



Reinterpreting the Reality of Diversity in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study attempts to dig into the socio-historical foundation that underlies the founding of Indonesia. The study found that the meaning of the nation has become very contextual in the experience of the establishment of Indonesia, which is not formed based on ethnicity or the same culture, religion, and beliefs. Awareness in the context of diversity has become a motivator for religious activists to play a role in maintaining harmony in plural life in the community. When our predecessors had established Pancasila as a national principle, every group, whether religious, ethnic, or other groups, absorbed themselves into a comprehensive Indonesian frame. Consequently, when this country has designed various rules for playing the nation's life, referring to the 1945 Constitution as the basis of its constitution, Pancasila as the basis of its ideology, and democracy as a system of its governance, anyone must bend down to these rules. This study attempts to dig into the socio-historical foundation that underlies the founding of Indonesia. It is not appropriate if we make various kinds of insubordination and rebellion just because the social teachings or religion we embrace emphasizes a different value system.

Keywords: *Indonesia; Diversity; Ethnicity; Culture; Religion; Pancasila*

Introduction

In the last few decades, social and political life in Indonesia has been marked by strengthening identity politics based on religion, ethnicity, and race. Several conflicts with ethnic and religious nuances occurred in several islands in Indonesia. An example of the conflict between Christians and Muslims happened in Posso in 1998 and Ambon in 1999. The implementation of Islamic sharia regional regulations in several districts and cities also shows the strengthening of identity politics, including the efforts of several Islamic fundamentalist groups who aspire to replace the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila with the ideology of the Khilafah. In addition, political elites often use the

issue of identity politics in electoral contestation, causing sharp polarization in society and potentially causing horizontal conflict among contestant supporters (Supratikno, 2022:407).

Why are we increasingly exhausted from living in diversity? Diversity is God's creative work. Is our faith in God also fragile? Why do we increasingly feel like living in ignorance, barbaric, without reason? Why are we no longer skilled at managing desires and are easily reactive and destructive? It does not describe our authenticity as noble Indonesian civilized humans. Indonesian civilization was born from humans educated in various practices and traditions that enlightened their emotional and spiritual. Unfortunately, the variety of Indonesian practices and traditions has been largely ignored. Consumerism, pragmatism, hedonism, and materialism helped roll up Indonesian civilization.

Recently, when problems hit Indonesia, mutual awareness is increasingly needed. The question is, is that awareness still being treated? What challenges must be faced in efforts to maintain and keep diversity?

Method

Literature research is a theoretical study that references other scientific literature related to culture, values, and norms that develop in the social situations studied (Sugiyono, 2007). Meanwhile, Danandjaja (2014) argues that library research is a scientific method of systematic bibliographical research, which includes the collection of bibliographical materials related to research objectives. Therefore, library research is a research activity carried out by collecting information and data with the help of various kinds of materials in the library, such as reference books, similar previous research results, articles, notes, and various journals related to the problem to be solved. Activities are carried out systematically to collect, process, and conclude data using specific techniques to find answers to the research problems.

Results and Discussion

1.1 Challenges of National Life in Diversity

Mutual aid is an example of the tradition of Indonesian civilization. In the Tumbang Titi area, Ketapang, West Kalimantan, there is a *sambeyan* tradition. People worked together to open up land and start farming alternately between families. In Java, there is a *sambatan* tradition. People worked together to build another family home. (Susila, 2016). *Sambeyan* and *Sambatan* require emotional and spiritual intelligence. *Sambatan* is derived from the word *sambat* means calling out to others because it needs help. People who do *sambatan* are aware of and peacefully accept their fragility. Humbly, he invites others to be involved in his life so that he can live beyond his fragility. Other people undoubtedly needed other people for a better and more dignified life.

Sambeyan and *Sambatan* are traditions that not only facilitate life together. *Sambeyan* and *Sambatan* are Indonesian pearls of wisdom that educate their people to realize that they accept self-vulnerability peacefully and simultaneously care for the character needs to be involved by the other and to form a character that respects the other as an irreplaceable dignified person.

The excellent character is cared for in self-practice and cognitive behavior. The form is in the range of asceticism or ascetic exercises. Almost all regions of Indonesia support that exercise. In that exercise, Indonesian people are formed into individuals who are aware of their fragility and simultaneously strengthened their awareness of the need to be involved and dependent on others as

brothers. This exercise strengthens the ability of Indonesian people to realize and manage their selfish desires. It is the intellectual intelligence of a typical Indonesian.

