



Islam in Contemporary Indonesia

Unit 5





The Unitary State of Indonesia (Republik Indonesia) was meant to be plural and tolerant of diversity

As it has been discussed in the previous units,

the omission of words that refer to the obligation of Muslims to adhere to Islamic teachings in the Pancasila draft

as well as the motto of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika attest to this moderation.



Moderate Islam in Indonesia

What is moderate Islam?

There are varied definitions of moderate Islam. In general, it means a middle path, a position that is in the middle of two extreme poles.

In the Indonesian context

The concept of moderatism indicates religious thoughts or practices that adopt neither the typically Western-liberal thoughts and radical Islamism thought (Hilmy 2013)

Secularism

Western liberal thoughts commonly separate religion and the state. This means that anything related to public and political affairs should not be based on religious principles. Rather, they are supposed to be based on the optimisation of human's liberal and rational thoughts. This practice is generally called secularism.

The separation of religious and public spheres can be seen, for instance, in the prohibition of the display of religious symbols in public institutions, such as offices and schools. This prohibition includes the ban of wearing religious attires, such as hijab.



Meanwhile...

Radical Islamism thoughts are associated with ideas that envision the application of Islamic laws rigidly in public affairs. This group is sometimes referred to as the literalists.



Moderate Muslims form the biggest proportion of Indonesian Muslims



For them, Islam should be kept in the private domain. Although they are devout Muslims, they tend to disagree with the idea of making Islamic laws the legal basis of the state. In spite of the fact that Islamic values, such as ikhlas (willingness to accept one's fate) and sabar (patience), have been important markers of Indonesian cultural values, the literal application of Islamic laws in public life is not widely accepted.

Moderate Muslims are those who do not react overwhelmingly to the international conflicts involving majority Muslim countries on one side, and the West on the other side.



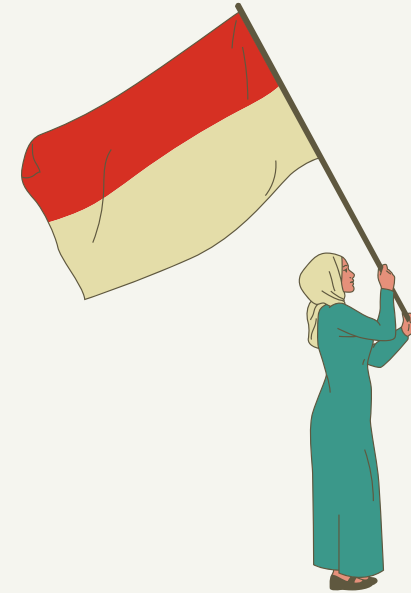
Illustration: Dionne Gain <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/how-modern-moderate-islam-is-fighting-back-in-indonesia-20190819-p52ihz.html>

The Two Biggest Islamic Mass Organizations in Indonesia



NU (Nahdatul Ulama)

NU is popularly known as traditionalist, its followers are mainly from the grass-root Muslims living in sub-urban areas and villages.



These two organizations can be classified as moderate due to their non violent theological standpoint. They generally agree with the idea of the Unified State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI, Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia).



Muhammadiyah

Muhammadiyah is popularly known as a modernist, its members are mostly in urban areas.

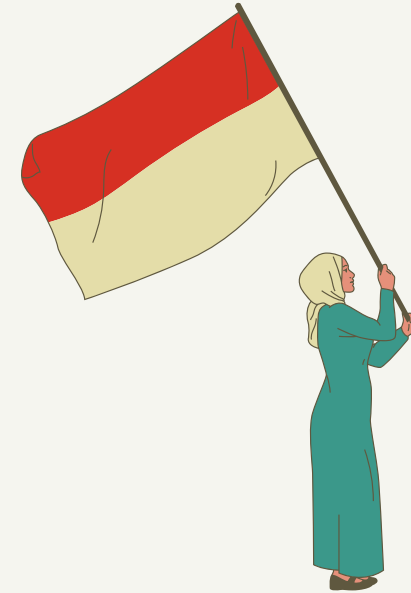


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For them, the NKRI with Pancasila as its ideological basis, UUD 1945 as its constitution basis, and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as its slogan, are considered to be able to accommodate the substantive elements of moderate Islam, which has a theological vision named *rahmatan li al-alam* (blessing for all universe).



