Religious e-Xpression among the Youths in the Indonesian Cyberspace

Leonard Chrysostomos Epafras

Universitas Gadjah Mada
Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta 55281
Email: leonard.epafras@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstract: About eighty-two per cent of online Indonesians are younger generation. Online realm for this generation is a space for the quest of individuation, socialization, and of its piety. This research-based article investigates the religious expressions in this realm. The research adopted mixed methods including online survey. However, the data interpretation and the final report remain qualitative. The finding suggested the complexity and multiple directions of religious expressions that also indicated the intersection of a number of issues such as the evasion of religious authority, conservatism, imagination of pluralistic society, and the transnational religious phenomenon.

Keywords: Indonesian cyberspace, millennial generation, religious expression

Abstrak: Sekitar 82 persen orang Indonesia yang aktif di internet adalah kaum muda. Dunia online bagi mereka adalah ruang untuk individualisasi, sosialisasi, dan ekspresi kesalehan. Makalah ini adalah penelisikan berdasarkan penelitian tentang ekspresi keagamaan di internet bagi generasi millenial. Penelitian ini mengadopsi metode campuran termasuk survei online. Namun, interpretasi data dan laporan akhir tetap bersifat kualitatif. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan kompleksitas dan beragamnya ekspresi keagamaan yang juga menunjukkan tumpang tindihnya isu seperti pengelakan terhadap otoritas agama, konservatisme, bayangan akan masyarakat majemuk, dan gejala keagamaan transnasional.

Kata Kunci: ekspresi keagamaan, generasi millenial, internet Indonesia

Decades ago, "Western" scholars might argue that technology and modernization facilitate the process heading to secular world and in consequence domesticated religion within the privatized domain (Bruce, 2001, p. 87). Nowadays, scholars testify that the reversing is somewhat true in which those are formative for the comeback of religion to the centre stage. The returned of religion in the public visibility coincided with process of the deprivatization of religion and the emergence of religious fundamentalism (Casanova, 1994; Marty & Appleby, 1994; Berger, 1999). Religious fundamentalism might be the "unintended side effect" of such process that taps upon growing technologized, networked and risky society (Castells, 2004, p. 12–35; Beck, 1992; Beck, 2009). While deprivatizing of religion might be accelerated by the internet, in the case of religious fundamentalism, internet became the arena for "reinforcing" religious "boundary" in order to fixate in what Castells termed "the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded" (Castells, 2004, p. 9). Indeed,

religious fundamentalism is not the only sign of the age as there are multiple shifts in the present day world, including the emergence of spiritualism (as a category overlapping, but not exclusively with the sphere of religion), ethno-nationalism, neo-national tribalized society (James, 2006, p. 13) and secularism, markedly with the growing "non-religious affiliated" category in a number of survey in the "Western" countries, such as the United States (Burke, 2015; Lipka, 2015). Technological achievement on the other hand, brought up new "enchantment" not totally different from "religious enchantment", a "non-deist cult" that brings the "ecstasy of communication" (Breton, 2010). The claim made by Jim Gilliam, "the internet is my religion" epitomized this condition (Gilliam, 2015). Thus, we witness in the present globalized world the overlapping, cross currents categories and metaphors between technology and religion, the issue partly taken in the present article.

Internet and social media (hereafter, "socmed") have grown exponentially to the point that speaking about the impact of them upon human lives is probably a cliché. Among two hundred and fifty million Indonesians, there are around eighty-two million of them online (Kominfo, 2014). Indonesian youngsters occupied 82.8% -the largest portion- of the Indonesian internet users (APJII & Puskakom UI, 2015, p. 12). The penetration of mobile device is even more impressive as it exceeds Indonesia's population (We Are Social, 2015). This impressive figure however, could not deceive the reality of digital divides, the "zone of silence" (Castells, 2002, p. 247ff.; Potter, 2006; Lupac & Sladek, 2008) that seriously challenged the rhetoric of the pervasiveness of internet and gender equality, despite numerous initiatives, both by the government and non-government institutions to increase larger exposure of internet among the Indonesians. To this segment, having a small-fry technology is luxurious. The most populous island but the smallest among the big five islands in Indonesia, Java Island is remains the highest rate of internet penetration. This is only a confirmation of the longer times criticism to the unequal development between Java Island and the rest of the country (30 ribu, 2015).