In the document of *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) article 2 (EG. 2), Pope Francis wrote that the great danger in today's world, which is covered by consumerism, is sadness and anxiety which are born of complacent hearts, but greed, the pursuit of reckless pleasure and a blunt conscience. When our inner life is repressed in its interests and sympathy, there is no room for others and no place for the poor. The voice of God is no longer heard, the joy of His love is no longer felt, and the desire to do a good thing disappears. That is a genuine danger for the faithful too. Many are victims and end up with hate feeling, anger, and slack. It is not a way of life filled with dignity; this is not God's will for us.

The view of Pope Francis reminds us that one of the root causes of the destruction of civilization, including what happens on Indonesian earth, is the degradation of the situation in which the reality of hatred among fellow citizens replaces the desire to do a good thing. The destruction of Indonesian civilization is increasingly massive when it is sprinkled with various things, making the sprinkling of civilization more massive.

We must re-live the variety of behavior and tradition of Indonesian character education. We have long been wrongly worshiped and determined excellent of human orientation. It is understandable if we are easily angry now and want to master by defeating and destroying others. We tend to be ambitious to win even though the way is not dignified and unreasonable. Cooperation cares for the fellow; diversity is seen as an obstacle to achieving noble ideals in the life of the nation and state.

1.2 Pancasila: Basic Principles as National

National identity has been pivotal to the fortunes of modern states. Weak national identity has been a major problem in the greater Middle East, where Yemen and Libya have disintegrated into failed states, and Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Somalia have suffered from internal insurgency and chaos. There are five fundamental reasons for a country to have an inclusive national identity: (1) physical security, without a national identity, triggers state collapse and civil war; (2) national identity is vital for the quality of government; (3) facilitating economic development. A solid national identity produces elites who are very focused on the economic development of their country rather than on their personal or group enrichment; (4) promoting a broad radius of trust, which acts as a lubricant that facilitates economic exchange and political participation; (5) encourage countries to maintain strong social safety nets that reduce economic inequality (Fukuyama, 2018).

According to Soekarno (n.d.), our nationalism originated and is based on Pancasila values. Pancasila and Indonesia are like one currency with two sides that cannot be separated. The separation will only result in the meaninglessness of Pancasila and Indonesia itself. Pancasila, in this case, is the ideal reality of a material condition consisting of various ethnic - the nation with its socio-cultural diversity called Indonesia (J. Titaley, 2013). Indonesia as a nation-state stands because there is a shared experience as an oppressed nation by the colonialist. Then, there is the desire to live together with the same values and future goals. *"The soul of Indonesia is the soul of cooperation, the soul of brotherhood, the soul of kinship. We have formulated such a soul with Pancasila"* (Soekarno, n.d.).

Indonesia was born on August 17, 1945; as Titaley (1991) said, it is a new phenomenon. Indonesia has never existed before. Previously there were tribal kingdoms in the archipelago. The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) is also not a continuation of the tribal kingdoms that have existed before, such as Majapahit or Sriwijaya. As stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, Pancasila became the philosophical and ideological basis of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). As a national principle, it unites the entire Indonesian people. Soerjanto Poespowardojo stated, *"Preserving the Republic of Indonesia means maintaining Pancasila as its*

foundation, and on the contrary, rejecting Pancasila means changing the building of the Republic of Indonesia." (Poespowardoyo, 1989).

National identity begins with a shared belief in the legitimacy of the country's political system, whether the system is democratic or not. Identity can be embodied in laws and formal institutions that dictate what language will be considered official or what children will teach in schools about their country's past. National identity also penetrates the realm of culture and values. It consists of people's stories about themselves: where they came from, what they celebrate, shared historical memories, and expectations about what it takes to be a genuine community member (Smith, 2015).

Titaley (1991) states, like the ideology of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), Pancasila contains the goal of the Indonesian people that must be realized in the life of society, nation, and the state of Indonesia. In this case, by borrowing the term of Rousseau, Pancasila is a general will. Soekarno himself explained that Pancasila is both a static foundation (primary) and dynamic (the goal that must be achieved) (Soekarno, n.d.) Each community is generally unique, meaning it has a cultural identity that differs from one another. Their views on life, values or norms, and various cultural expressions are formed following the historical context of space and time.

Bhikhu Parekh (2008), in his book *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, comprehensively analyzes socio-cultural diversity as something that cannot be avoided in life in multicultural societies. Nevertheless, multicultural societies need universal cultural elements to protect diversity while uniting it. Parekh bases his views on monism, which considers society single in the context of universal humanity. They seem fragmented due to differences in the context of space and time, but by nature, they have the same human characteristics. Intellect, soul, and desire become the essential elements of human nature; they believe in divine powers, live on the same earth, have pride in the community, have anger but also respect, and have the exact basic needs of life even though their goals are different (Parekh, 2008). It is where the importance of political structures builds a strong sense of unity and togetherness among its citizens. One of the structures of political integration is the proceduralist model, which views the need for the country to impose a general rule on all citizens. Regulations such as laws play a role in combining the diversity of the elements as much as possible.

