



Indonesian History Studies Centre
SANATADHARMA University

di periksa kebenarannya dan
sesuai dengan aslinya
Yogyakarta, tgl. 17 APR 2013

UNIV. SANATA DHARMA
(KIP SANATA DHARMA)

L. Bambang Harnoto, M.Si.
Wakil Rektor II

Certificate

Awarded to

H. Purwanta, M.A.

As a Speaker

For his participation in the International Seminar
Pancasila's Contemporary Appeal
Re-Legitimizing Indonesia's Founding Ethos

Yogyakarta, July 1-2, 2009


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PANCASILA'S CONTEMPORARY APPEAL:

Re-legitimizing Indonesia's Founding Ethos

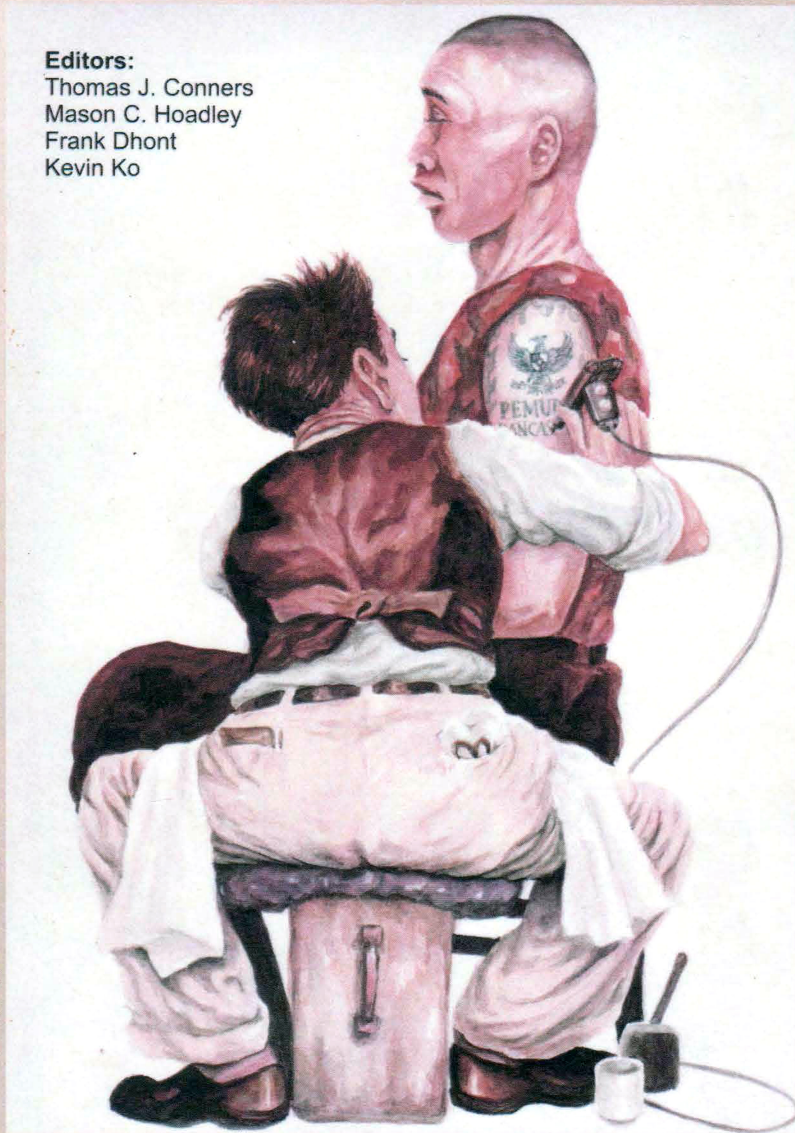
Editors:

Thomas J. Conners

Mason C. Hoadley

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Yale Indonesia Forum
International Conference Book Series, No. 2
Indonesia History Studies Centre, Sanata Dharma University



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Cherished, accepted, ignored, or rejected, the doctrine of Pancasila has been foundational to the fashioning of Indonesian identities. Created by Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, Pancasila was born out of compromise to serve as the new nation's unifying ideology. As such, Pancasila has formed the ideological foundation of the Indonesian state and has helped hold an extremely diverse Indonesian nation together.

During the Second Yale Indonesia Forum International Conference held at Sanata Dharma University in July 2009, a select group of Indonesian and overseas scholars of various academic disciplines convened to discuss Pancasila's contemporary appeal and to explore the ways in which Pancasila continues to play a role in Indonesian politics and public life.

