
**From Politics to Education:
Nurcholish Madjid and The Reform of Islamic Education In Indonesia**

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini menganalisis keputusan Nurcholish Madjid memilih pendidikan daripada politik untuk melakukan reformasi besar di Indonesia. Fokus tulisan ini tentang reformasi pendidikan Islamnya, studi ini mencoba untuk melihat ide-ide dan kegiatan-kegiatan pendidikan Nurcholish Madjid di IAIN-UIN Jakarta dan Paramadina. melalui penelitian kepustakaan. Kajian ini meneliti tentang reformasi pendidikan Islam Nurcholish Madjid dan konteks di mana reformasi itu dikembangkan. Hasil kajian akan menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan seperti apa ide yang dikembangkan oleh Nurcholish Madjid dan bagaimana ia mendefinisikan, menafsirkan, dan menerapkan ide-ide tersebut untuk pengembangan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. makalah ini berpendapat bahwa dalam mengajarkan dan memahami Islam, Nurcholish Madjid jelas memperlakukan Islam tidak hanya sebagai agama, tetapi juga sebagai fenomena historis, sosiologis, dan antropologis yang harus dipelajari secara terbuka, demokratis, partisipatif, pluralistik, dan inklusif.

Kata kunci: Nurcholis Madjid, reformasi, pendidikan Islam

Abstract

This paper analyses the decision of Nurcholish Madjid to choose education rather than politics to do a major reform in Indonesia. Focusing on his Islamic education reform, this paper attempts to look at his educational ideas and activities in IAIN-UIN Jakarta and Paramadina. Through a library research, this paper investigates Nurcholish Madjid's Islamic education reform and the contexts within which it was developed. This investigation tries to answer the questions of *what* kind of ideas which were developed by Nurcholish Madjid and *how* he defined, interpreted, and applied the ideas for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. This paper argues that in teaching and understanding Islam, Nurcholish Madjid obviously treated Islam not only as a religion, but also as a historical, sociological, and anthropological phenomenon which must be studied in an open, democratic, participatory, pluralistic, and inclusive way.

Keywords: Nurcholish Madjid, Reform, Islamic Education

Introduction

Generally speaking, both politics and education, in an appreciably different degree, colored Nurcholish Madjid's career both as an intellectual and reformer. In carrying out his reform in Indonesia, he obviously took education as the best way, rather than politics. His

educational institution, Paramadina, which will be discussed later, and his everlasting direct disengagement in politics demonstrated a clear understanding on the point. Nevertheless, his ideas related to Islam and politics were indeed extremely influential in Indonesian political landscape. R. William Liddle observed that it was Nurcholish Madjid's ideas of Islam and politics which made him popular over time (Liddle, 2005). Furthermore, Franz Magnis-Suseno remarked that Nurcholish Madjid was the first Islamic figure in Indonesia, and probably in the world, who successfully developed a modern concept on the position of religion in the state (Magnis-Suseno, 2005).

In 1966, Nurcholish Madjid was a prominent member of *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam* (HMI – the Association of Islamic Students), which played an active role in the demonstrations that weakened Sukarno and prepared the way for Suharto's final takeover in 1966 (Bruinessen M. v., 2006, p. 17). Being elected the president of the organisation in 1967, Nurcholish Madjid first sided with *Masyumi* in almost everything. He tried to bring as many of the *Masyumi* leaders' ideas to HMI as possible. He joined *Masyumi* intellectuals in fighting against the issue of secularisation. Most importantly, he stucked together with *Masyumi* leaders in their efforts to rebuild their party. Nevertheless, after a short time, he realised that the rehabilitation was impossible (Madjid N. , 1979). This awareness proved to be true that eventually the revival of the party failed.

In 1970, Nurcholish Madjid introduced the idea of 'secularisation' and sounded the slogan "Islam, yes, Islamic Party, no!", which both were viewed by *Masyumi* leaders as a betrayal to the party. As indicated by Franz Magnis-Suseno, Nurcholish Madjid insisted that Islam demanded secularisation, and therefore, since politics was a worldly matter, it had to be ruled and carried out by a worldly way. Religion was no way to rule politics. It did not mean that religion was out of public sphere. Conversely, religion became a source of values and moral, which the state had to seriously take into consideration in all its efforts to achieve its national goals (Magnis-Suseno, 2005). For this reason, therefore, Islamic party was not necessary for developing Islam in Indonesia. Nurcholish Madjid rather viewed that it was through education, which oriented to the development of intellectuality and morality, Islam in Indonesia would develop, and as such, would significantly contribute to the development of the nation.

Being away from direct political involvement and immersing in the efforts of developing education and intellectualism in Indonesia was the position held consistently by Nurcholish Madjid throughout his career. Although, he had once agreed to be proposed as presidential candidate for the 2004 general election fulfilling the second strong requests of many groups, he finally withdrew himself from the presidential candidacy for a moral reason (Kuntowijoyo, 2003).

With regard to the preference of education rather than politics, Nurcholish Madjid seemed to be inspired by the reform introduced by Muhammad Abduh in Egypt, which, in his view, was successful and kept develop forming the mindset of the younger generations of Islam who were modernly educated. As described by Nurcholish Madjid, like al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh saw that one of the main factors which caused the backwardness of Islam was the absence of the intellectual tradition or freedom of thought in Islam. However, unlike his teacher, al-Afghani who used politics as his strategy, Muhammad Abduh viewed education and intellectualism as more determinative strategies rather than politics. Therefore, after his involvement in the failed rebellion of Urabi Pasha, Muhammad Abduh subsequently put much attention and strong emphasis on the efforts of intellectual and educational reforms (Madjid N. , 1987 and Rahman, 1982).

