Othering the ‘Communist’ and the Construction of Religious Identity in (post-) New Order Indonesia

Budiawan

Abstrak:

A. Introduction

This paper explores some personal experiences of being othered as ‘communist’ among former political prisoners of the ‘1965 affair’ (or eks-tapol) in (post-) New Order Indonesia. Assuming that such experiences may have shaped the ways they define their sense of self, while being ‘communist’ is always already placed in opposition to being ‘religious’, this exploration is aimed at understanding how eks-tapol have developed their politics of identity amidst or vis-à-vis the ‘religious’ self. By scrutinizing their self-definition as a response to the othering practices, this paper will demonstrate to what extents the employment of the reduced notion of communism to atheism as a major part of constructing the ‘religious’ self in Indonesia is (in-)effective.
To reach the aim, this paper will firstly explore the eks-tapol’s experiences during their imprisonment. Since they were imprisoned without trial, and realizing that they had nothing to do with the events on 30 September 1965, it is necessary to learn how they coped with the accusation that they had been guilty of having a political affiliation to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which was by then legal. More importantly it is necessary to grasp how they dealt with the judgment that they were ‘atheist’: a moral(istic) labeling which had been most probably out of their concern since the ‘ideological’ dichotomy they kept in mind was ‘revolutionary’ and ‘counter-revolutionary’. Having been faced with such convictions (without being able to resist), how did they define their sense of self? What sorts of identity politics did they develop as a strategy for sustaining the self?

The identity politics of eks-tapol was [most likely] more complicated after they were released, for being released does not necessarily mean having a full freedom as citizens. They must have been faced with different circumstances. Even they faced not only state apparatuses but also other elements of society – who had been politically and ideologically in hostile to them – taking a part in objectifying them as the ‘communist’ other. How did they respond such othering practices? Section two will be concerned with this question.

The third section is concerned with the eks-tapol’s perceptions on religion. It aims at understanding whether they consider religion as something ‘alien’, and religious adherents as the ‘other’, and why. This will be continued to discussing who in fact constitute the ‘other’ to the eks-tapol, and why. Since othering practices always involve
power relations, this section will discuss how power operates in the politics of identity as a mode of domination on one side, and as a strategy for self-sustaining on the other.

The stuffs for discussing the issues in this paper are collected from both written texts by *eks-tapols* and interviews with several *eks-tapols* I conducted from October 1999 to January 2000. The major written texts used here are such as Pramudya Ananta Toer’s *Nyanyi Sunyi Seorang Bisu* (The Mute Soliloqui), Putu Oka Sukanta’s *Merajut Harkat* (Knitting the [Human] Dignity), and Hasan Raid’s *Pergulatan Muslim Komunis* (The Struggle of a Communist Moslem). In addition, I will include Abdul Latief’s *Suharto Terlibat G 30 S* (Suharto was Involved in the September 30, Movement) and Ruth Havelaar’s ‘Quartering’. These texts narrate the life-stories of the authors, although they appear in different forms. All of them, except Toer’s, are published after the ousting of Suharto in May 1998.

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1 It was the early months of Abdurrahman Wahid administration, which raised new hopes for “national reconciliation”, that could mean a de-stigmatization of *eks-tapols*. Yet tempered reactions from certain Moslem communities constrained the realization of that idea.

2 Pramudya Ananta Toer, an author and an honorary member of LEKRA, was imprisoned without trial for fourteen years. Putu Oka Sukanta, an author, often published his works in a LEKRA-linked daily, was imprisoned without trial for ten years. Hasan Raid, a former member of the Jakarta province parliament representing the PKI and a lecturer for the PKI-linked Ali Archam Social Science Academy, Jakarta, was imprisoned without trial for fourteen years. Abdul Latief, a former Army colonel, was brought to the military court and firstly sentenced to death, then life imprisonment, and eventually was released ten months after the fall of Suharto. Ruth Havelaar is the pen-name of Jitske Mulder, a Dutch woman who married an Indonesian *eks-tapol* — who was just released from Buru island — in 1980 and living in Indonesia for seven years, before she returned to the Netherlands and finally died of a cancer in 1988.

3 Toer’s work is subtitled “catatan-catatan dari Pulau Buru” (notes from Buru island), meaning that this is ‘only’ a collection of his accounts during his imprisonment in Buru island. Sukanta’s work is a novel. Yet it is much inspired by his own experiences during his imprisonment. Raid’s work is an autobiography, narrating his life-stories before, during and after his imprisonment. Latif’s is a collection of his defenses before the military court. While Havelaar’s is an account of her life narrating the troubles she faced as a wife of an *eks-tapol*, published serially in *Inside Indonesia*, from December 1988 to December 1990.

4 Toer’s *Nyanyi Sunyi* was firstly published in 1995, but it was then banned. After the ousting of Suharto it was reprinted and more broadly circulated.
B. Being Stigmatized as the ‘Communist’ Other during the Imprisonment

To *eks-tapol* having been arrested and imprisoned without trial was and is a puzzling experience. (So was and is to those who were brought to the court, for they perceived it as an ‘engineered trial’.) They have been wondering what they had been guilty of so that they were imprisoned for years.\(^5\) How they questioned such an experience during the imprisonment is well-depicted in Sukanta’s *Merajut Harkat*. It features how they wondered why and for how long they would be detained. Some admitted to their membership in any mass organization of the PKI. But, ‘by then being a member of a mass organization was like joining a football club, without necessarily knowing about the PKI’, said Mawa, the central character of the novel (p. 496).

They were confused and wondering about *what had really happened*. They were puzzled as to what had brought them into the prisons, and what had driven the mass killings in the countryside. They advanced various ‘analyses’. For instance, one *tapol* contended that ‘it was the fault of Aidit’, the PKI Chairman, ‘who was too ambitious’ (p. 296); while other *tapols* cursed the Cunning General, ‘who was a burglar yelling “burglary”’ (p. 217);\(^6\) and some perceived it as an espionage war (p. 465), in which ‘the extermination of PKI – since it was the largest Sukarno’s supporter – was only a means of overthrowing Sukarno’ (p. 469).\(^7\) In any case, these were individual ‘analyses’ only,

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\(^5\) All of the *eks-tapol* I have interviewed gave such a response when I asked why they were imprisoned. Moreover, when they were released the government declared that there was no indication that they were involved in the killing of the six top Army generals. Many of them – especially the relatively educated ones – are still curious about who in fact were behind the events on 30 September 1965.

\(^6\) Compare with the remarks by a well-noted artist Djoko Pekik, a former member of LEKRA, being detained for twelve years, in *Kompas* (December 14, 1999).
rather than factual reports; and ‘anybody can make any “analysis”’ (p. 465), but ‘nobody
knows exactly what has really happened’ (p. 486).