The fruits of this intense discussion can be found in this book which contains a collection of both critical and sympathetic views of the social, cultural, and political significance of Pancasila in post-colonial Indonesia. The collection explores in particular divergent understandings and expressions of Pancasila from Indonesia's post-colonial period through to the present. Together these essays give the reader a complex picture of Pancasila's contemporary appeal as part of what it means to be Indonesian.



Sanata Dharma University Press
LPPM Building, Universitas Sanata Dharma
Jl. Affandi, Mifcan Tromol Pos 29 Yogyakarta 55002
E-mail: publisher@usd.ac.id

ISBN 978-979-1088-56-5



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FRAGILE POSITION OF THE PANCASILA

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1. Position of the Pancasila

Many people, especially from minority groups are concerned over the future of the Pancasila in Indonesia. They fear that it will be replaced by a foreign system. Is this probable? In this paper I try to calculate the possibility, both from the positive and negative sides. Current trends show that opinion for negating the Pancasila and replacing it with another ideology is becoming stronger. If this happens it would indicate a loss of national feeling with few emotional contacts with their own country. I cite a report from *The Jakarta Post*, 16 August 2002:

Ask young Indonesians today what makes them Indonesians, and the answer may likely surprise, or disappoint you.

"I'm Indonesian because I was born in Indonesia and I'm a citizen of Indonesia, I just have to live with that," Intan Nirwani, a 14-year-old high school student, said when she was asked about what it meant being an Indonesian.

Swastika, 24, an anchor at a TV station and also Javanese, gave a similar answer.

"It's just a statistical status. I mean...you are Indonesian because your ID and your passport say so," Swastika stated.

It may be a false assumption to say that Intan and Swastika represent the general feeling of Indonesia's younger generation about their country, but their answers reflect a growing trend among the younger generation. They seem to have grown further away from the sense of being Indonesian that was still very much alive among the previous generations.

For many of today's young people, being Indonesian means nothing more than a "geographical fact" -- because they were born and raised in the country. Nothing more, nothing less.

Ramadhani, 22, a high school dropout and a street beggar, and Ismail, 17, a student at the Santi Rama school for the disabled, said they were Indonesians only because they lived here (cf Alfitra 2004).

From such newspaper stories we can understand that many young people have no emotional identity with Indonesia. For them Indonesia is nothing, is only a place where they were born and where they are now living.

Looking deeper, we discover that the problem with loss of Indonesian identity for young people has complex and deep roots. Henk Schulte Nordholt describes Indonesian History as history without people (Nordholt 2004). By this he means that there is no appropriate story for Indonesians; in history they are always portrayed as poor, stupid, traditional, and uncivilized. Their knowledge and skills are due to foreign 'goodness' that came with colonization. At the same time, Nordholt observes Indonesians live without history. They do not live on the basis of their own historical experiences, but upon current information and trends. From this point of view, we understand

that Indonesians, especially the younger generation, are ready to be followers and consumers of global trends. In this context global trends stands for all the facts, i.e. mental-facts, socio-facts and arti-facts, which derive from global power.

In the sixties Sukarno called the global power that motivated the West 'Nekolim' power, i.e. neo-colonialism and imperialism. Neo-colonialism is defined, interestingly enough, by Kwame Nkrumah as the last stage of imperialism. Furthermore, he explains:

Neo-colonialism is also the worst form of imperialism. For those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress. In the days of old-fashioned colonialism, the imperial power had at least to explain and justify at home the actions it was taking abroad. In the colony those who served the ruling imperial power could at least look to its protection against any violent move by their opponents. With neo-colonialism neither is the case (Nkrumah 1965).

Sukarno saw that the impact of neo-colonialism was very dangerous for Indonesia. In order to build a strong moral defense, he organized the Asia Africa Conference in 1955, which was attended by representatives of many newly independent countries from Asia and Africa. The conference's stated aims were to promote Asian-African economic and cultural cooperation and to oppose colonialism or neo-colonialism by the United States, the Soviet Union, or any other imperialistic nation. Finally, the conference agreed to build Non Alignment Movement.¹

¹ Sukarno named the group as NEFO (*New Emerging Forces*). At the end of the conference, 29 Afro-Asian states signed a 10-point *Declaration on Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation*.