Like Muhammad Abduh who first attempted to reform his alma mater, the University of al-Azhar, which later on the reform concretely took shape in the higher educational institution, Darul Ulum, Nurcholish Madjid first conducted his educational activities by further reforming the educational system of his alma mater, *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (IAIN – State Institute for Islamic Studies) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, and subsequently, he was much concerned with the educational reform at Paramadina, his own educational institution.

Nurcholish Madjid and IAIN – UIN Jakarta

Before his involvement in educational activities as a lecturer at IAIN - UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta to further develop the reform which was initiated by Harun Nasution and Mukti Ali in 1970s, Nurcholish Madjid had in fact served as a role model for many students of the IAIN. His success to be elected the president of HMI in 1967, for the first time not from a secular university, the surprise of his reelection for the presidency in 1969, for the first time in the history of HMI that one was elected twice in succession (Madjid

N. , 1979), and his standing as the most renowned Muslim intellectual of his generation helped raise the self-confidence and intellectual leverage of the IAIN community (Latif, 2005) (Latif 2005). In addition, his reform of Islamic thought provided a benchmark for a new generation of the IAIN intellectuals, and his PhD study at the University of Chicago (1978-1984) inspired and encouraged many students of the IAIN to continue their studies at centers of Islamic studies in Western universities.

After accomplishing his PhD study at the University of Chicago, Nurcholish Madjid returned to Indonesia in 1985, and at the same year, he joined the teaching staff at IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, in which he started to get involved in educational activities. Since then, he became a key figure in the process of educational reform at the IAIN (Barton, 1997 and Saleh, 2001). Through lecturing at the Graduate Program in Islamic studies, he progressively popularised and disseminated his ideas, such as civil society, pluralism, tolerance, secularization and democracy (Bakti, 2004 and 2005). Greg Barton observed that Nurcholish Madjid played a significant role in helping and developing the academic generation of the IAIN and the upcoming Muslim intellectuals. In line with one of central policies which was initiated by Munawir Sjadzali, the Minister of Religious Affairs (1983-1993), Nurcholish Madjid oriented many young potential and talented graduates of the IAIN to undertake the study of Islamic studies within the programs of anthropology, sociology, and history, through which he much hoped that the students could teach critically and reflectively, in their attempts to find solutions for various societal problems (Barton, 1999).

In addition to his collection of articles, as indicated by Karel Steenbrink, Nurcholish Madjid's lectures observably put forward inter-religious openness. Furthermore, he stressed the use of history in understanding Islamic doctrines. According to him, we would never understand the holy doctrine without taking a broad historical background into consideration. In the case of Indonesia, he suggested taking into consideration the local condition as well as the history, particularly the religious history, of the nation in order to give a strong cultural basis to Indonesian Islam (Steenbrink, 1996). Karel Steenbrink demonstrated that Nurcholish Madjid formulated the foundations for a reevaluation of varieties in the Islamic tradition, however he did not discuss the actual historical varieties in detail. The historical aspect functioned not for the sake of history itself but with the aim

of elaborating his ideal of a pluralistic and contextual Islam. On this point, Karel Steenbrink referred to the summary written by one of Nurcholish Madjid's Montreal students. It said:

“In the course of history Islam, according to Nurcholis Madjid, has been split into different groups. Every group, in its extreme representants, considered itself as the best keeper of the Truth and all other Muslims were considered as deviating. This conflict sometimes caused killing and resulted from this idea of possessing the only Truth. The event of Karbala and the *minha* (at the reign of al-Makmun) are only two examples out of many. Nurcholis Madjid suggests that we have to accept differing opinions as also originating from the doctrine of Islam. Although, the truth of the Islamic doctrine is absolute, human understanding is relative only” (Steenbrink, 1996).

Considering the consistency of Nurcholish Madjid's reasoning and ideas, it might be assumed that such an explanation does not restricted to merely his Montreal students, but also to his other students, including the students of the IAIN.

In carrying out his educational activities at the IAIN, Nurcholish Madjid was very much concerned with the efforts of making the students “*being educated*”, and therefore, they could become whatever they wanted to be (Jabali & Jamhari, 2002). This was what he called “*unintended consequences*”, the most important result of the process of education. According to him, the important aspect in education was not its intended consequences – for instance, one studied at *Institut Teknologi Bandung* (ITB – the Institute of Technology Bandung) with the intention of being an engineer), but the more important one was its unintended consequences: being educated, as demonstrated by many graduates of *Institut Pertanian Bogor* (IPB – the Institute of Agriculture Bogor) who could become (Jabali & Jamhari, 2002). In order to achieve the unintended consequences of education, Nurcholish Madjid strived to develop the intellectual aspect of the IAIN students, which, in his view, could lead them to a ready condition of being whatever professional, not only religious functionaries.

In line with the unintended consequences of education and in attempts to broaden the scope of the religious studies at the IAIN, Nurcholish Madjid, with employing the social science approaches, such as anthropological, sociological, and historical approaches, to Islamic studies, tried to relate them to broad contemporary issues, such as gender, civil society, democracy, and human rights. By such doing, the study at the IAIN was no longer strictly restricted to and concentrated on religious studies which much oriented to textual

and *fiqh* studies. It could be developed in accordance with social phenomena which raised and grew in society. At the same time, the students became more familiar with the contemporary issues. Indeed, combining the religious studies which were based on classical texts with contemporary issues contributed significantly for the development of the intellectuality at the IAIN.

