

The Power of Religion in Indonesia's Public Sphere Discourses: A Philosophical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a study of the formation and practice of discursive religion in the Indonesian public sphere. Religion is one of the fundamental dimensions in the political structure in Indonesia. Therefore, religion needs to be reflected rationally and openly so as not to be trapped in exclusive view that would leads to fundamentalism and radicalism. Philosophy has been one of the partners of religious discussion since the Greek Era, strengthened in the Middle Age, fought in the Modern Age, and underwent a process of redefinions in the Postmodern Era. This exploration of the power of religion in Indonesian texts and contexts is started at the transition from Sukarno to Suharto (1960-1998) until the current situation (1998-2023). In this dynamic, the power of religion seems to overwhelm the way of thinking and actions of the society.

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini merupakan kajian tentang pembentukan dan praktik agama diskursif dalam ranah publik Indonesia. Agama merupakan salah satu dimensi fundamental dalam struktur politik Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, agama perlu direfleksikan secara rasional dan terbuka agar tidak terjebak pada pandangan eksklusif yang dapat mengarah pada fundamentalisme dan radikalisme. Filsafat telah menjadi mitra dalam diskusi agama sejak Era Yunani, diperkuat pada Abad Pertengahan, diperdebatkan pada Era Modern, dan mengalami proses redefinisi pada Era Postmodern. Eksplorasi kekuasaan agama dalam teks dan konteks Indonesia dimulai pada masa transisi dari Sukarno ke Suharto (1960-1998) hingga situasi terkini (1998-2023). Dalam dinamika tersebut, kekuasaan agama tampak mendominasi pola pikir dan tindakan masyarakat.

1. INTRODUCTION

Auguste Comte, the father of positivism, in one of his philosophical statements once predicted that religion (theology) and metaphysics (philosophy) would end and disappear and then would be replaced by science and logical-positivism - a world-view that then became something factual rather than theoretical-speculative. (Schamaus, 2018:34). In one way, this statement, made in the 19th century, has some dimensions of truth in it; but on the other way it is not true altogether. It turns out that, amidst of many recent advances and tremendous development in science and technology, religion still exists and presents and even also plays a significant role in the public sphere until the first third of 21st century. Though religion has confronted with many challenges, criticism and internal crises in reality passed through the wave of Enlightenment of 19th century and then it also succeeded in overcoming the many challenges of the 20th century and now it entered into the 21st century with its own problems and challenges. Religion, in one way or another proved to be strong in confronting the challenges of the time and history. Nowadays, religion still has a power to give a certain color to the dynamic of human development of the world society. This tendency also takes places here in Indonesia. Religion still remains an important discourse that should be taken into account in the public space (sphere) with all its successes and failures. This article examined the power of religion in Indonesian public sphere (spaces) using the archaeological and genealogical methods once initiated and introduced by Michel Foucault (1926-1984).

Generally speaking, religion in Indonesia is an important element in the public space (sphere). It has a great and significant role to play in the political daily life of the Indonesian people. Historically, this idea has existed and played a significant role in the whole process of Indonesian independence itself. Sukarno stated this reality in a speech on June 1, 1945, and it was later affirmed during the session of the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence (PPKI – *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*) on August 18, 1945, the day after the Proclamation of Independence. This formulation is preserved in the first Principle of Pancasila – Belief in One Almighty God (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*). This theo-political formulation of belief in God was then translated quite concretely in Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution concerning the freedom of religion seen in the backdrop of the First Principle of Pancasila (the belief in one Almighty God). If we look closely to the whole process of the political amendments of Indonesia Constitution, it is interesting to know that article 29 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia is truly special because it is an article that has not been changed in the four amendments to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

