

Islam and Religious Pluralism in Indonesia

Doddy S. Truna

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung
dodystruna@uinsgd.ac.id

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Abstrak:

Beraneka ragamnya pengalaman keagamaan manusia telah melahirkan berbagai pola berpikir terhadap agama dan cara manusia mengekspresikan pengalaman keagamaannya tersebut. Karena pengalaman yang berbeda, maka pemikiran keagamaannya bisa berbeda, dan karena pemikiran keagamaannya berbeda-beda, maka perilaku beragamanya pun bisa bermacam-macam. Inilah sebabnya mengapa di dunia ini terdapat begitu banyak agama dan kepercayaan, termasuk juga di Indonesia. Tulisan ini akan mengkaji bagaimana agama Islam melihat fenomena pluralitas di Indonesia dan berbagai dampaknya. Dengan demikian, akan ditemukan titik temu Islam sebagai agama yang menghormati perbedaan demi nafas persatuan dan keutuhan bangsa.

Kata Kunci: *Islam plural; perdamaian; pluralitas.*

Abstract:

The diversity of human religious experiences has given rise to various thinking patterns about religion and how humans express their religious experiences. Because of different experiences, religious thoughts can be different, and because religious thoughts are different, religious behavior can also vary. This is why there are so many religions and beliefs, including in Indonesia. This paper will examine how Islam sees the phenomenon of plurality in Indonesia and its various impacts. Thus, a meeting point will be found for Islam as a religion that respects differences for the breath of national unity and integrity.

Keywords: *plural Islam; peace; plurality.*

INTRODUCTION

Religion is an inseparable part of human life and is almost generally accepted. Perhaps here and there, people or groups who do not adhere to any religion are found. Still, overall, the history of human culture provides a very impressive testimony of human religious capacity. Wherever evidence of the existence of traces of a culture is found, there is evidence that shows the existence of religion. Therefore, in addition to the frequent discussion of humans as *hayawan natiq* or '*homo sapiens*', meaning "thinking beings", there is also a solid reason to speak of humans as '*homo religiosus*', i.e. "creatures who tend to be" (Cunningham, 1991).

The above evidence can be grouped into (1) physical and (2) non-physical evidence. Physical evidence can be mentioned, such as the remains of places of worship, goods or equipment, ritual ceremonies, graves, tombstones, etc. At the same time, non-physical evidence can be from attitudes and behavior, ethics, values, laws, and social norms, which are forms of cultural expression of a community group. These forms of expression are

often based on the belief or religion they profess. Borobudur Temple in Central Java is historical evidence of the triumph of Buddhism in its era. In Central Java, Prambanan Temple is not just a monumental building but a center of ritual activities for Hindus. Likewise, the Pyramids and Sphinx in Egypt are the tombs of the kings of Egypt. The graves are made magnificently and elaborately, showing the existence of beliefs about life after death. These are physical evidence of the expression of human religious experience at that time (Truna, 2021).

How to shake hands by clasping both hands and pulling them to the chest is a form of respect between fellow humans in Sundanese and Javanese customs. This method is also a form of respect or worship to a god, holy person, or person who has a noble position in Hindu culture. Dewi (Devi), Sri (Shri), and Indra are among the names or titles in the Hindu religious system, becoming common words Indonesians use. Likewise, taboos and '*pamali*' to perform specific actions in Indonesian society are often associated with their belief in the unseen. These are all non-physical pieces of evidence that reveal human religious experience (Holil, 2020).

As stated above, humans express their religious capacities in social and cultural activities. Such activities have continued from time to time until now and may continue to take place in the future. Muslims perform prayers and dhikr in mosques, read the Qur'an, praise their God, and ask forgiveness from Him. They wake up at night to approach their Lord while everyone else is fast asleep. Catholics attend Holy Mass and share in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The Protestants were engrossed in hearing the father's sermon in the church, singing ecclesiastical hymns, and praying fervently. The Hindus faithfully and devotedly make offerings of flowers and incense every morning and evening. And Buddhists kneel before the Buddha and contemplate amid silence (Truna & Zakaria, 2021).

