

# Pran-Soeh Resistance to the State Hegemony

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## Abstrak

Munculnya gerakan keagamaan lokal (*the emergence of new local religion*) adalah fenomena yang lazim dan tak bisa dihindarkan. Di Jawa, misalnya, terdapat beberapa agama lokal yang lahir dari rahim budaya setempat dan kemudian disebut sebagai *Javanese religion* atau *religion of Java*. Di antara agama-agama lokal ini, ada sebuah gerakan keagamaan yang dikenal sebagai Agama Pran-Soeh. Embrio dari kemunculan Agama Pran-Soeh bisa ditelaah pada masa kolonialisme Belanda dan penjajahan Jepang. Seperti agama lokal lainnya, pendiri agama Pran-Soeh juga yakin bahwa dia menerima wahyu dari Tuhan. Kemudian, ia merasa bahwa memiliki tugas untuk menyebarkan wahyu untuk komunitasnya. Dari sinilah, agama lokal Pran-Soeh mulai muncul. Keberadaan aliran keagamaan ini belum banyak diteliti. Menggunakan perspektif historis, artikel ini bermaksud meneliti kemunculan dan keberadaan aliran ini, bagaimana hubungannya dengan pemerintahan politik, serta responsnya terhadap problematika sosial, terutama sosial Islam. Lebih jauh, artikel ini akan mengupas resistensi Pran-Soeh terhadap hegemoni negara. Keberadaan agama Pran-Soeh itu sendiri tidak tumbuh pesat di masyarakat, tetapi harus menghadapi hambatan baik dari dalam dan luar. Kendala dari dalam adalah bentuk konflik di antara mereka. Sementara kendala dari luar salah satu khususnya di Orde Baru adalah hegemonik negara dan kecemasan dan kekhawatiran agama yang *mainstream*. Jadi, kelangsungan hidup dan kematian agama Pran-Soeh tergantung pada keputusan negara dan kebijaksanaan agama yang *mainstream*.

**Kata Kunci:** Pran-Soeh, Hegemoni, Negara.

## Introduction

A new local religion could appear anytime and anywhere, that is, the new local religion could appear throughout the human life and in various places, although the scholars sometimes do not record the emergence of religion. The non-recording of the emergence of the new local religion could be due to various reasons. One of them is that the new local religion appearing is not a religion recognized by the majority or the ruling government.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, the new local religion is often considered to splinter or someone's engineering only. Nevertheless, the emergence of the new local religion could also originate from a deep understanding, serious approach, and a long process of acculturation resulting religious syncretism.<sup>2</sup>

However, some things that become problem here is sometimes the new local religion has exclusive and closed teachings. In other words, the new local religions sometimes only be known by people who have become adherents or followers, and the founders and adherents sometimes also be exclusive, and shut themselves from the adherents of other religions or groups so that the new local religious' teachings and attitudes of the founders or adherents sometimes cause misunderstanding, and led to "mistrust" in the wider community.<sup>3</sup>

In many literature, the emergence of new local religions is often associated with some things. Pareira Peane that examines religious movement Sal Baba in Singapore considers that the presence of religious movements as a response to the religiosity of modern society in Singapore is considered "dry" in terms of spirituality.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile,

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<sup>1</sup> Silvio Ferrari, "New Religious Movement in Western Europe, in Journal of Research and Analyses", no. 9. October 2006. Accessed from: [http://religion.info/pdf/2006\\_10\\_ferrari\\_nrm.pdf](http://religion.info/pdf/2006_10_ferrari_nrm.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. See also PareiraPeane Nicolas, "A New Religious Movement in Singapore: Syncretism and Variation in the Sai Baba Movement". Download from [http://socioblogsg.nles.wordpress.com/2007/03/shane\\_np\\_180.pdf.date\\_March\\_9th\\_2011](http://socioblogsg.nles.wordpress.com/2007/03/shane_np_180.pdf.date_March_9th_2011)

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Zablocki, "The Birth and Death of New Relegious Movement". Download from <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~zablocki/Articles/Zablocki-the-Birth-and-Death-of-Religious-Movements.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> PareiraPeane Nicolas, "A New Religious Movement in Singapore: Syncretism and Variation in the Sai Baba Movement".

