Example by StudyDriver

Qur'an Nurcholish Madjid Example

Qur'an Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005), also widely known as Cak Nur, was a great neo-modernist Muslim thinker from Jakarta, Indonesia who introduced a new way of interpreting Islam through culture and influenced Indonesia's development through desacralization and a religious-based, nationalized civil society. Madjid changed the vision of Islam for Indonesia with his famous slogan, "Islam Yes, Partai Islam, No," a bold idea that dismissed the need for an 'Islamic state' and called for more recognition of the 'spirit' of Islam. He strongly advocated for the 'cardinal principles' of Pancasila, the Indonesian constitution, in which he emphasized the idea of civil society found in the Qur'an. One of Islam's most well known theologians, Madjid founded Paramadina in 1986, the non-profit foundation, which today owns Paramadina University in Jakarta. In his quest for liberal Islam, the Paramadina organization was arguably his ultimate achievement in promoting secularization and democracy in Indonesia. Though Madjid did not focus on Qur'anic exegesis, his interpretations of the Qur'an socialized a neo-modernist approach, as he carefully looked at religious texts and reinterpreted them, developing an "inclusivist" understanding of Islam. The Paramadina Foundation's manifested Qur'anic notion of civil society fostered a liberal Islam in Indonesia, but also reinforced challenges for Pancasila and national unity. Madjid used the word madina as a core theme of his speeches and his writings as a scholar and political activist. The etymology and cultural significance of the name Paramadina is quite fascinating. For instance, most of us know that Medina (or Al-

Madinah), "the Radiant City," is the holy city of Islam in Saudi Arabia. Medina was also the ideal Islamic city-state. As a result, many people interpreted the name Paramadina as "for the city," para meaning "for" and Madina, "city". Others believed that the foundation actually meant "our prime religion," interpreting Parama as "prime" and dina, "our religion". Madjid eventually accepted the name as "our prime religion" though it is not certain as to why. Even more interesting, the word madina can be found in the Indonesian phrase masyarakat madani, which translates to "civil society," the ultimate focus of the Paramadina foundation. Masyarakat madani has now entered the Malay-Indonesian lexicon and is used by scholars, and government officials since the time of Soeharto (1990s). Habibie, ICMI's first president, used the term extensively. The commissioned book Transformasi Bangsa menuju Masyarakat Madani (Nation Transformation towards Masyarakat Madani 1999) was authored by ICMI members and Nurcholish Madjid (319 Bakti). Islamic scholars of the Ciputat school of thought, who published numerous works on civil society, further popularized Masyarakat madani. Little do many of us know that the phrase "liberal Islam" was coined at Paramadina itself. Paramadina activists were also influenced by masyarakat madani and were considered members of the alternative name, "the Liberal Islam Movement." The Paramadina Foundation is a highly cultural and religious landmark for Indonesia's struggle of Islam as most of its founders were members of the "1966 Generation" who were actively politically opposed against Soekarno (1945-1967), the first president of Indonesia. Following Soekarno, President Suharto seized power in Indonesia as dictator and recruited many technocrats, who later became part of the 1966 Generation and Paramadina. These technocrats became intellectual activists within the liberal Muslim community with the agenda of restoring cultural Islam and an Islamic community (322 Taji-Farouki). Madjid was extremely influential during this time: even Suharto recognized the credibility of his ideas pertaining to Indonesian identity; Sudharmono, the former vice president of Indonesia, claims to have studied Islam at Paramadina. Though his ideas regarding Pancasila were controversial, the Indonesian government and civil society generally accepted Madjid. He was also part of the 1998 Reformasi era and fought for long-overdue social, cultural, and political reform during Suharto's control. It was in the post-Suharto aftermath that Madjid increasingly advocated for the core characteristics of Paramadina: inclusivism, pluralism, tolerance, and democracy (322 Taji-Farouki). Madjid understood the influence of education in society as his education influenced him to improve it; Paramadina and Paramadina University are socio-religious and educational institutions that aim to shape individuals so that they pense sa culture, rethink their culture and