The activities mentioned above are carried out not only by village people in remote places far from modernity, so these people are often considered traditional, old-fashioned, or backward, but also by highly educated people who are considered modern in big cities. Even though they are already in touch with advanced technology, they still do not escape from religious activities to fulfill their daily needs. This is one proof that one's religiousness or non-religion (religiosity and irreligiosity) is not caused by traditionalism or modernity. You will find people serious about carrying out their religious activities from any group. Sometimes, people who do not adhere to any (formal) religion still perform certain ritual activities to communicate with "something else" or the *supreme being; the ultimate reality*. Thus, some humans do not consider it necessary to formally adhere to or be affiliated with one religion to be a god. The streams of belief, which are countless, can be evidence of a strong urge for a person or group of people to believe in God, while they do not want to convert to one of the existing religions. This kind of belief is sometimes only held by one person or a small group of people in one place (M Yusuf Wibisono et al., 2021).

The growth of "new" religions or beliefs in the modern world can be seen in several developed countries such as the United States and Japan. The religious movements led by David Koresh and Applewhite have led their respective followers to commit mass suicide, killing dozens of followers of both movements. This action is done voluntarily with complete faith in the existence of better days on "there planet", so that through suicide, humans will be able to go to that planet. The Aum Shinri Kyu religious movement was born in Japan, led by Asahara. This group has carried out aggressive actions against Japanese people driven by their beliefs or "religion". In Indonesia itself, there are not a few "modern" people who adhere to certain ideas (Haynes, 2020).

In general, it can be described that religious life in modern society in the last few decades has appeared in a distinctive form. Seeing the splendor of religious life today, it seems that the statements of western scholars such as Auguste Comte, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche about the marginalization of religion in people's lives have no signs of being proven. Even Naisbitt and Aburdene (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990) predicted that the future would be a time of *the revival of spiritualism*. This revival of spiritualism can take various forms, formally; among them is the revival of religion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Variety of Expressions of Human Religious Experience

Throughout his life, humans have experienced various events. Sometimes he is met with joy because his wish or wish has been fulfilled. He is not infrequently sad because of the calamity that befell him, whether because of illness, death, property loss, accidents, etc. When he meets with joy, a religious person will be grateful to praise his God and be thankful for the pleasures he gets, and when disaster strikes, he will ask for forgiveness and protection from the calamity that befell him.

To express their joy, they make sacrifices, either in offerings or the slaughter of certain animals, and various forms of ritual ceremonies. When disaster strikes, they complain to their God immediately to get out of the disaster.

For this request, they also perform ritual ceremonies and sacrifices. There are also various types of ritual ceremonies and sacrifices in daily life, especially on certain days that are considered sacred.

The above phenomenon can be seen in several community groups that can still be found in various areas, especially in the suburbs, coastal areas, or inland. A similar phenomenon was carried out by people who were still classified as humble (primitive) as in isolated tribes in remote areas. Today, religious people do things like that. Some may be in different forms even though the substance is the same. As stated in the first part of this paper, traces of the people's religious activities of the past can still be found in several places or museums today.

This religious activity accumulates human life experiences that are always related to nature. Relationships with nature provide human experience about the existence of various types and levels of power and power of nature. Some of these forces can be overcome by humans, and some cannot be overcome. One theory explains that when he can overcome the forces and powers of nature, the problem is solved because there is no longer any dependence on him. However, he could not always overcome these forces and sometimes succumbed to the power of nature. In such circumstances, the human dependence on nature arises and hopes for mercy and avoids its wrath in the form of disaster. Natural phenomena are dynamic. But of course, it does not move by itself. This gives rise to the thought that something is behind this universe and moves the universe but is not visible. This gave birth to the concept of the unseen (Yilmaz & Barton, 2021).