More importantly, by relating the Islamic studies to contemporary issues, Nurcholish Madjid addressed and put much attention to the crucial problems of Indonesia, such as good governance, poverty reduction, civil society, pluralism, and democracy. From this perspective, Islamic studies at the IAIN considerably contributed to find solutions for the problems. In this sense, Islam was used as a significant instrument for building the nation, and at the same time, it brought its community towards a better life.

At the IAIN, Nurcholish Madjid's educational activities were not restricted to lectures in the classes. They also included public lectures, seminars, and discussions, which all of them gave much and great influence to the students. Even, the influence reached not only the educated communities within IAIN Jakarta, but also many students of other IAINs in the regions. Nurcholish Madjid was viewed as one of the vanguards who successfully led a broad society to first recognize various new and fresh Islamic ideas and thought which developed at the IAIN (Jabali & Jamhari, 2002).

Nurcholish Madjid and Paramadina

One year after joining the teaching staff at the IAIN Jakarta, Nurcholish Madjid's old friends of the 1970s Renewal Movement, such as Utomo Dananjaya and Dawam Rahardjo, urged him to broaden his influence upon Indonesian society (Barton, 1997). In other words, they asked him not to restrict his educational activities solely at the IAIN, but to extend them to educating much broader audiences. Thus, after much deliberation, in 1986, Nurcholish Madjid, together with old friends, established a socio-educational organisation called Paramadina. Its full name was *Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina* (The Paramadina Foundation for Endowments).

Andi Faisal Bakti noted that there were nine Nurcholish Madjid's close friends who initiated the establishment of the foundation. The initiator, who came from KAHMI (The Body of HMI graduates) and HMI, included Eky Syahrudin (a KAHMI leader), Fahmi

Idris, Anniswati (the only female, was a former leader of PB KOHATI, the women branch of HMI), Dawam Rahardjo, Usep Fathuddin, Utomo Dananjaya, Ahmad Ganis, Abdul Latief, and Poedji Rahardjo. The group collected 13 million rupiahs to set up the foundation. Furthermore, Both Ahmad Ganis and Abdul Latief, two businessmen, provided an office at Blok M, Jakarta. Poedji Rahardjo lent his office at Pondok Indah, a well-to-do area in the southern part of Jakarta. Subsequently, they acquired a new office close to their original rented premises in Pondok Indah (Bakti, 2004).

The name of the foundation, “Paramadina”, had two meanings which were explained in two different ways based on two verbal divisions. Firstly, the name consisted of two words “parama” and “dina”. The Sanskrit word “parama” or “prime” was understood as “giving priority” and the Arabic “dina” was defined as “our religion”. Thus, the combination of these two words meant “giving priority to (or glorifying) our religion (Islam)”. Secondly, the name was derived from another two words “para” and “madina”. The Spanish word “para”, denoted “for” or “pro”, while the Arabic word “madina” represented “city” or, in a broad etymological sense, signified “the place of civilization or polity”. It referred to the city where the Prophet Muhammad lived and where many of Islam’s foundations were established (Kull, 2005). So, based on the second construction, Paramadina was designed for building an excellent civilisation as established by the prophet in Madinah.

Indeed, the various meanings of the name Paramadina reflected the goals of the foundation. According to Komaruddin Hidayat, based on the first meaning, Paramadina was an organisation which was run on the basis of the belief in and the struggle agenda of that Islam was an excellent religion, which was understood and practiced as *rahmah* for all Indonesian citizens (Hidayat, 2005). Putting the city of the Prophet as a model, Paramadina aimed at establishing civil society, which was a polity that was just, open and democratic within Indonesian religious, cultural, social and political contexts, and promoting pluralism, tolerance and mutual understanding among religious, cultural, social and political groups of Indonesia. Furthermore, the organisation helped Indonesian society to be capable of facing the nation’s future. In this sense, the organisation provided Islam as a rich source of common values that could serve as the basis for personal, institutional, and national development in Indonesia (Kull, 2005).

In the back of Nurcholish Madjid's book entitled "*Islam Doktrin & Peradaban: Sebuah Telaah Kritis tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan, dan Kemoderenan*" (Islam, Doctrine and Culture: A Critical Study of Faith, Humanism, and Modernity), which is published by Paramadina, it is clearly stated the mission of the foundation. It reads as follows:

"The Paramadina Foundation for Endowments is a religious institution which consciously understands the profoundly integration of Islamness and Indonesianness as the realisation of universal Islamic values and Indonesia's local tradition. The Foundation of Paramadina is designed to be a centre for religious activities, which are creative, constructive, and positive for the advancement of the society, without any defensive and reactionary attitude. Therefore, the core of its activities is oriented to increasing the capacity of answering the challenges of the age and contributing the ongoing growth of the intellectual tradition within the society. This means investing considerable resources in developing a highly quality and authority of scholarship. Consequently, the core program of activities revolves around initiatives to raise up and disseminate an understanding of Islam which is broad, deep, and in the spirit of openness, with a strong emphasis on: (a) understanding the sources of Islamic teachings, particularly the process of their formation, (b) alerting to the history of Islamic thought, a dialectical relationship between doctrine and culture, (c) appreciating cultural treasury of Islam from Muslim countries, (d) implanting the spirit of non-sectarianism and developing as well as maintaining "*Ukhuwwah Islamiyah*" (Islamic Brotherhood), which is connotatively dynamic and creative, (e) deepening and broadening a comparative study of Islamic schools and streams, in order to avoid anachronistic and exclusive attitudes, and (f) developing tolerant and appreciative attitudes towards other different groups of religion, in order to create a peaceful society, as taught by Islam."

