

Social and Cultural Integration: A Discourse Analysis of Islamic Themes in the *Basis*, 1998–2000

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Abstract

This article examines the discourse on Islam found in articles published in *Basis* from 1998 to 2000. *Basis* is a cultural magazine founded in Yogyakarta by members of the Society of Jesus (SJ) in 1951. Since 1998, *Basis* has regularly featured writings on Islamic themes contributed by both Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals. This research aims to understand why *Basis*, with its Catholic missionary vision and spirit, embraced Islamic themes during the 1998–2000 period and to what extent these Islamic and Islamic-themed articles reflect the journal's mission of interreligious dialogue in response to the "cultural freedom" of the Reform Era. A historical methodology using text analysis techniques was employed for this research. Primary sources included articles with Islamic themes published in *Basis* between 1998 and the early 2000s, as well as interview data. The findings indicate that following the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, Indonesia experienced "cultural freedom," including increased freedom of expression, which significantly influenced the media landscape. *Basis'* inclusion of articles with Islamic themes was a response to this "cultural freedom" in the contemporary context. The Islamic discourse presented in *Basis* primarily focused on contextual issues related to religious polarization and conflicts in Indonesia at the dawn of the Reform Era, including discussions on pluralism and the significance of interreligious dialogue within the framework of the nation-state. The Islamic discourse in *Basis* demonstrated a fluid nature, suggesting coexistence and close interaction among adherents of various value systems and worldviews.

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Introduction

Research by Michael L. Fitzgerald demonstrates that Christian-Muslim relations from a Catholic theological perspective since Vatican II have been described as intricate and not straightforward. Various perspectives view Islam differently, with some portraying it negatively as *bid'ah* [heresy], while others view it positively, considering Muhammad as part of the lineage of prophets who taught the doctrine of the oneness of God, liberating their followers from idol worship and polytheism (Fitzgerald, 2018). These complex perspectives illustrate that Christian-Muslim relations are far from simple, especially within the framework of national politics.

For example, the political situation in Indonesia following the fall of the New

Order regime in 1998 led to demands for freedom of the press and freedom of expression in public, which shaped Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia. The space for individual citizens' expression became more open. The state's recognition of the citizenship status of its citizens was then institutionalized within the political system and material cultural forms, safeguarded by positive legal systems (Nordholt & Klinken, 2007). For instance, cultural expressions of the Chinese community that were restricted or prohibited during the New Order era gained recognition from the state through the policies of President Abdurrahman Wahid (Mustajab, 2015). The downfall of the New Order in 1998 marked a year of "cultural freedom." It refers to the freedom of "democracy" in various aspects, including politics, economic liberalization, cultural and journalistic expression, as well as openness in expressing various ideas and concepts.

However, the "cultural freedom" also brought with it an illusory aspect due to the widespread potential for violence. As Ricklefs (2009) pointed out, the intergroup riots in the late 1990s were extensive and brutal, not solely due to Suharto's repressive regime but also because of inter-ethnic, inter-religious, various political interests, and the pressure of economic crises. Amidst the euphoria of this newfound freedom, social interactions among citizens and groups with diverse backgrounds often collided due to primordial sentiments rooted in ethnicity and religion. Signs of inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict were glaringly evident in the first decade of the Reform Era, leading some Indonesia scholars to speculate that Indonesia might follow the path of disintegration, similar to Yugoslavia (Aspinall & Berger, 2001). In the midst of this antithesis to "cultural freedom," episodes of inter-religious conflict gained momentum, threatening the cohesion, and tolerance of Indonesian society.

Amidst this intricate situation, various parties endeavored to build and strengthen inter-group dialogue among ethnic and religious communities. These dialogues aimed to foster cross-cultural and interfaith understanding through multi-party interactions and communication. One such effort to promote dialogue was through the mass media. *Basis*, a magazine focused on the study of philosophy, culture, literature, art, and religiosity, was established and managed by Catholic priests of the Society of Jesus (SJ). Starting in 1997 and leading up to the 2000s, this magazine began featuring special articles on Islam and Islamic themes. This raised curiosity because the magazine's thematic focus was far from religion, particularly given its affiliation with Catholic priests.

The study of the historical relationship between religion and media is not a new field. Although the historical connection between media, religion, and their institutions is not a continuum, historical research on the relationship between religion and media has shown significant and dramatic impacts. For instance, the ideas of the Protestant Reformation were heavily influenced by the printing network through the dissemination of books, posters, and pamphlets. In other words, the study of religion in media can shed light on media practices that impact social life (Stolow, 2010). Stewart M. Hoover argues that media plays a role in religious change, outlining two media frames in relation to religion as journalistic and non-journalistic,

acknowledging the controversial nature of their relationship (Hoover, 2012). The intersection of media and religion has also been the focus of several researchers, such as Kirby and Cusack (2017), Hoover (2012), Hosseini (2008) and others. Investigating the interplay between these two fields provides insights into the contemporary world, its transformations, and the potential for change.