Sukarno's anti neo-colonialism grew into an anti-Western project by the end of the 1950s. In the mid 1960s direct confrontation came about between Indonesia and Western (British) colonial powers over the question of Malaysia independence. It ended only in 1966 when Sukarno 'was bloodily replaced' by Suharto, who brought about a new atmosphere in relations between Indonesia and the West. The most important decision of Suharto's regime in molding Indonesia's future was to change the ultimate national goals. Justice and Prosperity was reduced to material prosperity only, through embracing Western capitalism. The decision brought Indonesia under Western dominance, or in Nkrumah's view, Indonesia fall into a neo-colonial relationship.

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.

The methods and form of this direction can take various shapes. For example, in an extreme case the troops of the imperial power may garrison the territory of the neo-colonial State and control the government of it. More often, however, neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means. The neo-colonial State may be obliged to take the manufactured products of the imperialist power to the exclusion of competing products from elsewhere. Control over government policy in the neo-colonial State may be secured by payments towards the cost of running the State, by the provision of civil servants in positions where they can dictate policy, and by monetary control over foreign exchange through the imposition of a banking system controlled by the imperial power...It is possible that neo-colonial control may be exercised by a consortium of financial interests, which are not specifically identifiable with any particular State.

The control of the Congo by great international financial concerns is a case in point (*Ibid.* 65).

One of cultural impacts of western domination had been the change of Indonesian life style into a more materialistic one. The existence of human beings is no longer dependant upon their strong character, but up on how much they have in property and other forms of wealth. The cultural condition of the Indonesian people has become similar to Erich Fromm's description of a 'sense of having':

As every imperfection of man is a bond with heaven, a point at which his heart is accessible to the priest, so every want is an opportunity for approaching one's neighbor with an air of friendship, and saying, 'Dear friend, I will give you what you need, but you know the *conditio sine qua non*. You know what ink you must use in signing yourself over to me. I shall swindle you while providing your enjoyment.' The entrepreneur accedes to the most depraved fancies of his neighbor, plays the role of pander between him and his needs, awakens unhealthy appetites in him, and watches for every weakness in order, later, to claim the remuneration for this labor of love." The man who has thus become subject to his alienated needs is 'a mentally and physically dehumanized being...the self-conscious and self-acting commodity.' This commodity-man knows only one way of relating himself to the world outside, by having it and by consuming (using) it. The more alienated he is, the more the sense of having and using constitutes his relationship to the world. 'The less you are, the less you express your life, the more you have, the greater is your alienated life and the greater is the saving of your alienated being' (Fromm 1961).

From this point of view corruption, collusion, and nepotism, which spread out in Indonesia during the 32 years of Suharto's regime, are rooted in what Erich Fromm called as sense of having. In general, Indonesian society does not care about

politics and state ideology per se. Politicians, bureaucrats, and many state officials do not provide what the people need; they make personal economic profits in order to get properties that they need.

Besides losing indigenous identity of young generation, it is also possible that the Pancasila might be replaced by Islamic values and norms. In the last five years we could see 'anti sipilis' movement come on Indonesian political screen. Through expressing their belief, the Islamic movements reject secularism, pluralism, and liberalism. A Survey of the Center for Islamic and Society (PPIM) at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta shows that most Islamic studies teachers oppose pluralism. The movement is supported in particular by Islamic organizations that want to change Indonesia into an Islamic state. Furthermore, Jajat Burhanudin as a chief of PPIM said:

I think they play a key role in promoting conservatism and radicalism among Muslims nowadays. You cannot say now that conservatism and radicalism only develop on the streets like what has been campaigned by the FPI (the Islam Defenders Front), but rather deep within the education (system) (*Jakarta Post*, 26 November 2008).

The movement has deep roots in Indonesian history. Before the coming of Europeans, Indonesia was dominated by Islamic kingdoms as Aceh (Sumatra), Banjar (Kalimantan), and Demak (Java). After the Independence Proclamation in 1945, a struggle to create an Islamic Indonesia state occurred in many places. The movement was suppressed by the Indonesian government through a short period of civil war, but the ideology never dies.

When wave of Islamic awakening came in the 1990s, the dream of an Indonesian Islamic state once more was taken up at national level. At the beginning of the 21st century, Islamic organizations and movements grew rapidly with their influence within the public space becoming ever stronger. One indicator of Islamic movements' strength is their success in implementing Islamic laws at the local level, the *Perda Sharia*. Through provincial and local representative bodies Islamic laws have been grafted on to regional regulations. Robin Bush claims that up to 55% of regional regulations are related to religion law. Furthermore,

... regional regulations which could be considered linked directly to Islamic teachings or *shari'a*, 14, or 33% require civil servants, students, or in some cases just Muslims in general, to wear 'Muslim clothing' – usually defined as wearing a *jilbab* for women, and a '*baju koko*' for men. These regulations vary widely from district to district. For example, in Banjar, Kalimantan, Muslim civil servants are required to wear *jilbab* and *baju koko* on Fridays. In Enrekang, South Sulawesi, Muslim civil servants and students must wear Muslim clothing every day (*Perda* 10/2005 – civil servants and students not complying are listed as absent on that day); and in Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, all women (Muslim or not) must wear *jilbab* to receive the services of the village government, *kelurahan* (*Perda* 5/2003) (Bush 2008).

