

## RENEWED ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN THE PRESS Case Study of “Ruangan Agama” Rubric in *Indonesia Raya* Newspaper (1949-1955)

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**Abstract:** The era of Liberal Democracy (1950-1959) was a period of political dynamics in which Islamic political parties had a significant role at the time, such as the Masjumi Party and the Nahdlatul Ulama Party. However, in addition to political parties, newspaper is another medium used to promote Islam as a way of life. This article analyzes the column “Ruangan Agama” in the *Indonesia Raya* newspaper published between 1949 to 1959 in promoting Islam to the public. It is a non-partisan newspaper and not the official media of any party as well. The method used is qualitative and historical approach to get a comprehensive and complete picture of Islamic thought at that time. The findings illustrate that the rubric of the "Ruangan Agama" in *Indonesia Raya* has engaged a discussion of contextual religion by raising real issues that were relevant at that time through the engaged reflection of Muslim intellectuals. The issues raised by the “Ruangan Agama” rubric are corruption, poverty, abuse of power, and others. In short, the "Ruangan Agama" *Indonesia Raya's* column is part of a renewed Islamic movement that reflects critically on the fate of Muslims within the nation-state.

**Keywords:** Newspaper, Indonesia Raya, Islamic movement, Liberal Democracy period.

### Introduction

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Islam has been an organized force against colonialism and imperialism. Sarekat Islam (SI) was the first modern Islamic organization established in the Dutch East Indies, followed by several Islamic organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Persis in the end of Dutch

colonialism in Java, and al-Washliyah and al-Ittihadiyah in Sumatra.<sup>1</sup> Since then Islam began to play a more significant, structured, and organized role in Indonesia, although with measured response from the Dutch administration.<sup>2</sup> In the era of Japanese occupation, Islam even occupied a very important position as a liaison between the natives and the Japanese government. Muslim figures then played a greater role when Indonesia became independent.

In the post-independence era, Islam became one of the most important ideologies in the Indonesian political scene. There were at least two Islamic ideologies that played a major role in the ideological battle at that time, namely modernist Islam and traditionalist Islam. In addition, at that time there was also the Darul Islam (DI) rebellion movement led by Kartosuwiryo in West Java. This movement represents a fundamentalist Islamic movement that wants the establishment of a state based on Islamic law.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Islam was a very important factor in determining the state's life at that time. It can be seen from the gains of Islamic parties at the time of the 1955 elections. Partai Masjumi and NU are the two largest Islamic parties that made it into the top five. These two Islamic parties had their own ideology and approach in politics. Masjumi is more modernist,<sup>4</sup> while NU is traditionalists.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, some political ideas, including the idea of caliphate,<sup>6</sup> and democracy,<sup>7</sup> and even jihadi<sup>8</sup> are still in circulation until today.

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<sup>1</sup> Ja'far, Ja'far, et al., "Discovering the Legacy of Mandailing Ulama: Education, Intellectuals, and Politics in North Sumatra in the Early 20th Century," *Ulumuna: Journal of Islamic studies* 26, 2 (2022).

<sup>2</sup> Fuad Faizi, "Moderating Resistances: The Reproduction of Muslim Religious Space in the Dutch East Indies," *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, 2 (2023)

<sup>3</sup> Cornelis van Dijk, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981)

<sup>4</sup> Fajri Matahati Muhammadin and Fairuz El Mechwar, "Masyumi's 'Djihad dan Qitaal' and Islamic Laws of War: Ahead of Its Time?," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial* 18, 2 (2023)

<sup>5</sup> Robin Bush, *Nabhdlatul Ulama and the Struggle for Power within Islam and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2009)

<sup>6</sup> Ibrahim, Farid Wajdi Dicky Wirianto, and Shohibul Adib, "The Thought Of Figures Of Islamic Mass Organization About Caliphate: A Case Study In Banda Aceh And West Java," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 22, 2 (2022).

<sup>7</sup> Robert W. Hefner, *Islam and Citizenship in Indonesia Democracy and the Quest for an Inclusive Public Ethics* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2023)

Islam is also increasingly developing into a discourse of discussion in the public sphere. One of the media that plays a big role in bringing Islam into discussion in the public sphere is newspapers. Newspaper had played important role in nurturing nationalism in Muslims mind in Indonesia as early as the 1920s.<sup>9</sup> Since the independence era, Indonesian newspapers have found freedom. Journalists and writers sprang up to establish their newspapers. Islam then became one of the topics of conversation in newspapers during the era of Liberal Democracy. Politicians, intellectuals, and religious figures took an active part in promoting the teachings of Islam to the public through newspaper articles. Moreover, in that era there was a DI movement that had harmed the image of Islam amid development being carried out by the Indonesian government, thus many religious figures wrote about Islam in newspapers to promote Islamic teachings that were in accordance with the goals of the state at that time.

