23]

Houses of worship also symbolize economic success, and economic prosperity of religious community, which subsequently lead to social resentment between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia. Given a large amount of religious groups in Indonesia, houses of worship will consequently continue to be a persistent issue, particularly if the success of religious mission is measured by the extensive building of houses of worship, be it churches or mosques.

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[21] Muhammad Adlin Sila, "In Pursuit of Promoting Moderate Indonesian Islam to the World: Understanding the Diversity of Islamic Practices in Bima, Sumbawa Island," *Third International Conference on Social and Political Sciences (ICSPS 2017)* (Atlantis Press, 2017).

[22] Jeremy J Kingsley, *Religious Authority and Local Governance in Eastern Indonesia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2018).

[23] Ali Mursyid, *Pemetaan Kerukunan Kehidupan Beragama di Berbagai Daerah di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang & Diklat Departemen Agama, 2009).

Considering the issue above, it can be said that there is a serious problem concerning the building of houses of worship because it is not only a problem of religious symbolism. It is also a problem of political, economic, and religious ideologies between Christians and Muslims since the New Order era to this day. All of this is indicative of how important spaces to mutually understand and respect various religions with the inherent differences found in missionary religions are. The mission of respective religions needs to be given due attention for reinterpretations, followers should not consider interpretations of dogmas in holy texts as something absolute but relative instead, so that room for dialogs and negotiations can unfold, without blaming and accusing one another. This, accordingly, underlines the significance of formulating religious theologies emphasizing the importance of religious missions to address universal problems of humanity.[24]

Building houses of worship by religious communities in Indonesia is a common thing. However, establishing a house of worship is exceptionally influential on religious communities with various assumptions. One of the growing assumptions is that the construction of worship places is the hegemony of one religion over another. Therefore, even though it is permissible to build houses of worship, some community members want restrictions on the construction of certain religious places of worship. The group that most often gets restrictions on constructing places of worship is religious minorities in an area. They are sometimes Christian or Muslim. The right to freedom to build a house of worship was then hindered because of the rejection of one religious community in a place.[25]

In the context of freedom to build houses of worship, there is what is called public morality, which is the basis for whether or not it is allowed to build a house of worship in a place. The morality adopted

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[24] Th Sumartana, *Misi Gereja, Teologi Agama-Agama, dan Masa Depan Demokrasi* (Yogyakarta: Interfidei, 2011).

[25] Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, et.al., *Disputed Churches…*; Zainal Abidin Bagir, et.al., *Membatasi Tanpa Melanggar…*

is the morality of whether to build a house of worship offends, hurts, respects, or violates the right to freedom of religion and belief or not. If all these are not found, then the construction of places of worship can be continued. However, if the construction of a house of worship is deemed offensive, hurtful and does not respect the feelings of members of other religions, then it is not allowed.[26]

Houses of worship established by religious communities are not only a theological problem but also political problem. This problem is considered as part of the natural recognition of religious beliefs. Therefore, establishing a worship house for someone who believes cannot be separated from acknowledging one's core political aspirations. A person will voluntarily help or give his property to build a house of worship to the public. The building of worship will lead to recognition in society for the political participation one chooses. Whether you commit to faith or not is seen in helping build houses of worship.[27]

Many there are scholars link the contribution of religion to the social conflicts that have occurred in Indonesia. Social conflict is mainly due to the "struggle for public space" in establishing places of worship. Religion with political power is critical to pay attention to because it will have an impact on the issue of the human rights of religious people to have religion and belief.[28] That is a problem genuine of those who are minority religions and beliefs in a particular area. Those who do not have political power will have a hard time. Meanwhile, if you have political power, it will be easier to build houses of worship. The struggle for public space involving religious groups and political ideology needs attention in analyzing the construction of places of worship.[29] Is it possible to reduce

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[26] *Ibid.*

[27] Simon Critchley and A Welchman, "You Are Not Your Own: On the Nature of Faith," *Paul and the Philosophers*, 2014, pp. 224-255.

[28] Greg Simons, "Islam, Society and Politics in Central Asia," *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 2019, pp. 283-285.

[29] Gerrie ter Haar and Yoshio Tsuruoka, *Religion and Society an Agenda for the 21 St Century* (USA: Brill, 2007).

social conflicts caused by religious factors and the construction of places of worship? This is a problem when religious communities still think that houses of worship are part of the power and existence of piety.

