

# FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS RELATIONS (CONSTRUCTION OF SUKARNO'S THOUGHT)

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## Abstract

The question of religious connections is constantly linked to the concept of religious freedom, which is a basic human right. This understanding of religion and religiosity must be maintained in order to obtain a tolerant attitude among religious groups. This is essential in development because religion and God are vital to human activity. The principles of the Oneness of God in the Pancasila state foundation are the result of the Indonesian national figures's thought about the problems raised above. The final dialogue of the Indonesian nation's founding fathers is the oneness of God as the foundation of all other of Pancasila principles. This article further elaborates on Sukarno's concept of divinity by combining the concepts of the perennial philosophy, systems theory, and paradigm shift, which are related to the context of religious life in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Religion; God; Interrelation of Religion; Sukarno

## A. Introduction

God is an idea and at the same time a reality that continues and will always be discussed. Some doubted God and claimed that God was part of the past (Armstrong, 1993), thought God was dead (Friedrich, 2020), and that religion was an addiction. The statement above implies that God, religion, and all things attached to them contain elements that are destructive for the survival of mankind. But for others, God and religion are light, spirit, and energy that fills space and time (Geertz, 1993; Weber, 2002). It exists even though it's invisible, it exists even though it's only through feeling.

God's construction in the human mind goes hand in hand with the historicity of humanity, passing through the halls of space and time. Human knowledge about God is obtained from preaching the scriptures, or

through experience, or thought processes/contemplations (philosophy), and or maybe only limited information passed down from ancestors, which then crystallizes into a belief. To this day, the idea/reality about God is believed by each person/group without any agreement, which God is actually the object of discussion; studied and believed. Each person/religious group is in accordance with the inherited tradition and believes that tradition is the right one (Swinburne, 2004). God, as a temporary truth reference, is a religious narrative and is expressed in the reality of life according to the knowledge and experience of religious people. Thus, admit it or not, the God who is believed in by religious people is a God created by the construction of human thought, and almost all religious people stand firmly on the truth they believe in. People's understanding of

God is stored in frozen narrative texts (dogmas).

God and religion are in the historical reality of human beings storing millions of stories; longing, love, glory, violence, war, and oppression. In the realm of personal life, God is the love and longing that every religious believer longs for. He is a source of inspiration, inspiring every step of the lover. But in social life sometimes, and oftentimes, religious adherents are unable to express the love they live in a personal space. There are egos, egos, and subjective truth claims on the religion/belief that is professed. This wall of subjectivity is the root of violence, oppression and war in the name of God/religion. Wahid wrote; God Doesn't Need to be Defended is an expression of frustration over the rampant acts of violence in the name of religion and God. If left unchecked, then religion and God will become institutions that foster hatred and acts of violence.

Human ideas about God are bound by space and time, and each generation has a different construction of God. Tafsir, fiqh, theology, Sufism, and others in the realm of Islamic studies are part of human thought in constructing God (Hidayat, 1996), and how humans behave towards Him. Along with changes in space and time, the study material above has changed, adapting to the present and here. At this point, Abdullah asks a critical question; whether religion is normative or historical? (Abdullah, 1998) At the normative level all religions teach love, but at the historical level religion has changed as a means of justifying symbols and acts of violence. What is the reason that a person's religious paradigm shift in the individual and social domains can change drastically? This is where Sukarno's paradigmatic intelligence involved God as the basis of the Indonesian state. Paradigm, in Kuhn's concept, if it shifts it will have an impact on changing one's perspective on reality. The next description will place Sukarno's thoughts related to the concept of shifting paradigm, system philosophy, religion, and God in the historical reality of Indonesia.

## B. Discussion

### 1. Sukarno: Life Background

Born in Surabaya on June 6, 1901 to Raden Soekemi Sosrodihardjo and Ida Ayu Nyoman Rai. Kusno Sosro Karno, Sukarno's nickname was given by his father. Karno is a father's prayer, so that his son will become a character like in the Mahabharata story; a brave figure, strong belief, loyal friend, and powerful (Budiman, 2010).

Sukarno's father is a descendant of the Sultan of Kediri, and his mother is a descendant of King Singaraja Bali. As a teacher, Sukarno's father was very concerned with education, and raised his son in a modest home.