This article discusses efforts to promote Islamic teachings in public spaces through newspapers. The author in this case conducted an analysis of the rubric “Ruangan Agama” – “Religion Room” in English – in the *Indonesia Raya* newspaper published between 1949 to 1959. The “Ruangan Agama” rubric was written by Firdaus A.N. Interestingly, however, the “Ruangan Agama” section is hosted by "secular" newspapers that have no affiliation with Islamic parties, such as Masjumi or NU. The *Indonesia Raya* newspaper declared itself as an independent newspaper. Nevertheless, this newspaper has an interest in raising religious issues. To that end, this article aims to analyze the role of newspapers in popularizing Islamic teachings.

Studies on Islam in the era of Liberal Democracy have been carried out by several scholars. B.J. Boland conducted a comprehensive study of Islamic history in the early era of Indonesian independence.<sup>10</sup> Boland conducted a descriptive analysis of the role of Islam in shaping modern Indonesia. In this regard, Boland's work is a critique of Islamic historical studies at that time that ignored

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<sup>8</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, “Interactions between Quietists and Jihadists in Indonesia: Polemics and Blurred Boundaries,” *QJIS* 2 (2023)

<sup>9</sup> Nor Huda Ali, et al., “Islamic Press in Surakarta (1914-1926): A Study of Medan Moeslimin and Islam Bergerak,” *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 17, 2 (2023).

<sup>10</sup> B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

Indonesia's position as one of the Muslim-majority countries.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Boland also criticized his predecessor orientalist scholars who had analyzed Islam in Indonesian society, such as Clifford Geertz. Boland seems did not want to repeat the same mistake as Geertz, so he wanted to “There is room for another alongside the sociological. That is to say, we may take as our point of departure the Islamic world of ideas and its history, in order to see how Islam functions as a living force in the new Indonesia”.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, Boland's study wants to show how Islamic values influenced the formation of modern Indonesian ideas. In this work, Boland also explained publications about Islam through books written by Islamic leaders. Books written at that time mostly sought to make Islam a basic foundation for statehood. The writers discussed by Boland are like Mohd. Arsjad Talib, Aziz Talib, Hadji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (HAMKA), Muh. Isa Ansary, Mohammad Natsir, and others.<sup>13</sup> Despite this, Boland paid little attention to newspapers as a medium that popularized Islam.

Studies of the relationship between the press and Islam have been written in a colonial context. Deliar Noer Michael Laffan, and Azyumardi Azra are three scholars who pay great attention to the role of the press in Indonesian Muslim society.<sup>14</sup> Deliar Noer emphasizes how the local Malay-language press mediated the formation of modernist Islamic thought. Modernist or renewal Islamic thought is a school of Islamic thought that prioritizes *ijtihad* to provide space for reason to interpret religious texts. This school was spread by reformers who had experience living in the Middle East. This idea was later spread through the Malay-language press. Michael Laffan does not see the press as a medium to convey the idea of renewal, but as a medium to convey the idea of nationhood. This study provides a new perspective in looking at Islamic history. So far, the history of Islam in Indonesia has only been seen in the context of intellectual battles between modernists and traditionalists. However, a deeper study of the media that coloured the fight is not widely discussed by scholars.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp.75-79.

<sup>14</sup> Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia 1900-1942* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982); Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below The Winds* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

Azyumardi Azra's study focuses on the role of *al-Imam* and *al-Munir* newspapers in spreading the idea of Islamic reformism. In this article, Azra reveals the influence of *al-Manar* magazine published in the Middle East on two well-known Malay newspapers, namely *al-Imam* and *al-Munir*.<sup>15</sup> In this regard, Azra shows that the Islamic press in Indonesia in the colonial era was not seen as limited to dynamics at the domestic level, but must be analyzed with a transnational approach. This is shown by the large influence of *al-Manar* on two local presses in Indonesia in disseminating the idea of Islamic reformism.

Studies by Yon Machmudi, Frial Ramadhan Supratman, and Mehmet Ozay on the press and Islamic thought show the importance of seeing Islamic history in Indonesia from a media perspective. In this study, Machmudi, Supratman, and Ozay describe the role of Indonesian newspapers in disseminating information about the dynamics of political Islam in Turkey.<sup>16</sup> Newspapers play an important role in influencing the public about the trend of political Islam in Turkey. One of the discussions in Indonesian newspapers at that time was about Atatürk or Mustafa Kemal. The figure became a concern in Indonesian newspapers, such as *Oetoesan Hindia*, *Adil*, *Peroendingan*, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, *Pandji Islam* and others.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the newspaper also assessed the influence of secularism in Turkey and the Muslim World.