Unlike most existing Muslim organisations in Indonesia, which were mass based and usually, in rhetoric at least, aimed at grassroots constituencies, Paramadina was self-consciously 'up-market' in its orientation. It targeted urban middle-class Muslims and members of the elite, including entrepreneurs, senior bureaucrats, military officers, politicians and intellectuals. In this regard, Paramadina indeed established, or pioneered, a new paradigm for Islamic organisations. The orientation was based on Nurcholish Majid's conviction that a strong middle class, together with the elite, was a necessary condition for democratisation in Indonesia. For this reason, he then appeared to be focused on educating and Islamizing the groups (Bruinessen M. v., 2006).

Although criticised for being narrowly focused on the middle class and the elites at its first efforts, Paramadina proved to be greatly successful in turning urban *abangan* professionals, business people, civil servants, and students towards a stronger religious

faith, a deeper knowledge of Islam, and a progressive outlook on the role of religion in society (Barton, 1997) Robert W. Hefner demonstrated that the success can be seen, as pointed out by *Cak Nur*, in the expansion of mosques and prayer halls in businesses, hotels, government offices, and Jakarta's affluent southern suburbs (Hefner, 1993).

Not surprisingly, since the targeted individuals were the middle class and the elite, the religious instructions held by Paramadina were conducted not only in the mosques but also in prestigious hotels, and in governmental and private business offices. In one occasion, as described by Moeflich Hasballah, a lecturer at the IAIN, its activities consisted of “enjoying Jakarta’s night, scene, enjoying cuisine, listening to piano music and then listening to a religious talk” (Hasballah, 2000). On this point, Ann Kull opined that the description might or might not be an accurate description of Paramadina’s beginnings. She viewed that its activities were described in this way at the time as the efforts to attract a particular group of targeted individuals (Kull, 2005). Today, the condition is considerably different in the sense that the educational activities carried out by Paramadina are much more centered on the environment of Paramadina itself. In addition to the targeted people, Paramadina also welcomes every individual and invites all talented younger generation throughout Indonesia to study at Paramadina.

As a socio-educational organisation, Paramadina is characterised by three features: independence, openness, and cultural orientation. Independence means that the organisation does not alienated with any socio-political forces, and therefore, it is free from any domination. As such, it is able to be consistently in line with the truth and the ideas of humanity. In the sense of openness, Paramadina positions itself as an instrument and meeting place for a group of people to have an honest, open, and democratic dialogue, searching for the truth. It maintains that the truth can possibly come from any sources. With regard to cultural orientation, Paramadina does not practically involve in political matters. Instead, it orients itself to productive and constructive activities that can provide alternatives and answers to contemporary challenges, without falling into the trap of exclusivity (Hasan, 2000).

Looking at all the missions, goals and the three characteristics of the foundation, it can not be denied that Paramadina indeed reflects the key ideas and principles of Nurcholish Madjid. In order to realise all the ideals, Nurcholish Madjid, through his

educational institution, Paramadina, and with the help of his close friends, created a number of Islamic learning programmes and conducted many educational activities. They included *Klub Kajian Agama* (KKA – Club for Religious Studies), Courses and lectures, Friday sermons and dialogue, and Paramadina Executive programme.

Klub Kajian Agama (KKA – Club for Religious Studies)

Soon after establishing the Foundation of Paramadina, Nurcholish Madjid held the so-called *Klub Kajian Agama* (KKA – Club for Religious Studies), a monthly seminar series. It was first held in October 1986. Since then, the KKA seminars were held on the evening of the third Friday of every month in luxurious hotels in Jakarta (Barton, 1997). For many years, it generally took place at Hotel Kartika Chandra, a large international hotel in South Jakarta, and the Regent Hotel owned by Kodel, the company of Fahmi Idris, which financially supported Paramadina. However, in 2002, the KKA was moved to an auditorium of Paramadina's university campus which was located in the street of Gatot Subroto, Jakarta. Until today, it remains held in the place. The atmosphere of the KKA, as observed by Ann Kull, is relaxed and the participants, who generally number between 200 and 400 persons, are encouraged to arrive early in order to get to know each other and exchange thought while drinking tea and coffee (Kull, 2005). This sort of condition and arrangement is but like a Western seminars' style, which is obviously very familiar to Nurcholish Madjid.

In each of the KKA discussions, there were always two papers presented. The first paper was presented by a guest speaker, who was invited to discuss a particular topic, while the second paper was made by Paramadina's inside community, mostly written and presented by Nurcholish Madjid himself, and as such, the second paper was intended to maintain the continuity and connectivity of the ideas discussed in the KKA from the beginning to the end. By so doing, Nurcholish Madjid hoped to be able to construct the unity of the views which he would develop and the selected and determined discussion's topics, as the series of efforts to re-understand Islamic teachings (Madjid N. , *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban: Sebuah Telaah Kritis tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan, dan Kemoderenan*, 2005). This description indicates that the KKA discussion used a thematic approach, which sought to deepen and sharpen the understanding of one particular issue. Although as such, the topic discussed in every KKA series did not stand

on its own, but it related to each other, which all of them reflected a comprehensive understanding of the unity of Islamic teachings.

