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Managing Diversity, Rewriting Memory: A Historical Perspective on Religious Pluralism and Conflict in Indonesia

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Abstract

This paper explores how the Indonesian government—especially at the local level—has historically engaged in resolving religious freedom-related conflicts. Unlike most studies that trace the roots of religious violence to ideological tensions between religion and the state, this research focuses on the actual mechanisms of conflict resolution and reconciliation, particularly in the post-Reformasi period when decentralization redefined governance structures. It argues that religious conflict resolution in Indonesia is shaped less by normative ideals of religious freedom and more by pragmatic political calculations and the pursuit of social recognition. Local governments often broker informal agreements aimed at preserving public order, without challenging dominant religious ideologies or addressing structural discrimination. Grounded in a socio-historical approach, this study analyzes three prolonged religious conflict cases: the displacement of Shi'ite communities in Sampang, the forced relocation of Ahmadis in West Nusa Tenggara, and the church permit dispute involving GKI Yasmin in Bogor. Data were collected through interviews, field observations, media analy

sis, and official documents. The findings suggest that reconciliation processes in Indonesia are contingent, varied, and shaped by local political contexts. While some local leaders play constructive roles in de-escalation and facilitating return or relocation, others repro duce discrimination or tolerate intolerant groups. This paper concludes that religious conflict resolution in Indonesia is a historically contingent and politically mediated process. It reflects broader tensions between democratic ideals and the persistence of majoritarian religious politics. Recognition—understood not as identity politics but as constitutional inclusion— emerges as a foundational principle for reconciliation and plural coexistence.

Keyword: *Historical Perspective, Minority, Religious Freedom, Religious Conflict, Reconciliation.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana pemerintah Indonesia—khususnya di tingkat lokal—secara historis menangani penyelesaian konflik yang berkaitan dengan kebebasan beragama. Berbeda dari sebagian besar kajian yang menelusuri akar kekerasan berbasis agama pada ketegangan ideologis antara agama dan negara, penelitian ini berfokus pada mekanisme resolusi konflik dan rekonsiliasi yang aktual, terutama dalam periode pasca-Reformasi ketika desentralisasi mengubah struktur pemerintahan. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa penyelesaian konflik agama di Indonesia lebih banyak ditentukan oleh kalkulasi politik pragmatis dan pencarian pengakuan sosial, daripada oleh komitmen normatif terhadap kebebasan beragama. Pemerintah daerah seringkali menjadi perantara kesepakatan informal demi menjaga ketertiban publik, tanpa menggugat ideologi mayoritas agama yang dominan atau mengatasi diskriminasi struktural. Berdasarkan pendekatan sosio-historis, studi ini menganalisis tiga kasus konflik keagamaan yang berlangsung lama: pengusiran komunitas Syiah di Sampang, relokasi paksa Ahmadiyah di Nusa Tenggara Barat, dan sengketa izin gereja GKI Yasmin di Bogor. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi lapangan, analisis media, dan dokumen resmi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa proses rekonsiliasi di Indonesia bersifat kontingen, beragam, dan sangat dipengaruhi oleh konteks politik lokal. Beberapa pemimpin daerah berperan aktif dalam menurunkan ketegangan dan memfasilitasi pemulangan atau relokasi, sementara yang lain justru mereproduksi diskriminasi atau mentoleransi kelompok intoleran. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa penyelesaian konflik agama di Indonesia merupakan proses yang kontekstual secara historis dan dimediasi secara politis. Dalam ketegangan antara ideal demokrasi dan dominasi politik agama mayoritas, pengakuan—bukan sebagai politik identitas, melainkan sebagai inklusi konstitusional—muncul sebagai prinsip dasar bagi rekonsiliasi dan keberagaman yang damai.

Rumadi, *Managing Diversity, Rewriting Memory: A Historical Perspective on Religious Pluralism and Conflict in Indonesia.*

Kata kunci: Kebebasan Beragama, Konflik Agama, Minoritas, Perspektif Historis, Rekonsiliasi.

