

RELIGION AND PEACEBUILDING: A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON TRANSNATIONAL ISLAM AND COMMUNAL HARMONY IN PAPUA

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Abstract

This article aims to contribute to the understanding of religion and peacebuilding, by focusing on the nexus of transnational Islam and peace in Papua. I will describe the presence of religions (Islam and Christianity), demonstrate how transnational Islam has emerged against the backdrop of conflict, how has it operated in the region, in particular Salafi faction lead by Jafar Umar Thalib and how it has threatened peacebuilding in Papua.

Keywords: Religion, Transnational Islam, Salafi, Peace, Papua.

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk memberikan kontribusi dalam memahami agama dan pembangunan perdamaian, dengan memfokuskan perhatian pada Islam transnasional dan perdamaian di Papua. Tulisan ini akan mendeskripsikan kehadiran agama (Islam dan Kristen) di Papua, menampilkan bagaimana Islam transnasional hadir melawan latar konflik, bagaimana ia beroperasi di wilayah tersebut, secara khusus faksi Salafi yang dipimpin oleh Ja'far Umar Thalib dan bagaimana faksi Salafinya telah mengancam perdamaian di Papua.

Kata Kunci: Agama, Islam Transnasional, Salafi, Perdamaian, Papua.

INTRODUCTION

Since being incorporated into Indonesia via a United Nations-sponsored Act of Free Choice in 1969, the mountainous half-island of Papua has had a troubled relationship with the Indonesian government. Local opposition to the widely criticised referendum led to the formation of the Free Papua Movement (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*, OPM) that has led a low level armed insurgency over several decades which the Indonesian government has suppressed with violence. Other causes for resentment on the part of the indigenous population include Papua's poverty relative to other parts of Indonesia and the large-scale influx of Muslim migrants that has tipped the demographic balance in some areas against the predominantly Christian Papuans. While the majority of Muslims in Papua live in peace with the indigenous population, the legalisation of Islamist political parties and organisations after the fall of Soeharto in May 1998 saw political and economic tensions in Papua increasingly framed in religious language.

Indonesia has seen an Islamisation of the public sphere since 1998, with an increasing number of Shari'a banks, traditional Islamic schools, Islamic universities and mosques (van Bruinessen, 2013). Radical transnational Islamic groups, including *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI), *Jemaah Tabligh*, and *Salafi* groups began to operate openly. The same process has occurred in Papua where it is more conspicuous because Papua has long been considered a primarily Christian region. Papua's largest city, Jayapura, is now home to many Islamic institutions and is the headquarters of several transnational Islamic groups, including HTI which spreads anti-democratic teachings in

mosques and universities and advocates for the implementation of a caliphate.

The presence of transnational Islamic groups has sparked tensions not only with the indigenous Christian community, but also within the Muslim community. Tensions are particularly apparent at the grass roots, where religious preachers contribute to the rise of prejudice, suspicion, mistrust and misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians, often spilling over into violence. For instance, a number of violent provocations by transnational Islamic groups led followers of the Evangelical Church in Indonesia (*Gereja Injili Di Indonesia*, GIDI) to attack Muslims while praying and burn a mosque in an episode that became known as the Tolikara Incident in July 2015 (Al-Makassary, 2017).

The activities of transnational Islamic actors have been resisted by Christian communities, Muslim communities, and the local government. Furthermore, the Papua branch of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), the biggest Islamic mass organization in Indonesia, has protested against HTI's activities. The local government in Papua attempted to restrict the activities of HTI before it was prohibited at the national level in May 2017 during Joko Widodo's tenure as president.

With the resolution of the conflicts in the Moluccas, Central Sulawesi and Aceh, Papua is the only region of Indonesia to be experiencing intermittent insurgent activity, although the Free Papua Movement has recently changed its approach from violence to diplomacy through internationalising human rights abuses against Papuans. Considerable attention has been given by civil society

groups, and to some extent government, to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. When Joko Widodo (Jokowi) was elected president in 2014 he vowed to give more attention to Papua and in the years since has visited regularly and carried out extensive development of infrastructure, including roads, schools, ports and hospitals in the province.

