

## THE INFLUENCE OF RELATION BETWEEN ULAMA AND STATE AUTHORITY ON THE STABILITY OF A COUNTRY

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### ABSTRAK

Relasi ulama dan negara merupakan diskursus kajian yang selalu menarik, tidak hanya di kalangan sarjana klasik bahkan di kalangan sarjana kontemporer. Fokus kajian yang sudah sangat lazim diangkat ialah terkait hubungan antara ulama dan otoritas kenegaraan yang memunculkan tiga paradigma: agama dan negara sebagai kesatuan, agama dan negara saling terpisah, dan agama dan negara saling berkaitan. Sementara itu, fokus perihal seberapa signifikan pengaruh ulama dan otoritas kenegaraan pada stabilitas dan dinamika suatu negara agaknya masih sering luput. Oleh karena itu, tulisan ini akan lebih fokus pada pembahasan tersebut dengan metode penelitiannya ialah deskriptif kualitatif dan pendekatan historis-politis. Sebagai hasil pembahasannya ialah bahwa peran ulama dan otoritas kenegaraan sangat signifikan di dalam dinamika dan stabilitas suatu negara. Pada satu sisi dapat berimplikasi pada kestabilan dan kemajuan, dan di sisi lain dapat menimbulkan stagnasi dan kemunduran.

**Kata kunci:** otoritas kenegaraan, relasi, stabilitas, ulama

### ABSTRACT

*The relation between ulama and the state authority is an interesting study discourse, not only among classical scholars but even among contemporary scholars. The focus of study that has been very commonly applied is related to the relationship between ulama and state authority that appeared three paradigms: religion and the state as a unit, religion and the state are separate from each other, and religion and the state are interrelated. Meanwhile, the focus on how significant the influence of ulama and state authorities is on the time and dynamics of a country is often missed. Therefore, this paper will be more focus on the discussion with the research methods, namely qualitative descriptive and historical-political approaches. The result of the discussion is that the role of ulama and state authorities is very significant in the dynamics of a country. It may impact for the stability and progress, and on the other hand it can lead to stagnation and decline.*

***Keywords:*** *state authority, relations, stability, ulama*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The relationship between religion and the state has always been a topic of discussion that is always interesting and seems to never end being discussed by both classical and contemporary scholars (Khalwani, 2019), especially in countries with a Muslim majority population. Because in fact, countries with Muslim majority populations since the last few decades have always displayed a high level of authoritarianism where closely related to religious authorities and state authorities and on the contrary actually shows a low level of social economic development when compared to the world index average (Kuru, 2019).

As a real impact of the existing phenomena, citing Kuru's view, there are two main streams of scholars who study the phenomena of the Islamic world. The first is the essentialist who tends to criticize that Islam is the cause of the decline and stagnation of the Muslim world. Meanwhile, the other is post-colonial which emphasizes its view that Western colonialism is the culprit and must be responsible for the decline and stagnation that exist in Muslim countries. However, both of them still seem to be ignorant of some of the internal factors that exist in Muslim countries, especially the complexity of their history.

Religion, which was originally believed to be an absolute manifestation of God's word on the earth, then must meet various dynamic phenomena of social life. Various autonomous institutions, thick with religious patterns, have sprung up under the control of the authority of their figures or ulama. Even at a certain phase, the existing

institutions, including in this case, is that the state is more powerful in controlling society than God. So that in its turn, religion and the state are able to transform into an institution that often fights for and maintains domination and hegemony (Gunawan, 2014, p. 188). Therefore, in this case, the role of the relationship between religion and the state will greatly determine the dynamics and stability related to the progress or decline of a country.

Similar to Gunawan, Kuru emphasized that the relationship between religious authorities or better known as ulama and the state or government authorities could have more implications for the stagnation of a country's creativity, so that progress and glory that are often imagined and dreamed of by Muslim countries will be hampered and longer achieved. But on the other hand, it should be underlined that the relationship between religion, politics, intellectuals, and economic actors can determine the stability, success, or failure of a country in achieving its progress and glory. This applies both in the Islamic world and the West. What was then stated by Brathwaite (2015) is similar to that religion and the state can make a very influential combination in the sustainability of a country. Therefore, the study of the extent to which the relationship between the ulama and the state affects the stability of the state will be the main focus of this research.