This article intends to critically explore the role of religious discourses in Indonesian texts and contexts. In general, people consider religion as a context for the realization of revelation and faith in the life of the human society. As such it needs to be critically read using a certain philosophical approach and by doing so, religion will not be trapped in a closed attitude and mentality in our ongoing human search for the truth. This article is divided into three main parts. First, the theoretical framework, in which authors attempt to explore and describe the relationship between philosophy and religion. This step is done by specifically using the approach once proposed by Michel Foucault with the name of archaeology and genealogy. Second, research methods, in which authors describe methods used in this study. Third, authors describe texts which, in the philosophical consideration of the authors, implicitly imply the position of religion and religious discourses in the Indonesian public space. This process of reading and interpreting is supported by a Foucauldian framework of thought in reading

religions and various religious discourses. Finally, this article would end with some conclusions and recommendations for further study and research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Historically speaking, religions and religious discourses have been studied and investigated from various scientific disciplines (social, politic, economic, anthropologic sciences). But surely one of religion's partners of critical dialogue in making the critical study and investigations of religions and religious discourses in philosophy. If we trace back into our long history of human reflections, it can be said that the inter-connection between religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, has been very strong since the early Middle Ages in the Christian (Church) history. Church theologians and philosophers such as Augustine (354-430), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Sina (980-1037), Ibn Rusd (1126-1198), as well as Jewish philosophers such as Salomon ibn Gabirol (1021-1069/70), and Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) have made a very deep contemplation and reflection on divinity (in a very broad sense of the word or theological discourses) in the light of philosophy. So strong was the inter-connection between them that in the Middle Ages, as its results, philosophy was finally seen as the servant of theology (*Philosophia est ancilla theologiae*). Developments, however, in the following era when modernity spread and dominated, religion received sharp criticism from philosophy and vice-versa. It is undeniable that those religious and philosophical discourses have enriched the tradition of thinking both in religion and philosophy. The relationship between religion (theology) and philosophy to this day remains an important dimension apart from various studies from other scientific disciplines regarding religion (theology).

In this section, authors will elaborate and describe Michel Foucault's way of thinking and his distinctive philosophical perspective. This French philosopher once said that his work was not for readers in general but for the specialist or the serious users of this way of thinking only. He saw his work as a kind of toolbox that anyone could rummage through and then use or apply as they pleased in any desired area (Dewey, 2020). It must be admitted, however, that there are so many tools in the box that requires skill to choose which "tools" are suitable for a certain purpose. Foucault's philosophical thinking is both broad and deep. It assumes that the readers are quite familiar with the tradition of western philosophical thinking such as that have been inherited by Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger and various other styles of philosophical thinking. Apart from that, the range of his philosophical thinking is also rooted in in-depth studies in the fields of history and psychology, making this post-structuralist philosopher's studies broad and profound. Foucault admitted that his philosophical framework was not in a unified whole (Mills, 2005:13-28). We need, therefore, to be extra careful in using Foucault's way of thinking because we might just repeat what he has said.

In this theoretical framework, there are two points that should be put forwarded before Foucault's way of thinking is applied further in the study of religious power in Indonesia. First, regarding power, Michel Foucault has a unique perspective. He did not begin his analysis with the attempt at the definition of the term power as has been the philosophical tradition since Greek times up to the Modern era. For him, this attempt wasn't helpful enough, because power exists in the daily relations of humans and society. So, according to Foucault, the issue of defining the power becomes something secondary. In the final analysis, Foucault views power not only as domination, but also as a certain strategy in the dynamic of communications and interactions between humans. Foucault's view of power should be distinguished from the views of other philosophers such as of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Hannah Arendt, and Juergen Habermas.

The English word “power” has its parallel in German “die Macht;” and its proper parallel in French is “la puissance.” The French word “la puissance” also means “power” but with the strong tendency toward repressive, dominative in connotation. Meanwhile, the French word “pouvoir” is a word specifically used by Foucault in a juridical, political and moral meaning (Kebung, 2021:95-96). Power, in the Foucaultian sense of the word, always exists in inter-relationship between humans, and also their relationships with the environment and other elements of life and nature.