Some of the research above did not focus more on the colonial era. The relationship between the press and Islam in the colonial era has indeed been a concern for scholars because of the position of Islam which tends to be an opposition to the power of colonialism. For this reason, the relationship between Islam and the press in the postcolonial era should also be a concern of scholars. A study from Muhammad Yuanda Zara describes the struggle of General Sudirman in the official Muhammadiyah magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*.<sup>18</sup> Zara

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<sup>15</sup> Azyumardi Azra, "The transmission of *al-Manar's* reformism to the Malay-Indonesian World: The case of *al-Imam* and *al-Munir*," *Studia Islamika* 6, 3 (1999): pp.75-100.

<sup>16</sup> Yon Machmudi, Frial Ramadhan Supratman and Mehmet Ozay, "Turkish laicism in Indonesia's newspapers (1920-1940) and its influence on Indonesian secularists and Muslims thoughts" *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 15, 1 (2021): pp. 1-20.

<sup>17</sup> Ozay, "Turkish Laicism in Indonesia's newspapers, pp. 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Yuanda Zara, "Islamic patriotism in General Sudirman Comic Strips of *Suara Muhammadiyah* (1966-1967)," *Studia Islamika* 29, 2 (2022): pp. 305-332.

took case studies of 29 editions of *Suara Muhammadiyah* published between 1966-1967. According to Zara, the comic strip that tells the story of General Sudirman's struggle aims to "upload a sense of Islamic patriotism among readers".<sup>19</sup> In this regard, Islamic values are of course highly emphasized to influence readers. General Sudirman was later portrayed as a pious Muslim hero. The conversation in the comics between Sudirman and his troops shows their adherence to Islamic values. One of the conversations in the comic was conducted by a soldier. One soldier described Sudirman as follows: "An instance that can be emulated is Pak Dirman, who has a solid faith. In a state of illness he did not surrender his fate to the Dutch, and instead he put up a fight".<sup>20</sup>

A more contemporary study of press and Islam relations was conducted by Janet Steele. Steele basically compares journalism in Southeast Asia.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, Steele not only analyzed the Islamic press, such as *Sabili* and *Republika*, but also *Tempo*. Based on this study, Steele stated that there are misconceptions about journalism and Islam. In addition, Steele also states that the work of journalists in Islamic media "contains not only views on the relationship between journalism and Islam but also a wealth of experience that has been overlooked by journalistic scholars".<sup>22</sup>

Based on the studies that have been conducted by the scholars above, the author finds that there have not been many studies that analyze the relationship between Islam and the press in the post-independence era, especially the era of Liberal Democracy. In fact, at that time Indonesia experienced a significant development of the newspaper business. At that time, Islam also became a very decisive factor in politics along with the strengthening of the Masjumi Party and Nahdlatul Ulama in parliament. For this reason, the author conducted an analysis and observation of the Islamic rubric called "Ruangan Agama" in the *Indonesia Raya* newspaper to see the relationship between the press and Islamic ideology that developed in the era of Liberal Democracy.

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<sup>19</sup> Zara "Islamic patriotism in General Sudirman Comic Strips, p. 306.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>21</sup> Janet Steele, *Mediating Islam: Cosmopolitan Journalisms in Muslim Southeast Asia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp.21-22.

In this study, the author uses the historical method, by collecting historical primary sources as the main source. The primary sources used by the author in this study are articles from the “Ruangan Agama” rubric in the *Indonesia Raya* newspaper. This newspaper is stored in the collection of the National Library of Indonesia. The articles published in the rubric “Ruangan Agama” are analyzed with a historical approach so as to get a comprehensive and complete picture of the condition of Islamic thought at that time. In addition, the author also analysed domestic political conditions in Indonesia. It is important to know to what extent the writings in the rubric "Room of Religion" are influenced by domestic political conditions themselves.

### **Islamic Press in Indonesia's Post-Independence Era**

Socio-cultural life in Indonesian Muslim society is undoubtedly inseparable from political contestation among Islamic parties. Masjumi and NU are two parties that have a fundamental pattern of difference. At first, NU was part of Masjumi. However, in 1952 NU left Masjumi due to intense opposition within Masjumi between modernist and traditionalist Islam.<sup>23</sup> The distinction between these two schools dates back to the early 20th century. Modernist Islamists came to the fore in Indonesian society as a critique of the religious practices of traditionalists. Modernists emphasize *ijtihad* in viewing modernization brought about by the West. For this reason, modernist Islamists place more emphasis on reason and rationality in the practice of Islamic teachings. They are usually more accustomed to modern education. For that they have a neat organizational structure. This is in contrast to traditionalists who emphasize *taqlid* on scholars. Carool Kersten sees that the modernists represented by Masjumi appear as urban circles influenced by European style. This is seen as strange to traditionalists.<sup>24</sup>