This research relies on second hand data in libraries and other sources with qualitative descriptive research methods. In collecting data for this research study, the author reads and examines various journal articles, books, and scientific

writings related to the theme. In addition, there are other sources as supporting data in the form of articles or related news that are relevant, in order to support understanding about the main themes carried out in this research. The data that has been obtained and collected is then processed by the author using a critical reading approach. As for critical reading here, it is not intended to merely explain what is contained in an article or text, but aims to an elaboration in order to get to a new text or writing.

We also need to emphasize here that the object of this paper is the actor or the religious authority, in this case is ulama, not the religion (Islam) itself. This is as examples and suggestions emphasized by some contemporary scholars including Salwa Ismail and Talal Asad who always place Islam not as an object, but instead place Muslims instead. Because for them, however, Muslims or the people behind the scenes of Islam are human beings. They are the same as any human being, possessing dynamic psychological and sociological aspects (Ismail, 2006).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Religion and Country**

According to Ibn Kholdun, religion in a country can play an important role as a unifying factor, a source of morality, a state paradigm, and even a tool for legitimizing power. However, on the other side he strongly emphasizes that religion can be present as a moral basis for the progress of a nation, because the purpose of the existence of both the state and religion is to both lead to the realization of human welfare, justice, and prosperity. Therefore, although they are different, they are

closely related and need each other. This is what then makes scholars state that Ibn Kholdun's paradigm of religion and state is a symbiotic paradigm view (Khalwani, 2019).

In addition to the symbiotic paradigm that is in accordance with Ibn Kholdun's view, namely the paradigm with its connotation that between religion and the state are interrelated with each other, where both need each other in their development and existence, other socio-religious studies experts state that there are still two other paradigms, namely secular and integration paradigms (Iqbal, 2016; Sirait, 2019). While the secular paradigm tends to separate religion and the state – including Musthafa Kemal Attaturk and Ali Abdul Raziq, the integration paradigm views religion and the state as an inseparable unit. His view is based on that religion (Islam) is a universal religion, kaffah, covering all aspects of life, therefore, in state affairs it must be in harmony and based on the basic rules of religion. Included in this view are Abu A'la Al Maududi, Rashid Rida and Sayyid Qutb. The three paradigms have their respective arguments or arguments.

Hamzah and Katu, in one of their theses, formulated that the state in an Islamic perspective is an area of power with several boundaries, which there are several important elements, including fertile land, communal communities, religious groups, future generations, and some rulers which are integrated with each other, thus leading to the creation of a safe, fair, peaceful and peaceful atmosphere (Hamzah & Katu, 2020). Related to these arguments, Rawls revealed that a religion has a

strategic place and position in a country (Ma'arif, 2006, p. 199).

From a number of explanations related to the relationship between religion and the state above, the author draws a common thread that regardless of the various existing views regarding that religion and the state are one unit, or both are very different and cannot be united, or even different but have one goal, all these are basically indicates that the relationship between religion and the state will greatly affect to the practice of social life – which cannot escape the scope of institutional power or in this case the state. This is further emphasized by one of the statements at the beginning of this paper regarding the fact that the study of the complexity surrounding the relationship between religion and the state has always been an interesting and warm discourse even by the contemporary scholars (Darajat, 2019; Khalwani, 2019; Kuru, 2019).

### **The Historical Complexity of Ulama and State Relations**

The relationship which exists between the ulama and the state in the Muslim world has been going on for several centuries. It is not the new thing in Islamic world. Historically, the relations that began to exist were not always smooth or had a positive impact on the Islamic world (Kuru, 2019, p. 32), although on the other hand, Islamic world has a record of extraordinary progress, especially in the range of the seventh to eleventh centuries – which was the golden age and glory of the Islamic world with its progress in the world. Various scientific fields at the same time become a center of progress in the world. In fact, during that period, no

single state was able to match the brilliance of the Islamic world (Alkhateeb, 2017, p. 89).