In spite of the fact that research on the relationship between religion and internet is legion (e.g. Brasher, 2001; Bunt, 2003; Ciolek, 2004; Dawson & Cowan, 2004; Højsgaard & Warburg, 2005), the investigation of Indonesian religious discourse in internet is still in infancy (see Merlyna Lim in 2005, 2012, 2013; Ardhianto, 2014). Not much even the investigation of young people perception on religious issues if not neglected outright in the larger discussion of religion in Indonesia. If there are some, then those more a reflection of the adult imaginaries and/or of the industrial interests (Priyandana, 2014; Wahidin, Effendi, & Shaleh, 2015). An irony, as this group is the largest population in the Indonesian online landscape.

This article focuses on the religious discourse among the youth, in particular Indonesian millennials generation. As the research, which the basis of this article is an

experiment, a trial and error and admittedly encountered a number of discrepancies, especially the broad scope of the issue at hand and the size of population of the subject the conclusion is open for further scrutiny and debate.

METHODS

Researching Religious e-Xpression

The present article is based on a research that is part of a collaborative research umbrella, conducted by the Inter-Religious Studies (IRS), Universitas Gadjah Mada Graduate School. The umbrella title of the research is "The Exploration of the Inter-Generational Perception and the Concept of Religious Plurality" that won the 2015 competitive research grants, organized by Universitas Gadjah Mada Graduate School. The research cluster is consisted of three inter-related researches, i.e. (1) "The Evolution of Religious Plurality Discourse in Indonesia"; (2) "The Study of Religious Plurality Social Practices in Three Generations in Yogyakarta"; and (3) "The Study of the Dynamics of Religious Plurality in Social Media and Internet among the Millennials". This article is written on and a contemplation upon the third research project on the religious plurality discourse among the millennials. The research team for this section included two research assistants, Fazlul Rahman, M.A. and Hendrikus Paulus Kaunang, M.A. Both are from the IRS.

The material object of the research is the millennials generation in which some others called it "Generation Y". In general, it includes any people that were born between

1980s and 1990s. We follow Pew Research Center's classification, which identify the millennials as young people who were born between 1981-1997 (Fry, 2015). In terms of digital technology exposure, it may also be called "Digital Native" generation -as against the older generation that belong to "Digital Migrants" (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; but see also the critiques of Thomas, 2011; Shah & Jansen, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Hertz, 2012). The researchers admit that all those generation identifications are a reflection of the United States and European demographic arrangement; hence the team takes a freer position on this and adopted the term "millennials" simply to push the comparative advantage. Basically, the Indonesian millennials are between the age of 18 and 34 in 2015. This is a generation who has come of age in the transition era between the New Order and Reformation (1998 onward), in a world of technological pervasion, of globalization, and of the period of the politicization of identity.

The research is conducted within the period of May to August 2015 and employed mixed methods, viz. online survey, semi-structured interview, literature study, focus group discussion (FGD), online observation, and meme collection. The team interviewed twelve sources (both the millennials and non-millennials), conducted three focus group discussions, observing a number of websites, blogs, Twitter and Facebook messages, walls and pages, which including two community forums, eleven Facebook fan and figure pages, two online petition websites, and twenty websites and blogs;

collecting twenty-six relevant memes; and lastly conducting an online survey, which recorded 432 responses, 343 of them are the millennials.

The process of selecting websites and blogs is a combination of random searching (based on Google searching) through the entry terms such as, *pluralisme agama* (religion plurality), *perdamaian agama* (religion peace), *kemajemukan agama* (religion diversity), and *konflik agama* (religion conflict), and the link suggestions -as the outcome of initial search and/or the information or suggestion by certain subjects or resources and/or by circumstantial observation.

The semi-structured interview was conducted in order to gain deeper insight on the issue at hand. The twelve interviewees were resided in Yogyakarta, Ruteng, Jakarta, and Melbourne (Australia), which consisted of five non-millennials and seven millennials, ages spanned between 26 and 48 years old; two females and ten males. The occupations of the interviewees are teacher, lecturer, activist, pastor, worker, writer, entrepreneur, and student. In terms of religious affiliation, eight of them are Muslims, one Catholic, one Protestant, one Hindu, and one non-affiliated. Most of them are internet and socmed activists, while two of them are less active but their positions in educational field, nonetheless, allowing them to enhance the understanding of religiosity among the millennials.

FGD is taken to gather a larger opinion from the millennials. Two FGDs were organized in Yogyakarta among the students, social activists, and employees and one in Lumajang among the students of a *pondok pesantren*. Altogether the FGDs garnered 22 respondents, all of them were millennials.