After completing basic education, Sukarno was sent by his father to Surabaya to continue his studies. Under the tutelage of Haji Oemar Said Cokroaminoto (hereinafter written HOS), Sukarno's critical thinking and attitude began to grow. HOS was the founder of Sarekat Islam, was actively involved in the Indonesian independence movement, and many people came to his place to discuss and exchange ideas. From this meeting and discussion at the HOS house, Sukarno's critical mental attitude was well-formed. Sukarno took the rhetoric and logic of HOS as his political capital. Sukarno acknowledged that HOS was the one who changed the course of his life (Adam, 1966).

After high school (Hogere Burger School) in Surabaya, Sukarno continued his studies at the Technische Hoogeschool te Bandoeng in 1921. During college, young Sukarno actively voiced the spirit of nationalism and Indonesian independence. No wonder he was later given the title of 'Lion Podium', a title that was also assigned to HOS. The course was completed in 1926.

Sukarno's Nationalist-Religious knowledge and attitude had been formed in Surabaya through intellectual interaction with HOS. This was further strengthened by Sukarno's fondness for

reading European references, especially socialism, which strengthened Sukarno's spirit of heroism and patriotism to free Indonesia from Dutch colonial rule. Nationalism, religion, and socialism are the basic thinking of Sukarno in building the concept of national thinking. The three basics of knowledge above were obtained by Sukarno through independent intellectual odyssey. What is certain is that Sukarno was raised, educated, and lived in an environment with good religiosity; parents, educational institutions, organizations involved, the references read form Soekano's genuine character (Adam, 1982). With this capital in 1927 Sukarno formed the Indonesian National Party (PNI) as an instrument of the struggle for Indonesian independence.

In BPUPKI, the figure of Sukarno is a bridge that dialogues Islamic and nationalist groups to formulate the basis of the state. Belief in One God is a final dialogue to ensure that Indonesia is not founded on the basis of certain religious values and doctrines. For this reason, Sukarno was asked to read the proclamation of Indonesian independence, accompanied by Hatta. Both, were the first President and Vice President of Indonesia; Indonesian proclaimer.

Pancasila as the basis of the state is the legacy of Sukarno, along with other Indonesian figures, which to this day have been widely studied from various perspectives; politics, theology, religious tolerance, democracy, economics, education and so on. As a proclaimer, - with strong scientific, social, national and religious integrity- Sukarno is a spirit for the generation of the Indonesian nation. Sukarno died in Jakarta on June 21, 1970.

## 2. Sukarno's Notes on Religion and Diversity

For the Indonesian people, God and Religion are identities, and variables that determine the direction of Indonesian

political policies. Anyone who studies the history of Indonesia must conclude that God and Religion are a living tradition, and become the lifeblood of society (Dhakidae, 2003). A person's religiosity can be seen from 3 (three) basic religious elements; mystical (theology), ritual, and culture.

In heavenly religion, a person acknowledges God through spiritual judgment which is strengthened by revelation-value, affirmed from the scriptures (James, 1902: 5). In primitive society, God was identified through the process of searching for the sacred (*scientia sacra*) (Nasr, 1989). In this search for the sacred, what is prioritized is the deepest side of humanity (spirit/soul/spirit), which is also mentioned in the narration of the sacred texts of the divine religion. Sometimes, in many cultures and traditions God is often transformed in various forms, and continues to change. Not the substance of God, but the pattern of human relations with God and human attitudes in responding to religious doctrines (Crippen, 1988). According to James, that even though it is a divine religion, the process of searching for the sacred is also through a cultural-traditional process. Next is writes (James, 1902):

“Whether it be Buddhist, Christian, or Mohammedan...His religion has been made for him by others, communicated to him by tradition, determined to fixed forms by imitation, and retained by habit”

Armstrong explained in more detail that today's God is a God that is known through philosophical, theological, and cultural searches. All of them deal with space and time, and often change (Armstrong, 1993). Therefore, the expression of a person's religion can be different from one time to another, or from one place to another. This is what Abdullah means as religious historicity (Abdullah, 2000; Abdullah, 2014), due to the continuous reading of the text of

the holy book (Hidayat, 1996). God and religion, in the historical space of humanity, are always reviewed and reinterpreted to strengthen the substance of God. Sukarno, in understanding God (Islam) uses science more as an approach, and with that he feels the existence of God (Kurniawan, 2018; Mu'minin, 2019; Suparto, 2019; Syarifuddin, 2013).

