Islam, State, and Nationalism in Brunei Darussalam, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia: A Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

Islam has comprehensive roles in some aspects of human activity. It enlarged from theological aspect to political aspects. Some former colonized countries where Islam was coexisted, this religion became an embryo of nationalist movements during colonization era. This essay scrutinizes the role of Islam in escalating nationalism during colonization era and it relation with the states in post colonization era in four former colonized countries namely Brunei Darussalam, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia. By using comparative method, the essay researched some main literature (library research) related to Islam and nationalism. It was founded that Islam has significant roles in nationalist movement in the four analyzed countries through several channels. Meanwhile, in the post-independence era, the relation between Islam and state system are variably. In India, Islam is separated from state system (secular). In contrast, Islamic ideology became the main sources of state system in Brunei Darussalam (adopted entirely) and Malaysia (adopted partially). Then, Islam in Indonesia seems like "a gray zone" because the country does not using Islamic law but still adopting Islamic thoughts in several cases.

Keywords: Colonized countries, Islam, Nationalism.

Introduction

Islam as one of the biggest religion contributed the remarkable development in the world history. Its idea and thought was adopted from Prophet Mohammad (al-hadith) and the holy Quran have been followed by nearly 1.6 billion people around the world in 2010. This number predicted to rapidly increase to more than 2.7 billion people in 2050 (Center 2015). Islam is much more than about religion, it is

a "way of life" that leads some aspect of human activity, private and public, and from theological to political (Houben 2003).

Islam also triggered nationalism especially in the former colonized countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia. The Islamic movement like Sarekat Islam (1912) and Muhammadiyah (1923) in Indonesia, and Kaum Muda (1920) in Malaysia expanded feel of anti-colonialism across the country (Houben 2003). In Brunei, Islam hold crucial role to the state nationalism since 1578 signed by the fighting spirit of Bruneian Moslem who saw the Spanish advance as a threat of their political institution and faith propagation (Mansurnoor 2008). Despite, Islam was not the majority religion in India, Islam also initiated reform movement of anti-British culture and domination in the country which marked by the mutiny in 1857 (Rodriguez 2017).

Since pre-independent era, Islam has significantly influenced the proliferation of nationalism in former colonialized countries such as Brunei Darussalam, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia. This essay will specifically scrutinize about how Islam influence nationalist movement in the four analyzed countries during colonial era. Then, it will be connected towards current relation between Islam and state politic in these countries.

Propagation of Islam

Islam in South and Southeast Asia has distinct qualities due to the propagation method to the areas of "high culture" centered between the Hindu-Buddhist Javanese state and the development under colonialism and thereafter. Since the seventh century, Muslim merchants from India, Persia, and south Arabia frequently traded through the harbor insular in South East Asia. During the trade expedition the merchants also brought their own religious expert (mullahs) to guide them performed Islamic obligation in their own trade quarters. The crucial turning point was when the domestic rulers become converted to Islam which drove to larger space for Islam proliferated in the region (Houben 2003).

Islam spread throughout Southeast Asia started from northern Sumatra in the early thirteenth century and reaching Borneo (currently; Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia) and the southern Philippines in the sixteenth century. Islam seems to have spread from Pasai Kingdom, a small Islamic kingdom on the coast of north Sumatra. Indigenous literatures make a connection to south India, assuming that

the apostle (Prophet/Rasul) of Islam came from Ma'bar, a place at Coromandel Coast. As there existed a long tradition of trading connection between south India and insular Southeast Asia, this historical assumption make a sense. South Indian Islam was connected to the Hadhramaut in current Yemen. Therefore, the Shafii legal school commenced in this area and is still followed both in south India and Indonesia (Houben 2003; Robson 1981).

Then in fourteenth century, Malacca on the Malay Peninsula developed into the central staple of the Malacca straits, a vital passage in the maritime trading network between the Indian Ocean and China Sea. According to local historical literature, most importantly the Malay Annals (Sejarah Melayu), the conversion of the local leader and his adoption of the title of sultan is described as a milestone of historical event. At that time Islamic thought was adopted by indigenous people, since it attracted numbers of Indian cloth merchant, stressing the individual worth of all men, and offering legal security under Islamic law/ Sharia (Andaya and Andaya 1982; Houben 2003).

