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Samsul Maarif

Pasang Surut Rekognisi

Agama Leluhur

dalam Politik Agama
di Indonesia



SHIFTING WATERS IN THE POLITICS OF

RELIGION

AND ITS IMPACTS ON INDONESIAN

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES



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Summary and review by Kelli A. Swazey

Samsul Maarif, *Pasang Surut Rekognisi Agama Leluhur dalam Politik Agama di Indonesia (The Tides of Recognition: Indigenous Religions in the Politics of Religion in Indonesia)* CRCS-UGM, 2017.

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**Shifting waters in the politics of religion
and its impact on the rights of
Indonesian indigenous communities**

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Foreword

The Tides of Recognition: Indigenous Religions in the Politics of Religion in Indonesia is the second book that the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies has published this year (2017) to respond to current issues related to religion in Indonesia. In May, we published *Krisis Keistimewaan – Kekerasan terhadap Minoritas di Yogyakarta* [“The Crisis of “Keistimewaan” (Yogyakarta’s Special Status): Violence towards Minorities in Yogyakarta]. In line with that book and our many other publications, we expect this book will contribute to debates on policies that affect communities who practice “indigenous religion” throughout Indonesia and that it will serve as material for our courses on the subject. To make Maarif’s book available for English-speaking audience we publish this summary and review by Kelli A. Swazey.

CRCS has offered a course titled “Indigenous Religions” for a number of years. The course is taught alongside other courses that are commonly offered at many other academic programs in religious studies, such as *world religions*. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that the course, currently taught by Samsul Maarif, occupies a central place in our curriculum, not simply

to complement material on the variety of religions that are commonly covered in religious studies programs, but quite significantly to interrogate the very definition of “religion” itself.

In the realm of policy, the politics of defining religion is even more crucial. The issue is not simply how well a definition represents the phenomenon it attempts to refer to and study, but also whether it is sufficiently inclusive, and thus non-discriminative. In its Indonesian version, this book uses the term “*agama leluhur*” (literally: ancestral religion) as the preferred Indonesian terminology for this term. We have to acknowledge that the choice of terms in both English and Indonesian also reflects a political position. As shown in this book, many groups of Indonesian citizens are denied their fundamental human rights because they are identified as belonging to indigenous religions. In line with the understanding of dominant religious groups, in the state’s definition, belonging to an indigenous religion implies that these groups and individuals “do not have any religion (yet)”. This problem of recognition started in the colonial period and intensified after

Independence, and many features of the policies developed in those eras remain until today, despite some improvements following Indonesia's democratization after 1998. The ongoing review of the 2006 Civil Administration Law at the Constitutional Court, where Maarif presented the findings he has written about in *Tides of Recognition* as an expert witness in May 2017, is the most recent reflection of this dynamic.

Our expectation is that this condensed English summary and review by CRCS researcher and lecturer Kelli A. Swazey and Samsul Maarif's original publication in Indonesian may stimulate further discourse and contribute to the enrichment of our understanding of Indonesian indigenous religious communities, in turn improving their standing as equal Indonesian citizens.

SHIFTING WATERS IN THE POLITICS OF RELIGION AND ITS IMPACTS ON INDONESIAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Summary and review by Kelli A. Swazey

Samsul Maarif, *Pasang Surut Rekognisi Agama Leluhur dalam Politik Agama di Indonesia*
(*The Tides of Recognition: Indigenous Religions in the Politics of Religion in Indonesia*)
CRCS-UGM, 2017.

Religion (*agama*) is essential to the Indonesian concept of citizenship, as until recently all citizens must declare a religion on essential civil documents in order to receive the services and civil rights guaranteed by the state. However, the Indonesian state only officially recognizes six religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. These official religions are recognized by fulfilling certain narrowly defined criteria that state uses to distinguish a religion from particularistic practices which it then relegates to the category of 'culture.' For many groups, these practices constitute systems of belief or cosmologies that encompass rules about daily life as well as spiritual

orientations and are, for them, equivalent to the participation of other Indonesians in the recognized faiths. Alternately classified as *kebudayaan* (culture), *adat* (tradition or traditional law), *kebatinan* (mysticism), or *aliran kepercayaan* (belief groups), these names encompass diverse practices from the Javanese philosophy of *kejawen* to the specific cosmologies held by ethnic based communities like the Parmalim of North Sumatra, as well as new religious movements emerging from these cosmologies, such as Sapto Dharmo. The practices that fall under these labels are defined in distinction to the category of official religion (*agama*) with the implication that those who ascribe to these beliefs have 'yet' to embrace a 'religion' and

