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A Mutualism between American and Islamic Values in Novel ‘*Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika*’

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Abstract

This paper examines the mutualism between Muslims and the American land through a long journey since the very early of American history. In the trend of Islamophobia aftermath 9/11, the bond is analyzed with a new perspective through discourses in the novel *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2016), written by two Indonesian Muslims authors, Hanum Salsabiela Rais and Rangga Almahendra. It describes the relationship between American values and Islamic teachings in a mutualistic association. The moral lesson of the novel has been clear to show the readers that Islam still contributes significantly to the world and has been in a mutual relationship with American country along history.

Keywords: *mutualism, American values, Islamic teachings*

Sari

Tulisan ini mengkaji hubungan mutualisme antara Muslim dan tanah Amerika melalui perjalanan panjang sejak awal sejarah Amerika. Dalam kecenderungan Islamofobia pasca 9/11, ikatan tersebut dianalisis dengan perspektif baru melalui wacana dalam novel *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika* (2016), yang ditulis oleh dua penulis Muslim Indonesia, Hanum Salsabiela Rais dan Rangga Almahendra. Novel ini menggambarkan hubungan antara nilai-nilai Amerika dan ajaran Islam dalam asosiasi mutualistik. Pelajaran moral dari novel ini adalah untuk menunjukkan kepada para pembaca bahwa Islam masih memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan bagi dunia dan telah menjalin hubungan timbal balik dengan negara Amerika sepanjang sejarah.

Kata kunci: *mutualisme, nilai-nilai Amerika, ajaran Islam*

Introduction

The word of ‘mutualism’ actually comes from microbiology domain and interchangeable with ‘cooperation’ (West, etc. 2007: 418). Roossinck (2011: 100) defines it as relationships between living bodies in which each member benefits from the connection, even though it can also occur between companions that are not in a cooperative relationship. The relationships are interspecific communications in which both companions experience a net advantage (Bronstein, 1994: 214). This concept can be operated to explore the relationship between American values and Islamic teachings.

The values of a nation can be interpreted as guiding principles on good and desirable, something that is on cultural ideas and can influence the minds of individual people (Schwartz, 2011: 469). It constructs “Americanness” identities that made America as a nation for many nations (Gjelten, 2016). One of the American basic values is respecting to all various beliefs and religions. However, there is an issue of a tension between American values and Islamic teachings. In the level of society, the Americans have seen the tension as a clash of civilization (Huntington, 1993: 32); they view the clash has been contented by a *hard-to-reconcile* cultural or ideological sentiment as the result of regional tensions with the seizure of cultural and political power in the past (Funk and Said, 2004: 1). This ideological sentiment has deteriorated over the last period for a variety of reasons mainly understood as a symbol of disconnect between Islamic faith traditions and Western concepts of democracy, liberty, and individual rights (Mansouri, etc., 2017: 9).

The ruinous incidence of September 11 has influenced the view of American people against Islamic society with suspicion. Throughout the process of recovering to the aftershock of 9/11, Muslim Americans encountered an increase of destructive stereotypes articulated by the larger people (Khan and Ecklund, 2013: 1-2), while Muslim immigrants, more than any other ones, were challenged with harmful attitudes (Schüller, 2012: 1). These attitudes can be labelled as ‘anti-Muslim racism’, ‘intolerance against Muslims’, ‘anti-Muslim prejudice’, ‘anti-Muslim bigotry’, ‘hatred

of Muslims', 'anti-Islamism', 'anti-Muslimism', 'Muslimophobia', 'demonisation of Islam' and 'demonisation of Muslims' (Richardson, 2013: 1). Muslims in America has been at the center of politically and emotionally charged questions over the meanings of U.S national identity (Considine, 2019: xxv).

Objectives of the Study

Unlike other study carried out in this area, this paper analyses the relationship between American values and Islamic teachings in the basis of mutualism as shown in the perspective of Rais and Almahendra in their novel "*Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika*" (Moon Split on America's Sky). They are both Indonesian citizens that have been successful in adapting this novel into a movie in Indonesia. Due to the background of the story, this novel can be classified in the post-9/11 category, especially as a novel of the outsider for being written by non-Americans (Versluys 2007: 68).

Methods

This paper is a literature review that attempts to investigate the concept of mutualism between American values and Islamic teachings in the United States. The researcher focuses on selected expressions as a basis to claim the main view of the authors of the novel.

Results and Discussion

The novel lifted up a big question '*Would the world be better without Islam?*' In answering this challenging issue, Hanum should fly to New York to investigate some informants as victims in the 9/11 attacks. Her journey with Almahendra, her husband, brought her into an unexpected life cycle-relationship among Azima Hussein, Michael Jones and Phillipus Brown. Azima represented an American Muslim that taught Hanum about the mutualism between American values and Islamic teachings. She was a widow of Ibrahim Hussein (Abe) who tried to save Jones wife in the accident of 9/11. Jones represented an American non-Muslim who hated Islam and judged all Muslims

since his wife was dead in the *Black Tuesday*, but then he changed his mind after knowing the sincerity of a Muslim, Abe. Brown was an American philanthropist who indebted to Hussein for saving his soul in the accident. This rich person told the truth to Jones that Abe had fought to protect her wife but she decided to suicide.

According to Rais and Almahendra (2015: 48), the phenomenon of Islamophobia is 'a booming West' hesitation of any religious doctrine'. They illustrated it on the novel as follows (p. 98):

"Hey, your name is also Mohammed, Officer! Are you a Muslim? You don't belong to the United States of America! Go away!"

From these sentences, we know that Islamic names also invite the 'anti-Muslim prejudice'.

However, Rais and Almahendra insisted the good effect of Islam in American history. To support the arguments, they put Jefferson as a gate of looking the mutualism between Islam and America:

"Do you know who this is?" Azima showed me another photo of a statue in an ancient Greek dome. There is a very familiar name. The name of the president in early American independence. "Yes, that's his name, Thomas Jefferson," I said lightly. What is interesting about the third American president? (p. 209).

The unique position of Jefferson has been mentioned on the previous page:

Thomas Jefferson is a religious figure. He and other American founding fathers are clearly not Muslim. But one question clung to mind. Jefferson's style of repeating the wording of God with all his majesty in a more universal way-not in the Christian way of the religion he professes-made all my sensitivities connected to the Koran that Jefferson possessed (p. 172).

The description of Jefferson on the novel has strongly strengthen the historical evidence that Islamic teachings are compatible with American values. Rais and Almahendra wrote:

Of course, people who study mathematics do not necessarily have to fall in love with mathematics. So also with Jefferson who can speak Arabic and learn the Qur'an, not necessarily he love Islam, let alone Islam. But one thing is for

sure, the declaration of independence of the United States is in line with the values of the Qur'an about justice and human freedom. That it is not religion which the main cause of world chaos, but injustice (p. 172).

Closing Remarks

The ¹ authors of Novel 'Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika' have a positive way to speak about the relationship between American values and Islamic teachings. By giving an interesting story plot, the authors impressed readers about how Muslims are actually love humanity. This novel is not only useful to stop Islamophobia in America but also to strengthen the harmony of Muslims and Americans around the world

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