The online survey allows for a larger data gathering and helps to create a pattern from the intended subject (the selected outcome of the survey is available in the Figures). This engagement is an experiment that was conducted in order to look the possibility of data gathering based on the "six degrees of separation" through the network of personal acquaintance. It was carried out between June 8 and August 4 2015. The research team employed Google Forms engine. The survey is divided into three parts that is consisted of fifteen questions related to online activities, twenty-two questions related to religiosity and religious expression and eight general and informatory questions. Specifically, in the religious affiliation item, the plan was adding three additional boxes besides the six recognized religions in Indonesia (viz. Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism), i.e. *aliran kepercayaan* (spiritual movements), "non-religious affiliated", and "other" religions.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION (n=343)	
RELIGION	N
Islam	168
Christianity (non-Catholic)	93
Catholicism	48
Hinduism	15
Buddhism	8
Confucianism	1
Spiritual Movements	1
Others	2
Non-affiliated	7

Figure 1 Religious Affiliation
Source: Author

Inter-Religious Interaction (Sample Items), n=343						
DESCRIPTION	Inter-religious dialogue	Support harsh measure on religious defamation case	Taking seriously on the spreading of our own religious negative portrayal in socmed/internet	Expressing dislike toward other religion(s) in socmed/internet	Agreement on the employment of the Electronic Transaction Law (UU ITE) implementation on religious defamation cases	Socmed/internet activities influence my religiosity
Strongly Agree	162	32	46	8	43	18
Agree	164	53	142	43	158	108
Disagree	17	164	123	163	105	155
Strongly Disagree	3	94	32	128	37	62

Figure 2 Inter-Religious Interaction

Source: Author

As a matter of fact, during the process of data collection the research team encountered two incidents: a repulsive meme sent to one of the respondents, and a survey site blocking, assumingly both initiated by the party who disagree with this online survey. This incident however, might say something about the complexity and sensitivity of the case at hand, that there is some section of Indonesian society that allergic to the issue of "religious plurality" qua "pluralism", as seemingly this survey perceived. "Pluralism" for some Indonesians connote to "secularism", "liberalism", and "religious relativism" (Yusuf, 2012).

The expectation of larger participation was failed, as the data gathered is minimum and hardly reflecting the population of Indonesian millennials. An explanation is put forward regarding this outcome, by one of the interviewee whom he remarked that the foursquare term such of "religion" is not a favourite topic for the youngsters. Any religious issue, he concluded, should appear in youth sub-culture appearance. Lesson to learn: it is deem important to understand specific cultural marker, cultural context, and even the social imagination of the research subjects.

DISCUSSION

Cyberspace and Young People

"Internet", "cyberspace", and "cybersphere" in this discussion could be seen in discursive way as it refers to arena of producing, consuming, creating, and establishing the agency position and self-production. It oftentimes connotes to "online", "wired", and "virtual" realms, as contrast to the "offline" and the "meatspace". Since William Gibson coined the term *cyberspace* in his novel, *Neuromancer* (1984) -a neologism of *cybernetics* and *space*, it popularized and associated with a number of activities through the prefix *cyber-* to create a sensation of "advanced": *cyberpunk*, *cybersex*, *cyberethics*, *cyberterrorism*, and others. This term is referring to the virtual activity -for instance in the novel Gibson wrote about *cyberspace* as *disembodied consciousness* in *consensual hallucination* (Gibson, 2000 [1984], 262)- and referring

to the factual activities in the internet (Strate, 1999, p. 383). This broad definition is employ in this article in order to smooth the discussion on the relationship between the human and digital technology, in particular in Indonesian context. Indonesia is still in the progress to increase the internet penetration, hence presumably the contrast between digital and non-digital realms -the combination that is called by Lindgren as "hyper media world" (Lindgren, Dahlberg-Grundberg & Johanson, 2014)- is still prevailed.

Cybersphere as a working terminology might be owed to the notion of "public sphere", an all-pervasive term that mainly imagined as a "middle-earth" between the state and society, as envisioned by Habermas (1989). The notion has been criticized for its presumption of the liberal public sphere and for its projection as the place of consensus, of public opinion (Fuchs, 2013, p. 181-182; Gitlin, 1998; Mendieta, 2011). In the context of cybersphere the consensus is depended upon on what a sociologist called *plausibility structure* (Berger, 1967, p. 16-17) or in socmed, *trending*. Trending as a "*plausibility structure*" musters people or group of people into a "consensus" upon certain topic within certain period of time, or if certain topic ripe for exposé as an expression of public anxiety. This trending is constantly changing and moving from one topic to another. All in all cybersphere is a complex place that far from becoming a place of steady consensus and more a hodgepodge of disperse motivations, of consensus as to resistance, as a place *for*

representation, as *of* representation, and the "safest place" for hiding the human motivation.