الملخص

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية كيف تعاملت الحكومة الإندونيسية، ولا سيما على المستوى المحلي، تاريخيًا مع حل النزاعات المتعلقة بحرية الدين. وعلى خلاف معظم الدراسات التي ترجع جذور العنف الديني إلى التوترات الأيديولوجية بين الدين والدولة، يركّز هذا البحث على آليات حل النزاعات والمصالحة الفعلية، خاصة في حقبة ما بعد الإصلاح (Reformasi) حين أعادت اللامركزية تشكيل بنية الحوكمة. وتجادل الدراسة بأن تسوية النزاعات الدينية في إندونيسيا غالبًا ما تتشكل وفق اعتبارات سياسية براغماتية وسعي للاعتراف الاجتماعي، بدلاً من الالتزام المعياري بمبادئ حرية الدين. وغالبًا ما تتوسط الحكومات المحلية اتفاقات غير رسمية تهدف إلى حفظ النظام العام دون تحدّي الهيمنة الأيديولوجية للدين السائد أو معالجة التمييز البنيوي. وبالاعتماد على مقاربة سوسيولوجية-تاريخية، تحلل هذه الدراسة ثلاث حالات نزاع ديني مزمنة: تهجير الطائفة الشيعية في سامبانغ، والترحيل القسري لأتباع الأحمدية في نوسا تنغارا الغربية، والنزاع حول تصريح بناء كنيسة GKI ياسمين في بوجور. تم جمع البيانات من خلال المقابلات، والملاحظة الميدانية، وتحليل وسائل الإعلام، والوثائق الرسمية. وتشير النتائج إلى أن عمليات المصالحة في إندونيسيا مشروطة وسياقية، وتتأثر إلى حد كبير بالواقع السياسي المحلي. ففي حين يلعب بعض القادة المحليين دورًا إيجابيًا في تهدئة التوترات وتسهيل العودة أو إعادة التوطين، يسهم آخرون في إعادة إنتاج التمييز أو التساهل مع الجماعات المتطرفة. تخلص الورقة إلى أن حل النزاعات الدينية في إندونيسيا هو عملية مشروطة تاريخيًا وموجهة سياسيًا، تعكس التوتر بين مثل الديمقراطية وهيمنة السياسات الدينية للأغلبية. ويظهر "الاعتراف" ––– لا بوصفه سياسة هوية بل بوصفه شمولًا دستوريًا ––– كمبدأ أساسي للمصالحة والتعايش التعددي السلمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية/الرئيسية: الأقليات، الحرية الدينية، الصراع الديني، المصالحة، النظرية التاريخية.

1. Introduction

After the 1998 Reformasi (Reform), scholars see that Indonesia, as a Muslim majority country, has been more successful in the democratic transition than other Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia, Pakistan, Libya, etc. However, social conflicts and turmoils still occur despite this achievement, resulting in human casualties and property destruction.[1] Religious conflicts have become a phenomenon in post-reform Indonesia, which still happen, although on a smaller scale. Some issues leading to conflicts include the rejection of certain houses of worship and the existence of particular religious sects, which are considered deviant from the mainstream.[2]

A report of a Decade of Religious Lives (in Indonesia) from 2009 to 2018, for example, shows religious-based conflicts occurred due to religion and faith freedom issues. Those conflicts are like *api dalam sekam,* an Indonesian expression meaning fire in husks. This

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[1] Ashutosh Varshney, Rizal Panggabean, Mohammad Zulfan Tadjoeddin, *Patterns of Collective Violence in Indonesia (1990-2003),* UNSFIR, Jakarta, 2004.

[2] Rumadi dkk, *Mengelola Toleransi dan Kebebasan Beragama: 3 Isu Penting*, the Wahid Institute, 2012.

expression means that even without visible smoke, the fire potentially gets bigger at any time.[3] International organizations such as Freedom House and US Commission also mentioned similar findings. Freedom House considered Indonesia as a 'partly free' country, while the US commission included Indonesia as a country under surveillance along with Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, etc.[4] This situation has negatively affected the development of democracy in Indonesia, which is considered stagnant, towards a setback.[5]

Amongst the intolerance incidents in Indonesia were those experienced by the Ahmadi people, Shi'ites, and the adherents of indigenous religions (*penghayat kepercayaan*). Socio-religious tensions and conflicts are often used as an indication that the Indonesian government is incapable of comprehensively avoiding and solving the problems.

Studies on religious conflict resolution show the government's lack of seriousness in dealing with religious conflicts, especially restoring victims' rights. The steps taken by the government offered more support for the perpetrators than the victims and even displayed the government's ignorance of the violence.[6] Besides, the government's policies tend to be influenced by majority-biased attitudes and perspectives in understanding the state-religion relationship.[7] Some laws and regulations are considered incapable of ensuring freedom of religion and faith. Some national and regional regulations even show discriminatory tones, leading to their use as tools to preserve discrimination. In turn, this shows the ambiguity of the government's actions and attitude toward the protection of religious freedom.[8]

A study by Cahyo Pamungkas[9] examines the reconciliation process in the conflicts involving Shi'a people in Sampang and Ahmadis in West Nusa Tenggara and recommends the importance of cultural approaches in the reconciliation process. However, that study has not measured the success of the cultural approaches. Other studies by Erni Budiwanti,[10] Ahmad

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[3] The Wahid Institute, "Kemerdekaan Terbatas: Satu Dekade Pemantauan Kemerdekaan Beragama-Berkeyakinan", *Laporan Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan*, Jakarta, 2020.

[4] The US Commission, "Annual Report on International Religious Freedom", Washington, 2021.

[5] Thomas Power and Eve Warburton, *Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnan to Regeression?,* ISEAS, Singapore, 2020.

[6] Aan Suryana, *The state and religious violence in Indonesia: Minority faiths and vigilantism. In The State and Religious Violence in Indonesia: Minority Faiths and Vigilantism*, Rouledge, New York, 2019.

[7] See David M Bourchier, "Two Decades of Ideological Contestation in Indonesia: From Democratic Cosmopolitanism to Religious Nationalism", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 2019; Jeremy Menchik, "Productive Intolerance Godly Nationalism in Indonesia", *Journal Comparative Studies in Society and History 56*, 2014, p. 591–621.

