Religious Conflicts and a Culture of Tolerance:
Paving the Way for Reconciliation in Indonesia[1]

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Abstrak

Indonesia yang berideologi Pancasila, dikenal sebagai suatu bangsa yang toleran meski memiliki aneka sukubangsa, budaya dan agama. Akhir-akhir ini, isu dan realitas konflik antaragama dan antarsukubangsa semakin merebak. Simbol-simbol keagamaan acapkali dimanipulasi oleh kelompok-kelompok tertentu. Manipulasi semacam itu yang melahirkan konflik-konflik agama turut menantang khasanah budaya Indonesia yang toleran, yang telah sekian lama diakui dan dijunjung tinggi. Semangat toleransi itu di antaranya dibangun di atas landasan ideologi nasional Pancasila dan khasanah budaya lokal seperti pela gandong dari Ambon atau budaya rumah adat dari Flores. Dalam artikel ini penulis berargumentasi bahwa manipulasi simbol-simbol agama tidak akan pernah dapat menyelesaikan konflik-konflik agama dan sukubangsa yang terjadi, baik di Ambon maupun tempat-tempat lain di Indonesia.

Bertolak dari teori bandul toleransi antaragama (pendulum swing theory of religious tolerance), penulis berargumentasi bahwa pendekatan budaya sebagaimana dikaji dalam studi kasus tentang 'budaya rumah adat Keo' dari Flores Tengah dan peristiwa Kupang (1998) dapat menjadi acuan untuk belajar dari pengalaman. Lebih lanjut, otonomi agama, baik di tingkat institusi maupun personal, merupakan suatu kondisi mutlak untuk mempertahankan Indonesia sebagai suatu negara kesatuan. Agama tanpa otonomi, dan bahkan yang secara sengaja dipolitisasi oleh sejumlah elite politik dan kelompok-kelompok fanatik, akan secara mudah menyulut terjadinya konflik-konflik agama. Pemerintah Indonesia, pemimpin-pemimpin agama dan para penganut aneka agama seyogianya menyatakan rasa 'sesal dan tobat', bila mereka ingin membuka jalan ke arah rekonsiliai dan melanjutkan kehidupan yang harmonis sebagai suatu negara kesatuan.

Introduction

If we try to recall our memories of the last days of the New Order regime we will find that most of the statements made by the Indone-sian authorities on social conflicts were unrealistic. They implied that the various conflicts that took place successively in Indonesia in

the 1990s are not *SARA*[2] issues. Rather, it is social and economic jealousy, according to the New Order regime, that have formed the basis for these conflicts.

To some extent, such statements support the national ideology of Pancasila, which has tended to produce a folklore about Indonesia as a multi-religious and multi-cultural nation which is peaceful and tolerant. However, we can not escape from the facts of escalating religious conflicts (Jakarta, Situbondo, Medan, Sambas, Kupang and Ambon). Christians and Muslims fight and kill each other. From the political perspective, however, those conflicts do not neatly arrange themselves along purely denominational lines. They also take place on the basis of ethnic lines such as Javanese versus Batak, Javanese versus Chinese, Ambon versus Bugis, Kupang versus Bugis, and so on. They are often only collaterally related to differences among religious groups such as Muslim versus Christian.

Apart from the idea of religious tolerance and harmony, we can see that the seeds of anti-Islam or anti-Christianity and inter-ethnic conflict have started to become wide-spread and grounded in Indonesian soil, most often in the form of taking revenge against the Muslim domination in Java and other islands. In the New Order era, religious bigotry was never believed to be the main issue because other issues dominated, such as the authoritarian regime, and army versus civilian rivalry. However, in the period of the New Order's collapse, religious and ethnic conflict have seemed to be part of Indonesian daily life. From then onwards, religious conflict has become sharper as religious bigotry has taken the shape of manipulation of religious symbols and echoing calls for religious wars (*jihad*).

This paper analyses the particular conflict between the locals and the Bugis-Macassans in Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) province, known as the Kupang incident (1998), and other religious conflicts in NTT (including host desecration in Flores between 1991-1995) in the context of 'house-based society' (*masyarakat berasas rumah*) and 'kinship culture' (*budaya kerabat*).

While taking into account the pendulum swing theory of religious tolerance (Gellner 1969; Hume 1757/1976), I argue that the cultural approach as discussed in my case study of 'Keo house-based society' of Central Flores offers a lesson to be learnt in solving the Ambon conflict which has lasted for quite a long period. Furthermore, religious autonomy, both in institutional and popular levels, is an absolute pre-condition for keeping Indonesia as a unitary state. Religion without autonomy, and even deliberately politicized by certain elite politicians and fanatic groups, will easily lead the respective believers to wage religious wars.

The Kupang incident violates a tolerant culture

Ethnographic description of Kupang

Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) is one of the twenty six provinces of Indonesia. Out of its 3.5 million population, the majority (86.93%) is Christian, with the remainder being 9.94% Muslims, 0.23% Hindu, 0.01% Buddhist and 3.87% other religions (BPS 1991:272; Depag 1995/1996). Various publications on NTT society and culture claim that there are at least 75 ethnic groups living in NTT, who differ in culture, language and customs (Liliweri and Neonbasu 1994:1).