The expansion of Islam to the region was largely a peaceful process, and conversion was no obstacle to the ordinary people. The continuation of native pre-Islamic ritual was tolerated, and the act of conversion, through the profession of faith (syahadah), did not presuppose knowledge of the Quran. Islam spread geographically from the coastal areas toward the interior through the brokerage of Islamic teachers. These commonly called Kiyai (Javanese.) or Maulana (Arab.) lived in rural areas where they establish Islamic school, called surau in Malaysia and Pesantren in Java (Houben 2003).

Nevertheless, Southeast Asian Islam distinct from prevalent forms in India or Arabian Peninsula. Numerous western scholars reiterated that has been more moderate than Islam in the Middle East since it laid only a thin civilization upon an indigenous traditional culture of animism and Indian influence. Islam propagated to the areas of "high culture" centered between the Hindu-Buddhist Javanese state and therefore did not construct a civilization but "appropriated" one (Geertz 1968). In this way, Islam fits in with a general Southeast Asian pattern of selective borrowing of cultural elements that come from the outside.

Islam and Nationalist Movement

Benedict Anderson (2006) defined nation as an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It called as 'imagined' caused by the members of nation never know, never hear, or even never meet their fellow, but they can recognize the communion in their mind. Anderson added that religious community and dynastic realm are the two relevant cultural systems which adopted as frame of reference of nationalism today (Anderson 2006). This part of the essay will elaborate about contribution of Islam toward nationalism in pre-independence era in the four analyzed countries.

Islam in India under British rule has been involved in nationalist movement since 1857 marked by mutiny a watershed in Islamic reform movement. Muslim in the United Provinces were strong and influential minority. The strong position of Muslim elites in the social structure of the region leads to United Provinces became the center of the two ideological trend of Indian Islam in 19th century, symbolized by the Deoband Seminary and Aligarh College (Rodriguez 2017). From religious and sociocultural perspective, the process of Islamic reform movement took the form of confrontation between traditionalist and modernist. Traditionalist adopted a Salafist thought and pretended revitalize Islam by rescuing original value. Generally, traditionalist rejected the Western culture contribution and an anti-British assumption or, at least, avoided collaboration with colonial power. The main expression of this traditionalism was the Deoband Seminary (Deoband Dar-ul-Ulum) founded in 1867 by Ulama' Muhammad Qasim Nanantawi, veteran of mutiny and famous polemicist of Christian missionaries and Hindu Arya Samaj movement's preacher. In contrast, modernist promoted a positive attitude toward cultural values of British rule in order to prevent the definitive alienation of the Muslim community. Consequently, they promote Western education and sought colonial protection in exchange for loyalty for the Crown. Alligarh College established by Sayyid Ahmad Khan in 1875 and become the main expression of modernism. Until the 1930s, Islamic nationalism retained that modern and elitist foundational character, but the adoption of the two nation theory pre-supposed a complex dilemma derived from the contradiction between its ideological foundation and its political viability (Rodriguez 2017).

In Indonesia, Islam commenced to participate in nationalist movement in 1912 when an association of reform-minded Muslim traders and entrepreneur

constituted themselves as Sarekat Islam (Islam Association / SI). Initially, SI emerged as dissatisfaction of Muslim Indonesian merchants over sharp business practices of their Chinese competitors. Then SI obtained support from Indonesian youths and intellectuals as well as untutored peasantry and labor group. Then, when the repressive policy of the Dutch authority impacted to futility of SI nationalist movement, some SI's members began to concentrate their attention on the non-political side of the Indonesian Muslim's emancipation movement, such as Muhammadiyyah founded by Hadji Ahmad Dahlan in 1912. Furthermore the two orthodox Muslim teachers, Kyai Hasyim Asyari and Kyai Wahab Hasbullah established Nahdlotul Ulama' (NU) in 1926 as Islamic movement centered around the village teachers-peasant (Kroef 1958).

Justus M. Kroef argued that those three Islamic movement possessed different approach to spread nationalism. The S.I. established Partai Sarikat Islam Indonesia/ PSII (United Indonesian Islam Party) as nationalist political vehicle, whereas Muhammadiyyah tend to use education channels i.e. Islamic boarding school and prayer house, then NU preferred to collaborate with ulama' (Islamic leader) in the villages and smaller towns, and a non-cooperative policy with respect to the infidel's rule.

