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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS ELITES ON PLURALISM AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUES IN MALANG-INDONESIA

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Abstract— The objectives of this research generally are to develop theories of scientific knowledge and social construction on religious pluralism and interreligious dialogues. How the religious elites construct the pluralism and interreligious dialogues as a part of interreligions relationship. In conclusion, this research shows that the socio-religious formation of religious elites in Malang is fundamentalist and moderate. Furthermore, the result of this research detail shows that the social construction of religious elites on religious pluralism is: first, according to Islam fundamentalist elites, that the construction of religious pluralism is deontic-diachronic/ non-reductionistic. According to moderate Islam, the construction of religious pluralism is normative; second, the religious attitude of Islam fundamentalist is exclusive-Islamcentric and according to elites moderate Islam is inclusive-Islamcentric in one side, and inclusive-theocentric in other side. While, the construction of religious pluralism according to Christian moderate elites is plural; third, the pattern of relation of fundamentalist elites is co-existence, and the pattern of relation moderate elites (both Islam or Christianity) is pro-existence. While the orientation of interreligious dialogues that they build generally is dialogues in community/ dialogues of life.

Keywords- Relationship, Islam-Christianity, Pluralism and Interreligious Dialogues

I. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The issue of pluralism and interreligious dialogues has gained momentum; since the issue was promoted by the elites of Christian in the west. In this sense, the issue was considered as an important matter and seen as a social phenomenon which also has historical values. Therefore, the interfaith-dialogues becomes reality not only for Christian but also for Muslim community. How does society respond to the pluralism of religions? There are two main mainstreams regarding to the response of society toward the issue of pluralism; the first mainstream argues that pluralism is something that cannot be avoided (conditio sine quanone), while the second mainstream argues that pluralism is such a sect or an ideology.

According to the group who refuses the plurality of religions the terms of ‘pluralitas agama’ (lit: plurality of religions) and ‘pluralisme agama’ (lit: religious pluralism) have different meanings. The plurality of religions refers to the circumstances in which the different groups of religions can be found in such community. Meanwhile, the religious pluralism is an ideology that recognizes all religion is the same and true. Based on the literatures such as sociology, theology and philosophy of religion ‘the pluralism theme’ becomes an
important subject to be discussed. The pluralism theme is also seen as globalization agenda which is well developed in the West. Therefore, assuming religious pluralism as *sunnatullah* (lit: natural law) is a fatal mistake.¹

Initially, in Indonesia, the issue of pluralism and interreligious dialogues was promoted by Nurchoilih Majid, Muki Ali and Djohan Efendi. In recent years, the Indonesian young generations such as Buddy Munawar Rahman from Paramadina University, Ulih Absar Abdallah (the founder of JIL or Liberal Islam Network) also have a strong wish to promote to the issue. While, for radical groups such as Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Hizb Tahrir Indonesia or Indonesian Liberation Party (HTI) and Front Pembela Islam (FPI or Islamic defender front) strongly refuse to promote religious pluralism.

In the context of relationship among religion groups, Malang-East Java has its own characteristic; this phenomenon can be seen from the relationship and communication among the elites of religious leaders (*kiai* or Islamic scholars, bishop, and the like) and intellectuals (lecturers, experts and university students). This relationship, particularly, is through the intensive of dialogues, social-cooperation and academic programs. Take it for examples; the Institute of theology Baitulwiyata (IPTh), the East Javanese Christian Church or Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan (GKJW) and the State Islamic University of Malang (UIN) have collaborated to conduct an intensive study on Islamic studies.

Despite the fact that the elites hold meetings to develop and enhance mutual respect and harmony among different religious faith, the violence or disharmony is still found, as a result the conflict on grass-roots level cannot be avoided. The case of VCD which contains prayer training shows that the association of Indonesian Christian students (*Lembaga pelayanan Mahasiswa Indonesia*) has scorned on *al Quran* (Islamic holy book) is proof that the disharmony is still found. In short, the phenomenon of religious relationship in Malang-East Java provides an interesting picture of unique experiences. This research addresses and explains the religious elite's understanding about religious pluralism and interfaith dialogues.