Papua has begun to enjoy what Johan Galtung (2014) called “negative peace”, but it is still lacking “positive peace”. Galtung (2014) defines “negative peace” as the absence of conflict or war and “positive peace” as the presence of cooperation, equality, culture of peace and dialogue. In order to achieve positive peace, some civil society groups in Papua, such as *Jaringan Damai Papua* (Papuan Peace Network), have carried out peacebuilding. These organizations emphasise dialogue as a way to solve Papuan problem and try to get support from the Indonesian government and other civil society organisations in Papua.

Previous studies of peacebuilding in Papua have focused mainly on vertical conflict and human rights abuses (Hernawan, 2018; Muridan, 2010; Chauvel & Bakti, 2004, et al). They have tended to focus mainly on those actors who promote variants of democracy, neglecting the groups that are explicitly anti-democratic. In this paper I take issue with these studies and argue that by ignoring transnational Islamic actors we exclude a substantial and influential section of the political community and present an incomplete portrait of the Papuan political landscape. It is only by including these groups in the analysis and taking into account the intra-religious dimension that we come to understand the difficult dynamics and prospects of peacebuilding in Papua.

DISCUSSION

Religion and the Advent of Transnational Islam in Papua

In Indonesia, Papua is well-known as a region with a Christian majority in Muslim-majority Indonesia and Papuan nationalists often use racial differences as a reason for self-determination. This section explains only deal with religion, in particular how Islam and Christianity have emerged and what their relationship is in Papua. It describes the advent of transnational Islamic groups that operated against the backdrop of the separatist conflict in Papua.

The Advent of Islam, Christianity and their Relationship in Papua

In Papua, the presence of Islam is closely linked to the trading activities of the Kingdom of Tidore. Exchanges between Muslim traders and Papuans probably started in or even before the 15th century although there are no definitive data. In the 17th century, the Moluccan kingdoms (Tidore, Ternate, Bacan and Jailolo), and especially Tidore, controlled Papua and its surroundings. Tidore had intensive trade contacts with Papuans in the region of the Bird’s Head and the Bomberai Peninsula. In short, Tidore’s trade relations with the northern New Guinea region paralleled the Sultan of Tidore’s efforts to introduce Islam (Warnk, 2010: 115).

There is no single theory of the advent of Islam in Papua, and the information about the issue is scarce and with large gaps. In the 14th century, on his voyage to Papua the Spanish sailor, de Torres, found that merchants from Makassar, Ternate and Tidore, while

trading on Onin, Fakfak, were teaching Islam. Reliable historical sources state that in the 16th and 17th centuries Islam entered the territory of Fakfak and Raja Ampat (Onim, 2006). According to Toni Wanggai (2008), there are seven narratives of the advent of Islam in Papua. Here are the seven versions:

The first is the Papuan version based on legends from Fakfak, Kaimana, Manokwari and Raja Ampat. People believe that Islam was not spread by the Kingdoms of Ternate and Tidore, but has been present in Papua ever since God created the island. In addition, they believe that their human ancestors, namely Adam and Eve, descended to Papua from Heaven.

The second is the version from Aceh which conveys that a preacher from Aceh, Abdul Ghafar, spread Islam in Papua. This idea is based on an oral story told by Muhamad Sidik Bauw and H. Ismail Samali Bauw, both descendants of King of Rumbati who tell that Abdul Ghafar preached for fourteen years (1360-1374) in Rumbati and surroundings until he died and was buried behind the Rumbati Village Mosque in 1374.

The third, is the Javanese version: In 1518, Sultan Adipati Muhammad Yunus, a son of Raden Patah from the Islamic Kingdom of Demak, cooperated with the Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore and sent preachers to Papua with the mission to spread Islam.

