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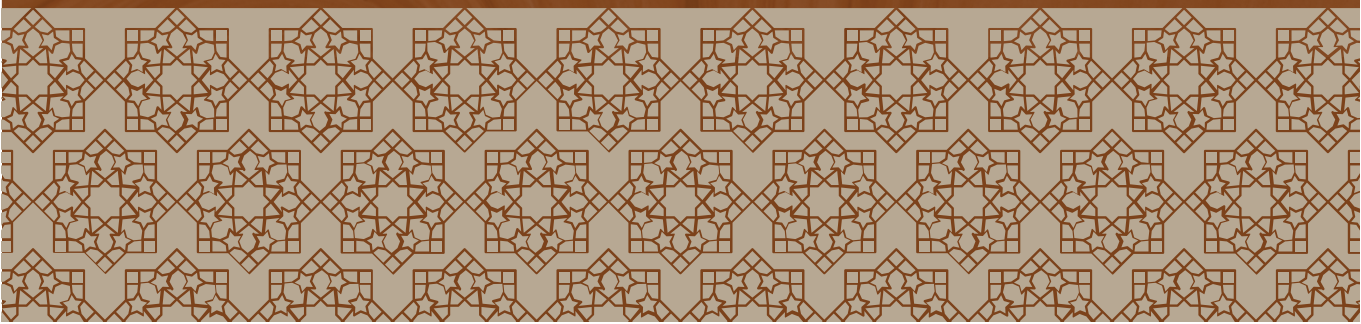
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RELIGIOUS MODERATION ON NU *ULAMA*'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Diversity is reality of being religious in the Nusantara society. Carelessness of this plural reality can bring up the intolerant potency because our failure interlaces interreligious relations in a plural society. This condition makes the narration of *Islam Nusantara* to be not enough about issues of arts and traditions but also to raise issues about being moderate Muslim in religious diversity. The NU *ulamas* for a long time have given their interest to the discourse of interreligious relations. This article discussed some teachings of the NU *ulamas* about practicing Islam in the diversity of Nusantara society. The research method of literature study or library research was used to read NU *ulamas*' teachings. Hopefully, this article can present the construction of ideas about being moderate Muslim in religious diversity as an expression of practicing Islam in Nusantara. This article explains that NU *ulamas* teach the Islamic practice not ignoring consciousness of religious diversity, abolishing the majoritarianism ego, and interlacing relationship of interreligious humanity with other religious people. It is the teaching of NU *ulamas* about being moderate Muslim in religious diversity.

Keywords: *Nahdlatul Ulama, Being Muslim, Islamic Knowledge, Islam Nusantara, Interreligious Harmony*

Abstrak

Keragaman merupakan realitas beragama dalam masyarakat Nusantara. Pengabaian realitas yang plural ini dapat memunculkan potensi intoleransi, sebab kelalaian kita menjalin hubungan antarumat beragama dalam sebuah masyarakat yang plural. Kondisi ini membuat narasi Islam Nusantara tidak cukup seputar isu seni dan tradisi, namun juga mengangkat isu tentang menjadi Muslim moderat dalam keragaman agama. Para ulama NU, untuk waktu yang lama, telah memberikan perhatian untuk diskursus hubungan antarumat beragama. Artikel ini mendiskusikan beberapa ajaran ulama NU terkait menjalankan Islam dalam keragaman masyarakat Nusantara. Harapannya, artikel ini dapat menghadirkan konstruksi gagasan tentang menjadi Muslim moderat dalam keragaman agama sebagai sebuah ekspresi menjalankan Islam di Nusantara. Artikel ini menjelaskan bahwa ulama NU mengajarkan praktek Islam yang tidak melupakan kesadaran keragaman agama, meruntuhkan ego mayoritanisme, dan menjalin hubungan kemanusiaan

antarumat beragama dengan umat agama lain. Demikian itu adalah ajaran ulama-ulama NU terkait menjadi Muslim moderat dalam keragaman agama.

Kata Kunci: *Nahdlatul Ulama, Menjadi Muslim, Pengetahuan Islam, Islam Nusantara, Kerukunan Antarumat Beragama*

INTRODUCTION

One thing that cannot be ignored in practicing religion in Indonesia is the reality of a plural society. Although the Muslim people relatively are the majority, where around 87.02% of Indonesian citizens are Islamic believers, but we cannot ignore the fact that there are 12.98% of Indonesian citizens who are not Islamic believers.¹ In this case, religious diversity becomes a reality in Indonesian society.² A carelessness of plural reality can emerge with the risk of intolerant potency because of our failure to interlace interreligious relations in plural Indonesian society.

The *ulamas* (religious leaders) of NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) had taught us to be religious without ignoring the diverse reality of Nusantara society.³ Such as Gus Dur's teaching about the indigenization of Islam (*pribumisasi Islam*) teaches us to practice Islam with an understanding of the basic problems in society.⁴ In this case, because the Nusantara Muslims live side by side with believers of other religions, the face of friendly Islam that regards religious differences is one necessity to be Muslim in Indonesia. It becomes the narration of *Islam Nusantara* (Southeast Asian Islam) to be not enough about issues of arts and traditions but also to raise issues about being moderate Muslim in religious diversity. It is also compatible with the spirit of Islam—as a religion that supports justice and avoids wrongdoing in inter-human relations⁵—in establishing the interreligious peace, Muslims and non-Muslims, as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad.⁶ And, also as the human is the creature who uses mind to be good and right,⁷ in this case to be good Muslims in religious diversity.