Raymond M. L. Lee argues that the emergence of new local religions in Malaysia is generally a development of the earlier religion developed both Islamic and non-Islamic. The adherents of this new local religion as long as assume that the existing religions have too much to follow modernity.<sup>5</sup> While in India, the birth of Amritanadamayi is a form of modernization of Hinduism. They change some Hindu doctrines that are considered no longer relevant to the context of modern society. As a result, such adherents feel that they are members of modern society on the one hand, but at the same time they become religious people on the other side.<sup>6</sup>

Of the three examples above shows that the emergence of religious movement or new local religion is phenomenon that has continued in various places; that is, the emergence of various forms of new religious movements is something that cannot be avoided. Therefore, the emergence of new local religions in terms of Edward Howard is *a part and parcel of the process of modernity*.<sup>7</sup>

Indonesia as a multi-religious and multi-cultural country has a possible growth of the popular movement which focuses on political or religious matters. The emergence of a new traditional or local religion is often rooted in a particular culture.<sup>8</sup> And, the emergence of new local religions has become a phenomenon that we can see in many areas in Indonesia till this present time.

On the island of Java itself, few local religions were born. Such local religions are so often identified with Javanese culture that the local religions are called *Javanese Religion* or *the Religion of Java*. Among the new

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<sup>5</sup> Raymond L. M. Lee, "The State and New Religious Movement in Malaysia", in *Journal of Sociology of Religion*, 1994, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> Qiu Yonghui, "New Religious Movements in India: The Mata Amritanadamayi Math". Download from [http://www.asianscholarship.org/asf/ejoum/articles/qiu\\_y.pdf](http://www.asianscholarship.org/asf/ejoum/articles/qiu_y.pdf), accessed 5 March 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Edward Howard, *A New Religious Movement in Modernity and Post-modernity* (London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Rahmat Subagya, *Kepercayaan, Kebatinan, Kerohanian, Kejimaandan Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002).

local religions that was born from the practice of Javanese and Javanese culture is Pran-Soeh religion.

Pran-Soeh religion is a local religion that was born alongside with Indonesia's socio-political conditions. The initially existence of Pran-Soeh religion could be traced to the Dutch colonialism and Japanese occupation as well as the internal conflict inside Indonesia country after its proclamation.<sup>9</sup> The founding father of this religion was Pran-Soeh Sastrosoewignyo himself. In other words, Pran-Soeh is the Founder of this religion.

The existence of Pran-Soeh religion in Indonesia has not been much studied by scholars yet. So far, there is no special research or writing mainly focuses on Pran-Soeh religion whether they talk about the concept of God, Prophethood, holy book and so forth, particularly talking about the relationship between Pran-Soeh religion, the government policies and responses of the society especially Islam community from historical perspective. Therefore, this article would like to discuss on it. Although some matters relating to Pran-Soeh religion are very interested to be described in order to get better understanding, yet this research report primarily focuses on the emergence and the existence of Pran-Soeh in the historical side. Thus, the main issues that will be answered or explained in this research report are about the historical background of Pran-Soeh, Pran-Soeh resistance to the state hegemony.

## **Historical Background of Pran-Soeh**

Various local religions or cults emerging in Java (if I do not say entirely, perhaps most) are considered as Javanese religion or religion of Java. Some historians and local religious reviewer said that the Javanese culture (often referred to as Javanese) is a culture that is believed to have existed and developed in the community of Java since Javanese people themselves had been already there. The peak development of Javanese

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<sup>9</sup> Ahsan, "AntaraPran-Soehdan Adam Makripat",dalam *Majalah Suluh*, edisi 26, Tahun VI, Maret-April 2006.

culture, according to historians, occurs during the Majapahit kingdom, especially during the king Hayam Wuruk and his famous Patih Gajah Mada. At that time, the kingdom of Majapahit virtually controlled the other kingdoms in Indonesia (archipelago). During the conquest of other kingdoms, especially those outside the area of Java, Javanese culture which was brought by the Majapahit rulers and soldiers involved in the process of interaction and assimilation with the local cultures and religions.<sup>10</sup> The process of influencing and influenced among the Javanese culture, other cultures and religions led to the concept of syncretism.<sup>11</sup>

Conceptually, syncretism is the result of the process of syncretation.<sup>12</sup> Syncretism is also a result of the acculturation process, namely: acceptance, adjustment, and reaction. Thus, syncretism is the process of merging and combining elements of the original with foreign elements, so it builds a new cultural pattern.<sup>13</sup>

Local religion 'Pran-Soeh' was born in Javanese culture. It also could be said as a result of syncretism process. Such a local religion appeared in 1921. The emergence of this local religion is marked by the acceptance of "revelation" by Pran-Soeh Sastrosoewignjo (1868-1957).<sup>14</sup> In connection with when Pran-Soeh Sastrosoewignjo received revelation is not known certainly. Or, at what age he received revelation there is no source which says clearly. However, Pran-Soeh was known by his family as a child who likes or has a desire to things magically or mystically.<sup>15</sup>

Pran-Soeh Sastrosoewignjo, son of Kyai Wiropati, was also known as Den Tjarik. The word 'Den' etymologically means 'higher'. Meanwhile, in social interpretation the word 'Den' means people who

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<sup>10</sup> Rahmat Subagya, *Kepercayaan Kebatinan, Kerohanian, Kejiwaan dan Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Soesilo Tanjung, *Ajaran Kejawen: Filosofi dan Perilaku* (Yogyakarta: AK Group, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Shri Heddy Ahimsa Putra, *Strukturalisme Levi-Strauss, Mitos dan Karya Sastra* (Yogyakarta: KEPEL Press, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Ahsan, "Antara Pran-Soeh dan Adam Makripat", dalam *Majalah Suluh*, edisi 26, Tahun VI, Maret-April 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

have higher status associated with the family line, descent or rank. The word 'Tjarik' itself means 'the village secretary', that is, those who were given tasks by the village chief for caring things relating to the administration of the village.