Modernist and traditionalist Muslims already have the press as a medium of communication. However, modernists since the beginning of the 20th century have been more accustomed to modern media in conveying their ideas and visions. Modern media widely used by modernist Islamic circles are newspapers and magazines. In fact, the emergence of modernist Islamic ideas among Indonesians was

<sup>23</sup> Carool Kersten, *A History of Islam in Indonesia: Unity in Diversity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p. 138.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

influenced by *Al-Manar* magazine initiated by Rashid Rida. In Padang, *al-Munir* newspaper was founded by Haji Abdullah Ahmad, one of the modernist Islamic figures from Minangkabau.<sup>25</sup> *Al-Munir* stressed the importance of resistance to the practice of *heresy*. In addition, the newspaper also attaches importance to "the organization as a vehicle for advancing the Muslim ummah".<sup>26</sup> Modernist Islamic figures, such as Mohammad Natsir and Hamka, have been writers and leaders in the Islamic press since the early 20th century. Hamka, for example, is a modernist Islamic figure who heads the *Pedoman Masyarakat* newspaper (1936-1943). Meanwhile, Natsir is a prolific writer who writes a lot in various Islamic presses, such as *Pedoman Masyarakat* and *Pandji Islam*.<sup>27</sup> Modernist organizations, such as Persis, also had a press to pour their ideas, such as *Defenders of Islam* and *Al-Fatwa*.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, traditionalists from NU also had a press organ called *Berita Nabdlatoel Oelama* (BNO) in the 1930s.<sup>29</sup>

In the era of Liberal Democracy, modernist Islamic writers gathered in the *Abadi* newspaper. This newspaper is also considered the media of the Masjumi Party. The newspaper promoted modernist Islamic ideas, such as integration between Islam and democracy. Although the idea of democracy originated in the West, modernists also promoted this idea. For this reason, this newspaper opposed the idea of Communism which it considered contrary to democracy. The caricatures contained in *Abadi* show the strong anti-communism voiced by modernist Islamists. One caricature on January 22, 1955 depicts PNI figure Ali Sastroamidjojo flanked by two women dressed in modern and traditionalist dress. Women dressed in modern dress were labelled as PKI, while those dressed as traditionalists with headscarves and batik cloth were labelled with NU. On top of Ali Sastroamidjojo's head, there is a figure bearing the hammer and sickle symbol and reading "PKI & non-party men". The PKI woman was seen warning Ali Sastroamidjojo with the words "watch out! If it is taken down", while the NU woman told Ali to take down the figure.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Azra, "The transmission of *al-Manar's* reformism, p. 92.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>27</sup> Kersten, *A History of Islam in Indonesia*, p. 105.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>30</sup> "Nasib ber-Polygamil," *Abadi*, 22 January 1955, no.17, year fifth.

In the caricature, *Abadi* criticized the PNI for embracing two opposing forces, namely PKI and NU. For this reason, Masjumi warned the PNI not to get caught up in the politics played by the PKI.

Meanwhile, apart from the PKI, *Abadi*'s position as a media of modernist Islam clearly opposed many secular nationalists. The PNI and Sukarno were targets of criticism from this newspaper. On 5 February 1955 *Abadi* newspaper published a story about Sukarno's personal life. In the news, *Abadi* discussed the relationship between Sukarno and Fatmawati which was reportedly fractured because there was a third woman, namely Hartini.<sup>31</sup> Modernist Islamic critiques of Sukarno and secular nationalists have long been rooted. In the 1930s, modernist figures, such as Hamka and Natsir, had already polemicized with Sukarno.<sup>32</sup> However, according to Kersten, the rift between Sukarno and the Masjumi circles occurred when Sukarno spoke in Amuntai, South Kalimantan, stating that an Islamic-based state “would divide areas, such as Bali, parts of Sulawesi, Maluku, and a row of islands to the east”.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, *Abadi* also contains various writings from modernist Islamic circles. One of the writings contained in *Abadi* is a poem from Mohammad Natsir entitled “Ber-Hari Raya”.<sup>34</sup> Natsir's political and moral commentaries are also widely contained in *Abadi*. On March 9, 1955, this newspaper carried Natsir's comments in an open meeting held at the racecourse, Tanah Sareal, Bogor City. Natsir commented that there is a “demoralization and moral crisis in Indonesia”.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Sukiman Wirjosandjojo is also a Masjumi and modernist Islamic figure who is widely quoted also in *Abadi* newspaper. Sukiman who is the deputy chairman of Masjumi often expressed his criticism of Indonesia's political conditions within *Abadi*. On 18 March 1955 *Abadi* carried Sukiman's criticism of Justice Minister Tan Po Goan.