The fourth is the Arabic version which explains that Sharif Muaz al-Qathan, a Sufi from Arabia, preached Islam in the Onin Peninsula (Patimunin-Fakfak). This occurred in the mid-16th century. The evidence is the 400-year-

old Tunasgain Mosque (probably built around 1587).

The fifth is the Banda version that argues that Bugis traders through Banda and East Seram spread Islam in Fakfak. This process of Islamization was done through circumcision. After having witnessed a successful circumcision, the Papuan people converted to Islam.

The sixth is the Bacan version that argues that Islam came from Bacan during the reign of Sultan Mohammad al-Bakir of the Sultanate of Bacan. He launched Islamic propagation efforts to places such as Sulawesi, the Philippines, Borneo, Nusa Tenggara, Java and Papua. Although people along the coast converted to Islam, most indigenous Papuans in the interior and highland regions continued to adhere to animism.

The seventh and final version is that of Ternate-Tidore, which argues that Islam in Papua originated from the North Moluccas (Ternate-Tidore). In 1443, Sultan Ibn Mansur (Sultan Tidore X or Sultan Papua I) led an expedition to Papua. After arriving at Misool Island and the Raja Ampat region, he gave Kaicil Patrawar, the son of Sultan Bacan, the title Komalo Gurabesi (Kapita Gurabesi). Kapita Gurabesi was married to Boki Tayyibah, the daughter of Sultan Ibn Mansur. Their descendants ruled four kingdoms in the Raja Ampat Islands: the Kingdom of Misool, Kingdom of Salawati, Kingdom of Batanta, and Kingdom of Waigeo.

Wanggai argues that the Moluccan (Bacan, Ternate and Tidore) version is consistent with the other versions because of the strategic geographical factor, whereby the route of the spice trade, as well as because Muslim traders largely

dealt with coastal people. Wanggai's idea seems to correspond with those of Onim (2006) and Warnk (2010) that Islam emerged in Papua following the established trade routes of the 16th century.

Although Islam came to Papua before Christianity, Islam was not widespread because Muslim traders did not actively engage in preaching Islam but focused on trading. The two Islamic kingdoms of the Moluccas (Ternate and Tidore) did not encourage *da'wah* (propagation or missinisation) activities in Papua. This situation continued until the Dutch occupied Papua. The Dutch brought Christianity. In general, Christians competed with Muslims in their converting efforts to win the hearts of the Papuans (Onim, 2006).

Christianity grew more rapidly in Papua because of the relentless efforts of Dutch missionaries to reach the interior, mountainous regions of the island. Although Christians came later than Muslims to Papua, Christians (especially Protestants) became widespread in remote areas and the central highlands of Papua. Before the Dutch government established posts in 1898, missionary activities played an important role in spreading Christianity and education in Papua before the Indonesian Government put an end to this when UNTEA handed Papua over to Indonesia.

On 5 February 1855, these missionary activities began with the arrival of two German missionaries, C.W. Attouw and G.J. Geissler, who set foot on the island of Mansinam. Both worked for the Berlin-based Gossener Mission, but they were soon hired by the *Utrechtsche Zendingsvereniging* in the early 1960s. Both primarily focused on baptising

local Papuans. Their letters to home often mentioned information about Islam in Dore and Cenderawasih Bay (Warnk, 2010: 123). The two missionaries started to introduce Christian teachings and western education in Papua (Meteray, 2012; Pamungkas, 2015).

Religion played a significant role in Papua. For several centuries, the various coastal areas of Papua became meeting places for traders with different religions who visited there and who traded under the well-known saying: "No *tembacco* (tobacco), no hallelujah". In the early 20th century, as the Dutch increasingly expanded their dominance in Papua, missionaries slowly pioneered into the interior to spread the Christian faith, and they succeeded in converting many Papuans to Christianity (Protestant and Roman Catholic). Papua's Christians associated their conversion with the presence of "Cargo" (Native movement, by magical means to get the things of the white man) although some of them faithfully stayed with their traditional beliefs. In addition, conversion to Christianity was seen as a way for Papuans to improve their status in the eyes of the Dutch and to affirm their elite status.

