

DIALECTICS OF ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN PUBLIC SPHERE IN KEDIRI

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Abstract: Islam and Christianity are religions that have been present in Indonesia for centuries, the history of these two religions cannot be separated from the existence of the Indonesian nation. As time goes by, the relationship between these two religions fluctuates (between conflict and harmony), in certain areas Islam becomes dominant, but in other areas Christianity is the dominant religion. National History records that several times Islam and Christianity were involved in religious conflicts. The dialectic of the relationship between the two religions in the public sphere is the key to fluctuations in the relationship between Islam and Christianity, such as what happened in the Kediri area where Islam and Christianity both exist in the public sphere. Therefore, this research attempts to portray the relationship between Islam and Christianity in public spheres by using a qualitative approach in research, while the technique for obtaining data in research uses interview and observation techniques. The research results show that religion's control of public sphere has exceeded formal and informal

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boundaries as discussed by Jurgen Habermas. These formal and informal boundaries are exceeded in "public values", namely viewing religious teachings in the public sphere based on the principle of beneficial value. This also goes beyond Jurgen Habermas's thinking about "Public Reason" in looking at the formal and informal areas of religion in the public sphere.

Keywords: Islam, Christian, Public Sphere, Jurgen Habermas

Preliminary

Kediri has been known as the city of santri. The first fact, this refers to the rapid development of Islam in the Kediri region, even if people mention "Kediri" then the first thing that comes to mind is Lirboyo or Ploso. Both are famous pesantren in Indonesia, even their fame has also been known to foreign countries, having produced thousands of alumni who play a major role in Islamic education in Indonesia.¹ At least to describe the existence of pesantren in Kediri, it can be mapped into 3 periods, the first is pesantren with the age of 100 years, including in this category are Lirboyo pesantren (1910) and Kedunglo pesantren (1902). The second is 50-100 years old, such as Al Falah, Ploso (since 1925); Darussalam, Summersari (since 1943), Wali Barokah (since 1951), and Tahfidzul Quran Maunah Sari (since 1963), and the third is less than 50 years old, including Mambaul Hisan (since 1990), and Al Amin, Ngasinan (since 1995).²

The public perception that Kediri is a city of santri (Islam) is not too exaggerated, if referring to the historical records of Kediri then the existence of Islam has existed since the 12th century, the presence of Sheikh Wasil Samsuddin marks the entry of Islam in Kediri, as a great scholar from Persia who came to Kediri to discuss the book of Musarar at the invitation of King Sri Aji Jayabaya. The

¹ Fauzan Saleh dan Nur Chamid, "Rekonstruksi Narasi Sejarah Syekh al- Wasil Syamsudin dan Peranannya dalam Penyebaran Islam di Wilayah Kediri dan Sekitarnya: Menggali Pijakan Mempertegas Identitas IAIN Kediri", *Porsiding Nasional*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (November, 2018), 1-28

² Adi Nugroho, "Kediri dan Pesantren," <https://radarkediri.jawapos.com/catatan-minggu/781292645/kediri-dan-pesantren>; diakses 15 November 2023.

Setono Gedong tomb complex marks his grave, until now his grave is always visited by pilgrims from various regions in Indonesia.³

Secondly, the public perception of Kediri as an Islamic region is also built through the writings of Clifford Geertz in his book "The Religion of Java". Geertz's research on Javanese Islam, conducted in 1953-1954 in Mojokuto, East Java, has given people the perception that the reflection of Islam in Java is in Mojokuto, which is none other than one of the areas in Kediri district, known as the Pare region. In his research Geertz states that Javanese Islam is divided into three typologies, namely Abangan, Santri and Priyai Islam.⁴ Geertz as quoted by Najib Burhani, explains that Abangan represents an emphasis on the animist aspect of Javanese syncretism as a whole and is broadly associated with the peasant element of society. Santri, represents the emphasis on the Islamic aspect of syncretism and is generally associated with the trading element (as well as certain elements of the peasantry). The priyayi, on the other hand, emphasizes the Hindu aspect and is associated with the bureaucratic element.⁵ Although in the future Geertz's research that explains the typology of Javanese Islam has many pros and cons among anthropologists and scholars who are concerned with Islamic studies, among the researchers who criticize the results of Geertz's research are Mark R. Woodward,⁶ Andrew Beatty,⁷ Nur Syam.⁸ However, any

³ Fauzan Saleh dan Nur Chamid, "Rekonstruksi Narasi Sejarah Syekh al- Wasil Syamsudin dan Peranannya dalam Penyebaran Islam di Wilayah Kediri dan Sekitarnya: Menggali Pijakan Mempertegas Identitas IAIN Kediri", *Porsiding Nasional*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (November, 2018), 1-28

⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).