This article delves into the discourse on Islam in the *Basis* during the period of the late 1990s to the early 2000s from a historical perspective. This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, during the period of 1998, there was a noticeable tension in the vertical intergroup relations among different religious communities in Indonesia. Notable examples include the conflicts between Christian and Islamic groups in Poso (December 1998), Ambon (January 1999), Ketapang-Jakarta, Kupang, and Makassar. Secondly, *Basis*, managed by Jesuit pastors, provided an extensive and intensive platform for Muslim writers and anyone interested to discuss Islamic themes. Thirdly, examining the discourse on Islam in *Basis* during the late 1990s to early 2000s can contribute to efforts aimed at preserving and fostering diversity through open dialogue. This is especially critical in the current environment, which is increasingly vulnerable to conflicts.

Several relevant studies have previously explored the discourse on Islam in the post-New Order era. As highlighted in the research conducted by Simorangkir (2015), the post-New Order era was characterized by the opening up of political and ideological spaces, resulting in religious struggles among Islamic groups vying to claim their interpretations of Islam. These competing interpretations and the depoliticization of Islam can potentially lead to confrontations between liberal and moderate Muslims, causing serious social and political conflicts (Zarkasyi, 2008). Vertical ideological conflicts appeared in various locations, often rooted in racial, religious, and sectarian disputes, as exemplified in Poso (Alganih, 2016).

This article aims to investigate why the *Basis*, guided by the vision and spirit of Catholic pastors, chose to focus on Islamic themes in their publications during the period of the late 1990s to the early 2000s. To what extent do the thematic articles on Islam and Islamic topics in the *Basis* reflect the mission of interreligious dialogue in response to the “cultural freedom” of the reform era? To explore this issue, this article analyzes the socio-cultural integration discourse within writings centered on Islam and Islamic themes published in the *Basis* from 1998 to the early 2000s.

“Socio-cultural integration” is understood as the interconnectedness of various elements within society in their day-to-day interactions. This operational definition is broad in scope, encompassing all socio-cultural aspects that bind together elements with differing interests within society. It also conceptualizes the generational conditions that form the background or “foundation” for individual actions and social activities within the community.

Method

This research employed a historical methodology. The analysis utilized Fairclough's framework with a specific focus on how texts are produced, their origins, and how the

content of one text is compared to others (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Written sources were collected by the researcher from the sections of *Basis* containing articles related to Islam during the period of 1998–2000. Additionally, the researcher gathered unwritten sources through interviews with the editor-in-chief of *Basis*, Sindhunata SJ (2007), and a member of the editorial board of the Islamic section, Heru Prakosa SJ (2021). Although there was instability in the Islamic-themed sections presented in *Basis* throughout the years 1998–2000, the researcher examined the continuity of the discourse about Islam as presented by the magazine.

The first part of this article focuses on providing a general overview of the background of *Basis* to provide context to the editorial stance. Describing the editorial context is essential for understanding the situation from various aspects, thus facilitating the examination of Islamic discourses presented in the magazine. This instability can also be interpreted as the editorial team's "selective" or "cautious" approach to publication. In other words, the articles selected for publication are the result of editorial approval, implying that the discourse presented reflects the editorial perspective. The second part focuses on the Islamic discourses present in the *Basis*'s sections during the 1998-2000 period, specifically in relation to aspects of Islamic interaction and social reality.

***Basis* in the Context of the New Order**

Basis is a cultural journal that originated in Yogyakarta, specifically at the Saint Ignatius College (Kolsani), located at Jl. Abu Bakar Ali No. 1 in 1951. *Basis* emerged during the fervent years of cultural identity exploration in the 1950s and early 1960s. During this passionate period, cultural spaces flourished, both locally and on a global scale. Forums for cultural discussion in the mass media expanded significantly, notably in newspapers like *Bintang Timoer* and *Harian Rakjat*, which consistently provided platforms for cultural and artistic discourse. Additionally, there was the cultural journal *Horison*, which emerged amidst the political and cultural tumult of the 1960s.

Basis, as a cultural medium, possesses distinctive characteristics compared to the cultural spaces of its time. This magazine was founded as a result of deliberations among Jesuit priests, including individuals such as J. Bakker, A. Djajasepoetra, J. Dijkstra, R. Soekarta, G. Vriens, and P.J. Zoetmulder, (Sindhunata, personal communication, 2007). The cultural orientation and harmonious blending of ideas in *Basis*, which absorbed influences from the West, Java, and other networks, can be traced back to the backgrounds of its founders. Broadly speaking, they possessed a foundation rooted in Western thought due to their formal education. However, their intellectual inclinations and perspectives were not exclusively Western.

One of the founders and the first editor-in-chief of *Basis* was Zoetmulder. He had a solid foundation in Western thought, deeply rooted in Western philosophy. Nevertheless, Zoetmulder was also renowned for his profound affection for Javanese culture. Many of his writings were wholeheartedly dedicated to Javanese culture. During the early period of *Basis*'s establishment, the Islamic section was already

present, albeit in a limited capacity. At that time, the emphasis in the Islamic section was on Javanese Islam. Under Zoetmulder's stewardship, *Basis* offered more content related to "mystical Islam," Islam that had assimilated with Javanese culture. This can be understood as a reflection of Zoetmulder's deep admiration for Javanese culture (Madiniér, 2021). In its early establishment, *Basis* also displayed a keen awareness of national political dynamics. For instance, in 1955, *Basis* contributed to the cultural discourse on "democracy" by publishing a guide to elections in a society that lacked prior experience with democratic processes.

