

Reinterpreting Islamic Authenticity: Hassan Hanafi's Sacred-Profane Dialectic and Its Implications for Social Transformation

Rifki Abror Ananda^{1*}, Ahmad Khoirul Fata², Tauseef Ahmad Parray³

1. Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol, Padang, Indonesia
2. Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia
3. Higher Education Department, Jammu & Kashmir, India

* Corresponding author: rifkiabrorananda@gmail.com

Article History:

Received: December 10, 2024
Revised: February 20, 2025
Accepted: March 2, 2025
Published: March 25, 2025

How to cite this article:

Ananda, R. A., Fata, A. K., & Parray, T. A. (2025). Reinterpreting Islamic Authenticity: Hassan Hanafi's Sacred-Profane Dialectic and Its Implications for Social Transformation. *International Journal of Religious and Interdisciplinary Studies (IJoRIS)*, 2(1), 25-34. <https://doi.org/10.64529/jrtx0651>

Copyright: © 2025 by the author/s. This open-access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

Abstract: This article explores the dialectic between the sacred and the profane in Hassan Hanafi's Islamic Leftism, focusing on its implications for Islamic authenticity and social transformation. The study addresses the issue of how religious traditions, often perceived as static, can be reinterpreted to address contemporary social challenges such as economic inequality and political oppression. Employing a textual analysis method, the research examines Hanafi's key works, including *Min Al-Aqidah Ila Al-Thawrah* and *Al-Turath wa al-Tajdid*, to analyze his critique of traditional Islamic conservatism and his emphasis on the dynamic role of sacredness in driving social change. The findings reveal that Hanafi redefines Islamic authenticity by integrating spiritual values with practical social action, challenging the overemphasis on transcendental aspects in Sufism. This study contributes to the discourse on Islamic thought by offering a new framework that bridges spirituality with societal transformation, providing insights for scholars and policymakers seeking to reconcile religious traditions with modern challenges.

Keywords: Sacred-Profane Dialectic, Hassan Hanafi, Islamic Left, Social Transformation, Islamic Theology, Modernity and Tradition

1. Introduction

Religious traditions often manifest through rituals that shape communal identity and reinforce a shared worldview (Shuttleworth, 2010). One such example is the *Kirab Malam Satu Suro* in Surakarta, an annual procession featuring sacred heirlooms of the Kasunanan Palace, including a herd of albino buffalo (*kebo bule*) (Headley, 1979). These buffaloes are believed to possess mystical significance, and many local participants regard their presence as a source of spiritual blessings. The ritual attracts large crowds, including visitors who view the event from an outsider's perspective. While the local Javanese community perceives it as a sacred moment intertwined with history and religious belief, foreign tourists and some observers see it merely as an exotic cultural spectacle. This contrast reflects a broader dialectic between the sacred and the profane—where an object or event considered sacred within one framework may be viewed as mundane or even secular in another (Andromeda, 2017; Azis, 2023; Bahtiar, 2011; Dani, 2019; Karim et al., 2020).

The distinction between the sacred and the profane has been widely explored in religious studies, particularly in the works of Mircea Eliade. According to Eliade, sacredness is constructed through hierophanies—manifestations of the divine in the material world. This perspective suggests that religious experience is rooted in an inherent dichotomy between the sacred, which carries spiritual meaning, and the profane, which represents life's ordinary and secular aspects. However, the boundary between the sacred and the profane is not fixed; it shifts depending on social,



historical, and ideological contexts. What one community considers sacred may be regarded as ordinary or even superstitious by another (Bertens, 1992; Eliade, 1956; Muhammad, 2013).

In contemporary Islamic thought, Hassan Hanafi offers a critical reinterpretation of this dichotomy, particularly in relation to Islamic authenticity. Through his concept of *Islamic Leftism*, Hanafi challenges conventional understandings of sacredness by arguing that religion must transcend mere metaphysical concerns and engage with social realities. For Hanafi, religious traditions should be preserved and re-evaluated in light of their relevance to contemporary struggles, such as economic inequality, political oppression, and social justice. This perspective seeks to reconcile religious heritage with modernity, positioning Islam as an active force in historical change rather than a static institution confined to rituals and dogmas (Hanafi, 1988; See Munir, 2000).