[8] Paul Marshall, "The Ambiguities of Religious Freedom in Indonesia", *Review of Faith and International Affairs,* 2018, p. 85-96.

[9] Cahyo Pamungkas, "Mencari Bentuk Rekonsiliasi Intra-Agama: Analisis terhadap Pengungsi Syiah Sampang dan Ahmadiyya Mataram", Jurnal Episteme Vol. 13, No. 1, 2018.

[10] Erni Budiwanti, "Jama'ah Ahmadiyya dan Resistensi Sosial di Lombok", *Jurnal Harmoni* Vol. VI, No. 23, 2007.

Zaenuri, [11] Ahmad Najib Burhani, [12] and Ahmad Zainul Hamdi [13] mainly focus on the chronology of violence caused by different interpretations of religious doctrines. However, these studies rarely see efforts in conflict resolutions. Besides, several violations against other religious groups, especially Shi'a people in Sampang, indicate the essential role of the advocation of civil society and victims to encourage the optimization of local government's roles in dealing with the conflicts. [14]

Apart from those studies, others argue for the weaknesses in government visions and roles in guaranteeing religious rights [15] caused by the alliance between the state and capital. [16] The existing discriminatory regulations worsen this. [17] Various violations and the state's incapability are rooted in the problematic state's ideological choice. [18] Some studies explain that the success in some conflict resolutions is influenced by several factors, such as the strategies used and victims' emotional, social, and spiritual resilience in dealing with difficulties. [19] Also, this is supported by victims' inability to develop alliances with the government elites and civil organizations and gain support from them. [20] Besides, the active roles of civil society organizations are also crucial. [21]

Ending conflicts while maintaining social resilience needs the reconciliation of the involving parties. Reconciliation can be created if each party thinks farther ahead and

[11] Ahmad Zaenuri, "Konflik Jamaah Ahmadiyya dengan Masyarakat non Ahmadiyya; Studi Kasus di Lombok", Disertasi, UIN Jakarta, 2009.

[12] Ahmad Najib Burhani, "When Muslims are not Muslims: The Ahmadiyya Community and Discourse on Heresy in Indonesia", Disertasi, Santa Barbara University, 2012.

[13] Ahmad Zaenul Hamdi, "Klaim Religious Authority dalam Konflik Sunni-Syiah Sampang Madura", Jurnal Islamica, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2012, p. 215-230.

[14] Aan Suryana, *The state and religious violence in Indonesia: Minority faiths and vigilantism. In The State and Religious Violence in Indonesia: Minority Faiths and Vigilantism*, Rouledge, New York, 2019; Ken Miichi, and Yuka Kayane, "The Politics of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: The Shi'a Response to the Sampang Incidents of 2011–2012", *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia Volume 8 , Issue 1,* 2020, p. 51-64.

[15] Robin Bush, Religious, "Politics and Minority Rights during the Yudhoyono Presidency" In D. T. Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner (Ed.), *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation,* ISEAS, Singapore, 2015, p. 239-257.

[16] Verdy Hadiz, *Populisme Islam di Indonesia dan Timur Tengah,* LP3ES, Jakarta, 2019, p. 242.

[17] Paul Marshall, "The Ambiguities of Religious Freedom in Indonesia", *Review of Faith and International Affairs,* 2018.

[18] See David M Bouchier, "Two Decades of Ideological Contestation in Indonesia: From Democratic Cosmopolitanism to Religious Nationalism", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 2019; Jeremy Menchik, "Productive Intolerance: Godly Nationalism in Indonesia", "Productive Intolerance Godly Nationalism in Indonesia", *Journal Comparative Studies in Society and History 56*, 2014; Abdul Mu'ti and Ahmad Najib Burhani, "The limits of religious freedom in Indonesia: with reference to the first pillar Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa of Pancasila", Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies, 2019, p. 111-134.

[19] Aleah Connley, "Understanding the oppressed: A study of the Ahmadiyya and their Strategies for Overcoming Adversity in Contemporary Indonesia", *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 35, 1, 2016, p. 29–58.

[20] Ken Miichi, and Yuka Kayane, "The Politics of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: The Shi'a Response to the Sampang Incidents of 2011–2012", *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia Volume 8 , Issue 1,* 2020, p. 11.

21 Zaenal Abidin Bagir, "Advocacy for Religious Freedom in Democratizing Indonesia", *The Review of Faith & International Affairs Volume 12,* 2014.

prioritizes common interests. Conflict resolution and reconciliation are related even though they are two different matters. Conflict resolution will lead to reconciliation if the mistakes are admitted and forgiven with a problem-solving approach. This can be done through several steps, such as *truth disclosure, compensation, acceptance, forgiveness, and recovery that bring peace.*[22]

However, methodologically, the implementation of those reconciliation processes is uneasy in the conflicts such as those involving the Ahmadi and Shi'a communities. The reconciliation process is more suitable for vertical conflicts between the state and societal groups, not horizontal ones. This is because the perpetrators and victims never sit together to maintain dialogues or discuss a possible reconciliation. Previous studies show that the meeting between the parties often tends to oppress the victims, which in this case is the Ahmadi and Shi'ites, by asking them to ask for God's forgiveness and return to the Sunni mainstream as the reconciliation precondition.