definite their own culture rather than accept being dominated by it (500 Bakti). I believe Madjid's philosophy for Paramadina was arguably inspired by his own educational upbringing, which was religious and liberal, local and international. Madjid completed his early education in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. He began at Madrasah al-Wataniyyah in the 1960s, a boarding school rooted in religious Islamic learning and attended Pondok Modern Gontor, another religious school, in East Java for high school. At the State Islamic University of Syarif Hidayatulah in Jakarta, Madjid was twice elected president of the Muslim student association, Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI) in 1967 and 1969. At this time, Madjid was fluent in Arabic and deeply revered the Qur'an; his leadership of HMI, the largest student organization in Indonesia, attracted the attention of the Saudi Arabian government, which sponsored his hajj in March 1969. Soon after, he completed his thesis at the State Islamic University titled al-Qur'an: 'Arabiyyun Lughatan wa Alamiyyun Ma'nan about the Qur'an and the Arabic language. A few years later, Madjid was accepted to the University of Chicago where he met Fazlur Rahman, the neo-modernist Muslim Pakistani American scholar who persuaded Madjid to pursue a PhD in Islamic Studies. In 1976 Madjid was participating in an international research seminar program on Islam and social change at the university and wanted to study Political Science. However, Rahman saw his passion for Islamic civil society and offered to mentor Madjid in Islamic Studies, pressing that the world needed more modern Islamic scholars. Madjid's Qur'anic interpretation and perception of Islam was hugely influenced by Rahman, who shared many of young Madjid's notions about Islam in civil society, fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and Qur'anic teachings. Rahman was especially concerned with the Qur'anic teachings' role in the achievement of social justice and the ideal civil society, which helped open Madjid's eyes to the problems facing the Islamic world. Rahman also emphasized that political parties could not provide a solution. This led Madjid to "look behind the legal rulings to the values enshrined in the Islamic revelation"--the Qur'an--to see if there was a way to enhance Pancasila as the cornerstone of national unity (493 Bakti). This inclusivist understanding of Islam in part earned Madjid the name of a neo-modernist. At the University of Chicago, Madjid was also introduced more to Ibn Taymiyyah thought, whose ideas were particularly important to his quest for liberal Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah was one of Islam's most famous theologians; he was a member of the Pietist school founded by Ibn Hanbal, who is considered the source of Wahhabiyyah, the mid 18th century traditionalist movement for socio-moral reconstruction of society. In addition, Ibn Taymiyyah sought the return of Islam to its sources, these sources being the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which deeply resonated

with Madjid. Madjid's understanding of Ibn Taymiyyah played a part in the formation of his personal view of the inclusivity of Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah's values of social justice, religious pluralism, tolerance, and democracy are all reflected in Madjid's passionate embrace of Pancasila, Indonesia's constitution. Madjid wanted Indonesia to take a "peaceful, consensual, and solidarity-based approach" to humanity that relied on culture (495 Bakti). This approach was promoted by the Paramadina Foundation, an institution based on paguyuban, community. The community model seen in Paramadina is seen as open, plural and universal but Madjid's unbreakable attachment to the concept of Madina, the ideal city-state, is what arguably hindered him from addressing a more global, open-minded civil society (496 Bakti). His neo-modernist perspective allowed him to interpret Qur'anic legislation to yield new laws for the present situation (17 Muin). In the process of formulating common values for Paramadina that favored a socially just, pluralistic, democratic civil society, he still failed when it came to addressing the prevalent issues of gender equality and discrimination against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Though Madjid did not produce any tafsir during his lifetime, through the guidance of Rahman he developed his own opinions about the ways Qur'anic teachings could achieve social justice and civil society in modern Indonesia; his concept of the 'spirit' of Islam hinted at a more metaphorical understanding of the Qur'an. In addition, he theorized about the authority of traditional ideas such as fiqh. Like Rahman, Madjid propagated the "heuristic device of contextuality" in his Qur'anic interpretation, specifically in terms of the way in which fiqh was meant to be practiced in civil society. One major example of this is how the Qur'an declares what will happen to an individual who turns aside from his Islam. Another example shows how the Qur'an declares that a human being is free to accept or reject belief in God and His Prophet:

> One who seeks other than Islam as a religion, it will not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he will be among the losers [Q. 3:85]. Whoever believes, let him believe, and whoever rejects belief, let him reject it. We have prepared for those who do evil a fire that envelops them [Q. 18:29] (84 Taji-Farouki).

