The conception of religious moderation in interfaith dialogue in Indonesia; Case study in Flores Nusa Tenggara Timur

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Abstract

This article discusses the concept of religious moderation in interfaith dialogue in Indonesia, especially in Flores, NTT. Religion, which in general is an ideology that is defensive and partial, at first glance does not appear in the Flores NTT community. This can be seen when commemorating religious holidays such as Eid al-Fitr or Christmas, where young people from different religious backgrounds help each other in the smooth implementation of the holiday, houses of worship that are often built side by side facilitate the process of interfaith interaction in Flores, NTT. This is an interest for the author to look further into the concept of religious moderation in Flores, NTT which can become an example in the application of religious moderation in Indonesia. Interpretive paradigm, an inductive qualitative approach, with qualitative multimethods, anthropology - ethnography to phenomenology, the author tries to map interfaith interaction patterns in the concept of religious moderation in NTT, where the result is, the position of religion as an ideology is replaced with the family, where the family is more exalted than religion, on the other hand the role of religious leaders is very large in the process of interfaith dialogue, cultural elements, customs that are humanistic in nature strengthen the process of interfaith interaction in Flores, NTT.

Keywords: *Moderation, Dialogue, Interfaith.*

Introduction

Indonesia and even the world is in the era of disruption, the world's changes are so tremendous which is the impact of the industrial revolution 4.0, globalization, advances in science and technology, especially in the field of information technology, requires humans to be more aware of improving the quality of life both in relation to God, to other humans, and nature. fellow human beings and to nature. With the development of modern science, the level of human literacy will also increase, in line with that, it is hoped that there will be increased awareness about the importance of respecting and upholding human dignity, closer encounters between religious communities, equality and equal treatment for all citizens, gender equality. and so on (Abdullah, 2020, 1).

Indonesia is a religious country, marked by the foundation of the country (Muti' and Burhani, 2019, 1), entering the third millennium, religious issues, interactions between religions, religion and culture, religion and science have resurfaced, many new thinkers have been born in this field, both nationally and internationally, as a result of changes in human thinking patterns. Entering a new area of relations between religion, religion and culture and religion and science today, according to Amin Abdullah, requires a new scientific style as well (Abdullah, 2020, 8), awareness of common interests in the frame of humanity (humanities) makes people aware of life together as a global citizen.

The area of East Nusa Tenggara Province (NTT) is a beautiful province with various customs, traditions and natural beauty. Many classy tourist destinations can be found there, such as Komodo island, Padar island, Kalimutu lake, and others. The island of NTT is also known as an island that can maintain harmony between religious adherents, even though most of the population is Catholic. This was even recognized by other nations,

as stated by the Polish Ambassador to Indonesia, Grzegorz Wisniewski, during a visit to Ende, accompanied by his wife Kryatyna. In addition to admiring the beauty of inter-religious traditions, he also admires the natural beauty of NTT (Kompas.com, 2019).

In the scope of education, a common fact occurs in NTT, where interfaith marriages often occur, even living in the same house with parents. On the other hand, there are still several schools in several areas in NTT which incidentally are religious schools, but students /students/students of other religions, for example, Islamic schools but there are Catholic Christian students, or vice versa Catholic schools but have Muslim students (ntt. kemenag.go.id, 2019), even up to university (ntt.Kemenag.go.id, 2019).

Based on the researcher's interest in "different" cases, amid the current tensions between religious adherents in Indonesia, therefore, in this study, researchers are interested in researching the concept of religious moderation in interfaith dialogue in Flores NTT.