This article examines how the dialectic between the sacred and the profane is reinterpreted in Hanafi's thought, particularly in his critique of religious tradition. This study uses textual analysis to explore how Hanafi reconstructs Islamic authenticity beyond traditional sacred-profane boundaries, advocating for an Islam that remains spiritually meaningful while actively shaping historical and social change. By rethinking the sacred in relation to contemporary social and political challenges, Hanafi presents an alternative framework for understanding Islamic authenticity—one that moves beyond theological abstraction and engages directly with lived realities.

By analyzing Hanafi's approach to the sacred and the profane, this study contributes to broader discussions on the role of religion in shaping modern societies. It highlights how religious thought can evolve in response to changing historical conditions while maintaining its core values. In doing so, this research offers insights into the possibilities of reinterpreting Islamic traditions in a way that bridges spirituality with social transformation.

2. Literatur Review

2.1. Basic Concepts of the Sacred and Profane in the Thought of Mircea Eliade

Mircea Eliade, a prominent historian of religion, introduced the concept of the sacred and the profane as two fundamental categories underlying the human experience of reality. This concept is an essential foundation for understanding how humans interpret the world and their place within it.

The sacred is understood as something "holy, divine, transcendent," and separate from everyday life. It represents a higher reality, a divine power, or something with profound spiritual value. "The sacred" functions to provide humans with a frame of reference for understanding the world and their existence, determining their direction and purpose in life, establishing the values they should uphold, uniting individuals within religious or spiritual communities, and enabling individuals to undergo a spiritual transformation or heightened awareness. The sacred can manifest in various forms, such as stones, trees, water, mountains, buildings (temples, churches, mosques), pilgrimage sites, sacred areas, religious festivals, rituals, religious figures, and more. Meanwhile, "the profane" encompasses everything that is "worldly, secular, ordinary," and devoid of sacred qualities. It is the everyday reality that we experience through our senses (Eliade, 1956).

Mircea Eliade's concept of the sacred and the profane provides a strong framework for understanding how humans experience and interpret reality. By comprehending the differences and relationships between these two categories, we can gain deeper insights into religion, culture, and human existence.

2.2. Sacred Manifestations in Religious and Cultural Life

The sacred is often understood more as something felt than described. Sacredness emerges when a community views an object as possessing certain values that elevate it above others. For instance, Hindus in India regard cows as holy creatures because they are believed to be the abode of the gods. Cows, also known as Nandini, are considered vehicles for the gods. Lord Shiva is often depicted riding Nandini during his travels. Conversely, non-Hindus view

cows as ordinary animals, valued for their utility in providing labor and meat, treating them no differently than other livestock (Muhammad, 2013).

Zakiah Darajat (Zakiah Darajat, 1985, pp. 167–168) explains:

"The concept of the sacred is something more easily felt than described. The belief that a sacred object contains holy elements imbued with an awe-inspiring and terrifying mystery underscores this perception. Within society, perspectives on what constitutes a sacred object and an ordinary one, or the sacred versus the profane, often vary. Furthermore, the sacred exists both in this world and in the afterlife. Hindus revere and sanctify cows, Muslims venerate the Black Stone in Mecca, Christians honor the cross atop altars, and primitive societies even conduct ritualistic sacrifices of their totem animals".

Mircea Eliade, in Connolly (Connolly, 2002, p. 122) distinguishes between the sacred and the profane by examining human experiences. He notes that modern humans have lost their understanding of the sacred, a perspective deeply integrated into earlier cultures' way of life and their view of reality. Eliade emphasizes the need for modern civilizations to reclaim this lost dimension (Connolly, 2002, p. 121). In *The Sacred and The Profane*, as quoted by Peter Connolly, Eliade states:

"Our main concern is to show how a religious individual seeks to live in a sacred world, as this total life experience stands in stark contrast to that of a non-religious person who lives in a desecralized world. Desacralization has eroded the entire experience of modern non-religious individuals, making it difficult for them to rediscover the existential dimensions of ancient religious life."

This is the basis for exploring the distinction between the sacred and the profane in both primitive and modern religions. Eliade's concept of "the sacred" is heavily influenced by Rudolf Otto's thought, especially as articulated in *Das Heilige* (The Sacred), published in 1917. Otto uses the concept not in a social context or for social needs as Émile Durkheim does, but as an expression of a unique religious feeling characterized by the experience of the *numinous* (from the Latin *numen*, meaning "spirit" or "divine reality"). This *numinous* feeling, which is non-rational, is a fundamental element of religious experience, characterized by its object, *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*: a mysterious entity that evokes both fear and awe (Dhavamony, 1995, p. 105; Farid, 2024).

