

Theosophical Teachings: Universal Fraternity The Adherents of the Archipelago Religion in the Colonial Period a Political Conspiracy

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of Theosophy teachings in the colonial period. This theme is interesting to be raised because theosophical teachings became the soul and spirit of the Indonesian nationalist movement during the struggle for independence. The Theosophy movement became an inspiration for some national movement figures. This material seems to have been overlooked in the historical record of the nation's struggle because it is rarely disclosed in history learning materials at various levels. This paper will describe the problem from the perspective of intellectual history and how it influenced the nationalist thought of the Javanese nobility. The theosophical movement shared the same ideals as the Dutch association policy. The main idea is to elevate the culture and society of the East to align with Western civilization. The theosophical movement had a big role in the Javanese cultural revival movement. Many aspects of Theosophy's teachings were connected with the esoteric cult of India, which had a strong impact on the nationalist vision of Javanese culture.

Keywords: *Teachings, theosophy, conspiracy politics, colonial*

1. INTRODUCTION

Discussion on the teachings of Theosophy in the colonial period, a theme that is still rare in the study of academic history, considering that this theme is quite sensitive in religious discourse. One important problem in the study of Western esotericism, including Theosophy, is the overlapping factual content of history with conspiracy theory. According to conspiracy theorists, the entire history of Western esotericism can be seen as an apocalyptic conspiracy to establish a New Age religion and a New World Order. This discourse is widely believed by anti-Semitic and conservative religious groups both in the West itself and in the Islamic world. The existence of esoteric associations is often associated with conspiracies, and conspiracies have their own 'market' in popular culture. However, in the last decade, Western esotericism has begun to emerge as an object of academic study.

Iskandar Nugraha [1] points out that through theosophical organizations, some Indonesian educated people find their own identity, feel the same fate, and seem to be invited to find their own national identity. Therefore, this paper will reveal whether it is true that the Theosophical movement is a political conspiracy,

and can it be proven that the Theosophy movement has contributed to sowing the seeds of love for the nation or nationalism? The development of theosophy teachings has received less attention in the tradition of historical writing in Indonesia. Theosophical teachings which subsequently inspired the theosophical movement during the colonial period were considered as triggers for religious intellectual change as part of the history of mentality. According to Sartono Kartodirdjo,[2] to understand the national movement, the history of mentality cannot be abandoned, especially if the issue of consciousness is seen as the beginning of the emergence of nationalism.

2. METHODS

This research uses a multidimensional approach to develop explanations and sharpen the analysis. Sociology, anthropology, literature approaches are used to produce a comprehensive description. The use of this approach in this study is to obtain a more focused problem-solving accuracy in a dimensional description, to produce academically accountable writing. Although it is realized that no restoration produces a return to its original state. Therefore, the facts need to be processed

by borrowing theories, concepts of social science. This effort is intended to obtain purely scientific results. Humans, both individually and collectively, are complex. The study of humans as social beings requires the use of social science concepts and theories so that they can be studied as analytical entities.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Understanding Theosophy*

The term theosophy in the discourse of philosophy and mysticism is a very old name and is even synonymous with the two studies. According to Blavatsky, "theos" means god (god, not God), "Sophia" means Wisdom (wisdom). However, theos here refers to or in the sense of "a god" in Greek, one of the divine beings and not in the sense of "God" as it is understood by people today, not "Personal God." Therefore, theosophy is not "God's Wisdom" as most people translate it, but "Divine Wisdom" as possessed by the gods. In other languages, Blavatsky refers to "theosophy" as "Divine Knowledge" or "Divine Science". [3]

In a sense, Sophie or Sophia is interpreted as "Science" or "Knowledge" and "Theos" is "God" or "God" (with a large T and A). According to them, theosophy is the Knowledge or Wisdom of Allah,[4] which means Knowledge of God; nature and its contents are a sure sign that God exists. The deepest meaning of theosophy is the Science of Perfection.[5] In theosophical society, God is understood as "Personal God" as understood and embraced by conventional religions in the archipelago, not a god in Blavatsky's sense as "impersonal god."

Helena Blavatsky's explanation of the intricacies of theosophy is indeed more complicated than what the theosophical society understands because the madam is more inclined to esoteric explanations, this happens because one of the reasons is the madam's "mystical experience". In several of his letters and lectures, Blavatsky defined Theosophy as Koan; a term in Zen Buddhism. Koan means a formulation, an important point towards the Absolute truth. Koan is a mystery that cannot be solved only by logical explanation and reason but can only be understood by consciousness at its deepest level which goes beyond the conceptualization and explanation of the intellect.

