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Indication of Religion's Decline

Civil Religion and Nationhood Narratives among Christians Youths in Yogyakarta.

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Our government makes non sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith – and I don't care what it is. –D. Eisenhower.

Introduction

This paper will start from the fact that Indonesia is a muslim-majority state. With approximately 80% of muslims population, Christianity adherents are consequently becoming minority. but it does not make the Christians absent for their spirit of nationalism. Being minority does not push them to the sense of ignorance to their statehood. Instead, some Christians are really motivated to be involved in addressing nationhood and statehood issues.

My involvement with some NGOs and communities brought me to found one of Christian-based youth initiative called themselves IJD (Indonesia Jangan Diam). This community is based in Yogyakarta, concerning with issues of democratization, nationhood, tolerance and civil society. It seemed they are aiming to disseminate their ideas and show their presence as well aspiration through popular medias. This community campaigns their message through social media, youth-events, and interestingly, through the designs of their own clothing company under the name Messenjah Clothing. The clothing line is aimed to raise and criticize current situation of Christianity, which the community consider as pasive in raising social awareness and still lack of addressing social issues.

IJD mostly consist of university students who are involved in PMK (Persekutuan Mahasiswa Kristen/Partnership of Christian students) so youth sector is their main objectives, for example by conducting Youth Camp for young Christian university students.

Given the fact that this community is based on Christian-value, this paper is aiming to study how they portray themselves as minority in muslim-majority Indonesia, under framework of nationhood and critics to institutionalized religion (institutionalized church). This paper will analyze IJD movement through their critics to religion as institutionalized community. And also

this paper will cover how they transfer religious Biblical narratives becoming pivotal roles in constructing their ideas of nationalism. By this account, this Christian youth movement implies a struggle between secularism principles and religious narratives in addressing their understanding about nationalism and statehood.

This paper eventually argues that IJD movement represents the rise of spirituality expression, rather than religious expression. This case also interplay at the same time with challenge and critics to priesthood authority structures, in which slowly indicates the decline of congregational membership. This paper also addresses IJD under perspective of civil religion suggested by Robert Bellah, in the sense of compromising Biblical narratives into axis of their principles in commitment towards their nationalism.

Christianity in Indonesia at A Glance

This paper is aimed to see how Christian-based community and movement perceive their presence as minority in Muslim-majority Indonesia. So nominal number of religious population will be necessary to imagine the case. To put some nominal data of Christians in Indonesia, I put data provided by Steenbrink's work (Steenbrink, 2008). Java is the most populous island in Indonesia. Among others, Java holds density around 830 populations per km². Compared to Sumatra with 60 populations, Central and East Kalimantan with 10, North Sulawesi with 140, and over 4 in Papua.

According to statistics for Javanese Christians at 2000, there were at least 3,673,004 Christian adherents. Contributing 3.03% of total population of Java around 121,293,750. Even though Christianity were presumably coming to Indonesia since 9th century, but it is important to highlight that indigenous 'Indonesian Christians' as community appeared far from its beginning.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, indigenous Protestant Christians numbered approximately about 40,000 populations. It is an increase compared to about 16,000 in 1605. In 17th century, the number might be supported by few thousand Catholics of European descent in Java, especially the Dutches. Catholicism did not really appear in Java, as it only located in Flores and surrounding islands, which until 1859 remained under Portuguese rule; in that year

the Catholics there numbered about 11,000 populations from estimated population of 7 million for the whole archipelago, constituting about 0.7% Christian.

IJD movements consists of Christians youths from different synods and denominations. I met Andy Korinto, who reluctantly to unveil which church he's affiliated to. With Yo, from GKI and Ardhito Giovanni, from GKJ.

Campaigning Christ's Spirit to The Youths

Firstly, I want to introduce Indonesia Jangan Diam (which further will be called as IJD) community, which is becoming object of the paper. This section and next section will provide mostly result of interview conducted by the author with the 'activists' of IJD members. In short, I conceptualize the result of the interview into three sections: Critics to churches and Christianity, sense of being minority and nationalism, and the last is about their aspiration as Christian adherents to nationhood of Indonesia under frame of Bellah's civil religion.