¹ Redaksi, "Jumlah Penduduk Menurut Agama," *Kemenag.go.id*, 31/08/2022. <https://satudata.kemenag.go.id/dataset/detail/jumlah-penduduk-menurut-agama>.

² Theguh Saumantri, "Membangun Kerukunan Beragama Di Era Pluralisme: Kontribusi Konsep John Hick," *Religi: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 19, no. 1 (2023), 112.

³ Term of Nusantara refers to Indonesia and even also Southeast Asia. The author used this term, although not one common word in English, to emphasize discourse of Islam Nusantara.

⁴ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Pribumisasi Islam," in *Islam Nusantara: Dari Ushul Fiqh hingga Paham Kebangsaan*, eds. A. Sahal and M. Aziz, (Bandung: Mizan, 2016), 43.

⁵ Machasin, "Islamic Peace Centered Theology," *Sunan Kalijaga: International Journal of Islamic Civilization* 4, no. 2 (2021), 160.

⁶ Zulhamdani, "Kebebasan Beragama dan Murtad dalam Islam: Aplikasi Teori Kontekstual terhadap Ayat-ayat Riddah dalam Al-Qur'an," *Alif Lam: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (2021), 20.

⁷ Arditya Prayogi and Dimas Prasetya, "Human as Cultured, Ethical, and Aesthetic Beings: A Conceptual Study," *Alif Lam: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (2023), 21.

The discourse of interreligious harmony is interesting in the production of NU's knowledge to be not solely caused by the NU as the Islamic civil society organization that is the majority—as the data at the year 2022 CE around 59.2% of Muslims in Indonesia admit themselves as member of the NU⁸—so as the big group in this country also becomes the big responsibility for the NU to produce the narrations that invite NU's members to the tolerant attitudes. NU's commitment to the notion of *Islam Nusantara*⁹ also makes a reason why the discourse of being moderate Muslim in religious diversity needs promoting in the knowledge production of NU *ulama*, because as the author has explained the Islam Nusantara also includes this issue. In addition, we also have to be aware that the discourse of interreligious harmony, despite not new issue, will be not old during the diverse reality there. Religious diversity becomes a challenge¹⁰ to Indonesian plural society. Religious diversity can bring out harmony but, not impossible, can also result conflict.¹¹ Therefore, in Indonesian plural society is important to do efforts to interreligious harmony, such as to discuss continuously the issues of interreligious harmony. This is our basic necessity to embody and maintain a harmonious life together.

The NU *ulamas* for a long time have given their interest to the discourse of interreligious relations. This article discusses some teachings of the NU *ulamas*. The questions; how are the NU *ulama's* teachings in responding to the religious diversity of Nusantara society? and how is the notion of being moderate Muslim in religious diversity in NU *ulama's* teachings? Those are the key questions discussed in this article. Through the effort to answer those questions, this article presents a narration of *Islam Nusantara* that gives a notion about being moderate Muslim in the religious diversity of Nusantara.

This article is a study about the production of Islamic knowledge of NU *ulama* responding to the context of Nusantara where the religions interact. Productions of NU's knowledge that are intended in this article do not concern the program, decision, or intellectual tradition but concern the aspect of NU *ulama's* notions that give us views of good religious attitudes for practicing Islam in the religious diversity of Indonesian citizens.

Talking about the production of knowledge, Bruinessen's notion about producing Islamic knowledge is one of the discourses of knowledge production that is interesting.

⁸ Redaksi, "Gus Yahya Klaim 59.2 Persen Pemeluk Islam Di Indonesia Mengaku NU," *CNN Indonesia*, 26/10/2022. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20221026021709-32-865346/gus-yahya-klaim-592-persen-pemeluk-islam-di-indonesia-mengaku-nu>.

⁹ Redaksi, "Ini Tema Muktamar NU Ke-33 Di Jombang," *NU Online*, 09/03/2015. <https://nu.or.id/nasional/ini-tema-muktamar-nu-ke-33-di-jombang-ueaTq>.

¹⁰ Muhammad Wildan, "Religious Diversity and the Challenge of Multiculturalism: Contrasting Indonesia and the European Union," *Sunan Kalijaga: International Journal of Islamic Civilization* 3, no. 2 (2020), 257.

¹¹ Nada Rahmatina and Rijal Ali, "Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Pilar Persatuan Bangsa: Studi Komparatif Kitab Suci Islam Dan Hindu," *Religi: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 20, no. 1 (2024), 104.

According to Bruinessen, Islamic knowledge refers to “whatever Muslims consider to be correct or proper belief and practice—in the widest meaning of those words, and including non-discursive, embodied forms of knowledge.”¹² In this opinion, the production of Islamic knowledge is about correct or proper practices; in this article, the author mentioned using the term “moderate Muslim”, which has been produced by the makers of Islamic knowledge.