Based on a membership and participatory system, Nurcholish Madjid ran the KKA discussions in line with the spirits of pluralism, openness and mutual respect, which were, in his view, very significant for creating faith-based brotherhood and humanity. According to him, the Qur'an taught a principle that all believers were brothers, and therefore, they should respect each other. If they disputed in one matter, they were supposed to reconcile, as a realisation of *taqwa* (piety) towards God, and an effort to obtain God's bless (Madjid N. , *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban: Sebuah Telaah Kritis tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan, dan Kemoderenan*, 2005). As indicated by Nurcholish Madjid, the implementation of the principles was greatly successful and influential, since the KKA's participants, who were from different religious backgrounds, increasingly demonstrated open and mutually respectful attitudes, and at the same time, they also showed their respective identity without any hesitation (Madjid N. , *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban: Sebuah Telaah Kritis tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan, dan Kemoderenan*, 2005).

In order to reach and influence broad audiences of all Indonesian community, Nurcholish Madjid, through his Paramadina organisation, published his papers of the KAA discussions in the form of several books. They were "*Islam, Doctrine & Culture: A Critical Study of Faith, Humanism, and Modernity*", "*Islam, the Religion of Humanism: Developing a New Tradition and Vision for Islam in Indonesia*", "*Islam, the Religion of Culture: Developing the Meanings and Relevance of Islamic Doctrine in History*", and some of the writings were also found in the book "*Contextualisation of Islamic Doctrine in History*".

Courses and Lectures

In order to give a greater detail description on Nurcholish Madjid's courses and lectures at Paramadina, it is first demonstrated the result of participatory observation conducted by Ann Kull. This is intended to give an idea on the whole lectures and courses carried out by Nurcholish Madjid at Paramadina. In one occasion, Ann Kull participated in one of Nurcholish Madjid's lecture at Paramadina. It was on *Perjalanan Menuju Keabadian* (The Journey to Eternity). With regard to the participants of the lecture, she observed that there were approximately sixty persons who attended the lecture. Two-thirds

of them were women, mostly middle-aged, while the remaining third were men in their sixties and seventies. Most of the women wore *jilbab* (veil or headscarf) and foot long dress, and one lady, who attended with her small child, was positively received. Ann Kull herself at the time wore normal “Western” dress, nevertheless, as she indicated, none of the participants seemed to notice or care of her (Kull, 2005).

Like what he regularly did, Nurcholish Madjid, as she observed, lectured without using any notes. The teaching materials were given in a rhetorical style which was relatively complex. He made quotations from the Qur’an and Hadith, first in Arabic and then in Indonesian. He also quoted from non-Muslim thinkers, such as the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (d.1976) and referred to outstanding figures from non-Muslim “history”, such as Robin Hood. Examples from ordinary life, comparing opposition to God’s will with driving against a red light, or expounding upon the ineffectiveness of food, drink and discos for resolving man’s psychological ills, were frequently used. He talked about all kinds of love, from erotic love to the love of God. On the point, he noted some examples from Europe, Indonesia, Australia and America. He also discussed “inclusive” religion with lengthy philosophical remarks. Finally, he concluded by saying: “To be a Muslim is to be someone that has to take a very, very big (personal) responsibility” (Kull, 2005). This style of teaching is indeed similar to the characteristics of his writings. It seems that both in teaching and writing, Nurcholish Madjid constantly demonstrated rich materials which were strongly constructed based on the Qur’an, and Hadith, supported by either outstanding Muslim or non-Muslim scholars’ arguments, much rooted in the history, and subsequently, related or linked the intellectual exercise to the social realities of life in order to answers the challenges of the age. More importantly, Nurcholish Madjid persistently sounded and promoted an inclusive and pluralistic view in almost every discussion.

In relation to the atmosphere of the Nurcholish Madjid’s courses and lectures at Paramadina, Ann Kull saw that it was easygoing and sometimes humorous. During the lecture, many participants freely interrupted Nurcholish Madjid, sometimes several at a time, commenting on several points. Nurcholish Madjid himself seemed to be immensely enjoying the nuance of the lecture, just like his audiences (Kull, 2005).

On the whole, Komaruddin Hidayat, Rector of *Universitas Islam Negeri* (UIN-State Islamic University) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta as well as a lecturer at Paramadina,

observed that Nurcholish Madjid's lectures and courses at Paramadina were constantly in attempts to build an excellent Indonesian civilisation, based on the principles of Islamic teachings as taught by the Prophet. Among the principles, *tauhid* was perceived as the most fundamental one, which implicated egalitarianism, citizens' participation, democracy, openness, law enforcement, control and critique, and noble characters (Hidayat, 2005). From this perspective, it can be understood that Nurcholish Madjid obviously oriented his audiences to the understanding of how Islam could greatly contributed to building and developing the country, and as such, he directly taught his audiences on how to be a good Muslim as well as a good citizen at the same time.

Friday Sermon and Dialogue

In 1998, Nurcholish Madjid initiated to hold a Friday prayer with sermon (*khutbah*) in the office of Paramadina in Pondok Indah, South Jakarta. It was carried out following the Nahdlatul Ulama's arrangement, using two *adzans* (call prayers). It was logical since Nurcholish Madjid was a member of the organisation. The prayer was attended by most of people who were working surrounding the office of Paramadina, such as bank clerks and street vendors. Sometimes, there were also some political figures or public officers who joined the prayer. Nurcholish Madjid was the one who gave most of the sermons of the prayer. If not going out of Jakarta or abroad, he always became *khatib* (preacher) and *imam* (leader of the prayer). When he gave a sermon, he never used a written text (Madjid N. , 2003).