The second generation of *Basis*, led by N. Drijarkara, was underpinned by Western thought that enveloped philosophy with the spirit of European enlightenment in the magazine's sections. During the third period of the magazine's existence, around the 1960s, it was led by Dick Hartoko, who allocated considerable space to artists. Hartoko introduced a distinctive section called *Tanda-Tanda Zaman* [signs of the times] as a prologue or gateway to understanding *Basis* as a whole.

Throughout these first three periods of *Basis*'s management, the publication included articles on religion, but those related to Islam were "limited," or one could say they had not received special attention. For example, during the 1990s, there was hardly any coverage of Islam in *Basis*. Interestingly, *Basis* was not consistent in its sections but rather highlighted the writings, whether scholarly, semi-academic, or popular, contributed by various individuals. The political and socio-political situation, along with limited religious activities and a reduced interest in religious matters, may have been significant factors. During the years 1960 to 1990, *Basis* was heavily steeped in philosophical discussions. For instance, the May 1995 edition, titled "The Role of Philosophy in National Life," covered topics such as Pluralism in the Modern State (A Review of Political Ethics), "Recognition for Philosophy," and "Influential Theories in the Social Sciences."

The fourth generation of *Basis* (1996–2010s) was led by Sindhunata, a Western-educated journalist with a profound interest in the visual arts. He skillfully amalgamated Western, Javanese, and Chinese influences into a coherent harmonization. Throughout his tenure, Sindhunata consistently championed the culture and arts of ordinary people. During this period, the Editorial Board had a dedicated editor for Islamic studies and Islamic thought, namely Heru Prakoso. An intriguing aspect of *Basis* from its inception is its non-standardized sections. Therefore, the sections related to Islam were also characterized by their flexibility. As aptly stated by Sindhunata (2001), "*Basis* has always had non-standardized sections." *Basis* meticulously curated its editions based on contemporary and pressing themes that warranted in-depth exploration. For instance, the theme of family emerged when the phenomenon of family de-religionization gained prominence, partly spurred by questions posed at the end of Karen Armstrong's book, "A History of God." The editorial team at *Basis* chose to retain only two consistent sections, namely "*Tanda-tanda Zaman*" [signs of the times] as the introductory gateway and "*Bayang-bayang*" [shadows], which was prepared by A. Sudiarja to guide readers' reflections after engaging with the content.

Despite its non-standardized approach, the sections related to Islam frequently made appearances in *Basis's* publications. According to Heru Prakoso (personal communication, 2021), the Editorial Board indeed had a focus on Islamic studies. Themes related to Islam in *Basis* encompassed a broader spectrum, characterized by an emphasis on Islam as a cultural civilization, rather than narrowly doctrinal or legal aspects. In essence, the focus was on constructive thinking for the collective welfare. *Basis* provided an Islamic section with a vision “to make *Basis* a conduit for expanding insights and contextualizing thinking in Indonesia” (Heru Prakoso, personal communication, 2021).

In Christian documents, the importance of “dialogue” between religions and cultures, particularly between Catholics and Islam, first emerged in 1964. This was evident in the encyclical letter issued by Pope Paul VI about the Church in August 1964. The second and most comprehensive Vatican reference concerning Islam came in the form of the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, known as *Nostra Aetate*, which was issued by the Second Vatican Council on October 28, 1965. Both of these documents represent significant Vatican references that paved the way for later ones (Reilly, 2013). Inter-religious and intercultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims were also carried out by Benedict XVI in Cologne on August 20, 2006, as a “vital need that is highly dependent on our future” (Reilly, 2013). Similar ideas were also stated by Francis I at the Vatican on March 22, 2013 (Reilly, 2013). Intense interreligious and intercultural dialogue between Islam and Catholicism emerged during the fourth generation of *Basis* after 1997. While *Basis* may have been late in opening up space for cultural and religious dialogue with Islam, the political situation during the New Order era was one of the most significant contributing factors. The prevailing situation also challenged the fourth generation of *Basis*, with one of the most pivotal moments being the downfall of the New Order regime in 1998. Subsequently, this period is often referred to as the “Reform Era,” characterized by harmonious everyday life. Government policies, including those in the field of religion, which were once controlled by the Suharto regime, became more open to public participation.

According to Bouchier’s explanation (2015), the emergence of the New Order regime was marked by “chaos,” and how the regime adopted organizational ideology, along with laws and terror, to shape the political landscape and consolidate control. In turn, this illustrates how the social and economic changes brought about by government policies, such as the rise of a cosmopolitan middle class and the rapid growth of urban proletariat, led to the failure of the corporatist political infrastructure and ultimately the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998 (Bouchier, 2015). During the New Order era, the space for religious activities was restricted, both for officially recognized religions and belief systems (Ma’arif, 2000). The events during the New Order period nurtured mutual suspicion among followers of Islam and Christianity, with lasting impacts on the subsequent developments (Ma’arif, 2000).