Kupang, as the capital town, is the dwelling place of approximately 522,944 inhabitants (Pos Kupang, 26/04/1999), consisting of two

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[2] *SARA* is an acronym introduced by the New Order Regime for the *Suku* (tribal), *Agama* (religious), *Ras* (racial) and *Antargolongan* (inter-group) issues.

sub-districts (*kecamatan*) with 25 village administrations (*kelurahan*). It is the largest urban centre of the province and is the centre of government, business, trade and education. In terms of population diversity, it has seven ethnic groups comprising Flores, Alor, Sumba, Timor, Rote, Sabu and the non-NTT people (*migrants*) who include Bugis, Buton, Makassar and Java. Liliweri, in his doctoral thesis entitled *'Prasangka Sosial dan Efektivitas Komunikasi Antar Etnik di Kupang'* (Social prejudice and effectiveness in inter-ethnic communication in Kupang), claimed that the tendency to be ethnocentric characterises interethnic communication in Kupang. Such a tendency can be seen in the concentration of population on the basis of ethnicity in settlements, work-places, social organisation, and boarding houses for students, as well as disguised inter-ethnic competition (Liliweri and Neonbasu 1994:2-4). All these negative phenomena have resulted in a decrease of social trust and communicative effectiveness among the ethnic groups, which also challenge the integrity and harmony of a unitary state.

House-based society and kinship culture: NTT tolerant values

Recently, the intensive study of the house (*oikology*) has been an important focus in anthropology, in addition to the study of genealogy and topogeny. House, in this context, is not only understood as a physical construction and a dwelling place for a group of people. A house also has its symbolic meaning as representing the ancestral spirits, as well as acting as a reference for social units or groups.

In the Islamic world, 'the house of Islam' (*darul-Islam*) is an important theological metaphor. *Darul Islam* in the classical sense is an Islamic territory where Islamic law prevails. Solidarity among the people in the territory is based on the unity of faith in Islam, Islamic law

and the guarantee of protection for all the community, both Muslims and non-Muslims *dhimmi*, who are Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. Everything outside *darul Islam* is regarded as the 'house of war' (*darul Harb*), which is potentially a site for war to be fought on the basis of *jihad* as recommended by Quran 8, 38-39:

> Say to the Unbelievers, if they desist (from unbelief), their past would be forgiven them; But if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already (a matter of warning for them). And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God altogether and everywhere; but if they cease, verily God doth see all that they do.

However, historical evidence from the Najran of South Yaman (610-622) and the Nubians of South Egypt (641-652) demonstrates the existence of a peace treaty with the non-Muslim communities. This treaty is known as house of treaty (*darul Sulh*) in which the Muslim and the Christian communities who are neighbours can accept their respective authorities in love, peace and respect for each other.

Drawing on this metaphorical terminology, many tribes in Timor and Flores, especially the Keo of Central Flores, possess a 'house culture' (*budaya rumah*) manifested through several phenomena of ritual houses (*sa'o nggua*), with a couple of lower social units such as big house (*sa'o mere*) or source house (*sa'o pu'u*), big basket (*mboda*), middle-size basket (*gata*) and small basket (*wati*). In social anthropology, house (*sa'o*) for the Keo of Flores and other tribes in NTT is a cultural force which plays a centripetal role in uniting and incorporating its members into a social unit. As a consequence of this 'house-based society', a kinship system has been built up which supports the harmonious relationship among house members, both Christians and Muslims, the local believers, and the ancestral spirits, by

undertaking a ritual around a cult house. At a certain level, the individual identity and group identity expressed around a house seem to dominate their Muslim or Christian identity. My case study of a Muslim community in eastern Keo (Maundai and Maunori) of Central Flores shows that not only the indigenous Muslims but also the migrant Muslims from Terim (Hadramawt) were once incorporated into a local 'large house'. Using Fox's terminology we have here an example of 'installing the outsiders inside' (Fox 1995).

If we look at this custom in the context of the religious dialogue which has been the focus of the Indonesian government and various religious institutions, 'house culture' (*budaya rumah*) is a positive cultural value of NTT. The same value was encountered by Levi-Strauss among the Yurok of California, as he describes that:

> [The house which constitutes] a corporate body holding an estate up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods and its titles down a real or imaginary line, is considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and, most often, of both (Levi-Strauss 1983:174; cfr. Levi-Strauss 1987:152).

The Kupang Incident, 30 November/1December 1998

Notwithstanding this cultural harmony of NTT, a series of religious conflicts recently took place in Flores and Timor. Various incidents of host desecration[3] took place in the capital

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[3] The incidents of desecration of the host and the riots in Flores took place in towns such as Bajawa (1992), Ende (1993), Maumere (1994) and Larantuka (1995). The incidents involved the Muslims who joined the Catholic Masses, received the holy communion (host) and squeezed them in stead of eating. Such acts have caused the Catholics to attack the actors and even kill some of them.

towns of Flores between 1991 and 1995, which resulted in conflict and suspicion among Christians and Muslims of Flores. Other incidents have involved several brutal attacks and the killing of offenders. Court cases involving these offenders often produced sentences considered inadequate by the Catholics, which led to rioting by Catholics resulting in the destruction of the stalls and goods of Muslim retailers and traders. The Kupang incident (30 November 1998) marked another peak of religious conflict in Timor, when several mosques, Bugis houses and shops were burnt down. The Bugis Muslims had to flee and live in anxiety. All the incidents, both in Flores and Timor, seem to present a real challenge for the tolerant culture of NTT and the house-based hypothesis built up by several researchers such as Tule (1994), Gomang (1993; 1994), and Liliweri (1994).