When Pran-Soeh Sastrosoewignjo lived in the palace of Yogyakarta in the reign of Sultan Agung VII, he had read and studied Babad Demak and Mataram. However, he was surprised by what happened in the palace of Yogyakarta. On one hand, he saw Sheikh Maulana Maghribi<sup>16</sup> always spent their time merely to communicate with God (Allah SWT). On other hand, he saw the Sultan Agung VII established communication with Nyai Roro Kidul more and more. This condition would make Pran-Soeh Sastrosoewignjo be curious and ask why it could be so.<sup>17</sup>

He often asked his family and people surrounding the palace of Yogyakarta, but he did not get a satisfactory answer. This situation made him feel disappointed. This caused Pran-Soeh leave for the palace or the castle. Then, he went to Mount Tidar, Magelang. In Tidar mountain, Pran-Soeh Sastrosoewignjo did meditation. However, he did not let his communication to Nyi Roro Kidul in his meditation, but to bring himself to God, the Lord of this universe.<sup>18</sup>

In the midst of meditation, he felt to get a whisper or revelation from God. Through the revelation or holy whisper, Pran-Soeh felt that he had changed; that is, he was no ordinary or layman anymore, but a holy man.<sup>19</sup> In other words, he felt that he was one with God. The

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<sup>16</sup> Related to this figure, I didn't get surely answer: who is the real figure naming Maulana Maghribi, as the *Buku Agung Pandom Suci* didn't mention or describe who the figure is. A follower of Pran-Soeh, Sehat, says that this figure doesn't refer to one name of the nine saints in Java Island, rather he was regarded as a religious scholar in the palace of Yogyakarta.

<sup>17</sup> Ahsan, "Antara Pran-Soeh dan Adam Makripat", dalam *Majalah Suluh*, edisi 26, Tahun VI, Maret-April 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

concept of unification between man and God is in the Javanese culture is called unified subjects.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the revelation or holy whisper made Pran-Soeh sure that he had two main tasks from the Lord, namely: (i) reintroducing human to God,<sup>21</sup> and (ii) making religion as *lelaku* of life.<sup>22</sup>

When Pran-Soeh was sure that he got a major assignment from God to do things over, he began spreading the revelation or the holy whisper. The spread of revelation is conducted to people residing or living near Tidar mountain, Muntilan Magelang. The person named Darmi Wasito is one person who understands and follows the behavior of Pran-Soeh well, so that this person who eventually became the successor-SoehPran. Pran-Soeh himself merely spread what he believed to be inspired or the holy whisper until the year 1956. It means Darmo Wasito led Pran-Soeh local religion since then.

Under the leadership of Darmo Wasito, this local religion began to organize itself. It means this local religion originally only emphasizes the mystical, and not well organized, but then he tried to formalize Pran-Soeh religion by forming a religious organization called Pran-Soeh.

However, the establishment of Pran-Soeh religion is not an easy, as some adherents of Pran-Soeh debated about an appropriate and fitting name. At first, they named the religion with the name of Omat Mohammad Manunggal (OMM). However, this name was considered unsuitable, and often debated and protested by Muslims because of the mixture of name between “Muhammad” and “Manunggal”. The

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<sup>20</sup> This term is a translation from Javanese language. It also refers to *ittihad or hulul* in Islamic sufi tradition. In Javanese tradition, this term derives from Syekh Siti Jenar, the sufi figure, and regarded as the pioneer of Java-Islam.

<sup>21</sup> It is due to what is done both by people outside the palace or inside the palace. I mean what they had done not to get closer with God, in contrast to make them away. So, Pran-Soeh felt to reintroduce human to God (interview with Yulia).

<sup>22</sup> Pran-Soeh asserted that people just made the religion as merely symbol of ritualistic, not to a guidance of dialy life. Therefore, he was in charge to determine the religion the way of life.

Muslims claimed the word 'Mohammad' identically belonged to Islam, not others.<sup>23</sup>

Further, the followers of Pran-Soeh changed the name Omat Mohammad Manunggal (OMM) to Omat Mohammad Muntilan (OMM). However, this name was considered problematic, and raised protest from Catholics Muntilan. The Catholics did not agree if their local names used as the name of religion or belief.