Following the fall of the New Order regime (1998-2014), concerns arose about the government's inability to contain religious intolerance, violence, and corruption,

which raised the possibility of a return to authoritarian methods by formulating ideologies from the past (Bourchier, 2015).

Historian (Ricklefs, 2009) described a new model of separatism in the form of riots and competition between political, ethnic, and religious interests. Several studies have shown that some conflicts were not solely religious issues but eventually involved religion in the vortex of conflict. For example, Syarif and Herlambang (2023) explained that the Sambas conflict in Kalimantan in 1999 was rooted in ethnic stereotypes.

On the other hand, issues of social inequality, conflict, or intergroup competition within society gave rise to the “momentum” of radical Islamic movements in 1998. Indra Latif Syaepu’s work provides a more detailed explanation of the momentum of radical Islamic movements, which refers to the situation in 1998 (Syaepu, 2017).

“It was a momentum for the emergence of radical Islamic movements arose, aiming to demonstrate their strength as a pressure force (opposition) against a regime perceived as non-aspirational towards Islam. Public sympathy for the radical movement had grown significantly due to its scripturally radical ideology.”

Hence, we can observe that 1998 marked a crucial turning point. The contextual changes during this period directly or indirectly influenced discussions within the public media space. The climate for open discussions was supported by the deregulation of the press through Law No. 40 of 1999 (Susilastuti, 2000). An uncontrolled press, no longer under state control, provided ample space within media columns and news reporting. In *Basis*, this climate also intensified its coverage with social-cultural dialogues within the realm of religion, especially Islam. Although there was space for discussions about Islam in earlier issues of *Basis*, the presence of an Islamic section post-1998 was a clear indication of the magazine's intensified attention to Islam. After 1998, *Basis* consistently and relatively continuously featured articles about Islam. These articles were placed under the section *agama* [religion], which specifically addressed the discourse on Islam and Islamic matters. Meanwhile, other sections like *pena politik* [political pen] and *pena agama* [religious pen] occasionally featured Islamic discourse as well. These sections became more prominent due to the increasing sensitivity of inter-religious relations at the time, especially between Islam and Christianity. For instance, the conflicts in Poso (December 1998) and Ambon (January 1999), Ketapang-Jakarta, Kupang, Ujung Padang, and others.

Subsequently, this period is often referred to as the reform era, characterized by a harmonization of everyday life. Government policies, including those related to religion, which were previously controlled by the Suharto regime’s state apparatus, became more open to public participation. This led to a “seemingly cultural freedom” and various changes amid growing disillusionment. The uncertain political situation and economic depression, which many did not anticipate, posed a significant threat to the nation’s unity.

Table 1. Authors and Article Titles in *Basis*, 1998-2000

Authors	Titles
Andree Feillard	Islam and the Indonesian State in the 20th Century: Nahdlatul Ulama's Solution"
Ahmad Suaedy	Roots of Civil Society in Islamic Tradition: A Study of Religious Thought by Masdar F. Mas'udi
Franz Magnis-Suseno, S. J	Islam and Christianity: Ticking Time Bomb or Hopeful Anchor?
Dr. Karel A. Steenbrink	Indonesia Post-Reform: A Breath of Fresh Air for People's Faith
Hairus Salim	NU Party: A Brief Retrospective Essay
J.B. Heru Prakosa	Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim's Ideas for Renewal
Hasrul Halili	The Wellspring of Peace: The Sufi Community
Karel A. Steenbrink	Issues of Islam in Western Countries
Edi Mulyono	Religion for Peace or Chauvinism
Bernhard Kieser	Brotherhood in Diversity
A.Syafi'i Maarif	Once Sincere, Now Not So Much
Franz Magnis-Suseno, S. J	Interreligious Relations: Serene in the Past, Now Tense
Andi Hakim Nasoetion	Knowledge for Life and Livelihood
Yuli Qodir	Amien Rais: From Muezzin to Leader

The majority of authors who discussed Islamic themes in *Basis* came from outside the magazine's Editorial Board. These authors included individuals such as Suaedy from Yogyakarta, Zuly Qodir from Muhammadiyah Banjarnegara, Karel A. Steenbrik from the Department of Religion at Utrecht University, Andree Feillard, author of the book "NU Vis-à-vis-Negara," Syafi'i Ma'arif, a central figure in Muhammadiyah and a lecturer at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Edi Mulyono, a theology student at Universitas Sanata Dharma, Hairus Salim from the Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial (LkiS) in Yogyakarta, and others.

The authors in *Basis* were diverse but generally well-educated and held "modern" perspectives. The presence of various sections and writers from diverse backgrounds can be interpreted sociologically as an effort to promote pluralism within the community, fostering acceptance from various groups. The pluralism presented in the sections of *Basis*, while limited in terms of "ideas," can also be understood more broadly as a means of understanding other groups. It takes the form of "multi-interaction" in fostering interfaith "dialogue." In *Basis*, Islam was not solely reflected by Indonesian Muslims, but also by those who were not Muslims but sought to understand and deepen the relationships that were to be built. For example, articles by Karel A. Steenbrik from the Department of Religion at Utrecht University, Edi Mulyono, a theology student at Universitas Sanata Dharma, Bernhard Kieser, and Franz Magnis-Suseno, S.J. The Islam section in *Basis* thus represents an "interfaith dialogue" emphasizing national tolerance.