According to Bruinessen, the NU *ulamas* from the background of traditionalists are the most interesting Muslim thinkers in Indonesia.¹³ Those NU *ulamas* are the alumni of the *pesantren*, so we can say that Bruinessen’s statement also explained that the *pesantren* have an important role in the production of Islamic knowledge in Indonesia. Through the alumni of *pesantren*, many productions of knowledge about good life in Indonesia emerge. Among Bruinessen mentioned was Gus Dur, whose teaching was studied in this article. According to Bruinessen, the commitment to aspirations of social justice and tolerance to other religious people is an important element in thinking of NU *ulama*.¹⁴ This opinion explains at least that the discourse of being moderate Muslim in religious diversity as the Muslim way, which can put forward justice and tolerance toward other religious believers, colors teachings of NU *ulamas*. Those teachings become the focus of reasearch that have studied in this article.

After Muktamar of NU in Jombang, in the year 2015 CE, which promoted the theme of *Islam Nusantara*,¹⁵ many works had studied the production of NU’s knowledge about the issues of *Islam Nusantara*. Ramdhan in his work explained the *Islam Nusantara* as the indigenization of Islam in the style of NU.¹⁶ The work of Aminuddin and Ulfah also explained the concept and epistemology of *Islam Nusantara*.¹⁷ These both of works explained *Islam Nusantara* as not another Islam, but Islam that has experience of dialectic with Nusantara culture. The difference between these works is that Ramdhan read the dialectic of Islamic doctrine and Nusantara culture through the concept of Islamic indigenization,¹⁸ whereas Aminuddin and Ulfa exposed aspects of the epistemology

¹² Martin van Bruinessen, “Producing Islamic Knowledge in Western Europe: Discipline, Authority, and Personal Quest,” in *Producing Islamic Knowledge: Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.

¹³ Martin van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradisi, Relasi-Relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru*, ed. LKiS (Yogyakarta, 2008), 9.

¹⁴ Bruinessen, 9.

¹⁵ The theme of the 33rd Muktamar of NU in Jombang is; *Meneguhkan Islam Nusantara untuk Peradaban Indonesia dan Dunia* (Strengthening *Islam Nusantara* to the Civilization of Indonesia and the World). Redaksi, “Ini Tema Muktamar NU Ke-33 Di Jombang,” *NU Online*.

¹⁶ Tri W. Ramdhan, “Islam Nusantara: Pribumisasi Islam Ala Nu,” *Al-Insiyiroh*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2018), 88.

¹⁷ Luthfi H. Aminuddin and Isnatin Ulfah, “Epistemology of Islam Nusantara: Transformation of Islamic Legal Thought in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU),” *Justicia Islamica* 18, no. 2 (2021), -.

¹⁸ Ramdhan, “Islam Nusantara,” 88.

of *Islam Nusantara* according to them based on approaches of *al-maqashid al-shari'ah*, *manhaj al-fikr ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*, and *al-'urf*.¹⁹ Differing from those works, this article read the dialog of Islam and Nusantara to be not the aspect of tradition or culture, but the aspect of Nusantara in this article is the reality of religious diversity in this area.

Munfaridah discussed the *Islam Nusantara* as a manifestation of NU's effort to embody peacefulness.²⁰ In a similar argument, Fuad also explained the *Islam Nusantara* as the Islamic moderation of NU style.²¹ Although both works explained how NU produces knowledge in the narration of Islamic moderation, Munfaridah's work exposed the concept of *Islam Nusantara*,²² while this article read NU *ulama*'s teachings and does not repeat the explanation of the concept of *Islam Nusantara*, except for trying giving a construction of ideas about being moderate Muslim in religious diversity as part of *Islam Nusantara* expressions. Fuad's work was more to effort reading the history of appearing NU and its impact on Islamic moderation,²³ while this article constructed the teachings or knowledge production of NU *ulama* in looking at religious diversity.

Studies reading the knowledge production of NU also had been executed by Mutakin²⁴ and Munfidah.²⁵ Mutakin explained the position of *kitab kuning* (the Islamic classical literature) in the intellectual tradition of NU,²⁶ and Munfidah read Gus Dur's teaching, as an *ulama* of NU, in the contexts of character education and local wisdom.²⁷ Differing from Mutakin explored the position of *kitab kuning* in the intellectual tradition of NU, this article did not explore the tradition of using sources in the knowledge production of NU but rather read the products of knowledge of NU *ulamas*. While Munfidah exposed Gus Dur's teaching on the construction of local wisdom of tradition, this article read the teachings of NU *ulamas* on the construction of religious wisdom in diversity.

Based on the explanations about previous studies and exposing the position of this article between those previous studies, the author can say that academically this work is important to be presented to enrich the study of *Islam Nusantara*. This article presents the discourse of being moderate Muslim in religious diversity as part of the expression of

¹⁹ Aminuddin and Ulfah, "Epistemology of Islam Nusantara," -.

²⁰ Tuti Munfaridah, "Islam Nusantara Sebagai Manifestasi Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Dalam Mewujudkan Perdamaian," *Wahana Akademika*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (2017), 33.

²¹ A. J. Fuad, "Akar Sejarah Moderasi Islam Pada Nahdlatul Ulama," *Tribakti*, Vol. 31, no. 1 (2020), 153.

²² Munfaridah, "Islam Nusantara Sebagai Manifestasi," 20.