During the Dutch period, Islam and Christian relations had been well established in Papua. There were no significant differences between Muslims and Christians in everyday life and they lived together in harmony because religion and custom (*adat*) together were the pillars of harmony in social and religious life. At that time, religion in Papua had not yet been touched by the influence of radical Islamic and Islamic reform movements. In addition, there was no movement of a group of cooperative and non-cooperative Islam opposed to the ideology and motto

of the struggle against the government of the Netherlands and its policies (Onim, 2006).

Muslims who resided in the Raja Ampat and Fakfak regions participated in politics and they created a political party to enable them to place their representatives in the Nieuw Guinea parliament that the Dutch had been created. In 1961, Haji Ibrahim Bauw established the Islamic Unity Party of New Guinea (KING) and in Sorong, some Muslims cooperated with Christians and established the Political Party of Christian-Islam Raja Ampat (Perkrista).

Since the 1960s, the mainstream Islamic organizations in Indonesia have started their operations in Papua. The *Nahdhatul Ulama* (NU) has operated in Papua since 1967, while *Muhammadiyah* only came to the region with schools and clinics around the 1980s. The *Muhammadiyah* had been present since 1942 but had not developed due of the Pacific war and protracted conflicts. In 1971, these Islamic organizations united to found *Yayasan Pendidikan Islam* (YAPIS) which runs schools for Muslim children (Onim, 2006). In the 1980s, when the author was studying in a YAPIS school in Serui, Yapen Island, there were some Christian class-mates. It should be remembered that the presence of clinics, schools and branches of Islamic organizations was intended for Muslims who migrated to Papua and there was no attempt to convert non-Muslims to Islam.

The development of Islam outside the coastal areas in Papua started in the 1960s and was linked with the transmigration policies of the Indonesian government. In 1963, the Indonesian Government sent public servants, teachers

and Muslim preachers to work in Papua. Gradually, some areas with a Christian majority turned to Islam because of the interaction between Papuans and Indonesian migrants. We found this phenomenon in Welesi, Wamena, and Karubaga, Tolikara (al-Makassary, 2017). At the time of writing, some Islamic religious teachers sent to Papua by the Ministry of Religion in 1965 are still alive. For example, H. Muharam, who lives in Jayapura (Wanggai, 2018). The recent development about the contestation of Muslim and Special Autonomy in Papua had been discussed (Pamungkas, 2015), but did not discuss about transnational Islam and its implications to communal harmony and peace.

As said above, President Soeharto implemented the policy to assimilate Indonesians and Papuans by sending Muslim migrants primarily from Java to Papua. As a result, the program changed the landscape of the formerly majority Christian territories and replaced them by majority Muslim settler communities such as in Jayapura, Keerom and Merauke districts. This phenomenon raised fears among Christians that Islam might threaten the Christian majority in the future.

In essence, religion in Papua does not play a decisive role in the way people display their political loyalty. As mentioned above, most members of the Christians Papuan elite were pro-Indonesian integration because of the way they were educated and because of their contacts with Indonesian nationalists whom the Dutch had imprisoned in Digul. These Papuans derived their pro-Indonesia tendencies from this interaction. Recently, Taha Al-Hamid, the Secretary General of the Papuan Presidium Council,

joined the Papuan nationalists in the early Reformation Era. Currently, some Papuan NGO activists, who are Muslims, are also sympathetic to the pro-self-determination struggle.

However, some Papuan Christians supporters of pro-self-determination feel threatened by the "Muslim occupiers" in Papua. This feeling was often echoed in the early period of Christian conservatism in Papua which started to enter Papua and its appeal still seems to continue to this day. For example, Socrates Sofyan Yoman, the Chairman of the Alliance of Baptist Churches in West Papua, has often loudly voiced his ideas about Papuan independence by using religious rhetoric and the term genocide. To date, some young Christian priests in Papua supported Papuan independence using their status and the statements they make in social media.