Within their ignorance they were to face a powerful judgment that PKI was the
mastermind of the killing of the six top and one middle-rank Army officers on September
30, 1965. The judgment was so powerful that it quickly led to the mass hysteria of anti-
communism. What the would-be ‘New Order’ regime did, then, was not to ‘prove’
whether or not one had really been involved in the killing of the generals, but whether one
was a communist or had an ‘indication’ of being one. 8

Since then, being a communist, or more precisely being charged or defamed as a
‘communist’ is a stigma. Referring to Erving Goffman’s classical study, this term is
primarily understood as ‘an attribute that is deeply discrediting’; and stigmatization
always involves a process of reduction, where a whole and usual person is reduced to ‘a
tainted, discounted one’ (Goffman, 1986:3). It always involves ‘dehumanization, threat,
aversion, and the depersonalization of others into stereotypic caricatures’ (Dovido, Major
and Crocker, 2000:1). In the experiences of eks-tapols, the stigmatization runs through the
reduction of the ‘communist’ to ‘atheist’ vis-à-vis the ‘religious’ self.

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7 Most of the respondents who are well-educated share Sukarno’s opinion expressed a few months after the
“1965 affair”, that what really happened on 30 September 1965 was inseparable from the Cold War, in
which the unexpected human tragedy took place because of the “astuteness of the ‘neo-colonialist and
imperialist forces’, the williness of a general, and the dizziness of Aidit”. (In original phrases: “lihainya
nekolim, liciknya seorang jenderal, dan keblingernya Aidit”).

8 The ‘logic’ of the Suharto’s would-be “New Order” regime was that: “PKI masterminded the ‘September
30, 1965 affair’, and when one was proved to be a communist, or to “have an indication” of being a
communist, then s/he must have been involved in the affair”. Yet this was unspecified ‘involvement’ (van
de Kok, Cribb and Heins, 1991:88). Even the word ‘indication’ was understood arbitrarily. For instance,
one of my informants was imprisoned without trial for five years just because the military found him
shaking hand with Sukarno in one picture hanging on the wall of his living room. (Interview with BU,
Yogyakarta, 15 December, 1999); while another informant was imprisoned without trial for nine years just
because her neighbor reported the military that she once attended a kampong meeting held by Gerwani
(interview with Mrs. HR, Jakarta, 7 December, 1999).
By such a reduction the accusation that the ‘communists’ had been involved in the killing of the generals seemed to get its ‘justification’. The ‘logic’ was as follows: (1) ‘only those who have no sense of humanity could mercilessly kill the generals’; (2) ‘only those who do not believe in God have no sense of humanity’; (3) ‘the communists do not believe in God’; so (4) ‘the communists have killed the generals’; and their arrests and imprisonment were then ‘justifiable’.

Such ‘logic’ – which is obviously misleading as it jumps from one premise to the other – was intensively imposed upon the tapols. This was intended to making a guilty feeling and a sense of regret of having affiliated with the PKI or any of its subsidiary organizations. Of the agents imposing such ‘logic’ were religious teachers, mainly the Islamic ones (ustadz). Many were recruited from the spiritual service of the military, and were deliberately employed ‘to have tapols return to the right way of life’, which was among other things by embracing any one of the state-admitted religions. As one eks-tapol narrates as follows:

In our confusion on what we had been guilty of and until when we would be detained, religious teachers, mainly the Islamic ones, judged us as the sinners. Almost every time they were about to begin a sermon – one program that we had to take in the prison – they asked us whether we knew why we were imprisoned. Without waiting for our replies and we indeed did not deserve to reply, they told that we were imprisoned because we were atheists; they said so ‘because only the atheists who could have, and had mercilessly killed the innocent generals’. Further the ustadz said: ‘Now you all have to be aware that being a communist is kebling (being on the wrong track). Since now you have to faithfully return to the true way of life, that is by

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9 Since the establishment of Suharto’s New Order regime, having an identity card (IC) as a legal document of citizenship is compulsory to those who have already been seventeen years of age and above; and in his or her IC one must state one’s religious status. Five religions are admitted by the state, i.e. Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism. (Confucianism – along with the New Order policy on repressing the cultural expression of ethnic Chinese – was no longer admitted as a religion. It was regarded only as a set of ethical teaching). By so doing the regime wanted to show that it consistently implemented the first principle of Pancasila, i.e. “Belief in One God”, which the previous regime was lack of concern. The state seemed to have an ambition to discipline its citizens in implementing the religious duties. Due to the reduced notion of communism to atheism, tapols (and their families) became the main target of the national “religious disciplining” project.
embracing any one of the official religions. Since you come to this class, it means you have declared to be a Moslem. So be a good Moslem'.

Religious teachers, especially the ustadz, applied such a brainwashing method in conducting the religious ‘indoctrination’. They kept reminding tapols that being a communist is not only kebling, but also ‘lowering one’s own dignity to animals’. As several eks-tapols narrate their memories as follows:

The ustadz quite often compared us – the tapols – with animals. They said that our dignity was subordinate to animals, because animals know how to thank their masters, but we do not. They repeatedly said:

‘Our motherland Indonesia has given us an opportunity to live, but the communists, like you all, instead of thanking her, have betrayed her. You have more than once betrayed our state and nation. It is understandable if the whole nation is tempered at people like you. It is understandable too that many of them can no longer tolerate what you have done, so that bloody incidents in some parts of the country are unavoidable. Now you must realize that you are here not because we punish you, but we save you from the mass amok, from the angry mass. In return, you have to obey the government; you have to show your loyalties to the state and nation, and your faith to God.’

Such a method was aimed at making the tapols not only have a sense of regret [of having affiliated with the PKI] but also feel helpless. When they had been in such a feeling, they would be (expected to be) obedient to the prison authorities-as-the extension of the regime. As one eks-tapol tells:

The officer of the military spiritual service quite often said before us:

‘You all have been like “old iron”. It depends on the government whether you will be processed in such a way that you will be useful again, so that you can return to the society, or the government will let you be in what you are until you get ’stained’ then disposed wherever the government wants. Again, it all depends on the government’.

Since the state claimed to have the ‘mission’ of turning the tapols back to ‘the right way of life’, the prison authorities felt necessary to discipline ‘the religious practices’ – in the sense of religious rituals such as joining mass prayers, attending religious sermons, and participating in Koran reciting class [to those who declared to be

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10 Interview with Sp (Yogyakarta, 20 June 2001). Other eks-tapols give such a testimony in various words.

11 Interviews with Sp (Yogyakarta, October 20, 1999), Mdl (Yogyakarta, October 25, 1999), IU and BI (Klaten, November 4, 1999), Pyt (Yogyakarta, November 10, 1999), Is (Solo, November 17, 1999), and Wyn (Yogyakarta, November 18, 1999), Sulami (Srangen, January 7, 2000).
Moslems] – of every tapol.\textsuperscript{13} As Raid writes that each tapol’s religious activity was considered as an indicator whether or not one had a good conduct (Raid, 2001:230); and faithfulness in practicing religious rituals was a loyalty to the state and nation (Raid, 2001:261). That is why the government considered the intensification of religious indoctrination as one of the requirements to prepare tapols to be (re-)accepted by the society when they were allowed ‘to return to the society’ (Raid, 2001:354).