This is also true in the case of the conflict of the Yasmin Indonesian Christian Church (Gereja Kristen Indonesia/ GKI Yasmin). The previous legal process and court decisions on the case were assumed to be successful reconciliation attempts. Nevertheless, the fact shows unexpected results. Even though conflict resolution is often carried out in a circle, the principles of reconciliation are still helpful in analyzing the social reconciliation process when dealing with conflicts involving Shi'a and Ahmadi people with the Sunni mainstream, as well as GKI Yasmin case.

Following up on the previous studies, this study starts from the following hypothesis: the success of social conflict resolution is significantly determined by the rational choices made by stakeholders to consider the right policy instrument based on various existing resources. This hypothesis assumes the crucial role of the state apparatus in preventing and resolving religious conflicts. With this hypothesis, one critical question is how the local government uses its capacity to solve the socio-religious conflict.

2. Method

This study uses three cases of socio-religious conflict as the unit of analysis, consisting of the conflict involving Shi'a people in Sampang; Ahmadiyya people in West Nusa Tenggara—especially Transito Mataram refugees—; and the GKI Yasmin dispute. These three cases were chosen because of their relatively prolonged conflict from 2005 to 2006. This will enable the authors to see how the government, especially the local government, in restoring the victims' rights.

The authors follow those three incidents from the beginning by observing them and getting involved in discussions, dialogues, and meetings with the victims, civil society organizations, and the government. Data, including documents and discussion notes, especially

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[22] Cahyo Pamungkas, "Mencari Bentuk Rekonsiliasi Intra-Agama:Analisis terhadap Pengungsi Syiah Sampang dan Ahmadiyya Mataram", Jurnal Episteme Vol. 13, No. 1, 2018, p. 121.

the one with the local government leaders, become the crucial source in this research. Data is analyzed to reveal the background of each case, involving actors and the reconciliation process. The data is analyzed using a collective case study approach. Selecting more than one case aims to obtain broader perspectives and reveal prominent issues.[23]

3.   Result: Ending Religious Conflict Residual: Three Cases

As mentioned above, this paper chooses three religious conflict cases as the unit of analysis. The cases include the Ahmadiyya conflict in West Nusa Tenggara; the Shi'a and Sunni conflict in Sampang; and the GKI Yasmin conflict in Bogor. These three cases are purposefully selected by considering their locations and the length of the period in solving the problems. This part chronologically explains the instances and attempts to deal with the conflict residuals from 2005 to 2006.

1.   Ahmadiyya Conflict in West Nusa Tenggara

Persecutions experienced by the Ahmadis have often happened since the early 2000s. Those persecutions forced the Ahmadi community to leave their village and live in the refuge. They have been in the Transito Boarding House owned by the Ministry of Social Affairs of the West Nusa Tenggara for sixteen years. The 2020 Government recorded the number of the Ahmadi people living in the Boarding House, comprising 35 families of 131 people. Various attempts have been made to end their settlement in the Boarding House, and just lately, they showed the results after the Presidential Staff Office facilitated a number of meetings between the Ministry of Public Works & Housing, the local government, and the Ahmadi refugees. Even though the refugees had not left the Boarding House when this research was conducted, the parties have made agreements to give them housing aid.[24]

Before staying at the Transito Boarding House, hundreds of Ahmadi people lived at the local people's houses at Perumahan Bumi Asri Ketapang, Ketapang Orang village, Gegerung, Lingsar, West Lombok. However, the attack from intolerant groups on 4 February 2006 forced them to leave Ketapang village and become refugees. This was the third attack after the earlier ones in 2002 and 2003 when they lived in Pancor, East Lombok. Unlike the refugees in East Lombok that had been relocated, the refugees in the Tansito Boarding House still find difficulties in solving their settlement issue.

When prosecution and expulsion happened, the local government of West Nusa Tenggara, both provincial and regional levels, had unsupportive attitudes toward the Ahmadi people. In March 2006, the Governor of West Nusa Tenggara issued a letter No. KW.19.1/4/HU.00/1353/2006 designated to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Attorney General to request that Ahmadiyya be banned. Then, the

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[23] John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Fourth Edition), Sage Publishing, California, 2017, p. 73.

[24] Minutes of the Coordination Meeting held by Office of the Presidential Staff, West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and Ministry of Public Works and Housing, on November 9, 2021.

West Lombok and East Lombok Regents reacted similarly to the Governor. The West Lombok Regent issued Decision No. 35 of 2001, considering banning Ahmadiyya's beliefs and teachings. On the other hand, the East Lombok Regent issued Decision No. 045.2/134/KUM/2002, considering banning Ahmadiyya propagation. These two letters strengthened the recommendation of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) of West Lombok No. 12/MUI-LB/7/2001 on 5 July 2001.