In summary, there are six points of conclusions that can be drawn from the fact that power is a matter of strategic and dynamic relationship between people (Kebung, 2021). First, power was already practicing or enacted before it was perceived as power or domination between humans over one another. In other words, power is exercised or enacted before it is adopted or possessed. Power, first, is a verb rather than a noun. It exists initially as a verb (to be enacted and practiced) then a noun (possession). Second, power is something that exists everywhere; we can also say that it is something dispersed in the society and in nature; it is always immanent in various kinds of human relationships and interactions. Third, power is seen as a mechanism or strategy that put so much emphasis upon practices and functions in certain fields of life. Fourth, power always existed and interrelated with knowledge, and hence the expressions “there cannot be power without knowledge and vice-versa.” Fifth, power does not mainly work through repression and intimidation but through regulation and normalization. It is not subjective and non-dialectical, but positive and constructive. Sixth, where there is power and power-relationship, there is also resistance. The resistance itself is not something outside the power but is always in relationship to it. Resistance is the counterpart of power.

Where does religion fit in the framework of Foucault’s analysis? That is the question that arises, though Foucault does not specifically discuss religion. But his philosophical thinking cannot be denied as growing out from Western traditions which are generally rooted in Christianity. Foucault, like most children in France at that time, grew up in the Catholic tradition to become an altar boy and was also educated in a Catholic, Jesuit education. In later developments, interest in religion, especially Christianity is a teaching or rigid identity, was not found in him in the time to come. Foucault, however, remains indebted to the system that exists in Christianity, for example when he examines power as a technique. Foucault took ideas from there, criticizing the system and at the same time saying that the system built in modernity cannot be separated from its Christian roots (Vargas, 2018). His criticism of power, however, using archaeological and genealogical methods, in truth allows religion to see a new perspective on religion itself. Because philosophical views are an important basis for theology (read: religion) so that it always talks about concrete life and is rooted in the world (Kebung, 2020).

The essence of the archaeological and genealogical methods used in this paper is to search for the text (archaeology) and context (genealogy). Archaeological searchings are an effort to find forms, epistemes (forms) while genealogical methods examine formations, discursive practices (formation) (Owen, 2016). Searching for texts is an archaeological reading. Texts help us to discover the discursive formation (episteme) of an era. Foucault wanted to explore texts including the neglected texts. This archaeological method can be found in Foucault’s books *The History of Madness* (1961) and *The Order of Things* (1966), apart from the methodological description in the book of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969). Because for him, in these unnoticed texts, one can find the thinking system of an era. Thus, Foucault did not want to generalize a construction empirically but rather looked at the specific details of thinking and actions that were accepted in that specific era (Gutting, 2005:41). The texts that will be read are texts related to shifts in religious perspectives and practices in the public sphere. At this

point, the text as a discursive formation is always related to practice. Here a genealogical approach is needed in order to be better in seeing the operationalization of power in the concrete space of life. The genealogical approach can be found in works such as *Discipline and Punish* (1975) which describes a situation where at one time certain viewpoints and practices were prohibited or did not appear in public spaces, but in other periods these viewpoints actually became models for display in public spaces. Genealogy looks more at how knowledge is operationalized or the discursive practices of knowledge.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This article is a literature study using a Foucauldian archaeology and genealogy approach. In analyzing texts or events, there are several approaches that can be taken even though Foucault himself never standardized a certain methodological position. But as Sara Mills also said, there are six approaches that can be seen in Foucault's philosophical analysis (Mills, 2005). However, in this article only three approaches would be used to review the power of religion in Indonesian political discourses. In this section, the main ideas of the three approaches would be mentioned and further explained; these three approaches will be used as a basis and the starting point for the review of the discourses.

First, based on archives (Drawn on archives), Michel Foucault had a high discipline to carry out archival studies in various libraries such as the Paris National Library and also libraries abroad such as Universities in various countries like Uppsala (Sweden) and Hamburg (Germany). The interesting thing concerning Foucault's study is that he also draws attention to the texts that are small, peripheral, unnoticed, and trivial. Because for him, such texts also provide information concerning important discursive formations in them. Likewise, this article also intends to reflect on several narratives of the relationship between religion and power by trying to see power relations in historical events in Indonesia.

Second, paying more attention to things that are contingent, coincidental, possible rather than causes (look for contingencies rather than causes). Behind this way of seeing, this method does not want to see things simply, but also sees various event. Foucault calls it eventalization which means finding connections, relationships, support, obstacles, games of power and strength (force), strategic and so on which at a certain time determine what is self-evident, universal and necessary. Third, investigating problems rather than subject. This Foucauldian method invites us to focus on relations, for example relations between ethical minorities, institutions and existing stigmatizations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, three types of narratives and events are explored further by using archaeology and Foucauldian genealogy approaches. With one fundamental question that we want to review, that is, what are the dynamics of religious power and socio-political power in Indonesia? In the three explanations below, a philosophical examination of the traces, contingencies and problematization of religious power from texts and contexts will be carried out.