⁵ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Geertz's Trichotomy Of Abangan, Santri, and Priyayi Controversy And Continuity", *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Desember, 2017), 329-350

⁶ Mark R Woodward mengkritik hasil temuannya Geertz dengan membandingkannya terhadap hasil penelitiannya di Yogyakarta, dengan judul, Mark R Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*, (Assn for Asian Studies Inc, 1989).

⁷ Andrew Beatty, *Varieties Of Javanese Religion; An anthropological account* (Australia: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

⁸ Dalam penelitiannya tentang Islam di kecamatan Palang Tuban, Nur Syam menyimpulkan bahwa Islam Jawa direpresentasikan oleh Islam NU dan Muhammadiyah, baca dalam Nur Syam, *Islam Pesisir* (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2005), 113.

researcher looking at the relationship between religion and culture in Indonesia will inevitably start with Geertz's work.

However, Islam was not the only religion that developed in Kediri during the early 20th century, as Christian history records that the first Javanese Catholics recorded in the Baptismal Book (*Libri Paroeciales*) of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Malang, were a woman born in **Salatiga** (baptized in 1910), a woman from Kediri, and another from Jombang (1917).⁹ On June 30, 1923, five Lazarist priests from the Netherlands came to Surabaya, following in the footsteps of the holy missionary, John Gabriel Perboyre and his colleagues who visited the city in mid-1835 on their way to China. The five missionaries were Dr. Th. de Backere (mission leader), Cornelius Klamer, J.H. Wolters, Th. Heuvelmans, and E. Sarneel, They took over the mission in the western part of East Java, namely the residencies in Surabaya, Rembang, and Kediri, and began their pastoral work from their headquarters in Surabaya.¹⁰

The existence of the Pohsarang Church marks the existence of Christianity in Kediri, its development being a holy place for Catholics. Routine activities both worship and other activities continue to exist until now. This cannot be separated from its success in building good relations with the local Javanese community through contextualization of Catholic teachings with Javanese culture making the Pohsarang Church exist and develop until now. The existence of Islam and Christianity in Kediri since the beginning of the 20th century, has not attracted much attention from researchers to focus on the study of the relationship between the two religions, if there is research that tries to examine the relationship between Islam and Christianity in Kediri, it is still limited to some time in the last decade, and even then it is still partial, it has not been able to thoroughly explain how the complexity of the relationship between these two

⁹ Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, *A history of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Hoteli Publishing, 2008), 719.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 720.

religions in Kediri, call it Khainuddin's research,¹¹ Putri Nur Ashrofiah,¹² and Ali Mustofa.¹³

The meeting of Islam and Christianity is the focus of many researchers, as is also done in this study, trying to portray the public sphere discussion between Islam and Christianity in Kediri with Jurgen Habermas' theoretical approach. This research is different from previous studies that examine the relationship between Islam and Christianity together with other religions, has not had a focus on the study of Islam and Christianity, especially in relation to public sphere.

Religion and the Public Sphere; Jurgen Habermas

Habermas says that religion substantially contains epistemic power (rational truths) that are in line with the ideas of the democratic legal state. In fact, Habermas said that secular post-metaphysical thinking incarnated in liberal state legal theory misunderstands itself if it does not realize the elements of religious traditions that are embedded in its own origins. According to Habermas, religious ideas, particularly from the Judeo-Christian tradition, are also incarnated in philosophy and the democratic legal state itself.

That is why Habermas urges that religion be considered by the democratic legal state. Religion should not be ignored, but must be included in democratic political processes. However, religion is not allowed to circulate freely in the political sphere. There are conditions that religion must pass if it is to participate in the political processes of the rule of law, namely the obligation to translate its particular expressions into universal language. In other words, religion is required to do public reasoning when participating in politics. Habermas makes a distinction between the informal public sphere (pre-parliament) and the formal public sphere (political system). It is in the pre-parliamentary area that religious communities (along with

¹¹ Khainuddin, "Interfaith Religious Harmony in Besowo Kediri Landscape", *Tribakti; Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Agustus, 2022), 326-344

¹² Putri Nur Ashrofiah, "Pola Interaksi Siswa-Siswi Kristen dan Muslim dalam Membangun Toleransi Beragama", *Journal of Islamic and Social Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (Agustus, 2023), 25-36

¹³ Ali Mustofa, "Pendidikan Keagamaan Untuk Membentuk Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama Di Medowo Kandangan Kediri", *Nazhruna; Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Februari, 2020), 14-37.

secular citizens) are challenged to carry out public reasoning on their particular traditions through translation efforts into a language that can be understood by the public. Habermas' public reasoning is first procedural (religious groups are seen as part of public deliberation to achieve the legitimacy of democratic state law), but also substantive (religion is believed to contain rational truths that can be transformed and utilized by the rule of law).¹⁴

Habermas believes that religion can contribute to politics if the state opens up space for it. Then in that informal public sphere, citizens (regardless of religious or secular beliefs) are required, to work together to translate the vocabulary and epistemic dimensions of their religions that are beneficial to democracy. The results of the translation that can be understood by all parties are applied in the formal public sphere (state), because in the formal political area, only a language that can be understood by all citizens can apply. Habermas's arguments as described show a very moderate position, so it should be considered by today's democratic legal state, so that our political life is closer to the public civilization that is aspired to.