Sukarno's anxiety was based on the reality of Indonesia - which was strengthened by his experience in exile - with its diverse traditions, cultures and religions. In the geographical area of Indonesia, there are more than 13,000 names of God, with various rituals (Dhakidae, 2018). With a reality like the one above, it is difficult to distinguish between religion and culture in the Indonesian context. Madjid, concluded that our religion today is also part of the cultural process. Religion and culture cannot be separated, however, the substance of the two can be distinguished. From this socio-cultural basis, the concept of divinity in Pancasila was born.

In academic discourse, Belief in One God is the work of the nation's children whose originality is beyond its era; par-excellent. However, this concept is better known as a political concept than an academic concept. Although in recent years there have been attempts at conceptual construction of Sukarno's thoughts related to the concepts of God, religiosity, and tolerance (Pujiastuti, 2020; Sukarnoputri, 2021; Sofjan, 2018; Sukarno, 2015; Wahib, 2004). Inter-religious relations were only announced in the 1990s, while the presence of the Precept of the One Godhead in 1945 was a response to the pluralism of culture, religion, and tradition in Indonesia. As a nation, Indonesia is praised for its success in 'reconciling' the existence of plurality.

It's just that the pluralism of religions/traditions that exist is limited

by the definition of religion by the Indonesian government in 1961. Religion, in the formulation of the Indonesian state, must meet the elements of God Almighty, have a prophet, have a holy book, have followers, and have a legal system that serves as practical reference for its adherents. With the existence of a formal state definition of religion, hundreds of adherents of beliefs, mysticism, traditional/local religions in Indonesia are classified as non-religious people. Not having a religion does not mean that you don't have God, because the traditional religions of the archipelago recognize God in various names, forms, and offerings; that is God Almighty. State intervention in religion is a systemic-functional context; religion is an instrument that always supports development (Borg, 2011).

Sukarno's political speech related to the One Godhead was stated in a speech on June 1, 1945, in front of the Dokuritsu Zyunbi Tyoosakai (Independence Effort Investigation Agency) trial as follows:

*'First of all, you ask: Do we want to establish an independent Indonesia for one person, for one group? ...do we mean that? Of course not!' (Sukarno, 1947). The fifth principle should be: To build an independent Indonesia by having faith in God Almighty. Divine Principle! Not only that the Indonesian people believe in God, but each Indonesian should believe in his own God. Christians worship God according to the instructions of Isa al-Masih, while Muslims worship according to the instructions of the Prophet Muhammad, Buddhists carry out their worship according to the books available to them. But let us all be godly. The state of Indonesia should be where everyone worships their Lord in a freeway. All Indonesian people are a country where everyone can worship their God in a freeway.*

*All people should worship God culturally, that is, without religious selfishness." And the State of Indonesia should be a state of God (Sukarno, 1947). Let us practice, practice religion, whether Islam or Christianity, in a civilized way...that is, respect for one another.*

From the political speech above, there are several important points that can be underlined in relation to Sukarno's ideas about God, religion, and religious relations. First, the concept of God and divinity offered by Sukarno was based on the archipelago community with a variety of traditions, cultures, and religions. The existence of mysticism and local religions in Indonesia is represented by the word God and divinity. This means that in terms of tourism there is an acknowledgment of the existence of local religions of the archipelago in the state system. Although the majority of Indonesian people are Muslims, they are not fully supported by the Indonesian people (Sukarno, 1947). This concept does not reinforce the concept of theosophy as many people assume, but Sukarno actually reconstructed God and divinity in the context of the integrity of a nation (Faidi, 2017).

Second, Sukarno's speech reconciled the existence of local religions and major religions (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism) in Indonesia. This is where Sukarno's genuine idea of positioning God and divinity in a global context lies. Local religions in Indonesia, with various names and offerings, must have a God (name) whose essence is also the same as the God referred to in other major religions. Feeling that one's self, race, religion is superior to other races and religions is arrogance that hinders the progress of a nation (Sukarno, 1963; Sukarno, 2016). Sukarno viewed religion as a social system that had a major influence in shaping the values, attitudes, and behavior of the Indonesian

people. Inter-religious interaction is expected to provide a positive novelty in supporting Indonesia as a nation.