²³ Fuad, "Akar Sejarah Moderasi," 156.

²⁴ Ali Mutakin, "Kitab Kuning Dan Tradisi Intelektual Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Dalam Penentuan Hukum (Menelisis Tradisi Riset Kitab Kuning)," *Syariah*, Vol. 18, no. 1 (2018), 192.

²⁵ Luk L. N. Munfidah, "Pemikiran Gus Dur Tentang Pendidikan Karakter Dan Kearifan Lokal, *Al-Tabrir*, Vol. 12, no. 1 (2015), 91.

²⁶ Mutakin, "Kitab Kuning Dan Tradisi Intelektual," 208.

²⁷ Munfidah, "Pemikiran Gus Dur," 95.

Islam Nusantara. This notion gives view that *Islam Nusantara*, in NU *Ulama's* teaching, is not enough about tradition or art but rather also about practicing Islam in the religious diversity of Nusantara society.

The knowledge production of NU *ulama* concerning the moderate Muslim that can put forward tolerance to other religious believers was studied in this article. The author used the research method of literature study or library research in exploring NU *ulama's* teachings. Remember this article is a literature study, so the sources of prime data are the sources of literature. And, because the teachings of NU *ulama*, which have been studied in this article, are from literature, hence the term of NU *ulama's* teachings in this article referred to the production of knowledge in the books, not to the viral lectures and also not to the result of interviews (*sowan ulama*).

Of course, not all books of NU *ulamas'* works were studied in this article. Just a few books, especially their production of knowledge concerning being good Muslim in religious diversity. Reading NU *ulamas'* teachings is dominant in Gus Dur's teaching, which is indeed the most identic with theme in this article. Gus Dur's teaching was studied concurrently with the teachings of other NU *ulamas*. There are teachings of Kiai Muzadi and Gus Yahya that remind the majority to be not egoist, and the teaching of Kiai Aqil teaches to understand the diverse reality of Nusantara and to promote interreligious harmony. There are also Kiai Yudian's teaching about Islam as the process to *salam* (welfare), Nyai Badriyah's teaching about *makruf* attitude to fellow humans, and Kiai Faqih's teaching about *mubadalah* relation of Muslim people with other religious people. Reading those NU *ulamas'* teachings, hopefully, this article can present the construction of ideas about being moderate Muslim in religious diversity as an expression of practicing Islam in Nusantara.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF DIVERSITY

Diversity is the reality of life in Nusantara. Although the majority of Indonesian citizens relatively are Muslim, we cannot ignore the fact that also many citizens are non-Muslim. Based on data from the Kementerian Agama (the Religious Ministry), in the year 2022 from the totality of Indonesian citizens around 277.750.009 populations; 241.699.189 (87.02%) are Muslim, 20.647.770 (7.43%) are Christian, 8.501.292 (3.06%) are Catholic, 4.692.883 (1.69%) are Hindu, 2.016.564 (0.73%) are Budha, 74.899 (0.03%) are Khonghucu, and 117.412 (0.04%) are identified as the others.²⁸ In other words, there are around 36.050.820 (12.98%) Indonesian citizens who are not Islamic believers.

²⁸ Redaksi, "Jumlah Penduduk Menurut Agama," *Kemenag.go.id*, 31/08/2022.

That quantity of non-Muslim people is not a small number to be ignored. The existence of millions of non-Muslims becomes the life of Nusantara society as a diverse reality. The author reminds a famous statement by Gus Dur; “*Indonesia itu ada karena keberagaman* (Indonesia exists because of diversity).”²⁹ In fact, the Indonesian nation is indeed formed by citizens who have diversity, including religious diversity.

The reality of religious diversity in Nusantara has existed since a hundred or thousand years ago. Before the coming of Islam until now, the reality of Nusantara is constantly diverse. In other words, pluralism is a concrete condition in the life of Nusantara society that has existed for a long time. This plural condition has not to be resisted, but rather we enough accept it as an actuality. In this case, Gus Dur had taught the socio-cultural approach, namely about the ability of Muslim people (and other religious people) to understand basic matters in society.³⁰ In this context, due to the fact that the Muslim people of Nusantara live in plural surroundings, being neighbors with other religious believers, the face of friendly Islam that regards religious difference is one basic necessity in being religious in Nusantara. Automatically, this becomes the good relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims as one basic necessity in the life of citizens because the absence of good relations is a big potency of chaos in religious differences.³¹ Therefore, we need the narration of religious doctrine that can promote values of pluralism in a form of consciousness to live harmoniously and peacefully in religious diversity.

The socio-cultural approach in Gus Dur’s teaching about the indigenization of Islam brings the discourse of *Islam Nusantara*, as the Islamic expression of Muslims in Nusantara, is not just about art and tradition of Muslim society but also about practicing Islam in the plural Indonesian society. This is suitable for how NU expresses Islam. According to Kiai Aqil, the Islamic way of NU does not contest Islam and the reality of Nusantara, however, NU takes the Islamic way which is dialogue to both flexibly.³² In other words, the NU *ulamas* attempt to understand the plural reality in Nusantara and teach to be moderate Muslims in diversity.