The interview was conducted to three persons, due to the lack of available time and limited period of executing the paper. The interviewee are the activists of IJD, as well they are running their clothing line under Messenjah. I met Andy, Yo and Ardhito as representatives of IJD movement.

Everyone may visit their headquarter in Pringwulung, Condongcatur Sleman. Having a quite large land surrounded by several house buildings, which are used by them for several purposes. One building is for their basecamp, approximately eight to ten people are living the house together. Having quite wide front yard, in southern part of the house there is a well-modified shop with set of café with tables and chairs. The shop is used for Messenjah clothing, their own business, as well they are running the café at evening to midnight.

The community also have their own public space, called 'Republik Guyub'. The space is created for some purposes, like for sharing spaces and in order supporting Christians youth to develop their entrepreneurship.

IJD does not consider itself as an NGO, according to the founder, Andy Korinto. He consider that IJD is a spirit. Andy stressed that IJD does not expect itself to be a religious-based

movement, as he aim to include as many as people to participate. Because in fact, some Muslims are also there, even not under term ‘Santri’ category. Andy recalls to Anis Baswedan’s quote: evil does not happen as consequence of many criminals, but it is more because of many good people decide to act nothing. It seems the main motivation in establishing IJD.

IJD was established in Yogyakarta. Andy mentioned there are two important figure in establishing IJD. The first is Haryadi Baskoro, which he mentioned as his teacher. And the other one is Dedi Permadi. Dedi is a lecturer in UGM but now he is studying for her Ph.D in Harvard. They are nationalist, and spiritual at the same time, Andy said. Haryadi is very spritual person, Andy recalls. They share concern about current condition of Christianity. He wrote small books, but with provocative messages, like “Student versus Church”.

According to Andy, IJD sees problems, especially in their internal sphere. They see Christians youths, are still passive in terms of their participation in social movement awareness unlike Muslims youths in NU or Muhammdiyah. Andy stressed that It may be not caused by their reluctance or laziness, instead it is because culture of exclusivism which is built surrounding their religious environment. So IJD try to provide them a kind of vehicle. This movement is trying to wake them up and raise their awareness, that there are still many problems happening in this country and there are still many homeworks of this nation to do.

The implementation of IJD activities are varying. One of their activity is holding a youth leader camp for christians youth and students. This camp has been holding twice, and the participants are coming from Christians students, who are mostly from PMK (Persekutuan Mahasiswa Kristen). And commonly the members are from the leaders of PMK and from the daily committee of PMK. IJD aims to influence, by Andy’s term is to poison the Christian youths so they wake up and aware.

Andy said that they are planning to hold the youth camp annually. Or only planning, in this term they are struggling due to self-financing event. IJD is aimed to be independent, meaning that they cover all of the expense for the youth camp. Without any external fundings.

Another recent activities is that they took part in Forum Jogja Damai (FJD). Forum Jogja Damai is an alliances of several youth communities and organizations in addressing issues of religions and tolerance. Several youth and religious community who joined FJD are: IJD itself, Gusdurian,

Young Interfaith Peacemaker, Ahmadiyya community, and so forth. The alliance had conducted some communal events, including ‘Jogja Peace Parade’ during 11-30 September, in celebrating international tolerance day. The events consisted of child interfaith tour, peace talkshow, watching movies, and occupying public spaces in Ambarrukmo Plaza to conduct musical performance for campaigning peace, and to attract wider audiences.

Decline of Religion(?): Critics to Internal Christian and Churches

A question raised to them, why such activities of IJD are targeted for PMK members? Andy said that he, and other IJD activists are already hopeless with the churches due to their absence of building awareness of social problems and nationalism issue. They see churches are failed to raise youth’s participation to social issues. Churches, according to them, mostly began to prioritize their own interests. Churches, according to Andy, are stuck to ceremonial and symbolic rituals. They don’t act into practical way. Even for them, symbolic rituals are opium. Referring the famous quote from Karl Marx.