II. **FOCUS OF STUDY AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Looking to the phenomena stated above, the researcher has been interested in studying the social construction of religious elites on religious pluralism and inter-faith dialogues in Malang-East Java. The major concerns of this study are:

1. To understand the religious elites' social construction about pluralism and interreligious dialogues.
2. To understand the religious elites' behaviors towards pluralism and interreligious dialogues.
3. To understand the relationship and dialogues model which have been developed by the religious elites in Malang-East Java.

The subjects and key sources of data are the elites of Muslim and Christian in Malang-East Java. They were chosen for their role in the organization of the Madrasah Forum for Religious Youth groups, National Awakening meeting, Muhamadiyah, or the council of UIN.

III. **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It is important to contribute to the understanding of religious elites’ understanding of pluralism in Malang-East Java. It is a significant endeavor to examine as bellow:

First, this study develops theoretical and methodological construction of interreligious and pluralistic religious. Specifically, this study uses the four type of religious pluralism, normative pluralism, nonnormative pluralism, and social pluralism. Following this study examines Panjatandandan about the case study of Panjatandandan in Malang-East Java. The thesis on the formative type of pluralism are also examined.

IV. **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research uses a qualitative study with Luckmans' sociological method. The data gained through common code and analysis of themes. The cases are constructed based on the results of field study. Also, it is a part of organizing of data and reduction of data in the interpretation or

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¹ See Majalah Islamiyah in an Introduction, Vol 1, Number 3 (September-November 2004), 5-6.

² See, Miles and Huberman translated by Tjeppe, 73-75
chosen for their involvement in ‘tolerance organizations’ such as FKAUB or the Forum for the harmony of religious groups, Nahdlatul Ulama (lit: the awakening of Islamic scholars), Muhamadiyah, and MUI (lit: Indonesian council of Ulama).

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

It is argued that the study contributes to an understanding about the religious’ elitess-social construction in Malang-East Java. Therefore, the significance of the study can be described as bellow:

First, the study contributes to develop theories in the field of social construction (i.e. pluralism and interreligious dialogues). Second, specifically, the study reviews John Hicks’ and Lagenhausens’ thesis about the four typologies of pluralism, namely: normative pluralism, serotypes pluralism, epistemology pluralism, and aletis pluralism. Furthermore, the study also examines Panikers’ and Mulders’ thesis about the categorization of religious behaviors of human beings. And finally, Marty, Watt, Hassan and Abou Fadis’ thesis on the formation of religious elites are also examined.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This research was conducted as a qualitative study using Peter L. Berger and Luckmans’ social construction theory. The data gained are analyzed through common code and the categorization of themes. The categories of analysis are constructed based on the findings in the field study. According to Miles,\(^2\) the organizing of data takes three stages: reduction of data, presentation of data, interpretation or verification of data.

Social construction theory views individuals with their institutions are divided into three categories: first, societal system is product of the individuals. Second, societal system is objective of the reality. Third, individuals are an interrelated part of social and societal system.\(^3\)

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pluralism is the terminology of philosophy that grows in the Western world. This term comes from the ontological question of “what is being?” To answer that question then arises four streams, namely: monism, dualism, pluralism and agnosticism. According to monism, "being" was only one, all spirit, and all ideal. This stream is then known as monism-idealism pioneered by Plato. Dualism assumes that "being" was composed of two natures, namely matter and spirit. The flow was introduced by Descartes. Pluralism assumes, "being" was not only composed of matter and spirit or idea, but consists of many elements. Then agnosticism denies the human ability to know the nature of the material and spiritual as well as the absolute and transcendent.\(^4\)

Furthermore, pluralism assumes that truth is not only coming from a single source, which is too ideal, but also from other sources, which is plural. This view was introduced by Leibniz and Russell. In the UK pluralism increasingly popular in the early 20th century by figures such as F. Maitland, S.G. Hobson, Harold Laski, R.H. Tawney and GDH Cole.\(^5\)


\(^{5}\) See Miles and Huberman, Analisis data kualitatif, translated by Tjepte, Rohadi (Jakarta: UI Press, 1997), 73-75
The discourse of pluralism both initiated by Leibniz, Russell, Maitland and colleagues carried out to neutralize the controversy between Anglicans and the Catholic Church and the emergence of denominations (sects) that exists in Protestantism. From here then the philosophers initiated the necessity of religious freedom with no domination of the Catholic majority against the minority group of Protestants in 17th century in France.\(^6\)

