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**Millennial in the Mausoleum:
Pilgrimage Site as Multiculturalism Learning Space for the Youth**

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Abstract

Today, the future of our multiculturalism society is in the hand of the millennial, the people who was born from the early 1980s until around 2000, or in other words the youth. A decade from now, the internet savvy generation will be the leader of many sectors. Yet, most of religious violence and members of radical organization is also from this generation. The phenomena of “jihad selfie” and “lone wolves” suicide bomber are fine example. Grow up in monolithic environment with very little relation with those from different faiths since they are very young, todays Indonesian millennial tends to have negative prejudices towards other faiths. The online debates on social media also make things worse. Meanwhile, in the amidst of this worrying situation, some of millennial frequently visits the local tomb outside the town to practice pilgrimage as well as encounter with more diverse expression of religious beliefs. As shown by many scholar, pilgrimage site is a place of contestation where many religious belief practices various kind of teaching within the same place. This fascinating phenomenon shows that local pilgrimage site which often perceived as a place of syncretism and backwardness have potential to foster religious harmony. Reflecting from those issues, this paper examines the activity of millennial in mausoleum. Thus, the discussion shall begin by examining the dynamic relation between the Millennial and religion. The discussion becomes point of departure to scrutinize the practice of local pilgrimage by the Millennial. The issue of de-institutionalization and, its counterpart, re-institutionalization, would also be

elaborated as a frame to enrich the analysis. Furthermore, explorations around the model of millennial pilgrim give us a hint for rethinking pilgrimage site as an alternative space for the youth to learn multiculturalism.

Introduction

Few months ago, “Jihad Selfie”, a documentary film by Noor Huda, was screened in prison and universities around Indonesia. Telling a story of how Indonesian teenagers are recruited into Islamic State, the film display two surprising facts in radicalization movement: the utilization of social media and the recruitment target which most of them are the teenagers who have no track record or experience with any terrorism group networks. Hence, as film shown, we could see how Akbar, a brilliant young boy who fluent in Arabic, play badminton, loves his mother, and get the scholarship from Turkey government may become a jihadist. Akbar is just the tip of an iceberg. Outside there, there are many “Akbar” recruited by the radical terrorist movement. In fact, many members of radical organization who perform religious violence are also from Akbar’s generation; the millennial.

The phenomena of “jihad selfie” and “lone wolves” terrorist are fine example. Grow up in monolithic environment with very little relation with those from different faiths since they are very young, today's Indonesian millennial tends to have negative prejudices towards other faiths. The online debates on social media also make things worse. Should be noted, the future of our multiculturalism society is in the hand of the millennial, the people who was born from the early 1980s until around 2000, or in other words the youth. A decade from now, the internet savvy generation will be the leader of many sectors.

Meanwhile, in the midst of this worrying situation, there are others young people who visit local saint tomb to practice pilgrimage and encounter with more diverse expression of religion. As shown by many scholar, pilgrimage site is a place of contestation where many religious belief practices various kind of teaching within the same place. This fascinating phenomenon shows that local pilgrimage site which often perceived as a place of syncretism and backwardness have potential

to foster religious harmony. Reflecting from those issues, this preliminary research paper examines the activity of millennial in mausoleum. In doing so, I conduct in-site observation and in depth interview with the youths in Sunan Tembayat pilgrimage site in Klaten, Central Java. To set the scene, I begin with the brief examination of millennial and religion within the frame of de-institutionalization and re-institutionalization.

Millennial and Religion: de-institutionalization and re-institutionalization

The Pew Forum research about Generation Y or the Millennial, the people who was born from the early 1980s until around 2000, indicated the declining interest toward religion which illustrated by the lower attendance of young adult in worship (Pew Forums' 2007 Religious Landscape Survey, 2008:06). Furthermore, as reported by Pew Forums, "one-in-four members of the millennial generation are unaffiliated with any particular faith". At glance, the finding looks affirming the secularization or privatization prophecy which religion would be cornered into private space and lost its significance on society (Cassanova, 1994:65). Thus, it is not surprising if some scholar draws hasty conclusion by pointing out the Millennial as generation without faith.

Yet, the prophecy is never fulfilled and our current situation today proves otherwise. Rather than losing their faith, it is safer and suitable to assume that the generation Y today is losing their trust toward religious institution. For them, religious affiliation is not as important as the previous generation have perceived (Lövheim, 2007:85). In short, do not "belong" is not equal with doesn't "have". There are several theories that support these arguments. One of the argument is the failed of religious institution in answering the urgent and crucial daily problem. The rigid and hierarchical system of established religion couldn't catch up with the vast problem of modernity and globalization (Lövheim, 2007:86). Hence, people in this generation keen to find another source of knowledge in order to answer their theological questions and uneasiness. Fortunately, the

internet provides the abundant and instant resources to fulfill their hunger and curiosity. (Bob Jacobson, 1999; Larsen, 2000)