In addition, traditionalists also have a press organ called *Duta Masyarakat*. This newspaper is a medium for NU and traditionalist

<sup>31</sup> “Java Post: Fatmawati dirikan rumah di Kebajoran Baru,” *Abadi*, 5 February 1955, no. 29, year fifth, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> H. A. M. K. Amrullah, “Tjinta kepada pemimpin,” *Soeara Islam*, 1 October 1931, no. 5, year first; Ozay, “Turkish Laicism in Indonesia’s newspapers, p. 10-18.

<sup>33</sup> Kersten, *A History of Islam in Indonesia*, p. 139.

<sup>34</sup> Mohammad Natsir, “Ber-Hari Raya,” *Abadi*, 21 May 1955, no. 111, year fifth, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> “Moh Natsir: Memang Ada Demoralisasi dan Krisis Akhlak,” *Abadi*, 9 March 1955, no. 55, year fifth, p. 1.

Islamic circles to voice their ideas. NU's closeness to secular nationalists, such as the PNI and Sukarno, is also reflected in the newspaper. This is of course different from *Abadi* who criticized Sukarno and PNI a lot. The *Duta Masjarakat* newspaper-broadcast many of Sukarno's speeches, especially from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s. In that era, the relationship between Sukarno and NU was very close. On 2 January 1958, the *Duta Majsarakat* published Sukarno's speech at the 1958 New Year reception at the Merdeka Palace. In a speech published by *Duta Masjarakat*, Sukarno said that 1958 "can bring peace and tranquillity to all people in this world".<sup>36</sup>

The *Duta Masjarakat* newspaper also contains much information, comments and writings from traditionalist Islamic circles from NU. One NU figure who made comments in *Duta Masjarakat* was MP K. H. Moh Wahib Wahab. Kiai Wahab, for example, made a comment in *Duta Masjarakat* on January 4, 1958, regarding Mohammad Hatta's criticism of the government. According to Wahab, Mohammad Hatta's criticism should be used as "material for the government to steer the government in the current situation".<sup>37</sup> In addition, *Duta Masjarakat* also reported on the roles carried out by NU figures. On January 6, 1958, *Duta Masjarakat* reported on the appreciation of the Minister of Religious Affairs – who came from among NU – K. H. Mohamad Ilyas from the Republic of Egypt. Ilyas received the "Wisam Alistihkak" award from the Republic of Egypt presented by the Egyptian Ambassador to Indonesia, Ali Fahmi al-Amroussi.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the writings of traditionalist Islamists, such as Moch. Thaha Ma'roef also graced the *Duta Masjarakat* newspaper. One of Thaha Ma'roef's columns that regularly appears in *Duta Masjarakat* is "Mimbar Djum'at" which is published every Friday.

In the 1950s two mainstream Islamic political forces, modernist and traditionalist Islam had great potential to seize the influence of Indonesian Muslims. They fought over the influence of newspapers. In addition, newspapers run by modernist and traditionalist Islamists also reflect the political conditions of Masjumi and NU. The *Abadi*

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<sup>36</sup> "Presiden Sukarno: Mari kita berdjalan terus dalam tahun jang baru ini," *Duta Masjarakat*, 2 January 1958, no. 1267, year fifth, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> "Harus dilihat dari mula2 terbentuknja Kab. Karya," *Duta Masjarakat*, 4 January 1958, no. 1269, year fifth, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> "Menteri Agama dapat bintang kehormatan," *Duta Masjarakat*, 6 January 1958, no. 1270, year fifth, p. 1.

newspaper, which became a medium for modernist Islamists, for example, was critical of and opposed to Sukarno, the secular nationalists and the PKI. Furthermore, the *Duta Masyarakat* newspaper was more aggressive towards Sukarno and the PNI. This is also reflected in the attitude of NU which was also ready to join a coalition with PNI in the late 1950s. However, in addition to the two newspapers that became propaganda media Masjumi and NU, there is another newspaper that also cares about the condition of Indonesian Muslims, namely *Indonesia Raya*. Interestingly, *Indonesia Raya* claims to be neutral and non-partisan, not affiliated with any political forces, including Masjumi and NU. The position of *Indonesia Raya* on the political, social, economic and cultural life of Muslims in Indonesia is reflected in the rubric “Ruangan Agama” which is published every Friday.

### The “Ruangan Agama” and Political Criticism

*Indonesia Raya* newspaper was one of the independent newspapers that prospered in the 1950s. It was originally influenced by military figures and is often referred to as a "military newspaper". Some of the soldiers who initially provided support to this newspaper were Major Brentel Susilo (Army), Military Governor Daan Jahja (Acting Commander of the Siliwangi Division until 1948), Basarudin Nasution (Director of the Army Law School), Colonel Tahi Bonar Simatupang (KSAP official), Colonel Abdul Haris Nasution (KSAD), Lt. Col. S. Parman (Perwira Staf Gubernur Militer Jakarta), Major Bachtar Lubis (Jurubicara Angkatan Darat), Letkol Sutojo Siswomihardjo (Komandan Batalyon V CPM).<sup>39</sup> However, Ignatius Haryanto said that the support of the soldiers was only in the form of material support, such as purchasing papers, paying employee salaries, moral support, and protecting soldiers.<sup>40</sup> *Indonesia Raya's* attitude towards the June 27 events showed the tension between the government and the Army. In this title, *Indonesia Raya* was optimistic about the role of the Army.