The Kupang incident has to be seen and understood in its multi-dimensional context, not merely in its religious aspect but also in its social, cultural, political and psychological dimensions. To some extent, it violated the tolerant culture of NTT, which has been observed over many years and has been a cultural value to be proud of. Although it did not claim any life, this tragic incident resulted in serious social, psychological and financial damage for the society. Its cost was estimated at 11.9 billion rupiah, which includes the total destruction of four mosques, another 14 half-destroyed mosques, 23 private houses, a boarding house for Muslims before they embark on their pilgrimage to Mecca (*Asrama Haji*), an Islamic Court Office and four Islamic Schools, 3 shops, 9 restaurants, 30 cars and motor-cycles. (DIAN, 1 January 1999, p. 11; GATRA 30 January 1999, p. 63; Pos Kupang, 19 March 1999).

What is behind the incident?

Various questions have been asked: who were the actors and the provocateurs in the Kupang incident? Who was behind this? Why did the Muslims and Christians of NTT suddenly turn against their own neighbours? Why did the Christians react in these incidents with such violence? Looking at the evidence based on the classifications of the origins of Islam in Flores and Timor (or NTT) into indigenous and migrants, I will now try to uncover the background to these religious conflicts. In addition to the existence of the provocateurs, in the local sphere, I presume four other factors to play a role in religious and ethnic conflicts on Flores and Timor: (1) the anonymous life of the city-dwellers; (2) the changing of market life; (3) the idea of Islamic Reform; and (4) taking revenge against Muslim domination on a national level.

Anonymous life of the city-dwellers

Most Flores and Timor people are Christians and live in villages. Village life is dominant in their social and religious lives. Even the big towns such as Bajawa, Ende and Maumere on Flores and Kupang on Timor, where the 'incidents' took place, are just like big villages in which the people know and deal with each other very well. They have lived for a long time with a unified and harmonious spirit. However, the new trend of Muslim migration to Flores and Timor has started to change those towns into societies characterised by religious anonymity, social anonymity, and the absence of a traditional or inherited common culture. In such an environment, it is possible to violate the sacredness of another religion or to insult the religious beliefs of others and victimise them.

New migrants and the changing of market life

On a regional level, in the Eastern Indonesian sea, since the 17th century, the Bugis, Buton and Macassar seafarers have built continuing contacts with Flores (1601-1603 with a ruler of Tonggo/Keo) and Timor (1641 with a ruler of Wehale). The Macassars brought both good and bad influences to different extents. The good influences include the introduction of Islam, coconut plantations and the fight against colonialism.

Without looking into details of the previous interaction, I will just discuss the recent wave of Macassar migration to Flores and Timor as sailors, fishermen and traders. They are estimated to be about eighty thousand in number, spread out along the coastal areas of Manggarai (Labuan Bajo, Terang, Reo and Pota), Ngadha (Riung, Bhekek and Mbay), the north coast of Ende district (Watu Bara, Maurole and Aewora), the north coast of Sikka district (Magepanda, Wuring, Geliting), on the small islands of Pamana, Sukun near Maumere town, and in Kalabahi and Kupang.

An important factor to consider in the migration of Macassars and other ethnic groups to NTT is their role in the markets. It might be more appropriate to understand this migration in terms of economic activity, including the whole network of domestic trade relationship in Flores and Timor islands. As far as I have observed it, it seems that over the last two decades, when sea-links to Eastern Indonesia were opened up, there was a huge number of Bugis and Macassars who migrated to Flores and Timor. This group of migrants enlarged the number of Muslims who had migrated earlier. It seems that economic elements dominate disputes which lead to social jealousy and perceptions of a migrant group take-over—especially where the indigenous people's job op-

portunities have been taken by the migrants—not a dispute over religious doctrine. These migrants have even started to dominate the markets in Flores and Timor, a role which was previously played by the Catholic or Christian Chinese. The existence of this wave of migrant Muslims has created a number of side effects such as the need for land for their settlements, the need for more mosques to be built, and the challenge to the local government and the local people that the Muslim voice should be taken into consideration.

Another relevant factor is the tendency of the Bugis and Macassar migrants to live in 'ghetto-like communities'. They tend to settle in 'ghettos', a separate limited settlement which is artificially cut off from any local societies and cultures, as can be found in several communities in the north of Sikka district and in Oesapa of Kupang.[4] Unlike the Arabs in Ma'unori who have been incorporated into the local 'large house', the Bugis and Macassar live quite isolated along the coast and on some small islands on the bay of Ma'umere city with an absolute orientation to marine activities. I could not uncover any motivation of the locals to refuse the Bugis and Macassars being incorporated into their society, as had happened among the Bima. Hitchcock (1996: 67-68) noted that the Sulawesi-Bima conflict in Bima has an historical dimension that can be traced back to the early seventeenth century when Sumbawa island came under the sway of the sultanate of Makassar. The different treatment of the Bugis and Macassars in this case may be because the Bimanese still feared Macassar domination.