The Mission of Proselytizing

Muslim-Christian proselytization has been a crucial issue since the New Order until today, particularly in relation to providing assistance to the impoverished. The provision of basic sustenance, daily necessities, scholarships, and other assistances is being considered a problem as it is deemed a proselytization method inviting others to convert. Accordingly, a proselytization method that does not result in sentiments and suspicions among followers of different religions is required. Congregation and proselytization are words understood as "attention" among Christians and Muslims, and as a result the philanthropic tradition develops in these two religions.[30] The philanthropic tradition in Christianity and Islam is not only a calling of faith, it is also a calling of religious ideology.[31] It is interesting to note that the philanthropic tradition has subsequently developed into an arena of contestation between Islam and Christianity in Indonesia.[32]

In the context of philanthropy-almsgiving to the poor, Asgar Ali Enginer, Farid Esack, and Abdullah An-Naim emphasize that Islam as a belief is a religion that can "liberate its community from poverty" and injustice.[33] This is similarly stated by Asghar Ali Engineer that Islam

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[30] Hilman Latief, *Islamic Charities and Social Activism: Welfare, Dakwah and Politics in Indonesia* (Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2012); Fitzgerald Timothy, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[31] John P Bartkowski and Helen A Regis, *Charitable Choices: Religion, Race, and Poverty in the Post-Welfare Era* (New York University Press, 2003).

[32] Hilman Latief, "Contesting Almsgiving in Post-New Order Indonesia," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2014, pp. 16-50.

[33] Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (London: Oneworld Publications, 1998); Farid Esack, *On Being a Muslim: Finding a Religious Path in the World Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

liberates the poor.[34] Islam, when understood properly will provide a benefit to its followers with the perspective of respecting others. Islam will defend the poor, women, and those who are politically, economically, and religiously discriminated upon.[35] Liberation in Islam is its main mission as a religion of mercy to all humankind regardless of one's ethnic and religious groups, except for those who are of the lower class and in need.[36] Based on a such Islamic theological perspective, it is only natural that the religious mission of Islam leads to the liberation of the poor and people in the society oppressed by the state or global capitalism.[37] When referring to the history of Islam, in the era of the prophet, Islam actually provides a strong foundation that this particular religion has a prophetic mission to liberate humankind from all forms of backwardness and oppression. Such ideals can be observed in the inherent values of *zakat, salat*, and hajj.[38] According to Hans Kung, Islam maintains a strong tradition as a defender of the poor, the oppressed, and the impoverished. The tradition to forgive and reconcile and live in peace with others can even be found in this religion preached by the Prophet Muhammad.[39]

According to Farid Esack, An Naim, Hasan Hanafi, and Hans Kung, Christians and Muslims should not be doubtful in working together responding to issues of poverty and backwardness. However, in reality, the issue of prophetic mission maintained by these Abrahamic religions has become a prolonged conflict that is nearly unstoppable to this day.

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[34] Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Islamic State* (New Dehli: Vikas Publ. House, 1980); Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology: Essays on Liberative Elements in Islam* (New York: Sterling Publ., 1990); Asghar Ali Engineer, "Rediscovering the Prophet's Prophetic Vision: About the Ideas of Liberation in the Scriptures," *Ulumul Qur'an Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1992.

[35] Abdullah Ahmed An Naim and Abdullah Ahmet, *Islam dan Negara Sekuler: Menegosiasikan Masa Depan Syari'ah*, Vol. 186 (Jakarta: Mizan, 2007).

[36] Farid Esack, *On Being a Muslim*…

[37] Hasan Hanafi, *Agama, Ideologi, dan Pembangunan* (Jakarta: P3M, 1991), p. 408-409; Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Islamic State*…

[38] Hans Kung, *Islam: Past, Present and Future* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2007).

[39] *Ibid.*

This is how it unfolds in the traditions of the one God three religions, which results in the struggle for more adherents until the last drop of blood, which is considered a holy prophetic mission.[40]

The struggle between Protestants-Catholics and Muslims to seize followers has occurred since the case of *Kiai* Sadrach in Kutoarjo, Prembun, Central Java from 1900 to 1946.[41] That is why tensions between Protestants-Catholics and Muslims have taken place since the pre-independence period. These tensions were further reinforced and exacerbated by the implementation of divide and conquer politics during the New Order era under Soeharto.[42] In the Java, the number of Protestants and Catholics are quite significant, which indicates the success of Christianity's mission in converting followers of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous religions.[43]

Protestant and Catholic in Java are religions that constantly conceal proselytization tensions against Islam since a long period of time. Some are caused by problems in understanding the religious missions brought by the two Abrahamic traditions. Karel Steenbrink argues that in Java and West Java, the tension between Christianity and Islam is clearly evident. Tension even occurs due to the dominance of the Muslim majority in Java, but Catholics and Protestants are considered aggressive in their proselytization and both traditions are known as exclusive religious communities.[44]

The exclusivism of the two Abrahamic religious traditions become one of the underlying causes of tension in maintaining the prophetic

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[40] Rodney Stark, *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism* (Pricenton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Peter L Berger, *The Other Side of God: A Polarity in World Religions* (Uttar Pradesh: Radius Institute, 1981).

