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The Dynamics of Religion and State Relations: Ibn Khaldūn's thoughts and their Relevance to Indonesia's Constitutional system

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between religion and the state is a fundamental issue in the development of political thought and constitutional systems, particularly in societies characterized by religious, cultural, ethnic, and social diversity. In Indonesia, this relationship has distinctive characteristics through Pancasila, which recognizes the importance of religious values while maintaining a pluralistic national framework. This article aims to analyze Ibn Khaldūn's thought on power, social solidarity (‘ashabiyyah), religion, justice, and civilization, and examine its relevance to Indonesia's constitutional system. This research employs a qualitative library research method using philosophical and comparative approaches. The data sources include Ibn Khaldūn's principal works, Islamic political thought literature, scholarly journal articles, and Indonesian constitutional documents. The findings indicate that Ibn Khaldūn regarded social solidarity as a foundation for political authority, religion as a moral force that strengthens collective unity, and justice as an essential prerequisite for the sustainability of the state and civilization. These ideas have substantive relevance to Pancasila, particularly the principles of belief in one supreme God, just and civilized humanity, Indonesian unity, and social justice. Nevertheless, their application in Indonesia must take into account constitutional democracy, popular sovereignty, human rights protection, and societal pluralism. This article concludes that Ibn Khaldūn's thought provides a valuable analytical perspective for developing a just, inclusive, and common-good-oriented relationship between religion and the state.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldūn; Religion and State; ‘Ashabiyyah; Pancasila; Indonesian Constitutional System.

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religion and the state is one of the important issues in the history of the development of political thought, both in the Western tradition and in the treasury of Islamic thought. This issue is not only related to the position of religion in the government structure, but also concerns the legitimacy of power, sources of political authority, the formation of collective identity, the enforcement of justice, and the moral orientation of state administration. In the development of modern society, the relationship between religion and the state is increasingly complex because the state is no longer only faced with issues of power and government, but must also manage the diversity of beliefs, social interests, and the demands of democracy and human rights.

In the tradition of Islamic thought, discussions regarding the relationship between religion and the state have a long historical and philosophical foundation. A number of Muslim thinkers paid attention to issues of power, leadership, government,

and the social life order. One prominent figure who has important contributions in this field is Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406 AD), a Muslim historian, sociologist, and political thinker known for his monumental work, Al-Muqaddimah. His thoughts offer a different approach from purely normative political theory because he tries to explain the formation of power and the development of civilization based on social reality, inter-group relations, economic factors, and political dynamics.

Ibn Khaldūn views that human life is essentially social. Humans cannot fulfill all their life needs individually so they require cooperation and social order. From these needs emerge social organization, leadership, and political power. However, power is not formed suddenly. It grows through group solidarity called 'ashabiyyah, which is a social bond that breeds loyalty, a sense of togetherness, and the ability of a group to defend its collective interests.

The concept of 'ashabiyyah becomes one of the important elements in Ibn Khaldūn's theory of power. According to him, social solidarity is a force that allows a group to gain political dominance and build a government. However, the power that has been formed can experience a decline when social solidarity weakens, rulers are trapped in luxury, justice is ignored, and the relationship between leaders and society fractures. Thus, the survival of the state is largely determined by the quality of social and moral relations that support power.

Besides social solidarity, Ibn Khaldūn gave attention to religion as a force that can strengthen unity and provide moral orientation for political life. Religion, in his perspective, can unite groups that previously had different interests. Religious ties are able to expand social solidarity because unity is no longer solely based on kinship relations or group interests, but also on common moral and spiritual goals. Nevertheless, his thoughts cannot be simplified as the idea that political power must be completely united with religious authority. Ibn Khaldūn actually provides a historical analysis regarding the different characters of government based on legal orientation, worldly interests, and religious guidance.

This thought has important relevance when linked to Indonesia's constitutional experience. Indonesia is a country that has a diversity of religions, ethnicities, languages, customs, and cultures. This diversity is a national wealth, but simultaneously presents challenges in building unity and maintaining the stability of national life. In such conditions, the relationship between religion and the state must be placed proportionally so that religious values can contribute to the formation of public morals without eliminating the principle of equality of citizens.

Pancasila provides a philosophical foundation for managing this relationship. The principle of Belief in the One and Only God affirms that state life has divine and moral dimensions. Meanwhile, the principles of Just and Civilized Humanity, the Unity of Indonesia, and Social Justice provide an orientation so that the administration of the state respects human dignity, maintains unity, and realizes common prosperity. Thus, Pancasila is not only the basis of government administration, but also a meeting point for communities with different backgrounds of beliefs and cultures.

The problem that arises is that the relationship between religion and state in practice does not always run ideally. Religion is sometimes used as a symbol of political legitimacy, while differences in belief can develop into social tensions if not managed through principles of tolerance, justice, and respect for citizens' rights. On the other hand, the separation of religion from all dimensions of public life also has the potential to ignore the contribution of religious moral and ethical values to the formation of society's character and the responsibilities of state administrators.