are hence more 'primitive' or delayed in the 'civilization process'. From the colonial period through the present post-Reformasi allegiance to representative democracy, the state's treatment of the array of practices and cosmologies that do not align with the official definition of religion has long been a challenge in the management of Indonesia's diverse population. The result is discrimination and coercion towards those groups who insist on their right to identify with their belief systems outside of the six officially recognized civil religions.

The Tides of Recognition: Indigenous Religions in the Politics of Religion in Indonesia (CRCS 2017) examines the history of the legal definition of what Maarif terms "indigenous religions" in Indonesia, arguing these beliefs belong within the category of religion, and the impact of this legal process on groups who identify as themselves as practitioners. The choice of the term *indigenous* religions is in itself a call for the recognition of these practices as living, contemporary, and equivalent to official state religions, a nuance the author finds lacking in such other terms as *asli* (original), local, or ancestral. As the book documents, however, the debate over how to characterize these practices has a contentious history that begins with the efforts of colonial powers to impose their definition of what a religion should be on the diverse lifeways of inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies. The debate over the definition of these practices is inseparable from the politics of religion, as a category and as organizations of political actors, in contemporary Indonesia, and an issue that has significant implications for citizens' rights.

The Tides of Recognition begins by tracing the development of the concepts of *adat* and *agama* during the colonial period.

The concept of *adat*, which is normally glossed as traditional systems of rights and rules anchored in the cultures of particular communities, was utilized by the Dutch as part of their divide-and-conquer politics for the colonial East Indies. Scholars codified local rules and mores from across the archipelago into codes of customary law (*adretrecht*) to differentiate Islam as a foreign influence in the region (Bowen 1983:230). The colonial revitalization of *adat* institutions was intended to create an alliance between local communities and the Dutch against Muslim militants. Labeling some practices as *adat* and revitalizing them created tensions and polarized cultural communities against Islamic groups, as the Dutch perceived (political) Islam as an element that needed to be curtailed and controlled. This was the beginning of the relegation of certain practices to the domain of 'culture' that was defined in contradistinction to a Western definition of religion then being formulated. The effort to segregate Islam from local practices was carried out through educational efforts under the so-called Ethical Policy of the late colonial period, which focused on *adat* 'revitalization' by modernizing traditional practices through the teachings of Christianity.

Following independence, Indonesian nationalist leaders were faced with the challenge of incorporating numerous configurations of *adat* alongside Islamic and secular systems of law and the reality of Christian majorities in certain strategic regions into a unified national system (Bowen 1983:280). The drafting of the Indonesian constitution starting in 1945 reflected these tensions in balancing the desires for an Islamic Indonesia with concern for populations that belonged to other

world religions or the numerous groups that fell under the category *Kepercayaan* and *adat* communities. In an initial draft of the constitution, the inclusion of the Jakarta Charter, which stated that "The Indonesian State is based on belief in the One and Only God with the obligation for Muslims to live according to Islamic law," was amended due to fears it would be used against non-Muslim populations. The term *kepercayaan* (belief) appeared in the second clause of the draft constitution: "The nation guarantees the freedom for all inhabitants to embrace and practice according to their religion and beliefs." In some interpretations, the word *kepercayaan* (belief) in this clause is understood as referring to internal pluralism in Islam, not to the existence of groups outside of the religions recognized by the state, a reaction and safeguard against pressure from *santri* groups who championed a more orthodox interpretation of Islam. In this sense, *kepercayaan* can be interpreted as part of *agama*, not something outside of it. Other interpretations see the addition of the phrase "and beliefs" as a compromise not only for more "syncretic" practices of Islam (*aliran abangan*), but also for any non-Muslim groups who feared that they would be forced to submit to Islamic law under the new national system. At the very least, Maarif notes, the phrase indicated that at the inception of the Indonesian nation, there were communities who claimed to be different from "orthodox" religious groups with representation inside the government.