“Well, speaking about spirit that we talked earlier, it because as we believe, Christianity was not built intentionally as a religion. as institution. Christianity talks about lifestyle. Christian, it means people who follow way of Christ. Simple like that. We see that Christianity nowadays has been in false way.”

“If we talk about religion, it must involve ceremony, laws, like Sharia in Islam, formalistic ways. Then one of its effect is a dominance of the preachers. If we study Bible, those things are not there. Christianity requires no ceremony, Christainity has no preacher’s dominance, and the law itself is God itself. the law is that we understand what God wants. Relationship between we, and God, should be integrated with God. Whenever we are integrated with what God wants, then we will be able to see Indonesia in perspective of God. If God becomes me, for example, if he becomes Indonesian citizen, becomes a youth, what he is going to do after seeing the problem of this country? Is He going to sleep? Is He going to act nothing? We really want to distinguish between religiousness (keberagamaan) and deity (ketuhanan). That is different! Nowadays, we see a lot of people are claiming themselves religious. But far from the values of deity (beragama, tetapi tidak bertuhan).”

IJD are very critical to Christian as institutionalized religion. They perceive that Christian nowadays, by mentioning modern churches, are beginning to be material and worldly-oriented.

“And again, if we speak about dominance of the preacher, Jesus was only once getting angry. He did some acts like FPI was only once. When he saw bait-Allah (House of God), at that time was synagogue, became a place of trading, place of transaction. If he comes today, and sees those modern churches, of course he will be angry. That’s why through IJD we are going to be angry, little by little. Have you seen one of viral picture of one church which provided a payment machine for credit card? That’s embarrassing! Of course we are not going to over-generalize that all modern churches are like that. But the fact that we see as challenge, is that Christianity got challenge from its internal factor, like those modern churches which made people eventually very worldly-oriented, very material.”

Some critics towards church and its clergy, thrown by Andy and other youths from IJD resembles what Steenbrink has described about Christian Indonesian theologian, Yahya Wijaya. He is a quite peculiar Mennonite Chinese-Indonesian theologian who mainly rejected and very critical to Christian material ‘success’ theology, and individualism which happening in Christian church. He wants to seek the middle position between the anti-capitalist Theology of Liberation and the pro-capitalist theories of Max Weber, Michael Novak and Brian Griffith. He makes an attempt to formulate a balanced theology on the position of the family in Christian theology and within the church, as well as to describe the political-economic implications of this theology. He seeks connections to the family values of traditional Confucianism and the turn towards individualism in modern society. His theology is a sound reaction to traditional Reformed individualism and is at the same time a rare example of theologising in the difficult situation of the Indonesian Chinese diaspora of business families. (Steenbrink, 2008. 917)

Most of IJD’s critics to internal Christianity, is delivered through their t-shirts production. And IJD sends their critics through t-shirts production in Messenjah clothing. Regarding Messenjah clothing, Andy told me that it’s taken from Messenger. So what message do they deliver? Since its first establishment, Messenjah was supposed to produce spiritual shirts (Kaos rohani) for Christians community market. But then along with the time, they try to deliver their messages in more universal ways so they open distro / shop publicly. Even though still, the main mission is for sending message, or perhaps critics, to Christians.

Yo told me that Messenjah clothing is different with IJD. They are separated. He stressed that Messenjah is mostly for internal to Christians. The portion is different, Said Yo. IJD is mostly to public outside, Messenjah is for inside. To brainwash fellows Christians. He said while laughing. Andy added:

“Once we ever designed a picture of clown. And we put a quote from Charles Spurgeon. In short, it tells that there will come a time when the shepherd (preachers) does not feed his sheeps. But contrary, that the members will feed him! And these religious leaders are no more than etertainers, the clowns. So the church members will not be sheeps, instead they will be goats. In Christianity, there is a metaphor distinguishing between sheeps and goats. Sheeps have connotation that they obey to God. Meanwhile goats, they are more rebel, let’s say. Goats are viewed as persons who are very religious, but they do not do anything that God wants. For example feeding the poors, feeding the suffered (sicks).. in Matthew 25 there is a metaphor of this sheep and goat. Like other shirts, Love God Love People. We produce messages but more emphasizing to internal Christians.”