Interactions between State Politics and Socio-Cultural Integration

Religion develops in a place by continuously and consistently utilizing a global network. As a result, a significant portion of the Nusantara population, exposed to continuous trans-ideological contact, has adopted the ideas of major religions. This religious revolution, as described by Reid (2011) has had a profound influence on the emergence of Islam and Christianity in contemporary Indonesia. Over time, religion has become an inseparable part of the lives and culture of local communities, continually undergoing osmosis. During this phase, the Islamic spirit has fueled renewal in response to the changing social and political landscape of the era (Azra, 2002).

For instance, during the New Order era, the Istiqlal Festival was organized in October 1991, featuring a symposium with the theme “Islam and Indonesian Culture.” This festival served as a significant moment for exploring Islam and the cultural diversity of Nusantara. This momentum marked the emergence of religious and cultural awareness within Islam, as well as its historical context (Masjid 1993). Of course, the historical, social, and cultural awareness within Islam cannot be separated from the global network, established through geographical connections for centuries during the trade era. The exchange of ideas has facilitated osmosis, resulting in the interconnection and blending of concepts, cultures, and communal characteristics gradually, progressively, and often imperceptibly.

These changes have occurred in parallel with the development and negotiation of ideas within the context of Indonesia as a nation-state, which has successfully navigated various inter-religious conflicts in the past. These negotiations also involve citizen participation in the public sphere. The process encompasses relationships within a community or group when making collective decisions, including within the Islamic community.

Simorangkir (2015) divides the New Order’s politicization of Islam into two periods: the period of oppression and violence (1968-1990) and the communication period (1990s). The change in the New Order’s political stance in the 1990s was influenced by various factors, including the 1979 Iranian Revolution (Simorangkir, 2015). Meanwhile, the responses from the Islamic community to the political changes during the New Order era varied. Some took a confrontational approach, while others adapted.

Following the fall of the New Order in May 1998, Indonesian society underwent significant changes. Within Indonesian society, different religious groups can have varying ideological and socio-political perspectives. Inter-religious and intra-religious groups also experience similar diversity in viewpoints. These differences in perspectives have made intergroup relationships vulnerable, both between and within religions, especially within Islam. The conflicts in Poso (December 1998), Ambon (January 1999), Ketapang-Jakarta, Kupang, and Ujung Padang were consequences of differing perspectives within the context of changing political circumstances.

With the changing political landscape after the fall of the New Order, spaces for dialogue on religious ideas within various religious groups became necessary and

important. (Geertz, 1981) categories of three Indonesian Islamic groups that are still debated—*abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi*—can provide some guidance. Islam in Indonesia exhibits a sharp dichotomy between traditional Islam and modern Islam. Nevertheless, there are many different scales that cannot be neatly categorized into the three groups that serve as dividers.

The sections in *Basis* containing articles about Islam during the period of 1998-2000 broadly cover the social and political dynamics of nation-building. These discourses encompass two main aspects: the polarization of religious conflicts and efforts to resolve them through solidarity in religious, social, and national life. The sections on Islam were written by various Islamic groups and religious figures, Islamic researchers, and some from the *Basis* editorial team. The authors are generally educated individuals, who, whether consciously or not, are agents influencing public opinion through *Basis*.

Suaedy's (1999) writing for example, is motivated by the emergence of political parties with Islamic identities after the fall of the New Order amidst the congestion of civil society due to their proximity and conformity to the rulers. Suaedy (1999) refers to civil society in Muslim countries, although he ultimately unravels the congestion of civil society by understanding the ideas of Masdar F. Mas'udi (an NU cleric) who proposed a return to the Khittah (1926). Suaedy (1999) presents Masdar's ideas about individual freedom in thought and action when facing God, fellow humans, and the state. His ideas aim to reconcile Islam with the demands of individual freedom. Post-Reformasi, various crucial issues about individual freedom of expression emerged, with freedom in the mass media being a significant part of this crucial issue.

Feillard (1999) focuses on how the unity of the nation through Pancasila has historically been a shared agreement and could also "potentially" distinguish Indonesia from other countries. Feillard's opinion is reinforced by how Gus Dur viewed the "secularism" of Pancasila, which involved applying Islamic ethics to community life.

The writings by Suaedy and Feillard illustrate the role of religion in nation-building. Both articles focus on ideological issues and their connection to religion. Despite observing phenomena in Islamic countries elsewhere, both still attempt to look "inward" (locally) to formulate the existing problems, both ideologically and socio-culturally.