To ‘support’ the ‘mission’, the prison authorities provided religious books for tapols. Yet since other sorts of book were strictly prohibited, the provision of religious books should be understood as one way of controlling what books tapols may and may not read, which is tantamount to controlling what ideas tapols may and may not keep in mind. It seemed that the state had an ambition to ‘purify’ tapols from the ‘communist ideological contamination’, as the insistence of loyalty to Pancasila implies. Despite the effectiveness of the aim, it could indeed broaden the religious knowledge, and at least kill the time of tapols, so that ideas of resisting would go away.\textsuperscript{14}

To measure whether or not such a ‘mission’ was successful, the prison authorities held religious examinations for tapols who were about to be released. They were asked about fundamental questions on life, such as on the ultimate goal of life, to whom life should be dedicated, what should constitute the basic principles of life, who has enabled

\textsuperscript{12} Interview with P, Yogyakarta, June 20, 2001.

\textsuperscript{13} As the government did not force which religion tapols had to choose, many who were formerly nominal Moslems finally “converted” to Christianity. They said that unlike the ustadz, Christian preachers, both Catholic priests and Protestant ministers, gave them empathy on what they were experiencing. Christian preachers invited them to perceive what they were experiencing as a life-examination, rather than a punishment. (Interviews with Sp, Mdl, IU, BI, P, and N). See also Raid (2001:231).

\textsuperscript{14} Pramudya Ananta Toer, when he was interviewed by the press how he could have such a detailed knowledge on Hinduism as he has well demonstrated in his novel Arok Dedes (1999), said that during the imprisonment tapols were allowed to read religious books only. On such a confession, see also A. Latief (1998:61). But Latief added that in his experience, in what circumstances a tapol was allowed to read a
the life, etc. In answering such questions, so long as tapols mentioned words such as ‘God’, ‘state’, ‘nation’, ‘religion’, ‘Pancasila’ and ‘the government’ in praising tone, the officers in charge of handling the ‘examination’ were seemingly satisfied. They looked so sure that they had run the ‘mission’ successfully, because they had assumed [or judged] that no tapol had embraced any religion faithfully. In fact not a few tapols had been devout religious adherents before being imprisoned (Raid, 2001:448).15

Because of the presumption that a ‘communist’ – no matter whether one has declared to be so or just because of being so labeled – is always already an atheist, the prison authorities always denied the religious confession of a tapol. As Raid writes that when he told that he had been a devout Moslem since his childhood, his interrogator did not believe it. The interrogator insisted that it did not make any sense for a communist to be a religious adherent. Raid attempted to convince him as follows:

Regarding my “Moslem”-ness, I said, only God who knows the best. Other people who never see me do prayers and do fasting during the fasting month can claim that ‘it is impossible for me to be a devoted Moslem’, because I do not need to tell anybody every time I want to do such religious duties. To me exposing own religious practices will only make a religious vulgarization. And let me tell you that the PKI has never criticized me just because I practice my religious duties (Raid, 2001:215).

Still the interrogator rejected such a reason. He overlooked Raid’s own personal experiences. He insisted that ‘the PKI is atheist, as everybody knows’. Raid wanted to inform that in the PKI’s constitution, anybody could be accepted to be its member, regardless of his or her religious faith or belief, so long as one accepted the party’s programs. But he thought it would be in vain. He was silent (Raid, 2001:216).

15 It was indeed right that many tapols were nominal Moslems, since the major strongholds of PKI were areas where the societies were culturally belonging to – in Clifford Geertz’s ‘three divisions’ on ‘santri’-‘abangan’-‘priyayi’ (Geertz, 1960) – ‘abangan’ communities. This was in many ways applicable to the case
Reducing a ‘communist’ to ‘atheist’ then has at least two meanings to the New Order regime. It was not only a means of justifying the accusation that the PKI had masterminded the ‘1965 affair’, but it was also aimed at claiming that the New Order was a regime of moralities which did not only ‘save the state and nation from the betrayals of the ‘communists’, but also ‘saved the “traitors” from the tempered mass’. The ‘communists’ were thus seen not only as the betraying other who must be punished, but also as the desperately almost totally exterminated other upon whom the New Order regime wished to perform itself as an altruistic one. Yet both practices of ‘othering’ should be understood in the context of preserving the ‘presence’ of the ‘communists’ so that the establishment of the New Order regime got its raison d’etre.

Being positioned in such ambiguous other the tapols realized that they no longer had their own authorities to define their sense of self. During the imprisonment they were placed as objects, the passive and pacified ones, upon which the prison authorities could create any labels or categories as they wished to. As one character in Sukanta’s Merajut Harkat says:

“….who has made us here PKI, PR, Lekra, BTI, is the rulers” (p.452).

By such a statement, he does not deny the fact that many tapols were formerly members or sympathizers of the PKI or any of its subsidiary organizations. But it was the rulers who forcefully defined the sense of membership in those organizations.

When their sense of self was defined by the prison authorities, the only space left to protect their ‘imagined autonomies’ was to fight against the guilty feeling imposed on them. As one character in Sukanta’s Merajut Harkat says:

of the PKI’s strongholds in Central and East Java, but not in other areas such as West Sumatra, North Sumatra, and Bali.
We have to fight against any guilty feeling. Just when we grow a sense of guilty because the rulers keep blaming us, we become the losers. So … [do we need to do] self-introspection, as the rulers have strongly suggested? No way. Self-introspection will only weaken ourselves. Do we think we have committed to any crimes? (p.497).

It was thus an ‘inward resistance’ that tapols developed, to keep their zone of consciousness free from any state ideological imposition.

Since it was the Moslem clerics who often strongly suggested that tapols do self-introspection, their responses were either perceiving their attendance in the Islamic sermons just for fun, or abandoning it and moving to the Christian religious courses. Most of the nominal Moslem tapols tended to take such a measure. As Toer writes:

Since the early days of the imprisonment, I do not remember how many times I have attended religious class, [Pancasila] ideological indoctrination, religious preaches, etc. It is sorry: nothing got into my mind. …Of so many words bombarded into my ears, they were essentially only an order of ‘must’ and ‘must not’, obligation, obligation, and obligation. And the Pancasila indoctrination? It got stuck, absolutely stuck into its first principle which then flowed out from its shell in the form and content of all words about religion: heaven, hell, life after death, the judgment day, the humbleness of humankind, the distinction between human being and animals, reason, reason, reason, but never try to use it.

It was indeed a progress, even a leap forward. In the early years, the ulemas – who were deliberately invited to the prisons – with their victorious spirit of warfare, felt unnecessary to control themselves in bombarding their insults and humiliation [to the tapols]. And since to an Indonesian tapol having no religion is [regarded as] the same as being uncivilized, be they – the undignified Moslems – in queue to come to the mercy of either a Catholic priest or a Protestant minister (Toer, 1995:117).