Third, pluralism and religious relations. Plurality is a fact of diversity that includes differences in race, ethnicity, religion, culture, politics, skin color, language, and others. Plurality is a gift from God to humans. Therefore there is nothing wrong in plurality. Pluralism is an attitude that arises from the existence of plurality; namely recognizing differences and making peace with differences (genuine engagement of diversity within the bonds of civility) (Sabri, 2018). The attitude required in pluralism is to recognize, respect, and develop the qualities of the above attitude to achieve common humanitarian goals in society. In cross-religious studies the assumption is built that humans come from the same God and will return to the same God. this is the essence of truth (absolute) of all religions. In the language of the Koran if there are two Gods, then this world (order) will be corrupted. Pluralism, as described above, is the spirit of the One Godhead which is framed in *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*. The idealism above, today is being bullied in the dark because of identity politics and partial interests (*furu'iyyah*). Conflicts originating from economic, social, cultural, ethnic, and class problems further exacerbate the pluralistic attitude of the Indonesian people. Mass media, social media, and buzzers are variables that add to the turbidity and chaos in society which also exacerbates the loss of pluralism. The rationale of violence, narratives of hatred, intolerance, and the attitude of claims of truth of religious adherents emerge to show that they are true, and beyond that they are heretical. Adherents of religion are clashed by interests, which may be outside the interests of Indonesia as a whole nation. The form of the above attitude can be seen in the conflicts that arise and violent behavior

in society. The identity of the archipelago as a polite, civilized, and respectful society begins to be torn apart when faced with the global world. This is a clash of civilizations, which Huntington describes as war without weapons. In this clash of civilizations, national identity should be strengthened to achieve global victory. Pluralism is an attitude that must be maintained, packaged, and developed to position Indonesia in the global arena. The above is coupled with the reality of regional autonomy which has developed into small rulers at the regional level. The criticism of some researchers related to the application of sharia in the Regional Autonomy Regulation is part of maintaining pluralism and mutual respect between religious adherents (Muslihun, 2018; Patittingi et al., 2021). Fourth, liberation theology is Guterez's concept in Latin America against Western power over the third world. The concept of God Almighty that Sukarno offered was also the concept of resistance which was wrapped in national discourse. In several of his works, Sukarno wrote that nationalism, Islam, and socialism were the *weltanचाung* of Indonesia (Adam, 1982; Sukarno, 1963; Sukarno, 2016; Suhelmi, 2011). Guterez's spirit of resistance is poverty, ignorance and backwardness. The reality is almost the same as the reality of Indonesia at the beginning of independence; Indonesia's resources are controlled by the West, and Indonesian people are mired in poverty. Sukarno's call at that time was 'be the master in your own country' (Sukarno, 2016). If it is related to the perennial concept, essentially Sukarno's religious theological process was through a cultural process, which gave birth to the concept of 'a cultured God, without religious egoism'. In his time, what Sukarno initiated was a paradigm shift in God and divinity, from the formal-ritual realm to praxis. God, regardless of God

and religion, should be active in providing significant positive changes for the development of the nation. Sukarno invited him to think and act under the Precepts of the One Godhead, namely a God who has culture, no religious egotism; namely mutual respect.

Fifth, in the construction of system philosophy, religion is part of a large system. Religion interacts with systems and symbols that exist in society. As a consequence of the interaction between systems in society is the newness (emergence properties) of the state and religion. The 'original' religion, after having a dialogue with the reality of the existing system, will be with the existing socio-cultural reality. Islam in Turkey is different from Islam in Saudi, Saudi Islam is different from Islam in Indonesia. Likewise, Hinduism in Indonesia is different from Balinese Hinduism, and so on. Religion as part of the system, its substance never stops working. There are always new meanings and interpretations of religion, in accordance with social, political, and cultural changes in society. Therefore, the State must be present to regulate the interaction of religion with other social systems. Indonesia is not a religious country like Saudi Arabia, nor is it a secular country like Turkey, but recognizes religion as part of the nation and state which is regulated in the basis of the state and the statutory system. Belief in the One Supreme God is the basis of the state that provides guidelines for practical religious behavior. Not regulating the people's right to believe in God, but the behavior of religious people in carrying out their relationship with God may contribute to the acceleration of Indonesia's development. In order to avoid inter-religious encounters, avoid truth claims, fundamentalist-radicalism, inclusiveness and self-loathing, the state is an intermediary medium to maintain a

steady dialogue between religions and the existing system in society.