Web 2.0 platform and social media are widely believed as the latest upshot of digital technology revolution, an *e-ruption* that bring with it new paradigm of digital practice by put humanity at the centre of digital constellation (O'Reilly, 2005; Fraser & Dutta, 2008). This claim however, does not go unchallenged, as a critique revealed that those merely new model of internet capitalism rather than radical shift of technological achievement (Fuchs, 2013). The new paradigm nonetheless, persisted, as it "harnessing creativity and collective intelligence" and enhances the interactivity between the user and technology to the point of altering the meaning of identity, reality, and even humanity (Fraser & Dutta, 2008).

Internet arguably gives a significant incentive for the expansion of the youth culture. Youngsters often charged as people who are disconnected with reality and living in the virtual bubble, as contended by some of the interviewees and FGD's participants. However, the present research reporting a more complex picture in which many Indonesian youngsters displayed sensitivity in a number socio-political issues, though in diverse outlets and though some of them extremely peculiar, as can be seen in the following part.

As the survey in this research project indicated, Facebook and Twitter remained the "traditional" and popular social media over the others, as it concurred in the

present research. Mobile technology, coupled with instant messaging and socmed applications broaden the dimension of digital technology implementation. Line, Whatsapp, and Path gave this young people privatized version of public space where they are safely establishing congregation with their selected fellows. Facebook on the other hand helps to distinguish the social self in the online world from other internet activities. The recent research demonstrated that many Indonesian *Facebookers* do not know that they are doing internet (Mirani, 2015). Facebook is more socializing then "internet" since it apparently gives an "intense engagement and emotional enjoyment" (Magid, 2012; Mauri, Cipresso, Balgera, Villamira & Riva, 2011). After all, there is a truth in an observation that "Indonesians are a very social and 'chatty'" people (Pramuadji, 2014).

Youth culture is perceived as the culture that cultivates experimentation, creativity, playfulness, and adventure (Fraser&Dutta, 2008; Magid, 2012; Mauri, Cipresso, Balgera, Villamira & Riva, 2011). Youth culture is also displayed a tendency to create "rhizomatic networking" that evades existing hierarchy (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 189–191). Along with it there is a condition in which Deleuze and Guattari called *disconnected becomings*: a realm that is "... *carried out in such a way that it becomes imperceptible itself, asignifying, makes its rupture, its own line of flight, follows 'aparallel evolution' through the end*" (Deleuze & Guattari,

1987, p. 11). The disconnected becoming implies to the independence of a self from the "traditional" structure. Paradoxically, since hitch onto the internet world in some cases is also adopting "citizenship" and/or "membership" in the interest of forging social self and creating a sense of "community", hence escaping from *hierarchy* does not mean total individuation: it may rather adopting *heterarchy* setting in which the subscription to and sources of authority come from different venues. This may determine the religious discourse consumption and production patterns, as we shall see below.

All things considered, the youth could be seen as a "prosumer", producer and consumer simultaneously, and as suggested by Willis, in the "active consumption as a kind of production" (Willis in White & Wyn, 2008, p. 212, 216). The research also demonstrated that even though many of the millennials "exist" in almost all socmed, i.e. the "traditional" socmed such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ and the newest one such as Path, Instagram, Line, it does not mean they preoccupied with them and keep adding friends in all those media. During the course of time, they exercised a degree of self-regulation as they active only in selective media, while maintained the accounts on the rest.

Besides those potentials, a number of reports pointed out the flip side of internet and socmed for young people (e.g. Hollauf, 2015; Lanier, 2010). Digital addiction (pornographic, gambling, cartoon websites), excessive video game playing,

chat-obsessed behaviour, cyber-bullying/-harassment, marginalizing people, and the latest is radicalized youngsters through cyber jihad (see the following part), those often attributed to this generation and became a serious concern for the government, parents, school, and religious authorities (White & Wyn, 2008, p. 221). Sharing status, often "oversharing" details of personal life is common in the social media. Other observations further pointed out the difficulties young people individuating their self in the socmed. Many of them suffered what is called "duck syndrome", "A duck appears to glide calmly across the water, while beneath the surface it frantically, relentlessly paddles" (Scelfo, 2015). They presented the best face in socmed regardless their inner struggling. They have to present the most "optimal" self in the hyperpersonality and impersonality mode (Walther, 1996).