From national viewpoint, the *Perda Sharia* contradicts the Constitution. Paragraph 28 guarantees the equality of all citizens of all groups, as well as the guarantee of human rights through various sections in the constitution. Besides conflicting with the Constitution, these local regulations also directly challenge the unity in diversity motto of *Bhinneka tunggal eka*.

... although Islam is the religion of the majority there are also non-Muslim among Indonesians and institutionally Indonesia is not an Islamic state, therefore the ratification of *Perda Sharia* betrayed national consensus agreed upon by the founding fathers of the republic (Candraningrum 2006).

A LSI Survey shows that 61,4 percent of the Indonesian people are afraid that the *perda syaria* will break the unity of Indonesia (www.politikindonesia.com/readhead.php?Id=1024).

TAKDIR, a legal aid NGO, makes periodic requests for judicial review in cases of *Perda Sharia* to the Supreme Court. In April 2007, in a surprisingly little-remarked-upon verdict, the Supreme Court rejected the request for judicial review of the Tangerang regulation against prostitution on the grounds that the city government had followed all correct procedures in its formulation. As the municipality of Angering also had the constitutional right to produce such regulation, the Court opined, there was no basis for judicial review of the content of the law. Women's groups, as well as the NGOs that had brought the case to the Supreme Court for review, were disappointed with this decision. They believed that the Court could have taken up not just the procedural issues in the formation of the regulation but also its contents (Bush *ap cit*).

A second indicator of both Islamic movements' strength and their desire to replace the Pancasila is the growth of religious sentiment among Islamic religious organizations and between Islamic and other religious organizations. The Wahid Institute notes that there have been ten blasphemy cases in the past two years. The Blasphemy Article (1966) prohibits people from practicing and interpreting a belief which deviates from the main 'rules and interpretation' of a specific religion. One of

cases between Muslim and non-Muslim took place on 11 October 2008, FPI (Islamic Defender's Front) attacked *Sapto Dharmo* members who were holding religious ritual. The Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace, an Indonesian human rights group that promotes tolerance and counts former President Abdurrahman Wahid as one of its founders, reports that religious intolerance is increasing in Indonesia. 265 cases of violence against religions were reported January to December 2008, as increase from 135 cases in 2007. In those cases, there was no clear position taken by governmental authorities or the bureaucracy. The government seems reluctant to see violence precipitated by religion intolerance as criminal. It in action makes many people argue for increased governmental commitment by retaining the Pancasila as national "umbrella" safeguarding the principle of Indonesia as pluralistic nation.

Although both local and national cases graphically illustrate the fragile position of the Pancasila, it is not as vulnerable as it looks. Indonesia still has considerable resources for defending it. Most Indonesians still believe that continuation of the Pancasila is crucial for Indonesia. A survey shows that 96.6% want the Pancasila defended as the basis of the nation; 92.1% said that it is the best foundation for Indonesia. Moreover most Indonesians believe that the Pancasila is rooted in indigenous culture. Indonesia is a colorful nation in its composition, comprising more than sixteen ethnic groups with Javanese as the largest, each with its own specific traditions and local cultures. It means that plurality is a reality, which we cannot deny. Indonesian society, especially in the past, believes that the differences actually complement one another to build universal harmony. Based on this believe, people always treat

others as their own family and see social cohesiveness as the most important goal in life. To make social cohesiveness work, our society found a creative manner of cooperation called as *gotong-royong*. It means together collaboratively to resolve a problem peacefully. Through it Indonesians can solve any problem, individual and social ones alike. One reason for Indonesian people believing that the Pancasila is rooted in indigenous culture is because if there is one term to epitomize the Pancasila it is *gotong-royong*.²

If we then hear objections from the Moslem side, we much realize that it is not the voice of all Moslems. These groups are small. In the last general election, we see that Islamic Parties received only 14.99% of the vote; most people choose secular and national-religious parties. Moreover, 55% of Islamist party sympathizers idealize the Pancasila as the state ideology. So, in term of numbers, objections to the continued existence of the Pancasila are raised by a very small number of people. The problem is that with such a small group sounding their voice very loudly, the majority of Moslems choose to keep silent.

