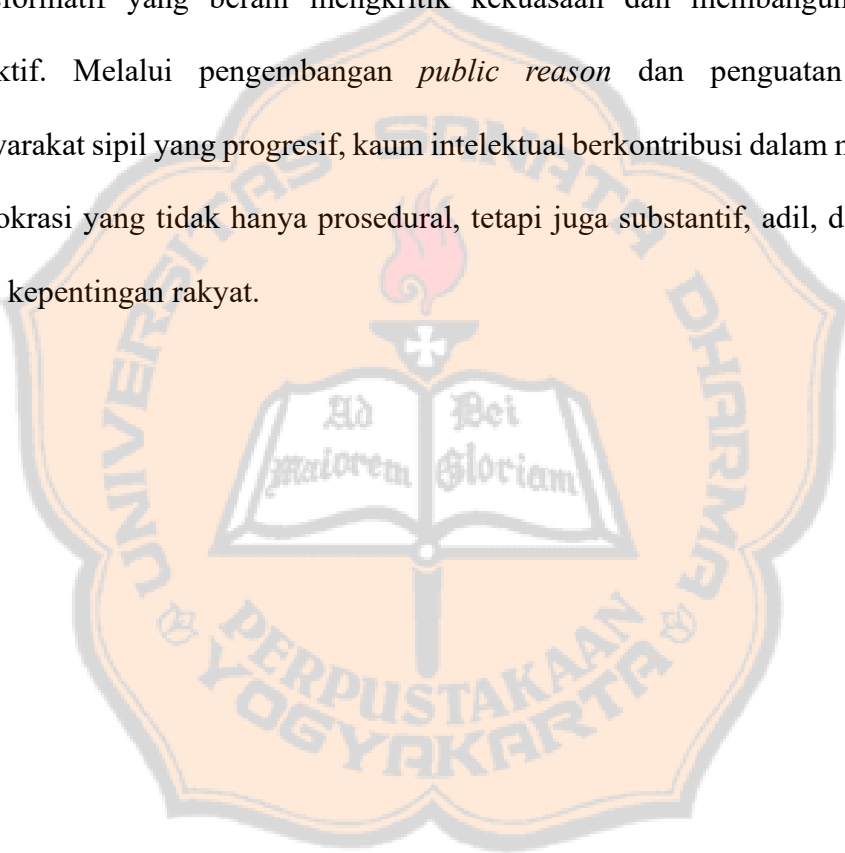


ABSTRAK

Sejarah panjang bangsa Indonesia menunjukkan bahwa penyingkiran kaum intelektual kritis bukanlah fiksi, melainkan kenyataan historis yang terus berulang. Sejak era kolonial hingga masa Orde Baru, kaum intelektual yang menyuarakan ketidakadilan dan membela kepentingan rakyat kecil kerap menjadi sasaran represi—mulai dari sensor, pengasingan, kriminalisasi, hingga kekerasan fisik. Bahkan dalam era Reformasi yang menjunjung tinggi kebebasan berekspresi, tekanan terhadap suara-suara kritis tetap berlangsung, melalui pembatasan akses media, tekanan politik, hingga praktik disinformasi yang melemahkan kepercayaan publik terhadap narasi intelektual. Ketika ruang bagi nalar kritis semakin menyempit dan peran kaum intelektual merosot baik karena represi kekuasaan, kooptasi kepentingan ekonomi-politik, maupun apatisme publik terhadap wacana intelektual, maka demokrasi berisiko tereduksi menjadi demokrasi prosedural semata. Demokrasi semacam ini kehilangan orientasi keadilan substantif dan justru berpotensi menjadi instrumen legalistik yang melanggengkan ketimpangan serta melindungi kekuasaan represif.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji sejarah kaum intelektual Indonesia menggunakan kerangka pikir Edward Said mengenai peran kaum intelektual. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif melalui studi pustaka, penelitian ini mengomparasikan teori peran intelektual Said dengan konsep *public reason* dari John Rawls guna memperkaya analisis terhadap peran intelektual dalam mendorong rasionalitas publik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Indonesia tidak kekurangan figur intelektual publik yang tangguh, namun peran mereka kerap

terhambat oleh tantangan struktural maupun kultural, termasuk delegitimasi sosial, kooptasi kekuasaan, dan kurangnya dukungan masyarakat sipil. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa peran kaum intelektual bukan sekadar ideal normatif, melainkan kebutuhan mendesak untuk menjaga kualitas demokrasi. Intelektual dituntut untuk melampaui posisi sebagai pengamat pasif dan tampil sebagai agen transformatif yang berani mengkritik kekuasaan dan membangun kesadaran kolektif. Melalui pengembangan *public reason* dan penguatan organisasi masyarakat sipil yang progresif, kaum intelektual berkontribusi dalam menciptakan demokrasi yang tidak hanya prosedural, tetapi juga substantif, adil, dan berpihak pada kepentingan rakyat.



ABSTRACT

Indonesia's historical trajectory reveals that the marginalization of critical intellectuals is not a fictional narrative, but a persistent historical reality. From the colonial period through the New Order regime, intellectuals who spoke out against injustice and advocated for the marginalized were frequently subjected to various forms of repression—including censorship, exile, criminalization, and physical violence. Even in the post-Reformation era, which ostensibly upholds freedom of expression, critical voices continue to face systematic constraints through restricted media access, political coercion, and disinformation campaigns that erode public trust in intellectual discourse. As the space for critical reasoning shrinks and the role of intellectuals deteriorates—whether due to authoritarian repression, co-optation by politico-economic interests, or public indifference toward intellectual engagement—democracy risks devolving into a mere formal mechanism. In such a context, democracy loses its commitment to substantive justice and may instead become a legalistic tool that legitimizes inequality and reinforces repressive power structures.

This study aims to examine the historical role of Indonesian intellectuals through the theoretical lens of Edward Said's conception of the intellectual. Employing a qualitative-descriptive method based on literature review, the research juxtaposes Said's framework with John Rawls's concept of public reason in order to deepen the analysis of the intellectual's function in fostering public rationality. The findings suggest that Indonesia is not lacking in resilient public intellectuals; however, their contributions are frequently constrained by structural and cultural

barriers, including social delegitimization, political co-optation, and weak support from civil society. This study asserts that the role of the intellectual is not merely a normative ideal but a critical necessity for safeguarding democratic quality. Intellectuals are called to transcend the role of passive observers and act as transformative agents who confront power, articulate dissent, and cultivate collective critical consciousness. By advancing public reason and strengthening progressive civil society organizations, intellectuals play a vital role in shaping a democracy that is not only procedural but also substantive, just, and genuinely oriented toward the public good.