Before proceeding to further investigation regarding the relation between ulama and the state, it is important for us to briefly mention the spectrum of ulama in this paper. Ibn Rajab al Hanbali stated that the scholars were the main successors of the spread of the Prophet's message in their respective communities. They are able to call and invite people to the call of the Prophet, namely to obey Allah's commands and prohibitions, and maintain the existence of Allah's Religion (Abdullah, 2021, p. 2). Basically, they are religious authorities, namely as influential groups in society.

However, ulama is an important element in a country. For example, referring to the Indonesian context, Ulama have long proven themselves to be one of the most important actors who have had a political, sociological, and cultural influence on the historical dynamics of Indonesian society. One of them is their articulation and interpretation of the relationship between religion and the state. The relationship between religion and the state, which was considered 'final' with the concept of the Pancasila state, began to be discussed and debated for its legitimacy in open spaces in the Reformation era and after (Hasan et al., 2019, p. 19).

Historically, apart from excelling in the scientific field, the Islamic world also has more superior record in the economic field compared to the Western world. What should be noted is a phenomenon that is often overlooked, that in those heydays, a high status or position in the Muslim

community was held or dominated by independent scholars and merchants. They have their own plus in social life which is equal to and even higher than the local policy makers. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the Western world is still dark and under the control of religious hegemony and military elites. The domination of the military and religious authorities (the church) is still very strong (Kuru, 2019, p. 69).

As for the various debates that exist among scholars regarding the events that determine the starting point for the emergence of relations between the ulama and the state in the Islamic world, it can be traced since the great tragedy in Islamic history, namely the civil war between Ali's side as the fourth caliph and Muawiyah's side who acted at that time as governor of Damascus. It is not clandestine that one of the real effects of this incident was the death of thousands of people. It didn't stop there, a series of tragic events accompanied it, including the murder of Ali.

As its continuation, it can be seen that Muawiyah founded the Umayyad dynasty and consolidated state institutions as official institutions. Records of the use of the first throne and royal guard were found during the Umayyad dynasty. But even though he has been officially crowned as caliph, in fact Muawiyah is still not recognized by some Muslims as a real impact of the arbitration by his emissary, namely Amr bin Ash who seized power from Ali (Hitti, 2002, p. 235).

Furthermore, if we jump to the eighth and ninth centuries which were the golden age of the Islamic world, Wael Hallaq states that during the heyday of Islamic intellectuals,

scholars and scholars were independent, including the founders of the four madhhabs and also the Imam of Ja'far Sadiq. In fact, most of them are willing to be ostracized and put on trial just for refusing to be servants of the rulers. Imam Abu Hanifah is reported to have died in prison, Imam Malik was whipped, Imam Shafi'i was detained, and Imam Ibn Hambal was tortured in prison, while Imam Ja'far Sadiq was poisoned (Kuru, 2019, p. 72). It all happened because they realized that they could be used as a tool of legitimacy with various arguments in society if they were subject to and under the control of the authorities. They even refused financial assistance from the rulers. Because for them this can then have an impact on their submission to local authorities.

The reason of ulama and intellectuals prefer to be independent and not submit to any state authority is because they generally realize and believe that close relations with state authorities are actions that lead to corrupt practices. They also prefer to be financed by commerce and maintain relationships with independent merchants. Even most of the scholars at that time were independent and very valuable merchants. From the eighth to the eleventh centuries, around 72.5% of Muslim scholars and scholars and their families were involved in trade and industry (Kuru, 2019, pp. 5–7). These has a real impact on their independence in thinking and being creative.