After sixteen years passed, those letters have never been annulled. However, changes have been made to end the refuge. This can be seen in the attempts made by the local government of East Lombok when dealing with refugee issues, including Transito refugees. The process has been relatively slow but progressing. Similarly, in East Lombok, The Executive Board of Indonesian Ahmadiyya Congregation (Pengurus Besar Jama'ah Ahmadiyya Indonesia/ PB JAI) sent a letter, dated 24 November 2020, to the Head of Presidential Staff, acknowledged by the Governor of West Nusa Tenggara. This letter stated that JAI owns lands in several locations in Central Lombok and Mataram that can be used to relocate the Transito refugees. If this scenario is agreed upon, the PB JAI requested that the central government provide the fund for housing.

After several negotiations, the local government of West Nusa Tenggara sent another letter to the Ministry of Public Work and Housing, acknowledged by the Presidential Staff. This letter stated that the provincial government delegates the Head of Social Services and Local Assistance I to verify the appropriateness of the lands mentioned by PB JAI for the relocation (30/11/2020). This can be seen as a progressive step to solve the refugee issues with more precise and concrete directions.

2. Sunni – Shi'a Conflict Resolution in Sampang

The religious conflict in Sampang, East Java, occurred in 2012 and left deep wounds in the socio-religious lives of the community. Undeniably, the conflict was the peak of the tensions between Sunni and Shi'a communities in Sampang. Even though physical attacks were suffered by the Shi'a community in 2011 and 2012, the social pressures were started in 2004. The peak was in August 2012, when a group attacked and burned the Shi'a people's houses in Sampang. After that, 168 Shi'a people started refuge at Rusunawa Puspo Agro, Jemundo, Sidoarjo on 20 June 2013. The latest data shows that in 2020 there were 349 refugees (134 males, and 215 females, consisting of 83 families).

The conflict was triggered by the differences in the Sunni and Shi'a beliefs, which initially involved family conflict. The problem is worsened by labelling Shi'a people as deviants. Hate speeches and discrimination then followed. One group that rejected the Shi'ites' presence in Sampang was the Ulama Gathering Organization of Madura (Badan Silaturahmi Ulama se-Madura/ BASSRA). Because of this refusal, since 2010, the local government leaders involved in the Coordinating Body of the Indigenous Beliefs Surveillance (Badan Koordinasi Pengawasan Aliran Kepercayaan/ Bakorpakem) Sampang insisted that Tajul Muluk, the Shi'a

leader of Sampang, stop propagating Shi'a teachings and making any statement that considered offensive to the Sunni tradition.

The MUI of Sampang Regency issued a fatwa dated 1 January 2012, stating that the teaching of Tajul Muluk is deviant and a form of blasphemy to Islam. One day after this fatwa issuance, the Nahdlatul Ulama Branch Organization of Sampang issued a similar statement. After that, BASSRA requested the MUI of Sampang and the MUI to issue a fatwa on Shi'a teaching deviation. This fatwa finally brought Tajul Muluk to be a suspect against Religious Blasphemy Law No. 1/PNPS/1965 and Criminal Law Article 156a. In July 2012, the Court of Sampang sentenced him to two years in prison.[25]

Because of the expulsion from Sampang, the Shi'a people were forced to live in the refuge in Jemundo Sidoarjo. Since 2014, the Provincial Government of East Java has provided them with a living allowance that amounted to 709.000 rupiahs per refugee. Up to date, the Provincial Government of East Java has paid up to 20 billion rupiahs for the allowance.[26] Due to the limited amount of the allowance to cover their daily needs, some refugees work at the market and other economic centers to meet their needs.

Even though they have lived in the refuge, the social tensions between the refugees and Sampang people remain. The locals in Sampang remain suspicious of the refugees, making the latter unable to visit their families in Sampang. If one of the refugees died, the Sampang people refused the burial of Shi'a believers in their village. The refugees also found difficulties meeting their fundamental rights, such as possessing identity cards, family cards, marriage certificates, health services, land certificates, etc.

Viewing the difficulties faced by the refugees, a group of civil society organizations driven by The Institute of Research and Human Resource Development of Nahdlatul Ulama (Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia Nahdlatul Ulama/ LAPKESDAM NU) organized assistance. It encouraged the local government of Sampang to fulfill the fundamental rights of the refugees. With such encouragement, in 2016, the refugees obtained Healthy Indonesia Cards (Kartu Indonesia Sehat), Identity Cards, and Family Cards. Those who did not have marriage certificates were allowed to ratify their marriage (*isbat nikah*) in the Religious Courts of Sampang. To ensure that their lands remain in their possession, the government offered Complete Systematic Land Registration (Pendaftaran Tanah Sistematis Lengkap).[27] The Governor of East Java, after that granted them land certificates.[28] These are done to bridge the communication and reconciliation processes. The local government also

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[25] https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2012/07/120712_vonis_syiah_sampang

[26] Report of the East Java National Unity and Political Agency *(Badan Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik)* in a Coordination Meeting with Office of the Presidential Staff, on 14 May 2020.

[27] Document of "Laporan Akhir Program Peduli 2015-2020 Lakpesdam PBNU". Peduli program is a program which aims to building post-conflict social integration such as conflict Sunni and Shia in Sampang, Madura, East Java and Ahmadiyya conflict in West Nusa Tenggara.