[41] Karel A Steenbrink, "A Catholic Sadrach: The Contested Conversion of Madrais Adherents in West Java between 1960-2000," *Het Koninkrijk Festschrift Tom van Den End* (Heerenveen: Groen, 2005), p. 286-307.

[42] Daniel Dhakidae, *Cendekiawan dan Kekuasaan Dalam Negara Orde Baru* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2003); Th Sumartana, *Mission at the Crossroads...*

[43] Karel A Steenbrink, "A Catholic Sadrach…"

[44] Karel A Steenbrink, "Catholics in Majority…"

mission as it has an impact on the truth claim that both religions maintain. While in fact, truth claims should be interpreted within its historical contexts, so that they convey the prophetic mission instead of making the mission more exclusive by considering other religions as the devil's religion and deviants.[45]

Religious communities in Indonesia, both Christians and Muslims, need to be given attention in terms of spreading religious understanding, life mission, cultural and humanitarian missions. The mission of Christianity-Islam should have the audacity to go against the traditions of conventional faith.[46] Accordingly, proselytization efforts conducted by Christians-Muslims, which to date seem to be inclined toward recruiting greater amount of congregation members and converting followers of different religions need to be stopped. Missions that are carried out wisely as the Sufis did by teaching religion in the Sufistic dimension need to be considered.[47] The task of Christianity-Islam's mission should be oriented toward religious enlightenment and resolution of actual social life issues so that the religious prophetic mission maintains its relevance. The Christian-Muslim mission no longer need to be based on the desire of gaining more congregation members or followers as this will merely exacerbate the tensions between Christians and Muslims that have been occurring since the New Order period.[48]

Throughout the journey of the Christian and Muslim mission in Indonesia, there is actually a "theological sentiment" that started with Muslims being suspicious of Christians and Christians being suspicious of Muslims in terms of spreading their religion to the public. This is a result of the influence that collaborations between Christians and the colonial government had in the past. At the very least, a close relationship between

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[45] Th Sumartana, "Tragedy Hono Caraka, dan Kebutuhan Dialog," *Misi Gereja, Teologi Agama-Agama, dan Masa Depan Demokrasi* (Yogyakarta: Interfidei, 2011), p. 83-103.

[46] Olaf Schumann, *Keluar dari Benteng Pertahanan* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 1996).

[47] Djohan Effendi, *Pluralisme dan Kebebasan Beragama* (Yogyakarta: Institut Dian/Interfidei, 2010).

[48] Th Sumartana, *Misi Gereja…*

Christianity and the colonial administration. Meanwhile, Christians are suspicious of Muslims due to their intimacy with Islamic countries in the Middle East and their Islamic rituals of worship that constantly refer to Middle Eastern traditions. Such perspective has been presented by Ibrahim Abu Rabi when considering the challenges faced by Christians and Muslims leading up to the 21st century.

In further, a historical review concerning the roots of Muslim-Christian relationship in Indonesia brings us to the view that there is a harmony of inter-religious relation dynamics that is ornamented by feelings of mutual respect and collaboration, running hand in hand with various conflicts and tensions. The fact that that the advent of Protestant and Catholic Christianity was closely allied with colonialism, and that these religions have a relatively strong and effective proselytization strategy, has created a condition in which the Indonesian population—of which the majority are Muslims—feel threatened by the developing Christian communities. Historically, Muslim communities throughout the archipelago felt that the colonial government's political policies provided protection to activities relating to the spread of Christianity. As a result, in the early period of Indonesia's independence, Muslims suspicion of Protestants and Catholics had easily developed. Suspicions of Christianization has even continued to develop to this day.[49]

The mission of Christianity and the proselytization of Islam occurring in Indonesia, particularly in Java, have created tensions that cannot be easily mended. The issue of Christianization is closely related to the issue of communism. Whereas the issue of Islamic proselytization is closely associated with Middle Eastern conservatism, which tends to be exclusive and intolerant.[50] Accordingly, the issue of community members, who were former supporters of the communist party, converting to

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[49] Ibrahim Abu Rabi, "Christian-Muslim Relations in Indonesia: Five Challenges of the Twenty-First Century," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1998, pp. 3-25.