Meanwhile, in terms of digital technology exposure, Generation Y or the Millennial are usually called as “Digital Native.” Coined by Mark Prensky, this term refers to a generation who becomes “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet (Prensky, 2001:1). In other words, this generation born and grow up with a familiarity of digital technology. The other opposite of this generation is “Digital Immigrant” that refers to “who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology are, and always will be compared to them (Prensky, 2001:2).” Should be noted, these generation identifications are based on United States and European society context. Thus, we might see different compositions in identifying the Millennials. As shown by Eprafas, Indonesia is in the progress to increase the internet penetration while at the same time many people still illiterate. It is highly probable the contrast between digital and non-digital realms is still prevailed (Eprafas, 2016:3). Thus, the range of Millennials generation in Indonesia is might be longer, between 18 to 35 years old in 2016. Meanwhile, this is a generation who has come of age in the transition era between the New Order and Reformation, in a world of technological pervasion, of globalization, and of the period of the politicization of identity

Hence, we might argue that Indonesian Generation Y might be also categorized as the digital immigrant. Indonesian Millennial was born in the latest analog technology era and grows up within the early digital age. Living in these liminal periods of technology and religious situation, this generation has the ability and access in migrating between the sites. Roof highlighted this phenomenon as “spiritual market place” where people could pick their religious feature beyond their formal religion that befit with their need (Roof, 1999:24). Hence, it is common for this generation to state, “I’m not religious but I am spiritual.” By saying this, people not only imply the contradiction between spiritual and religious but also show their sentiment about religion, or precisely formal

religious institution (Howell, 2006:20). However, the spirituality could become subject areas for conducting inter-religious dialogue (Swidler, 2008:15) and the center of interfaith encounter as well as the most powerful feature in dialogue (Abu-Nimer, 2000:16).

Millennial in the Mausoleum: three spheres of learning spaces

Scrutinizing the pilgrimage practices by youth in Tembayat and Gunung Jati, I categorize three spheres on how the youth encounter as well as learn the diversity of religious practices. First, by visual observation on the site architecture. Both sites have a hybrid style of architecture which is visually appealing to attract the visitor. Built on the East Javanese Hindu style that closely resembles with Hindu-Bali architecture, the site of Tembayat shows how the existences of Islamic tradition in Java have connection with old Hindu culture in the past. This co-existence opens the path to as toward the awareness of multiculturalism situation of our society. “At first, I guess this place is a ruined temple before I saw the sign (of Sunan Tembayat). It shows that Islam could enter in everywhere” said Arif, 18, high school student from Wonogiri. Similar response also came from Indah, 21, college student from Indramayu who visit Tembayat on tour package. “The relief and the gate style tell us how Islam and old Hindu tradition are living together in the past.” From both respondents, we may see how the architecture of the site becomes a doorway to grow the awareness of multicultural society that have been established for a long time in Nusantara. Moreover, the existence of the site until nowadays may serve as physical proof on how the culture and tradition from two different worlds and periods may co-exist. The coming of new tradition or culture doesn’t always abolish the former one. Should be noted, the name of Tembayat hill is frequently mentioned in important Javanese manuscripts, notably Babad Tanah Jawi, Babad Nitik, and Serat Kandha (Rinkes as mentioned in van Doorn-Harder and de Kees, 2001:332). Located between two centers of the heartland of Javanese culture, Yogyakarta and Surakarta, this little hill became a focal point in the historical map of Islam dissemination in Java. This is the place where the Islamic proliferation in the core site of Hindu -Buddhist tradition, which is

strongly crafted for thousand years since the Old Mataram dynasty, began. Furthermore, the Tembayat hill is also the site where the body of Sunan Bayat, one of the holy saints of Java, was buried.

Second, through the narration of the sites. The polyphonic hagiography of the sites plays significant role in building multi-culture and multi-religious awareness. The holy saint or wali status of Sunan Bayat is quite interesting. Some classic Javanese literatures, such as Babad Tembayat and Babad Demak, noted that Sunan Bayat is part of Wali Sanga (Jamhari,2000:61), the famous group of Islamic proselytizer who has great contribution in spreading Islam in 16th century of Java (van Dijk, 1998:222). Furthermore, some scholars deduced him as the tenth Wali according to the analysis of some classical sources (van Doorn-Harder and de Kees, 2001:332). Some others merely perceive Sunan Bayat as just local wali and apart from the Wali Sanga. Interestingly, the life history of Sunan Bayat not only shrouded by mystery but also has polyphonic stories. The famous legend tells that Sunan Bayat real name is Adipati Pandanarang, the rich governor of Semarang. Briefly, after Sunan Kalijaga, one of the Wali Sanga, spiritually persuades him, the Adipati left his status and wealth in order to become disciple of Kalijaga and to learn Islam. After Pandanarang gained enough knowledge, Kalijaga asked him to spread Islam in Bayat and its surrounding. The other version denotes that Sunan Bayat is not the Adipati Pandanarang himself but his son.