4.1. Traces of Power Relationship and Religion in the 60s

In this sub-part, traces of religious power and political power are examined and explored in the narrative surrounding the socio-political events of the 1960s era. The flow of this archaeological search began around the year of 1963 when the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* popularly known in its abbreviation, PKI)

launched an “unilateral action” to implement the land reform law from 1959-1960 which could be said to have not been implemented. PKI members began to seize lands, especially in Central Java and East Java (also in West Java, Bali and North Sumatera) where fierce conflicts with landowners occurred. These landowners also work as government bureaucrats, military, PNI supporters (politicians), and also *Kiyai* and *Santri* or religious members (M.C.Rifleks, 2003:332). Behind this land-conflict incident, the authors would only see the religious narrative in it. There are four groups involved in dealing with agrarian reform (launched by PKI), namely governmental bureaucrats, military, politicians and clergies. These four groups have different mass-bases and orientations from each other but they are also united by one common interest and issue, namely the question of belief in God (religious belief). Religious legitimacy is at the center of resistance in this land conflict. The basis for this legitimacy is constructed with the main premise and socio-religious stereotype that “PKI people are godless or irreligious individuals.” *Tempo Magazine’s* “Special Report”, first edition of 7th October 2012, which was later published in a 2013 book entitled “Confessions of the 1965 Executioner-Tempo Investigation, regarding the 1965 Massacre” became an important formation to examine the power of religion in this socio-political incident. Several narratives would be described based on Tempo’s investigative-reports taken from historical eye-witnesses who describe and narrate the power of religion in them (Kurniawan, et.al., 2013).

The following is the story of Haji SY from Probolinggo, East Java, who was 27 years old in 1965. “I took part in the operation because of the state obligations. Because, if the PKI wins, Islam will be destroyed. Moreover, parents and Kyais also gave their approvals. If I die, I will die as a syuhada (falsely translated as martyrs)” (Kurniawan, et.al., 2013). Likewise, Ansori admitted that he attended several meetings leading up to the massacre. And the religious leaders who attended the meeting stated that the crushing of the PKI members was Jihadic action. If you didn’t crush it first, the PKI members would actually crush those whom they considered as enemies (Kurniawan, et.al., 2013). Mochamad Samsi from Srebet-Lumajang hamlet clearly said: “It is not valid to be a Muslim if you do not destroy the PKI people” or “It is *haram* to kill lizards if you have not killed these infidels” (Kurniawan, et.al., 2013). Likewise, the story of Chambali from Rengel Tuban sub-district, East Java, contains a religious-narrative background behind this murder story. He said that he wanted to kill someone, but before he was killed, I asked the person if he had any last messages. “If you are Muslim, read the Shahadat first.” The person answered the question straightforwardly: “Please kill me. I don’t have any message. I don’t need to read the Shahadat. Why do PKI people read the Shahadat? PKI people don’t know Gusti Allah.” However, on the other hand, there are also some disturbing experiences. “There was one person who trying to escaped death. I asked the person if you were Muslim. He answered: “Yes, I am Muslim. I emphasize again. If you are Muslim, can you recite the Shahadat? That person was able to recite the Shahadat fluently. My body was immediately trembled upon hearing Shahadat. The sword I was holding fell off and fell into the abyss” (Kurniawan, et.al., 2013).

Confessions also came from Zainuddim Rusjiman (72 years). “My hatred for communism started as a student, when I was a member of the Islamic Student Association (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*, HMI). “I believe that communists are the enemy of all religions... if PKI people can be trained, the they will be trained, if not destroyed” (Kurniawan, et.al., 2013). Indoctrination regarding the threat of the PKI as a godless atheist organ also occurred in Maumere (Flores, East Nusa Tenggara). It is said that all the

executioners were forced to kill under threat. The indoctrination was that “PKI people are evil, do not know *Godo*... If they are not killed, they will surely do the killing of the Priests, nuns, sisters, brothers (religious-congregation members)” (Kurniawan, et.al., 2013).