Minority, Biblical Narratives towards Nationhood

It is interesting to see how IJD activists perceive themselves as minor number of total religion’s population of Indonesia. During planning this final paper, I hold my own pre-assumption, which is viewing the activists of IJD as minority who are struggling to get a better recognition and raise their aspiration in public.

During the interview I asked them a question: do you use this movement to raise Christians voices against inequality and discrimination in Indonesia, consequently because of being minority? As well I refer to certain cases of discrimination like ban of GKI Yasmin in Bogor, or dispersal of several Christian activities in Yogyakarta. Their answer is surprising. Yo, one of interviewee, convince me that they do not even think about being a minority in terms of number of population. *“we never think about it”*. Andy illustrated about SKB (Surat Keterangan Bersama) of three ministries.

Actually, it was not SKB of three ministries. Instead it was SKB of two ministries, collective decision letter of Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Internal Affairs. Demand of

evaluation or even withdrawal of the SKB raised following some cases involving worship buildings. Like burning church in Aceh Singkil, and Ahok's plan to destruct GKPI building in Jatinegara Jakarta. Legality of the worship building becomes main problem in some inter-religious conflict, and some politicians and public figures think that the conflict involving worship building is caused by the SKB.

“many people demand that the SKB to be withdrawn. Because it is hard to build a church due to the SKB. For me, I am one of those who hope that the SKB is not withdrawn. Because I think that there are too much churches already. It is not popular opinion among christians, isn't it?”

“Of course I disagree if there are already churches built legally by license of building, or it has been already standing there for decades, and already rooted to society, but then suddenly some groups of Islamic people came and forcing the church to be closed. It is discrimination, for sure! But we can not close our eyes that there are many, many 'modern' churches, I call it modern churches, that built churches building without permit or license, without socializing process to the neighborhood, and also influence nothing good to people surrounding it. So it could be prone to conflict with neighbors.”

There is one Biblical quote cited by Yo, in shaping their perception of being minority in population, or minority politically. Further, Yo stressed that however bad the condition that Christian receive in certain land, it can't be their excuse to be ignorance. Christians must develop their land whenever they are. Yo mentioned one of Biblical quote: *“seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.”* later I found it is Jeremiah 29:7. Yo continued,

“the context of that verse, was about Israel people who are in exile to an occupied-country. They were under pressure of colonization, but God asked them to seek prosperity in that country. You see that they are in difficult position. Just example, that we are tortured and discriminated by the government, but we are asked to seek prosperity to this land. So, that spirit that we are bringing to this movement. So wherever we live, now we live in Indonesia, with every its bad system, so we must contribute to Indonesia as much as we could.”

Andy told me regarding the sense of being minority, that we are now playing our own perspective in defining what condition is it to be called minority. Andy continued what Yo said earlier:

“What we need to understand is a consciousness that if God put us in a particular place, God must have a plan to that place. When God wants to do something to that place, it needs media. Who is the media? The media must be us! So if you asked me if there are discriminations, I do not see it as motivating factor for IJD to raise voice. Instead it is an awareness that: look! God has His plan to the country through us.”

Meanwhile Ardhito emphasized on Christian problem in perceiving themselves as minority. They noticed a problem that some Christians adherents feel inferior under Muslim majority. Then it made some Christians do not feel responsible to contribute to the country.

“Look at Ahok. He is a Chinese, he is also Christian. He got double minority. but in fact he could be a leader. Even though it is difficult for him, there are many oppositions against him. I see the reality among Christians, they have not been under condition that we could call it as under discrimination. But they put themselves under sense of being discriminated. They have sense of inferiority. So they do not have any feeling of responsible in contributing to the country. Actually it does not need any sense of being minority or majority to be aware that we must contribute something to our country. In fact, I believe there are many Islamic majority who are also silent and are doing nothing.”