Islam was a foundation of nationalist movement in Malaya through Kaum Muda (young faction) establishment. The Kaum Muda elites were "Modernist-Reformist" and the bearers of the religious and political ideology initiated in Al-Azhar University in Cairo. This movement was led by urban-based Arabs, Jawi Peranakan or Indonesians which obtained Arabic education in madrasah (Islamic school) usually in Arab or India. In 1930s, the Kaum Muda movement had become actively politicized, and it began to challenge the leadership of the conservative elites (Kaum Tua/ old faction) in the society. The movement contributed to stimulate nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments based on Islamic doctrines (Means 1969). Then, the Kaum Muda's religious and political ideology gradually influenced Malay elites at the Malay courts and some of the religious leaders in Kampong of Malaya. Means argued that the ideology of Kaum Muda contained the seeds of nationalism stressing the political mobilization of the Malay community, according to reaffirmation Islamic faith and rediscovery of its great traditions.

Compared to the role of Islam in nationalist movement in India, Indonesia and Malaysia, 'political' movement emerged rather late in Brunei. In the absence of a local press or even an intellectual class, Brunei did not participate in the agitation over issues of Islamic reform and modernism that proliferated in Malaya (Hussainmiya 2003). Actually, Islam hold crucial role to the state nationalism since 1578 signed by the fighting spirit of Bruneian Moslem who saw the Spanish advance as a threat of their political institution and faith propagation (Mansurnoor 2008). Nevertheless, the direct nationalist movement initiated by Islamic group occurred during the Japanese colonial rule. BARIP/Barisan Pemuda (1946-1948) became nucleus of nationalist consciousness among Bruneian. In 1956, BARIP transformed to Parti Rakyat Brunei (Brunei People's Party) as the first quasi-political nationalist movement (Hussainmiya 2003).

Generally, Islam initiated nationalist movement in the three analyzed countries used three main channels; political party, educational institution, and civil society.

Relation of Islam and State

There are three categories of relation between Islam and state system (Syadzali 1993). First, Islam considered as the perfect religion that take care of entire aspect of social life, including how to manage the state (integralistic). People who stand this paradigm believe that Islam is religion and also the state. This category argued practice of Islam politics that should be implemented is the system which was performed by Prophet Muhammad and Khulafaur Rasyidin (the Four Muhammad's successors). Second, Islam does not affiliate to the state (secularistic). This category assumes that Muhammad is only a messenger who teaches moral and guide his adherents in worshiping God. Islamic thought should not be included in state political system. The last, there is no certain concept of state in Islam, but Islamic idea may contributed in managing the state, i.e. discussion (syuro), justice ('adl), and social welfare. This category stressed that Islamic thoughts substantially could be undertaken and practiced in the system of state. Principally, this paradigm believes that Islam and state strengthen and complete each other (Rochmat 2017).

Since its independency in in 1984, Brunei has been proclaimed by Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah as non-secular state. Islam plays central role in the history of the Brunei sultanate. This is signed by the structure and the content of the state

ideology; Melayu, Islam, Beraja (MIB) / Malay Islamic Monarchy (Mansurnoor 2008). Brunei's religious bureaucracy maintains an absolute monopoly over Islam-related public communication. As Islamic State, Islamic policy-making takes place solely among state actors, and behind closed doors. Since pre-independence era, Brunei has implemented Islamic Law, despite partially influenced by British rule. In the post-independence era, the government attempted to implement Islamic law holistically across the country. The latest step is the enactment of Syariah Penal Code Order 2013 (SPCO). This rule of law implement 3 stages of punishment in Islamic law, namely ta'zir (fine) for general offences, then hudud (scourging) and qishas (dead penalty/beheading) for more severe punishment (Muller 2018).

Meanwhile, Indian constitution did not declare any religion to be the state religion or an otherwise privileged faith tradition. Despite, being the second largest religious community, Muslim are overly under-represented in the governance of the country. Leaders community have since long been demanding a quota in government job and educational institutions, but the demand has never found favor with the rulers who believe that it would be contradict to the provision of the Constitution against religion-based discrimination between citizen. Although the demand has been implemented in two South Indian states where Muslim dominate the population, the central government still considering the implementation of this demand in the others religious state minorities (Mahmood 2011). Tahir Mahmood argued that India is a unique state which believe in secularism and preserve its spirituality through constitutional provision, legislation, state policy and judicial pronouncement.

