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Haji Agus Salim's Political Hermeneutical Thoughts on Islam and The State

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Abstract: This study examines Haji Agus Salim's political thinking on the relationship between Islam and the state in Indonesia. This study aims to examine Haji Agus Salim's political thinking on the relationship between Islam and the state in the Indonesian context. The main focus lies in exploring his concept of theo-democracy, which combines Islamic values with the principles of modern democracy in an inclusive and dynamic manner. Haji Agus Salim rejected formal theocracy and viewed the state as a moral and ethical instrument that opens up space for political *ijtihad* for Muslims in a pluralistic society. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a systematic review method, and utilizes hermeneutic analysis to understand the socio-political context that shaped Agus Salim's thinking. Data were collected through a literature review of relevant primary and secondary documents. The results show that Agus Salim's thinking is contextual, creative, and relevant to address the challenges of the relationship between Islam and the state in various periods of Indonesian history. He also proposed the idea of Islamic socialism as an alternative to capitalism and communism, emphasizing social justice and the welfare of the people. This idea makes an important contribution to the discourse of a democratic, pluralistic, and just state. This study recommends the need for conceptual and implementational deepening of Haji Agus Salim's theo-democratic ideas as a reference in formulating inclusive state policies based on universal Islamic values.

Keyword: Haji Agus Salim, Islam and The State, Theo-Democracy, Islamic Politics, Islamic Socialism, Pluralism, Indonesian Political System

INTRODUCTION

Haji Agus Salim (1884–1954) was one of the most influential figures in modern Indonesian intellectual and political history. He is known as a Muslim scholar with broad views, profound thoughts, and significant contributions to the struggle for independence and the formation of the Indonesian national character. A skilled orator and prolific writer, Agus Salim combined Islamic values with the political and social realities faced by the Indonesian people during the colonial and post-independence eras. His thinking went beyond Islamic

issues to include discourse on the ideal form and character of the state for Indonesia's pluralistic and diverse society.

Agus Salim's extensive experience abroad before independence enriched his insights. According to Solichin Salam (1961), his intellectual and diplomatic travels in various countries gave him a broad perspective in understanding national issues, including the relationship between religion and state. He became a bridge between traditional Islamic thought and modernity, making Islam not merely a spiritual religion but also the ethical and moral basis for national and state life.

His involvement in the Sarekat Islam (SI), a transformation of the Sarekat Dagang Islam (SDI) founded by H. Samanhoedi in 1911, was a significant milestone in the history of Islamic political thought in Indonesia. Under the leadership of figures such as HOS Tjokroaminoto, Abdoel Moeis, and Agus Salim himself, SI developed into an Islamic organization that not only focused on religious aspects, but also fought for the political and economic interests of Muslims under the pressure of colonialism (Kahin, 1967). It was here that Agus Salim began to formulate ideas about Islam that were contextual and inclusive of the political realities of the nation.

In the academic realm, the discourse on the relationship between Islam and the state is a classic issue that remains a topic of debate today. Harun Nasution, as quoted by M. Rusli Karim (1999), states that this issue has existed since the beginning of Muslim history, particularly regarding the legitimacy of power and the form of government that aligns with Islamic teachings. This issue has given rise to various approaches and models of thought.

In general, there are three models of the relationship between religion and state that have developed in contemporary Islamic thought literature. First, the secularist model, which emphasizes the separation of religion from state affairs. This model views religion as a private matter, while the state is neutral toward religion. However, Frans Magnis Suseno (1998) believes that this dichotomy is inappropriate in the Islamic context, because Islam is comprehensive and does not limit itself to the private sphere. Second, the symbiotic model, which views the relationship between religion and state as complementary. In this model, religion serves as the source of ethical and moral values, while the state serves as the medium for implementing these values (Pardoyo, 1993). Third, the integralist model, which unites the functions of religion and state within a single system. This approach varies, ranging from a formal Islamic state to forms of religious nationalism such as that advocated by Sukarno (M. Hari Zamharir, 2004).