Civil Religion and Aspiration of Christian

This section provides IJD's imagination to ideal Indonesia as what they aim. The interview led to address some topics like Pancasila, evangelism (Kristenisasi), and aspiration for political Christian.

I know that one of conflict factor in inter-religious conflict is about evangelism (Kristenisasi). We, as Christians, we never think about it even though some other Christians do. We hold our opinion that all of Christian values will come through 'hidayah'. I could easily confess Shahadah. But what about my heart? We never think to

convert Indonesia into Christian country, for instance. At all! For us, Pancasila is final values for Indonesia and that is enough! We believe that Pancasila is also part of a plan from God to Indonesia.

IJD holds a belief that they do not want to aspire for political Christian in Indonesia. They refer to what happened in Rome, where government and religion become one. When I confronted that Christian has similar aim like Islamic ‘Khilafah’, they clearly mentioned that even Christian theocracy will be useless if it could not give prosperity to people. They don’t bother about Islamic majority or so.

“In Bible, Rome, there is also mentioned that we must respect our government even though the government is cruel, repressing you. You must respect! Because they are whom God put above you. That is our message and aspiration. Pancasila is enough. But of course, we still have our service to our ummah, we want to be influential to our friends. Desire to convert other people, it must be there. But in terms of nationalism, it never came to our minds. Despite all of Indonesians are converted to Christians, it will be useless. There was a case of Roma, uniting religion and state. It eventually rotten. So it means that it failed. That was not the purpose. I love the way Gus Dur performed his effort. He built religion as values which is deep rooted to society. He did not aim any sharia laws.”

“I am not sure if God could be systematized in form of rituals and system, or sharia like in Islam. For me, God is personal relation, that we approach it through personal vehicle. For example, more we close to God, it requires no formality. I perceive Christianity in this sense. I can not value somebody’s Christianity through his ID card. Imagine, if we have ten people in front of us. How could we know which one is Christian or not? Firstly, I would open Bible, and try to know them how they behave and act. Which one of those people acts according to Bible and according to Jesus? If he gets hurt he forgive, for instance. Then doing something for his society. Even though his ID card is agnostic, but according to my opinion, he is Christian already. For me, Gus Dur is already Christian, in the way he internalize and practice way of Christ. So it’s about how value of deity manifested to his body and practices.”

Analyzing IJD, between Decline of Religion and Civil Religion

Firstly, I want to analyze motivation and spirit which are brought by IJD. Does it indicate aspiration of religion-based or otherwise, it is under value of spirituality. I would argue that in analyzing IJD movement, it could indicate emergence of spirituality, rather than maintaining, and taking religion (as institutions) as motivation of their activism. In other words, it might be a symptom of religion's failure as organized institution. In our course's reading about spirituality (Bender and McRobert 2012: 2), the authors described spirituality, compared to religion. In this sense, IJD perhaps could not be analyzed as "religious none", as the authors suggested. But the emergence happens within religion itself.

Bender and McRobert suggested some indications of spirituality instead of religion: lack of authority structures, community, congregational identity, membership, and such entities integral to religion. Let's say, factors which are supporting religion exist. As I mentioned in previous sections, IJD members are critical to church as institution and place for rituals and symbols. By mentioning IJD as a spirit for action and activism, I see that the activists of this movement are holding Christianity more or less as spirituality rather than religion.

I would cite Bender and McRobert statement, that (institutionalized) religion in social scientific definition relates to practices which create distinction of private and public. This distinction is created by civic participation, congregation, membership, and set of laws. Spirituality implies some positive association, in terms someone could opt out of political and religious interactions. Someone may be inclined to what he perceives more personal, more authentic, than the way it is understood by religion politically (Bender, 2012: 2).

Religion also carries connotation of organized, collective and politically active. Meaning that religion actively aims and aspires for the sake of its members politically. Religion has certain interest to spread evangelism, or da'wah, in Islamic terms. Religion, as organized institution, aims to get more followers and has aspiration to enforce set of laws and rules in certain areas. Otherwise, spirituality carries more articulation of feelings, desire and motivation that trying to escape from established institutional form (Bender, 2012: 19).