In Indonesia, although Islam has the most followers, Islamic law was not applied as state law. After independency on 17 August 1945, there was a lengthy discussion between nationalist leaders and Moslem representatives decided that Islam would not become the official state religion. The state philosophy of Pancasila did however prohibit atheism and encouraged every citizen to adhere to an officially recognized religion (Houben 2003). Moreover, unlike a secular European state, Indonesian government strongly promote religion through official institution such as school and public institution (Hefner and Patricia 1997). Nevertheless, Indonesian law still adopt some Islamic thought as the sources rule of private law, such as marriage and others transaction in Islamic system such as waqf (donation) and waris (inheritance). Unlike in Brunei where Islamic law holistically

implemented, Indonesia still use 'burgelijh wetbook' (Dutch law book system) as national rule of law, except Aceh special province who purely implement Islamic law. Meanwhile, Islamic law and custom law (adatrecht) were implemented as living law among Indonesian society. Unlike Brunei as an Islamic state or India as a secular state, meanwhile Indonesian classified as a country which adopted Islamic law as a living law in the country (Rochmat 2017).

The connection between Islam and state that was assigned to the sultans under British rule was continued after independency in 1957, specifically after the creation of the Malaysian federation in 1963 (Houben 2003). In the traditional Malay political system, religion (Islam) assisted to symbolize the unity of the state. The Islamic concept of dar al-islam (the place of Islam) and dar al-harb (the place of war i.e., the abode of infidels) helped to define those who were legitimately excluded from the political system. The concepts indicated that being a Malay meant being a Muslim. By 1950s most of Malay states had established Department of Religious Affairs to improve Muslim administration and provide new services for Muslim community. Similar with Bruneian, State government enforced Muslim criminal and moral codes. In many areas, what had been considered to be religious obligation was made a matter of law, enforced and punished in the court (Means 1969).

Islam has different role and relation with the state system in the four analyzed countries. Islam considered as main sources of state law in Brunei and Malaysia (Islamic state). Conversely, state system in India separated the government with the religion (secular). Meanwhile, according to Syadzali's perspective, Indonesia categorized as a non-Islamic and non-secular state, but adopting Islamic thought as living law.

Conclusion

Historically, Islam propagated from Yemen to South India. In the seventh century, Muslim merchants from India, Persia, and south Arabia traded to Malacca straits. They bring mullah (Islamic leader) to lead them in their daily prayer. Both mullah and merchants teach Islam to indigenous people in Malacca straits. Then, Islam propagated to Southeast Asia started from Northern Sumatra to Borneo and reach southern Philippine. Although, Islam was spread from India and Arabian Peninsula, some western scholars argued that Islam in Southeast Asia has been

more moderate than Islam in the Middle East since it laid only a thin civilization upon an indigenous traditional culture of animism and Indian influence (Houben 2003). The peaceful process of "Islamization" in Southeast Asia became the key factor of rapid expansion of Islam in the region.

Islam significantly contributed to nationalist movement in the four former colonized countries. Islam or Muslim community mainly used three channels in spreading the nucleus of nationalism. First, it involved through a political party i.e. the PSII in Indonesia and Parti Rakyat Brunei. Second, Islam triggered Nationalism by educational institution, such as Deoband Seminary and Alligarh College in India, and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia. The last, Muslim society used civil society as a vehicle to spread nationalism and anti-colonial rules, such as kaum muda movement in Malaysia and Nahdlotul Ulama' in Indonesia. Nevertheless, during their struggling process, those roots of nationalism developed and combined three channels in order to gain more public support within pre-independence era.

In the post-independence era, the relation between Islam and state system are variably. In India, Islam is separated from state system (secular). In contrast, Islamic ideology became the main sources of state system in Brunei Darussalam (adopted entirely) and Malaysia (adopted partially). Meanwhile, Islam seems like "a gray zone" in Indonesia since the country does not use Islamic law officially but still adopting Islamic thought in several cases.

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