### 3. Implications of Sukarno's Thoughts

Geertz's statement in comparative research on religion, wrote that Sukarno's ideology was a process of scientific synthesis, which was a combination of the concepts of nationalism, Islam, and communism (Kurniawan, 2018). Internationally, Indonesia is also recognized as a nation capable of maintaining the harmony of the religions in it. The foundation of the Indonesian state which puts God as the foundation with a specific Indonesian meaning has fascinated many people; political, educational, social, and tolerance. God in the precepts of the One Godhead is designed in the context of nationality, not based on the egoism of a particular religion. This is the interesting side of Sukarno's concept of divinity.

Sukarno's idea above is identical to Amin Abdullah's idea which offers the concept of intersubjectivity in religious relations, namely one's religious practice to acknowledge and respect the religion/religion of others (Abdullah, 2020). To be able to realize the above attitude, Wahid emphasized a critical attitude to the internal aspects of religion being embraced, understanding the history of religion and religion, adjusting to reality and conditions. and also ignores the existence of other religious people (Gutierrez, 1988). Such an attitude is an exclusive attitude in religion that allows dialogue for humanism to occur.

Inclusive attitude in religion, according to Goddard because religious adherents make double standards in their theological construction, namely; For internal religious adherents certain standards are set, and on the other hand set different standards for adherents of other religions. (Goddard, 1995) D'Adamo also criticizes religion of knowing which departs from the

paradigm of only God, religion, and the holy book of certain religions as sources of knowledge. truth (Gooch, 2000). Paradigm like this will have an impact on the attitude of blind fanaticism, self-righteousness, and assumes that religious knowledge comes from God. In substance, the religious knowledge of today's society is the interpretation of the holy book, which also goes through a process of reasoning; construction of thought and culture. The main challenge for religious people today is how to position their faith in the traffic of faith of other people/communities by recognizing and respecting people's faith/belief without having to lose their religious identity in themselves. This is where theological reconstruction (understanding) is needed.

Theoretically, theological renewal involves all elements in human beings; body and soul. Huxley wrote that in the human soul there is something, or even identical with the voice of God (the sacred). Surely all souls are the same, and the voice of God that is heard is the same voice of God (Huxley, 1992). This also means that the highest element of humanity is the spirit that comes from God, whose potential is God's potential, and exists within every human being. This is the deepest esoteric side of religion, and every religious teaching/belief acknowledges its existence (soul/spirit) (Smith, 2003). It is only with this esoteric instrument that pluralism is realized. What Sukarno narrated in his June 1 speech was part of revealing the deepest side of human spirituality.

In the study of religious studies, pluralism is seen in the attitude of exclusivism, inclusivism, and parallelism. Exclusivism in religion is an attitude of self-righteousness, assuming that other religions/schools of thought are heretical, and being more introverted in building social relations with other religions/groups outside themselves. On

the other hand, inclusivism is an attitude that brings tolerance, and opens oneself to understanding the (truth) religion/school of thought. In the logic of inclusivism, truth and salvation are relative, and each religion has a different way of arriving at the point of truth and salvation. The main attitude that stands out in inclusivism is accepting the existence (truth) of other religions/mazhabs, without losing their religious identity. Complementing the two concepts above, the concept of thinking parallelism is presented. In the atmosphere of paralism, every religion/belief has the same distance from God. This does not mean that all religions are the same, but that diversity must greet each other and contribute to building civilization/humanity with the perspective of faith/divinity in the teachings of each religion/belief (Rachman, 2018).

The concept of God Almighty, cultural divinity, which is not religious egoism, and mutual respect is Sukarno's whole concept in building the concept of religious pluralism. The basis of his thinking is the concept of nationality, which is associated with humanism and internationalism (Sukarno, 1947; Sukarno, 1963; Sukarno, 2016). Indonesia as a nation must be present and actively participate in responding to humanitarian issues at the global level. That is Sukarno's moral message, and Sukarno's intellectual heritage which is associated with the concept of God, divinity, and religion.

### C. Conclusion

The basis of Sukarno's thought in formulating the concept of thinking about God, religion, and divinity is the diversity of religions, cultures, and traditions that exist in Indonesia. The above diversity is in the same fate; poverty, backwardness, and ignorance. That is the basic concept of liberation theology in the One Godhead. The first principle of Pancasila above is an instrument

of gluing differences between religion and God in the reality of religious practice in Indonesia. The thinking mindset as above is Sukarno's thinking in laying the foundations of Indonesia, nationality, humanism, and internationalism.

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