### **From Independent to Dependency**

The relationship between religion and the state, which then became more evident can be traced

in the range of 1000-1200 CE, during that time the territory tended to be divided into two. The sultan focused on state administration and military affairs, while the ulama focused on social and family affairs. However, both of them synergize with each other and form relationships and cooperation. In fact, the two are interdependent. Including influential figures at that time were Al Gazali, Ibn Rushd, and Al Razi who aggressively offered their political thoughts in the context of balancing (Firdaus, 2014, p. 167). Furthermore, the various practices of these relations were increasingly visible during the Seljuq dynasty. The scholars began to become tools of legitimacy for the government. Several policies related to rents and high taxation to merchants were also intensively implemented (Kuru, 2019, p. 57).

The eleventh through thirteenth centuries were a time of gradual reversal. So that between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries there was a real transformation of the stagnation and decline of the Islamic world. The phenomenon that occurred in Central Asia, Iran, and Iraq in the eleventh century was a multidimensional transformation which was also the beginning of a turning point towards decline. At the time when the ulama began to have many alliances with the government, the ulama eventually functioned as a legislative authority, which in practice was dominantly undemocratic. The legal position by the scholars is under the authority of the state. The mosque is also controlled by the government in order to legitimize its power (Kuru, 2019, p. 42).

As a result of the alliance between the ulama and the state, as already mentioned, the law can be manipulated and played in accordance with the interests of the lasting power of state authorities. Meanwhile, the arguments of the scholars will only be limited to a stamp of approval in the eyes of the people. This is in accordance with the argument of Gunter W. Remming who considers that between religious authorities and the state both carry out social roles in society (Saputro, 2018, p. 115). Hebert Spencer's thesis also confirms how religious and state authorities play the same role, namely as controller and regulator.

In the period between the twelfth century and the fourteenth century, the practice of the model of relations between the ulama and the state increasingly spread to several other Muslim countries including Andalusia, Egypt, and Syria. The existence of a major war, namely the invasion by the crusaders also accelerated the spread of this relationship model. Because with the tragedy, however, Muslims must try to find protection from various disturbances caused by foreign invasions to the state authorities under their military control.

As its continuation, in the sixteenth century, three powerful military empires emerged, namely the Ottoman Sunnis, Shii Safavids, and the Mughal dynasties. All three are undoubtedly strong in military terms (Islam, 2019, p. 36), but in fact they fail to manage and revive intellectually and economically. Their excessive focus on the defense and military fields makes them tend to ignore and marginalize intellectuals, scholars, and

merchants. In the end, they began to face the complexities of political and economic crises. Therefore, during progress during this period, there were actually substantial defects (Kuru, 2019, p. 203).

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between ulama and state authorities is unavoidable in line with the inauguration of the state as an institutional institution. Although during the golden age there were records that most of the ulama kept their distance from their relationship with the rulers, in fact there were still some who had to be involved. As the formulation of Ibn Khaldun which states that religion has an important role in a country for the realization of peace and justice, the ulama as religious authorities must be actively involved. Therefore, the relationship between the two will affect the stability of a country. The social dynamics of a country depends on how both of them play their respective roles.

Kuru's thesis, related to that the relationship between the ulama and the state is a fundamental aspect of the decline and obstacle to the progress of the Islamic world, is something that Muslims must admit. The ulama and state authorities must put aside their egos to later admit and accept the lashes. Because the historical facts do indicate a decline and an obstacle to progress. While the emphasis on the object of study on Muslims and non-Muslims is expected to be very helpful for Muslims as the main actors of Islamic progress to be more aware of self-evaluation, and not be preoccupied with various scapegoats

of colonialization or even worse on the essence of Islam itself. Because as stated by Hasan, et al, that the relation between the ulama and the state can also have an impact on the stability and progress of a country.

Some points that Muslims should pay more attention to nowadays are the creative reforms of intellectuals, scholars, and independent merchants. This will be able to balance the power of state authorities as the most influential actor on the stability of a country. However, for the author, the discourse study related to this relationship is still not final. Continuation of studies and deepening by scholars will always be needed. So that with the passage of time, more accurate formulations will appear and have implications for the achievement of the ideal relationship between the ulama and the state.

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