In those traces of narrative above, it can be easily seen that religion is in the praxis of power. Religious power operates at both individual and group levels. Religion becomes a discursive formation to obtain a basis for action. Religion is a strategy used to influence the way of thinking and the inner-personal spaces of people and communities involved in those tragic various and sadistic actions. Religion here becomes the main text and context in the operationalization of socio-political power. The situation of religious-power, however, was different when the New-Order regime came to power afterwards. Religious power relations also undergo changes in text and context. This would be explained in detail in the next paragraph of the article.

4.2. Discursive Formation of Power Relations and Religion in the New Order Era

In this second point, we examined the discursive formation of religious power relations during the New Order (Orba) Era. As Daniel Dhakidae said, both Sukarno and Suharto were adherents of Snouck Hurgronje's theory or way of thinking, namely giving the widest possible freedom to religions (especially Islam) and taking strong actions whenever there was even the slightest whiff of political Islam. Sukarno took tough action against DI-TII and Suharto was even more creative in not only suppressing political Islam but also religious Islam (Dhakidae, 2003; Borgias, 2012). In 1970-1980 the New Order Regime stigmatized political Islamic groups and suppressed all forms of their activities (Haryanto, 2019: 11). One control over religion can be seen from the regulation of school uniforms. It cannot be denied that this regulation was created as response to the widespread use of the hijab in the early 1980s. the Suharto regime viewed the wearing of the hijab as a symbol of defiance against the regime. The New Order responded to this incident by issuing a Decree of the Director General of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of Education and Culture, No.052/C/Kep/D 82, 7th March 1982, concerning Uniform Guidelines for Junior High Schools and Senior High Schools. This rule is the formal basis for controlling and at the same time normalizing religious power in the public sphere by state authorities (Bolo, 2020). This Decree is the basis for the legitimacy of schools to repress female students who wear the hijab in various cities in Indonesia such as Jakarta, Tangerang, Bekasi, Semarang, Kendari and several other cities. The resistance from the residents did not subside, resulting in a new order on February 16th 1991 establishing a Decree No.100/C/Kep/D/1991 which essentially allows students to wear clothes according to their religious beliefs. From here, in a Foucauldian context, we see these power relations. Even though state institutions have strict control devices, they are ultimately unable to “usurp” the power of religion, which in this case relates to the body. Because power, as Foucault once said, is the relations between various forces. Power is not something that is acquired and can then be shared. It is also not a property that can be reduced or added to. But power, on the contrary, is a practice and is dispersed everywhere and cannot be localized. The above changes in the New Order's approach to the control of “religious bodies” also need to be read in this context.

Apart from the state body, it also strictly controls and restricts five religions and at the same time suppresses many local-indigenous religious beliefs in this country. The prohibition of this belief system is strange enough, but the logic of power and control over it is neatly constructed. The New Order built this controlling effort by started from the

definition of religion. It is said that “religion is belief in Almighty God.” The question is, if religion is defined in that way, why then the “Faith in the Almighty God” is prohibited. Is there any difference between Almighty God in the definition of religion and the Almighty God in the concept of some indigenous religious beliefs? Don’t religious beliefs also believe in Almighty God? It turns out that for the ruler in power, even though a religious sect believes in the Almighty God, it is not a religion (Dhakidae, 2003). Religion has been limited in understanding by the authorities, there is epistemic control over religion.

Now it is just a matter of how normalization goes, the New Order rulers need supervisory institutions. And this supervisory institution does not only come from religious elements, but also from elements of the prosecutor’s office and even the military high-ranking officials. The story of Eyang Praptowiseno alias Suwito, an occultic shaman from the village of Cempo, Salem, Karanganyar on the western slopes of Mount Lawu, Surakarta, whose practice was stopped by Pepekuper (Assistant Warlord) indicates that the state’s strict control preacher the remote areas (Dhakidae, 2003:558). If you look closely at the power relations this prohibition, it is clearly strict because Pepekuper itself is under the supervision of the Central War Ruler (Peperpu) and above it is the Supreme War Ruler (Peperti). The question is, then, will this strict state control eliminate the practice of belief or mysticism that exist in Indonesia? The answer to this question would be explored in the section three in the following paragraph.