People hope that starting with this Army will open the possibility of stopping the symptoms of disintegration that are taking place in various fields of life and business in our homeland. Many people hope that for example this action of the Army can be

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<sup>39</sup> Ignatius Haryanto, *Indonesia Raya Dibredel* (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2006), p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 54-55.

created a situation in which the eradication of corruption can begin, the cessation of politicization of the state apparatus in all fields, the special play with licenses and the like, the expulsion of adventurers from the political and economic world, and the constructive resolution of our state problems, and the solemn commencement of the development work of our country.<sup>41</sup>

*Indonesia Raya* newspaper was first published on December 29, 1949 in Jakarta. Jullie Effendie and Hiswara were the general leaders of the newspaper. At that time Mochtar Lubis' name was still recorded as a journalist and editor of Foreign Relations in *Antara*.<sup>42</sup> After that, Mochtar Lubis left *Antara* and joined *Indonesia Raya*. Since then *the Indonesia Raya* newspaper has been very attached to the name Mochtar Lubis. For this reason, when you want to understand *Indonesia Raya*, you must also understand the thoughts of Mochtar Lubis. Mochtar Lubis' character as a journalist of *Indonesia Raya* can be seen from various testimonies issued by his colleagues.<sup>43</sup> He was the figure who most influenced the ideology of *Indonesia Raya*. David Hill called Mochtar Lubis “a symbol of press freedom in Indonesia”. In addition, Mochtar is also known as a person who diligently criticizes anyone, including the president.<sup>44</sup> Mochtar Lubis is known as a democrat who upholds the value of liberalism. This can be seen by his seriousness in criticizing the authoritarian system of government. In addition, Mochtar Lubis was also known as an anti-communist. Besides being known as a journalist, Mochtar Lubis is also known as a novelist. Some of his famous novels, such as *A Road with No End* and *Twilight in Jakarta*.<sup>45</sup>

Like various other Indonesian newspapers, *Indonesia Raya* features many types of writings, ranging from opinions, advertisements, short stories, the 'Mas Kluyur' column under Mochtar Lubis, the "Gema Pers" column which contains information about the state of the Indonesian press, to the column “Ruangan Agama”. This article focuses on discussing the column “Ruangan Agama” which is widely

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<sup>41</sup> “Beberapa pikiran untuk Angkatan Darat,” *Indonesia Raya*, 21 July 1955, No. 165, year sixth.

<sup>42</sup> Haryanto, *Indonesia Raya Dibredelel*, p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Atmakusumah (ed.), *Mochtar Lubis: Wartawan Jihad* (Jakarta: Harian Kompas, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> David T. Hill, *Journalism and Politics in Indonesia: A Critical Biography of Mochtar Lubis (1922-2004) as Editor and Author* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

published in *Indonesia Raya* every Friday. This column was written by “H. Firdaus A.N”. Meanwhile, researchers have not found further about the figure of H. Firdaus A.N. who filled in the column “Ruangan Agama”. One of the appeals of the “Ruangan Agama” column in this press is that the press nurtured by liberal figures provides a place for Islamic intellectuals to express ideas and opinions on religious issues.

Based on an analysis conducted by the authors, the column “Ruangan Agama” displays contextual Islamic teachings rather than textual ones. Religious problems raised by “Ruangan Agama” are social and economic problems faced by the people of Indonesia. In the column “Ruangan Agama”, H. Firdaus A.N. wrote that Islam must be a religion that is able to solve social, economic, and political problems.

Therefore, let's not be surprised, if the Islamic religion has a wide wing, it is able to invite people to various shades of 'nature the question of a turbulent society. Do not be surprised, if the teachings of Islam can answer the question that grows in various fields.<sup>46</sup>

The “Ruangan Agama”, in fact, always links religious affairs with real life. In discussing the issue of *Eid al-Adha* and sacrifice, for example, “Ruangan Agama” provides a broad interpretation by linking sacrificial worship with poverty suffered by Muslims. According to the “Ruangan Agama”, the worship of *Eid al-Adha*,” is to show love to the poor who rarely get meat for their food”.<sup>47</sup> For this reason, Paradise A.N. in “Ruangan Agama” provides a broader interpretation of sacrificial worship. The interpretation is carried out from the perspective of socio-economic problems faced by society. In addition, “Ruangan Agama” also criticized the lavish lifestyle of Indonesian officials who were considered incompatible with Islamic religious teachings.