In the late 1940s, *santri* (pietistic) versus *abangan* (syncretic) Islamic groups, to use terms popularized by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, were politically polarized, with *santri* on the side of the military pitted against the *abangan*

groups associated with communism. Although communities identified as practicing *kebatinan/kepercayaan* were not necessarily associated with the Communist Party, they fell into the category of *abangan*, and therefore were considered insufficiently pious and thus communist by default. During this period, *santri* groups continued to push the association of *abangan* and *kebatinan* groups as atheistic and, within the Cold War context, Communist. The formation of the Department of Religion (Depag) on January 3rd, 1946, was a response on behalf of *santri* groups disappointed that the mandate for Islamic law was not to be inscribed in the constitution. For the last seven decades, the Department of Religion has played an essential role in framing the evolving definition of religion under this influence of the polarization between groups claiming the prerogative to speak for Islam, whether defined as orthodox or as open to diversity.

The 1950s: Defining and debating the role of belief/mystical groups

In 1952, the Department of Religion released its definition of religion, one that reflects an interpretation of religion in line with *santri* politics and an orthodox interpretation of Islam. A religion according to this definition is a teaching which conforms to the first article of Pancasila—*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa* (Belief in the One and Only God), was revealed to a prophet and has one distinct holy book, and is internationally recognized. Although this definition was not codified in official state documents, it continues to exert a strong influence over how the state limits what can be called a religion until today.

In addition to promoting a narrow definition of religion that could be used

to exclude groups and practices deemed heterodox, the Department of Religion evolved as an institution that served as a “watchdog” for belief groups, treating them as a threat to nationalism and to the five officially recognized religions. In 1953, the Department formed the Coordinating Board for Monitoring Belief Groups (PAKEM) to oversee communities and organizations not affiliated with any of the official religions and to assure that they did not transform into “new” religions able to make claims on the international stage. In their capacity to survey the religious landscape, the Department also contributed to the continuing processes of the classification of non-official groups. The Department’s success in defining *aliran kepercayaan/ kebatinan* as different from religion(s) also had the effect of encouraging these groups to organize themselves and codify their teachings and practices. In 1953 the Department of Religion recorded over three hundred and sixty distinct *aliran kepercayaan* groups nationwide, with twenty-nine in West Java alone.

The increasing visibility of these groups through the 1950s coincided with their consolidation and with their effort to push back against the implications that they were a threat to the nationalism. Formed in 1955, the People’s Kebatinan Congress in Indonesia (BKKI) represented seventy organizations and called for the government to recognize *aliran kebatinan*. In its second congress in 1956, the organization put forward a refined definition of *kebatinan* that showed they fit the first principle of Pancasila (Belief in the One God). However, under pressure from the Department of Religion, the BKKI also stated that its member organizations were not aiming to become new religions *per se*

to be recognized as such by the state; rather they were seeking to improve “religiosity” in the country. By 1957, the group had begun to move away from the Department of Religion’s control, instead requesting that the President himself recognize *kebatinan* groups as equal to official religions. Although Soekarno praised the groups for orienting themselves to Pancasila, he also cautioned them against practices labelled black magic (*klenik*). This suspicion towards indigenous religions of being ‘backwards’ or ‘deviant’ in relation to the “progressive” world religions continues to haunt these groups and is expressed in contemporary debates over religious practice and identity in Indonesia today, particularly in cases alleging the defamation of religion (*penodaan agama*).

1960s: Religion ascends

By the time of the IV Congress of BKKI in 1960, *kebatinan* organizations were continuing to push for the recognition of their identity as equivalent to the official world religions recognized by the state. Orthodox Islamic political groups, however, maintained that placing these *kebatinan* organizations on equal footing with state-recognized religions such as Islam would set a dangerous precedent. The 1960 Decree of the People’s Consultative Assembly Outline of the Pattern of Overall National Development Phase One 1961-1969 (TAP MPR No.II/MPRS/1960) exemplifies the ongoing negotiations over the position of *aliran kepercayaan* groups in the Indonesian nation. Although its second article states that ‘mystical’ and ‘cultural’ practices are to be accommodated as equal to religion, the same article outlines that religious education will be applied at all levels of schooling, with the concession that students can opt out of

religious education. This was interpreted as a display of the power of the *santri* groups to continue to push for limitations on the movement of *aliran kepercayaan* groups into public life. The pressure to restrict these groups was increasingly reflected in state policies aimed at policing them. In 1961, PAKEM was moved under the aegis of the public prosecutor's office and expanded to have a presence in every province and regency in order to better fulfill its function of monitoring these groups that could, in the state's estimation, "endanger the community and the nation."