The Millennials' Religious e-Xpression in Cyberspace

There are numerous examples of Indonesian youth experimentation of creativities in the cyberspace such as the establishment of Indonesian-native socmed (*sebangsa*) a mobile app for 2014 general and presidential election (*pemiluapps)* and others. The playground of the youth is also considered a digression, a diversion that questioning social structure, government, ideology, market, and all "establishments", including the religious presumptions (Rifkin, 2014, p. 304). A witty meme might reflect this playfulness through which it blurs religious identity. The context is *lebaran* (Indonesian

eid al-fitr celebration): "At last arrived in [my] hometown. 'You said you couldn't find ticket?' 'I was ushered by Santa Claus, mom'" "*Akhirnya tiba juga di kampung. 'katanya kehabisan tiket mudik?' 'saya menumpang Sinterklas, bu'*". Cyberspace allows such cultural production.

In the last few years, there are new phenomena on public opinion gathering in the internet through comments in socmed, meme, and online petition. The latter is becoming a mouthpiece for public opinion toward certain figures or socio-political body such as the government, political parties, companies, and educational institutions. The millennials are also active in this public opinion gathering and displaying the development of their political awareness and social sensitivity upon social and religious issues. For instance, we collecting such petitions by the millennials regarding the issues of such as women police hijab uniform ("*Cabut larangan jilbab bagi Polwan*"), church demolition ("*Hentikan Pembongkaran Gereja di Pangkep*"), Rohingya Muslims ("*Selamatkan Etnis Rohingya*"), religion and citizenship ("*Penghapusan Kolom Agama dari Kartu Tanda Penduduk*"). Indeed, political awareness and sensitivities displayed through the aforementioned examples are associated with ideological and religious position. In this case, however, cyberspace is a place for the young people mobilizing their socio-political awareness in which the offline realm hardly provides.

The online survey confirmed the digital divide as earlier mentioned. Java Island

occupied 86.5% of respondents, while the rest is 11,4% (outside Java Island), and 2% (abroad) respectively. Prominent discrepancy we encountered along the way was the population outreached for the online survey. Aforementioned, the Indonesian millennials occupied 82.8% of internet users. We found that our respondents were not only too few to represent the spectrum of millennials, it is also tended to belong to certain persuasion, which apparently more favourable toward the notion of "religious plurality". Religious minority (non-Muslims) tends to support the notion of "religious plurality" though there were significant numbers who support it among the Muslims. There was limited representation from the sceptical and opposition camps.

In term of religious affiliation beyond the six recognized religions, evidently, 3.5% (12 respondents out of 343) filled the narrow paths of non-religious affiliated and spiritual movements. Out of six of non-affiliated two styled themselves as "atheists" and "agnostics". This figure hardly representational but tells us about a shift taken place among the younger generation that some of them increasingly disaffected with the organized religions. Furthermore, since affiliation to religion does not always correlate with the piety and religious activities, we can expect the "spiral of silence" at work, that is the silence opposition against the dominant discourse (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). However, it is simply undetected in the research finding. Spiral of silence and self-censorship also

at work when many of the internet users were on different relative position from the majority (Islam). An interviewee from a religious minority group contended, "as a minority … [I] have to be very careful to create a statement, [so as to] avoid trouble … minorities seek common interest with the majority so [s/he] wouldn't marginalized". Another observation in this regard shown that religious-based representation in the Indonesian cyberspace is imbalanced, minority in the offline realm tended to be a minority in the online realm as well.

Most of the respondents supporting to the idea of religious plurality, e.g. inter-religious dialogue (95%), inter-religious friendship (97.2%), holiday greeting to other religion (83.1%), and so on. The state slogan "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" as the exact term or by connotation appeared several times in the discussion and online survey. However, pursuing further the notion we found a more complicated and nuance positions. The following sample figures are suggestive: opposition to the inter-religious marriage (43.7%), support to the state pressure toward religious "dissidents" (54.2%), and harsh measures to the religious defamation (24.7%). The last two, while showed a different degree of understanding of religious plurality, is probably also telling about the social imagination on the "stronger state", rather than being simply an "intolerant" stance. Apparently, for them, coercive measure is necessary to maintain order. After the falling of the New Order, Indonesia underwent difficult transition that weakened the foundations of

state authority. Another figure, i.e. almost 60% of the respondents agree with the implementation of Law No. 11/2008 on the Information and Electronic Transaction Law (renowned as UU ITE) upon the issue of religious defamation -12.5% among them gave a stronger support. It can be expected that within this ambient the inter-religious tension might be sowing.

