

A Brief Report on the Excursion at Mendut Monastery, Magelang and Percik Institute, Salatiga

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1. Introduction

This year, the NICMCR Consortium held the 8th Interfaith Dialogue (ID 8th/8th Interfaith Dialogue) at the State Islamic University (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (June 22, 2023) and Duta Wacana Christian University (UKDW) Yogyakarta (June 23, 2023). The theme raised in ID 8th is about Decolonizing Religion. This conference addressed the following sub-themes, Gender and decolonizing religion; Education/curriculum and decolonizing religion; Local theology and decolonizing religion; and Indigenous religion and decolonizing religion.

After the "seminar" activity, participants were invited to take an excursion at institutions related to one of the topics above. Two institutions are the subject of the tour, namely the Mendut Temple and Monastery in Magelang Regency and the Percik Institute in Salatiga City (a member of the NICMCR Consortium). The selection of the Mendut Monastery as one of the subjects of the excursion was the seminar participants could learn more about the vision and mission of the Mendut Monastery. In addition, participants can also see the beauty of Mendut Temple up close. Meanwhile, the course at Percik Institute Salatiga was intended not only for seminar participants to learn and understand the process of interfaith dialogue at the local level. However, specifically, the participants were also invited to have a discussion with the theme "Dialogue on Local Theological Processes in the Context of Pluralism."

Even though the participants had received an explanation at the Seminar in Jogja, the information they received still needed to be comprehensive, especially concrete knowledge of local theology. Therefore, the course at Percik Institute has provided a more lifelike picture of decolonization concerning local theology.

2. Objectives of the Excursion

The objectives of the Excursion at Mendut Temple and the Local Theological Advocacy Seminar include:

- a. Provides opportunities for participants to learn about the history, architecture, and Buddhism related to Mendut Temple.
- b. Promotes a better understanding of religious and cultural diversity and helps strengthen interfaith relations by promoting tolerance and harmony;

- c. Explains how advocating local theology can help strengthen local religious identity and promote interfaith tolerance.

3. Activities of the Excursion

3.1. Excursion at Mendut Monastery, Magelang Regency, Central Java

On Friday, June 23, 2023, some of the participants (24 people) of the 8th Interfaith Dialogue and International Seminar on "Decolonizing Religion" visited two places. The first visit was to Mendut Monastery in Magelang Regency, and the second was to the Percik Institute in Salatiga City.

Seminar participants arrived at the Mendut Monastery around 09.30 WIB using the Tourism Bus. They were welcomed by representatives of the Percik Institute, who were in charge of the activities, and the General Secretary of the Mendut Temple as the host. The General Secretary of the Mendut Monastery, Mr. Wahyu Utomo, invited the participants to the Vihara meeting room and gave remarks. He then briefly introduced the monastery, regarding the history and activities of the monastery both inside and outside as an effort to realize social care.



In this brief explanation, Mr. Wahyu also tells about the progress of Bhiksu Sri Pannyavara as head of the monastery in maintaining peace through his involvement in interfaith movements/forums. Participation in interfaith movements or forums is essential for the Vihara to

apply Buddhist teachings amidst a pluralistic society. Not only participating in interfaith activities or forums but also implementing it in the management of monasteries, such as out of seven staff at the monastery, only three staff are Buddhists, one staff is Catholic, and three other staff are Muslims. One of the criteria for determining staff is also based on understanding tolerance and pluralism. This allowed Mr. Wahyu to be accepted at the monastery and to occupy the position of General Secretary. While still in college, he was actively involved in the Youth Interfaith Forum "Sobat Muda" initiated by Percik.



Mr. Wahyu (Monestary Mendut Staff) is describing Mendut Monestary activities to the audiences

After introductions and a short discussion about the role of Buddhism in society, Mr. Wahyu invited the participants to continue the discussion while walking around the monastery. On this occasion, the participants received an explanation of how the Buddhist temple or religion provides a place, attention, and respect for local theology by having Buddha statues from various locations. Each Buddha statue in this monastery is unique, reflecting the local problems that are struggling in each region.



The visit to the Mendut Monastery ended at 11.00. The participants then prepared to continue their journey to Salatiga.