The word theosophy according to Blavatsky was inherited from the Alexandrian philosophers, namely the truth-loving philosophers, the Philaletheians, from the words "love" (Phil) and "truth" (Aletheia). The word theosophy comes from the third century AD which was introduced by Ammonius Saccas and his students who began to discuss the eclectic philosophical system. The aim of this philosophical system is first to instill certain

noble moral truths in its students who are all "lovers of truth." Therefore, the motto used by the Theosophical Society is "There is no religion higher than Truth, Satyan Nasti Paro Dharmah." The main goal of the founders of the eclectic school of theosophy is also one of the three goals of the Theosophical Society as its modern successor, namely the reconciliation of all religions, sects, and nations under a common ethical system based on eternal truth.[6]

From the name, it appears that theosophy means esoteric (inner) science or the science of reality which will explain the deepest dimension (the essence) of dry and rigid dogmas. Theosophy will shape a person to be wise, compassionate, or love others, with pure, clean thoughts and attitudes. So, at the level of practice, theosophy, as emphasized by Blavatsky, is the practice of living a life full of love, purity of heart and self, not greed, not always selfish, and has social solidarity. Because of this, the Theosophical Society is sometimes called the Noble White Brotherhood because of its focus on values and noble living practices.

In many publications of the theosophical society, especially those written by members of theosophy Muslims, theosophy also means Sufism, the science and practice of Sufism, or the Sufi way. Sufism is a science and this path must be taken by the theosophists to arrive at Reality, Truth, and Perfection. In general, theosophy is Divine wisdom and all events explained by God, knowledge of the universe, and the living universe, which is trying to be studied from the inside out, from the Unseen Reality to its bright state. Then what is sought is Reality; Reality in religion, philosophy, and science to achieve wisdom in life, behavior, and action. The most important thing in theosophy is its teaching that whatever a person accepts, whether it is religion, philosophy, or science, should not be taken for granted, but should be explored. Truth or Reality. Any knowledge should be "felt" true or "experienced" directly in fact, at least criticized to the depth. This is perhaps the most difficult thing to do to become a true theosophist. However, that is the true teaching of theosophy.

B. *Development*

The Theosophical Movement was first founded in New York, the United States in 1875 by a noblewoman of Russian descent. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky[7] was assisted by two Americans named Henry Steel Olcott and W.Q. Judge. This movement obliges its members to create independent minds and work for the sake of changing the people, namely through inner means to fight lust. According to them conventional religion no longer has any influence. Theosophy itself comes from the Greek Theosophia which means divine wisdom. This understanding assumes that all religions are the same has existed for a long time.

Looking at the nature of the movement, Theosophy is a Neo-Hindu Movement inspired by Jewish mysticism-esoteric called Kabbala and Gnosticism, secret science of salvation, and forms of western occultism. Due to the nature and scope of theosophy which is inclined to eastern mystical thought, in 1879 the center of Theosophy was moved from New York to Adyar in Madras, India. Entering 1895, there was a new chapter in TS's body when a new character, Annie Besant, appeared. It was because of this figure that the Theosophical movements slowly began to show their influence not only in India but also in the world, including in the Dutch East Indies.[8]

Theosophy spreads its teachings through propaganda through the Javanese art of wayang. Thanks to the incessant propaganda through wayang, more and more Indonesians, especially Javanese aristocrats, joined this movement. In addition to propaganda through wayang, during 1914 propaganda was often held through lectures.

The Theosophy Movement in Indonesia was first founded in Pekalongan, Central Java in 1883, 8 years after the founding of this movement in America. The Theosophical lodge in this small town was led by a European nobleman named Baron van Tengenel. The Theosophy movement only began to develop at the beginning of the 20th century, where the first Theosophical Congress was held in Yogyakarta in 1907. This first congress discussed the need not to establish the Theosophy movement which is an association of lodges.

After several congresses held finally, in April 1912 an independent Theosophy organization in Indonesia was officially established under the name *Nederlandsch Indische Theosofische Vereeniging (NITV)*,[9] this organization was legally recognized as the 20th branch with its president D. Van Hinloopen Labberton. Later, Labberton was the person who played a major role in the development of the Theosophy movement in Indonesia. On November 2, the articles of association of NITV were approved by the Dutch East Indies government on November 2, 1912. Thus NITV became a legal entity organization and the center of NITV was established in Batavia.

NITV used a propaganda strategy, one of which was to spread propaganda in spreading Theosophy teachings, especially through the Javanese art of wayang, wayang at that time was used as one of the most important agenda items in every Theosophy meeting. Thanks to the incessant propaganda through wayang, Indonesians, especially Javanese Priyayi, are increasingly following this movement. In addition to propaganda through wayang, during 1914 propaganda was often held through lectures.

Theosophy itself has a fairly cynical view of the existence of religious teachings. Theosophical teachings always emphasize the urgency of brotherhood between humans regardless of religion, race, gender, and other human differences. Religion in this position is considered as one of the triggers of conflict, not only conflicts between religions, even people of the same religion also experience it. Differences in teachings between religions and differences of opinion between people of the same religion are often positioned as the main source of conflict.