[50] M. C. Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to the Present* (Singapore: NUS Singapore, 2012).

Christianity is the most crucial issue in the Christian-Muslim relationship in Java. There is suspicion among Muslims that Christian priests in Java mobilized former communist members to embrace Christianity as a strategy to gain greater Christian following. Nonetheless, the assumption that priests mobilized Muslims to convert has been rejected by the church as those who converted to Christianity were not Muslims to begin with, they largely consisted of people who used to be of Hindu or Abangan background who felt more comfortable following Christianity than Islam.[51]

The matter of the mission of proselytizing continues to be a developing issue as both Christianity and Islam maintain the view of spreading their respective theological perspective to the wider public. It can be observed as a contestation of public sphere that continues to be fought over unrestrictedly by followers of different religions. The claim of truth over one's theological perspective is one of the underlying cause that mission of proselytizing is carried out by Christians or Muslims respectively because aside from gaining more congregation, it is also a confirmation of public faith.

As a religion that is believed to be a preaching-mission religion, Islam-Christianity has never stopped spreading throughout Indonesia. Islamic bases in Indonesia, such as in Central Java, West Java, East Java, Aceh, Padang, and Makassar provide indications that Islam continues to develop there. On the other hand, Christian bases such as in Manado, East Nusa Tenggara, Ambon, Papua and Medan also show that Christianity is developing in these provinces. This makes the assumption that Islam-Christianity is a preaching-mission religion which causes religious conversion to be difficult to refute. The interesting thing is that the Mentawai Islands have also become a Christian base, even though they are part of West Sumatera Province. As in Aceh, Singkil has become a Christian base. These two districts are adjacent to

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[51] Singgih Nugroho, *Menyintas dan Menyeberang: Perpindahan Massal Keagamaan Pasca 1965 di Pedesaan Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Syarikat, 2008).

North Sumatera Province, the Karo land which is the basis of Batak Christianity. Therefore, the suspicion of Islamization and Christianization in Indonesia has never stopped growing in society. Even so, the number of Christian population increases in Indonesia is not significant from year to year. The data can be seen from statistical data, which states that from 2000-2019, the number of Christians in Indonesia was only around 7.8%. Meanwhile, Muslims are at 88.7%. However, religious conversion has become a commodity of religious activity among Muslim-Christian circles to date. However, religious issues are important because they are related to beliefs in God and society's religious life.[52]

Living Practice of Social Justice

Is there a relationship between Islam-Christianity and social justice, especially economic justice in Indonesia? The problem of social justice is not an easy problem in the Muslim-Christian relationship. The practices of cooperation, and humanitarian cooperation running for a very long time do not guarantee good Islamic-Christian relations. Islamic-Christian social relations' strength does not guarantee that Muslim-Christians willingly accept the conditions on the ground when there are many Muslims who live in poverty and hunger. The philanthropic practices of Islam-Christianity in Indonesia have not erased various negative stigmas of Islamic-Christian relations in social life.[53]

The Muslim-Christian relationship in Indonesia has always been associated with social justice accepted by Muslims and Christians. The problem of economic justice among Muslims is serious. Some Muslims assume that economic injustice among Muslims is due to Christians controlling the economic centers of Indonesia. The Indonesian

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[52] Arif Ahmed, "Belief and Religious 'Belief,'" *Religious Studies*, 2019.
[53] Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Between Social Services and Tolerance: Explaining Religious Dynamics in Muhammadiyah," *Trends in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Yusof Ishak Institute, 2019.

government deems the division of the economy unfairly so that economic monopoly occurs. Their rulers are Christian and ethnic Chinese.[54] Social justice becomes a discussion in Islam, Christianity, and society in building community peace. Therefore, if there is an imbalance, it will not be easy to achieve peace.[55] We know that presenting God to society is very important. Because this can be felt and assessed as a religious impact by the community, in this connection, restrictions on the transmission of God's message are problematic.[56]

Practicing the Fifth Precepts (*Pancasila*), "Social Justice for All Indonesians" is still a severe problem among the most Muslim majority. Indonesian Muslims, estimated at 88.6% of Indonesia's total population of 267 million people. This large number makes the number of Muslims who suffer from poverty large enough to reach 34% of Indonesia's total low population of 49%.[57] This number is what makes the issue of social justice very crucial among Indonesian Muslims and Christians. If this cannot be resolved properly, the Islam-Christian relationship will be a problem throughout the year. In fact, the problem of social justice eventually becomes a religious problem.