In other cases, humans also experience encounters with something that does not exist in everyday life. The meeting occurred, among others, through dreams. In a plan, a person meets a dead person. This gives rise to the assumption that there are spirits around humans who can relate to humans, help humans or wreak havoc. The spirit must be persuaded not to cause havoc and even give good luck to humans. For this need, ritual ceremonies and sacrifices are also carried out.

The two examples above are just two of many theories about the growth of religion and belief. Religions and beliefs that fit this theory are local religions created by human thought. There are other theories about the origin of religion and human religious experience, including the idea of revelation abstracted from the case on the sky religions. Regarding the revelation theory, it is not foreign to the adherents of major religions that there is a God who rules the universe and reveals his word to the chosen people (prophets).

The diversity of human religious experiences has given rise to various thinking patterns about religion and how humans express their religious experiences. Due to different backgrounds, and religious behavior can also vary because religious thoughts are different. This is why there are so many religions and beliefs, including in Indonesia.

Religious experience is expressed in various forms or dimensions. Joachim Wach (Wach, 2019) divides the various expressions into three types, namely expressions in the form of thoughts, actions, and fellowship. A person's religious experience will shape beliefs, concepts, doctrines, myths, and so on in the mind of every believer. These religious thoughts will impact the religious behavior of a person or group of people. We see various ways of worshiping God, motivated by multiple ideas or concepts about God. Likewise, associations or groups of religious adherents are created by the similarity of ritual practices and parallels of thought in religion (Wach, 2016).

In contrast to Wach, Harsja W. Bachtiar (Bachtiar, 1985) divides the manifestation of religious experience into five types of phenomena. The first is a ritual phenomenon expressed in religious practices, such as sacrifices, burial ceremonies, annual ceremonies, etc. The second phenomenon is reflected in cosmology, myth, and legend religious ideas. The third type of phenomenon is in the figures of special religious figures such as shamans, shamans, priests, and guardians. They are individuals who are believed to have special knowledge and relationship with the sacred. The fourth type of phenomenon is reflected in the collectivity of the people, both in the form of cults, sects, groups, *harakah*, congregations, to large movements. The fifth type of phenomenon is reflected in the existence of sacred and sacred places such as mosques, churches, shrines, temples, graves, etc.

Regardless of whether we agree or disagree with the opinions above, we can see various forms of religious expression in various aspects of human life based on multiple human religious experiences. We can also see the human religious manifestations described by Harsja above. There are multiple ways of worship, different types of beliefs, various places of worship, the position of religious leaders or holy people, and the existence of multiple groups or religious movements. Everything is based on the belief in the presence of a God who must be worshiped.

In Indonesia, there are various religions. Not only five or six religions, but there are tens and maybe hundreds of religions. Some of these religions come from outside the archipelago through religious propagators, some grow from the community itself, called sects of belief or *kebatinan*. They have their belief system and way of worshiping, form groups, build places of worship, and have leaders. The existence of these religions is protected, even now the

recognition is increasingly visible under the pretext of respecting the religious rights of everyone (Viktorahadi et al., 2021; M Yusuf Wibisono et al., 2020).

Islam and Religious Pluralism in Indonesia

From the description above, it can be understood that there are various religions in Indonesia. Of all the existing religions, Islam has a majority of adherents who reach more than 80 percent of the entire population of Indonesia, followed by other major religions, namely Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. While the flow of belief is another form of religion, there is no clear data except those that are only estimates. This is because the adherents of many faiths are individual and are not officially and openly stated (BPS, 2020).

Thus, it is clear that Indonesia is a country with a plurality of religions embraced by its inhabitants. This religious plurality has experienced a long history with various events and problems it faces. The relationship between religious groups in Indonesia has experienced ups and downs, raising awareness of each believer's necessity to create tolerance and harmony between adherents with clear tolerance limits. In reality, residents of different religions cannot be united regarding their beliefs. Even if there is an attempt in that direction, it will certainly fail because the issue of religious belief cannot be negotiated and compromised (Mubarok & Rahman, 2021).