In sum, until the early part of 1998 people have lived harmoniously in Papua regardless of their religions and ethnic backgrounds. There was no tension or conflict between Islam and Christianity because they lived in communal harmony and lived under the guidance of local wisdoms (Onim, 2006).

The Presence of Transnational Islam

Indonesia has experienced an Islamisation of the public sphere since 1998, along with the start of the Reformation Era, with an increasing number of Shari'a banks, traditional Islamic schools, Islamic universities and large numbers of mosques (van Bruinessen, 2013; Bamualim, 2010). Radical transnational Islamic groups including *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI), *Jemaah Tabligh*, and *Salafi*

Wahabi groups began to operate openly in Indonesia. The same process has occurred in Papua where it is more conspicuous because Papua has long been considered a predominantly Christian region.

In June 2008, ten years after the start of the Reformation Era (1998), the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported that radical movements developed among both Muslims and Christians. Radical Christian denominations include the Pentecostal-Charismatic/Evangelical Churches, while radical Islamic groups include among others HTI and the Salafi Movement. These two Islamic groups are categorized as transnational Islam in this study because they are characterized by caliphate/jihadi tendencies (Mandaville, 2009).

To date, there are five transnational Islamic groups in Papua: [1] HTI, [2] *Salafi Wahabi* [3] *Jemaah Tabligh*, [4] *Jemaah Ahmadiyah* and [5] *Global Ikhwan*. In 1988, *Jemaah Tabligh* came to Papua and it is currently based in Jayapura. Its members have been and are spreading to various cities in Papua (Noor, 2010). *Jemaah Ahmadiyah* arrived in Papua in 2000 and most stories related to this movement concern persecution and the fact that their mosques were padlocked by Muslim conservatives to prevent the *Ahmadiyah* from operating freely. They are considered to deviate from the teachings of Islam. The *Global Ikhwan*, the new name of *Darul Arqam*, which has been banned in Malaysia, came to Papua in 2013. This global movement currently promotes economic empowerment through building restaurants and schools in many countries, including Australia and Indonesia.

Muslims and non-Muslims do

not oppose all transnational Islamic organizations mentioned above. In general, Muslims and non-Muslims have no issues with the *Jemaah Tabligh* and *Global Ikhwan*. Non-Muslims have no problem with *Jemaah Ahmadiyah* but have problems with conservative Muslims, as stated above. Especially the *Salafi Wahabi* Groups and HTI have caused tensions with the NU and the *Muhammadiyah*, as well as with non-Muslims who consider them radical and potentially endangering communal harmony in Papua. Salafi groups will be explained below while HTI will be explored in more detail below.

Salafi Groups: The Jafar Umar Thalib Faction

Salafi groups have never been united in one organization but they have remained decentralized (Rahmat, 2017). In Papua, there are several Salafi groups. One that has drawn national attention is the faction of Jafar Umar Thalib (JUT) whose followers can be classified into two waves. The first wave, *Laskar Jihad* came to Papua after it could no longer operate in the Moluccas after the Peace Agreement was signed in 2002. Some remaining troops chose to settle in Ambon and married there, while others returned to their hometowns, mostly in Java. Some decided to migrate to Papua and they spread over several cities such as Fakfak, Manokwari, Kaimana, Sorong and Jayapura (Onim, 2006; ICG, 2008).

The presence of former members of *Laskar Jihad* has had a negative impact in Papua. In 2006, there were some small-scale conflicts in Manokwari and Kaimana. In 2009, Salafi groups were actively spreading their religious teachings and they preached in the Great

Mosque in Jayapura (Al-Makassary, 2010). In addition, their presence has created prejudice against Christians and suspicion between Muslims and non-Muslims. Events such as the Tolikara incident (2015), the rejection of mosque construction in Wamena and Manokwari, among others, are due to their presence and their ways of Islamic propagation.