Practicing Islam and considering the plural reality in Nusantara, in Kiai Aqil’s opinion, had existed since the Wali Songo era—Wali Songo are the spreaders of Islam in Nusantara. Where, the *walis* brought up the *fiqihul hikmah* attitude in performing

²⁹ Redaksi, “Peneliti Senior: Gus Dur Menjaga Persatuan Dalam Keberagaman,” *NU Online*, 29/05/2023. <https://nu.or.id/nasional/peneliti-senior-gus-dur-menjaga-persatuan-dalam-keberagaman-QTk1p>.

³⁰ Wahid, “Pribumisasi Islam,” 43.

³¹ Roni Ismail, *Menuju Muslim Rahmatan Lil’Alamin*, (Yogyakarta: Suka Press, 2006), 50-52; Roni Ismail, “Konsep Toleransi dalam Psikologi Agama (Tinjauan Kematangan Beragama), *Religi: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2012. 1-12.

³² Said Aqil Siraj, “Rekonstruksi Aswaja Sebagai Etika Sosial: Akar-Akar Teologi Moderasi Nahdlatul Ulama,” in *Islam Nusantara: Dari Ushul Fiqh Hingga Paham Kebangsaan*, eds. Akhmad Sahal and Munawir Aziz (Bandung: Mizan, 2016), 161.

Islam in the plural Nusantara society, so Islam could be accepted by all even people of Hindu and Budha and other religious believers.³³ Such as Sunan Kudus did not slaughter cows, was more choosing buffalo, to regard the Hindu people in his surroundings. The *fiqihul hikmah* was a result of Wali Songo's consciousness toward the plural reality of Nusantara; multi-ethnics, multi-cultures, multi-languages, and multi-religions. Here, the Wali Songo expressed the culture of *Islam Nusantara* which can be instrumental in living harmoniously and peacefully.³⁴ In this case, being moderate Muslim in religious diversity is one heritage of Wali Songo's wisdom in spreading Islam in Nusantara.

The doctrine of being moderate Muslim in the religious diversity is begun with the consciousness of diversity. In this consciousness, Gus Dur taught that the difference of beliefs does not restrict or forbid collaboration between the Muslim people and other religious people, especially concerning the importance of humans (or humanity).³⁵ In this case, we are conscious, that we are indeed different, and in this religious difference has not to be disunity but rather has to develop the consciousness of diversity and to promote the interreligious relations. This consciousness will be able to reduce the potency of chaos and strengthen the interreligious harmony in life together.

The consciousness of religious diversity has no meaning, we must believe that all religions are correct. We have beliefs in each of our religions. The Muslim people believe that Islam is correct, and sure the people of Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Budha, Khonghucu, and *Penghayat*, all believe that each of their religions is correct. However, based on the consciousness of religious diversity brings us to a good condition that regards differences of religions each other. According to Gus Dur, believing in one truth and its performance does not mean making us cannot understand other different people.³⁶

In this case, the teaching of *Islam Nusantara* gives a narration of being Islamic that still maintains closeness with non-Muslims in a plural society. This is not against the Islamic doctrine and instead is suitable for the Islamic spirit. According to Gus Dur, the difference is one of the things that is acknowledged by Islam, while disunity is very forbidden in Islamic doctrine.³⁷ This teaching explains it's nothing we differ, Islam acknowledges differences and one which has to be ensured is to maintain unity because Islam forbids disunity even with non-Muslim people.

³³ Said Aqil Siraj, "Meneladani Strategi 'Kebudayaan' Para Wali," in *Atlas Wali Songo*, au. Agus Sunyoto (Tangerang: Pustaka IIMaN, 2012), xi.

³⁴ Ahmad Baso, "Belajar Dari Tradisi Para Sayid-Wali Songo Di Nusantara," *Besari*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2023), 15.

³⁵ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita*, (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2006), 133-134.

³⁶ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Jalan Utama Bagi Kita," In *Fikih Tradisi: Dasar Amaliyah Warga NU*, au. Abdusshomad, (Jakarta: DPP PKB, 2008), -. Re-post by Gusdur.net: <https://gusdur.net/jalan-utama-bagi-kita/>.

³⁷ Wahid, *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita*, 29.

In the consciousness of religious diversity, Gus Dur taught us that interpretation from *al-islamu ya'lu wala yu'la 'alaihi* (Islam is eminent and predominates), meaning that the Islamic value is sole that must be followed by all citizens and ignores differences, it is an inexact interpretation to the context of plural Indonesian society.³⁸ According to Gus Dur, Islamic eminence should be looked at as the ability to develop plurality or diversity in tolerating other values (other religions) without having to lose identity as a believer of Islam.³⁹ How we can say that Islam is the most eminent religion on the condition where practicing Islam instead makes unpeacefulness of life together in religious diversity?

In this case, Gus Dur had given a doctrine of *Islam Nusantara*, which explains that the eminence of Islam is visible in Islamic expression that makes peacefulness, and no chaos, in the context of plural Indonesian society.⁴⁰ This is a condition where, in Kiai Yudian's view, the Islamic process as way carries to *salam* (welfare).⁴¹ The welfare way is begun with the consciousness of religious diversity. We are conscious, that the Muslim people do not live alone in this country; conscious, that the Muslim people live together with other religious people as one plural society.