Finally, on October 14, 1957, the adherents of Pran-Soeh officially called it with the name 'Adam Makrifat,' and the naming is housed on Tidar mountain, Muntilan, Magelang. However, the name 'Adam Makrifat' was not like they wished. I mean after the government banned the development of local religions or beliefs outside the official religions (Islam, Christianity, Catholic, Hindu and Buddha), Pran-Soeh adherents called themselves *Perkumpulan Umat Adam Makrifat Indonesia*' (PUAMI). However, the name of *Perkumpulan Umat Adam Makrifat Indonesia*' (PUAMI) was transformed again into the religion of Pran-Soeh. The name changing was made after a meeting of all the local religions and beliefs in Yogyakarta, on November 4, 1961. Darmo Warsito himself announced the name of Pran-Soeh as the official name of this local religion. Unfortunately, the use of Pran-Soeh as the name of this local religion was not approved by the adherents entirely. I mean some adherents of Pran-Soeh still wanted to retain or maintain the name of *Perkumpulan Umat Adam Makrifat Indonesia* (PUAMI) as they assessed if the name of Pran-Soeh was used; then possibly the offspring would have sued and taken the ownership of the right to lead the Pran-Soeh local religion or belief.<sup>24</sup>

The internal conflicts between the adherents of Pran-Soeh who wanted to retain the name of *Perkumpulan Umat Adam Makrifat Indonesia* (PUAMI) and the adherents who rejected the name of Pran-Soeh made them divided into three groups. The first group used the name of *Adam Makrifat*. This group was mostly settled in the area of Gunung Kidul.

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<sup>23</sup> Ahsan, "Antara Pran-Soeh dan Adam Makripat", dalam *Majalah Suluh*, edisi 26, Tahun VI, Maret-April 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Wibowo, interview, 12 February 2011.

The next group called themselves *Ngesti Kasampun*. This group was residing in the area around Borobudur. The last group followed the decision of Darmo Wasito; that is, they used the name of Pran-Soeh as their local religion name or belief. This community is mostly living in the area of Muntilan Central Java and Sleman Yogyakarta. And this community is the dominant group in Pran-Soeh, too.<sup>25</sup>

Led by Darmo Warsito, Pran-Soeh local religion was trying to collect the records of "revelation" of Romo Pran-Soeh; and then the revelation was booked into the holy book. This holy book was called *Kitab Agung Pandom Suci*. The collection and bookkeeping of the *Kitab Agung Pandom Suci* was done by students of Darmo Warsito. They interviewed the earlier students of Romo Pran-Soeh Sastroswignjo especially Darmo Wasito himself. Therefore, the name of Darmo Wasito was written in the front page of the *Kitab Agung Pandom Suci*. One adherent of this local religion gave a comment that the book of *Kitab Agung Pandom Suci* today required a lot of changes, mainly related to the editor and the contextualization of meaning.<sup>26</sup> However, I think this adherent's comment because he felt less comfortable if the name of Darmo Wasito is written in the book of *Kitab Agung Pandom Suci*, not Pran-Soeh as the founder of this local religion.

Like other religious people who believe in God, the adherents of Pran-Soeh also worship by praying (meditation), especially when they want to sleep. Before doing meditation, they are required to read chapter al-Ikhlâṣ, chapter an-Nâs and chapter al-Fâtiḥah in the holy Quran.<sup>27</sup> This is apparently once showing that Pran-Soeh doctrine is not a pure Java, but it is a form of syncretism between Javanese culture and Islam.

Meditation in Pran-Soeh religion itself is conducted to gain an inspiration. For the followers of Pran-Soeh, the inspiration itself is God's

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<sup>25</sup> See [www.pran-soeh.blogspot.com](http://www.pran-soeh.blogspot.com), accessed 13 March 2011.

<sup>26</sup> I also find the text in the *Kitab Agung Pandom Suci* in [www.pran-soeh.blogspot.com](http://www.pran-soeh.blogspot.com). But, systematically and in language, there is difference between the original *Kitab Agung Pandom Suci* and the other one written in internet. The *Kitab* in internet entitle '*Wasiyate Pakdhe Pujoenvito*.'

<sup>27</sup> Ahsan, "Antara Pran-Soeh dan Adam Makripat", in *Majalah Suluh*, edisi 26, Tahun VI, Maret-April 2006.

instructions that must be implemented. Also, the meditation is a way to get the highest dignity in Pran-Soeh religion; namely, to know God, Romo Pran-Soeh,<sup>28</sup> defeat the enemies of God (all the elements of evil), and reach the light of God.