UU ITE that was established in 2008 is meant to protect electronic and information exchange, mostly in the internet. Despite its noble objective, it has unintended side effects since it also being used for the cases of religious defamation or blasphemy in the internet, especially through the article 27/3 and 28/2 of the law. The law stretched its history to the New Order administration when in 1970s it established a discourse of SARA ("*suku, agama, ras, aliran*" -ethnicities, religions, races, and socio-political streams) as a tool for the state, through the law and security enforcements to maintain social order and stability. The "collateral damages" of this discourse are well recorded as suppressive acts against the "dissidents" were mounted and the meaning of accepted religious expression were defined. This ambiguity might give a complex perception on religious plurality in the present context -demonstrated the strong legacy of the New Order- as the implementation toward any opinion and initiatives put forward in the internet that considered a threat to social order and national unity. Theoretically speaking it could silent the religious "dissident" view in the internet, such as atheism, agnosticism, and religious minority. This opinion coupled with the support of the implementation UU ITE

on the case of religious defamation shown an ambiguity.

The above case shown that there are different level of understanding and awareness of "religious plurality", nonetheless there is a social imagination of "the muscular state", in which *masculinity* and strong hand to maintain social order and integrity is invested. If this observation is acceptable then this is not only to confirm the increasing intolerance in the internet (be it induced by the millennials or not) but also a reflection of the deficient of the state administration on managing social order, stability, and diversity. Masculinity, as earlier argument already touch upon, might be contributed by the imagery of the New Order's strong administration, in particular epitomized in the figure of General Suharto, as manifested in the popular meme and poster, taking him as a desirable nostalgic leader: *piye kabare, isih penak jamanku to* ["How are you? My day is much better, right?"]. An interview with a respondent revealed further the interplay of the millennials' social imagination and the state's.

> The government is less active [and] "dares" to subdue the radicals, who deviate from the core of the accepted religions in Indonesia. Radicalism that is heading toward terrorism, and radicalism that heading toward separatism (the two are existed but the former get more attention because of the work of Densus 88 [the counter-terrorism unit belong to the National Police] should be taken seriously through the solid intelligence works. The state security is crucial for all of us. If the state safe and secure [from the agitation] then [everybody] could observe [each religion] and work peacefully. (personal communication, n.d)

In certain case, masculinity is an important element for the formation of individuation and identity for a (male)

youngster and this quality is evolved in distinct way from the above imagination of the state, though probably to a degree there is a contribution of that imagination as well. This is apparent in the case of the emergence of Indonesian young jihadists that recruited by some groups, including ISIS/ISIL, through socmed such as Facebook, as spotted by Noor Huda Ismail, an observer of radical Islamism in two interviews. The imageries of jihadists holding AK-47 in Facebook cover photos for instance, might induce the impression of gallantry, cool and dashing for other young jihadists. Those are converged with Islamic messages that give these youngsters religious meaning and passion, such as, "live a noble life or die as a martyr" (*ish kariman aw mut shahidan*) (Ismail, 2015). The new jihadists adore the veterans of Afghanistan and Mindanao wars as their new heroes (Toohey, 2014). Many of them spend almost a full-time life behind the laptop, in the socmed and internet, as to the cyberspace is the *only* vehicle to become social and the place to invigorate their religious presupposition. An Indonesian sociologist even confidently claimed that among the "fundamentalist" religionists, internet is the most powerful tools for their existence. While internet and its constellations produced within the "Western" logic of advancement and modernity -something might contradict to the core value of this group- the adoption of it for the group ideological end reflecting the Manuel Castells' observation that the member of this group "… building of defensive identity in the terms of dominant institutions/ideologies, reversing the value judgment while reinforcing the boundary" (Castells, 2004, p. 9). On the other hand, the recruitment through the socmed is illustrating the rhizomic condition in which multiplication of social subjects is not depended upon traditional genealogies and authorities, as the meaning production and authority association are independents and determined in the privatized space.