[28] https://daerah.sindonews.com/read/322736/704/gubernur-khofifah-serahkan-sertifikat-tanah-kepada-230-pengungsi-sampang-1612314127

maintains an economic elevation program for the refugees. Slowly, these efforts successfully bridged the communication. The most monumental event was when 140 refugees returned to visit Jemundo Sidoarjo on Eid Al Fitr in 2017. This had never happened before.

The reconciliation process went naturally. This opened an opportunity for the 4 November 2020 Declaration, where Tajul Muluk and his 320 followers declared to leave Shi'a belief and return to Sunni belief in front of the ulama of Madura, the Indonesian Ulama Council of East Java, and the representatives of the government.[29] The declaration process was uneasy. Many of the ulama in Madura showed doubt about the sincerity of Tajul Muluk in the declaration and assumed him to maintain *taqiyya* (hiding his true belief). Tajul Muluk opened up himself and communicated with various parties who were able to help solve the refuge issues. With the guarantee from the Regent of Sampang, Slamet Junaidi, the ulama around Madura finally believed in and attended the declaration. The ulama and other figures who were the opponents of Tajul Muluk and his followers met, shook hands, and even held each other.

Before the declaration, the Regent of Sampang maintained intensive communication with various parties. Apart from asking for political support and communicating with the Head of Presidential Staff, Retired General Moeldoko, and the Regent Slamet Junaidi helped the communication and the funding of Tajul Muluk and his followers' children to enroll in Nahdlatul Ulama's *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), such as Pesantren Tebuireng in Jombang and Pesantren Lirboyo in Kediri. The Regent of Sampang visited those pesantrens to ask for support and ask them to accept the ex-Shi'a children to be students. The Regent of Sampang stated that he would pay all costs with his money.[30] Because of this communication, the leader of Pesantren Lirboyo, KH. Kafabih Mahrus Ali, and the leader of Pesantren Tebuireng Jombang, KH. Abdul Hakim Madfudz, attended the Declaration of Tajul Muluk and his followers in the Sampang Regency's Pendopo.

Even though the declaration has not solved all refugees' problems, the effort can be seen as an opening door for a comprehensive reconciliation. After the declaration, the refugees can visit Sampang at any time. If one of the refugees passes away, he/ she can be buried in Sampang. The meeting of the refugees with the local people of Sampang has become fluid. Some of the refugees started to build simple houses in their hometowns. The situation has been better. The Regent of Sampang underwent the first pick-up of fourteen households (53 people) to return to Sampang (29/4/2022). For those who have not had a house, based on the coordination meeting facilitated by the Presidential Staff Office (14/4/2022), the government has delegated the Ministry of Public Works and Housing to assist the housing aid with the fund budgeted by the state in 2023. The houses are to be built in the areas owned by the refugees.

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[29] https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-54550918
[30] Interview and dialog with Slamet Junaidi, Regent of Sampang on various occasions in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

The development of religious conflict resolution in Sampang Madura has ended even if some issues have remained. Among the remaining issues is that some refugees have not returned to their hometowns, and 24 of them still maintain the Shi'a belief. These people have requested to return to Sampang. However. The local government has focused on those who have returned to Sunni belief. This last issue will remain a complex one in the future.

3. The Conflict of GKI Yasmin, Bogor

In solving the religious intolerance issue, Bima Arya, the Mayor of Bogor, uses an agreement-based policy as an innovation to deal with the conflict involving the Indonesia Christian Church (GKI) in Taman Yasmin. This conflict was started in 2006 and only found a relatively permanent solution after 15 years. Before, various attempts were made, including taking the case to court. However, the Court Decision made by the first instance court and the Supreme Court did not solve the problem completely. The legal settlement did not solve social issues that emerged.

The city government of Bogor has become one of the most critical actors both in the conflict process and resolution process. First, the city government allowed the building of the Church in 2006. The issue of GKI Yasmin cannot be separated from the policy of the city government of Bogor, ordering the termination of the building permit of GKI Yasmin in 2008. The termination was reacted by protests from some groups and had become a controversial issue for decades. This case was not only a local or national issue but an international one. International organizations maintaining surveillance of religious freedom in Indonesia use the case of GKI Yasmin as an example of a human rights violation in Indonesia.[31]

The problem mitigation was started after Bima Arya became the mayor for two periods (2014 to 2019 and 2019 to 2024). Various attempts were made but unsuccessful until Bima Arya became the mayor. In 2019, during his second period. Bima Arya continued the effort to solve the GKI Yasmin conflict. He formed Team 7, consisting of the representatives of GKI Yasmin, GKI Pengadilan Bogor, and the GKI Yasmin Synod. This collaboration, along with the city government of Bogor, formulated three alternative solutions: 1) sharing areas between mosques and the Church; 2) the relocation of GKI Yasmin; 3) starting a new permit process to build the Church. After several analyses, Team 7 agreed to choose the third alternative: to start a new permit to build the Church in its original location. Following this, the Joint Settlement Team for the Establishment of GKI Yasmin was made to maintain dialogues with various parties, the local people, and religious figures. This was to establish a conducive precondition before the permit process is completed.