From Theology Towards Religious Studies

A challenge in viewing religion from a socio-anthropological perspective where religious texts that intersect with the socio-anthropological context in which religion develops require religion to intersect with other empirical-scientific sciences in practice Amin Abdullah quotes the opinion of Sartono Kartodirjo, who mapped three layers of entities in viewing the relationship of subjective fiqhiyyah-religion) and objective logic of religious thinking (falsafiyyah-scientific), namely: (1) Mentifact when religion is still in the form of values, values, beliefs (belief), thoughts (thoughts), ideas and world views that are general; then (2) Sosifact, namely when these ideas, values and thoughts enter the social world, they form groups, organizations, schools of thought, denominations, sects, associations, communities, organizations, along with social institutions that accompany it as well as behaviour, attitude (attitude) and patterns of relationships and social interactions are complex; then the last entity is (3) Artifacts, the relationship between the two is manifested and symbolized in the physical world such as the relationship between places of worship (mosques, churches, temples, synagogues, monasteries, pagodas), institutions (social-religious, educational, economic, cultural) manuscripts, manuscripts, books, inscriptions, art objects, tools of worship, music, paintings, laboratories, means of transportation, ritual objects, tombs, and so on are inseparable from the relationship between manifact and sociofact (Kartodirdjo, 1992, 5).

Religion is a primary need in life. Even human needs for religion are far greater than their needs for food, drink, shelter, and clothing (Al-Maghlout, 2012, ix). There are various meanings of religion, starting from the words a and gam. A means no, and gam means to go. Thus religion is defined as something that accompanies human life and cannot be separated from human life. (Shihab, 2013, 75). There are also the words a and gamma. A is defined by no, and gamma is defined as topsy-turvy or messy namely, religion contains a set of rules for its adherents so that their lives are not messy; religion leads its adherents to an orderly life (Anshari, 1978, 11). *Cambridge International Dictionary of defines religion as belief in and worship of one God or many gods or belief in various belief systems or systems of worship* (Cambridge, 1995, 1200). And many other definitions of religion based on different experts.

Moreover, there are many more definitions of religion, according to experts.

In explaining the problem of the scope of religion, scholars who study religion do not attempt to define religion in the word. However, scholars are more interested in the multi-category definition of religion. Call it Frederik Streng, who describes religion through three basic dimensions, namely personal, cultural, and ultimate dimensions (Conolly, 2011, 8). Eric Sharpe distinguishes it into four dimensions, existential, intellectual, institutional, and ethical dimensions (Conolly, 2011) (Streng, 1976, 7), hen sociologist Charles Glock and Rodney Stark identify five different dimensions, namely experiential, ideological, ritualistic, intellectual, and consequential dimensions (Hom, 1977, 14), while Ninian Smart, a phenomenologist and philosopher of religion distinguishes the scope of religion into six or even seven dimensions, namely mystical or narrative dimensions, ritual, social, ethical, doctrinal, experiential, and material (Smart, 1968: 15-19). From these various dimensions, the authors capture the similarity of the dimensions described by previous scholars, namely, all have closed and

open dimensions. In other words, all religions have an aspect of exclusivity on the one hand and an aspect of inclusiveness on the other simultaneously.

First of all, the theme must be separated between Ulum al-Diin (Religious Knowledge or the exclusive aspect of religion) and Dirasat Islamiyyah or inclusive aspects of religion, borrowing istiah Amin Abdullah, Dirasat Islamiyyah namely an understanding that was originally dogmatic (an understanding that generally refers directly to the religious sciences). Islam such as Aqidah and Shari'a (using linguistics to understand the text of the holy book) shifts towards a more flexible one, namely Ulum al-Diin or Religious Knowledge, namely Islamic knowledge combined with Islamic experience that intersects with culture, science and the surrounding conditions in which the Islamic community lives by prioritizing morality, ethics, morality. Thus, a paradigm shift is required, which was initially a theological study of religion to a more open religious study or religious study.

Gerard Hall SM contributed a brilliant idea in his research related to this. This research is based on an interview conducted by Gerard Hall SM with Raimon Panikkar, in which the discussion discusses the principles and practices of multi-religious dialogue focusing on Panikkar's experience of Christian-Hindu, Christian-Buddhist and Christian-Secularist dialogue. These discussions resulted in "rules" for interreligious dialogue and intercultural encounters. Attention will be drawn to the different levels of religious discourse identified as myths, logos, and symbols. Panikkar's bolder proposal for a confluence of world religious and cultural traditions will be introduced through an explanation of the "cosmotheandric vision", the reality of what he now calls the "radical trinity" of cosmic matter, human consciousness and divine freedom (Hall, 2004).