Efforts to maintain tolerance and create religious harmony have been repeatedly carried out in various forms and activities. These efforts generally include three aspects of harmony known as tri harmony: (1) Internal harmony of religious communities, an effort to dialogue religious aspects in one religion for the benefit of that religion and the nation's interests. In Islamic groups, meetings are held between Islamic organizations such as MUI, Persis, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, PUI, and other Islamic organizations. In Christian groups, for example, between churches and their leaders. Likewise, in other religious groups. (2) Inter-religious harmony, namely an effort made between different religious groups (Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other sects). (3) Harmony between religious communities and the government (Rahman & Saebani, 2018).

In general, the activities of a meeting of internal figures belonging to one particular religion to discuss internal problems of their religion. For example, in the case of Muslims, the discussion revolves around attitudes towards technological developments concerning Islamic law, zakat issues, attitudes towards political developments, *haji*, determining the Islamic calendar, and other Islamic aspects. The purpose of these meetings, in general, is to seek the benefit of Muslims in particular and the nation's interests in general. Likewise, in the case of non-Islamic religions, the discussion revolves around the internal affairs of their religion and attitudes towards other social matters.

Meanwhile, meetings between adherents of different religions revolve around meetings between religious leaders and scholars. In the forum, the topic of discussion generally concerns social aspects that can be carried out together without being constrained by differences in beliefs, for the benefit of the nation as a whole. Debate in theological fields is generally avoided. Even if there is a discussion about this, it is only informative and is not meant to argue apologetically with each other. This, again, shows that the theological aspect is not a topic open to compromise (M. Y. Wibisono, 2020).

The meeting activities between religious communities and the government ranged from a typical attitude in facing the nation's interests or requests for input from the government to religious communities to determine state or government policies. This is usually about programs that directly or indirectly impact the religious aspects of Indonesian society. Examples in this case for example regarding correctional family planning programs, educational programs for the community such as normal (compulsory education), development in the field of religion, and so on.

In certain aspects these efforts have yielded results, with the issuance of many regulations that can be used as guidelines by all religious communities such as the Marriage Law, UUSPN, Zakat Law, Guidelines for Religious Broadcasting, Guidelines for Internal Harmony and Inter-Religious People. In addition, mutual understanding is obtained between the dialogue parties and a common attitude in anticipating world developments (Abadi et al., 2016).

Several results have been achieved so that the ideals of social harmony in a pluralistic society of religious adherents can be realized, at least temporarily. From several studies that have been carried out, the efforts of harmony that can be created are only in social aspects and do not touch on theological or worship aspects. This is clear because the Islamic theological system (*aqidah*) and the theological systems of other religions should not compromise with the theological system of a different religion or belief.

Because a religious aspect cannot be compromised, which is the essential aspect, the possibility of conflict between religious adherents cannot be eliminated. Conflicts can still arise from time to time in a community group

consisting of followers of various religions or various religious sects/ideas within one religion. A pluralistic religious society like this has the potential for conflict. Each religious believer believes that his religion or understanding is the most correct and must be disseminated. All religions have a *da'wah* dimension, the consequence of believing in truth is inviting others to follow that truth. Truth should not be hidden or silenced. It must immediately be conveyed to others. That is the spirit of religion, the spirit to invite to the fact.

There are often denials if conflicts between religious communities are caused by differences in religion or beliefs between conflicting groups. It is often raised that religion only contains elements of universal goodness; it cannot possibly invite conflict. Therefore, it is not religion that is the cause of these conflicts or disputes. There must be other causes outside of religion, especially those of a *vested interest*. Denial like this is a denial of the existence of different concepts of religious truth. It will only ignore essential elements to create social harmony in a society with a religious plurality of its members.