In addition to many actions contrary to religious teachings, people have now shown their thirst and devotion to matter. They have worshipped things, more than others. As long as they can, they don't care anymore, whether the object/material is taken in a lawful way, or hope like corruption and all kinds of tricks to have

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<sup>46</sup> H. Firdaus A.N. “Ruangan Agama: Arti ‘Idul Adha bagi Masyarakat,” *Indonesia Raya*, 29 July 1955, No. 172, year sixth (VI), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

hoarded property. Therefore, it is not surprising, if we hear, that now many people are suddenly becoming rich. There have been many “Qarun” in Indonesia; from tall people to Tualang thugs who are outside the government body.<sup>48</sup>

One of the other socio-economic problems raised by “Ruangan Agama” is corruption. The rubric “Ruangan Agama” on August 12, 1955 was entitled "What is the law to eradicate corruption?". Usually the column "Space of Religion", before discussing a problem, quotes verses from the Quran or al-Hadith. In the article "What is the law against corruption", for example, “Ruangan Agama” quotes *hadith*.<sup>49</sup> After that, articles usually reflect on the example of Muslim figures of the prophetic period of Muhammad (PBUH) and *Khulafaur Rashidin*. In this article, Firdaus A.N. tells the figure of Caliph Umar bin Khattab, a companion of the prophet Muhammad SAW who became the caliph replacing Abu Bakr As-Shidiq. In the paper, Firdaus A.N. shows an example of eradicating corruption.

In Islam, in the time of Caliph Omar bin Khatab, scrutiny in the possible corruption of the country's treasury, was highly scrutinized and scrutinized, as was the head of state (Umar bin Khatab) himself. He did not hesitate to ask his governor where he got his property, if he knew in his view, that the governor could not earn such according to his view, that the governor could not earn such according to his salary.<sup>50</sup>

After that, usually the article “Ruangan Agama” also quotes verses from the Qur'an in the middle of the writing, so that his opinions are legitimized with the verse. In the article “What is the law against corruption?”, for example, Firdaus A.N. in “Ruangan Agama” quotes the Qur'anic verse Surat Al-Maidah verse 100 which reads:

Say, O Muhammad, it is not the same dirty as the pure one, even though you are amazed to see the pile of dirty treasures; So fear Allah, O you who have reason, hopefully, you will have the happiness of life (al-Maidah verse 100).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> H. Firdaus A.N. “Ruang Agama: Negara jang direndhai Tuhan,” *Indonesia Raya*, 16 July 1955, no. 161, year sixth (VI), p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> H. Firdaus A.N. “Ruang Agama: Apa hukum pembantrasan korupsi?” *Indonesia Raya*, 12 August 1955, No. 183, year sixth (VI), p. 3

<sup>50</sup> Firdaus A.N. “Ruang Agama: Apa hukum pembantrasan korupsi?”, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

The problems raised by the column “Ruangan Agama” are inseparable from the views of the editors of *Indonesia Raya* on Indonesia's socio-economic and political problems. Before the article “Ruangan Agama” entitled “What is the law on combating corruption?” was written, the editorial of *Indonesia Raya* had raised the problem of corruption with the title “Eradication of corruption” on August 8, 1955. This is related to the arrest of Van Dulken, Deputy Head of LAAPLN, who was involved in a foreign exchange corruption case of 300 million rupiah.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the *Indonesia Raya* newspaper also criticized Sukarno's desire to go on Hajj. The criticism was delivered through the “Ruangan Agama” entitled “Before you go on Hajj” on July 8, 1955. In the article, it was mentioned that the author of “Ruangan Agama”, H. Firdaus A.N., stated, “Then specifically to Karno we warn, that the master's country is now chaotic and excited. Before you depart, this must be sorted out first so that things do not arise that we do not want to be together later”.<sup>53</sup> The next day *Indonesia Raya* issued news also about the costs incurred for President Sukarno to go to Hajj. *Indonesia Raya* newspaper stated that “the president and his entourage went on Hajj and made official visits abroad amounting to no less than 2,750,000 rupiah”.<sup>54</sup>

*Indonesia Raya* newspaper also gave a lot of criticism of Indonesian politics. The rubric “Ruangan Agama” also provides a lot of criticism of the running of government through reflection on Islamic religious values. The political criticism given by the “Religion Room” was carried out after discussing religious issues.