How is Indonesia? Where does the ethos of our nation dig? The answer is from many things, including from the context of religious spirituality. In the past, Bung Karno cited "the fire of Islam"; it seems that what is meant is how the ethos of religious spirituality can be used as a stimulation for progress. However, whether the fire has emerged from this angle or just ashes? We must continue looking at ourselves to dig back into the nation's ethos and new ethics compatible with his time. If the nation's ethos is weak and outdated, how do we want to run fast? (Alfian, 2016)

Kartodirdjo (1983), a historian, in his book *Mersudi Budi* Functioning as An Influential Ethos, defines "*mersudi budi*" (Javanese) as an ethos that reflects intellectual asceticism, a kind of mental discipline basis of all business and work. The implementation of "*mersudi budi*" seems to be when he analyzes Japanese society's work ethos that developed since the Meiji Restoration. Due to "*mersudi budi*" is an asceticism, not escapism, called religiosity that is expressed by leaving all worldly affairs, exactly has the functions as an ethos that has a considerable influence on the life of the nation.

However, the question appears, if "*mersudi budi*" is a kind of productive asceticism that can be equated with "Protestant ethos" - Weber's "Tokugawa Religion" - Bellah's, why there is no Meiji Restoration in Java, wider Indonesia? It seems that the problem is that Java has other experiences. In practice, the royal feudal culture in Java is buried by colonialism. Colonialists have divisive politics so that in resolving opposition, even the native rulers are pitted against them. There may be other hypotheses, even contrary to this opinion. What about the Samurai tradition in Japan? Is it also in Java? If there is, how significant? To what extent is the producer mentality and entrepreneurship triggered by

religiosity awareness? What about modernization? Does it emerge "independently" or suspend on the colonial side and its subsequent regime?

Our experience in Java or Indonesia differs from that in Japan and the West. Japan, according to Kishore Mahbubani in his book *Cannot Asian Think (1998)*, is the earliest Asian nation that can adopt the Western ethos. The discussion about the work ethos of Indonesians has become a classic issue. Before independence, he burst through the "Cultural Polemic" between Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and others. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana triggers a polemic by offering views from the message if we want to move forward, imitating the Western ethos. For Sutan Takdir, we are too weak to light a fire, so the rice we cook does not coo. Meanwhile, in the West, the fire is on.

1.3 The Need for the Preservation of Nationalism

Indonesian nationalism is nationalism that grows and develops in the park of internationalism (Nugroho, 2016). The birth and survival of a nation are closely related to its people's commitment, participation, and progression. However, forming a nation does not occur in a static or frozen period, which is only remembered or read in historical texts rigidly and artificially. Forming and caring for the nation is an active process that takes place continuously, creatively, and consistently without betraying authentic historical values that become the basic consensus or foundation for the formation of a nation.

Today, for young people, being a nationalist means participating positively in alternative public spaces, starting from things that seem small to significant activities. Build an independent community based on hobbies, build solidarity movements, organize the city to be comfortable and environmentally friendly, try entrepreneurship, do complicated things, such as encouraging a more responsive and open political system, and so that the government works correctly and accountably. These activities come from the young people's abundance of desire and energy to express themselves, be involved, and be recognized socially by their environment.

The expected nationalism is not narrow nationalism, which is rhetorical propaganda, but unjustly the rights of citizens or making people difficult. Nor is it a scary nationalism that does not make the social and regional environment comfortable. The expected nationalism is also not a form of excessiveness of the concept called globalization. Because however, interdependent between countries is inevitable, there is still a different domestic interest between the nation-state.

The early period of the Republic was formed based on mutual awareness as a nation. People of different ethnic, sects, religions, and ethnicities merge into mutual awareness, namely fighting for independence. The meaning of the nation has become very contextual in the experience of the establishment of Indonesia, neither formed based on ethnicity nor the same culture, religion, and beliefs.

Awareness in the context of diversity has become a motivator for religious activists to play a role in maintaining harmony in plural life in the community. That can be seen, for example, in 1912 when several Christian figures in Mojowarno, Jombang, East Java, founded an association. The association was named *Mardi Pracoyo (MP)*. Some of the founding figures of *Mardi Pracoyo* are Mattheus Jr., Poertjojo Gadroen, and Wirjodarmo. The main aim of this association is to improve the community's spiritual quality and socio-economic life. Consciously, *MP* is also engaged in politics. One of the aims is to respond to the challenges that appeared by Sarekat Islam (SI) through its magazine: *Oetoesan Hindia*. The magazine published in Surabaya has inspired Christians to actively participate in spreading the spirit of nationalism.