Islamic Reform

The pressure for Islamic Reform has also played a role in this new phenomenon of conflict. It is a fact that the indigenous Muslims in Keo (and other groups of Flores and Timor) still observe their customs (*adat istiadat*) and local culture, and still bring offerings and sacrifices to their ancestors' spirits and the spirits of the village protectors. They still visit their ancestors' tombs during their *ziarah* at *Idul Fitri*. They still love their non-Muslim relatives and neighbours as their brothers, rather than discriminating against them as the pagans (*kafir*).

In Flores and Timor, the idea of an Islamic Reform Movement (such as Muhammadiyah) has been spread widely via the teachers of Islam in the public and Islamic Schools such as Madrasah, Pesantren and Muhammadiyah Schools. At the same time, the Islamic Reform idea has been promulgated through government office workers and officials, police and military men. Generally, it also arrives with the migrant workers and traders. To some extent, such a concept of Islamic Reform has grouped the Muslims in NTT into the 'real' (*sejati*) and the 'deviant' (*sesat*). In the eyes of the immigrant Muslims, most of the indigenous Muslims should be labelled as deviant Muslims

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[4] One among the reasons for the ethnic conflict in Sambas of West Kalimantan since 22 February to March 1999, is that the Madurese migrants do not know and do not pay respect to the local traditions and customary laws of both the Dayak and the Malays. That is a claim made by the Governor of West Kalimantan Province, Mr. Aspar Aswin in the daily newspaper Kompas, 20 dan 22 Maret 1999). Up to 22 March 1999, about 100 Madurese have been killed and 15.000 migrated to Pontianak, according to this source.

[5] The director of SMU Muhammdiyah Ende mentions that in December 1997, out of the total number of 499 students, 230 were Catholics and 3 Protestants (47% are Christians). Out of a total number of 32 teachers, 4 were Catholics, 1 was Protestant and 1 Hindu (20% Christians). The other informants, Ibrahim Made Gili and Mrs. Salma Umar from SMU Mutma'inah explained that out of 192 students, 68 were Catholics and 7 were Protestants (30 % Christians); also with the teachers: out of 20 teachers, 5 are Catholics and 1 Protestant (45% are Christians).

since they still carry out local traditions and collaborate with Christians in daily life. The following examples illustrate this. The Muhammadyah University in Kupang attracts a large number of Christian students and employs Christian lecturers as well. The Muhammadiyah and the Mutma'inah High Schools in Ende (Flores) also have a large number of Christian students and teachers.[5] Pesantren Tarbiyah Modern Walisanga, Ende, even employed two SVD priest-candidates in 1997 as teachers and they were placed in charge of running the santri's boarding-house. Such Islamic practices on Flores have led to a question, raised in a national conference, of Muhammadiyah in Java as being incompatible with true Muhammadiyah. However, in response to such a question, Drs. Jafar Haji Abdullah, the Director of the SMU Muhammadiyah Ende explained that:

> SMU Muhammadiyah Ende holds the national view and wants to provide the same opportunities for all to gain access to a sufficient education, as having been practised in the past, when Muhammadiyah did not exist yet on Flores, that nearly all the Muslim leaders on Flores were educated in qualified Catholic schools (interview December 4th 1997).

Taking revenge against Muslims domination at the national level

No doubt the issue of an Islamic state in Indonesia has appeared to be of interest only to fringe elements of the Muslim community. However, the presidential succession from Soeharto to Habibie in 1998 is seen by non-Muslims as the government's acknowledgement of the Muslim pressure through the Association of the Indonesian Muslim Scholars or *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (*ICMI*). To some extent, such a handover of national leadership has been a sign of gain by the *ICMI* followers. It has also led to a high level of frustration and considerable unease

amongst non-Muslim minorities, including Chinese and Christians throughout Indonesia. Such frustration has become stronger since Chinese (Christians) were the targets of looting and rape, churches were burnt, Christians were oppressed, and Habibie could not do anything to stop it.

The Kupang incident (and also that in Ambon) shows that there is anger among Christians over increased Muslim domination and oppression of the Christian minority in the whole state, and over the incidents of Ketapang (Jakarta) and other places that they see and hear stories about. Yet, after a period of reconciliation sponsored by the religious leaders at the Provincial level, there appears to be no real challenge to the NTT values of tolerant culture, no serious rift within a house-based community. At issue is not so much Christian versus Muslims as insider versus outsider, or indigenous versus migrants but a provoked action resulting in revenge against the fear of Muslim oppression at the national level.

In my observation, at a time of real cleavage when ethnic or religious domination and pressure take place, some counter-pressures (*tekanan balik*) can also emerge. The Ambon and Kupang incidents are examples of this. The Christians in Kupang seemed to have been victimised by certain political elites, fanatics and organised groups for taking revenge against their own Muslim brothers. I would argue that when a group of tolerant Christians was under pressure because of the Ketapang (Jakarta) incident a week before, they could take one of the following alternatives: (1) withdraw from the controversy; (2) delay taking sides; or (3) attempt to keep their potential 'enemy', whom they see as brothers, out of the conflict; or (4) maintain a low intensity of feeling toward the other side. This perceived victimisation is why some members of a Christian Student Association in Kupang organised a day of mourn-

ing (*hari perkabungan*). But when a group of provocateurs appeared and encouraged them to take revenge and launched a counter-pressure, then a whole new set of responses occurred. When uncommitted people come under the influence of more radical groups, they break off attachments in a way which is inconsistent with their tolerant culture. This set of responses is well-known as the 'explosive nature of conflict' expressed by burning, looting and killing.