As a guidance in daily life, the adherents of Pran-Soeh have teachings which they call *Angger-Angger Sebelas*. The doctrine of *Angger-Angger Sebelas* consists of two important things, namely: what should be done (required), and what should not be done (or something should be avoided to do). What is required to do is (i) to believe faithfully to Romo Pran-Soeh and the messenger, (ii) to be loyal to the government of Indonesia and all the representatives of the government, (iii) to have loving-kindness to the fellows, (iv) to work hard and keep promise, (v) to love our both parents, (vi) to love our children and wives/husbands and all family members, and (vii) to have the virtuous fair and compassionate. Meanwhile, what is prohibited to do is (i) to do adultery, (ii) to get married more than one person, (iii) to do evil deeds, and (iv) to act contrary to the above seven required things.<sup>29</sup>

The most emphasized in the overall practice of worship and spiritual life in Pran-Soeh local religion is to cleanse the soul or spirit.<sup>30</sup> Only the pure soul or spirit will return to God after a man gets a die. Pran-Soeh believes if the soul is not pure and full of sin, it will return to God well, or it will hover between heaven and earth. More, the adherents of Pran-Soeh believe that the soul is immortal, and it will be reborn in another body.<sup>31</sup> However, the soul can also enter the body of the adult person, even though the body has its own soul, and this new spirit will replace the old soul. This is what makes Pran-Soeh followers to do various efforts to cleanse or purify their soul or spirit. The purification of soul could be carried out by good consistently and continuously

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<sup>28</sup> In term of above matter, a fanatic follower of Pran-Soeh says that Pran-Soeh is not only the holy man, but also God Himself. Meanwhile, the moderate adherent regards Pran-Soeh is a man who got revelation from God, and he was in charge to spread the revelation to his community.

<sup>29</sup> Darmo Wasito, *Kitab Agung Pandom Suci* (Dewan Agama Pran-Soeh, 1961).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Such this belief is like in Buddhist belief in which the soul will experience the rebirth or reborn, but in the different form.

behaviors or actions. The good behaviors or actions meant here are to reduce food eating and drinking, and control various other bodily pleasures. In addition, every adherent of Pran-Soeh is highly recommended to do good to the fellows.<sup>32</sup>

### **Hanh's Concept in Problematizing such Problematic Issues**

After the proclamation of Indonesian independence, a lot of local religions (often called local beliefs) appeared very much. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, in 1953 some new 360 local religious and mystical beliefs were recorded. This number continued to grow, till reaching the number of 644 in 1972.<sup>33</sup> However, such a figure does not include many small local beliefs. It means the figure doesn't list the local beliefs or religions. In other words, many local religions or beliefs are not detected, even though they are scattered throughout the territory of Indonesia. Some of these beliefs have not clear form of organization. While, others have disciplined and established organization well, such as Sapta Dharma, Surnarah, Pangestu, Ngelmu Beja and so forth. Pran-Soeh local religion itself has Religious Council based in Muntilan Central Java. Then, the Religious Council of Pran-Soeh establishes *Persatuan Pemuda Pran-Soeh Indonesia* (the Youth Union of Pran-Soeh Indonesia (Perpusi)).<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the historical development shows that the local beliefs or religions are not only active in activities that are purely spiritual, but they also do various trans-regional activities such as congress, seminars and discussions. In 1955, they agreed to form an organization as a forum for community's aspirations of mysticism, namely: *Badan Kongres Kebatinnan Indonesia* (National Congress of Indonesian mysticism (BKKI)), chaired by Mr. Wonsonegoro. In 1962,

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<sup>32</sup> Darmo Wasito, *Kitab Agung Pandom Suci* (Dewan Agama Pran-Soeh, 1961).

<sup>33</sup> Rahmat Subagya, *Kepercayaan Kebatinnan Kerobanian Kejimwaan dan Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002), 23.

<sup>34</sup> Ahsan, "Antara Pran-Soeh dan Adam Makripat", in *Majalah Suluh*, ed. 26, Tahun VI, Maret-April 2006.

they also held a seminar relating to mysticism and world peace. Finally, in 1968 they formed *Persatuan Ulah Kebatinan Seluruh Indonesia* (PUKSI).<sup>35</sup>

Such above activities and development of various local religions and beliefs raised some worries for mainstream religions.<sup>36</sup> It means the adherents of mainstream religions felt worried if the people of Indonesia would be stuck or fallen on the practices of animism and dynamism that are contrary to the teachings of mainstream religions. This condition had the government need to create an organization holding matters in term of the local religions and beliefs. In other words, the organization especially functions to handle matters relating to the activities and the development of local religions or beliefs. The organization is called *Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat* (PAKEM).<sup>37</sup> This organization aims to monitor and record the activities and developments of the local religions and beliefs. In performing its duties, PAKEM cooperates with police, court, and social organizations of the mainstream religions. At first, this PAKEM is under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but then it is taken over by the Kejaksaan Tinggi.<sup>38</sup>