In the inaugural address of *Mardi Pracoyo* in 1913, Mattheus Jr., as Chairman, talks about harmony and cooperation, both with followers of other religions and among Christians, for mutual progress. On another occasion, in a youth camp event in the 1920s, when Mattheus speaks and brings a

paper titled *Bangsa lan Agami* (Nation and Religion), he asserts that God accepts and gives place to all nations and religions. All nations, both believers and non-believers, have entered into God's plan of salvation. Therefore, the lives of nations today, like or not, are forced to utilize the means of salvation; this is the actual evidence that God's call to the nations has come, and halos of salvation (*siwering kawilujengan*) have been seen by all nations.¹

Sumartana saw that based on Mattheus's view, harmony between nations and religions could be expected because there is a belief about the same blessing from God so that all polarization can be neutralized. In this theological vision, all struggles toward national independence and religious freedom are given new values. They do not have to cause riots or sorrow but instead become the signs of solidarity, harmony, and fellowship between nations and religions (J. S. Aritonang, 2004)

Regarding Christian internal harmony, Mattheus underlines it as a support for independence so that Javanese Christians do not continue to depend on Zending. Besides, they can see themselves at the level of Christians in other places, for example, in Ambon and Minahasa. Regarding this, Mattheus said: Ambonese and Menado Christians assumed that Javanese Christians are below their level because Christians in Java do not feel themselves on the same level as the Dutch, whereas Christians feel equal with the Dutch; only their skin color is different. It is Christianity that makes them equal, not their ethnic identity. In this connection, Javanese Christians believe they are still below the Dutch, so they feel inferior.

Moreover, Javanese Christians are only referred to as join Christianity. According to Hoekema (1997), Mattheus speaks and shows the efforts of harmony in the various political associations he followed in Java. With it, he also appeals to Javanese Christians not to hesitate to work in politics. Because if Christians do not show harmony among themselves, they cannot contribute to the unity and awareness of their people

The seeds of mutual awareness as a nation emerged in the 20th century—the founding of Budi Utomo (1908) and the Youth Pledge (1928). The nation's founders gave the seed with their national ideas and behavior that grounded the idea. In 1945-1949 period became the seedbed of understanding in the form of action. People who may not know each other, but because they have the same experience and goals, cooperate in fighting against the colonialist. Their property, youth, and lives are sacrificed for those ideals. Although not infrequently, their contribution is not recorded in the pages of history written by the authorities.

Suhartono describes the position of fighters and movement figures with different ideologies, such as thesis and antithesis. Sometimes they stretch away, but at another time, they meet. Suhartono notes there are at least three big fragments of the ideological grip of the movement at that time, namely nationalist, socialist with various variants, and Islam. So, what makes the difference of thought fall apart until they struggle together? "Mutual awareness, there is national awareness. There is a desire to live together or to be together", said Suhartono. (Lee & Mahar, 2017)

Conclusion

Buya Syafii Maarif (2009) explains that Indonesia is the meeting point of all religions. Each adherent has the same right to express his belief in private and public spaces. Therefore, it is not appropriate if Indonesia is only contested as a place to show the power of a single truth associated with

¹ Sumartana, quoted from the article for the Youth Camp, Pemutanipun Kekuwi ing Redi Kuncung (Remembrance of the Camp on Mount Kuncung), 11-15 October 1924 and 18-21 April 1925, Mojokerto, 1925, p. 41

certain religious teachings. When our founding fathers established Pancasila as the national principle, every group, be it religion, ethnicity, or the emotionality of other groups merged into the framework of a complete Indonesia. Consequently, Indonesia has established the 1945 Constitution as the basis of its constitution, Pancasila as the basis of its ideology, and democracy as its system of government; everyone must comply with these rules. Those are all formulations of the game's rules that have become a common consensus so that any model, including models of specific religious teachings, cannot replace them.

The five principles, Pancasila, sealed in the fourth paragraph of the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution as the basis for the establishment of The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), must be understood as a whole because the five principles are a unity that reflects the personality traits of the Indonesian nation. The history of the formation of the Indonesian state and nation shows that the plurality of the Indonesian people is a fact that cannot be denied, but they are united as one nation because of the similarity of fundamental values that comprehend fully (Doweng, 2016)

Our responsibility as the Indonesian nation is to fill this independence by strengthening the Indonesian identity that is positive and constructive through our work in various lines of life. It is not appropriate if we make various kinds of insubordination and rebellion just because the social teachings or religion we embrace emphasizes a different value system. We must introduce and export a moderate perspective of Indonesia in constructing a wise and inclusive religious understanding.

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