By taking guidance to God and the sunnah of His messenger, let us examine the state of our society and explore it more vividly and clearly. So, it is good that in this case we are honest, that we, our people, our country, are still far from what Allah and His prophets want. Could a society that is always excited by quarrels and conflicts in various fields, be said to be the society that we want to be holy? What is a country that is tired of corrupt people, can be said to be a state that God recognizes? What are the deceptions perpetrated by the ruling politicians, he said, for devotion to the country and the people, but to fulfil the greedy

<sup>52</sup> “Pembantaran korupsi,” *Indonesia Raya*.

<sup>53</sup> H. Firdaus A.N. “Ruang Agama: Sebelum tuan pergi haji”, *Indonesia Raya*, 8 July 1955, No.154, Year Sixth (VI), p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Firdaus A.N. “Ruang Agama: Sebelum tuan pergi haji”, p. 3.

desires, in reality, can be said by the rails determined by the Scriptures, on which books they have taken their oaths?<sup>55</sup>

The rubric of the “Ruang Agama” maintained by H. Firdaus A.N., also did not hesitate to give direct criticism. One of the criticisms directed by the “Ruang Agama” directly was to the Ali-Arifin Cabinet.

Massive corruption arises like the situation in the past Ali-Arifin Cabinet, because people have been so enslaved by the passions of materialism. Material lust that is abysmal and has been greatly exaggerated.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, the “Ruangan Agama” section also further explains the criticism of Ali-Arifin's Cabinet members.

It is common knowledge that many of Ali Arifin's former cabinet ministers are wealthy, many employees who are closely associated with these ministers in the past, which is too conspicuous for this destitute people. It must all be properly examined, and if it is clear that the right of the state is being corrupted, then do not hesitate to act. Sin is the apparatus of the state or the officers in that matter – who do not want to act when they know – because he is allowing evil to run rampant in society. Because if we hear news about the wealth of Ali-Arifin's cabinet ministers, and we read article 53 of the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia that a minister when he holds office can never receive from anyone, directly or indirectly, a promise or gift, -- then inevitably a question arises from the people: where did they get the famous wealth? Did they not break his oath?<sup>57</sup>

The courage of the “Ruangan Agama” rubric in criticizing the government was not only directed at cabinet members, but even to President Sukarno who was about to go on Hajj in 1955.

Then specifically to Karno, we warn you, that the lord country is now chaotic and excited. Before the master departs, this must be sorted out first so that things do not arise that we do not want to be together later. After that, then I recommend that Karno really perform Hajj sincerely, not unlike Prof. Snouk Hurgronje who had both Hajj and settled in Makkah but then became a big

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<sup>55</sup> Firdaus A.N. “Ruang Agama: Takutilah ‘azab bentjana dari Tuhan”, *Indonesia Raya*, 5 August 1955, No.177, Year Sixth (VI), p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Firdaus A. N. “Ruang Agama: Apa hukum pembantrasan korupsi?”, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

enemy of the Indonesian people, because after that Hajj he did *divide et impera* politics to our nation. Again, make a pilgrimage sincerely for Allah's sake!<sup>58</sup>

The “Ruangan Agama” rubric is part of the *Indonesia Raya* newspaper which is known to be critical of the government. This of course gives an idea that the press managed by Mochtar Lubis is an independent press. The consequences of the critical attitude shown by *Indonesia Raya* have led to the newspaper's banning. In fact, Mochtar Lubis, as the editor-in-chief of *Indonesia Raya* also had to languish in prison for this critical attitude.

### Conclusion

The “Ruangan Agama” rubric maintained by H. Firdaus A.N. in the *Indonesia Raya* newspaper is a column that discusses many religious issues from political, social, economic, and cultural perspectives. This rubric engages a discussion of contextual religion by raising real issues that were relevant at that time through the engaged reflection of Muslim intellectuals. One of the issues raised by the “Ruangan Agama” rubric is corruption. In addition, there are also issues, such as poverty, abuse of power and others. This of course shows that the rubric of the “Ruangan Agama” is part of a renewed Islamic idea that emphasizes the rational rather than the textual understanding. This method has its roots in the 19th century developed by the Egyptian reforming scholar Muhammad Abduh. For this reason, the “Ruangan Agama” rubric is able to explore and critique the real conditions faced by Indonesia. In fact, criticism of the “Ruangan Agama” was directed at ministers from the Indonesian cabinets. The case study conducted by the author, “Ruangan Agama” gave a lot of criticism to Ali-Arifin's cabinet, even to President Sukarno himself. For this reason, in this article, the author argues that the rubric of the “Ruangan Agama” in *Indonesia Raya* is part of a renewed Islamic movement that reflects critically on the fate of Muslims within the nation-state. For this reason, “Ruangan Agama” emphasizes many contextual, not textual, methods in responding to problems faced by Muslims in Indonesia at that time, such as corruption, poverty, materialism, and others. []

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<sup>58</sup> Firdaus A.N. “Ruang Agama: Sebelum tuan pergi haji”, p. 3.

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