Next, the government also began to redefine what religion is. So, we have the term of “religion” and the term of “non-religion”. The religion in this context is often associated with a variety of social change, modernization, and loyalty to the nation-building purposes. Meanwhile, the ‘non-religion’ is connected to a backward society, left behind, and the like.<sup>39</sup>

The adherents of mainstream religions regarded that the redefining between religion and non-religion is not satisfying them. In other words, the redefining between religion and non-religion doesn't

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<sup>35</sup> L. Krisna Yulianta, "Ketika Kepercayaan Tidak Lagi Dipercaya" dalam blog pribadinya, <http://sajaratunjava.blogspot.com/2009/02/ketika-kepercayaan-tidak-lagi-dipercaya.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Rahmat Subagya, *Kepercayaan Kebatinan Kerohanian Kejawanan dan Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002), 23.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Jane Monnick Atkinson, "Religion in Dialogue: The Construction of An Indonesian Minority Religion" in Rita Smith and Susan Rodgers(ed.), *Indonesian Religions in Transition* (USA: The University of Arizona Press, 1987).

reflect what they wanted. Then, they asked for the government or the state to do some more harsh. In responding the adherents of mainstream religions, the state or government had solutions on how to eliminate the local beliefs or religions. One of the government or state to eliminate is making stigmatization of the local beliefs or religions.<sup>40</sup> The stigmatization is conducted by linking the local beliefs or religions with the movement of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). In 1965 eventually the government froze and disbanded the various local beliefs or religions. They were accused of being lackeys of the PKI.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, Perpusi as the Pran-Soeh youth organization was also dissolved. Likewise, the two students of Pran-Soeh, SMH. Sirwoko and Darmo Wasito, were abducted by soldiers when Gestapu 1965 occurred. And the both men also disappeared until now along with other Gestapu victims in Indonesia.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, the government made inconsistency and discrimination. In the Constitution of 1945, article 29 verse 2 for example, we can understand that the people of Indonesia have free right to choose a certain religion, and to worship according to religion and beliefs.<sup>43</sup> This article is also in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 6 issued in 1948. The Universal Declaration asserts that every person has a right to be treated as subjects of law. However, in 1965 through Law No. 01/PNPS on the prevention of desecration of religion, the government established official religions in Indonesia covering only Islam, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, and Buddha.

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<sup>40</sup> Rahmat Subagya, *Kepercayaan Kebatinan Kerohanian Kejiwaan dan Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ahsan, "Antara Pran-Soeh dan Adam Makripat", in *Majalah Suluh*, ed. 26, Tahun VI, Maret-April 2006.

<sup>43</sup> See Jane Monnig Atkinson, "Religion in Dialogue: The Construction of An Indonesian Minority Religion" in Rita Smith and Susan Rodgers (ed.), *Indonesian Religions in Transition* (USA: The University of Arizona Press, 1987) and *Kompilasi Peraturan Perundang-Undangan Kerukunan Hidup Umat Beragama*, Edisi ketujuh, Departemen Agama RI Badan Litbang Agama dan Diklat Keagamaan Puslitbang.

Consequently, other religions including local religions and beliefs are forbidden to grow, and are considered as wrong cults.<sup>44</sup>

In connection with the above legislation, there were some various responses from the adherents of local religions and beliefs. They judged that the statute above is considered to have ignored the existence of hundreds of local beliefs and religions throughout Indonesia. Unfortunately, the government didn't answer their responses well. So, the followers of local beliefs and religions have experienced discrimination along with the birth of the Marriage Act 1974. This act (article 2, verse 1 and 2) states that a marriage can only be done if the marriage party is in accordance with the law and official religion.<sup>45</sup> In such circumstances, then any local beliefs and religions including the adherents Pran-Soeh had to "confess" one official religion to be able to get marriage.

A light of happiness came in 1980, in which the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare in his letter to the Minister of Home Affairs Number B-310/Menko/Kesra/VI/1980 provided solutions to this problem. He asserted that the adherents of local religions or beliefs were able to perform marriages by doing the recording at the local civil registry office. Unfortunately, this is no longer valid because in 1985 the Minister of Home Affairs reissued a circular letter number 477/4054. This letter did not merely eliminate the local beliefs or religions, but it also classified the local religions and beliefs as the prohibited religions or beliefs.<sup>46</sup>

Five years later, when the Ministry of the Home Affairs held by Rudini, he issued a letter stating that 477/2535/PUOD the local religions or beliefs were allowed to do marriages by listing their wedding at a registry office after they had gotten an assessment, exemption or approval from the local courts. Unfortunately, in 1995 DG PUOD (the general government and autonomous regions), Sumitro Maskun, on