Comparable example in different setting is the Nazism sympathizer youngster in a blog (http://alifrafikkhan.blogspot.co.id/). Historically speaking, Nazism once became a source of the state muscularity in the formative days of Indonesian nationalism in 1920s, up until the post-independence period. The emergence of the short-lived Indonesian Facist Party (Wilson, 2008), the term "Gestapu" for the 1965 putsch (Hadler, 2004, p. 306-307), might connote to the German masculinity. Furthermore, Ben Anderson recalled the day when he was a journalist in 1963 and surprised by the first president of Indonesia, Sukarno, of his speech that adoring Hitler as an exemplary statesman (Anderson, 1998, pp. 1-2). The emergence of youngsters who crazed with the Nazi heroism might partially explained with the aforementioned masculinity as an element of their individuation formation, and at the same time paralleled with their religious aspiration, as the site also discussing about the connection of some Nazi figures with Islam and Muslims in Palestine. At this juncture, there are a number of intersecting concerns besides the above issues, which

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including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is among the heated issues nowadays among some Muslims. The presence of this blog might be an indication a way of some millennials involved with international political conversation, regardless in a questionable way.

Socmed has been contorted as the place for investing emotional attainment by expressing their feeling, in many ways unrestrained. The process of mimetic, argued by one interviewee explained the limited rational choice and attitude in this milieu. The internet is not the place, as the observation conclude, to broaden the view toward the Other and tended to confirm the preconceived belief toward other religions; it is simply amplifying the "echo chamber" effect. Mirroring and amplification of contention are also the feature of this mode of interaction, such as the emergence of Facebook fan pages, *Muslim Defence League* (MDL Indonesian chapter) and the *Indonesian Christian Defence League* as its competitor. Both pages mutually developing negative images of the rival religion. This condition further pronounced when inter-religious polemics surfaced, triggered by cases such as hijab ban in the high schools in Bali Island (a Hindu enclave island), religious conversion of some celebrities -both the Christians and the Muslims celebrities, and other cases. These kinds of incidents are easily triggered the inflammatory, tweetwar, word exchanges, and memes in socmed and internet. Religious polemic especially among the Abrahamic religious traditions has a long

history. The millennials are just following the traditional pattern of it; only the media of expression are changing. Polemical tendency in the religious cyberspace further accentuated the stereotypical imagery of the other, through which religious conservatism provided an easy and accessible exposition to handle certain religious issues. This position oftentimes less interested in the discourse of religious plurality if not stands against it. However, it is interesting how this conservatism is handled by the millennials.

Kartun Muslimah, a Facebook fan page, is an interesting case where it presumably ran by Muslim girls that promote Islamic values. In term of religious position this page is devoted to the most conservative precepts, e.g. on the issues of youngsters dating, gender relations, and others. It does not hide their anti-western position, in which oftentimes associated to Christianity. In many ways, this is an example of a reclaiming and seizing Islamic portion of public space or seizing the public space for Islam. Interestingly, the way it presented is very much within the youth sub-culture, including the play on visualization of the messages. The fact that the page is ran by Muslim girls and intended to the specific "market" of young Muslim women demonstrated a complex presentation of religious self while following a distinct religious imagination. An example of this is its creation of jargon such as "high-quality *jomblo*", a high quality dateless is certainly a counter narrative of modern life in which pre-marital dating and free-sex

is common among Indonesian youngsters. The fan page strongly promoted non-dating marriage through which an Islamic ideal is invested. The employment of cartoon (as the name of the page implied), meme, attractive visualization, humour, and up-to-date slang/lingo among the youngsters such as "*jomblo*" (dateless) showed multiple belonging of the Muslims self and distinct way this millennials engaged with religious and social problems. However, its strong conservatism flavour prevented it to engage with inter-religious discourse.

The new media, internet and other digital technological products, notably mobile communication devices, and its utilization such as the above *Kartun Muslimah* represented a new emerging Muslim youths, especially the urbanites and the middle class, who do not see the discrepancy between being religious and embracing modernity. Religion and modernity are seen as equally attractive (Heryanto, 2014, p. 24ff.). This, presumably is not exclusively Muslim phenomenon but to a lesser degree also obvious among the young people in other religions, notably the Christians. It is even safe to say that in much earlier period, it was some Indonesian Christians that found firm ground on embracing media and digital technology in mobilizing religious aspiration, especially through the adoption of American televangelism sub-culture (Coleman, 2000, p. 185ff.).