DEMOLISHING THE MAJORITARIANISM EGO

In one speech, Gus Yahya, general chairman of PB-NU, mentioned that based on a survey in the year 2022, around 59.2% of Muslims in Indonesia admitted their status as a member of NU.⁴² If data from the Kementerian Agama⁴³ claimed that in the year 2022 Muslims in Indonesia were around 241.699.189, it meant the NU members at the time were around 143.085.920. It also was more than half of Indonesian citizens, in the year 2022 numbering around 277.750.009, were members (*warga*) of NU. This explains that NU is the majority group in Indonesia.

Kiai Muzadi explained that in the context of nationality the Muslim people, including the members of NU, as the majority side have the responsibility to be more for minority rights.⁴⁴ So, the majority status does not mean the Muslim people must dominate all things in this country, including freedom of religious expression, predominantly. According to

³⁸ Wahid, "Jalan Utama Bagi Kita," -. Re-post by Gusdur.net: <https://gusdur.net/jalan-utama-bagi-kita/>.

³⁹ Wahid.

⁴⁰ Wahid.

⁴¹ Yudian Wahyudi, *Maqashid Syariah Dalam Pergumulan Politik: Berfilsafat Hukum Islam Dari Harvard Ke Sunan Kalijaga* (Yogyakarta: Nawesea Press, 2019), 23.

⁴² Redaksi, "Gus Yahya Klaim 59.2 Persen Pemeluk Islam Di Indonesia Mengaku NU," *Cnnindonesia.com*.

⁴³ Redaksi, "Jumlah Penduduk Menurut Agama," *Kemenag.go.id*.

⁴⁴ Hasyim Muzadi, *Nabdlatul Ulama Di Tengah Agenda Persoalan Bangsa*, (Jakarta: Logos, 1999), 58.

Kiai Muzadi, reacting to the plural reality in Nusantara society has to be acted with a pro-pluralism religious attitude.⁴⁵ In this case, Kiai Muzadi taught the fact that Muslims are the majority making Muslims have the big responsibility to give safety and comfort to the minorities. Thus, not using a lot of quantity for discriminating a few quantities. In this doctrine of NU *ulama*, the majority status is not to grow ego majoritarianism but consciousness of religious diversity.

The consciousness of diversity that demolishes the majoritarianism ego brings on a religious way that promotes interreligious equality. In this case, Gus Dur explained that although the Quran has asserted the correct religion on the side of Allah is Islam, it is not meaning that the country cannot give the same treatment to all religious people as citizens. Unity of the country will just form if the country gives the same treatment based on fair law to all citizens. The theological equation between religions will be not possible—if we mean as right to formulate the gospel-truth of God. However, the law equation can be constituted as long as every citizen gets the same treatment fairly. Gus Dur reminded us that, in this reality of religious diversity, we should understand based on wisdom.⁴⁶

In this context, NU *ulama's* teaching invites giving attitude to the majority status based on wisdom, and no fanaticism or egoism. The consciousness of religious diversity makes the NU *ulamas*, as Gus Dur and Kiai Muzadi, truly understand that, in the context of nationality, we must promote interreligious equality. The Muslim people who are the majority cannot discriminate other religious people who are the minorities. Minority groups have the right to freedom of being religious in the public sphere such as the majority group. NU's tolerant ideology, according to Gus Dur, makes NU appear as the anchor of NKRI (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia), which has a role in maintaining the safety and harmony of life together in Indonesia.⁴⁷

Majoritarianism ego as a toxic can crack the consciousness of religious diversity. When one majority group feels the most superior, so they look at the minority groups as the sides that are not proper to get the same portion of being religious as their group. They feel that their group is the sole side that can build the big place of worship because of the majority, while the minority groups are enough to practice worship in their homes; have not to build a worship place. Here, limiting religious expression to minorities (the majoritarianism tyranny) occurs in the public sphere, which is acted by the majority group. The NU *ulama*, as Gus Dur, understands the danger of majoritarianism tyranny

⁴⁵ Muzadi, 59.

⁴⁶ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Melawan Melalui Lelucon: Kumpulan Kolom Abdurrahman Wahid Di Tempo* (Jakarta: Tempo, 2000), 60-61.

⁴⁷ Baso, "Belajar Dari Tradisi," 15.

in interreligious harmony, accordingly among Gus Dur's teachings are humanity, equality, and justice for minorities.

Like Gus Dur and Kiai Muzadi who taught interreligious equality, Gus Yahya also continued the narration to abolish the majoritarianism ego. According to Gus Yahya, Islam in Nusantara is always in the condition of learning continuously. Among those conditions is the consideration of the *ulamas* for hundred years of developing Islam based on considering the plural socio-cultural reality of Nusantara society, and taking religious way with being dialog between Islam and plural Nusantara reality in performing Islam. In this case, the *ulamas* of Nusantara do not put forward the majoritarianism ego making special citizens to Muslim status, they position Muslim people as equal citizens with non-Muslim people in the life of plural Indonesian society. Therefore, in Gus Yahya's view, the *ulamas* of Nusantara commonly believe that public affairs should be handled based on willingness and justness together.⁴⁸

These teaching of NU *ulamas* is part of the social ethic principle of NU that promotes attitudes of *tawasuth* and *i'tidal* (moderate and fair), *tasamuh* (tolerance to difference), *tawazun* (balanced), and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (inviting goodness preventing badness).⁴⁹ In this principle, attitudes of *tawasuth* and *i'tidal* are religious attitudes that promote consciousness toward justice and equality in life together.⁵⁰ So, in NU *Ulama's* teaching, whatever your religion, we all are equal as fellow citizens and fellow humans. This teaching of diversity develops awareness to co-exist with Muslims and non-Muslims.⁵¹ And, in this case, we abolish the majoritarianism ego in ourselves and promote good relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the religious diversity of Nusantara.