Meanwhile, another popular folklore around the site associates the Sunan Bayat with pseudo-legendary figure of King Brawijaya V, the last king of Hindu-Buddhist empire of Majapahit (Jamhari, 2000:63). The story recounts that in his disguise as local government in Semarang, King Brawijaya V encountered Sunan Kalijaga. After the fierce argument about true spirituality (ngelmu sejati), the King acknowledged the Kalijaga's wisdom and decided to become his disciple. Thus, Sunan Kalijaga gave the King a new name: Pandanarang. Shortly, for the rest of his life Pandanarang devoted himself for preaching the Islam around the Tembayat hill, where he got the title Sunan Bayat—derived from the word Tembayat—means the holy man who preach in Bayat. After he passed away, his

body is buried in Tembayat hill and his followers bestowed him with the grand mausoleum van Doorn-Harder and de Kees, 2001:331). This narration befits with the story from juru kunci or custodians inside the main part of the tomb and some regular pilgrims. Interestingly, the pilgrim's motivation in performing pilgrimage to Tembayat is not weakened with the unclear historical background and multi-identities of Sunan Bayat. In fact, it attracts many people from diverse backgrounds to visit the tomb as well as to link their needs and identities. "I just know that there are many stories of Sunan Bayat's origin. But, no one here seems have a problem with that," said Ari, 22, young employee from Jogja. However, some of the youngsters feel a little confuse for the various origin of Sunan Bayat, "I don't know which one is true. All of the stories seem true. Maybe all of them are true and good" said Heru, 17, high school student from Pekalongan. Even though he feels confuse with the multi-narrations, Heru starts to recognize the diversity as good thing.

Third, through the diversity of pilgrimage practices. Should be noted, there are no official or specific scriptural ways to perform the pilgrimage. The pilgrims try to adapt the practices according to their belief, experience, and the habits of other pilgrims that they think is suitable. Nancy Ammerman indicates this phenomenon as "every day religion" where, "many ways of religion may be interwoven with the lives of the people" (Ammerman, 2007:5). The pilgrims, as individual or group, negotiate the religious teaching with their mundane condition or local context to develop their own religiosities. Interestingly, although performed the diverse and sometimes contradictory ritual traditions, the pilgrims never disturb or confront each other. They realized that they come for the similar purpose: seeking the spiritual blessing from Sunan Bayat. "Some other day, I saw there was a girl who brought the pencils to be blessed through the custodian. In my belief, it was not appropriate. But I do not need to condemn it because she has its own belief to Sunan Bayat," said Hariyanto, 24, employee from Klaten.

Interesting to note, the pilgrim frequently shares their spiritual value or experience to each other. This kind of conversation is common and easily found in the rest area or the open space where the pilgrims take a break. Started by asking

question, they usually talk to the strangers politely and try to connect their experiences. By exchanging the experiences, the pilgrims not only enhance their conviction of Sunan's spiritual power but also strengthen their identity as part of Tembayat pilgrimage komunitas. Turner points out the notion of "komunitas" or spiritual kinship as the commonalities of pilgrimage practices around the globe (Turner, 1973: 193). Performed as individual and voluntary act, people leave their "familiar place" to the "far place", often literally because the pilgrimage site usually located on peripheral area, in order to get healing or renew their spirituality. After they reach the pilgrimage site, this individual sense turns into communal sense where each pilgrim, who is strangers to the others, helps each other and shares collective experiences. Within this framework, Turner deduces that "komunitas" for some extent represent the anti-structure where people relinquish their social status or class structure in pilgrim site and become equal to each other. The pilgrim in Tembayat striped their personal identity and attire new identity as Sunan Bayat's guest.

However, it doesn't mean that there is no contestation or friction within the pilgrimage site. There is also dynamic tension between official and lay people's perspective within pilgrimage site and practice. As Turner noticed, the pilgrimage actually works on certain structure too. "Let them do what they need to do, all of us have our own belief," said Suratno, 29, teacher commented on the practice of walking around the grave for seven times. Thus, the pilgrimage practice doesn't eliminate the diversity of belief but "removes their sting". In other words, the differences among the pilgrim are recognized or tolerated not heightened in order to create "complex heterogeneous unity" (Turner, 1973:221).

Conclusion

How often do you see group of youngster perform pilgrimage in the middle of local saint mausoleum over the hill, located at least 40 km northeast from the nearest province capital, at New Year's Eve? I guess it's almost rare. Thus, in the midst of worrying situation of radicalization on young generation, it is

fascinating to know the fact that there are group of youngster who encounter with the diversity of religious expression and practices and learn to accept it. The examination of pilgrimage practice by the youth in Sunan Tembayat site shows that the mausoleum might be alternatives learning space of multiculturalism. There are three spheres that serve as medium for the youth to encounter the diversity or religious expression and practices as well as to learn about the multiculturalism. The first sphere, observation of the architecture of the site, becomes a doorway to open the awareness about co-existence living among the diverse cultural tradition. The second sphere, the polyphonic narration of the site, becomes a medium for the youth to learn about multi-perspectives on single entity. Here, they learn that there might be more than a single story for the same figure or subject. The third sphere, the diverse practices of pilgrimage, shows the diversity of religious expression even under the same religion. Through understanding on these spheres, the youth start to learn that multiculturalism is undeniable fact on our society for a long time as well as to recognize and tolerate the differences among them. Should be noted, this awareness doesn't guarantee the harmony lives in the future. Yet, this multicultural recognition might be a good point of departure for the youth in building better multicultural society.

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