Human rationality cannot fully grasp religious experience. "The Divine" cannot be entirely comprehended by human intellect or perfectly expressed through human means or language. It is referred to as "Mystery," something beyond explanation. "The Wholly Other," "the transcendent," and "the numinous" are concepts of the holy that combine both rational and non-rational aspects. Concretely, the sacred encompasses many things: the one supreme God, deities, supernatural phenomena, spirits, deified ancestors, sanctified individuals and objects, rituals, and myths. Because the human experience of the divine is human experience, it finds expression in symbols within the profane environment (Dhavamony, 1995).

2.3. Sacred and Profane Dialectics in Religion and Society

From this point, Mircea Eliade, in Bertens (Bertens, 1992), argues that the essence of religion lies in the dialectic or reciprocal relationship between the sacred and the profane. In his book *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Eliade examines numerous examples of the dialectic between the sacred and the profane from various religions across different times and places. Eliade provides examples from primitive societies, medieval European Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Through these examples, Eliade demonstrates that the core of religion is the opposition or distinction between the sacred and the profane.

Essentially, religion arises from human awareness that beyond the impermanent material world (the profane) lies an eternal, transcendent reality (the sacred), fundamentally different from the profane. Humans can connect with

this sacred reality in some way. People become aware of the sacred because it manifests itself and reveals its complete otherness from the profane. This manifestation is called *hierophany/hierophanies*. The term derives from the Greek *hieros* (sacred) and *phaino* (to show or reveal). Linguistically, hierophany means: "The Sacred manifests itself" (*hieron phainestai*) or "The Sacred reveals itself" to humans and to worldly objects. Eliade identifies a continuum from the most elementary hierophanies—manifestations of the sacred in particular objects like stones and trees—to the highest hierophany in Christianity: the incarnation of Jesus Christ (Eliade, 1956).

According to Eliade, the world is filled with hierophanies for religious people. This means that the sacred reveals itself in worldly objects, with manifestations remembered and represented through symbols. Modern individuals might find it puzzling that "the sacred" could manifest in a stone or tree. However, Eliade emphasizes that this does not constitute worship of the stone or tree per se but rather an acknowledgment of the hierophany—a reality that transcends the physical object, revealing a completely another dimension of existence: the sacred (Bertens, 1992, p. 141).

In his studies of religion, Eliade focuses on archaic societies, prehistoric communities with the most ancient civilizations. These societies engaged in natural activities like hunting and farming. Within such societies, there is always a distinction between the sacred and the profane. The profane is the realm of daily life, encompassing routine and less significant activities—marked by error, constant change, and chaos. The sacred, by contrast, is the realm of the supernatural, extraordinary, and eternal—associated with power, perfection, and order. It is the dwelling place of spirits, ancestors, heroes, and deities (Sanderan, 2021).

In summary, Eliade (Eliade, 1956) states:

"The man of the archaic societies tends to live as much as possible in the sacred or in close proximity to consecrated objects. The tendency is perfectly understandable because, for primitives as for the man of all pre-modern societies, the sacred is equivalent to power and, in the last analysis, to reality. The sacred is saturated with being. Sacred power means reality and, at the same time, enduringness and efficacy."

The sacred is an essential aspect of the non-rational religious experience—the numinous. It is identified as God, the Wholly Other (*Das Ganz Andere*), transcending all realities in this world. The eternal divine reality stands entirely apart from the worldly profane. The profane includes the world, humanity, and all of God's creation. The world becomes sacred through hierophany (Eliade, 1956).

The polarity between the sacred and the profane is often framed as an opposition between the real and the unreal. Throughout history, from primitive to modern times, no human society has been devoid of religion or, in primitive terms, beliefs in the supernatural. Every society holds beliefs about eternal, sacred realities and transient, mundane, and worldly realities. For Eliade, human awareness of the sacred arises because it is distinct from worldly realities. In primitive and modern societies, "the sacred" is equated with power or force (*mana*). Mana is understood as a mysterious yet active force that certain individuals among the Melanesians possess. *Mana* is not present in all religions and is unique to the oldest forms of religion (Eliade, 1956).

Sacred objects such as trees and stones are not worshiped as mere physical objects. Primitive societies revere them because these objects are hierophanies. In this sense, they do not worship the tree or stone itself but rather the sacred reality manifesting within it, transforming it into a supernatural reality. From the perspective of a person with a profane worldview, a sacred stone might appear like any other mundane object. However, the stone becomes a supernatural reality for those who perceive the sacred presence within it (Bertens, 1992, pp. 141–142). In this way, the hierophany of the stone reveals its essence as sacred (Eliade, 1956, p. 12).