Ideologically, the relationship between religion and the state in Indonesia has been agreed upon. This agreement is enshrined in Pancasila and the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution. Essentially, the state is not built on the foundation of one religion. Pancasila as the sole principle was politically implemented by Suharto (New Order). The creation of the "Outline of State Policy" (GBHN) by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) in March 1983 sparked debate among Islamic scholars in Indonesia (Prawiranegara, 1983). Nevertheless, during the New Order era, Pancasila was accepted as part of creating harmony in everyday life and was elaborated into various government policies in the religious field. (Fitch & Webb, 1989). State control by the New Order became a broad "deterrent to dialogue," including inter- and intra-

religious dialogues. In Steenbrink (1999), revealed religions in Indonesia received the strongest position, being protected, supported, but also confined and tightly controlled by the state.

The discourses presented in *Basis* related to Islam and the state depict the potential of ideas and socio-political situations, both at the local and global levels. The Islam rubric in *Basis* broadly contains and responds to political changes. In a global context, the content of the rubric usually refers to ideas from local and global thinkers or references local and global events on a broader scale. Local and global perspectives seem to be “negotiated” to unravel or understand contextual issues and social actions that occurred during and after 1988. Highlighted issues include the proliferation of right-wing ideologies, the polarization of Islamic ideologies between fundamentalists and nationalists, as well as other forms in relation to society and the nation, including the reality of violence involving religion post-New Order.

Karen A. Steenbrink, a Western thinker, in her article in *Basis* (1999), discusses the polarized situation in the field of religion, especially Islam, during that period. Steenbrink (1999) observes the diversity within Islam in interpreting and emphasizing individual choices regarding Islam and the varied attitudes in Indonesia. According to Steenbrink, there were opportunities for religious variation, belief systems, and respect for smaller sects during the reformation. Steenbrink explains that religious traditions are collections or products of historical developments.

The collapse of the social and state-related structure and the fragility of spiritual-religious relations occurred in the post-New Order era. Among the Islamic community, some took a confrontational stance, while others adapted. Inter-religious relations became precarious with the burning of places of worship that occurred in 1996 in Surabaya, Sitobondo, Tasikmalaya, Rengasdengklok, and Ketapang Jakarta in 1998. Social conflicts “tinged with religion” also occurred, such as the Ambon riots. The situation in Indonesia at that time was responded to by many in an effort to restore inter-religious trust.

As previously stated, the spirit of Islam for renewal continued to develop in line with the socio-political changes in society. The “dampening” factors previously played by the New Order seemed to change as Indonesia approached, underwent, and emerged from the 1998 Reformasi. The New Order’s methods of “suppressing dialogue” were like a spark in a tinderbox. This was marked by widespread riots due to competition between ethnic groups, religions, politics, and economic crises. Therefore, episodes of “false tolerance” during the New Order era turned into brutal violence in the 1990s (Ricklefs, 2009).

During the 1998-2000 period when inter-religious relations were fragile due to social conflicts, *Basis* featured works that took a “mediating” approach through a “modern” perspective on religion and Islamic practices. For example, an article by Magnis-Suseno (2000) that addressed the clashes between Islam and Christianity in 1999. In his “mediation” efforts, Magnis-Suseno (2000) offered his insights by considering two aspects. First, by revisiting the history of Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia. Second, by proposing a “political” reorientation of attitudes. The aspect

of the historical relationship between Christianity and Islam is revealed through the lens of psychoanalysis, inviting people to remember embarrassing and painful experiences to respond reasonably. Both religions can positively tolerate each other in accordance with the obligation to respect and maintain good relations (Magnis-Suseno, 2000). Reorienting political attitudes, according to (Magnis-Suseno, 2000), can help foster mutually beneficial relationships between different communities, thereby preventing pluralism from becoming a time bomb.

Basis seems to have taken a serious approach to dissecting inter-religious relations with the theme of sincerity. This analysis is presented from various angles, including religion, politics, social sciences, anthropology, theological philosophy, gender, and educational practices. On April 1-2, 2000, a seminar was held in Yogyakarta by *Basis*, Kolsani Library, and Kanisius Publishing. The seminar was limited in scope and involved community leaders, religious figures, intellectuals, civil society activists, journalists, and students. Speakers at the seminar included H. Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif; I. Suharyo, Franz Magnis-Suseno; Jakob Oetama; J. Sudarminta; Budi Santoso; Haryatmoko; P.S. Hary Susanto; Musa Asyaro; Tom Jacobs; Robert Setia; Karlina Laksono-Supelii; Syafa'atun Amirzanah, and Paul Suparno. The results of the seminar were published in *Basis* in 2020. The seminar is evidence of *Basis's* commitment to "moderating" inter-religious relations and harmony. The sincerity project was initiated as part of a broader societal initiative. Its goal was to transform the climate of hatred among different communities, amid various interests and information flows, into a climate of learning to live together and communicate in new ways that encourage mutual understanding (Kieser, 2000).

Ma'arif (2000) viewed the conflict in Maluku not merely as a religious issue, but rather the trigger for mass clashes was primarily social-economic and ethnic in nature. Religion, in the context of socio-cultural factors, is related to other elements, including political, economic, legal, and more. In this role of diversity, religion is sometimes exploited for unhealthy purposes. Syafi'i's opinion is aligned with other contributors in *Basis*, such as Hasrul Halili, who argued that conflicts involving religion generally encompass issues beyond religion, such as national identity, ethnicity, social-economic disparities, and political power (Halili, 1999). Furthermore, Halili (1999) discussed that the majority of religious groups in Indonesia adhere to an exclusivist theology, ultimately leading to a claim of sole religious truth and the exclusion of others.