There is a real antagonism, based on social-economic, ethnic and religious grounds, which have lasted for a relatively long period (e.g. in Ambon) without protagonists showing regret, because the majority of people are involved in it. What really happened in Kupang, however, was that soon after an explosive conflict there was a great feeling of regret or wanting to 'run-away' from the events. This can be seen from the reactions of the Christian institutions and individual Christians who protected the Bugis Muslims from further brutal attack, helped Muslim refugees, helped in reconstructing mosques, and so on. The most interesting reaction was the formation of a travelling group of religious leaders (*safari pemimpin agama*) at the provincial level who played a significant mediating role. This *safari* travelled around the whole province of NTT and gave new insights to Muslims and Christians so that they might read, understand and live the values and doctrines of the Quran and Bible in the context of their real lives which are plural and multi-religious, with love and respect for each other's denominations. This solution led the central Government (c.q. the Coordinator Minister of Social Affair) to praise the religious leaders and the people of NTT in solving their conflict (*Pos Kupang*, 18 February 1999, p.7; *Suara Pembaruan*, 14 March 1999).

All these conflicts have, to some extent, challenged the tolerant culture and the house-based society of NTT described above and other hypotheses built up by researchers without taking into consideration the impact of social and political changes and cultural dynamism in Indonesia. This seems to be similar to the study and analysis of *uli, pela* and *gandong*[6] in Ambon (Pattiselanno 1999: 58-70). Underestimating the significant value of *pela–gandong* or regarding them as out of date has become an additional reason to extend the conflict, and even to justify the inception of the state of emergency.

Paving the way for reconciliation

Conflicts (in various aspects of life such as religious, ethnic, social and political) always lead to violence, insecurity and instability. As we have witnessed in various places in Indonesia (including Sambas, Kupang and Ambon) conflicts have resulted in lost of material property and thousands of lives and the aberration of cultural and moral values. As Indonesian citizens who are 'religious and civilised' (*beragama dan beradab*) we want to stop and to resolve this conflict. However, different actors have different perspectives and methods in coping with it. The government might want to speak of security in military terms (the security approach). Religious people (Muslims and Christians) might speak of security as a collective feeling that their way of life, culture, religion and rights will not be trampled on. That is why, conflict resolution or conflict management can provide the means to renew the environment of society in which everybody feels they are participants.

Without underestimating the efforts of various leaders who have tried to solve the conflict as quickly as possible (promising an instant solution), Benvenisti's approach to conflict management is inspiring and challenging. In a political memoir called **Conflicts and**

Contradictions Benvenisti (1986: 118), a Jewish Israeli writes with some exasperation of dealings with

> [conflict] resolvers … who believe that communal conflicts are like a chessboard where one can think up the best arrangement of chess pieces and move them all at once

Such 'frustrated peacemakers', as he calls them, even go so far as to organise themselves into a new academic specialty (discipline) labelled 'conflict resolution', specialising in producing manuals for resolving conflicts in easy steps. In one sense the aim of the paper is to offer a modification to Benvenisti's complaint and take culture seriously in the emerging field of scholarly and political concerns called conflict resolution.[7]

Encouraging cultural approach

In dealing with cultural approach, the role and the contribution of anthropologists are central in creating a society which is tolerant. Much research and many publications have discussed the religions, cultures and ethnicities of NTT. Mubyarto claimed that one of the problems to be coped with is that NTT societies still very often express their limited social cohesion within their own separate ethnic groups (Liliweri and Neonbasu 1994: 3; Mubyarto 1991:xiv). Liliweri (1994) also makes a number of interesting points. Firstly, he argues that

based on the social inter-ethnic prejudice, all ethnic groups in Kupang, including the non-NTT group, have a high sense of discrimination against other ethnic groups. Exceptions include Sumbanese and Alorese, whose cultural backgrounds tend to incorporate the others as their kin (*kerabat*) and members of their social groups. Secondly, all ethnic groups in Kupang tend to victimise the Rotinese, the majority group in Kupang, as their common target of discrimination (Liliweri dan Neonbasu 1994:10-11).

A similar cultural strategy has also been noted by Gomang in Alor, which is expressed through a traditional alliance of brotherhood between the coastal dwellers and the highlanders (*kakari woto watang*). This cultural value not only functions to build a harmonious society but also promotes ways to solve conflicts (Gomang 1993; 1994).

In contrast to Mubyarto (1991) and Liliweri (1994), based on research on Keo of Central Flores, I have claimed that kinship culture (*budaya kerabat*) built up around a cult house (*rumah adat*) has been a local value which incorporates people from different religious denominations into a tolerant and harmonious society (Tule 1994:181-184). Based on Keo examples and additional data I collected in some locations in NTT (1991), I maintain that the religious interaction is indeed being lived by the locals in the sphere of daily life (or living-dialogue) more than in formal scientific, theological and political dialogue.