Amidst this dynamic of thought, Haji Agus Salim occupied a unique position. He rejected the idea of theocracy and opposed the formalization of religion in the government system. According to him, Islam does not explicitly provide a specific model of state, but rather universal ethical principles. He argued that the state is a political tool that can be used to uphold the values of justice, freedom, and social welfare, as long as it aligns with Islamic moral teachings (Frans Magnis Suseno, 1998). He also rejected the concept of the caliphate as a single political system for Muslims, citing the historical realities following the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate in Turkey.

In the context of ideology, Agus Salim rejected the ideologies of capitalism and communism, which he considered to be rooted in Western materialism. As an alternative, he proposed Islamic socialism, a socio-political system that emphasizes the principles of social justice, concern for the weak, and equal distribution of prosperity (HOS Tjokroaminoto & Firman Manan, 2016). This thinking aligns with the ideas of Mohammad Roem (1995), who stated that the purpose of human life is to realize social justice through the values of goodness.

The relevance of Haji Agus Salim's thoughts is deeply felt in the context of Indonesia today. As a pluralistic nation with the ideological foundation of Pancasila, Agus Salim's inclusive and moderate approach has significantly contributed to bridging the debate between groups seeking an Islamic state and those promoting secularism. He represents a modernist

Muslim mindset, open to pluralism, and upholding democracy, without losing its Islamic identity. For him, the state is not a direct manifestation of God's sovereignty, but rather the result of human political *ijtihad* aimed at upholding Islamic ethical values contextually.

Thus, studying the thoughts of Haji Agus Salim is crucial. It serves not only to reflect on his contributions to national history, but also as a source of inspiration in formulating a model of religious and state relations that is tolerant, inclusive, and in accordance with universal Islamic values. An examination of his thoughts can provide a deeper understanding of how Islam can be constructively present in state life without necessarily leading to exclusivism or rigid religious formalism. Haji Agus Salim's ideas offer an alternative window into answering the fundamental question: how to build a just, democratic, and civilized nation within an Islamic framework that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (blessing for the universe)?

Starting from the issue of the relationship between Islam and the state in the thought of Haji Agus Salim, this study focuses on how to read and understand his ideas in the context of the modern state and their relevance to the lives of today's society. The formulation of the problem studied includes the reasons why Haji Agus Salim initiated the relationship between Islam and the state as a political instrument in democracy, as well as the implications of his thoughts in the context of Indonesian politics and statehood. This study aims to explore in depth Haji Agus Salim's conception of the relationship between religion and the state, emphasizing his views that are not theo-democratic, but rather as a humanist, religious, and philosophical political instrument. This study is expected to find a strategic formula in implementing the concept of Islam and the ideal state, as well as enrich the scientific discourse on the empowerment of human morality through the integration of profane and sacred values. Specifically, this study aims to understand the concept of the relationship between Islam and the state in the thought of Haji Agus Salim, understand the background of the emergence of these ideas, and examine their implications, including their relationship to the spiritualization of Islam as developed by Nurcholish Madjid in the lives of religious communities in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a systematic review method, which aims to summarize and present primary research results in a comprehensive and balanced manner. This approach was chosen to provide a detailed description of the problem or topic being focused on. Data collection techniques involved gathering various documents and literature relevant to the research theme. The collected data was then analyzed in depth to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results of the Study of Haji Agus Salim's Thoughts on the Relationship between Islam and the State

Based on a review of Haji Agus Salim's writings and various supporting sources, it can be seen that Haji Agus Salim's thinking places the relationship between Islam and the state within a dynamic and productive framework. This thinking does not simply view Islam and the state as two separate or even conflicting entities, but rather as a relationship with the potential to synergize to create a just and democratic society.

Haji Agus Salim proposed a concept of a state based on God's law, but in a theo-democratic form. This means that the state, as an instrument of Islamic morality and ethics, must be able to create space for flexible political *ijtihad*, allowing Muslims to interact and live together with other groups in a pluralistic society. This demonstrates that Haji Agus Salim's thinking seeks to bridge the principles of statehood reflected in the Qur'an with the values of modern democracy that value freedom, equality, and deliberation.

2. Differences in Vision and Contextual Influence

A review of the literature reveals differences in vision between Haji Agus Salim and other Islamic figures, such as KH. Mas Mansur, Mohammad Natsir, and KH. Hasyim Asyari, regarding the ideal form of the state and political attitudes toward it. These differences are influenced by each figure's educational background and socio-political experiences. Haji Agus Salim, for example, was heavily influenced by his experiences with the national movement and the process of social modernization, which influenced his perspective on Islam and the state.