Obviously that declaring to be a religious adherent was one way of sustaining the self. Since many tapols perceived Christian priests as spiritual guides, rather than moral judges, they converted to be Christians. Regarding this conversion, and why most nominal Moslem prisoners were reluctant to remain Moslems, Toer has a critical account on how the ulemas preached:

In the religious preaches – especially the Islamic ones – I got no impression on the appearance of Diogenes, nor a torch on his hand. What those preachers talked are the same as what I got in the mosques during my childhood. I am getting old, and those who gave sermons are just a little older than my child. The content of the sermons remained the same. … Several times I felt necessary to suggest some preachers that their sermons should expose human-ness, but they ignored. They again and again talked about heaven and hell, as if each human being only needs the two poles [of the life

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16 In the myth of ancient Greek it is a living creature searching for a naturally created human being.
after death]. If I was bored with such sermons, I could not blame myself. In this case, the ways the *ulemas* preach were far left behind from the ways of both Protestant ministers and Catholic priests do (Toer, 1995:108).

Such a conversion [within the prisons] did not matter to the government since Christianity is formally admitted by the state. However, this strategy of adaptability [to the New Order’s Pancasila ideology] did not necessarily make *tapols* socially well-accepted after they were released. Being a religious adherent did not automatically erase the moral stigma attached to them. The moral labeling of being an “atheist” – with its various negative connotations – was still there; and to many extents this made them in predicament: being socially placed in always already wrong position. This will be the concern of the following section, which will feature how *eks-tapols* have experienced such difficulties in the society.

### C. Being “Returned to the Society”, Being “Removed to a Larger Prison”

To *eks-tapols* being released from the prisons, or – in the government’s term – being “returned to the society” is to many extents like being removed to “a larger prison”. There were no longer prison guards watching, intimidating and exploiting them, nor prison authorities controlling what they may and may not think and dream of. But the

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17 However, without reducing his appreciation to the professional Christian clerics, who showed their empathy on what *tapols* were facing, Toer had a bitter experience with a Christian preacher recruited from the military service. Before punishing *tapols* [due to something he saw wrong], the military preacher scolded and threatened them to make them into a *satay*. Toer notes: “While cursing us, he kicked and punched us. Nasty words got out from his mouth, which were not suitable to be heard by civilized ears” (Toer, 1995:227). Religious preachers from the “military spiritual service”, regardless of their religion, had indeed such a tendency. (Interviews with P, Sp, Pyt, Is, Wyn, Sul, and HR).

18 The mass releases were due to international pressures rather than to the internal dynamics within the Indonesian politics itself. On the mass releases of *tapols* in 1976 - 1979, see Fealy (1995:29-39).
state remained keep an eye on almost every step of their everyday life. The state imposed various regulations and restrictions upon them. For example they were supposed: (1) to attend an ideological indoctrination – or “re-education” in the government’s term – held weekly (then fourth-nightly) in the sub-district military compound, (2) to be ready to show up every time government officials needed their presence – regardless of the interests – in a government office, usually the office of sub-district head, (3) to ask for permissions to the neighborhood committee up to the military officer of provincial level, when they wanted to go or move to another town of different province, and (4) to report the kampong head what and where or for whom they worked.

Regarding the jobs they were permitted to take they did not deserve to apply to be civil servants and to work in the military [and police] services, even their children could not do so either; they were not allowed to take a job closely related to public opinion making, such as in press, education, performing arts, etc. In addition, their identity card was stamped “ET”, indicating that they were Eks-Tapols, which could make them in serious trouble when they had a business with the government bureaucracy. In short, the government kept controlling them in such a way that – in Hasan Raid’s words – they felt that they were “freed but no freedom” (Raid, 2001:445), or as ‘a second-class citizen’ (Nusa, 1987:22).

In addition, various elements of society, especially those being in hostile to the PKI, suspected that eks-tapols remained a potential threat to the “social and moral order”; meanwhile the rest were mostly afraid that being close to eks-tapols could be suspected as a “communist”, and this could bring “unexpected consequences”. If the former tended to closely watch, the latter to take a distance from eks-tapols. Thus, even though they had
been released from the prisons, they felt re-imprisoned due to various social judgments, suspicions and fears. As Havelaar notes:

Neighbors can inform on you and warn the authorities. They can provide information about the ex-political prisoner’s family and their visitors. If the neighbors ask ‘Was that your sister who came?’, the advisable answer is ‘No, a friend of mine’. In this way, the neighbor is satisfied and the family is safe. Moreover, such things as jobs, careers or the children’s studies are not in danger (Havelaar, 1989:31).

In another part of the account she writes:

Society became our warder, and to this very day the society, employers, workers, pedicab drivers, neighbors, military men, postal officers and others, want to play that role. But, to be honest, it’s not that these Indonesians are deceitful or sneaky, but because they have suffered under the soldiers’ boot and under the impact of the bloody events of 1965 and since (Havelaar, 1990:30).

Such a social suspicion made eks-tapols in predicament, which is particularly seen in relation to their religious practices.

To eks-tapols, being a religious adherent was indeed one self-protecting strategy from the social suspicion that they were ‘atheists’. Many converted or declared to be Christians when they were imprisoned, so did most members of their families. Boland observes that the reasons why they were in favor of Christianity were as follows: (1) they found it easier to choose a new religious community than to turn definitely to Islam; (2) they considered Islam as a troublesome, foreign religion, because of its many Arabic formulas and its Arabic Holy Book, whereas in Protestant [and Catholic] churches only the national or even the regional language is used; (3) they feared being bothered with a

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19 But the other side of this equation, Havelaar observes, is that religion has also helped to consolidate the oppression of others, the ones who don’t agree with the rules of mosques and churches and, because of that, are accused of atheism and communism. Very often neither the accuser nor the accused know anything about atheism and communism (Havelaar, 1989:30).

20 From 1965 to 1970 more than two million people (mostly tapols and their families) in Java converted to be Christians. See Avery Willis as cited in Kim (1998:364). Even ‘conversion’ was often collectively declared before a mass baptism was undertaken. As Boland notes, once a Protestant minister found the gate of a village in Central Java state ‘Christian Village’, whereas no Christian was living there. This statement had at least two meanings. To the government apparatuses, or the communist-hunters, they would say that they had been religious adherents, so that they did not deserve to be accused as ‘communists’; while to
number of precepts and prohibitions when becoming Muslims, e.g. religious duties such as prayer and fasting, and the prohibition of eating pork (and fried/cooked blood of certain animals such as chicken, cow, goat, etc, believed to be medicine-like food) (Boland, 1971:232) (words in bracket, added).

Apart from “theological” considerations, Boland notes that some Christian reporters stress and generalize one answer sometimes heard from new converts, namely that “the great massacre of so-called atheistic Communists by yang beragama (religious people), especially by Muslim youth groups”21 had resulted in a choice for Christianity, as the Christians had not been involved in these murders.22 (Italics added). On the other hand, the Churches did not refuse to accept these new members, although their entrance created great problems, both with regard to religious after-care and because of criticism and insinuation launched by other religious and political groups (Boland, 1971:233).