Certain prohibitions must be observed to transform something profane into something sacred—these are often referred to as *taboos*. For example, taboos might pertain to eating certain foods or engaging in particular sexual

behaviors deemed immoral by societal standards. In primitive or archaic societies, even an act like eating could become a sacrament, a communion with "the sacred" (Sanderan, 2021; Sugiyono, 2021).

3. Methods

The material object of this research is the dialectic between the sacred and the profane in Islamic thought, with a specific focus on Hassan Hanafi's concept of Islamic Leftism. The study examines how Hanafi reinterprets Islamic authenticity by challenging traditional notions of sacredness and emphasizing its role in social transformation. The research centers on Hanafi's critique of Sufism and his call for a more dynamic engagement of Islamic values in addressing contemporary issues such as economic inequality, political oppression, and social justice. By analyzing Hanafi's works, the study seeks to uncover how the sacred-profane dialectic can serve as a foundation for rethinking Islamic traditions in the modern era.

This research adopts a qualitative approach, specifically utilizing textual analysis as its primary method (Stern, 1996). The study is designed to critically examine Hanafi's writings and their implications for Islamic thought. The research design is structured to explore the theoretical framework of the sacred-profane dialectic, as articulated by Hanafi, and its application in contemporary Islamic contexts. The design also incorporates a comparative analysis of Hanafi's ideas with traditional Islamic conservatism, particularly Sufism, to highlight the transformative potential of his thought.

The primary data sources for this research are Hassan Hanafi's key works, including *Min Al-Aqidah Ila Al-Thawrah* and *Al-Turath wa al-Tajdid*. These texts provide the foundational material for understanding Hanafi's reinterpretation of Islamic authenticity and his critique of traditional religious practices. Secondary sources include scholarly articles, books, commentaries on Hanafi's ideas, and literature on the sacred-profane dialectic in religious studies, particularly the works of Mircea Eliade and Rudolf Otto. These sources help contextualize Hanafi's thought within broader academic and religious discourses.

Data collection for this research involves a comprehensive review of both primary and secondary texts. The primary texts by Hanafi are analyzed to extract key themes related to the sacred-profane dialectic and Islamic Leftism. Secondary sources, including academic articles and books, are reviewed to provide a theoretical background and comparative perspectives. The data collection process also includes identifying and categorizing Hanafi's critiques of Sufism and his proposals for integrating Islamic values with social action. This technique ensures a thorough and systematic examination of the relevant materials.

The thematic data analysis identifies and interprets key themes in Hanafi's works. The analysis begins with a close reading of Hanafi's texts to extract his views on the sacred-profane dialectic and its implications for Islamic authenticity. The themes are then compared with traditional Islamic thought, particularly Sufism, to highlight the transformative aspects of Hanafi's ideas. The analysis also incorporates insights from secondary sources to contextualize Hanafi's thought within broader religious and academic discourses. The findings are synthesized to demonstrate how Hanafi's reinterpretation of the sacred-profane dialectic offers a new framework for understanding Islamic authenticity in the modern era.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Islamic Left of Hassan Hanafi

Hassan Hanafi was a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Cairo University. Born in Cairo on February 13, 1935, he hailed from a family of musicians originating from Bani Suwayf, a province in Upper Egypt. His family migrated to Cairo, the capital of Egypt. They had Moroccan ancestry—his grandfather was from Morocco, while his grandmother belonged to the Bani Mur tribe, which also included the lineage of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's second president (Arroisi, 2014; Hambali, 2001, p. 219; Haq, 2020; Soleh, 2003, p. 157).

John L. Esposito and John O. Voll (Esposito & Voll, 2002) noted that Hanafi's role in Egyptian society exemplified the archetype of a pure intellectual, as reflected in his academic credentials. He neither founded a political organization nor was a direct leader of political movements. His primary goal was to reconstruct a comprehensive framework of Islamic thought, emphasizing its relevance to society and the global Muslim community. This was the foundation for a series of transformative views on world perspectives and social structures, steering "from dogma to revolution" and establishing a proper relationship between "tradition and modernity." Hanafi's approach began with sharp criticism of the existing conditions, aimed at developing a revolutionary theology within Islam.