3.2. Excursion at Percik Institute: Discussion on "Dialogue on Local Theological Processes in the Context of Diversity"

Around 13.00 WIB, the excursion participants arrived at Kampoeng Percik. Apart from the excursion participants, there were also observers and local theology practitioners from several regions in Central Java, such as (Wonogiri Regency, Grobogan Regency, Purworejo Regency, Semarang Regency, Salatiga City, and its surroundings). The number of participants in the activity is estimated to be 74 people (47 men and 27 women). Based on the attendance list, participants came from Indonesia (64 people), the Netherlands (9 people), and Turkey (1 person).

The presence of the excursion participants at Percik was greeted quite lively by the Reog art. While enjoying lunch, the participants watched the Reog Ponorogo art in a bright atmosphere. Apart from the Reog Ponorogo art, the committee also presented the Angklung art from West Java but the performers were artists who had lived in Salatiga City for a long time. The participants were also treated to a choral performance by four SWCU students. Apart from being greeted by the arts, several Percik staff warmly welcomed the participants. Percik staff explained the existence of

Kampoeng Percik to the participants. They were impressed with the arrangement of Kampoeng Percik.

Regarding the Kampoeng Percik environment, in the opening of the discussion, Haryani Saptaningtyas (Director of Percik) revealed that the founders of Percik deliberately built the Percik office like the atmosphere in a village/rural area. Kampoeng Percik is also adaptive to modern life. As witnessed by the participants, Percik does not have a gate, so the participants can come back at any time to visit Kampoeng Percik. Before closing her remarks, to give appreciation and respect to Percik's founders and staff who had passed away, Haryani asked the participants to observe silence and pray for them.



Apart from providing information regarding Kampoeng Percik, Haryani also explained the background of today's discussion. One of Haryani's explanations is that the contextualization of theology has been studied at universities and is considered a process of decolonization. According to her, there needs to be more understanding of the decolonization of theology put into practice as part of the advocacy process. For this reason, participants will receive an explanation regarding the decolonization process in Central Java using the case of the local theology program in Percik in collaboration with the Synod of the Christian Church of Java.



The discussion process was facilitated by Singgih Nugroho (Percik Conflict Prevention Program Manager). The discussion began with a presentation from Dr. Pradjarta (Keynote Speaker and the Initiator of Percik's Local Theology Program). Due to health reasons, Dr. Pradjarta delivered through a video recording that had been prepared beforehand. In a limited duration, Dr. Pradjarta has provided a comprehensive description of the local theology program, a collaboration between Percik and the Javanese Christian Church.

Dr. Pradjarta explained some of the historical aspects or background of the Local Theology Program at Percik. According to him, one of these aspects, among others, is marked by tension between local theology and Western theology. That tension continues to this day. Dr. Pradjarta gave an example, "Salamatan," or Ritual Communal Meal, has been replaced with Biston; Circumcision is considered an Islamic tradition and should therefore be avoided. Shamanism (native healing) was banned because it was considered heresy. However, these practices still live under the surface under the shadow of the domination of Western Theology.



Dr. Pradjarta also quoted Philip Quarles van Ufford, who described the tensions of inter-Christian rivalry, which were closely attached to the tradition of forming Javanese, Kejawen (Javanism), Islam, and pure Christianity pioneered by official missionaries from the Netherlands.

According to Dr. Pradjarta, many theologians and pastors support tradition to revive local theology, a jargon that has been dreamed of for a long time. They hope that with local theology, the church will be interested in understanding it. However, they are worried that local theology will lead to syncretism and the assumption that it will create unrest among the congregation by understanding local theology. The term local theology in Indonesia is often used interchangeably with contextual theology. The difference between the two is often a question in missionary academic circles.

After the presentation from Dr. Pradjarta, the Facilitator invited the participants to provide responses, feedback, and objections. Some several questions or responders are interested in exploring further local theological practices. On some of these questions, Dr. Pradjarta, assisted by Pdt. Pudjaprijatma. Meanwhile, Maria Ingrid volunteered to be the translator in this discussion process. In addition to class discussions, the Facilitator asks participants to discuss in groups. The group discussion took place in a serious but relaxed way. The participants enjoyed the group discussion process because they could intensively exchange ideas more equally.



One of the Discussion in a Small Group

After the group discussion, participants were asked to return to the main room (hall). This activity was closed by Haryani Saptaningtyas while introducing the two Deputy Directors in front of the participants. In addition, Haryani also expressed her most profound gratitude for the support and cooperation of supporting organizations and participants. The event closed with dinner together. After that, the excursion participants returned to Yogyakarta.***

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