Developments in 1965 constituted another legal blow to the recognition and status of practitioners of indigenous religions with the establishment of the Law No.1/PNPS/1965 on the Misuse and/or Defamation of Religion. This was the first codification into law which directly legitimized religion (*agama*) according to the definition provided by the Department of Religion, hence delegitimizing *kebatinan/kepercayaan* by positioning practitioners as violating the law and disturbing the unity of the nation. The policy implied that religious groups are clearly defined and that teachings and practices labeled *kepercayaan/kebatinan* are not equal to religion, in both their nature and in the rights they were entitled to. It also implied that followers of these groups did not have a religion, as they fell outside of the six religions recognized by the state: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism (which was outlawed by a special presidential instruction in 1967 that was finally revoked in the year 2000).

The tides of institutional attitudes towards *kebatinan/kepercayaan* groups were changing, just as public understanding of

the role of religion was about to undergo a dramatic shift. In the violent aftermath of Soeharto's ascension to power in 1965-66, *kebatinan/kepercayaan* groups along with *abangan* Muslims became enemies of the state due to their association (real or imagined) with communism. Converting to one of the state's "official religions" was often a necessity to protect oneself and one's family against the accusation of association with the Indonesian Communist Party. Declaring membership in one of the state's officially recognized religious categories became a means of first escaping violence and then of ensuring one received the full protection of the state.

1968-78: Finding safety under the label of culture

In the transformed political landscape of the New Order in the late 1960s, *kebatinan/kepercayaan* groups began to receive support from elite politicians and factions of the military. BKKI transitioned into the The Coordinating Body of Associations of Belief, Spirituality and Mysticism in Indonesia (BK5I). The addition of the term *kepercayaan* to the organization's name was an effort to assert a direct link between these groups and the Constitution Article 29. Informally asked to join Golkar in 1970, the organization came under the jurisdiction of the Coordinating Secretariat of Beliefs (SKK) of the Golkar Party, and hence was, at least structurally, considered by proponents of *Kepercayaan* to be equivalent to the Indonesia Ulama Association (MUI). The *kebatinan/kepercayaan* groups thus found a kind of legitimation through incorporation into Golkar, and the shift in their title served to distance the groups from an association with "occultism."

In the Outlines of State Policy passed in 1973, the Peoples Constitutive Assembly (MPR) declared that *kepercayaan* was equivalent to religion on the basis that these groups were rooted in Belief in the One and Only God (Subagya 1976:125 in Picard and Mardinier 2011:15). This statement instigated a backlash from Islamic forces that would lead to a significant change in the state's categorization of non-official religions. At the 1978 People's Constitutive Assembly, a debate erupted over the proposed *Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila (P-4)*, a curriculum guide for national education about the national ideology of Pancasila. Members of the MPR from the United Development Party (PPP) responded by rejecting any kind of recognition for the *aliran kepercayaan*. Protests and walk-outs occurred as some Muslim groups saw the legal recognition of *kepercayaan* as blasphemous (*syirik*). Under this pressure, the government turned to the strategy of "culturizing" *kepercayaan* and further defining this category against the category of religion. Thus, the policy enacted in 1978 (TAP MPR No. IV/MPR/1978) states that "the Belief in the One and Only God" is not sufficient to define what is a religion and will not transform non-recognized groups into new religions as such." The management of all *aliran kepercayaan* groups was moved to the Department of Education and Culture, definitively categorizing these groups within the realm of culture, not religion.

1978-1998 Solidifying the definition of religion

The paradox of this "culturization" of *kepercayaan* was that the groups that didn't belong to an official state religion were characterized as "cultural organizations or

expressions," but simultaneously continued to be allowed weekly broadcast time for their teachings on state television channels (TVRI) alongside the "recognized" religions. The 1978 policy from the People's Consultative Assembly (TAP MPR RI IV/MPR 1978 on GBHN) and later regulations made it clear that only five religions were recognized and qualified to receive state services, such as religious education in public schools. The main reference point for this new limitation was in civil registration processes required of all citizens, including registration of the Family Card (Kartu Keluarga/KK) and the National Identification Card (Kartu Tanda Penduduk/KTP) as well as paperwork pertaining to birth, marriage, divorce, death, burial, and access to education. The practical impact of these policies in defining religion was that forthwith all civil forms had a column where the individual was required to enter his/her religious identity or be denied services. Those who belonged to *aliran kepercayaan* groups had little choice but to affiliate with a recognized religion if they wanted to access civil services. Even registering for electricity required an ID card listing an official religion.