Muhammadiyah

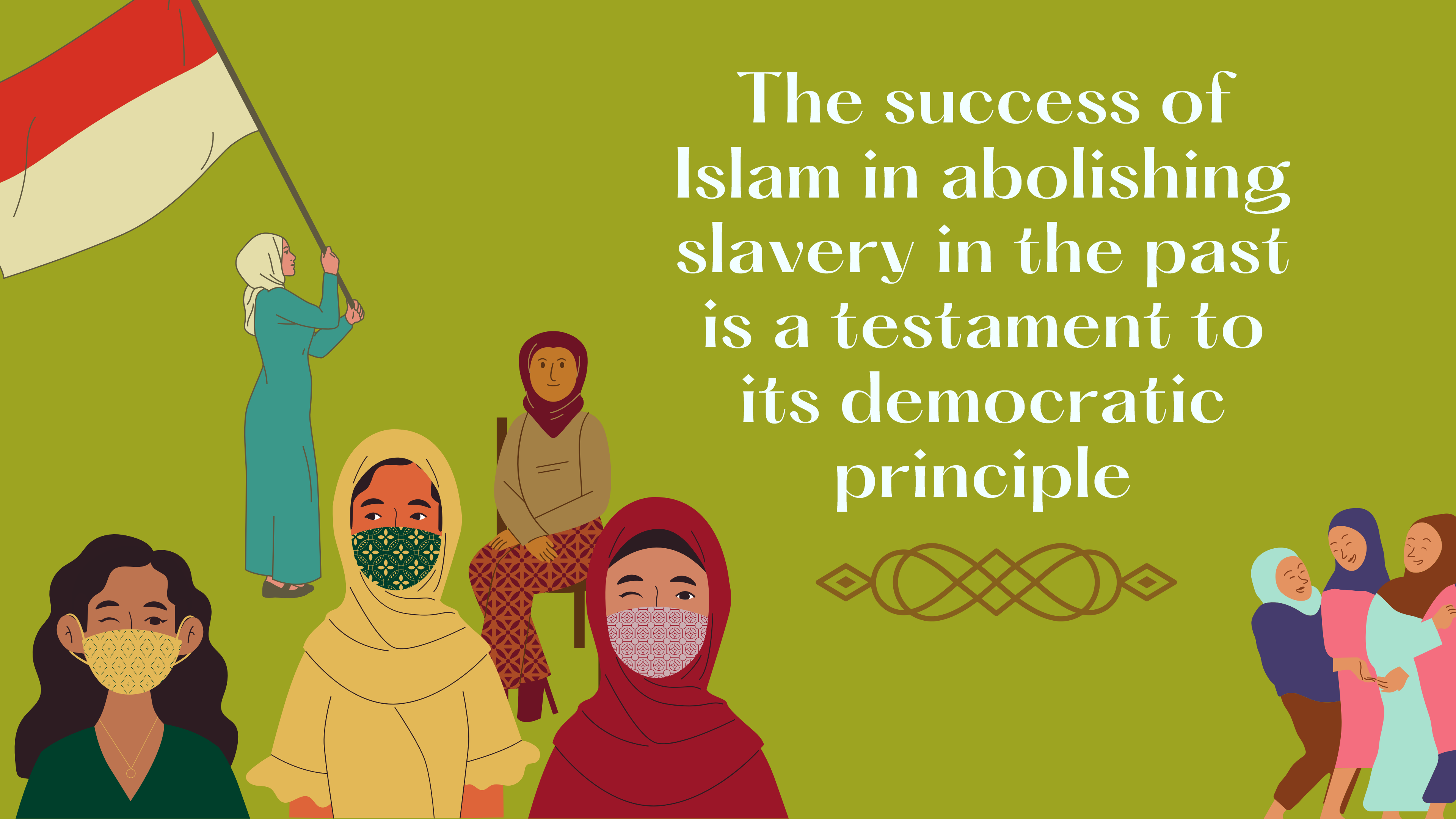
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When it comes to modern and Western values, such as democracy and human rights, these two organizations do not show resistance. The principles of democracy is seen not only workable in Western developed countries, but also can be found in Qur'an and hadith, the two main sources of Islamic teachings. For NU and Muhammadiyah, Islam itself is democratic, thus there is no point of rejecting this modern value.



The success of
Islam in abolishing
slavery in the past
is a testament to
its democratic
principle





Reference

Hilmy, Masdar. 2013. "Whither Indonesia's Islamic Moderatism? A Reexamination on the Moderate Vision of Muhammadiyah and NU". *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 7:1, pp. 24–48.