In the field of philosophy, pluralism—which is different from monism and dualism—at least declares the two main characteristics, namely that (i) the reality is not composed of one or one of a kind unique substance, (ii) the reality can be solved in a number of environmental completely different and not reducible to a single unit. In this case, people have fundamentally different views regarding the main principles, particularly relating to religion and the deepest meaning of human life. The difference may be considered to contain the potential conflict of depth that can only be denied when there is a common value system that is received together (for example, the same human dignity), when supposedly there is a need for social and political actions in a particular society. Further implication of pluralism is the diversity of philosophical justification, as he asserted to bring all truth is relative, that all philosophical and religious beliefs are purely relative, which is an expression of personal opinions that have the same value. That means that it is not a single source or principle of goodness, but that there are many, good separate from each

autonomous and goodness is not reducible to a single entity.\(^7\)

While John Hick\(^8\) divides religious pluralism in four different faces: the first, normative-religious pluralism, that religious pluralism is calling on all parties, especially the Christians to establish a harmonious relationship with other religions, has driven the arrogance and spread tolerance; secondly, stereological religious pluralism. Religious pluralism views, that besides Christians can also get the Christian salvation. Religious pluralism is a continuation of religious pluralism-normative; third, epistemological pluralism-religious. Religious pluralism is asserted, that Christians have not justification more solid on their faith than the adherents of other religions. So, the adherents of major religions in this world have the same position in the context of justification of religious beliefs—which according to Hick—the best is found in religious experience; fourth aesthetic-religious pluralism. Religious pluralism is asserted, that religious truth must be found in other religions besides Christianity with the same degree as that can be found in Christianity.\(^9\)

VI. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In order to analyze the nature of religious elitess in Malang-East Java, the researcher used the analyses of Panikkars’ 10 points. In a sense, this study used paradigms that are developed, namely: fundamental group. This is supported by E.Martys\(^11\) that Islamic fundamental group can keep the Islamic society to maintain the dakwhah (preaching) role to feature of study support. Furthermore, four typology normative-religious pluralism and epistemology pluralism and religious pluralism.

This research has two types of social-constructionism, namely fundamentalism. These two types are the variety of religious pluralism and inclusionism.

First, it can be seen that the pluralism is an inclusive pluralism, reductionism. Islam modeled by the Islamic construction and Inclusive.

Second, the attitude of Islam in Indonesia is an exclusive-ism. According to education inclusive-Islam, Islamic Scholes and inclusive-Islam, education. Meanwhile, for the other group, the one of religious pluralism is place.
researcher uses Hicks’s, Lagenhausens’, 10 Panikkers’ 11 and Watts’ thesis. In this sense, this study examines two kinds of paradigms that belong to religious elites, namely: fundamentalist and moderate group. This study also supports E.Martys 12 and Abou Fadl’s 13 contention that Islamic fundamentalist group tends to keep the Islamic identity as part of dawah (preaching) efforts. With regard to feature of pluralism of religions, this study supports Hicks’ study that there are four typologies of pluralism, namely: normative pluralism, serotypes pluralism, epistemological pluralism, and alethic pluralism.

This research concludes that there are two typologies of religious elites’ social-construction in Malang-East Java; namely fundamentalist and moderate. These two typologies have impact on the varieties of the social construction of pluralism and inter-faith dialogues.

First, Islam fundamentalist elites view that the construction of religious pluralism is deontic-diachronic/non-reductionism. Meanwhile, according to Islam moderate elites group, the construction of religious pluralism is normative.

Second, the religious behavior and attitude of Islamic fundamentalist group is an exclusive-Islam centrist, while according to elites moderate Islam is an inclusive-Islam centrist on the one hand and inclusive-theocentrism on the other. Meanwhile, for Christian moderate elites group, the construction of religious pluralism is plural. Third, the relationship model of fundamentalist elites is co-existence, in contrast for moderate elites (both Islam and Christian); the model of relationship is pro-existence. In general, the orientation of interreligious dialogues which they have developed is a dialogue in community/dialogues of life model.

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