Therefore, a perspective of thought is needed that is able to explain the relationship between social solidarity, political legitimacy, religious morality, and the survival of civilization. Ibn Khaldūn's thought becomes relevant because it offers an analysis that does not only talk about how power is formed, but also how power can lose legitimacy and experience decline when it is not based on justice and social solidarity.

Studies on 'ashabiyyah generally place the concept as a foundation to explain the formation of power, group cohesion, and social change. Meanwhile, studies on Ibn Khaldūn's state theory often highlight the relationship between government, leadership, justice, and the cycle of civilization development. In the perspective of Islamic political thought, studies on the relationship between religion and state have also given attention to differing views on religious authority, government legitimacy, and the position of Islamic law in state life. The research gap lies in the suboptimal integration of three dimensions of Ibn Khaldūn's thought, namely social solidarity, religious legitimacy, and political justice, in an analytical framework specifically directed at the Indonesian constitutional system.

The novelty of this article lies in the development of a comparative-contextual reading of Ibn Khaldūn's thoughts through three perspectives:

1. Sociological-political perspective, by examining 'ashabiyyah as the basis of solidarity and national integration.
2. Ethical-religious perspective, by analyzing religion as a source of public morality and orientation of justice in state administration.
3. Constitutional perspective, by connecting Ibn Khaldūn's theory of power and civilization with Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD NRI Tahun 1945), democracy, and the protection of diversity.

With this framework, this article seeks to present classical Islamic thought as an analytical perspective that remains relevant to understanding modern political and constitutional issues.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a library research type. Literature study was chosen because the focus of the research lies in the interpretation of concepts in the works of Ibn Khaldūn's thoughts and their comparison with Indonesian constitutional principles, not on the measurement of respondent behavior or field data collection.

The approach used includes three elements. First, a philosophical approach to understand the foundation of thought regarding power, religion, justice, and civilization. Second, a historical-contextual approach to place Ibn Khaldūn's ideas in the social and political environment of his time. Third, a comparative-constitutional approach to assess the substantive conformity of these ideas with Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.

The research was conducted through tracing and analyzing literature sources, both in the form of books, scientific publications, and legal documents that can be accessed digitally. Because this research does not involve empirical data collection in the field, there is no designated field research location.

The publication period of contemporary literature that is the main focus is 2021–2026, while Ibn Khaldūn's classical works and previous theoretical literature are used as a conceptual foundation. This range refers to the publication year of the sources reviewed, not a statement that all literature has been systematically traced up to all publications in 2026.

The object of research is Ibn Khaldūn's thoughts on power, social solidarity, religion, justice, and the development of civilization as well as their relevance to the relationship between religion and state in Indonesia.

The units of analysis include:

- The concept of 'ashabiyyah as the basis of social solidarity.
- The concept of mulk and the legitimacy of power.
- The relationship between religion, morality, and unity.
- Justice and the cycle of civilization development.
- Pancasila principles and the provisions of the 1945 Constitution relating to religion, citizens' rights, and political power.

Data sources are divided into two groups. First, primary sources, including Ibn Khaldūn's works, especially Al-Muqaddimah, as well as official Indonesian constitutional documents, particularly the Preamble and articles of the 1945 Constitution that are relevant to Pancasila, popular sovereignty, the rule of law, freedom of religion, and human rights. Second, secondary sources, including academic books, national and international journal articles, and contemporary research discussing 'ashabiyyah theory, Islamic political thought, religious pluralism, Pancasila, and the relationship between religion and state.

Data collection was carried out through documentation and literature tracing. The stages include identifying primary works, tracing articles, selecting sources, grouping information, and comparing concepts. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through four stages: data reduction, thematic categorization, comparative interpretation, and synthesis. The validity of the analysis is maintained through source triangulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Based on the literature review, conceptual findings were obtained related to the formation of power, the relationship between religion and political legitimacy, justice as the foundation of civilization, and the relevance of Ibn Khaldūn's thoughts to the Indonesian constitutional system:

1. Social Solidarity as the Foundation of Integration and Power: Social solidarity is an important element in the formation and survival of power. In Ibn Khaldūn's thought, 'ashabiyyah allows a group to build collective strength. In the Indonesian context, the required solidarity is not based on group identity, but civic solidarity that recognizes the equality of all citizens.

2. Religion as a Source of Political Ethics and Moral Legitimacy: Religion has the potential to strengthen solidarity and form a moral orientation in political life. Divine values can provide an ethical foundation for state administration, but their implementation must be in harmony with the principles of humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice.

3. Justice as a Prerequisite for State Survival: Justice is an important element in the survival of government and civilization. This idea highlights the importance of responsive government, consistent law enforcement, equal opportunities, and non-discriminatory distribution of development benefits.