The religion column was a result of these policies from 1978 onward, as previously religion was not listed on the National Identity Card. These policies also strengthened the imperative for national institutions to monitor followers of *kepercayaan*. The Coordinating Board for Monitoring Belief Groups in Society (BakorPakem) was shored up to assure that *aliran kepercayaan* groups did not transform into new religions that would confuse the system with claims to equal footing. They were thus prohibited from resembling or conflicting with official religions. These

policies established in the middle part of New Order persisted even beyond the end of the regime, eliminating the space for followers of indigenous religions to express their beliefs and identities. Furthermore, they now faced discrimination and the possibility of criminalization.

Marriage law was also affected by the reformulated definition of religion, although the paradoxical attitudes of the New Order government towards non-official religions continued to be displayed. Although Law No. 1/1974 and Government Regulation no. 9/1975 ensured that practitioners of *kepercayaan* could be listed on marriage licenses at the civil court, the case of the marriage of Protestant Lydia Kandaou to Muslim Jamal Mirdad in 1983 garnered strong public reaction, leading to Presidential Decree No. 12 1983 stating that civil courts could only register the marriages of those belonging to religions other than Islam while Islamic marriages were to come under Islamic authorities. The Head of the Civil Marriage Registry in Jakarta further instructed that the civil courts could only record those marriages already recognized by religious institutions. Not only did these rulings significantly limit marriages between members of different recognized religions, like the couple whose wedding sparked the controversy, they had the effect of further restricting the rights of followers of indigenous religions from identifying with their communities of belief, since they lacked the recognition as religions that could solemnize marriages, and obstructed their ability to form families through the rituals of their own religious traditions.

At the end of the New Order period, the tide of politics turned more strongly towards limitations on *aliran kepercayaan*.

Where previous Decrees of the People's Consultative Assembly (TAP MPR) had underlined that *kepercayaan* was a form of culture that could not be allowed to move towards institutionalization as a new religion but had been less clear as to how such designations should shape the daily lives of their followers, the TAP MPR No.X 1998 went so far as to state all followers of *kepercayaan* were required to belong to one of the state-recognized world religions. "Culturizing" the practices of the followers of indigenous religions essentially forced them to redefine themselves as members of one of the state's official religions. In the TAP MPR RI No. 2001, "Belief (*Kepercayaan*) in the One and Only God" was listed under the heading of culture, and *aliran kepercayaan* were no longer recognized as an official category. As other scholarship has shown, some groups strategically affiliated themselves with official world religions, while others found themselves cut of the system entirely.

Reformasi: Human rights as a basis for recognition

In the *Reformasi* era following the 1998 collapse of the Suharto regime, the struggle for the rights of followers of indigenous religions or *aliran kepercayaan* was renewed through efforts to amend Indonesian Constitution according to development of global standards of Human Rights. This marked the emergence of a new discourse about followers of non-official religions. Various labels came to be used to describe what had formerly been referred to as *aliran kepercayaan*, such as indigenous religions (*agama leluhur*), local religions (*agama lokal*), archipelago religions (*agama Nusantara*), and local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*). This discourse asserted that these groups are 'indigenous'

to localities within Indonesia, while those religions recognized by the state are 'imported'. This new perspective coincided with the establishment of the Indigenous People's Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) in 1999, an organization that lobbies on behalf of "traditional communities" (*masyarakat adat*) in Indonesia in connection with the global movement for the recognition of indigenous rights.

Amendments to Indonesia's Constitution, especially the amendments on Human Rights, have served as a reference for the revitalization of national discussion about the country's indigenous religions, now referred in these terms. Specifically, Chapter XA Article 28A-28J, which details freedom of religion, belief, and assembly. These sections delineate belief and religion as separate but equal entities, outlining that followers of either should be equally protected and served by the state. However, the same chapter contains language that indicates these freedoms must be tempered by limitations based on "moral considerations and religious values" (Article 28J Paragraph 2). The phrase contained in this paragraph has been a point of debate, as it can be interpreted to limit freedoms (in contradiction to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted in 1966 and ratified by Indonesia in 2006), and was cited in the decision delivered by the Constitutional Court's review of the 1965 religious defamation law.