The advent of JUT and his disciples after the Tolikara incident can be categorized as the second wave. On 17 July 2015, the Tolikara incident took place in which members of the Evangelical Church in Indonesia (*Gereja Injili Di Indonesia*) attacked Muslims while they were praying and they burned a mosque in Karubaga, Tolikara (Al-Makassary, 2017). The incident drew national and global attention. Some Muslims in Indonesia, without knowing all the details of the case were enraged and they condemned the event. On 20 July 2015, JUT issued a declaration of war against GIDI because its members had attacked the Tolikara Muslims. In addition, JUT denounced the Government of Indonesia as being *kafir* (infidel).

The motivation behind JUT's efforts to educate Muslim Papuans is questionable. In a meeting with a team created by the mayor of Jayapura, JUT said his presence was to establish a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) because the morals of the Indonesian nation have deteriorated. To solve this problem, JUT will start his *pesantren* in Papua. At that meeting, JUT did not mention that the Tolikara incident was the main reason that brought him to Papua but it is obvious that it was.

On 27 December 2015, the Papuan chapter of the Islamic Muslim Council (MUI) held a meeting between leaders of

Islamic mass organizations and JUT and his ten disciples to respond to his arrival. At the meeting, participants asked JUT why he had come to Papua and about his role in the Koya Barat conflict. On 9 December 2015, when the Christians in Papua were celebrating the first week of Advent, suddenly public heard a shock news that came from Koya Barat, Jayapura city. There was a conflict amongst two young people in an area that shares border with Papua New Guinea and Keerom Regency. It was mentioned that a young Muslim that wanted to pray felt disturbed due to noisy of religious songs that was coming from Christmas houses (*pondok Natal*). Fighting was inevitable. Fortunately, local security officers fastly solved the problem without going to the police. Recently, the young Muslim in the fighting was identified as one of disciples of Jafar Umar Thalib (JUT), the former commander of *Laskar Jihad* in the Moluccas conflict, in Koya Barat, Jayapura city.

He replied "I came to do conduct *da'wah* (propagation) by establishing a *pesantren* in Papua in Arso 14, Keerom". He added that Muslims in Papua were ignorant about the *shari'a* (Islamic law) and little aware of the true tenets of Islam. Hence, he needs to engage in *da'wah* and send Muslim preachers to remote areas in Papua. Regarding the conflict in Koya Barat, JUT said "That was a misunderstanding among young people. My student tried to remind young Christians to turn down the volume on the songs they played but they ignored it. Hence, the conflict occurred" (Al-Makassary, 2017).

The participant's reactions to JUT's explanation varied. Trembling, one young Muslim strongly protested by saying that JUT's arrival would cause anxiety among

religious communities in Papua. Fadhal Alhamid, that was his name, added: "Any attempt to maintain peace in Papua will be more difficult if JUT operates in Papua". Another young Muslim told the story of his experience living in the village of Walesi, Wamena. He said some Christians and Muslims shared the same house. Other participants argued that they did not want JUT's arrival to jeopardize good communication and interfaith and family relationships. In short, all participants agreed to reject JUT's plans to set up his *pesantren*.

The participants rejected JUT's arrival for the following reasons: *First*, JUT's track record is filled with violence and acts of intolerance in Ambon and Yogyakarta. Furthermore, JUT and his *Laskar Jihad* had been involved in the conflict in the Moluccas and Muslims in Papua did not want religious conflict in Papua. *Second*, the communal harmony amongst Muslim groups in Papua was good (without any attempt to call each other infidel or to blame one another). *Third*, JUT's declaration "War against pluralism" violated *Sunatullah* (Allah's will) and would create tension with non-Muslims in Papua.

Principally, JUT's main intention to come to Papua was to set up a *pesantren*. So, after having settled in Koya Barat, JUT and his disciples were busy looking for a suitable place to realize their desire in the Keerom regency. Keerom shares its border with Papua New Guinea. This region has many Muslim transmigrants especially from Java who work, trade and farm in the area. Initially, JUT planned to buy land in Arso 1 but he faced obstacles from the land owner and the leader of the local ethnic (*ondoafi*). Finally, JUT bought 26.5 hectares in Arso 14.