Evaluation of the concept of interreligious dialogue and its relation to Islam by using a theological-historical approach in recent studies. The analysis includes the treatment of early Muslim rulers, especially the second caliph of Islam "Umar", towards adherents of other religions in an effort to understand the nature of interreligious dialogue in Islam. This research shows how Islam plays a unique role in promoting interfaith dialogue by providing justice, equal rights, and freedom of religious belief and practice from any religion, culture and civilization, and accepting all previous prophets as Prophets of Islam. The study concludes with a strong emphasis that Islam is a comprehensive religion that advocates harmonious interfaith relations. It can be taken as a model to defuse interreligious conflict and to promote interfaith harmony and peaceful coexistence in this world of diverse religions and traditions (Khan, 2020).

Interfaith dialogue highlights the importance of world religions to provide spiritual intervention. Dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange, and dialogue of religious experiences encourage interfaith dialogue in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, religious dialogue must shift from theological form to religious studies, thus theology will be more flexible and between religious adherents can help each other in the same goal, namely humanity (Corpuz, 2021).

From Insider to Outsider Perspective

In principle, insider/outsider in religious studies was born to emphasize that religion must be presented objectively and proportionally as an object of study. The process of placing religion as an object of study that is objective and proportional cannot be separated from the role of the subjectivity of the observer/researcher, and researchers are required to prioritize objectivity without being sceptical through impartial studies and investigations.

So Far, in viewing religion, the approach taken has focused on the insider so that the resulting product is a justification of religion, no longer positioning religion as an object of study. Therefore, there is a need for a new view where the insider in studying religion changes and leads to outsiders, with Thus, religious studies will be more objective and can dialogue with social realities. All religions must teach goodness, but historical facts state that not a few religions have created a commotion. In the context of spiritual development, every religion in Indonesia teaches about harmony. No religion teaches conflict. However, in practice, conflicts between religious communities are sometimes unavoidable. Conflict can occur because the emotions of the people are not controlled. To avoid conflicts between religious communities, it is necessary to continue to improve the development of the lives of religious people, both through religious leaders and in religious education (Karim, 2016, 3).

Awareness of living in company with others requires careful attention to building relationships, especially with different people. Education that prioritizes the formation of self-concept in relation to others can encourage students to find life orientation. This is also a beneficial aspect of finding self-meaning. The life orientation of the younger generation also makes them able to make peace with themselves and build and maintain peace in everyday life. However, religious education that has been going on so far seems to have obstacles in the straightforwardness of moral teachings about accepting differences, even though humans always relate to others who are different in their lives. The obstacle in religious education is not primarily due to religious teachings but the socio-cultural conditions that are responded to by religious institutions so that it seems as if religion is difficult to accept differences. This situation can certainly be addressed through efforts with a clear rationale.

One of the solutions offered in this research is to find a peaceful and peaceful life among religious adherents in Indonesia, namely looking for the side similarities between religions, one of the ways to find these similarities is that dialogue between religious adherents must be carried out. Continuously. In this way, each religion's teachings are heard and sourced from the adherents of the religion concerned. Not according to other people's point of view. This is because one of the causes of tension between religious adherents is miscommunication between religious adherents. This may be due to a lack of understanding or also because it was intentional by certain parties for specific purposes.

The Role of Religious Leaders

If it is understood fundamentally, the essence of every religious teaching, as revealed in the holy books of each religion, aims for the benefit of humans through good deeds. Besides, every religion must have its point of exclusivity because it stands based on differences. There is no need to look for the location of the differences, what is needed in this case is to find common ground between existing religions to create a harmonious and peaceful life in a world. Because the common enemy of humans is ignorance, poverty, injustice and human rights violations, not adherents of a different religion, therefore, the ultimate goal of every religion should be to become an internal discussion of religious adherents, especially religious leaders, and discuss them with the general public in a language that does not cause double understanding, or misunderstandings that can even be fatal for the survival of the community.