Social justice is a condition that is desired by every citizen in Indonesia, whomever they are. Social justice (especially issues of economic justice) does not see one's religion. Therefore, the issue of social justice is a necessity for all citizens. Not a single citizen wants to live in deprivation, misery, and poverty. Therefore, if social justice is not achieved, various social problems may arise in Indonesia. Social injustice is assumed to be one of the causes of social conflict. Chadwick F Alger also expressly argues that the issue of social justice is a problem

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[54] Todd M. Thompson, *Norman Anderson and the Christian Mission to Modernise Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

[55] A Christian Van Gorder, *Islam, Peace and Social Justice: A Christian Perspective* (London: James Clarke, 2014), p. 291.

[56] Mohammad Saleh Zarepour, "God's Propositional Omniscience: A Defence of the Strictly Restricted Account," *Religious Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 4, 2020, pp. 473-487.

[57] BPS RI, *Laporan Kependudukan* (Jakarta, 2010).

in interfaith relations in building peace.[58]

Practices of social justice, helping fellow citizens that have been done by the Indonesian people when a disaster occurs, from Christians to Muslims, or vice versa Muslims to Christians. However, it still cannot erase the stigma that Christian-Islam in terms of social justice is still unequal. The gap between Muslims and Christians in terms of the economy continues to keep burning, leading to social unrest with religious motives. Social justice in fact is still considered a practice of assisting with various religious motives, including when a disaster occurs, and there is suspicion there. Christianization has become a rumor, as happened in Aceh when the Tsunami hit in 2004. Until the time when Islamic law was enacted, until now rumors about Christianization continued.[59]

The issue of social justice is also inseparable from the assumption that there are anti-Islamic groups in Indonesia. Chinese groups and Conservative Christians are considered anti-Islamic groups. Moreover, in government, there are several Christian Ministers such as Andrianus Moi, JB. Sumarlin, Frans Seda, and Radius Prawiro. They are became Ministers of Finance during the Soeharto era in power. The TNI Commander, General LB. Murdani and Pangkokamtib Sudomo are assumed to be the masterminds of Indonesia's anti-Islamic military policy. At this time, the Jokowi era was accused of being anti-Islam, because General Luhut Binsar Panjaitan was in the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin Cabinet, the battle in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. The anti-Ahok sentiment in the 2017 election (*Pilkada*) turned into an anti-Jokowi campaign.[60] Without a "solution" that can break the chain of socio-economic injustice in Muslim-Christian communities in Indonesia, the relationship between

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[58] Chadwick F Alger, "Peace Studies as a Transdisciplinary Project," *Peace Research and Peacebuilding* (Berlin: Springer, 2014), p. 69-90.

[59] Al Makin, "Islamic Acehnese Identity, Sharia, and Christianization Rumor: A Study of the Narratives of the Attack on the Bethel Church in Penauyong Banda Aceh," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2016, pp. 1-36.

[60] IPAC, "Anti-Ahok To Anti-Jokowi: Islamist Influence On Indonesia's 2019 Election Campaign," *Institute Policy Analysis of Conflict*, March 2019.

Islam-Christianity can continue in lazy tolerance or double standard tolerance. For this, Jeremi Menchick argues that there is tolerance, but there will be no freedom of religion because religious people, especially minorities, will always feel threatened by the majority. Meanwhile, the majority religious community also feels threatened by the minority. There is a fear of tyranny of the majority, and minority hegemony has always been a ghost of religious communities in Indonesia.[61]

Conclusion

The critical issue hampering Christian-Muslim relations is the mission of proselytizing. Both of them claimed as the bringer and spreader of religion to people of the world to be saved from their digression. The crux of the problem in Christian-Muslim relations continues to develop to this day and results in other problems such as religious conversion, and construction of house of worship. The two Abrahamic religious traditions continue to be at odds due to differences in theological matters, political and economic issues in the country.

One way to reduce the ongoing tensions between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia's contemporary era is by conducting equal, critical, and inclusively dialog. By implementing such means, both Christians and Muslims will learn from each other, share experiences, and still steadfastly uphold the belief they follow within existing differences and new religious experiences. As are the tradition of pass over, two religions can be developed among Christianity and Islam followers in Indonesia. The mission of the Abrahamic religious traditions within the present context refers to practicing religion in a diversity of symbols yet a unity of substantial meaning.

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[61] Jeremi Menchick, *Islam and Democracy: Tolerance without Liberalism* (Cambidge Press University, 2016).

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