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<sup>44</sup> Rahmat Subagya, *Kepercayaan Kebatinan Kerohanian Kejawanan dan Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Departemen Agama RI, *Kompilasi Peraturan Perundang-Undangan...*

<sup>46</sup> Rahmat Subagya, *Kepercayaan Kebatinan Kerohanian Kejawanan dan Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002), 34.

behalf of the Minister of Home Affairs issued a letter number 474.2/3069/PUOD stating the cancellation of Minister of the Home Affairs' previous letter, and also stated that the marriage of the followers of local religion cannot be executed and recorded in a registry office, even though they had gotten approval from the court.<sup>47</sup>

The attitude of discrimination by the state or the government against the adherents of minority or a religious cult like Pran local-Soeh not only resulted in anxiety and fear to show their existence as adherents of local religion or belief. In the context of Pran-Soeh local religion, for example, I almost did not hear or know this local religion or belief until I take this doctoral program. That is, before 2010 I almost did not hear the news or read the research related to the exploration and publications about the local religion of Pran-Soeh.

When I do interviews with one of Pran-Soeh follower, he asked back whether the publication of the interview or my research does not adversely affect negatively to the existence of Pran-Soeh religion. He said that the information relating to Pran-Soeh religion and his group can be exploited by certain groups or parties to provide a negative stigma. This information even could be used as a tool to dissolve and prohibit the development of Pran-Soeh. Such an anxiety and unease is of course due to bad experiences they faced, either in the reign of the Old Order or New One.

The Fall of the New Order regime brought new hope to believers of Soeh-Pran. The hope firstly appeared when the government acknowledged the current existence of different beliefs or local religions including Pran-Soeh. In fact, Abdurrahman Wahid as president in the Reform era issued a Presidential Order no. 06 in 2000 that recognized the return of Confucianism as a religion. This is certainly a positive impact on the existence and recognition of local religions or beliefs. Two years later, 2002, the General Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia set back the 1945 Constitution article 29, verse 2 in the general assembly building. The current President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono himself issued a statement that the state no longer questions the "recognized

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

religion” and the “unrecognized religions” at the 2557 Lunar New Year celebration in 2006. Although the statement was not written in the form of rule up to the present, but it became a mile stone and new story in history for the context of the relationship among the official religions, the state and the local religions or beliefs in Indonesia.

At this time, the adherents of Pran-Soeh started joining various social organizations that exist in society. Besides being a form of participation in social development, they also advocate the rights of minorities that had been ignored by the state or government. One of the organizations in which the adherents of Pran-Soeh become members is the Brotherhood Interfaith Forum (FPUB) in Yogyakarta. This institution has a vision, namely: to create a peaceful life in the context of inter-religious relations. There are a variety of Yogyakarta’s local religions and beliefs joining the above organizations.<sup>48</sup>

In its work program, FPUB tries to establish the positive communication among different faiths or beliefs, religions, and mysticism, so that the mutual understanding and respect for individual differences in the relationship are created properly. As one form of communication, they publish a magazine which they called “Suluh”. The magazine is published in two languages, namely Indonesia and English. The magazine contains a variety of discourses in the lives of religious plurality and beliefs that exist in Indonesia. In line with this, the adherents of Pran-Soeh are still trying to introduce their activities or religious activities.<sup>49</sup>

In this reform era, the adherents of Pran-Soeh have attempted to gain the trust of the government's legality. Renda, one of the Pan-Soeh adherents, states that they've got a certificate from the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia. This certificate states Pran-Soeh as the local religion or belief is recognized by the government. For the adherents of Pran-Soeh, this certificate of course is very important because they begin

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<sup>48</sup> Rendra, *interview*, 13 February 2011

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

to dare to assert their religious identity or their existence, including administering their identity management and others.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Resistance of Pran-Soeh against Government**

The phenomenon of the emergence of local religions such as Pran-Soeh in the context of political developments in the early days of Indonesian independence, especially in Yogyakarta at least, can be studied from two views of point.

First, the emergence of Pran-Soeh in Yogyakarta is a local community response to various political phenomena that occur at that time.<sup>51</sup> That is, there are some conditions that encourage the emergence of a new religion or belief in the local Javanese community in those days, namely: the public at the time needs, and even has a tendency to learn something related to mystic. The mystic is often considered by the society as something provides their immunity from guns and sharp bullets; making them to be disappeared, and the like.