4.3. The Power Relationship and Religion in Contemporary Events

In this third point, the authors examined the religious power-relationship. They examined it from the flow of various events appeared in the public stages today, whether they are broadcasted through mass media or just stayed viral on various social media platform. There are a lot of events in this relationship, but the one thing that will be reviewed in this section is the statement of the previous Minister of Religious Affairs, Yaqut Cholil Qoumas (popularly known with his alias, Gus Yaqut) regarding the Circular Letter of the Minister of Religious Affairs in 05/2022 concerning Guidelines for Using Loudspeaker in Pekanbaru which has caused a chaotic socio-religio-polemic. There were several elements of society who reported the statements by the Minister of Religious Affairs and even stipulated that they were considered to be something insulting to Islam.

In the context of power relationship discussed here, the authors of this article are not concerned into the detail of this polemic. They only want to look at the power-relationship between the minister’s statement in relation to the statements of the two media activists, namely Ade Armando and Denny Siregar on The Cokro TV network. The title of the review delivered by Ade Armando is “Why it is impossible for Gus Yaqut to be appointed” (Armando, 2022) shows the operationalization of this power network. Ade Armando explained that the group that attacked Gus Yaqut was orchestrated by a joint movement from the Islamic Defense Action Group, Alumni 212, the Betawi Rempug Forum, and the Minangkabau Traditional and Natural Meeting Institute. Ade Armando made a detailed comparison of the power relationship in this particular case. First, Gus Yaqut may be hated but he is still a Muslim. Gus Yaqut’s breakthrough was made from the start with the statement and the recognition that he (Gus Yaqut) was the minister of all religions. He is a minister of all religions and not just the minister of Islamic religion. In this connection he openly supports the Shia and Ahmadiyah religious groups. He also publicly wished the Baha’i Community a happy holiday. The statements put forwarded above show the aspects of power relationships in it. Second, it cannot be denied that Gus Yaqut comes from a strong

religious power network. Meanwhile, Ahok (Basuki Tjahaja Purnama) is not from the same origin and background with Gus Yaqut. The position of Ahok in power relationship is a problematic one. He is, so to say, trapped in a double minority context and condition due to his religious status as a Christian and his ethnic background as a Chinese. Contradictory enough, that though at that time Ahok was a Governor of DKI Jakarta, it was very clear that Ahok is the perfect powerless person at the pinnacle of power. Ahok's power as governor was actually powerless because it was not supported by a network of power relationship. Finally, this fact caused him to fall down and even then, sent to prison for two years.

As far as religion is concerned, Ahok's fate is totally different from the fate of Gus Yaqut. As a person he is already of powerful one. First of all, he comes from the largest Islamic religious organization in Indonesia, Nahdatul Ulama (NU). So, he has a powerful relationship and network. This powerful network is also further become stronger and firmer because Yaqut comes from the circle of family founders of NU itself. In addition, we should also realize that his older brother K.H. Yahya Cholil Staquf served as Chairperson of NU (2022-2027). Even the power relationships are also visible in the Minister's organizational activities. Gus Yaqut is the Chairperson of Ansor and the Commander of Banser, the organization of NU Youthful with all its militancy and consistency. From the case of Gus Yaqut in comparison to Ahok's case we can conclude that the power relationship combines with the religious elements and background plays an important and strong role in the social performance of a certain person and their final fate: fall down and prison in the case of Ahok (voit of a strong power relationship), high-ranking political position in the case of Gus Yaqut.