The conversation about the rights of indigenous religious practitioners, as seen through the frame of the human rights amendments to the constitution, has also renewed concerns about religious defamation and spurred renewed attention to the Law PNPS/1965 on the Prevention

of Misuse and/or Defamation of Religion. The Indonesian courts' concern over the danger that indigenous religions pose to society and nation was further displayed in Law No. 16/2004 and in the 2005 letter from the Ministry of the Interior (Surat No. 477/07/MD), denying the right of marriages performed outside of the six official state religions to be recorded.

Institutionalized discrimination against followers of non-official religions continues to be an issue in legislation regarding civil registration processes. As noted in the 2006 Law on Civil Administration (UU Administrasi Kependudukan 23/2006), "[problems of discrimination] persist especially in field of civil registration, where citizens are discriminated against by the divisions of ethnicity, race and religion in a number of policies that were products of the colonial period." In regards to the religion column on the National Identity Card, the Law provides that adherents of what was now termed, albeit ambiguously, "religions yet to be recognized as religions" (*agamanya belum diakui sebagai agama*) can leave the column blank, but are still deserving of the same rights and services as other citizens. This represented a breakthrough in the institutional recognition of long-term, systematic discrimination against adherents of indigenous religions. Another positive breakthrough was seen in the development of new policies aimed at facilitating the registration of marriages for practitioners of indigenous religions without requiring them to register as a member of an official state religion.

Presidential Regulation No. 25 2008 is the first official national policy document to define *kepercayaan* in any form. Diverging from earlier documents that described *aliran*

kepercayaan as a threat to public order, this document recognizes these groups as fulfilling the qualifications as religions if their doctrines recognize belief in the One and Only God as set down in the first Principle of Pancasila. Following the 2006 Law on Civil Administration, the Government Regulation on the Enactment of the Law on Civil Administration (2007), the Presidential Regulation (2008), and the Joint Decrees of Ministers of Domestic Affairs and Culture and Tourism (No. 42/40/2009 on Guidance for Conservation of Cultural Heritage; and No. 43/41/2009 on Guidance of Services for Followers of *Kepercayaan*) all represented significant steps forward in the recognition of adherents of indigenous religions. Although not entirely eliminating discrimination, these policies have facilitated the right to register marriages and the births of children, as well as educational rights for members of these communities.

Different but deserving: cultural groups with equal rights

Since 2012, policies on groups identifying as traditional religious practitioners have continued to define *aliran kepercayaan* as deserving of the same service and rights as religious groups, even as they are defined as practicing something that is different from religion. Recognized as community organizations (*orkemas*) under Regulation of the Ministry of Home Affairs No. 33 2012, groups registering under the name of a “belief” are classified as cultural entities, managed under the Ministry of Culture and Education. The Ministry’s 2013 policy on these groups (No.7/2013) serves a guide for regional governments in fulfilling their rights, as well as documenting and preserving their

traditions, requiring both recognition of their existence and efforts to protect them and their practices from discrimination by other citizens and local governments.

Finally, state recognition of the rights of practitioners of indigenous religions is being realized through educational reform. Since 1960, religious education has been required in public schools with instruction limited only to the six (or at times five) officially recognized world religions. Previously, all students were required to attend religious education courses regardless of whether they practiced one of the official religions or not. This resulted in de facto discrimination as students from communities practicing indigenous religions were not provided with curricular offerings that recognized their practices, and even more egregiously, contributed to their identities being subsumed under one of the state-recognized religions. The 2016 policy from the Ministry of Education and Culture (No. 27/2016) for followers of *kepercayaan* allows students to opt out of religious education if their practice is not represented, as well as opens the possibility for the development of curriculum for instruction on the beliefs of indigenous religion communities. Although problems persist in the application of this policy, the preparation of infrastructure to support this shift in educational policy towards previously discriminated groups is a positive development.

Rights without recognition as Religion?