In situations of religious conflicts, as explained by Ma'arif (2000), sincerity and honesty as important manifestations of faith are no longer effective. Ma'arif (2000) addresses this issue with the approach of AJ Toynbee (1889-1975), who regarded religion as an attempt to find a path to inner peace. (Ma'arif 2000) introduces the concept of "difference within brotherhood and brotherhood within difference." This means that religious and cultural pluralism is not a threat but should be acknowledged, respected, and celebrated in a broader perspective.

In the realm of religion, the sociology of religion aims to examine the role of religion in social change (Lubis, 2015). Indeed, religion has influenced socio-cultural life in post-New Order Indonesia. However, the collective memory built during that

period, characterized by mutual jealousy and suspicion, has led to a form of superficial tolerance. Post-New Order Indonesia's religious relations became "vulnerable" due to the entry of "politics" and the situation of "cultural freedom," which were consequences of the New Order era. Magnis-Suseno (1999) describes how the historical burden of Christianity's arrival during colonial times, willingly or not, became part of the collective memory and identity of the relationship between Islam and Christianity in Indonesia. At the beginning of the New Order regime, Islamic figures were sidelined, while Christians held important positions in Golkar. According to Magnis-Suseno (1999), this has remained a bitter story in Indonesian Islam to this day. Therefore, in the post-New Order era, inter-religious dialogue was established in various forms, including through the media, as part of a positive relationship. However, the interpretations of this inter-religious dialogue have become highly varied.

Inter-religious dialogue, as explained by Halili (1999), suggests that Islam itself encourages the development of inclusive theology in the Quran (Quranic verses 3:64, 2:62, and 5:69). This means recognizing faith in other forms as long as it is sincere, supported by reason, and characterized by virtuous conduct (Halili, 1999). In the classification of the Roman Catholic Church, there are four types of inter-religious dialogue: theological exchange dialogue, religious experience dialogue, action dialogue, and life dialogue (Melnik, 2020). From this classification perspective, the categorization of Islam in *Basis* can be seen as an effort to engage in both life dialogue and theological dialogue, where life dialogue takes place in a spirit of openness, sharing human issues, and respecting each other's spiritual values (Melnik, 2020).

Realistically, Mulyanto (2000) article points out that efforts to establish cross-national socio-cultural integration dialogues often fail, especially at the grassroots level. Mulyanto (2000) emphasizes ethics as a fundamental global mental standard for peaceful human life, representing a collective form of optimism.

Cross-Border Cultural Freedom

The discussions on Islam within the pages of *Basis* in 2000 not only focus on national and state perspectives but also present another dimension—a cosmopolitan view of Islam (Held, 2015). This perspective is fluid and involves ideas from both domestic and international sources. These articles prioritize viewing issues through a broader perspective and a wider range of experiences, rather than making direct comparisons. Islam, as presented in *Basis*, is not limited to the views of Islamic figures but also includes contributions from those interested in Islamic studies. The fluidity in perspectives is a reflection of the cultural diversity aimed at fostering a culture of democracy that accommodates broad viewpoints while not shying away from the possibility of tensions arising from the dialogue between cultural democracy and democracy itself. Although individual actions and social activities within society are shaped by the prevailing conditions or situations, referred to in this article as socio-cultural integration, this fluid perspective is an integral part of the modern world. It poses challenges, implying the coexistence and interaction of adherents of various

value systems and worldviews within a single society (Held, 2015). In today's interconnected and interdependent world, it is crucial to explore complex issues related to building positive relationships between people of different religions, commonly referred to as "interfaith dialogue." This specifically, it emphasizes multiculturalism and the acceptance of pluralism in the creation of political communities, socio-cultural context within the framework of cosmopolitanism.

The fluid and expansive experiences presented in *Basis* not only indicate the breadth of references but also represent a comprehensive effort to build a dialogue between Islam and Catholicism within their respective contexts. Other articles highlight the national and state situations in Pakistan and Turkey as examples of the strengthening discourse on Islam (Feillard, 1999).

An article that focuses on the cosmopolitan nature of Islam within European diaspora communities is written by Steenbrink (1999) titled "Issues of Islam in Western Countries." While the article primarily discusses Islam in Indonesia, it also clearly demonstrates how diaspora occurs transnationally across various European countries. Karel Steenbrink argues that diaspora communities still maintain an orientation toward their home country. For example, Indonesian Muslims who have migrated to Suriname continue to pray facing west, following a practice from Indonesia (Steenbrink 1999). Steenbrink (1999) provides examples of various forms of diaspora in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and England, each with its characteristics, including political and cultural diaspora. Discussing the complexities of political diaspora is challenging within the limited space of a magazine column. However, what's most important is that no solutions are offered to address politically oriented diaspora wings within cosmopolitan societies. The approach he employs to explain this development is understood as global citizenship, which is non-exclusive and encompasses both local and transnational dimensions (Eckersley, 2007). This approach unites political commitments to establish an inclusive concept of freedom, providing a space for different communities, both local and transnational.