Due to the latter issue, the new converts sometimes found a fear and suspicion from the ‘original’ Christians. It was not a suspicion that the new converts were not Islamic dais (missionaries), they would say that they had declared to be Christians, so that ‘Islamization’ would not be welcome (Boland, 1971:232).

Islam (2004) Regarding the involvement of the Muslim youths in the mass hunts and killings of the so-called communists in 1965-66, many eks-tapols keep bitter notes and memories towards the Moslems. As an account of an eks-tapol published in Robert Cribb’s The Indonesian Killings 1965 – 1966 notes: “I really hate the Muslims. All my family was Islam. Even when they helped me, it was not genuine. I was called an unbeliever (kafir). My father was Islam, he kept the fast and daily prayers. He did not like me being close to the church. We often fought” (Cribb, 1990:239). But many other eks-tapols, as I have found in my interviews with them, perceived the involvement of the Muslim youths as the latter’s naivete in receiving the military propaganda against the communists. Since the Moslems themselves in turn became the victims of the New Order regime, these eks-tapols perceive the Moslems as their fellow victims as well. (Interviews with Pyt, Nm, Sur, and Wyn).

22 It should be noted that although ‘Christians had not been involved in the murders’, one statement which surely was not completely correct, it does not mean that Christian mass organizations and political parties did not take a part in the mass hysteria of anti-communism. But since they were minorities, their roles were not exposed. Besides, to the PKI the Christian parties were insignificant opponents, so that deep sense of hostility was not growing significantly; and, more importantly, both Catholic priests and Protestant ministers, in running their Church services in the prisons and before the families of the tapols could
faithful Christians. Nor a fear that these new converts would penetrate communism into this religious community. But, the ‘original’ Christians feared that the membership of the newly-converted Christians within their religious community would be suspected by the state and other religious groups, especially the Moslems, that Churches had served as the ‘nests of the communists’: a charge which could bring ‘unexpected consequences’.

Regardless of such a suspicion, the fact of the fear was there. As an eks-tapol narrates:

At the beginning, when a Catholic priest introduced me to a neighborhood Catholic community, I was warmly welcomed. Even they proposed me to be a board member of the community. At first I refused it politely, as I realized who I was. But as they persuaded me, for they honored me as a ‘senior’ member, I accepted the appointment. Time run normally and I worked well for the community. But, when the priest guiding me since I was imprisoned was no longer there, things were getting worse to me. The new priest, who was much younger than the old one, and younger than me too, seemed uneasy with my position as a board member in the community. Without telling me before, he dismissed me from the board membership. He did not say it to me personally, but through somebody else. I did not know why. But, later on I found that the priest did not want the community to be ‘monitored’ by the government just because of my membership in the board committee. I could not afford to resist it. 

Such a fear, whether or not it was based on real reasons, was there. It was there, either it happened to eks-tapols themselves or to the society in general, or even it was only what the society might have thought of eks-tapols. As Raid experienced that being a devout Moslem, he attended religious sermons in the mosque in his neighborhood after he

differentiate between ‘political business’ and ‘religious business’, one thing which Moslem preachers could not and did not do. (Interviews with P, Sp, Mdl, Nm, Sur, Wyn, Pyt, BI, and IU).

23 Interview with Sp (Yogyakarta, June 21, 2001). A similar experience also happens to Pyt and Is.

24 James T. Siegel gives a critical account on such kind of fear produced by the state (and reproduced by the society): “Since the 1980s at least, Indonesian political leaders have spoken of ‘organization without bodies’ to describe a presumed communist resurgence. The Indonesian state has gone to great lengths to keep track of not only those communists released after years in prison, but their descendants as well. This seems to indicate fear of something they cannot locate, even when they know precisely who is a communist and who is the son or daughter of a communist. Put differently, the ruling elite cannot find a face or a name for their fears. The people they feel to be menacing them always appear as ordinary and like themselves, and require, therefore. More and more surveillance in order to prevent them from disappearing. …What marks the fear of communism is a fear of specters; a fear that the descendants of communists will take revenge for the murders of their parents and grandparents. As a result, there is a great impulse to find ‘evidence’ for such motivations of revenge in whatever expressions of political discontent manage to appear in public” (Siegel, 1999:215).
was released. Since he found that none of the sermons was enlightening, he no longer showed up. He of course did not tell the reason. That is why, Raid notes,

\[\ldots\] some neighbors had thought that I no longer attended the sermons because I was afraid of being charged [by the military] to influence the religious community. It is up to what they thought (Raid, 2001:452).

In the two cases above, although the attitudes of the society to eks-tapols look different, their imagination or fear of what the state could do on eks-tapols (and its possible implications on the people nearby) is the same. In the first case, the presence of an eks-tapol is rejected because of the fear that the religious community ‘could be in danger’; while in the second case the absence of an eks-tapol is ‘tolerated’ because [they thought that he may have thought that] his presence could make the community ‘in danger’. In both cases, such ‘unexpected consequences’ do not yet happen. This means that eks-tapols seem to be ‘re-imprisoned’ by the society, but the society itself is in fact imprisoned by the state, or the society is conditioned by the state to imprison itself (by in turn imprisoning eks-tapols).

In such ‘an order of imprisonment’ it is obvious that eks-tapols experience ‘a double re-imprisonment’: being ‘re-imprisoned’ not only by the state, either directly or through the society, but also by the society itself. It is through the society when the reason is dealing with their fear of what the ‘state could do’. It is by the society itself when the reason is dealing with the society’s own suspicion or distrust on the religious confession of eks-tapols. The latter is well-illustrated in the experience of an eks-tapol below:

I have never changed my religious status. I remain a Moslem since I was released from the prison. But I realize that I am not a devout Moslem. You know I am not from a santri [orthodox Moslem] family. I did my religious duties just when I was in a good mood, or just when I wanted to. Since I was released [in the end of 1970s], a mosque has been built in my village, even just fifty meters away from my house; most of my neighbors, even many of my relatives in the village, have become santris. They pray five times a day. They do subuh [morning before the dawn] and mahgreb [evening after the sunset] prayers in the mosque. They do fasting during the fasting month. They attend religious sermon routinely held on every Thursday night. They attend the
Koran reciting class every evening after the *mahgreb* prayer until the time for *isya* prayer comes. In short, my village has become a *santri* village, although not a few of its members have been Christians since the Dutch colonial era.

Some neighbors often indirectly invited me to do prayers in the mosque, and to join other religious activities there. Firstly I was reluctant. I tried not to care of those ‘indirect invitations’. But I could not stand to hear ‘loud whispers’ saying that I was reluctant to do religious duties because I was a communist. My nephews and nieces told what some neighbors said about me, and they were told to persuade me to be ‘insya’, to be aware on the ‘right way of life’ I had to take. As I did not want to see my relatives ‘being pressured’ to persuade me, I came to the mosque, joining the mass prayers, attending the sermons. But, what did my neighbors say about what I had done? They suspected that my main motive [of doing such religious duties] was only to show up in the mosque. ‘It was only for basa-basi, for pleasing the neighbors’, they said, as a niece of mine told me. So, instead of welcoming me, they looked cynical to me. They said to my niece: ‘Your uncle is a communist. A communist does not believe in God. What for does he come to the mosque?’