2. Recommendation

From the foregoing discussion of the current position it can be concluded that most Indonesians want to keep the Pancasila as the national ideology and basic foundation. So the next step is how to face two problems, namely western domination and small group of radical Muslim. Most in

² In Sukarno's speech at the BPUPKI meeting 1 June 1945, he said that Pancasila is extracted to be three, it would be: believe in God, nationalism, and socialism.

viewing the Indonesian future agree on the need for civil society or in Islamic term a 'Madani Society'. In civil society every person is empowered to pursue his or her own happiness and has autonomy in deciding the manner in which that can be accomplished. When people act independently and think rationally, socio-culturally they will develop tolerance and appreciation others' independency.

The growth of Indonesian democracy in the last decade shows that we are on the right track in developing civil society. Step by step many political positions, such as regents and governors, have been filled through public election. Although money politics often color the elections, people seem to be more mature in making their choices. Moreover, when political figures do something unjust or corrupt, the general public takes it upon themselves to raise their voices. Current news often report citizens and students demonstrating in response to unjust decisions of local government and overt corruption.

Although there have been many positive sides to the recent growth of Indonesian democracy, we still have a lot of home works ahead of us in order to build a strong civil society. One of these is reform of the national education system. Since the time of the Suharto regime, the national education system has emphasized cognitive aims. While UNESCO has launched four pillars of education for the 21st century, the Indonesian educational system continues to ignore character building. The focus of national education is to develop learning to know and to do and pays little attention to nurturing learning how to be and to live together. From this point of view, reform of the national education system should be pushed in the direction of nurturing character building of its students.

Furthermore reform of education should turn schools into institutions with the obligation of inculcating Indonesian local identity. Until now Indonesian schools teach mostly Western and Middle Eastern identities. It is not easy to change the schools climate to be more Indonesian. In this case, Kalijaga's educational reforms are of special interest just because there are many similarities between conditions then and now. Sunan Kalijaga is one of the nine high nobles (*Wali Songgo*) who become Moslem leaders in the Demak era of the sixteenth century. He was surrounded by the domination of Hadramaut culture. Yet he defended his local identity through the wearing of Javanese dress. We could imagine how hard his life was. He not only wore local clothing but also creatively developed the *wayang* shadow puppet theater as a pedagogical tool. He used the *wayang* to educate people to be Javanese. To allay Hadramauti suspicions, Kalijaga cleverly added an Islamic symbol called *Jamus Kalimasada* onto his *wayang*. The symbol is a most powerful heirloom, but it very rarely comes on the screen. Through adding the Islamic symbol, Kalijaga rendered the *wayang* an acceptable vehicle of communication for Moslem leaders, although it very rarely deals with Islamic values and norms. From Kalijaga's genius in leadership we can learn much for reforming our educational system. The most important lesson to be learned from Kalijaga is that educational reform must be based on indigenous culture and take account into account the harmonious relationships among all stakeholders.

In addition to furthering indigenous values, Indonesian school reform must also be directed toward development of students' critical thinking. Critical thinking is a purposeful and reflective judgment about what to believe and how to act

in response to observations, experiences, verbal or written expressions, or arguments. Critical thinking involves determining the meaning and significance of what is observed or expressed or, concerning a given inference or argument, determining whether there is adequate justification to accept the conclusion as true. Through developing critical thinking, students could engage in making rational decisions, building strong arguments and taking both academic and socio-cultural responsibilities for their decisions. On the other hand, students also could learn from questioning or arguing the validity of any statement wherever it comes from.

To develop critical thinking, the school environment needs to be changed in almost totally different perspectives from the conventional one. School should be a safe place for students to express their opinions where no one can arbitrarily dismiss or ridicule them, including teachers. Students and teachers should be equal in discussions or debate forums, so they can stimulate one another. Teaching-learning processes are also influenced by students' activities in observation, collecting data, writing opinion, presentation, discussion, and debate.

Through education reform that stresses building students' character, I feel the new Indonesian generation could develop strong arguments that the Pancasila is the best foundation for peaceful life of a diverse nation as Indonesia. They will not be trapped as Heidegger named as *da-sein* or Erich Fromm's "sense of having", although to live in global era is challenging just because of the growth of capitalism becoming a juggernaut.

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