However, even as practitioners of indigenous religions gain state recognition of certain civil rights, the increasingly politicized stakes of defining religion continues to problematize the existence

and the institutional acceptance of practices categorized as *kepercayaan*. In the 2009 review of the PNPS No.1/1965 at the Constitutional Court, both the House of Representatives and the Muslim Ulama Council continued to characterize adherents and practices of all beliefs outside the official religions as a threat to society, nation, and the purity of religious practice itself. When groups representing the *aliran kepercayaan* communities requested a repeal of the law due to its inherently discriminatory view of all non-official religious groups, the court ruled that the law guarantees equal protection to “recognized religious groups” and that previous discrimination was attributable to incorrect application of legal administrative procedures.

Judge Maria Farida Indrati dissented, noting that the government’s inconsistent practices in the application of the law meant that only the six official religions are accorded full service and protection, as was demonstrated in cases where members of non-official religious groups continue to experience problems with civil registration processes. Even though individuals now have the right to leave the religion column blank in civil documents like the National Identity Card (KTP.), in practice, exercising the right not to identify with one of the official state religions in civil procedures leaves citizens vulnerable to discrimination, as it is still normatively understood that not having a religion means association with communism, atheism, and anti-nationalism. Current debate concerns whether followers of indigenous religions should be able to fill in the name of their own practice or community, or if the religion column should be removed from state documents altogether.

The Tides of Recognition concedes that the advances in recognizing the civil rights of practitioners of indigenous religions, such as the option to leave the religion column in civil documents blank, represent only a partial solution to overcoming impediments to equality for these groups. Leaving the religion column blank still functions as an indication of “not having” a religion, opening the possibility for all of the historical stigma that entails. Furthermore, beyond access to civil registration and social services, these groups often face economic and social issues linked to their ways of life and belief systems, including the ways indigenous religion communities are deeply connected to their natural environment as an essential part of their identities and livelihoods. Thus, the book recommends that the government form a Special Unit (Satgas) to analyze the wider social, economic, and political obstacles to ensuring that practitioners of indigenous religions enjoy the same rights and services as other citizens. Most importantly, policies that contain discriminatory elements must be reviewed and/or replaced.

Although *The Tides of Recognition* recognizes that significant impediments remain to achieving equal civil rights for practitioners of indigenous religions, the book could go further in theorizing the wider social and political implications of ontologically classifying these practices and communities as part of *culture* instead of *religion*, each of which is a category with a weighty academic and political global history. Despite governmental recognition of followers of indigenous religions and assurances that they are to be guaranteed equal rights and service under national law, civil registration processes continue to be hindered by social stigma and normative

cultural attitudes towards practitioners who fall outside of the six official state religions. Lack of coordination and education in law and policy enforcement at local levels continues to obstruct the full application of these institutional advances in recognizing and protecting the rights of indigenous practitioners. These institutional victories may be essentially ineffectual if normative understandings of the category of religion continue to be highly politicized and if government bodies continue to perceive religion, in its narrow official definition, as something in need of protection from the inherent diversity of the Indonesian nation rather than on its behalf.

Tracing the history and shifting legal status of practitioners of indigenous religions clearly demonstrates the powerful discursive heritage of how *agama* has been imagined, and, essentially, how it continues to play a powerful role in conceptions of Indonesian citizenship. Indeed, *The Tides of Recognition* forces us to ask what, if anything, has changed in the deep structure of Indonesian religiosity since the 1980s when the anthropologist Jane Monnig Atkinson explained that “Indonesia’s policy on religion contains different messages for

different sectors of society To members of world religions, it guarantees religious freedom and tolerance under the aegis of national unity and purpose. To those who would hold on to traditional ways it is highly censorious, linking the absence of recognized religion to the rejection of colonialism.” (Monnig Atkinson, 1983:688). These problems persist even as members of groups whose practices don’t fit into the normative Indonesian definition of religion are granted rights concessions as cultural entities. Religious identification remains an influential normative framework that shapes perceptions of difference, even as in some places the resurgence of *adat* as category for representation, and a growing awareness of the global movement for indigenous rights, challenges that model. Being subsumed under the category of culture is a concession that has allowed *aliran kepercayaan* to gain a kind of institutional recognition, but precludes a more inclusive definition of *agama* that would strengthen their position as *religious* practitioners, and in turn link the rights of indigenous groups to other religious minorities who suffer from similar forms of discrimination in Indonesia.

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