Since then I no longer come to the mosque, and I have learned not to care of what my neighbors whisper and say about me, about my past.  

It was not only the society placing *eks-tapols* in ‘an always already wrong position’, but the state, more precisely the state apparatuses, had also such a tendency. Regarding the state ideology *Pancasila* ‘re-education’ national project for *eks-tapols*, for instance, state apparatuses were skeptical of its effectiveness. As Havelaar notes:

> Several years after the prisoners’ release the government acknowledged that it is not worth teaching the *Pancasila* to prostitutes and ex-political prisoners: they stay what they are! (Havelaar, 1988:27).

Due to being an object of such a skepticism, *eks-tapols* seemed to have been socially positioned between being ‘necessitated’ and ‘unwanted’. Their past-as-defined-by the state and society seemed to have been frozen in such a way that they ‘deserved to be punished’. That’s why the fact that they still existed was regarded as due to the mercy of the others. However, due to their social existence, the state and society could objectify them not merely to differentiate from the *self*, but also as a scapegoat of all troubles and a curse, without any protest and resistance. Paraphrasing Zygmunt Bauman’s words, they

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25 Compare to a dialogue in *Merajut Harkat*, that when a *tapol* was about to do a prayer, a criminal prisoner was approaching him and forcing him to give his sarong. As the *tapol* objected because he needed it for doing a prayer, the criminal prisoner said: ‘A communist does not need to do a prayer. Whether or not you do a prayer, you will go to hell’ (Sukanta, 1999:158).

26 Interview with Sum (Klaten, 28 November 1999). A similar experience also happens to Is.
were placed as the other who could be (and were) ‘incarcerated in a territory from which there is no exit for them, but which the others may enter at will’ (Bauman, 1996:72).

Having been placed in such an ‘always already wrong position’, eks-tapols have been conditioned – borrowing Sylvia Brinton Perera’s words – ‘to live in hiding’; as if they have been ‘to live with an omnipresent sense of danger and an awareness of the shadow that others around them do not wish to see’ (Perera, 1986:26-27). One manifestation of such a ‘hiding mode of life’ was showing a great reluctance of talking about the past, except with those sharing the community of memory. Their reluctance was due to their hesitance whether other people were really willing to accept what they talked honestly, or they only wanted to listen to what they desired. That was why they tended to be silent, but it does not mean that they were inarticulate (Gunawan Mohamad, 1999).

The fall of Suharto has enabled eks-tapols to break their silence and to articulate themselves publicly. They have not only initiated to set up a foundation concerning with their past, i.e. YPKP 1965-66, but also publishing their testimonies, defenses, and even their thoughts on one thing socially considered to be ‘sensitive’, i.e., religion. One of the outstanding examples of the latter is Hasan Raid’s autobiography, which discusses a lot about communism and religion. Although Raid’s ideas on religion do not represent the thoughts of eks-tapols in general, it is worth noting that his ideas really deconstruct the established notions of religion and communism in the popular discourse of anti-communism. The following section is concerned with eks-tapols’ perceptions on religion,

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27 Pramudya Ananta Toer’s confidence to publish his Nyanyi Sunyi was perhaps just one example of the articulateness of eks-tapols. But he was silent due to being silenced. The banning of his works always invited public controversies. People debated about his works and his life stories, but he himself was not present.
mainly referring to Raid’s autobiography. Put differently the next section concerns with how the ‘communist’ other speaks about the thing socially used to stigmatize them.

D. Eks-Tapols’ Perceptions on Religion (and Communism)

Due to various degrees of eks-tapols’ ideological consciousness on communism and of different life experiences in dealing with religion and devout religious adherents, it is impossible to generalize what they may have thought about these two socially considered mutually exclusive things. However, there is a common perception among eks-tapols: they tend to position religion as a ‘private’ affair, while perceiving communism as a ‘historical imperative’ for realizing the idea of ‘social justice’. In other words, they do not see the two things as mutually exclusive, since they perceive them as separate affairs.

Such a perception reflects the PKI’s official attitude toward religion; and this is prevalent among eks-tapols who were nominal Moslems before being imprisoned, and remain so after being released from the prison. This is indeed no cultural coincidence, since nominal Moslems tend to place religious matter as a private business. I suspect that such a perception is, to many extents, inseparable from the predominantly popular discourse of religion itself, which tends to expose religion as a guide to ‘life after death’ rather than as normative guides on everyday life. Since nobody knows or can claim what one’s fate will be like in one’s ‘life after death’, so one’s ‘future life’ is one’s personal responsibility, and therefore running religious duties – in the sense of practicing religious rituals – is an individual interest.

By such a perception, eks-tapols who remain nominal Moslems tend to consider a devout Moslem who likes strongly persuading or forcing others to do religious duties to
be ‘fanatical’, or showing no ‘tolerance’, in the sense of not allowing other people to be as what they are, or as what they believe in. This is certainly in contradiction to the principle of a devout Moslem, who keeps the idea that ‘reminding fellow Moslems in order to run the religious duties is a part of a religious obligation’. Due to such a possible collision, where eks-tapols consider themselves to be always the losers, they tend to avoid associating with the “fanatical”. This also means that they reject to be ‘included’ within the “religious” self – a process of inclusion, as the previous section discussed, which quite often runs with suspicion. However, it is interesting to see that while eks-tapols can vulnerably be stigmatized as ‘atheists’, they in return can (at least silently) accuse their accusers as being “fanatical” – a social labeling which is in contradiction to the idea of “tolerance”, one thing which not only the state ideology Pancasila itself, but also the society in general promotes.

Despite such a limited space for ‘resisting’ the moral labeling of being ‘atheists’, eks-tapols’ social existence remains vulnerable for any religious imposition. During Sukarno’s reign they could indeed justify their ‘non-religiousness’ by referring to the ideas of religious tolerance or religious freedom, which the state (as almost completely personified in Sukarno’s power) defined as the freedom to embrace or not to embrace any religion28 – a definition which Islamic political parties have always rejected (Kim, 1998:363-4). But, since the notion of religious freedom as well as religious tolerance have changed, where one has a freedom to choose any religion (formally admitted by the state)

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28 In his speech before the United Nations in 1960, Sukarno among other things promoted Pancasila, in which the first principle is ‘Belief in One God’; and referring to this principle, the Indonesian nation comprises of various religious adherents, even ‘non-religious followers’. When Sukarno emphasized the importance of this principle for the Indonesian people, he felt necessary to say that ‘even who do not believe in God, due to their tolerance, can accept this principle’. (See, Sukarno, “To Build the World Anew”, 1960:29-30).
– but no longer choice not to have a religion – and one has to tolerate the existence of different religious followers, they can no longer protect themselves behind the two concepts. Therefore, whether or not they like, they have to socially adapt themselves to the ‘religious-oriented’ social milieu,\textsuperscript{29} regardless of the degree of their devotion.