The above conditions certainly cannot be released from the atmosphere which occurred at the time. As known, the country was still in a state of war and conflict, although the proclamation had been announced. In other words, the people of Indonesia still needed tales or superstition that they considered good protectors for their lives from the sharp bullets or weapons, so that the mystical things had a significant impact for the people at that time. For example, the villagers who have no skills in the warfare but they should be involved in the defense of the country, then they feel that they need to arm themselves with inner power, *ilmu kebal*, and others as the protecting things. In other words, the unseen is a widespread in the community eventually be an option to gain

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Compared with Julia Day Howell and Peter L. Nelson, *Structural Adaptation and "Success" in Tranplantation of an Asia Religious Movement: The Brahma Kumaris in The Western World, Part I*, Research in *the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, Volume 8, (JAP Press Inc., 2007).

strength until the community or people can survive in the conditions of war, conflict and the like.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, in the early independence of Indonesia, the economic condition is very bad. In addition, social conflict and political competition among groups also participated in exacerbating and worsening the situation at that time. This refers to the role of major religions in the government and the state politics intensified, so this is not or less provides a space for the local religions or beliefs. Such conditions led to many people at least to be saturated and less hope with their economic and social life as well as politics. As a result, people prefer to get rid of the situation. One of the ways they can do is to be imprisoned (meditated) and be isolated from society.

*Second*, the local religions or beliefs are often considered or associated with the liberation or millennial movement (Messiah or Imam Mahdi movement).<sup>53</sup> In this context, the emergence of local religion of Pran-Soeh is used to "pacify" the people around him in the face of suffering and trials they experienced. That is, the suffering they are experiencing now is contemporary suffering. Conversely, this local religion calls its believers to get safety and happiness in Hereafter. In other words, all sufferings they face or experience in the world is only one process to obtain good reward good after they die.<sup>54</sup> To justify the truth, this religion offers a form of theology. On the one hand - in my opinion - the theology offered by the Pran-Soeh religion is absurd to understand, however, the use of symbols in the presentation of its theology seemingly make the public more easily to understand.

The complexity of the concept of theology of Soeh-Pran in my opinion will be a problem, especially in the contemporary context in which people have freely right to ask and critic the construction of a certain theology including Pran-Soeh. It is also recognized by Renda, a Pran-Soeh follower. He stated that many people "do not understand" Pran-Soeh theology with precise and so well that they would prefer to

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<sup>52</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo, "Agrarian Radicalism in Java: Its Setting and Development", in Claire Holt, *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Pub, 2007), 43.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

select another local belief such as Sapta Dharma, Sumarah, and even to embrace a particular religion.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the unclearness of theological explanation of Pran-Soeh would make its adherents to have not a strong militancy. As a result, many adherents of Pran-Soeh have no big intention or motivation to pass on the teachings of Pran-Soeh on families, children and their grandchildren. Their families are given the right to choose religion or beliefs freely.

Furthermore, Rendra admitted that his three children are Muslim, while a child of his is Christian. The last child follows his mother's religion, Christianity. The exampled fact at least illustrates that the average follower of Pran-Soeh is now aged over 50 years, so that young people especially teenagers who hold the local religion of Pran-Soeh become rare.

If I compare the emergence of new local religion or belief between Indonesia and the other countries, then we will find some similarities. However, the greatest importance in the similarity is the new local religion or belief was born as a serious response against the hegemonic behavior they encounter or experience, either from the state, or the higher social groups. The given response is to build a link between what they want and what they face in the real world.

Accordingly, one thing that can be categorized specifically on Javanese community is that the emergence of a new local religion or belief offering local wisdom is a form of blended local culture and “foreign” religion. It means that many adherents of local religions or beliefs still embrace an official religion as their religion. In other words, they “go” into the new local religion merely to appease their hearts, and to reach spiritual fulfillment. Also, one thing becomes certain is that no all new local religions survive at long time; only a few are able to survive. People have fully rights to determine whether a certain local religion or belief continually survives or not.

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<sup>55</sup> Rendra, *interview*, 13 February 2011.

## Conclusion

Based on the above explanation, the emergence of local religion Pran-Soeh is at least influenced by the dissatisfaction of Pran-Soeh against the religious practices performed at the palace of Yogyakarta. Like the other local religion, the religious founder of Pran-Soeh is also sure that he received the revelation from God. Then, he feels that he has a duty to disseminate the revelation to his community. From here, the local religion of Pran-Soeh emerges.

The existence of Pran-Soeh religion itself does not grow rapidly in the community, but it must face obstacles both from within and outside. The inside obstacle is in the form of conflicts among them. While, the outside one particularly in the New Order is the hegemonic state and the mainstream religion's anxiety and worries. So, the survival and death of religion of Pran-Soeh depend on the state decisions and the mainstream religions' wisdom.

Along with the era of freedom and independence for self-determination, the adherents of Soeh-Pran now have gained the legitimacy from the Supreme Court. Even though, the Pran-Soeh is seemingly stumbling in managing itself and upraising its development.

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