In a meeting between religious leaders at the Green Perundi Hotel, Komodo Airport Complex, Jl. Alo Tanis-Flores which was held on October 6-08 2017 with the theme "The Role of Religious Leaders in Building Tolerance for Life in Manggarai Raya", the event was also attended by interfaith leaders, such as the chairman of MUI West Manggarai, East Manggarai and Manggarai, the chairman of the West Manggarai FKUB, East Manggarai and Manggarai, former Manggarai Regent Anton Bagu Dagur, West Manggarai Police Chief, there are also community leaders, youth leaders, including speakers from the NTT Province FKUB.

The issues being discussed on this occasion, as conveyed by Maria Theresia Geme, Chair of the Prov FKUB. NTT, which is about inculcating the values of diversity through the work program of the NTT FKUB in the field of education, namely: (Geme, 2017)

1. Pluralism learning for students is packaged in arts and sports activities.
2. The re-reading of religious texts that cover a pluralist context will usually appear spontaneously during joint celebrations, dialogues, speech competitions and many other.
3. Explore local wisdom related to harmony and love for the environment, hold reforestation or other things related to caring for the environment.
4. Celebrating national days together, regional holidays such as birthdays of districts, cities, sub-districts and even urban villages.

Under the activities with a neutral theme, it will open the barriers of community exclusivity and form a community with sensitivity to issues that reach the public interest, including the national interest of religious harmony. In the series of meetings between religious leaders, several conclusions were made in building harmony and civilized cultural tolerance. Based on observations and recent case studies that occurred around the community, several recommendations were obtained as follows (Geme, 2017)

1. Conquering oneself is the greatest struggle in the dynamics of life (*neka ngong ata lombong lala, kali weki ru lombong muku*).

2. How good is the communication (*reje lele, bantang cama*) in FKUB or the interaction between religious believers, that is how good the nuances of the life of the people/community are. This will be realized if every ummah/citizen is obliged to: (1) understand the difference, (2) accept the difference, and (3) give living space to the difference. These three things are the secret of efforts to increase Indonesian nationalism as a manifestation of the essence of Bhineka Tunggal Ika (which in the Manggarai cultural pattern is known as *Langkes para le, woleng molang one*).

3. Communication forums or dialogues are essentially joint solutions to problems without violence, without pressure from any party, and willing/sincerely accepting positive solutions through reformulation. Instill awareness in the people that we are diverse in religion, but if religious (spirituality of service to fellow human beings in a civilized manner as a form of appreciation of religious faith).

4. Willing and able to forgive the mistakes of others as the enchanting beauty of life (*na'a ngger wa rak, na'a ngger eta lemas; neka sesa mu'u etan, kali ngampang kin nai wam, nai ngalis tuka ngengga*)

5. Do not think we will be satisfied with revenge, but know that revenge exacerbates the cycle of hatred and rotates the heart and bones.

6. Be aware and avoid the determination of religion against state power because it will trigger conflict (*neka lage sake; neka pande ngawe wae, ngampang tana; neka pande radi adon*).

7. The case of radicalism is a historical fact that encourages all the children of this nation to begin together to organize a more brotherly and civilized future. Togetherness always accompanies humans to dare to open themselves up and uphold racist (interlinear) things by getting used to seeing other people as our different selves or seeing themselves with another.

8. Is dialectics possibly still occurring due to contemporary global exposure? The answer is very likely because contemporary global penetration has given birth to cultural radicalization; therefore, changed the way of thinking, attitude, values and ways of managing life.