When practicing religious duties is only a matter of adapting to the social milieu, religion then seems to be a business for ‘public appearances’. Religion seems to have been reduced to ‘publicly appearing symbols’, in which various social relations between the ‘fellows’ are running. This ‘superficialization’ of the meaning of religion thus seems to be, to many extents, the outcome of the religious disciplining project itself. In other words, the perception of eks-tapol\textsuperscript{s} (who remain nominal Moslems) on religion, c.q. Islam, is to a large extent shaped by how religion has been employed as a significant marker of social difference, or as a sign for including and excluding individuals.

Such a phenomenon relatively does not happen to eks-tapol\textsuperscript{s} having converted to be Christians. At the beginning they indeed perceived religious symbols as a kind of social protection (to their ‘stigmatized’ past). But, since their processes of becoming Christians did not run by force, and the religious disciplining project has not targeted them, an eagerness of learning and internalizing the religious teachings is growing. As some eks-tapol\textsuperscript{s} narrate as follows:

\textsuperscript{29} The New Order regime massively intensified such a social milieu since early 1980s, when they strongly reconfirmed Pancasila as the sole basic principle (azas tunggal) for all political and social organizations. This was in fact a part of the state’s strategy for suppressing Islamic social and political organizations that still had an ambition of establishing an Islamic state. On the other hand, as a ‘compensation’ for such political suppression, the state did not only give various facilities but also promoted the cultural expression of Islam. One of the symbols of such a promotion was the Suharto’s family pilgrimage to Mecca. Since then, due to the state promotion, more mosques were built in the whole country, and religious activities were more frequently held. Even the state sponsored the establishment of ‘missionary’ Islamic institution aimed at ‘strengthening the faith of Moslems’, which was tantamount to disciplining the religious practices of the ‘fellow Moslems’, and ‘protecting’ the Moslems from the ‘threat of Christianization’ as well.
Since I was released, I always put my baptized name before my original name. To many cases this really protected me from the stigma of an eks-tapol. People around me of course know that I am an eks-tapol; but they (should) also know that I am a religious follower, so, I guess, they have thought that I have been ‘insyaf’, or being aware that my past was wrong. Besides, my Moslem neighbors have no rights to control my religious practices as I have been a Christian, not their fellow Moslem; and, here is what has made me feel ‘at home’ to be a Christian: the Christians did not discipline my religious practices. They are glad when they see me go to church, but they do not question me when I do not go to church. This has encouraged me to be a good Christian, by learning, internalizing and practicing its moral tenets.\(^{30}\)

By such cases I do not contend that Christians are more tolerant than Moslems. If they look more tolerant, in the sense of being lack of interest in ‘disciplining’ their fellows, it is because they constitute a religious minority group. In the kampongs and villages of eks-tapols I have interviewed, there is no Christian community constituting a majority group. Neighbors nearby the eks-tapols are either devoted Moslems or nominal ones. Religious composition and social locality are necessary to note because proximity in locality is a significant factor in disciplining one’s religious practices.\(^{31}\)

Unlike the eks-tapols who either remain nominal Moslems or have converted to be Christians, the ones who have been devoted religious followers – particularly Moslems – since their childhood have a different perception on religion and communism. They do not perceive the two things as separate matters, but as mutually interconnected principles. This is surely in extreme opposition to the predominant opinion of the popular discourse of anti-communism, which perceives the two things as mutually exclusive.

The perception that religion and communism are mutually interconnected is well-represented in Hasan Raid’s autobiography. Without any hesitation he explains why he, as

\(^{30}\) Interviews with BI, Sp and IU. In the case of BI, who was imprisoned at seventeen and exiled to Buru island until 1978, he felt to be enlightened when he was sent to a special camp during his imprisonment. Since he was released from the camp, he attended religious sermons given by a Catholic priest, and was baptized then. During the interview, he quite often said ‘thanks God’, expressing his gratitude that he has been survival despite the bitter miseries he suffered.

\(^{31}\) In the neighborhood life of kampong and rural societies in Indonesia, neighbors tend to keep an eye on what others do in the everyday life. The concept of ‘privacy’ seems to be something foreign.
a devoted Moslem, could become a communist. Even when I interviewed him, he ‘provokingly’ said, “it is impossible for a good Moslem, in the sense that one who really knows and practices the fundamental tenets of Islam, to hate Communism”. To him becoming a communist was therefore not the matter of ‘being trapped [by the communist] due to the astuteness of the communist propaganda’ nor due to being forced by other people, but was really due to his personal interpretation of the teachings of Islam.

The Islamic teaching Raid adopts as the primary reference to become a communist is an article saying: “It is haram (strictly forbidden by law of Islam) to eat flowing blood”. Unlike the predominant interpretation that ‘eating blood of animals is haram, just as eating pork and consuming alcohol’, Raid interprets this article further, and associates it with Karl Marx’s idea of human exploitation. From this perspective he sees that the PKI’s opposition to the practices of human exploitation for realizing a social justice is not only in line with, but as the concrete translation of the Holy Book of Islam (Raid, 2001:77).

Raid in fact is not alone in bearing such an interpretation. He was much inspired by his ideological mentor, Haji Datuk Batuah, whose place of origin is the same as his own, i.e., Silungkang, West Sumatra – which ethnically belongs to Minangkabau society.

32 This phenomenon was in fact not something unique in the Indonesian history. In 1920s not a few devoted Moslems, even the ones who had done the hajj pilgrimage, became the leaders of the PKI. The most prominent one was Haji Mohammad Misbach, who was exiled to Boven Digul, West Papua, due to his involvement in the 1926-27 PKI uprisings. On the political life story of Haji Mishbach and his ideas on communism and Islamism, see Shiraishi (1990: 249-298). However, such a historiography was silenced under the New Order regime. It was just in 1999, the year after the ousting of Suharto, the Indonesian translation of this book was published, amidst the euphoria of (re-)publishing the so-called leftist books, which was then seriously opposed by the so-called Islamic social organizations (and silently backed up by the police and the military).

33 Interview with Hasan Raid, Jakarta, 7 December 1999.

34 This is really in contradiction to the idea of ‘keblinger’, a term popularly used to judge the communists and communism. Even Indonesian literary works showing deep sympathy on the sufferings of tapols (and their families) regarded communism and those who became communist as ‘kebliger’. On such literary works, see Aveling (1975).
which is predominantly devout Moslems. In his dialogue with his mentor, Raid was asked what he would say on his mentor’s contention that “it is sinful if one sees the practices of human exploitation but one does not put a side on the exploited”. By citing a letter in Koran, Raid said that “God has put a side on the poor and the exploited (mustadha芬). God has promised to the mustadha芬 a chance to be the leaders and inheritors of the earth” (Raid, 2001:78).