Hassan Hanafi's (Hanafi, 2003) His explanation of tradition shows ideas on the sacred and the profane. For Hanafi, tradition is not merely the study of a bygone past that is forgotten or preserved in museums; it is a part of reality and a component of the human psyche. Hanafi defined tradition (*turāth*) in terms of dualism: the tradition of power versus the tradition of opposition, state tradition versus people's tradition, and official culture versus the culture of resistance. Hence, no tradition is absolute—it is intrinsically tied to society, class, power, and historical phases.

Hanafi sought to dismantle the old order entirely, even at the societal consciousness or thought construction level. By asserting that tradition represents specific societal aspects, he aimed to introduce new ideas capable of shaping new traditions. He viewed tradition as a foundation to convince society that civilizational change always involves a renewed understanding of tradition, signifying the emergence of new traditions. Islamic Leftism, he argued, is rooted in tradition, though with a tendency to pull the entire theological and traditional structure into the anthropological praxis realm. Consequently, metaphysical and transcendental understanding gives way to rational and realistic interpretations. Islamic Leftism emerged from an acute awareness of the oppressed condition of Muslims and sought to reconstruct traditional Islamic thought to serve as a liberating force (Hambali, 2001, p. 225; Munir, 2000).

For Hanafi, Islamic tradition holds no significance unless it empowers Muslims to take action in reconstructing history and its relation to humanity. The study of classical Islamic heritage is not intended to preserve traditions that have shaped the current backwardness of Muslim societies, but to eliminate its negative aspects and highlight its positive elements for progress (Hambali, 2001, p. 29).

Hanafi avoided blending all forms of knowledge indiscriminately. Instead, he selected only essential aspects relevant to renewal, disregarding and not recommending others. Issa J. Boullata (Boullatta, 2001) observed that Hanafi examined tradition for its psychological power to influence societal consciousness and behavior, allowing for the identification of negative elements that weaken and positive ones that strengthen. A critical aspect in his analysis of tradition was "authenticity."

Hanafi explained that an essential element of tradition is knowledge, signifying authentic awareness that provides insight into every aspect of human life. For instance, in Islamic theology, he revived *Mu'tazilah* principles because Islamic Leftism aimed to promote rationalism, freedom, democracy, and exploration of nature. He viewed these as necessary for renewing the current condition of society. Without rationality and freedom, theology would become a barrier to social action. Hanafi attributed the stagnation in the Islamic world to the prevalence of Sufism, which dominated the religious behavior of Muslims, coupled with the widespread influence of Ash'arite theology. For Hanafi, although Ash'arism claimed to value rationality, it was deeply intertwined with Sufi structures, making it incapable of addressing the complexities of modern conditions. He criticized Sufism for perpetuating negative outlooks on life, such as escapism, neglect, poverty, and hunger (Badruzzaman, 2005; Fata, 2011).

Hanafi's critique of Sufism is central to his broader argument about Islamic authenticity and its role in shaping social transformation. In his work *Al-Turath wa al-Tajdid* (Heritage and Renewal), Hanafi criticizes the dominance of Sufism in Islamic history, arguing that it has led to a passive and fatalistic approach to religion. According to him, Sufism emphasizes transcendence and detachment from worldly affairs, which, in turn, diminishes Islam's potential as a revolutionary force for social change. He contrasts this with the early Islamic period, where religious principles

were actively applied to political and social structures. Hanafi argues that Islam, as a sacred tradition, should not be confined to mystical experiences and esoteric knowledge but must engage with the material conditions of society (Hanafi, 1988; Munir, 2000).

This critique is directly linked to the sacred-profane dialectic. In Hanafi's view, Sufi traditions have overemphasized the sacred at the expense of the profane, creating a religious culture that prioritizes spiritual contemplation over societal engagement. This imbalance, he argues, has contributed to the stagnation of Islamic civilization. For instance, he calls for a reinterpretation of Islamic theology that bridges the gap between sacred beliefs and practical action. He suggests that the sacred must not be seen as separate from the profane but rather as a driving force for political and social liberation. By shifting the focus from metaphysical speculation to real-world struggles, Hanafi seeks to transform Islam into a dynamic force that addresses issues such as economic justice, political oppression, and cultural hegemony (Hanafi, 1988; Kasno et al., 2023; Munir, 2000; Soleh, 2003).

Thus, Hanafi's critique of Sufism is not merely a rejection of mysticism but a call to redefine the relationship between the sacred and the profane. He envisions Islam as a place where sacred values inspire social action rather than encourage withdrawal from worldly concerns. In this sense, his *Islamic Leftism* can be understood as an attempt to reclaim the sacred not as an abstract, otherworldly ideal but as a tangible force for historical change. Through this lens, Hanafi repositions the sacred as an active component of human experience, capable of shaping the material realities of Muslim societies.