If NU *ulama's* teaching can penetrate into the religious expression of every NU member, it is more than half of Indonesian citizens have the consciousness of religious diversity and no majoritarianism ego. In other words, there have been more than half of Indonesian Muslims are moderate Muslims in religious diversity. Of course, it is "if", is it not?

AN INTERLACING THE RELATION OF INTERRELIGIOUS HUMANITY

During the year 2023, based on data from Setara Institute, there were around 217 incidents and 329 actions of infraction for the KBB (*Kebabasan Beragama Berkeyakinan*/Freedom Being Religious and Belief) in Indonesia. Among those infractions, 26 intolerant

⁴⁸ Yahya Cholil Staquf, "Islam Merangkul Nusantara," in *Islam Nusantara: Dari Usbul Fiqh Hingga Paham Kebangsaan*, ed. Akhmad Sahal and Munawir Aziz (Bandung: Mizan, 2016), 198.

⁴⁹ As'ad Said Ali, *Pergolakan Di Jantung Tradisi NU Yang Saya Amati* (Jakarta: Pustaka LP3ES, 2008), 31.

⁵⁰ M. Masyhur Amin, *NU Dan Ijtihad Politik Kenegaraannya* (Yogyakarta: Al-Amin, 1996), 87.

⁵¹ Jamal Ma'mur Asmani, *Menatap Masa Depan NU* (Yogyakarta: Aswaja Pressindo, n.d.), 159.

actions were executed by society and 23 discriminative actions were executed by side of the country.⁵² Shutting the Bunda Maria Statue in Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta, was one of the intolerant cases in the year 2023, which was viral.⁵³

Intolerant or discriminative cases against other religious people are not loose from the absence of the consciousness of religious diversity and the accretion of majoritarianism ego. The absence of consciousness to be diverse brings on failure to interlace the relation of interreligious humanity.⁵⁴ In this case, the teaching of NU *ulama*, as Gus Dur taught, wants to interlace the relation of interreligious humanity with other religious people.⁵⁵ To be a moderate Muslim, fellow Muslims are brothers based on faith (Islamic fraternity) and non-Muslim people are brothers based on humanity (human fraternity).⁵⁶

Gus Dur's teaching of humanity is based on his interpretation of the Islamic faith (*ketauhidan*). Gus Dur looked at humanity as part of a reflection of God's characters. Praising humans means praising God who creates humans, while lowering humans means lowering God. Gus Dur's humanistic teaching argues a mistake that tolerance to non-Muslim sources from low faith. In Gus Dur's teaching, interreligious tolerance is precisely based on high faith. Where, the Islamic faith teaches that human is the creation of Allah, so praising humans, whatever their religion, is the same as praising their Creator.⁵⁷ The basis of high faith brings a moderate Muslim expressing the character of God; it means, God is the most affectionate so being Muslim ought to spread affection to all humans even though non-Muslims.⁵⁸

Gus Dur also interpreted humanity based on the interpretation of Surah al-Anbiya', verse 107; *Wa ma arsalnaka illa rahmatan li al-alamin*. According to Gus Dur, the term *rahmah* is adopted from the meaning of *rahim* (womb) of the mother, accordingly, all humans who are born from *rahim* of the mother are brothers. The word *alamin* in this

⁵² Setara Institute, "Kondisi Kebebasan Beragama Berkeyakinan (KBB) 2023: Dari Stagnasi Menuju Stagnasi Baru," 11/06/2024.

⁵³ Redaksi, "7 Fakta Penutupan Patung Bunda Maria Di Kulon Progo: Didatangi Ormas, Lalu Tutup Patung Atas Keinginan Sendiri," *Tempo.co*, 25/032023. <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1706814/7-fakta-penutupan-patung-bunda-maria-di-kulon-progo-didatangi-ormas-lalu-tutup-patung-atas-keinginan-sendiri>.

⁵⁴ Moh. Rivaldi Abdul, "Meruntuhkan Ego Mayoritanisme: Analisis Pemikiran Buya Syafii Maarif dan Kyai Yudian Atas Kesetaraan Antar Umat Beragama," in *Membumikan Pancasila: Kyai Yudian Wahyudi Antara Buya Ahmad Syafii Maarif Dan Pendeta Andreas Yewango*, ed. Wardah Nuroniyah (Yogyakarta: Cakrawala, 2023), 4.

⁵⁵ Wahid, *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita*, 351.

⁵⁶ Moh. Rivaldi Abdul, "Gus Dur's Interreligious Equality in the Context of Plural Indonesian Society," *Al-Imam: Journal on Islamic Studies, Civilisation and Learning Societies* 5, no. 2 (2024), 77.