3. Islamic Political Thought in a Hermeneutic Perspective

The hermeneutic approach in this research opens up opportunities to understand Haji Agus Salim's thoughts not only textually but also within socio-cultural and historical contexts. Through philosophical hermeneutics, it is found that Haji Agus Salim's interpretation of Islamic political texts is creative and innovative, allowing for the adaptation of Islamic principles to current developments and the local Indonesian context.

This method also emphasizes that the relationship between Islam and the state cannot be viewed as confrontational, but rather as a relationship that can foster a harmonious political synthesis. Thus, Haji Agus Salim's thinking offers an alternative solution to the debate between exclusivism and inclusivism in Islamic politics in Indonesia.

4. The Implications of Haji Agus Salim's Thoughts in Democracy and the Modern Nation State

Haji Agus Salim's thoughts have important implications for the development of the modern Indonesian nation-state. His proposed concept of theo-democracy provides the foundation for a state that respects Islamic values as well as democratic principles, such as participation, deliberation, and social justice.

This study demonstrates that Haji Agus Salim's thoughts can serve as a reference in formulating an inclusive and democratic political relationship between Islam and the state. This is particularly relevant given Indonesia's social plurality and cultural diversity, which require a concept of statehood that accommodates differences without creating social tension.

5. Contemporary Discourse and Historical Relevance

This study places Haji Agus Salim's thought within three periods of Islamic political history in Indonesia—pre-independence, post-revolution, and the New Order—each of which presented distinct dynamics and challenges in the relationship between Islam and the state. Agus Salim's thought, which emphasizes dialogue and synthesis between Islam and modernity, provides an important perspective for understanding and addressing the problematic nature of this relationship in each period.

Criticism of Islamic political idealism and activism during the New Order period also becomes a reflection in this study, considering how the emphasis on legalistic and formalistic aspects of Islam often creates tension in a socially and culturally heterogeneous society. From the analysis, it can be concluded that Haji Agus Salim's thoughts on the relationship between Islam and the state emphasize the concept of a theo-democratic state that prioritizes Islamic values as well as the principles of modern democracy. The hermeneutic approach used allows for a more flexible and contextual interpretation, making it relevant to the socio-political dynamics of Indonesia. This thought has the potential to become an important foundation for the development of harmonious and democratic relations between Islamic politics and the state in a pluralistic society.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Haji Agus Salim's political thought on the relationship between Islam and the state presents a dynamic and inclusive concept, namely a theo-democratic state

that integrates Islamic values with the principles of modern democracy. Agus Salim rejects the formal theocratic model and positions the state as a moral and ethical instrument that opens up space for political *ijtihad*, thus enabling Muslims to live harmoniously alongside other groups in a pluralistic society. The hermeneutic approach in this study shows that Agus Salim's thought is creative and contextual, adapting Islamic principles to Indonesia's diverse socio-political conditions.

Agus Salim's thinking also differed from that of several other Islamic figures due to his extensive socio-political experience, particularly in the national movement and modernization. He proposed the concept of Islamic socialism as an alternative to capitalism and communism, with a focus on social justice and prosperity. His theo-democratic concept was able to bridge the tension between exclusivism and inclusivism in Islamic politics, making it highly relevant for building a pluralistic and democratic Indonesian nation-state.

Historically, Agus Salim's ideas have been relevant across various political periods in Indonesia, from the pre-independence era to the New Order. His thinking provides a crucial perspective for addressing the problematic relationship between Islam and the state by emphasizing dialogue, tolerance, and a synthesis between Islam and modernity. Therefore, Haji Agus Salim's thoughts can serve as a strategic reference in formulating a harmonious, democratic, and consistent model of political relations between Islam and the state in Indonesia.

To further the study and implementation of Haji Agus Salim's thinking, it is recommended that academics and political practitioners deepen their study of the concept of theo-democracy as an alternative in formulating inclusive and socially just state policies. The government and educational institutions should also encourage dialogue between various religious and political groups to foster a harmonious shared understanding. Furthermore, concrete efforts are needed to integrate Islamic moral values with democratic principles in government practice to create a just, democratic, and pluralistic state.

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