A comprehensive explanation of the classical intellectual framework as inherited knowledge carries two objectives, as explained by Boullata: First, on one hand, to establish its origin as a discipline related to divine revelation, while on the other hand, it is tied to the specific conditions of its time. Second, it needs to be reconstructed within a new cultural system to respond to the conditions and needs of the modern era. From here, Islamic Leftism seeks to carry out a revolution among Muslims, a revolution that is a revolution of Tawhid (Oneness of God) (Hambali, 2001, p. 17).

Hanafi asserts that the human category can only be grounded in contemporary civilization if its roots are embedded in the old tradition. This can be done in several ways: First, by returning the alienated human being to their consciousness, from the outside to the inside, in the sense of restoring their awareness of their own tradition. This can be achieved by reinterpreting Allah and the ruler in the old tradition to revisit human beings within that tradition. Second, creating a new humanist tradition through the existing reality is possible. The old tradition serves as the initial link in the chain of tradition, but it is not everything. Tradition can be restarted and impose its new reality. In his phenomenological interpretation of Tafsir, these two approaches can be described in terms of two paths: the path of revelation and the path of humanity (Hanafi, 2003, pp. 191–193).

Hanafi expects Western civilization to be examined thoroughly because not everything from the West is modern and true. This aims to counter the Orientalist discourse that often claims to "shape the civilization of the East." Meanwhile, originality lies in the tradition, which has existed since ancient times. For Hanafi, studying the West does not mean following it but absorbing its methods, which can then be used to develop Islamic civilization itself to counter Western modernity (Fata & Noorhayati, 2016; Hanafi, 2003; Rihlasyita, 2019).

Islamic Leftism seeks to form a Muslim consciousness that is open to the West as an object of study while still using its own tradition as a measure of truth. Islamic Leftism works to strengthen Muslims from within, from their own tradition. The task of Islamic Leftism is also to draw Western civilization, along with its military power, back into the boundaries of the West after imperialism has been shattered and to make it an object of study of non-Western civilizations, even creating a new science called Occidentalism to counter the old Orientalism (Hambali, 2001; Izza, 2016; Rihlasyita, 2019).

Hanafi places the aspect of knowledge as the core of tradition, which will eventually impact human activities. A change rooted in tradition indicates the return of that tradition itself. The revolution of Tawhid, which he understands anthropologically, is the only hope for a tradition that will take root in human consciousness. Thus, the

selection of certain knowledge from classical scholarly heritage is the selection of parts that will ultimately form a new tradition, namely the tradition of unity, or what he calls Tawhid consciousness (Fata, 2005; Hanafi, 2003, p. 193).

So, what is the relationship between the concepts of the sacred and the profane with Hassan Hanafi's Islamic Left ideas?

4.2. Sacred-Profane and Islamic Authenticity

As explained above, every human activity socially is an effort to organize the world (nomization). Every nomization assumes the existence of an ideal order that must be formed in human reality, both as individuals and as a community. This ideal order is then taken over by religion as something more promising. The nomos of religion is sacred nomos. Sacred is the opposite of profane, which does not have sacred or holy status. Losing the sacred nature is the same as secularization, which is the conception that the event is profane. However, on a deeper level, what is sacred also has another opposing category, which is more dangerous, namely, chaos (Berger, 1994; Fata & Noorhayati, 2016).

When religion loses its sacred meaning and is replaced by the profane, this not only signifies a process of secularization but also represents a form of chaos for religion (Fata & Noorhayati, 2016). It seems that the Islamic Left regards the sacred as authenticity itself. This is what will be maintained from the reading of the classical intellectual tradition; as a result, every structure of tradition must be understood as an interpretation of revelation adapted to its time. Whatever the tradition, whether it encompasses religious sciences or humanities, it is an effort to prove the truth of the Qur'anic revelation so that what is important in interpreting the Qur'an for the world today can also be explained. From here, a complete understanding of Islamic authenticity will emerge, which is entirely different from others. Therefore, what is authentic in Islam is what is contained in the Qur'an.