This part concludes with an interesting example of a cross-confessional initiative, *Teman Ahok* to support a public figure in which the meaning of religious authority is reinterpret in a distinct way. *Teman Ahok* is a group of Jakarta-based youngsters (22-24 years old) that concerned with the promotion of Basuki Cahaya Purnama, known by his popular nickname Ahok, the present governor of the Special Province of the Capital Jakarta, for the 2017 governorate election. This is an inter-confessional and non-partisan group that created a website, Facebook page and Twitter account, and YouTube for this campaign. Importantly, Ahok is ethnically Chinese and a devout Christian. It is an irony that Ahok became the governor for the region where once was the most inhabitable place for Indonesian Chinese when a huge riot happened during the last days of General Suharto seventeen years ago. Renowned for the stern position against rampant corruption and lazy management, firstly in his native district in Belitung Island, later on in Jakarta Capital Region as Vice Governor, and presently the governor, Ahok gained genuine support from the wide range elements of society, even across religious persuasions. Just to be expected, his position drew criticism from other segments, and significantly from some Muslim elements, basically on the ground of his religious identification. Until recently, he became the constant target of black campaigns and other image damaging activities by his political opponents and anti-Christian and Chinese elements.

Among many arguments to reject Ahok leadership, the most popular was based on Qur'anic passages, one of them is from *Surā Al-Mā'ida* 51:18:

You who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians as allies: they are allies only to each other. Anyone who takes them, as an ally becomes one of them -God does not guide such wrongdoers. (Qur'anic translation is from M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (2004)).

Official Indonesian translation of this passage is translating allies (*awliyā'*) as "leaders" ("*pemimpin*"). Non-Muslim, i.e. the Jews and Christians are seen as unbelievers (*kufur*) hence among the popular opinion barred from becoming a leader among the Muslim population. There is a complex Islamic opinion on the possibility of non-Muslim political leadership upon Muslim population, and here the space limited to discuss it (see the discussion in Sahal, 2012). The interesting thing is that Muslims and non-Muslims millennials aware of this religious debate, do not overlook it but do not take it as a catch-22 either. They on the other hand elude the normative restriction, induced by religious authority, and moving to another morally equivalent to that religious imagination: struggle for the social justice. In the case of Jakarta, the imagination of social justice is invested upon the shoulder of a non-Muslim leadership.

One Facebook comment posted in *Teman Ahok* fan page is suggestive. A presumably a male youngster, called him Valdex, he remarked:

If in Islam it is forbidden and sinful for taking non-Muslims (*kafir*, "unbelievers") as a leader [of a nation] … then I am ready to take that burden [of sin] from my God. The important thing is that I surrender [my trust] to Brother Ahok [Koh Ahok] in Jakarta, if necessary I surrender [my trust] to Brother Ahok for Indonesian [president] … so that Indonesian future is brighter, and my descendants do not suffer of being born in Indonesia because of

the corrupters … Greet Indonesia free from corruption.

Valdex is taking the risk of "violating" the traditional understanding of the aforementioned Qur'anic passage, and trading it for something he perceived as a larger good. At this point he did not challenge the religious authority -he accepted the burden of the sin- but simply imagining a better Indonesia, in which free from corruption. This imagination is clearly not only does not contradict with Islamic precepts but in fact along with religious position against the corruption. Indonesian Muslim authorities such as Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI -*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*) have produced religious instruction (fatwa) to combat corruption.

CONCLUSION

Indonesian millennials present complex faces, and as expected offers no coherent picture. The polemical feature on religious issue apparently strong and these youngsters became the forefront of religious conservatism, oftentimes became the mouthpiece of the established religious authority. Nevertheless, they also present religious issue in a more engaging manner, with its playful element, even crossing the traditional gender boundary. The harm side is that some youths became radicalized in seeking their manhood. While many millennials are sharing with many conservative idea of religion, but the way of drawing the boundary and belonging is more dynamic.

As argued by Heriyanto, the emergence of young Muslim eloquence -I would like

to extend this thesis to Christian youths as well- in digital technology is not necessarily challenges the establishment per se, though indeed it challenged it in the way religious message should contextually presented for a layer of Indonesian young population. It is, on contrary created another variant of Islam and Islamicization process within Indonesian society (Heryanto, 2014, p. 32). Digital technology in this sense gives a way for a new form of religiosity rather than challenging the old one.

The commodification of human "experience" by media and commercial also provide another dimension on the millennials understanding of religiosity and on the religious plurality. Pentecostal (and Charismatic) form of Christianity has no difficulty to embrace new media, including many forms of digital technology product to enhance their messages and in turn embracing youth culture into their religious system. This "experiential" primacy of religiosity is more fitting to the youth culture and became an alternative to another form of religiosity that put the primacy on rational affirmation.

Socmed and internet have been a vehicle for some millennials to augment their sensitivity to social and religious issues. The inter-religious and religious plurality discourse framed beyond formality and abstraction by some Indonesian millennials through this kind of social engagement rather than in discursive level within the institutional and academic walls. Indeed, to them the better future of Indonesia is depending upon.

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