On 5 September 2017, the Mayor of Keerom Regency issued his third letter to JUT ordering him to stop the construction of his *pesantren* stating that he must leave the site no later than the 3rd week of September 2017. The letter mentioned that if this letter was ignored, the building would be demolished. After receiving the letter, JUT wrote a reply to the Mayor of Keerom questioning the legal basis for the demolition of his *pesantren*. In any case, the building of JUT's *pesantren* was stopped because it met with too much resistance. A semi-permanent *pesantren* however was built, including a mosque for JUT activities such as prayers and religious gatherings.

There were two responses of the local government and Islamic organizations to the presence of JUT in Keerom. Nursalim, an NU activist in Keerom, said that some parties supported JUT's existence in Keerom. He said, "Unfortunately, some members of the *Muhammadiyah*, some other Muslims and some members of the elite in the local government of Keerom supported JUT". In addition, the replacement of the Chief of Police in Keerom was seen as an attempt to indirectly support the JUT's presence. The new Chief of Police in Keerom held a morning coffee with several religious leaders, including JUT but he did not invite people who resisted JUT. Groups who demanded JUT's rejection chose to remain quiet. At the same time, JUT had paid no heed to the third letter of expulsion issued by the former Mayor of Keerom. Additionally, on 10 January 2018 the Mayor of Keerom, Celsius Watae (who made the attempt to stop JUT's operation in Keerom), was dead and this strengthened JUT's position.

The Threat to Communal Harmony in Papua

The presence of transnational Islamic groups in Papua has caused disharmony among religious communities. Christians are worried because of the Islamization which is marked by an increase in Islamic activities, Islamic institutions and Muslim organizations. One of the latent issues among religious leaders in Papua is Islamization as it is, for example, related with Uztad Fadhlan Garamatan, who is seen as a HTI member in Papua.

To date, there have been various incidents and mosque construction has been halted because of existing plans to turn Manokwari into a city of the gospel (Al-Hamid, 2013: 450). The issue of the draft regulation for this plan first came up in 2006. In 2007, small-scale conflicts occurred in Manokwari and Kaimana (ICG, 2008). In addition, various circulars from the Association of Churches in Jayawijaya (2016) and the Communion of Churches in the Jayapura District (2018) on the prohibition of mosque construction triggered tension with Muslims peaking in the Tolikara Incident (IPAC, 2017; Al-Makassary, 2017).

There are four main threats to religious tolerance and peace in Papua: First, over-religious fanaticism; Second, over-ethnic primordialism; Third, the marginalization of the Papuan indigenous people; Fourth, social change as a result of many transmigrants into Papua (Dian-Interfidei and FKPPA 2015). In the same vein, the International Crises Group (ICG) (2008) mentioned that there are several main factors that cause conflict in Papua: migration of Muslim communities from other parts of Indonesia into Papua;

the emergence of exclusive groups in two communities, Muslims and Christians, that view each other as enemies; remnants of former Jihadists from the Moluccan conflict; and the result of extensive development outside Papua.

Peacebuilding in Papua

There is no single definition of peacebuilding. However, present-day practices of peacebuilding reflect the general definition the United Nations (UN) adopted since the 1990s, as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (Ozerdem & Lee, 2015).

In discussing Papua, I will use John Paul Laderach’s (2007) concept of peacebuilding. He defines peacebuilding as a “comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships”. In other words, Laderach sees peacebuilding as a *process*.

The religious leaders in Papua’s declaration of “Papua Land of Peace” in February 2002 echoes Laderach’s idea of peacebuilding. “Papua Land of Peace” is a social construct made by religious leaders to prevent conflict and to build peace in Papua (Hernawan, 2018). However, the arrival of transnational Islamic groups appears to challenge the concept of “Papua Land of Peace”. To a certain degree, transnational groups have tried to construct a narrative that associates Christianity with the independence movement and Islam with loyalty to the Indonesian state.