Every structure of tradition results from the interpretation of the Qur'an adapted to its time. However, what is considered an important tradition to trace and continue is only, as explained earlier, the alignment of Islam with certain structures of tradition, excluding the Sufi tradition. Thus, Islamic authenticity is seen as being born from traditions other than Sufism. Therefore, when considering that the Sufi tradition is also part of the tradition that represents Islamic authenticity, Hanafi clearly does not fully side with tradition. More than that, when the Islamic left considers Sufism always to understand religion as too distant from empirical reality, this should be understood as a tradition that most represents the sacredness of Islam. Hence, the Islamic left might be seen as wanting to eliminate the sacred domain from religion (Arroisi, 2014; Hambali, 2001; Hanafi, 2001).

Hanafi explains in his other work that Islam is not only a religion but also a cultural system. Culture is not the result of static thought but a dynamic creativity within the span of history. Since culture is a tradition that is inevitable in history, the second cycle (which may refer to the law of recurrence, where after something disappears, it is reborn) is identical to a renewal movement into a mass movement that has more power, before ultimately being reproduced as a new culture (Hanafi, 2001).

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that Hassan Hanafi's reinterpretation of the sacred-profane dialectic offers a transformative framework for understanding Islamic authenticity. Hanafi critiques traditional Islamic conservatism, particularly Sufism, for overemphasizing transcendental aspects at the expense of social engagement. He argues that sacredness in Islam should not be confined to spiritual contemplation but must actively inspire social transformation. Through his concept of Islamic Leftism, Hanafi advocates for a dynamic integration of religious values with contemporary struggles, such as economic inequality and political oppression. The findings highlight how Hanafi redefines Islamic authenticity by bridging the gap between spirituality and practical action, positioning Islam as a force for historical and social change. This challenges the static nature of traditional religious practices and calls for a more engaged and socially relevant interpretation of Islamic teachings.

This research contributes to the academic discourse on Islamic thought by providing a new perspective on the sacred-profane dialectic. By analyzing Hanafi's works, the study demonstrates how religious traditions can be reinterpreted to address modern social challenges, offering a fresh framework for understanding Islamic authenticity. The research also enriches the field of religious studies by integrating Hanafi's critique of Sufism with broader discussions on the role of religion in social transformation. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of balancing spiritual values with practical action, providing insights for scholars and policymakers seeking to reconcile religious traditions with contemporary realities. This contribution opens new avenues for exploring the intersection of religion, social justice, and modernity in Islamic contexts.

Future research could expand on this study by comparing Hanafi's Islamic Leftism with other contemporary reformist movements, such as those led by Mohammad Abed al-Jabri or Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. This would provide a broader understanding of the diversity of Islamic thought in addressing modern challenges. Additionally, empirical studies could be conducted to examine how Hanafi's ideas influence religious institutions and social movements in Muslim-majority countries, particularly in Southeast Asia. Another area for further study is the application of Hanafi's sacred-profane dialectic in addressing specific contemporary issues, such as gender equality, environmental justice, and interfaith dialogue. These studies would deepen our understanding of how Islamic authenticity can be reinterpreted to foster social transformation in diverse contexts.

References

- Andromeda, L. (2017). *Lembu dalam perspektif umat Hindu di Pura Penataran Luhur Medang Kamulan Gresik*. UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya.
- Arroisi, J. (2014). Catatan atas Teologi Humanis Hasan Hanafi. *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam*, 12(2), 171–196. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v12i2.235>
- Azis, A. (2023). Makna Spiritual Dalam Perayaan Kirab 1 Suro (Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta). *Indonesia Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 1(5), 2109–2117.
- Badruzzaman, A. (2005). *Kiri Islam Hasan Hanafi: Menggugat Kemapanan Agama dan Politik*. Tiara Wacana.
- Bahtiar, A. (2011). Religiusitas Masyarakat Jawa Dalam Karya Sastra Indonesia Modern. *Deiksis*, 3(4), 339–353. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.30998/deiksis.v3i04.439>
- Berger, P. L. (1994). *Kabar Angin dari Langit: Makna Teologi dalam Masyarakat Modern*. LP3ES.
- Bertens, K. (1992). Yang Sakral dan yang Profan dalam Penghayatan Tradisional: Homo Religiosus Menurut Mircea Eliade. *Ulumul Qur'an*, 3(3), 47–51.
- Boullatta, I. J. (2001). *Dekonstruksi Tradisi: Gelegar Pemikiran Arab Islam*. LKiS.
- Connoly, P. (Ed.). (2002). *Aneka Pendekatan Studi Agama*. LKiS.
- Dani, A. A. (2019). Pesan Dakwah Dalam Kirab Budaya Malam 1 Suro Kraton Kasunanan Surakarta. *Hikmah*, 13(1), 60–74. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24952/hik.v13i1.1329>
- Dhavamony, M. (1995). *Fenomenologi Agama*. Kanisius.
- Eliade, M. (1956). *The Sacred and The Profane Nature of Religion*. Harcourt Brace World.
- Esposito, J. L., & Voll, J. O. (2002). *Tokoh-Kunci Gerakan Islam Kontemporer*. Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Farid. (2024). The Concept of Religious Experience by Rudolf Otto: A Phenomenological Approach. *Jurnal Filsafat*, 34(2), 231–253. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22146/jf.92141>