4. Mapping the Relevance of Ibn Khaldūn's Thoughts to the Indonesian Constitutional System

Dimensions of analysis	Ibn Khaldūn's Thought	Relevance in the Indonesian system
Social solidarity	'Ashabiyyah as a collective force	National unity and civic solidarity
Political power	Mulk and the ability to build authority	Power limited by constitution and law
Religion	Strengthening moral orientation and solidarity	Public ethics in harmony with Pancasila
Justice	Maintenance of social order and government survival	Supremacy of law, rights protection, and social justice
Civilization	The development and decline of dynasties or power	Evaluation of institutional sustainability, public trust, and welfare
Legitimacy	Social support and collective strength	Popular sovereignty, democratic processes, and accountability

DISCUSSION

The Relevance of 'Ashabiyyah Theory in Strengthening Indonesian Unity

Unity is one of the fundamental issues in the life of a plural state. A state consisting of various social groups requires a mechanism to build a sense of shared belonging without eliminating the identity inherent in each group. In this context, Ibn Khaldūn's theory of 'ashabiyyah offers a perspective on the importance of solidarity as a force that connects individuals with the political community. Although 'ashabiyyah in Ibn Khaldūn's historical context is mostly related to kinship ties, its basic function can be developed to understand national solidarity. In a modern state, solidarity does not have to stem from blood relations or shared religion, but can be built through commitment to the constitution, shared historical experiences, respect for citizens' rights, and a willingness to safeguard the public interest.

Religion and State: Between Religious Morality and Constitutional Democracy

Ibn Khaldūn's thoughts provide a foundation for understanding that religion can act as a source of morality and a strengthener of social solidarity. However, reading these thoughts in the Indonesian context needs to consider the differences between medieval political societies and modern states formed based on a constitution. In Indonesian society, religion holds an important position in personal, social, educational, and cultural life. The constitution provides a framework for managing this relationship. Article 29 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution states that the state is based on Belief in the One and Only God, while Article 29 paragraph (2) guarantees the independence of every resident to embrace their respective religions and to worship according to their religion and beliefs.

Pancasila as the Meeting Point of Religion, State, and Diversity

Pancasila has an important meaning because it provides a philosophical basis for national life that acknowledges the divine dimension as well as the diversity of society. In this framework, Pancasila does not need to be contrasted with religion. On the contrary, Pancasila can be a shared space for various groups to fight for social good without making differences in belief a reason to negate the rights of others. Related to

Ibn Khaldūn, there are three important meeting points: First, national solidarity. Second, the morality of power. Third, justice in living together.

Power, Justice, and the Challenges of Indonesian Democracy

One of the important contributions of Ibn Khaldūn's thought is his explanation that power has dynamics and does not always last permanently. Government can experience strengthening when it is able to build solidarity, but can also experience weakening when the interests of the rulers are increasingly far from the interests of society. This perspective is relevant for analyzing the challenges of Indonesian democracy, especially in relation to public official accountability, the quality of state services, social inequality, and the use of religious identity in political competition.

Social Justice as a Measure of State Success

Ibn Khaldūn's thought regarding the development and decline of civilization places emphasis on the relationship between the government and the socio-economic conditions of society. The state cannot maintain its survival if the ruler's policies continuously undermine trust, widen inequality, or burden society without considering their capabilities. In the Indonesian context, this idea can be linked to the principle of Social Justice for All the People of Indonesia.

Practical Reflections for the Indonesian Constitutional System

Based on the synthesis of Ibn Khaldūn's thoughts and Indonesian constitutional principles, there are several implications that can be developed: 1) Strengthening civic solidarity; 2) Developing political ethics oriented to the public interest; 3) Strengthening the protection of freedom of religion and belief; 4) Making social justice a measure of government performance; 5) Developing inclusive political and religious education.

Theoretical Contributions and Research Limitations

Theoretically, this article brings together classical Islamic political thought with modern constitutional theory and practice. However, this research has limitations as it is based on literature sources, requires critical interpretation due to different historical contexts, and has not conducted systematic testing of policy implementation.

CONCLUSION

Ibn Khaldūn's thoughts provide an important perspective for understanding the dynamics of the relationship between religion and the state through the interconnectedness of social solidarity, power, morality, justice, and the development of civilization. The concept of 'ashabiyyah explains the importance of social ties in the formation of power, while the concept of mulk helps to understand how political authority obtains and maintains its position. At the same time, Ibn Khaldūn's analysis regarding the decline of government shows that power can weaken when social solidarity decreases, justice is ignored, and the interests of the rulers are separated from the interests of society.

In the Indonesian context, these thoughts have substantive relevance to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Social solidarity can be developed into civic solidarity that supports the Unity of Indonesia; religion can contribute to public ethics; while justice becomes an important principle in building a government that gains public trust. Nevertheless, this relevance does not mean equating medieval political theory with a modern constitutional system. Its application must consider popular sovereignty, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, and societal diversity.

This article affirms that a constructive relationship between religion and the state is not a relationship that makes religion a tool for political legitimacy or removes religion from all public life. This relationship needs to be built through the contribution of religious moral values in line with constitutional principles, the equality of citizens, and the public interest. In this framework, Pancasila acts as a meeting point that connects the dimensions of divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice.

Thus, the main contribution of Ibn Khaldūn's thought for Indonesia lies in its ability to serve as a reminder that the survival of the state depends not only on institutional strength, but also on the quality of societal solidarity, governmental justice, and public trust. Future research is recommended to test this conceptual relevance through empirical studies and legal analysis of the practice of religion and state relations in Indonesia.

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