From the explanation above, it can be understood that the efforts to harmonize religious life cannot completely reduce conflicts between religious communities and internal religious people who have different understandings and thoughts. Whenever there is an opportunity, especially if social crises accompany it, the conflict will surface, causing a multi-dimensional concern. Therefore, other efforts are needed as an alternative to the above actions, which are ineffective in creating social harmony in a country with a plurality of religions embraced by its inhabitants.

Pluralism *vis a vis* The Must-Follow One Teaching

All followers of religion will declare that their religion is the most correct. Therefore, he must be spread so that others can follow the truth of his religion. Every religion must be believed by its adherents as a complete system (perfect). This perfection has the meaning and consequence that it does not need anything else to complete it. Religiosity becomes perfect when the adherent obeys his religious doctrine as a whole and makes it the only guide in life.

Therefore, some people's understanding of pluralism and tolerance cannot be justified by justifying all religions, even though all religions have dimensions of goodness. The value of excellence in human terms is relative; it is closely related to other values held by humans or a particular group of people, although there may also be universal ones. Likewise, theological truth is subjective and normative, in the sense that only adherents of the religion concerned believe in the truth. It is based on religious doctrines sourced from the holy book as the word of God and the words of His prophets (Zaleski, 2021).

Concerning the belief in the only truth, namely the religion embraced and believed by a believer, each believer's truth claim to his religion is necessary and understandable. How is it possible for someone to adhere to and believe in one particular religion without a truth claim to that religion? Tobroni and Syamsul Arifin, for example, wrote that the problems that often arise and cause obstacles to dialogue between religions are not entirely theological issues. Such barriers have more to do with narrow truths, such as the truth claims of each religion. Problems often arise when interpretation leads to a truth claim, which results in an attitude of abuse of the truth of other religions. This situation becomes increasingly problematic when ridden by different interests (Arifin & Tobroni, 1994). Therefore, the truth claim is undoubtedly valid. A believer must unequivocally claim his religion as the only truth. A truth claim does not always result in an attitude of harassment towards the recognition of truth claims from adherents of other faiths. Harassment is another matter and not necessarily because truth claim of someone's religious is more of an ethical issue (Munawar-Rachman et al., 2022).

Indeed, religion has a certain attitude towards pluralism, namely an ethical attitude. Within the framework of this moral attitude, there is an acknowledgment of the existence of other religions. In Islam, the attitude towards the presence of other faiths is packaged in the framework of ethical perspectives that must be developed. Some verses of the Qur'an that express this attitude can be mentioned, for example, Sura 49 verse 13, 30: 22, and 5: 48. As Surah 49/Al-Hujurat: 13 says (meaning):

"O mankind, indeed We created you from a male and female and made you into nations and tribes so that you might know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing."

Surah 30 verse 22:

"And among the signs of His power is the creation of the heavens and the earth and your different languages and skin color. Verily in that there are indeed signs for those who know."

Surah 5 verse 48:

"And We have sent down to you the Qur'an with the truth, confirming what was before, namely the book (which was revealed earlier) and a touchstone against the other books; So judge their case according to what Allah has sent down and do not follow their lusts by forsaking the truth which has come to you. For every nation among you, We have given rules and a clear path. If Allah had willed, He would have made you one people (only), but Allah wants to test you against His gift to you, so compete in doing good. All of you will return to Allah, then He will inform you of what you have disputed."

However, this does not mean that there is a justification for religions other than Islam. Even followers of other religions must be invited into the same sentence (*kalimat sawaa*), namely acknowledging and worshiping only Allah and not making partners with Him. If Muslims mean that the *kalimat sawaa* is Tauhidullah, then the invitation to adhere to the *kalimat sawaa* means an invitation to embrace Islam as a whole (*kaffah*).

