

Term of Reference 8th Interfaith Dialogue
“Decolonizing Religion”
Yogyakarta, 22 June 2023

Introduction

In the 7th Interfaith Dialogue, the discussions were framed with the theme, “Religion in Colonization and Decolonization, Indonesian-Dutch Confrontation, Confirmation, Transformation.” As expected, there were many issues surfaced during the conference. Time and space were too limited to deeply consider each of the issues. Therefore, there is a need to continue the discussions and debates. For that reason, the present 8th Interfaith Dialogue uplifts a similar theme, “Decolonizing Religion(s).”

Decolonization essentially represents an effort to heal the harm and injustice caused by colonialism. It is a theoretical framework that seeks to challenge and overturn the legacy of colonialism, both in terms of its material impacts and its ideological and cultural influences by way of recognizing and dismantling the structures of power and domination that were established under colonialism. Speaking of today, it is true that a country like Indonesia is no more under the domination of foreign power as it was in the Dutch colonial time. But, it is difficult to deny the lingering legacy of colonial power to the present. Some call this coloniality to distinguish it from colonialism. In terms of time, coloniality refers to the present, the post-colonial time, whereas colonialism refers to the past, the colonial time itself.

Decolonization seeks to establish a more just and equitable future in addition to rectifying the harm done in the past. This means recognizing the ongoing impacts of colonialism and addressing the continuing injustices resulting from it, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. It also means recognizing the agency and perspectives of those who have been most impacted by colonialism during and after the colonial era and working to unpack their voices and experiences in the process of decolonization.

Decolonizing Religion

Reclaiming indigenous spiritualities and knowledge systems that colonial regimes have repressed or obliterated is one aspect of the process of decolonizing religion. In this process, the dominance of Western faiths is challenged, and the worth and significance of indigenous spiritual traditions are recognized. On the other hand, it also critically examines the notion of religion and its various rendering such as indigenous religion, world religions, and so on.

Moreover, decolonizing religion can help to promote social justice more broadly. Decolonizing religion can support the development of a more critical awareness of privilege and power by recognizing the role that Western religions have played in the process of colonialism. This can lead to greater recognition of the ways in which colonialism and coloniality continue to shape our world today and the need for transformative change.

Bearing in mind that religion is interrelated to several relevant issues, this conference will address the following topics as its sub-themes:

- Gender and decolonizing religion.
- Education/curriculum and decolonizing religion.
- Local theology and decolonizing religion.
- Indigenous religion and decolonizing religion.

The sub-themes cover a broad area that should be understood in a way that religion relates to those issues of gender, education, theology, and, of course, indigenous religion. Decolonizing religion in relation to gender seeks the lost stories, the authentic stories that shaped the indigenous cultures before they molded into one single narration. For instance, there is a number of indigenous communities in Indonesia that recognize 4-7 gender classification while foreign ideology brought a binary classification. Also, race and gender ideologies and corresponding hierarchical dominance in Indonesia and the Netherlands helped fuel and perpetuate the stripping of women's authority in paternalistic approaches, conceived from the understanding that women are inferior and in need of protection. This idea was directly inherited from the colonial era in which civilizing and protecting the colonized community was at its core business. In relation to theology, decolonizing theology is a process of critically examining the theological frameworks that have been developed within the context of colonialism, imperialism, and other forms of domination. It involves challenging the assumptions and biases that have been embedded in theological discourses and centering the experiences and perspectives of marginalized communities. Theology, like other disciplines, has been influenced by the legacy of colonialism. This has led to a situation where non-Western theological frameworks have been marginalized, and Western theological frameworks have been assumed to be universal. This brings another issue closely connected to Western Christianity and theology, that is, decolonizing Christianity. This process involves challenging the hegemony of Western interpretations of Christianity and acknowledging the value and importance of indigenous Christian traditions. As Christianity in Indonesian and European contexts often meets Islam in many respects, Islam is also inescapable from the decolonizing process. This involves acknowledging the ways in which Western colonial powers have influenced the development of Islamic thought and practice and

working to address the harm that has been done. Islam is often portrayed one-sidedly by Western Christianity as a religion of violence. This view reflects a misunderstanding of the religion which needs much revision. Decolonizing Islam is an important process that has the potential to create a more just and equitable world.

While describing decolonization and decolonizing religion with some interconnected aspects above, it does not mean invoking “the old wound” (Indonesia: “luka lama”). The intention is merely to review the presence to identify injustices and bring forth the opposite: justice for all and in all aspects of life. This a call that humanity is facing, no matter race, gender, social status, and religion.

Venue and Time

Time: 22 June 2023, 08.00 – 17.00 WIB (Western Indonesia Time)

Venue: Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Jl. Dr. Wahidin 5-25,
Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
<https://www.ukdw.ac.id/>

Speakers

Zainal Abidin Bagir (keynote)

Frans Wijsen (decolonizing decolonization),

Josien Folbert and Haryani Saptaningtyas (local theology as decolonization)

Syamsu Maarif (indigenous religions, Islam)

Dewi Candraningrum (gender)

Ruard Ganzevoort (education, Christianity)

Schedule (tentative)

08.00 – 10.00	Opening ceremony Opening speeches: KBRI Belanda, NICMCR, UKDW
10.00 – 10.30	Keynote speech
10.30 – 12.00	Plenary session 1: local theology, decolonizing decolonization
12.00 – 13.00	Group picture, lunch break and prayer time (Ishoma)
13.00 – 15.00	Plenary session 2: indigenous religions, Islam, gender, religious education, Christianity
15.00 – 15.30	Closing statements, conclusions and recommendations

15.30 – 17.00	NICMCR's meeting
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Conference Fee:

- Indonesian Student Participant: 50K IDR
- International Student Participant: 5 USD
- General Indonesian Participant: 100K IDR
- General International Participant: 10 USD

Bank Transfer

Account No: 024 989 8884

Account Name: Fakultas Theologia UKDW

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Registration Link: bit.ly/8thinterfaithdialogue

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