In other remarks, Cassanova mentioned that traditional religion as institution increasingly becomes irrelevant to the modern world. What so-called modern religion is no longer to be found

inside churches. Religious adherents began to drag religion into self-expression and self-realization, which is called 'invisible religion' of modernity (Casanova: 36).

The interview brought me to another thought; does this movement, to some extent, imply an understanding of the citizen towards civil religion?

The separation of church and state has not deny a political realm a religious dimension. Although matters of personal religious belief, worship, and association are considered to be strictly private affairs, there are, at the same time, certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of state share.

According to course's reading of Robert Bellah, idea of civil religion operates with symbolism of state's figure. This kind of symbolism found both physical and ritualistic expression, according to Bellah. Bellah provided example on how Abraham Lincoln was devoted as equated figure of Jesus (Bellah, 1967: 11). Lincoln's law partner said that Lincoln was the God's chosen one. Noblest and loveliest character since Jesus Christ, due to crisis on American civil war. Further, Bellah argued that the civil religion at its best is "a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or, one could almost say, as revealed through the experience of the (American) people.

I saw similar expression during my interview with the interviewee. They expressed symbolism of their religious belief to the reality of state's condition. During my interview, I did not see that they perceive Pancasila as result of negotiation of political leaders between nationalist and Islamic streams (See further about omission of seven word in Picard, 2011: 12). In Jakarta charter, which later became Pancasila, the first 'sila' put 'Belief in one Deity and obligation to practice Islamic sharia for its adherents'. These phrase were then erased due to compromising representatives of leaders from Eastern part of Indonesia, which was majority non-Muslims. After the phrase was erased, the first sila remained 'Belief in one Deity' until now. This compromise taken for the sake of Indonesia unity, and accomodating non-Muslims believers.

During interview conducted to IJD activists, they suggest that Pancasila is final form as state's pillar, and Pancasila is a plan of God to Indonesia. Such expression led me to think that it shows manifestation of their understanding of religion and sense of nationalism. Other symbolism, physically, also came when they mentioned about Gus Dur, resembles a leader Christian. Gus

Dur, with his effort of being distinguished national figure as president or as a scholar, leads to similar symbolism. The fact that Gus Dur is a Muslim, it does not matter for them because what matters is about the way Christ's teaching is practiced.

IJD movement could also be viewed through framework of democratization process. As mentioned by Brenner, democratization process inevitably addresses questions about what kind of values the nation should embrace, or avoid (Brenner, 2011: 486), and that question gives space to private morality to present and compete in public sphere. Unlike dynamic on Islamic activism, the interview with IJD activists proven my preassumption regarding their aspiration is falsified. Earlier I assumed that IJD is a vehicle to get more space and presence in public, in terms of campaigning Christian values to public. But in fact, they could transform and compromise their understanding of religion into nationalism. For example, in deciding that Pancasila is final form of state's pillar, and also rejecting assumption of evangelism and aspiration for Christian politically.

Conclusion

IJD is a movement initiated by several Christian youths and university students coming from PMK (Persekutuan Mahasiswa Kristen). The paper analyzes this movement (and community) through interview and analysis on the interviewee's statements. In their activity, they often categorize into two: external and internal. External, meaning that IJD operates as vehicle to public campaign. Covering wide masses, and intended for people from every background. But in internal level, they operate as criticizing church and current condition of Christians adherents, which they consider does not behave according Bible. For example, when the preacher prioritizes church's interest rather than common interests of the adherents. Also, material and worldly-oriented.

In sum, IJD's movement could be analyzed into at least two perspectives. Firstly, IJD may indicate decline of religion as institutionalized community. This refers to their critical action to church and preachers. Spirit that is brought by IJD could be categorized as spirituality, in terms of lack of congregational membership and religious authority. In other perspective, IJD could also be analyzed through civil religion. Symbolism, and considering state's symbol as part of

their belief indicate that they could compromise their self-interpretation of religion and nationalism.

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