This topic of power relationship is also apparent from the discursive formation reviewed by Denny Siregar in a review entitled "Minister of All Religions" (Siregar, 2022). Denny Siregar explicitly showed a certain mysterious power that had been operating long before Gus Yaqut became a Minister of Religious Affairs. The Minister is a brave and powerful personality. His courage and power have been proven even when he was still in Banser Social-Organization. In that particular position and role, Gus Yaqut was a symbol of resistance against various intolerant groups in some places and cities in Java. The strength and the power formation within Gus Yaqut was also not shared by the previous Minister of Religious Affairs, Fachrul Razi. Though Fachrul Razi's power network is also actually capable and powerful because he has a military background from a high-ranking position. And apart from that reality, Fachrul Razi also in a socio-political context has a strong socio-religious background because he grew up in the Islamic culture of Aceh and Minang. The formation of discursive power relationship, however, is not strong enough. Gus Yaqut appears with a relatively strong power relationship because he has been in a network of power that is tooted in the deep-rooted socio-religious context of Islam (NU). From the above description, it can be easily seen that Gus Yaqut was in a very strong power formation before he became a minister, which is itself a representation of power formation and the dynamic of power relationship.

There are several important and interesting points that can be deducted and learned about the dynamic of power relationship from those above webs of political and religious events. There is a certain discursive formation shown in the religious and political polemic surrounding the Minister of Religious Affairs' statement and the movements of resistance of the opponents. First, it should be underlined that the religious relationship that emerged in the discursive events between the statement of Minister of Religious Affairs and the opposing religious groups were productive and constructive in their basic character.

The reason is that because the discursive process, even though it is harsh, can occur openly and in a balanced manner. Each party has epistemic arguments based on religion (Islam) and each party also has supporters who practice these epistemic truths. This text and context make this polemic on the discursive formation of religion in the public sphere can be discussed and argued more rationally. In this discursive formation, all religious epistemes are openly expressed, tested, and verified. Various verses and propositions appear in the public space and are continuously constructed. If studied further, this polemic also becomes a certain religio-socio-political construction that enriches peoples understanding of religion and religious affairs in the public sphere. The second point of discernment is closely related to the fact that Gus Yaqut is quite strong in this discursive battle and struggle. The reason for this fact is because the religious power relationship within Gus Yaqut have been practiced and embodied by him long before it was “appropriated” by and in his whole life and personality. What has been “appropriated” by a certain person later on in his political life, has been actually long previously practiced by the whole life of that person him or herself. And this idea and fact are also in line with Foucault’s study that ultimately it is not episteme that determines the power relationship but the long discursive practice and embodiment of it. Practice is much more decisive than a series of discursive formations. Practice is above theory (Kebung, 2021). In this polemic, we see religious power networks being tested in the public space (sphere).

The authors strongly emphasized that this is the reality of the process of the formation and discursive practices of religion in the Indonesian public space. And this political phenomenon takes place already since a very long time even before its declaration of Independence back in the medio of forties of the last century. So, this is already a very long journey in this country’s socio-political existence. And based on that particular historical awareness it can be said that religious power relationship needs to be managed openly and rationally because only with an open heart and mind and grandeous rationality can be a certain religious power in the public sphere bring benefits and something positive and constructive to all humans.

5. CONCLUSION

Religion as part of the public sphere cannot be separated from discursive formations and discursive practices. Indonida, as country with a diversity of religions and the practice of belief in the Almighty God, needs to continue to review the traces, current context and possible future of religion. In the history of Indonesia, religion is one of the elements that influences and determines the public space. This can be easily seen from the historical context of this country when religion was also used to legitimize the effort of the people to get rid of the people who were considered as part or member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and all its affiliates. There was, however, a time when religion also was suspected and controlled by the state authorities because religion was considered to shake the stability of power and its status quo. This is what happened in the Suharto era. After that era ended, however, religion returned to occupy the public space. Nowadays, with more open public spaces due to the massive and rapid development of information technology, the power of religious influences is even greater and greater.

Various events in this country cannot be separated from the influence of religion. The power of religion in the sense of something productive and constructive also needs to continue to be interpreted. These religious power relations are built with discursive formations and

rational discursive practices. The rationale in this context is that discursive formations are open to testing both at the episteme and action level or at the practical level. Religion in this context does not end because it is part of the power itself. And the power is society itself. If religion is part of human life and pursuits then it will continue to give color to the public space. Finally, the study of philosophy needs to continue to be developed because with the critical power and maturity of thinking in the public sphere about religion is more open towards a better civilization.

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