My observation seems to contradict Stark and Glock's theory which claims that high knowledge and critical understanding of one's own faith and that of others creates the personality of a believer who is more open-minded, tolerant and full of respect for the belief of other denominations (Stark and Glock 1968:253-262). Although such a theory may be valid in dealing with some people, for example in the USA

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[7] More generally the impetus of the theory, which deals with aspects of a cultural approach to understanding conflict and conflict resolution, comes from the Center (now Institute) for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University (Virginia). Established in 1980 largely through efforts of the late social psychiatrist Bryant Wedge, the Centre in 1982 became the first institution of higher education in the United States to offer a professional postgraduate degree in conflict management—thus helping to proclaim the new discipline that so discomforted Benvenisti. In 1988 it admitted its first class of doctoral students into the first PhD program in conflict analysis and resolution in the world.

and other places, it is not absolutely valid in NTT. A survey conducted in three villages of NTT shows that about 70% of the total respondents have an intermediary level of knowledge of their own and other religions, another 24% have low level of knowledge and only 3% of the respondents have high knowledge (Tule 1994:184).

This evidence suggests that another factor, kinship (*kekerabatan*), as a socio-cultural factor, has become a very special unifying force in religious interaction. Tentative data collected in Tonggo (Keo), where the Muslims represent 50% of the total population of the village, show that 75% of the Muslim respondents recognize relatives who are non-Muslims. Out of that percentage, 95% of the respondents claimed that they have consanguinal kinship and 52% have affinal kinship with the non-Muslims (Tule 1994:184-189).

Encouraging religious autonomy

When facing religious conflict in Indonesia nowadays, we must recognise that there is no purely religious phenomenon. Mircea Eliade (1958:xiii) has made this point clear:

> …a religious phenomenon cannot be understood outside of its history, that is, outside of its cultural and socio-economic context. … Every religious experience is expressed and transmitted in a particular historical context. But admitting the historicity of religious ex-

periences does not imply that they are reducible to non-religious forms of behaviour. Stating that a religious datum is always a historical datum does not mean that it is reducible to a non-religious history – for example, to an economic, social or political history (also see Douglas 1978:134).

But such a view does not mean that religions can not be independent of the state. Although the theological dogma[8] of Islam claims that there is no separation between religion and state/government it might be true in its theological level, but not in its institutional level. History gives evidence that many societies, even nation states survive without direct religious intervention. Such a stance might be acceptable if we refer back to essence of religion as described by Earle (1967:10).

> Religion is something more than morality. It is the expression of some common aim, which binds a society together and gives it a common ideal which successive generations strive to realize. It is recognised in the performance of a ritual, which gives dramatic expression to the aims of a society and to the favours to be elicited from the deity. Or it can be recognised in a creed, which expresses these ideals in a purely verbal form.

All these factors play a part in establishing a group identity. The question is whether this fundamental function of religion can still be fulfilled. Most scholars of religions, including Eliade, believe that the principal function of religion is to maintain an 'opening' toward a superhuman or transcendent world. On the one hand, the sacred is the Supreme, the Other Than Man–trans-personal and the transcendent. On the other hand, the sacred is exemplary in the sense that it establishes patterns to be followed. By being transcendent and exemplary it compels the religious man (*homo religiosus*) to move beyond personal situations (egoism, hate, anger, animosity, jealousy, etc), to surpass the contingent and the particular and to comply with universal values (love, respect, forgiveness). To gain this level of con-

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[8] Ali Abd al-Raziq, an Egyptian scholar, published a book entitled *Al-Islam wa usul al-hukm* (Islam and the Bases of Power) in 1925. One of his main arguments is that Islam is a religion, not a state (*Islam din la dawla*). There is no need for an Islamic system of government or caliphate because the Quran and Hadith were silent on the matter. He claimed: 'We have no need for the caliphate neither in our religious nor in temporal affairs; the caliphate has always been and continues to be a misfortune to Islam and Muslims, and a source of evil and corruption…..' (1925: 36). This claim is really contrary to the main doctrine of Islam that Islam is religion and state (*Al-Islam din wa dawla*).

science, we need a process of re-sacralization of religion (Eliade 1958:324). We need to get rid of religious profanation (*profanasi*) and desacralisation (*desakralisasi*) of our religions in various ways: politicised religion, equating the respective revelation (religions) with theological elaboration which then leads to fanaticism. Cantwell Smith has warned us of this danger, when he writes:

> …what ever you may think of revelation, you must admit that theologies are not what God reveals. Theology is one of many human responses to God and to His initiatives: responses decided by human, and falliable; always particularist (1991: 21)

In this context I call for a new outlook of religions by all believers and theologians. All should recognise in the emergence of the new religious phenomena a social change in which we can see that our previous national pride offers no real truth. So, a fundamental question is how do we react to these new phenomena? Firstly, waging holy wars is not an appropriate solution, because wars destroy everyone, winners and losers. Secondly, security approach is also not a proper solution because it is not based on people's own interests. However, it is critical to encourage cultural and religious approaches in their real sense, thus highlighting the ineffectiveness of politicising religions. History shows that we can not treat other religions as our experimental object (*kelinci percobaan*).

In the *Pancasila* state of Indonesia the mingling of races, the breakdown of moral and cultural values, religious tolerance, a rapid escalation of religious conflict and ethnic violence, have shaped our 'national' culture and ideology to be at best an ideal and at worst a mere hallucination. That is why our burdens and challenges have never been more compelling than they are now. A crucial question is challenging our unitary state: 'Do we need a single creed, or at least a single culture, to create our identity which distinguishes us (Indonesians) from others (non-Indonesians)?'