However, this step was uneasy because the surrounding people were still traumatized by the demonstrations and tensions that had happened for years. Because of this, Team 7 and the city government of Bogor used another alternative by relocating the church location, which is

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[31] Laporan Human Rights Watch, "In Religion's Name: Abuses Againts Religious Minorities in Indonesia", Washington DC, 2013.

not far from the original site, with an area of 1.668 M2. Following up on this decision, Team 7 and the city government of Bogor approached religious figures, including Ustad Achmad Imam, a prominent figure rejecting the building of GKI Yasmin, and the surrounding people for dialogues. The changing of MUI leadership in 2017 led to an easier way to solve the problem. The head of MUI from 2017 to 2022, KH. Muhammad Mustofa Abdullah bin Nuh, was known as a protective ulama. Even his pesantren often hold inter-religious meetings.

Apart from that, the mayor, Bima Arya, mandated a particular task to the West Bogor subdistrict head to maintain communication and dialogue with various parties, especially religious figures in the West Bogor subdistrict. Intensive communication resulted in an agreement stating that 73 locals (out of 60 required) did not object to the church building in their area.[32] After obtaining the support from the locals and the GKI Yasmin congregation, the city government of Bogor signed minutes of handover of the land to be used for the church building. This signing was witnessed by the members of the Religious Harmony Forum (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama) Bogor, MUI, GKI Yasmin congregation, and the government. This case came to an end with the handover of the Building Permit to GKI Yasmin (8/8/2021), followed by the lying of the first stone marking the start of the church development.[33]

Indeed, this resolution has not satisfied all people. A small group of the GKI Yasmin congregation – led by Bona Sigalingging, who advocated civil society activists fighting for religious freedom, including the National Commission of Human Rights, rejected all alternative resolutions unless the local government gave the church a building permit in the original locations. This group disagreed with its superior, the GKI Pengadilan Bogor, about the city government's approach. When the city government of Bogor gave the land grant and new permit in a different location, they still refused the decision, stating that the government had lost to the intolerant groups and ignored the previous Court Decision.[34] The National Commission of Human Rights, which assisted GKI Yasmin, accepted the step made by the city government of Bogor as the best alternative resolution, even if it is not the ideal one.[35]

4. Discussion

This research shows the complexity of religious issues in Indonesia, especially in solving religious conflicts. None of the socio-religious conflicts can be solved easily and quickly, especially when it comes to restoring victims' rights. Three cases in this study show that socio-religious relations between the majority and minority groups still become a serious problem. In this regard, there has been a tug between religious freedom assurance and the hegemony of

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[32] Interview with Bima Arya, Mayor of Bogor, in June 16, 2021.

[33] https://metro.tempo.co/read/1536003/peletakan-batu-pertama-pembangunan-gki-yasmin-ksp-apresiasi-bima-arya

[34] The release material is entitled "Refusing to Relocate: Caring for Compliance with the Law, Constitution and Unity in Diversity" which was carried out by a group of members of the GKI Yasmin congregation on June 15, 2021.

[35] https://mediaindonesia.com/humaniora/412020/komnas-ham-relokasi-gki-yasmin-jalan-keluar-terbaik-meski-tak-ideal

the majority. The latest feel that they are disturbed by the existence of the minority sects or religions. The majority hegemony can tolerate those from other faiths more than deviant sects from one religion.[36]

At a certain level, those problems are related to the ideological choice of the state, where Indonesia cannot be neutral to religion. The significant roles of religion in state life include godly nationalism, [37] corporatism ideology, [38] religious nationalism, [39] or constitution theocracy.[40]

Nevertheless, the ideological choice can be ignored in solving religious conflicts. The capacity of the government is more decisive than the ideological issue. State capacity refers to the capability of the state to solve a problem. This is related to the controlling role of the state over its people, activities, and natural resources[41] within its jurisdiction and how the state implements the chosen policies effectively.[42] The state's capacity reflects its ability to mobilize social and economic support and agreements to achieve specific objectives related to public problems.

At least there are two state capacities: administrative and policy. The first refers to the capability of the state to manage its human and physical resources to produce expected outputs. If the primary indicator of the state's capacity is the proper output, then the administrative capacity is related to the resource management effectivity. Meanwhile, the policy capacity is related to intelligent choices in determining a strategic direction to allocate scarce resources for the public interests.

The state's capacity is a form of the use of power. This concept considers the state's capacity as a conscious and intended action and, therefore, a rational project. This concept assumes that a policy results from efforts to maintain objective values and seek analytical forms to gain better outcomes for the people in an objective way.[43] As a form of conscious action and a part of the use of power, the use of the state's capacity is the result of three elements: determined results, chosen policy instruments, and existing resources.[44]

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[36] Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Conversion to Ahmadiyya in Indonesia: Winning Hearts through Ethical and Spiritual Appeals", *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia,* 2014, p. 657-690; Melissa Crouch, "Judicial Review and Religious Freedom: The Case of Indonesian Ahmadis", *Sydney Law Review*, , 2012, p. 545-572.

[37] Jeremy Menchik, "Productive Intolerance: Godly Nationalism in Indonesia…."