Muslims believe that Islam is a perfect religion (al-Maidah: 3). Religion is a set of divine systems with various consequences. Thus Islam is an ideal god system. The result of the perfection of the Islamic religious system is that it no longer needs another system to complement the existing Islamic religious system. Perhaps the notion *kaffah* in Surah al-Baqarah (2): 208 is in the context that it is enough that only one method (Islam) is adopted because it already has perfections in its various aspects. Besides Islam, other godly systems are included in "*khutuwat al-shaithan*", and people who follow or implement it are included in *tattabi'u khutuwat al-shaithan*.

It can be said that (supposedly) adherents of other religions believe that the religion they embrace is perfect, so there is no need to add elements from other divine systems. It is odd if someone adheres to and believes in one religion while he knows that his religion is an imperfect system of God that requires another system as a complement. This includes beliefs. As a belief, the belief system is also divine. So (supposedly) he also adheres to his religion or belief in a "*kaffah* and does not use other systems as a complement or addition. The mixing of many religious elements by an adherent acknowledges the imperfection of the religion he adheres to.

We have seen this in some religious communities' religious traditions and traditional ceremonies in Indonesia. There is a mixture of many elements of religions in their religious practices. The aspects of animism-dynamism in the customs of the ancestral heritage are added to parts of Hinduism and Buddhism and then seasoned with prayers taken from verses of the Qur'an or hadiths. We can see things like this in the events of traditional ceremonies of pregnancy, birth, circumcision, marriage, and even death in several groups of people in Indonesia. Then, which religion can claim, affirm, acknowledge, and accept such practices? Is not every religion (supposedly) claiming that its religion is perfect, so there is no need for additional elements from other religions? (Truna, 2021)

Therefore, Islam rejects this practice because it contains shirk, superstition, and superstition elements. This practice is unconsciously (or perhaps consciously) an acknowledgment of the imperfection of the Islamic religion, and this is rejected. People who are consistent in religion will take only one of the existing religions, namely the one most believed to be true and carry out the teachings of the religion they believe in as a whole and comprehensively.

In short, the problem of *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) is not merely a matter of Islamic religious doctrine. In common sense, the act of shirk is rejected because it shows a person's inconsistency in religion. He feels unsure about one system, so it needs to be added or supplemented with elements from other religious or belief systems. People who are not sure of what they adhere to will be in doubt and misgiving. Psychologically, people who are always indecisive and anxious mean that they have mental disorders, which are included in psychoneurosis.

CONCLUSION

The plurality of religion is a sociological fact that cannot be denied. It is God's will as a means of testing for people who are consistent with the religion they embrace and for the gifts He has given. Had Allah willed, He would have made this human being one people (only) (Qur'an 5:48). On the other hand, the reality of religious plurality must be addressed to align with God's intention to create that reality.

In responding to the idea of religious pluralism, a Muslim and every follower of other religions is required to be wise. The attitude towards pluralism does not have to sacrifice the foundations of one's religious beliefs by justifying all existing religions. The wise attitude in question is holding fast to beliefs in one's faith, and understanding other people they also have the same attitude towards their religion.

In the context of Islamic *da'wah*, a Muslim is required to understand why other people follow a religion that is not the same as their own. If he views that their path is the wrong way, then their error must be told to them *until*

they understand. That is one of the signs of a wise act of *da'wah* as the realization of the call for *da'wah*, "*ud'û ilâ sabîlirabbika bilhikmah...*"

It is from this theological foundation (Islamic *aqidah*) that Islamic culture is built, a culture that is genuinely based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the sunnah of His Messenger. Sunnah is the tradition of the Prophet; with that sunnah, the Prophet has built an alternative Islamic culture and civilization that is free from elements that are considered un-Islamic. The Prophet also adopted some of the Arab traditions of the Jahiliyyah era if it was not contrary to the principle of monotheism and then made them into an Islamic practice that later developed into Islamic culture. This kind of culture, which the Prophet and his righteous companions built, must be developed by Muslims.

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