⁵⁷ Nur K. Ridwan, *Ajaran-Ajaran Gus Dur: Syarah 9 Nilai Utama Gus Dur*, (Yogyakarta: Noktah, 2019), 39.

⁵⁸ Moh. Rivaldi Abdul, "Tauhid Kedamaian: Beriman Dan Berdamai Dalam Keragaman Agama Masyarakat Nusantara," in *Moderasi Beragama: Akar Teologi, Nalar Kebudayaan, dan Kontestasi di Ruang Digital*, eds. L.M. Makhnun, S. Kurniawan, and W.E. Wahyudi, (Jakarta: Penerbit BRIN, 2023), 38.

verse also is interpreted by Gus Dur as all humans commonly and not just Muslims. So, in Gus Dur's interpretation, this verse means that the Prophet Muhammad was delegated by Allah to bring the message of fraternity into human life. And, the human fraternity does not look at religious status.⁵⁹ This becomes a way of *salam* (welfare) in religious diversity.

Gus Dur's humanistic teaching without looking at the religious status does not mean making the same of all religions—this is as author has explained in the discussion about the consciousness of diversity. Instead equating all religions is a form of ignoring the reality of diversity. Gus Dur acknowledged reality of religious diversity, and he was not trapped in interreligious enmity. According to Gus Dur, the differences have not to be a reason for disunity.⁶⁰ In this case, the same does not to be differentiated, and the difference does not to be equated. We enough admit the religious diversity and maintain the inter-human relation in this diversity. According to Gus Dur, the religious difference does not limit or forbid collaboration between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially in humanistic things. Gus Dur believed that Islam is a religion that acknowledges differences and very forbids disunity.⁶¹

The teaching of NU *ulama* in this context is the relation of humanity between Muslims and non-Muslims. This teaching brings us to the expression of being moderate Muslim, which is friendly in religious diversity, which is reciprocally regard-regarding other religious people, and which is helping each other without looking at religious status. Humanity becomes a knot of common good that unites interreligious differences. According to Gus Dur, due to the fact that all religions have to actualize welfare in life together, although in forms differ, so here is formed inter-religious resemblance; not in doctrines of belief but just at achievement of humanity.⁶² Therefore, the teaching of NU *ulama* teaches that we indeed differ in religions, but we can interlace the relation of interreligious humanity.

The relation of interreligious humanity, if based on the views of Nyai Badriyah and Kiai Faqih, interlaces the relation of *makruf*⁶³ and *mubadalah*.⁶⁴ *Makruf* in this context is a relation that promotes correct, good, and proper attitudes toward other religious people. So, a moderate Muslim promotes an attitude of *makruf* to non-Muslims. And, that relation occurs with *mubadalah* (reciprocally), where the interreligious relation of

⁵⁹ Wahid, *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita*, 111.

⁶⁰ Wahid, 351.

⁶¹ Wahid, 133-134.

⁶² Wahid, 134-135.

⁶³ Badriyah Fayumi, *Konsep Makruf Dalam Ayat-Ayat Munakahat Dan Kontekstualisasinya Dalam Beberapa Masalah Perkawinan Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2008), 49.

⁶⁴ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Relasi Mubadalah Muslim Dengan Umat Berbeda Agama* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2022), 17.

makruf is reciprocal and all religious people get a good impact together. In this case, meeting a moderate Muslim and a moderate non-Muslim will embody a harmonious and peaceful life in religious differences.

Relation of humanity with people who have different religions is one of the expressions of moderate Muslim in the context of religious diversity. Through the relation of interreligious humanity, we can avoid intolerant and discriminative actions against other religious believers. And, practicing Islam in the diversity of Nusantara can truly become one of the sources of *salam* (welfare) to all humans in this country.

CONCLUSION

NU *ulamas* teach Islamic expression that does not ignore the reality of Nusantara. We have discussed how the socio-cultural approach to the indigenization of Islam and the NU way of being religious based on the dialogue between Islam and Nusantara culture. This NU *ulama's* teaching promotes an expression of being moderate Muslim, which is friendly and regards religious differences, in practicing Islam in the context of plural Nusantara society. It is the character of *Islam Nusantara*, which appears from the dialogic encounter between the Nusantara culture that accentuates harmony in the life of plural society and the Islamic doctrine that teaches to live without violence.

In this NU *ulama's* teaching, being Muslim is not based on the majoritarianism ego and building a wall of separation with non-Muslims. NU *ulamas* teach to Muslim people have a consciousness of diversity and promote good relations of humanity with other religious people. Such as in the pluralism paradigm, the *ulamas* teach that every person, either Muslim or non-Muslim, has to be treated humanely because of humanistic values. The NU *ulamas* have given teachings for being moderate Muslim, which practices Islam with regarding humanity to all humans including non-Muslim people.

NU *ulamas* teach Islamic practice that does not ignore the consciousness of religious diversity. In this consciousness, the Muslim people abolish the majoritarianism ego and promote interreligious equality. This teaching makes Muslim people to be able to interlace the relationship of interreligious humanity with people who have different religions. This explains that NU *ulamas* consider correct or proper Islamic practices in the religious diversity of Nusantara in the production of their knowledge. A knowledge production teaches about being moderate Muslim who can interlace interreligious tolerance in the plural Nusantara society.

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