[38] Mary E McCoy, *Purifying Islam in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: Corporatist Metaphors and the Rise of Religious Intolerance*, Michigan State University, 2013.

[39] David M Bourchier, "Two Decades of Ideological Contestation in Indonesia…"

[40] Ran Hirschl, *Contstutional Theocracy*, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2010.

[41] Sidney Tarrow, Charles Tilly and Douglas McAdam, *The Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge University Press, Singapore, 2001, p. 78.

[42] Hillel David Soifer, *State Power and the Economic Origins of Democracy*, St Comp Int Dev 48, Philadelphia, 2013.

[43] Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: the Art of Political Decision Making,* Norton & Company, New York, 2012, p. 10.

[44] Johannes Lindvall & Jan Teorell, *"State Capacity as Power: A Conceptual Framewaork"*, *Paper prepared for presentation at the seminar on the State and Capitalism Since 1800, Harvard University, October 7, 2016. https://ces.fas.harvard.edu/uploads/files/Event-Papers/State-Capacity-as-Power-September-2016.pdf*

Religious conflict resolutions in the three regions illustrate the significant role of the local leaders in increasing their capacity. This study clearly shows that the government, especially the local governments, did not show partiality to the victims at the beginning. This is worsened because the victims are considered deviants like Ahmadiyya and Shi'a. On that basis, it is not surprising that, at certain times, the government becomes a sponsor of intolerance which has severe consequences on the state's social life.

Political dynamic, national and local, determines the government's attitude towards those sects. In the case of Ahmadiyya, for example, even when many parties labeled Ahmadiyya as deviant and committed prosecution of the Ahmadi community, the government has never declared the deviation of the Ahmadiyya Indonesia Congregation organization. Besides, none of the court decisions related to the organization or people of Ahmadiyya convicted them of committing religious blasphemy.

This is relatively similar to the Shi'a community. Various organizations are affiliated with Shi'a. such as Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), Ikatan Jemaah Ahlulbait Indonesia (IJABI), and other Shi'a-affiliated educational institutions remain exist. Even though Tajul Muluk, the leader of the Shi'a community in Sampang, was sentenced to two years in prison for religious blasphemy, the conviction was only for Tajul Muluk and not for other Shi'a followers. Many Shi'a figures enjoy freedom.

This fact indicates that the impartiality in the government policy and court decisions regarding the mentioned sects is a contemporary socio-political dynamic. This is not something that continuously occurs in Indonesia's socio-religious history. Therefore, it may not be correct to relate the issues with the state's ideological choice. The explanation for religious conflicts as the state's ideological implication assumes a constant attitude of the government. In reality, policies regarding religious issues are dynamic and politically negotiable. This perspective can explain the prolonged conflicts, even though the local governments are involved in the intolerant actions and suppress the minority through their policies. However, at the same time, the local governments play a crucial role in the reconciliation process.

Therefore, it is necessary to develop social meeting opportunities between the conflicting parties so that they know each other. In that process, recognition becomes essential. This recognition is not in the identity politics frame but the broader context of citizenship.

However, there is no single pattern to solve the religious conflicts. Conflict resolution in Sampang can be considered ideal as it involves the local government, the central government, civil society organizations, and the locals, among the violent actors. Nevertheless, the resolution only worked for the Shi'a people who converted to Sunni. In the case of the Ahmadiyya conflict in West Nusa Tenggara, social reconciliation did not occur. The local government policy only supported the relocation, which was undergone in silence to prevent any social impact. This is because most people in West Nusa Tenggara have found it

challenging to accept Ahmadiyya. In the case of GKI Yasmin, the most significant feature was the collaboration between the city government of Bogor and GKI Pengadilan Bogor as the superior of GKI Yasmin. This collaboration was successfully cooling down the groups who objected to GKI Yasmin.

This confirms the previous finding by Cahyo Pamungkas, stating that religious conflict reconciliation between the victims and perpetrators can only work with a cultural approach, leaving other dimensions, such as theological differences. In this matter, an active role of the government is essential. However, this approach is only possible for inter-religious conflicts, such as the GKI Yasmin case. In internal conflicts involving sects in one religion, such as the case of Shi'a and Ahmadiyya, the theological issues become very serious.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that the local governments are the most critical actors in religious conflict resolution. The conflict resolution process is undergone through agreement-based policy and the existing social capital. This, usually, is carried out after a prolonged conflict, and the victims' rights have been unfulfilled. The prosecution victims in intolerant cases mostly cannot be restored totally. However, in many cases, efforts for reconciliation are maintained even if they are unfinished. This includes efforts to encourage the issuance of conflict resolution-related policies.

Dealing with religious conflicts is a temporary matter related to the political dynamic prioritizing social acceptance over freedom. As a temporal issue, policies to solve religious conflict can be made by considering the local agreement without questioning the ideology of state-religion relation on the national scale. This is a rational choice by determining policy instruments based on existing potential resources, such as political support, sufficient bureaucratic resources, and existing information. Recognition and social acknowledgment of the minority groups become the primary foundation of reconciliation. In this context, recognition is not identity politics but the recognition of the minority groups as citizens with constitutional rights to be respected.

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