Pendulum swing theory of religious tolerance: a lesson to be learnt

One among various theoretical approaches to religious conflict is the approach of David Hume. In his *The Natural History of Religion* (1757/1976), Hume presents several theories of religion. He begins with a rather conventional theory of a unilineal kind, of a progression from polytheism to monotheism. It is also a progression from a less rational view to a more rational one. He does, however, proceed to a far more interesting theory concerning a permanent oscillation in religious phenomena: the oscillation between polytheistic and monotheistic views.

In dealing with religious tolerance, Hume claims that even the idolaters, both in ancient and modern times, have their own spirit of tolerance. Priests in past ages could, it seems, allow salvation to those of different religious communities. The Romans, he said, commonly adopted the gods of the conquered people. That is why the religious wars and persecutions of the Egyptian idolaters [9] were indeed an exception to this rule of religious tolerance. The intolerance of almost all religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) which have maintained the unity of God is as remarkable as the contrary principle in polytheism. And if, amongst the Christians and Muslims, some have embraced the principles of tolerance, this singularity has proceeded from the steady resolution of the civil magistrate, in opposition to the continued efforts of priest and bigots (Hume 1976: 60-61).

[9] Different species of animals were the deities of the different sects of the Egyptians; and the deities being in continual war, engaged their votaries in the same contention. The worshippers of dogs could not remain in peace with the adorers of cats or wolves.

Let us make an attempt to apply Hume's theory to a certain aspect of the religious conflict among the people of NTT, and Ambon (or Indonesia in general). Religious tolerance (*toleransi*), apart from its ideological and political dimension, to some extent is a psychological characterization of a pole facing another pole, which is religious bigotry (*fanatisme*). Between these two poles the oscillation takes place at various times and places. A serious observation of religious interaction in NTT will show that the swinging of the pendulum between these two poles has taken place since the beginning of Islamic and Christian missionary work in the 1600s and then in the 1910s.

More oscillations have taken place in the 1990s, when host desecrations took place in Flores. Mosques are being built every where in NTT, while in Java it seems to be difficult to build a church in a society with a Muslim majority. A turbulent situation reached its peak in the burning of churches and killing of Christians in Java. The Christians took revenge by burning mosques in Kupang (1998). Finally, Christians and Muslims attack and kill each other, while burning their respective religious facilities in Ambon. The whole nation is facing a circle of violence (*circulus vitiosus*).

The pendulum of inter-religious hostility and religious bigotry had swung between religious tolerance and bigotry. It swings from the centre (Jakarta) to the periphery (Kupang and Ambon). It will swing all the time. However, our task as religious people is to slow down and minimise the oscillation of this religious pendulum.

Such a view implies that our new outlook on conflicts must not always be negative but also seen as constructive for organisations and society as well. Of the early theorists only Mary Parker Follet (1940) recognised the constructive possibilities for conflict within organisations. She wrote that:

instead of condemning conflict, we should set it to work for us. Of course the chief job of the mechanical engineer is to eliminate friction, but it is also true that he capitalizes friction… We talk of friction of mind on mind as a good thing… We have to know when to try to eliminate friction and when to capitalize it (Metcalf and Lyndall 1941:30-31).

It was not until the mid-1950s that the transition took place to what psychologists refer to as the behavioralist's school (organisational behaviour), where conflict was viewed as an inevitable and integral aspect of productive organisations. Much of this new view of conflict is attributable to sociologist Lewis Coser who introduced the idea of 'conflict as a form of socialization' of German philosopher Georg Simmel (1858-1918) to American social scientists such as Talcott Parsons and Wedge (Coser 1956).

Talcott Parsons has also reminded us, through his concept of dynamic functionalism, that 'conflict and change in a society can not be seen as a sick society, but as a part of its social dynamism' (Parsons 1951). Wedge, on one level, understands that conflict is inevitable, not always bad, and is often an engine of desirable social change. However, he also saw conflict in the nuclear age as dangerous and pathological. Social conflict that escalates into violence, borrowing Eric Fromm's expression, he called the result of 'narcissistic rage', a pathology of the self suffered and acted out by a group or nation (Wedge 1986:57; Fromm 1972).

If we view the Ambon conflict in this perspective, we can say that such a pervasive unmanaged conflict is a sort of endemic and pandemic expression of social and religious pathology, enhanced by a group of people who might be labelled as 'religious hooligans'.[10] The

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[10] A hooligan is a member of a gang of street roughs, very often related to soccer games. Although it has no real connection with 'Holy gun', metaphorically it here refers to any group who holds the guns on behalf of the Holy (God).

costs of this epidemic outbreak—individual, group, mass, and state violence—have been far too high to contemplate passively from the sidelines if we accept the international reports that it has claimed the lives of about 4000 people.

This reality should stimulate the revival of our morality (ethics) amongst the religious and political leaders and academics. In this perspective, the conflict should also cope with moral criteria—through the objective power bargaining and negotiation by the political leaders, between the central and the local governments, through the objective academic contribution, from which both parties in conflict will move toward a solution. This process also depends on how the religious variables are engineered for the *bonum commune* (*maslahat*) of the society. The roles of political and religious leaders, the religionists, the anthropologists, and the inter-faith institutions are significant in working together for the solution of the religious conflicts. The government can never take over the job of the religious leaders; while the religious leaders can never take over the job of the government. In other words, religious autonomy is to be encouraged and welcomed, but always in a complementary way.