In another article by Karel Steenbrink titled *Indonesia Pasca Reformasi: Angin Segar Bagi Agama Rakyat*, the focus shifts towards examining Indonesia from a Western perspective, with a specific emphasis on the local religious diaspora. Steenbrink's unique perspective stems from his experiences as a non-Muslim teaching at an Islamic higher education institution (Steenbrink, 2000). Within this context, Steenbrink delves into the diaspora process, exploring how major religions interact with local rituals, sometimes referred to as "*bid'ah*" (Steenbrink, 2000). Towards the end of his article, A. Steenbrink (2000) emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the future of religious diversity, including various belief systems and practices.

Furthermore, "*Basis*" magazine includes other articles with themes related to Islam that offer glimpses of cosmopolitanism. While not delving deeply into the topic, these articles make comparisons with situations in countries beyond the Islamic world. For example, Suaedy's (1999) article underscores how moderate Islamic intellectuals in Indonesia draw parallels with Eastern Europe. Suaedy cites L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, who view Eastern Europe as not only modern but also as a genuinely new type

of state. This phenomenon contrasts with the absence of a similar enlightenment and renewal process in Indonesia. The resurgence of civil society in Eastern Europe, including former Soviet states, is attributed to the internal decay of socialist and communist systems, resulting in what can be termed as an “alternative epistemology” to the established enlightenment project. One aspect of this Eastern European enlightenment project involves the re-emergence and reconstruction of ancient Greek political philosophy, particularly the Socratic and Platonic perspectives, incorporating transcendental elements into their profound and consistent analyses (Suaedy, 1999).

In addition to its focus on European thinkers and perspectives, “*Basis*” magazine also demonstrates an orientation towards modern Islamic thinkers. Notably, the works of J.B. Heru Prakosa, Edi Mulyono, and their unique backgrounds are worth exploring. These authors, both of whom have non-Islamic backgrounds (Catholic), offer thought-provoking insights into contemporary Islamic thought. J.B. Heru Prakosa’s article delves into the concept of Islamic renewal through an examination of the ideas put forth by Abdullah Ahmad An-Naim, a scholar born in Sudan and based in the United States. Prakosa argues that An-Naim’s perspective aligns the essence of public law within Islamic Sharia with the values of modernity. This alignment encompasses principles such as patience, tolerance, and the incompatibility of democracy with majority tyranny.

On a related note, Edi Mulyanto’s work, titled *Agama Perdamaian atau Nasistis*, provides a comprehensive exploration of cosmopolitanism within the realm of religion. Mulyono draws upon Hans Kung’s notion of global ethics to emphasize the significance of minimal ethics for the preservation of humanity (Mulyanto, 2000). The concept of global ethics, as presented by Mulyanto, extends an invitation to individuals, irrespective of their faith, to adopt and live in accordance with these ethical principles. This viewpoint echoes Hans Kung’s perspective (Mulyanto, 2000). Furthermore, Edi Mulyanto’s perspective transcends the religious sphere to address global political ethics and the concept of a global authority or world governance in international relations. Mulyono’s outlook aligns with liberal cosmopolitanism, as it pertains to managing religious issues within the framework of international society. In social liberalism, the international environment is envisioned as a structured society organized around nation-states. Each nation-state bears primary responsibility for the well-being of its citizens, while the international community’s role is to establish and maintain the background conditions wherein domestic societies can prosper (Beitz, 1999). Consequently, agents of international justice encompass nation-states or communities, working collectively to establish political equality among states, with each committed and capable of fulfilling the legitimate interests of its population (Beitz, 1999).

Conclusion

The connection between media and religion, studied historically, is not a new approach. Nevertheless, media with its framing still requires examination to observe the efforts of a small portion of discourse constructed in the past, particularly during

the New Order regime in this article. *Basis* is a mass media outlet founded and managed by Jesuit priests at Ignatius College. In the post-New Order era (1998-2000), referred to as the “cultural independence” period in this article, *Basis* paid attention to changes in the social situation related to religious life, especially Islam. Before 1998, *Basis* had presented reviews of Islam, but it was less intensive.

Politically, the period of 1998-2000 was conducive to the emergence of Islamic political parties and Islamic movements in Indonesia. On the social front, the culture wrapped within the political maneuvers of these movements has created a situation with religious tensions. The main focus of *Basis* was to discuss the relationship between Islam and the state, as well as tolerance in society. With writers from modern Islamic groups and intellectuals, *Basis* engaged in discussions about diversity. The discourse created by *Basis* also reflects efforts and proposals on how to coexist in a pluralistic society. The sections in *Basis* can be seen as a space for dialogue and mediation between religions. The study of religion and media is still necessary because it provides a historical space for reflection and reconciliation based on history. The loss of spaces for interreligious mediation may lead to the breakdown of dialogue, ultimately resulting in conflicts.

In addition to the issue of religious diversity, *Basis*, with its Islam-themed sections in the 1998-2000 period, discusses socio-cultural integration in the context of being a nation across borders, often portraying diasporic communities in cosmopolitan international societies.

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