In strengthening the peacebuilding process, religion is a factor that needs to be taken into account, along with economic and political factors as roots of conflict (Abu-Nimer, 2003). Appleby’s book *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* (2000) stresses that all great religions have traditions that can not only be activated to legitimize conflict and war, but can also function as resources to promote non-violent conflict resolution and peace. In some ways, Islamic militant groups seem to use religion to legitimize and justify conflict. For example, the emergence of Boko Haram has been a major obstacle to development and peacebuilding in Nigeria (Moshood and Thovoetin, 2017). Similarly, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) also used religious injunctions to target both non-Muslims and Shi’ite communities in areas under their influence (Celso, 2015).

The dark side of the Reformation Era is communal conflict that erupted in some areas in Indonesia (among others in Ambon, Sambas, and Sampit). In 2001, a Peace Agreement was reached to solve the conflict in the Moluccas that caused *Laskar Jihad* to lose its influence (Hasan, 2007; Saud, 2012). It was reported that JUT planned to exercise its *jihad* in Papua. At the same time, Papua was in turmoil for self-determination because it was inspired by East-Timor’s success in becoming an independent state. Therefore, on 5 February 2003, in order to anticipate fears of the emergence of JUT and to maintain peace in Papua, religious leaders in Papua decided to declare “Papua Land of Peace” (Tebay, 2007: 345).

The “Papua Land of Peace” project aims to respond to the abandonment of civil and political rights (CPR), economic,

social and cultural rights (economic, cultural and social rights / ESCR), excessive security approaches, welfare gaps in Papua and the destruction of places of worship outside Papua. In the same tone, on 4 February 2013, Hermann Saud, the Chairman of *Forum Kerukunan Para Pimpinan Agama* (Forum of the Leaders of All Religions) in Papua Province, in a seminar on “Papua Land of Peace”, said that there are a number of contemporary challenges to realize “Papua Land of Peace”, namely religious dogmatism, the religious tyranny of the majority, and little co-operation between religious communities in the world, such as in health, education and economics.

To encapsulate the idea of “Papua Land of Peace”, as a process in Laderach’s perspective on peacebuilding, there are two issues at the core of it: [1] preventing communal conflict, [2] dialogue.

CONCLUSION

Historically, the advent Islam and Christianity in Papua was never a source of conflict. The kingdoms of the Moluccas, especially Tidore played a role in the spread of Islam through trade channels but did not spread Islam in remote areas in Papua except Fakfak, Kaimana and parts of Sorong. Christianity developed in Papua with the missionary who did reach out to remote and interior areas, especially with the construction of schools and clinics for indigenous Papuans. Ultimately, the largest part of Papua became an area with a majority Christian population. The relationship between Muslims and Christians was good in the socio-economic and political spheres, as described above.

The Dutch used religion (and race) as one of the reasons that Papua was different from all other parts of Indonesia and thus they did not recognize Papua as part of Indonesia during the Round Table Conference in The Hague in 1949. Until 1998, religious differences were never a source of protracted conflict in Papua. Conflict in Papua is primarily caused by political and economic issues.

In Papua, the Reformation Era created a democratic space for pro-democracy groups, including pro-Papuan nationalists who became active in their goal to achieve Papuan independence. In addition, the transnational Islamic movement also utilized this room for freedom to voice its aspirations and to disseminate radical Islamic teachings. In other words, the Post-Soeharto era opened a window of opportunity for transnational Islamic movements such as *Jemaah Tabligh*, *Ahmadiyah*, *Global Ikhwan*, *Salafi* and *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI). Since the 2000s, transnational Islam, especially Salafi and HTI started to operate in Papua which led to resistance from mainstream Muslims and non-Muslims, because of their radical Islamic teachings as perpetrated by Thalib and his disciples.

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