Based on the book "*Pesan-Pesan Taqwa Nurcholish Madjid: Kumpulan Khutbah Jum'at di Paramadina*" (The Messages of Piety of Nurcholish Madjid: The collection of the Friday Sermons in Paramadina), it seemed that in conveying the sermons, Nurcholish Madjid much addressed and focused on the matter of *taqwa*, which he discussed from various perspectives. Subsequently, he related the messages of *taqwa* to *akhlak al-karimah* (noble characters). In this sense, he encouraged the audience to have a good and high quality *taqwa* which implicated good conducts.

Unlike other common Friday prayers which were not followed by a discussion, Nurcholish Madjid conducted a dialogue or discussion after the prayer in Paramadina. This was first particularly intended to further discuss the materials of the sermons as well as to address other religious issues. However, in the practical level, it extended to deals with the

socio-political issues which became a heatedly topic or discourse in public and mass media. The extension happened since many audiences could hardly understand the current political situation of the time, the transitional era, and therefore, they proposed such questions to Nurcholish Madjid, whom they viewed as the one who could answer and give a clear and satisfactory explanation (Madjid N. , 2002). Consequently, the dialogue covered various topics. As demonstrated in the book “*Atas Nama Pengalaman Beragama dan Berbangsa di Masa Transisi: Kumpulan Dialog Jumat di Paramadina*” (In the Name of Religious and National Experiences: The Collection of the Friday Dialogues in Paramadina), it included the topics of *taqwa* (piety), patience, just, good deed, general election, federalism, the Jakarta Charter, and economic globalisation.

Paramadina Executive Programme

In addition to providing courses and lectures on Islamic thought and Islamic philosophy, Nurcholish Madjid also offered a programme called “Paramadina Eksekutif” (Paramadina Executive), which put strong emphasis on *tasawuf* (Sufism or Islamic mysticism). As reflected in the name of the programme, it was specifically designed for executives, professionals, practitioners, functionaries, and other middle class and elite professionals. According to Nurcholish Madjid, focusing on the groups was very significant, since they were the ones most able to formulate and present ideas publicly (i.e. “trend-makers” or “opinion-makers”), which eventually their involvement would stimulate the participation of the other classes in the programme by intentional rather than accidental means (Kull, 2005). The programme offered ‘Sufism packets’ which included a number of gatherings, in which the participants were able to actively chanted *dhikr* (remembering God), without being engaged in particular sufism orders (Hasan, 2000).

Among the programmes offered by Paramadina, the *tasawuf* programme was the most popular one. According to Budhy Munawar-Rachman, the director of the educational division of Paramadina, “this was because the participants need not only religious knowledge, but also need to know how to apply it in their daily life” (Hasballah, 2000). Komaruddin Hidayat stated that they were interested in such a programme for several reasons. Among them were searching for meaningful life, maintaining intellectual enrichment, relieving psychological problems, and looking for religious and class justification ((Darmadi, 2000). Furthermore, the programme seemed to be helpful for

recovering the participants who were suffering from a sense of alienation, which was resulted from the rapidly processes of development and globalisation in urban life.

In line with the characteristics of Paramadina, as an independent, open, cultural-oriented organisation, Nurcholish Madjid strongly strived to keep Paramadina's Sufism away from becoming a new *tarekat* (Sufism order). He also did not maintain the relationship with a particular Sufism order in Indonesia in order to avoid the impression that Paramadina favoured one particular *tarekat* over another (Kull, 2005).

In addition to Nurcholish Madjid's educational activities at the Paramadina Foundation for Endowments, as described in the previous discussion, he was also particularly very much concerned with research as a crucial instrument for developing sciences and culture. For this reason and other scholarly aims, in 1998, he then established the University of Paramadina Mulya, which later in 2001 became the University of Paramadina. The educational goals of the university are clearly described in "Vision and Mission" in its homepage. It reads as follows:

Paramadina University is programmed to give solution for the future challenge of national development, and to contribute for the current national education program as well as to give alternative education model. The idea will be implemented by developing a university as a teaching and research centre to stimulate research culture and supports professional activities related to the development issues. In addition, the performance of campus as cultural centre stimulates and supports inventions, strengthens religious sensitivity, prospers human dignity, increases mutual understanding and tolerance. Moreover, Paramadina University is also expected to set up scientific tradition not only in the classroom but also in all university environments to facilitate creative thinking and strong student personality with highly acknowledge to the freedom of academics forum.

Paramadina University has a mission to develop the science and invention with good human characters to satisfy happiness around the world through creation of university environmental conducive to science and cultural development. Through this mission, Paramadina University could become a miniature of a knowledge-based community appreciating ethical values, morals and objectives rationality (religious knowledge based society). In campus, students will be accommodated by various activities respecting academic freedom as reflection of a modern campus dedicated for the scientific truth. Therefore, Paramadina University will be the first private research university in Indonesia.

As a research university, the curriculum of Paramadina will be based on the philosophy of science and culture that has to be taken by all first-year students as a compulsory course. In the following years, the various study programs will be offered by departments and selected based on the desire and ability of students. The programs are related to philosophy, social sciences, arts, economics, business, engineering and others prospective sciences. In every opportunity both formal and informal events, discussion and dialogue will be dominant.

According to Nurcholish Madjid, an education as a human capital investment peaked on the education in University. A higher education, with its educational and researchable activities, was a centre for the creativity of nation's culture and cultural development towards new advancements. Therefore, it played a major role in encouraging the creativity of national culture and accelerating the development of the nation. He observed that the best thought of the nation constantly emerged from university and the development of the nation was also resulted from university (Madjid N. , 2006). It was in this sense, the Paramadina University was indeed extremely significant.