Habermas' consideration that religion is seen as part of the "Public Use of Reason" is not without substantial basis. Habermas emphasized that it is very important to pay attention to the inclusive rational content in religions that are in contact with issues of universal humanitarian social justice. Because according to Habermas religion is a very helpful source of meaning and motivation, especially in the face of the forces of global capitalism which tend to be anarchic. Habermas believes that religious practices and traditions can be a source of values that enrich multicultural citizenship ethics, encourage solidarity and respect for equality.¹⁵ This is very possible because religion holds values of tolerance, togetherness and mutual respect for individuals.

Discussion: "Public Value" beyond Public Reasoning

The people of Kediri are famous for their cultural diversity that is rooted in the community, the culture is also binding and

¹⁴ Jurgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Gusti A.B Menoh, *Agama dalam Ruang Publik; Hubungan Antara Agama dan Negara dalam Masyarakat Post Sekuler Menurut Jurgen Habermas*, (Yogyakarta, Kanisius: 2023).

acculturated in all religions. With a basic society that is harmonious and harmonious in religious life, the implementation of a religious culture has attracted the enthusiasm of other religious communities to participate, this can be seen from the implementation of the earth alms tradition, unduh-unduh, and ogoh-ogoh celebrations, where the implementation does not only involve one religious community, but also other religious communities. According to Christian religious leaders, harmony in this tradition has become an inseparable part of religious life in Kediri.¹⁶

The unduh-unduh tradition is one example, this tradition is an inseparable part of the teaching tradition of the Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW), therefore this implementation is routinely carried out every year within the Jawi Wetan Christian Church in Kediri, which is carried out as a form of thanksgiving ceremony to God for the abundant blessings of the earth to Christians. The implementation of the unduh-unduh tradition does not only involve the GKJW community, but also other religious communities who are present to help in the procession of implementation, this routine of mutual assistance has been a legacy of the community since long ago, built in a harmonious community structure.

In Habermas' view, religious communities must try to optimize their religious traditions and teachings in a more general language so that they can be accepted by society in general, and can even enter the formal sphere, a sphere where religious traditions and teachings are discussed more universally so that they can be accepted by all parties in a democratic society, this is what Habermas calls public reasoning. Habermas' view in discussing public reasoning becomes a logical framework that can bridge the debate between the concepts of the relationship between religion and the State, namely secular and religious states.

However, the practice at the micro level of the concept of state (village) in interfaith relations in Kediri shows a step ahead of what Habermas calls public reasoning, the implementation of various religious traditions that contain religious teachings, such as in the practice of the unduh-unduh tradition by the people. The Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW) has become part of the routine agenda whose existence is accommodated by the village government, not only the implementation of the unduh-unduh tradition, but also the

¹⁶ Wawancara dengan Pdt. Edo. GKJW Bedali Ngancar Kediri, 5 Februari 2024

ogoh-ogoh tradition which is a religious tradition in Hindu society, as well as various other traditions in Islam.

This means that the religious tradition has entered the formal sphere not only because it can be reasoned by the public, but also because the value contained in the religious tradition has been understood, this has gone beyond what Habermas thinks about public reasoning. What is public value, that religious teachings that exist in the informal space can be formally accepted if they have positive value in society. Even some religious communities in a democratic society, no longer need to do public reasoning on the teachings of certain religious traditions, but can see the positive value in religious life so that it can be well accepted in the formal public sphere.

Multireligious society sees that religious diversity must be understood as a destiny that cannot be separated in religious life, this requires multireligious society to continue to produce a field of religious harmony that can strengthen relations between religious communities, including in building relations between Islam and Christianity in Kediri. The multireligious community has seen that the unduh-unduh tradition of the GKJW Kediri Community has a positive value in building interfaith relations in the multireligious community, this has an impact on the life of interfaith relations in Kediri.

Conclusions

Jurgen Habermas has laid a theoretical foundation in bridging the debate on the concept of the relationship between religion and the State, with the logic of public reasoning in religious societies, Habermas tries to find a middle way so that religious teachings can continue to contribute to community life. Habermas believes that religion has good teachings for people's lives, so its existence should not be ignored. Public reasoning as Habermas reveals is an attempt to bridge so that religious teachings can be accepted by the public sphere. However, in a multireligious society, harmonious inter-religious relations are very important to be maintained, certain religious teachings not only need to be reasoned by the public so that they can be accepted in formal life, but also must consider their positive value in building inter-religious relations. This is what is found in the research between Islamic and Christian relations in Kediri in the public sphere, where public values in multireligious societies are important to be guided.

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