Much of his focus involved pinpointing the authority of fiqh of previous centuries mentioned in the Qur'an and discovering how that authority could be applied to modern times in Indonesia (77 Taji-Farouki). This is arguably

how Madjid used the Qur'an and hadith to find pragmatic and appropriate responses to the challenges facing Indonesia's Muslim community. Perhaps Pancasila, Indonesia's constitution could solve these challenges. In old Javanese, Pancasila derives from two Sanskrit words: panca, "five," and sila, "principles." It is thus composed of five inseparable principles that reflected Madjid's ideas: the belief in only one god, civilized humanity, a unified Indonesia, democracy, and social justice for everyone. Pancasila is many things--a constitutional law, a philosophy, and a socio-religious society. During Madjid's time, Indonesia was, and still is, an extremely multicultural, multi-religious nation; the ideology behind Pancasila was that it would shelter and protect everyone under the umbrella of pluralism. Besides Islam, Pancasila recognizes seven official religions, including Catholic and Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Pancasila is a model for peace, but it has its shortcomings: only these Abrahamic religions, among a few others, are recognized and given legal status by Indonesia government, while Indonesia has over two hundred and forty-five different minority religions. This begs the question: how is Pancasila inclusive or pluralistic? How could Pancasila be the "cornerstone of national unity" when it left out others? There appears to be some gaps in Pancasila. In Madjid's eyes, masarakat madani, civil society, must depend on social justice by more importantly it must depend on one and only one god binding all citizens. In this sense Islam had to be and ethical and driving force in Indonesia. Pancasila is also resonant of the Qur'anic idea, in Madjid's opinion, that the Qur'an does not address atheism since all humans believe in "something powerful within themselves" (495 Bakti). Again, masarakat madani is a model meant to be contextualized in a religious-based society, religion being the driving force behind the development of Indonesia, but a desacralized force. This is also the basic insight of the Paramadina Foundation, which embraced this neo-modernist approach. Madjid is so passionate about promoting inclusivism, integralism and the respect for human rights that he gave his own definition of "Islam" as belonging to any religion; he insisted that anyone belonging to the People of the Book could be considered Muslim because they were recognized by the Qur'an. This was the supposed 'spirit' of Islam. His embrace of the Islamic notion of fitrah—the intuitive ability to discern between right and wrong, good and bad--showed his broad and simple interpretation of what Islam was and who it affected. Through fitrah, which was almost synonymous with al-Islam, almost anyone could acquire peace and salvation in Islam. Consumed by how Islam played a role in a civil society, in a religiously plural society, it was still difficult or Madjid and by extension Paramadina to see its position vis-à-vis other religions. Idealizing Islam presents

challenges in itself. The Algerian Muslim scholar, Mohammed Arkoun (1928-2010), sought the build a tolerant and ethicist future like Madjid, and called for the "dignity of man" and "spiritual responsibility". A post-modernist scholar, his work was based on the Qur'an, the Bible and the Torah. He was a proponent of the emancipation of the so-called "human spirit." Unlike Madjid, however, who wanted people to realize the 'spirit' of Islam, Arkoun wanted people to liberate themselves from "any orthodoxy whatsoever," be it religious, ideological or philosophic. It was this type of person who would arguably be pluralist, "epistemologically able to see what goes on in building a particular tradition, philosophy, or worldview" (Hashas). For the human spirit, assuming a spiritual responsibility means providing oneself with all the means, and at all times the necessary conditions, for resisting all activities (once they have been duly identified) that aim to alienate it (the spirit), enslave it, mutilate it or mislead one or several of its faculties in an attempt to achieve an end contrary to what makes it the seat, the agent and the irreducible sign of the eminent dignity of the human person [16]. Arkoun believed that these intertwined concepts would help open up possibilities for "the emancipation of the human condition" (Hashas). "From Arkoun's historiographical perspective, Islam has this potential of rehabilitating the debate on the dignity of man and human emancipation... 'There exists a liberal, critical Islam open to change, an Islam still little known and rarely taken into consideration'"[19] (Hashas). For both Arkoun and Madjid, the Qur'an was arguably perfectly compatible with modernity, since modernity was equivalent with rationality, and rationality was integral to Islam (79 Taji-Farouki). Both scholars were consumed by ideas of rationality within the Qur'an. Reason could be found in the Qur'an but it was their challenge to recover "rational dimension" of Islam. Madjid did not have a traditional understanding of the Qur'anic revelation. Influenced by theologian Ibn Taymiyyah and his mentor Fazlur Rahman, Madjid adopted a "heuristic approach of contextuality" in his own Qur'anic interpretation. As a neo-modernist leader, Madjid called for a liberal Islam and the desacralization of Islamic parties. He expanded his ideas under the Ciputat School of thought, founding the groundbreaking Paramadina Foundation, where the concepts of city, religion, and social justice were interdependent. Inspired by the Indonesian constitution of Pancasila, Madjid promoted the same ideas of pluralism, democracy, and social justice in Paramadina, though the application of such ideas was flawed. The Qur'anic notion of civil society, known in Indonesia as masarakat madani, helped to foster a liberal Islam but at the same time created obstacles for Indonesia's national unity due to the fact that it depended on a religious-based society where one god united all citizens.

Works Cited

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