Nurcholish Madjid as “Guru Bangsa” (Teacher of the Nation)

There is no certainty on who first described and called Nurcholish Madjid “Guru Bangsa”. Apparently, the term started to emerge in Indonesian media in the last quarter of 1990s, following the fall of President Suharto. It related to the issues on searching the most appropriate person who would replace Suharto as a president. Ann Kull, for instance, found Eep Saefulloh Fatah's article, published in February 1999, which evaluated and ranked twelve candidates for the election of June 1999. In his article, Eep Saefulloh Fatah Put Nurcholish Madjid in the first place and used the term to describe Nurcholish Madjid's position in Indonesian society (Kull, 2005). According to Fachry Ali, there were definitely various answers to the question of whether or not Nurcholish Madjid was “Guru Bangsa”. However, he saw a certain aspect of Nurcholish Madjid which never ever changed during his life, that was, that the commitments of intellectuality and morality should go hand in hand in one line. For this principle, Fachry Ali opined that Nurcholish Madjid tended to act as “Guru Bangsa”, and refused political leadership tasks (Ali F. , 2001)

A day before the announcement of the resignation of President Suharto on 20 Mei 1998, there was a group of Indonesian figures who gathered in Wisma Kodel, Kuningan, Jakarta. Among them were Fahmi Idris, Utomo Dananjaya, Aburizal Bakri, Soengeng Sarjadi, Didik J Rachbini, Malik Fajar, Akbar Tanjung, Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, Fachry Ali, AE Priyono and Ihsan Ali Fauzi. They discussed primarily on the direction of the nation after the fall of Suharto. Being aware of the necessity of a leader who was morally and intellectually clean, Fachry Ali proposed Nurcholish Madjid as the right person to replace Suharto and lead the nation. None of the audiences refused the proposal. However, when *Cak Nur* came and joined the meeting, he said “All of us were leaders. Thus, we led together” (Ali F. , 2001). This indicates that Nurcholish Madjid did not want to be appointed for the presidency. Indeed, he remained in his long standing position, in which he kept away from political involvement and concerned with the development of both the

intellectuality and morality of the nation. It was the position which he held consistently since his early reform in 1970s. For constantly enlightening the Indonesian society by developing their intellects and morals, many viewed him as “*Guru Bangsa*”.

The title “*Guru Bangsa*” was, in the view of F. Rahardi, the utmost right term used to describe *Cak Nur*, since he did not only teach the Indonesian Muslim community, but also educated the whole Indonesian society to understand and receive the differences among them without any hate. In the seminar on “*Agama dan Pendidikan Perdamaian*” (Religion and Peace Education) held by University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta and Committee on Religion and Peace in Jakarta in 1980s, Nurcholish Madjid insisted that religious understanding should obliterate absolutism and receive pluralism, and only as such, religion could contribute to peace (Rahardi, 2005). The message of pluralism was persistently sounded by Nurcholish Madjid to various communities of religions in Indonesia, and therefore, he became a multi-religious figure. His ideas were not only popular within the Indonesian Muslim community, but also very well-liked in Indonesian Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Hindu and Confucianist communities.

Muhammad Ali observed that there were many degrees devoted to Nurcholish Madjid. He was, for instance, frequently called reformist, neo-modernist, nationalist, moderate, and liberalist. However, in his view, the most called degree for Nurcholish Madjid was “*Guru Bangsa*” (Ali M. , 2005). After the death of Nurcholish Madjid, M. Wahyuni Nafis noted and compiled 19 articles, including two articles written by F. Rahardi and Muhammad Ali, which reflected Nurcholish Madjid as “*Guru Bangsa*”, in a book entitled “*Kesaksian Intelektual: Mengiringi Kepergian Sang Guru Bangsa*” (Intellectual Testimonies: Accompanying the death of the Teacher of the Nation). In 2001, Sukandi published a book entitled “*Tarikat Nurcholisy: Jejak Pemikiran dariPembaharu sampai Guru Bangsa* (The School of Nurcholish: The Track of Thought from Reformer to Teacher of the Nation). This book consists of 40 articles. The title of “*Guru Bangsa*” was also used by Sudirman Tebba to describe Nurcholish Madjid’s position in his book entitled “*Orientasi Sufistik Cak Nur: Komitmen Moral Seorang Guru Bangsa*” (The Sufism Orientation of *Cak Nur*: a Moral Commitment of a Teacher of the Nation). From this perspective, it can be understood that Nurcholish Madjid was widely viewed as “*Guru Bangsa*” in Indonesia.

Placing Nurcholish Madjid as “*Guru Bangsa*” was obviously based on his intellectual and moral activities which greatly contributed to the development of the nation. In addition

to his ongoing efforts in promoting pluralism in Indonesia, as mentioned earlier, he was viewed as the one who was successful in breaking the rigid thought of Indonesian Muslim society. His ideas on modernisation and secularisation in the early 1970s prove to be a great power to fight against the obstinacy of thought in Indonesia. It had a major impact in the development of intellectualism in Indonesia. For this, many view him as the Father of Intellectualism in Indonesia (Urbaningrum, 2005).

For the struggle of Muslim society in Indonesia, *Cak Nur* proposed a cultural way, rather than political one through Islamic party. Through the way, he not only sought to educate Indonesian Muslims to understand and differentiate between religion and religiousity, transcendent and profane aspects, but also to keep away the manipulation of religion for temporal interests. This way, in a long term, significantly contributed to end the tensions between the state and Indonesian Muslim society and bring it into a peaceful relationship, which was absolutely very significant for the development of Indonesia (Urbaningrum, 2005).