Datuk Batuah agreed to what Raid had cited from Koran. But, Batuah questioned why the letter has not come into being on the earth. He ‘wondered’ if God has broken His promise. In response to that question, Raid referred to another letter (the letter of al-Ra’du) stating that “God will not change the fate of the people except the people themselves change their own fate”. On this point of tenet both Batuah and Raid had a concern as they saw hardly any Moslem clerics have a deep concern in awakening the people’s consciousness on the importance of self-organizing, and self-struggling for freeing themselves from the ‘shackles of repression and exploitation’. They both were in agreement to declare that “we as Moslems within the PKI raise the banner of liberation of the mustadhafin, which most ulemas and Moslem clerics have neglected. Through the PKI we implement the Islamic teaching on human liberation” (Raid, 2001:78-79).

In such a perspective, Raid does not see that communism is in contradiction to religion, c.q., Islam. Even, to him the former is in concordance with the latter. They both share “an ambition to establish the human justice, where there are no longer practices of human exploitation, in the world”. Only their terms are different, such as ‘proletariat’ in

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35 Many eks-tapolı told that Sukarno quite often cited this surah in many of his speeches ‘for generating the revolutionary spirit of the people’. They themselves also like citing this surah, not for denying the spiritual importance of praying, but for criticizing (or even cynically commenting) the preaches of many ulemas who
By such a religious interpretation, Raid does not necessarily feel disturbed with the existence of – if any – those who claim to be ‘non-religious’, or even ‘atheists’. By citing various letters of Koran, he shows that “there should be no enforcement on whether one has to embrace or not to embrace a religion”. Regarding this idea of religious freedom, he writes as follows:

…if one wishes to embrace a religion and implements its teachings, that is one’s own concern with one’s own God. On the contrary, one who does not want to embrace any religion, that is also one’s own responsibility to one’s own God. Nobody can force other people to embrace or not to embrace any religion. Forcing other people to have or not to have a religion is contradictory to \textit{laa ikraaha fi al-din} (no enforcement in [having and running the teachings of] a religion) (Raid, 2001:80).\textsuperscript{36}

He further cites three other letters stating that ‘religion is one’s own concern with one’s own God, one’s own responsibility, not a collective responsibility’ (Raid, 2001:80-81).

Having been convinced in the human justice that the PKI struggled for on one side, and having faithfully engaged with Islam since his childhood on the other, Raid does not necessarily feel regretful of having joined the PKI, although the PKI was finally destroyed, and he was imprisoned without trial for fourteen years (Raid, 2001:2). To him, his decision to join the PKI was in accordance with [his interpretation of] the teaching of Islam on the idea of human justice. Even he says that what he did in his membership of the PKI was a part of his dedication to God (Raid, 2001:545).\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36} If so, he must have been convinced [from the beginning] that the PKI would not destroy any religion.

\textsuperscript{37} In closing his autobiography, he feels necessary to convince its readers that what he has narrated is truly his honest expression of what he has experienced and thought. It seems that to anticipate a possible controversy on his thoughts in Islam and Communism, he needs to affirm that “truth is truth, despite its origin, regardless of who says, since the very source of truth is God” (Raid, 2001:545-6).
In the context of the popular discourse of anti-communism in post-1965 Indonesia, Hasan Raid’s idea above is really de-constructive. It deconstructs the binary opposition of religion and communism, which seems to have been taken for granted.\(^38\) (In the context of the Indonesian history, it is not something new). It implies that the practice of othering the ‘communist’ for the sake of constructing the ‘religious’ self is, theoretically at least, irrelevant. However, it is doubtful if such a logical implication can really go ‘out there’. Even if more kyais or (young) Moslem intellectuals realize that the social spirit of Communism is close to the social tenet of Islam, there remains a difference between the two. As a kyai contends:

“In fact Communism in a social sense is very close to Islam. Yet the point of difference is that the former is atheist socialist while the latter is religious socialist. However, in workshops and study groups we discuss Marxist ideas as a comparative study to Islam”.\(^39\)

Yet, despite such ‘ideological’ differentiation, a sense of academic curiosity on Communism (and other leftist ideas) has been growing. If this phenomenon is not only a part of the euphoria of ‘reformasi’, of the enthusiasm of ‘consuming’ all ideas repressed during Suharto’s authoritarian rule, this would likely ‘de-demonize’ the images of ‘Communists’ and ‘Communism’. Then, even if the dichotomy of ‘communism’ and ‘religion’ remains ‘out there’, its meaning would likely change. So would the differentiation between the ‘atheist’ and the ‘religious’ be likely. How the change would go is the question of the historical future.

\(^{38}\) In one review of Hasan Raid’s autobiography, the reviewer still needs to say: “We probably do not believe that there is a Moslem being a member of the PKI …even joining the PKI due to his faith in Islam”. See Miftahuddin (Kompas, 29 June 2001).
E. Closing Remarks

To eks-tapol, the experiences of being objectified as the ‘communist’ other have socially placed them in ‘always already wrong position’. Whether or not they show a will to change their past, their ‘stigmatized’ past (as ‘atheist/communist’) is already fixed and has to be there. Despite any attempts to adapt to the ‘religious-oriented’ social milieu, as both the state and society in general themselves have expected, they are still to face a social suspicion that what they have done is not a reflection of their consciousness on how they should be. The socially imposed moral labeling of being ‘atheist’ seems to be un-erasable. Such is particularly experienced by most eks-tapol who remain nominal Moslems, to whom the devout Moslems feel deserved to discipline their religious practices, to make them ‘whole-hearted Moslems’ on one side, but seem to need their ‘stigmatized’ past unchanged so that the latter could reaffirm their being ‘religious’ self. Meanwhile eks-tapol who have converted to be Christians face less social suspicion (from the ‘original’ Christians) on the possibilities of ‘returning to their past ideology’. Yet this does not necessarily mean that they have felt to be ‘completely socially accepted’. But by converting to be Christians at least they can protect themselves from the moral labeling of being ‘atheist’. Baptized names to many extents can shield them from the social judgment on their stigmatized past.

To eks-tapol who have been devout Moslems since their childhood, the moral labeling that a communist is always an atheist and communism is identical to atheism is not a social judgment from which they need to hide themselves, but, instead, a challenge which they feel to have to counter. To them, being labeled as an atheist is like being given

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an opportunity to articulate what they have thought on communism and religion. The fall of Suharto and the euphoria of ‘reformasi’ have enabled them to articulate their thoughts publicly, no matter of the various public responses.

The public articulation of the thoughts of eks-tapol on religion and communism have deconstructed the ‘socially fixed’ binary opposition of both. Although it is doubtful if such a deconstruction can really affect the social practices of identity politics in Indonesian society, this has at least given an indication of de-demonizing the images of ‘communist’ and ‘communism’. Still if such de-demonizing process does not change the social practices of othering the ‘communist’, the problem most likely lies on the poverty of the religious identity politics of in the Indonesian society itself.

About the author:

Email address: bwan4@yahoo.com

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