9. Side being ourselves has become artificial and full of hypocrisy; Our Indonesianness is disturbed by radicalism and anarchism because of cultural determination towards religion. It should be realized that culture is a human creation, and it is apparent that if it is a human creation, then culture does not have divine authority. Therefore, the people must be awakened from their subjective dogmatic sleep, which has been doubted.

10. Observe and be aware of the phenomenon of places of worship as beautiful or bad as anything made by human hands. God needs our pious conscience, while at the practical level, often places of worship (mosques, churches, temples, monasteries, and others) are religious markets and are instantaneous so that it seems that houses of worship are places of pseudo-representation of pious living (*ranga laing gong, tuka laing toni*).

11. Do not let the presence of faith replace the role of reason, but instead, faith plays a role in perfecting reason, realize that faith is a gift from God while reason is a human capacity that is open to the infinite. Therefore, seriously consider the development of the human resource quality of the people so that their minds are dignified and civilized.

12. No matter what and how in terms of religions, it should still be fostered and developed a space for interfaith dialogue of positive solidarity so that they are accustomed to accepting others as themselves. The purpose of the dialogue is so that each party gets a correct understanding of other religions and deepens and broadens their horizons in their religion. Dialogue is a model of democratization (democracy in the making). With dialogue, we can dismantle the barriers of primordialism in plural reality regardless of ethnicity, ethnicity or religion and are willing to live side by side in togetherness as partners (equals).

13. Tolerance cannot exist as long as a taxonomy of power or religion is maintained (classification of ethnicity or religion) therefore, be an educated person rather than an indoctrinated person (*neka bo taem wae de kraeng, landing pandem go neho nggaeng wikit kaper, mu'um ga pa'u wau, wencu nembur*).

14. The houses of worship cannot save you, but your pious faith and good deeds save a noble conscience and good deeds that is the Bait of Allah.

15. It does not matter your religion or ethnicity because if you can do good to anyone, people will not ask what your religion or ethnicity is.

From the description above, it can be understood that religious leaders have great concern for promoting common life in Flores. Some of the points above are manifestations of this concern. It is hoped that in the future, the community will be able to understand and apply a harmonious life together to realize the ideals of living together in peace and tranquillity in Flores. One of the responses from community leaders, as described by H. Djainuidine as the replacement for the West Manggarai Police Chief in the event stated;

> *"This kind of event is very useful, because it gives insight that each religion has similarities and is conveyed according to their beliefs, so that other religions can understand, and make people aware of responses to certain religions or sects that are often or have been rumored as violent streams"* (Djainudin, personal communicator, October 18, 2017).

The same thing was conveyed by Father Richard Manggu Pr, as the Parish of Holy Spirit Priest, he responded about the religious life in Flores,

> *"If I see that during my time on duty in Flores for these two years, life between religious communities, be it Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Hindu and Confucian, is very good, there have been no physical or non-physical clashes, mutual support and respect, this situation is very much supported. because of the familiarity of the religious leaders, because after all, what is voiced in the pulpit, must be heard by the people, because the existence of familiarity, the common perception of views, and the existence of joint activities between religious leaders are supporting factors in the diversity of religion in Flores"* (Manggu, Personal Communicator, July 7th 2017).

Muslims in Flores have the same historical roots as other religions, and are bound by strong cultural ties, this is what makes harmony possible, a historical similarity where Muslims in the interior of Flores are children of the land, or indigenous people, except in the coastal areas. Even then, it can be understood as a native, because it has been passed down from generation to generation until now, thus, religious differences are not something that needs to be put forward. He further said:

> "The government is very supportive, in this case the Ministry of Religion, at the Regency level is making a joint curriculum on religion, in a joint meeting at our Ministry of Religion (religious leaders) it was agreed to make a module on diversity and plurality, on the other hand On the other hand, we saw that in Flores at first, brothers and sisters, both Muslim, Catholic and Protestant, started their interactions in Flores by trading, Muslims selling fish, while many Catholics/Christians at that time did not have a religion. selling plantation products such as sweet potatoes, bananas and so on, as well as the presence of Muslim brothers in the interior, Muslims in the interior of Manggarai Baraat are children of the land/indigenous people, this is something that needs to be carefully considered, religious and cultural traditions already exist has been in Flores for a long time, and this tradition of harmony has been slightly disturbed by the unfavorable national situation, although even if it is not too influential in the context of life, economic dialogue, scientific dialogue, and the economy are going well". (Manggu, Personal Communicator, July 7th, 2017).