Theosophy knowledge has been introduced to various levels of society in the Dutch East Indies by one of its adherents, Annie Besant.[10] Lectures, public lectures, and courses that they conducted in various regions, among others, such as the lectures conducted by van Gelder in Semarang in 1903,[11] lectures at the meeting of theosophists in Surabaya in 1911,[12] Surabaya. lectures as well as the opening of educational institutions and the formation of administrators in Batavia in 1912, public lectures on theosophy in Medan in 1913,[13] public lectures in Batavia in 1915,[14] then lecture at the congress of theosophists in Batavia in 1918,[15] courses on theosophy in Batavia were taught by A. Hamerster in 1919.[16]

Succeeded as reported by De locomotif, "Groot success. Met zijn voordracht over de teosofi had de heer van Gelder gepasseerden Zaterdag groot success".[17] The ease of joining the adherents is done by giving freedom or free to attend lectures, public lectures, and courses.[18] Advertising to intensify efforts to introduce the teachings were also conducted, such as ads that contain theosophical teachings in Islam that are loaded on *Bataviaasch nieuwsblad*, "Theosofie in den Islam. Vanavond 7 uur wordt in de Theosofische loge been lezing gehou len over "Theosofie in den Islam",[19] then an advertisement about a meeting or gathering of theosophists, "Vergaderingen: Theosofische Lodge, Welirangslraat. Heden: 8 unnm voordracht over Theosofie",[20] advertisement for a lecture "Lezing over Theosofi: in de kleine zaal van het Medan-Hote. voor het Comite voor Chr. actie een lezing houden over Theosofie".[21]

These advertisements brought the influence that more and more people were interested in knowing about theosophical teachings, both its adherents and the general public. In such conditions, the availability of reading books containing theosophical teachings is highly sought after and in demand. The need for these books also attracts publishers to publish books with theosophy themes.

C. Theosophical Movement and Figures of the National Movement

One of the famous indigenous figures who joined the Theosophical organization was Dr. Radjiman Wedyoningrat. The cultural atmosphere that seemed to be vacillating had brought Radjiman into the Theosophy association. He then founded the organization that marked the national awakening, namely Budi Utomo. Theosophical teachings influenced BO a lot, many BO members had a Theosophy background. Among others, Radjiman Wedyoningrat who served as chairman, Mangkunegara VII, Cipto Mangunkusumo etc. BO itself is a Theosophical and agnostic organization.[22]

From BO, radical national figures such as Cipto Mangunkusumo and Soewardi were born who were dissatisfied with the direction of the BO movement, eventually, they joined the *Idische Partij* formed by Douwes Dekker who was also a member of the Theosophy movement.

The rise of Nationalism can be attributed to the Theosophical movement. In the Theosophical movement, it appears that there is an attempt to absorb western cultural values to raise the original culture that cannot be abandoned, even though the two cannot be equated. So that there is mutual respect and respect. The combination of the two is what ultimately creates something new, one of which leads to the emergence of Nationalism. This Nationalist character in his time gave rise to the idea of creating a rival institution that led to the non-cooperative nationalism movement. One of them was the birth of the PNI.

The prestige, position, and influence of the Indonesian National Party organization led by Ir. Soekarno seemed to be getting bigger and bigger spread throughout Indonesia, this Nationalist organization began to gain great influence among the people. Thanks to the incessant propaganda containing the desire to gain independence by self-effort. This has strengthened public opinion towards the PNI's goals, which they felt could bring about a new era in the minds and feelings of the Javanese.

Connecting the Theosophy movement with the PNI included the assumption that both of them had members who came from the Javanese priyayi and intellectuals at that time. It is known that several PNI members also came from theosophy circles. So when in 1929 the Theosophy movement was at the peak of its division, while the PNI candidates numbered 10,000 people. Possibly at that time, there were many NITV members, who spread to the political organization.[23]

The Theosophical movement in Indonesia experienced a decline in the 1930s. This was triggered by the establishment of nationalist organizations. The situation of the movement at that time indicated that only political organizations were more relevant. As a socio-cultural organization, the Theosophy movement must accept this reality. It is seen that there is a

tendency to be more conservative due to an increasingly unacceptable paternalistic attitude. As a result, many priyayi fled from this association-style organization and joined organizations with a more Indonesian nationalist pattern. [24]

4. CONCLUSION

Theosophy assumes that all religions have a common point of truth. Theosophists tried to strengthen their position. Claiming that he is above all religious truth. Its adherents develop an understanding of the commonality of all religions and practice brotherhood regardless of religious differences. The understanding of religious pluralism is reflected directly through the application of grouping and adoption of truth from all religions in the world. Theosophical teachings consider that their teachings are the essence of religions and therefore consider them to have a higher position than religion.

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