Several important points that affect our understanding for paving the way for reconciliation are as follows (see the diagram of the eight factors, diagram 1):

- The emergence of the third party (as mediator, resolver) which is both natural and constant. He {it}is once in always in; he {it}becomes the hand that knots and sews the net together; his {its} relation with the people is based on personal, not professional function or written contract. Through this third party people are reconnected and the net kept integral.
- The displacement of interpersonal anxiety and hostility onto provocative actors, a scape goat or evil ghost.
- The continuous use of the positive and all-encompassing positive gossip network for indirect confrontation and reconciliation.
- The constant religious reaffirmation of the sacred character of the community's collective life through religious ceremonies attended by the entire populace (e.g. the local cult sacrifice of water buffalo among the Keo) .
- The good and effective government in which the siginificant and the sole responsibility of the chief is to monitor the flow of daily life and to recall everyone's attention to the collective values of non-aggression and cheerful cooperation when these seemed threatened by the imminent surfacing of conflict.
- The use of recreation in ritual contexts (dances e.g. *cakalele*.) as sublimations to symbolise enduring structural tensions and the drastic consequences that would flow from their real world expression.
- The compilation of 'conflict vocabulary' that maps the local typology of disputes, the escalation and management of overt conflict with great vividness.
- The recognition of a large body of customary rules for the minimization of direct competition, the prevention of face-to-face confrontation, and, when all else fails, the rapid defusing and de-escalation of overt conflict (Black 1991:150-151; Lederach 1991: 184).

Conclusion

The Kupang incident and other religious/ethnic conflicts that took place in NTT and Ambon have to some extent challenged the traditionally tolerant culture of Indonesia. This positive culture has been lived out for generations

on the basis of the kin culture (*budaya kerabat*), the 'house-based society' (*masyarakat berasas rumah*) and the traditional alliance between the Muslims and the non-Muslims (*kakari woto watang*) of NTT, *Uli, Pela* and *Gandong* from Ambon. In the midst of rapid social, political, cultural and religious changes, such values need to be inherited and socialised into a wider context, both by the indigenous and the migrants. The roles of the government, academics, local and religious leaders and the religious institution are significant in the process of socialisation through both formal and informal education. The incorporation process of the migrants into a local society and a local culture should be encouraged, while paying attention to the dynamic aspect of culture. Most of the *SARA* conflicts wide spread recently throughout Indonesia have origins in political manipulations by certain political elites, fanatic groups and provocateurs.

In the midst of this potential conflict based on religious and ethnic issues, we need to address the issue of religious and cultural revivalism, which promote religious and cultural autonomy. In this context, the roles of religious leaders, anthropologists, religionist, moralists and the local leaders are central. The religious leaders should encourage a more contextual understanding of their respective religions, which leads to bridging the gap between the popular religion and the institutional religion. A cultural religion (popular religion) versus an institutional or structural religion, both Islam and Christianity, should be seriously observed in dealing with religious conflicts. It seems that popular Islam and Christianity in NTT have been able to accommodate these cultural values. However, the institutional or structural religion

Diagram 1
A complex combination of the eight factors, on which rested the ability to gain conflict resolution
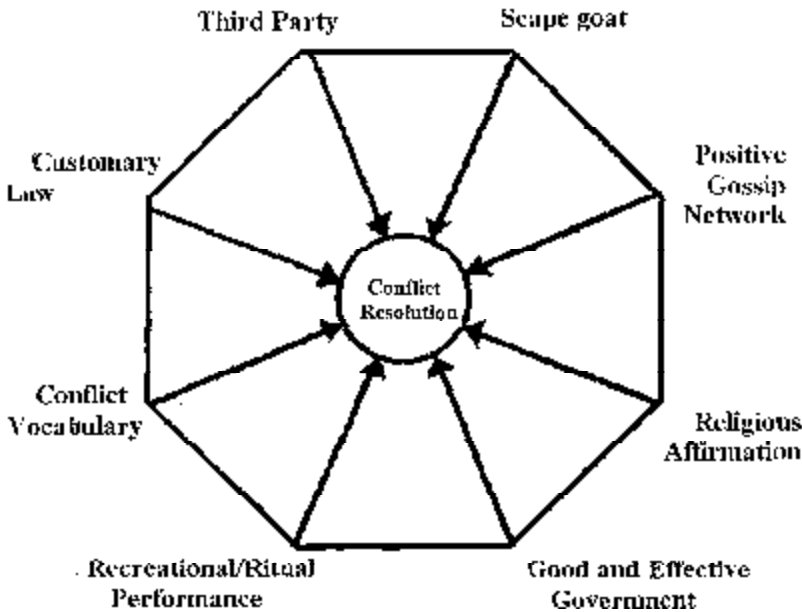
(both Islam and Christianity) with their judg-
mental attitude of designating 'a real' versus
'a deviant' adherent, has planted a seed of re-
ligious fanaticism or bigotry.

The civilised and the religious people
should re-appreciate their cultural values such
as 'Muslim and non-Muslim brotherhood'
(*kakari woto watang*), 'house-based brother-
hood' (*ka'e ari sa'o tenda*), consanguinal and
affinal kinship (*la mina*). But on top of these
values, we should go back to the essence of
religion dealing with the Divinity (Creator,
Lover, All-Embracing, The Most Merciful); we
should learn and teach, give and take from each
other among ethnic and religious groups the
positive contributions in our daily lives since
we are the *khalifat Allah*.

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