In order to create a democratic life in Indonesia, *Cak Nur*, with his position outside the circle of power, progressively supported and encouraged the process of democratisation in Indonesia. In 1995, he, for instance, introduced the significance of opposition as the basic need for democratisation, an idea which was obviously refused by Suharto. In 1996, through the *Komite Independen Pemantau Pemilu* (KIPP – The Independent Committee for the General Election Supervision), *Cak Nur* attempted to educate Indonesian society to understand a democratic election, as the most important part of democratisation. Furthermore, in the era of reformation, through his writings, speeches and comments, *Cak Nur* intensively sounded and promoted the ideas on democracy, such as political participation, free election, effective representative board, peace circulation of the elites, power control, good competition, political ethics, pluralism and the rights of minority, civil society, middle class, and the equal position before the law. All of these efforts indicate that Nurcholish Madjid was very much concerned with the fate of Indonesia. For him, a democratic life was must as the basic condition for Indonesia to develop. Only on this basis, Indonesian people could build civilisation.

According to Fachry Ali, the struggle of *Cak Nur* against the New Order's authoritarianism and his encouragement to build a permanent system for democracy in Indonesia was the essence of *Cak Nur*'s thought and struggle. He once said "*Do not trust*

the fate of the nation in a good intention of one or two leaders. Trust the fate of the nation in a transparent and reliable system” (F. Ali 2005).

Abdurrahman Wahid observed that Nurcholish Madjid, in promoting his ideas, consistently demonstrated a good manner (morals), even towards his critics or opponents. Although, he was constantly criticised and condemned by many people, he never took a violent action. Instead, he forgave them. This was, in the view of Abdurrahman Wahid, an exemplary education which was taught by *Cak Nur* towards Indonesian society (Wahid 2005). Such moral was very significant in a societal and national life, and therefore, it should be developed for the development of the nation.

As a figure who, with great intellectuality and morality, was very much concerned with the problems of the nation, Nurcholish Madjid became a valuable reference. Many people asked for his views and advices about various problems. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, for instance, asked for his advices concerning the efforts to rebuild Indonesia. As reported by Ann Kull, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said:

“I met him (*beliau*) to ask for his view and his advise about what concrete efforts that could be done to rebuild [metaphorically speaking] the post crisis Indonesia. (...) Cak Nur is the important national figure that pays strong attention to moral values but also extends his attention to national problems, especially to rescue the rebuilding of our country. I have studied the 10-point platform disclosed by Cak Nur several months ago very careful and I hope I will not forget it. The platform is the same as my own basic thoughts on how to develop the country in the future (...) and [it is also useful] in the formation of an effective and competent government. This is the essence of my meeting with him (*beliau*). Of course I will continue my consultations with Cak Nur, as well as with several other important persons and leaders I consider appropriate to offer their thought and opinions” (Ann Kull 2005).

Finally, the above discussion may lead us to an understanding that Nurcholish Madjid can be viewed as “*Guru Bangsa*” (teacher of the nation) who had major contributions for building and developing the country. His reform and modernisation which he carried out since 1970s until his death, together with a strong and consistent commitment on both intellectuality and morality, gradually put and lead him into a high position as the teacher of the nation who continuously gave enlightenment and education to the people of the nation.

Conclusion

As an educator, Nurcholish Madjid centered his educational activities on the IAIN – UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, and particularly on his own socio-educational institution, Paramadina. These educational activities took form in formal, non-formal, and informal settings. At the IAIN, in addition to educating the students in many classes within the formal programmes set up for the IAIN, Nurcholish Madjid also involved in many non-formal discussions, seminars, and courses. Likewise, at the Paramadina, he did lectures and courses, performing Paramadina's formal programmes, and conducted non-formal education programmes, such as Club for Religious studies, courses, discussions, dialogues, Paramadina executive, and so forth. The informal education can be seen in the everyday life of Nurcholish Madjid, interacting and communicating with his colleagues and students, exemplifying morals and ethics, giving advices and answering questions, either at the IAIN, Paramadina, or other places.

In general, Nurcholish Madjid's educational activities both at the IAIN and the Paramadina demonstrated the same line and type of education. In teaching and educating the students and his other audiences, Nurcholish Madjid treated Islam not only as a religion, but also as a historical, sociological, and anthropological phenomenon, and therefore, it was empirical, observable, and opened to be criticised. In this sense, a rational and critical, rather than emotional and normative analysis was extremely stressed and encouraged. This type of education indeed spurred on the students to tendentiously demonstrate a logical, rather than emotional, rigid, defensive, and reactionary attitude.

Furthermore, Nurcholish Madjid applied an open, democratic and participatory approach, encouraging the students and participants to welcome, accept, recognise, and respect any ideas and opinions from any sources, and subsequently, participate actively in exercising and discussing the ideas, as parts of the ongoing processes and efforts in understanding, approaching, and finding the truth. This, in turn, will lead the student and participants to an open-minded, democratic, and respectful attitude, by which a peaceful life can be established.

Finally, Nurcholish Madjid put a strong emphasis on a pluralistic and inclusive approach in his teaching activities, in which the students and participants were encouraged to recognise all the differences among human beings, particularly in terms of their religion,

and accept the positions of others. In such a way, Nurcholish Madjid sought to promote and develop tolerance, harmony, and coexistence.

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