From this it can be said that sincere appreciation and deep understanding of something that people of different religions believe with us is very necessary, sincere acceptance and appreciation of differences is very necessary, rejecting differences is tantamount to refusing life, because it is impossible in life. all colors, differences are no longer seen as something that separates, but something that enriches, thus, appreciation and deep understanding make life work as expected. The chairman of the West Manggarai FKUB, Father Robertus Pelita commented on religious plurality in Flores, according to him,

> *"Religious plurality is defined as the relationship between religions, plural here means the awareness that we live side by side in the community, therefore there is a need for mutual understanding and that attitude starts from exploring each other's religions, because if explored, the essence of every religion is the same, namely teaching goodness"* (Pelita, Personal Communicator, July 20, 2017).

In this case, an open attitude can be very helpful in understanding a teaching, and with it can reduce suspicion from other parties, in addition, it is also necessary to inculcate this diversity, for example starting from religious subject matter that is compiled together to introduce religious teachings. other. Furthermore, Father Robertus continued,

"*In Flores, I think the inter-religious relationship is quite good, although in certain places there is still mutual suspicion, but it has not yet led to violence. After we explore further, it turns out that this is only limited to negative images of certain individuals towards other religions, mainly influenced by external factors, for example the state of national politics. Therefore, we from the West Manggarai FKUB always have a program to go to areas that we consider vulnerable and provide a positive view of everyone's appreciation of religion, that actually every religious teaching has good (good) teachings, it's just that religious people sometimes get it wrong. perceptive or misunderstood other teachings so that they always have suspicions about the teachings of other religions*" (Pelita, Personal Communicator, July 20, 2017).

Complex social life requires openness between followers of religions to want to understand the teachings of other religions, because without adequate understanding, there will be many unnecessary mistakes. On the one hand, the role of religious leaders is very necessary, because after all, religious leaders are people whose words are heard. by the community, so that if the religious leaders cannot position their attitude properly, it will cause a turmoil of thought for their followers.

From some of the descriptions above, the writer can conclude that several factors that support interfaith life in Flores are as follows:

1. There are similarities in customs that come from the same history, where a common history of building Flores unites religious people in Flores, even in remote areas there are many close families of different religions such as in Rekas, Terang, Werang, shaped like between uncles and nephews, among fellow brothers of different religions and so on.

2. The existence of cooperation between religious leaders, in this case, FKUB makes a major contribution in conditioning interfaith dialogue that runs regularly and peacefully. The relationship between religious leaders under FKUB shows a harmonious life between religious leaders in Flores, such as joint activities between religious leaders, religious dialogue and so on.

3. The approach of religious leaders, apart from FKUB, also routinely gives religious lectures at religious pulpits with a humanist emphasis.

Conclusion

From the description of the research results above, it can be concluded that the religious moderation created in Flores, NTT is inseparable from several aspects, including the community positioning that religion is not ideological but dialogical. Dialogical things can make the others know each otehr without feeling that their religion has been cornered, or for followers of religions who want to know the teachings of other religions, do not feel that their religious teachings have been tarnished. With the realization of a dialogical view of religion, it will be easy to see religion from the point of view of other religions. This creates an understanding that believing in a belief does not necessarily legalize that person to blame the beliefs of others. This perspective will result in ease of interfaith dialogue, spearheaded by religious leaders first, which when talking about religion, it must start from the point of view of an expert and have a deep understanding of religious teachings and the universality of values of religion, which can then be applied in the scope of education, both formal (educational institutions), informal (family) and non-formal (community).

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