- Fata, A. K. (2005). Ideologi Peradaban Islam. *Akademika*, 17(1), 59–70.
- Fata, A. K. (2011). Tarekat. *Al-Ulum: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 11(2), 373–384.
- Fata, A. K., & Noorhayati, S. M. (2016). Sekularisme dan Tantangan Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer. *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*, 20(2), 215–228. <https://doi.org/10.29300/MADANIA.V20I2.180>
- Hambali, M. R. (2001). Hasan Hanafi: Dari Islam “Kiri”, Revitalisasi Turats, hingga Oksidentalisme. In M. A. A. Shah (Ed.), *Islam Garda Depan: Mozaik Pemikiran Islam Timur Tengah* (p. 220). Mizan.
- Hanafi, H. (1988). *Min al-`Aqidah ila al-Thawrah: al-Muqaddimat al-Nadhariyat*. Dar al-Tanwir li al-Taba`ah wa al-Nashr.
- Hanafi, H. (2001). Agama, Kekerasan, dan Islam Kontemporer. Jendela.
- Hanafi, H. (2003). Oposisi Pasca Tradisi. Syarikat Indonesia.
- Haq, A. F. (2020). Pemikiran Teologi Teosentris Menuju Antroposentris Hasan Hanafi. *Jurnal Ilmiah Spiritualis: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Tasawuf*, 6(2), 159–190. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.53429/spiritualis.v6i2.132>
- Headley, S. C. (1979). The Ritual Lancing of Durga’s Buffalo in Surakarta and the Offering of its Blood in the Krendowahono Forest. In *Between People and Statistics* (pp. 49–58). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-8846-0_4
- Izza, Y. P. (2016). Oksidentalisme: Membuka Kedok Imperialisme Barat. *At-Tuhfah: Jurnal Keislaman*, 5(9), 1–34. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36840/jurnalstudikeislaman.v5i9.46>
- Karim, R., Widaningrum, I., & Widiyahseno, B. (2020). Penelusuran Sejarah Kebo Bule “Kyai Slamet” Di Keraton Surakarta Dan Kelahiran Kesenian Kebo Bule Sebagai Media Dakwah Islam Di Ponorogo. *Sebatik*, 24(2), 240–252.
- Kasno, Wibawa, N. H. H. P., & Fata, A. K. (2023). From God To Humanity: Reconstruction of Islamic Theology in Contemporary Era. *Journal of Dharma*, 48(4), 429–448.
- Muhammad, N. (2013). Memahami Konsep Sakral dan Profan dalam Agama-Agama. *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 13(2), 266–278. <https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v15i2.4900>
- Munir, A. (2000). Hassan Hanafi: Kiri Islam dan Proyek Al Turats Wa Al Tajdid. *Mimbar: Jurnal Sosial Dan Pembangunan*, 16(3), 251–259. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v16i3.20>
- Rihlasyita, W. (2019). Kiri Islam Hasan Hanafi Dan Oksidentalisme. *Jurnal Al-Yasini*, 4(2), 112–122.
- Sanderan, R. (2021). Budaya Arkhaik Dalam Aktualisasi Agama Modern. *OSF Preprints*, 26(November). <https://doi.org/doi:10.31219/osf.io/s897g>.
- Shuttleworth, J. (2010). Faith and culture: community life and the creation of a shared psychic reality. *Infant Observation*, 13(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698031003606618>
- Soleh, A. K. (2003). Hasan Hanafi: Hermeneutika Humanistik. In Ahmad Khudori Soleh (Ed.), *Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer*. Jendela.
- Stern, B. B. (1996). Textual Analysis in Advertising Research: Construction and Deconstruction of Meanings. *Journal of Advertising*, 25(3), 61–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1996.10673507>
- Sugiyono, P. B. (2021). Sumbangsih Freud Bagi Kehidupan Sosial-Keagamaan: Telaah Atas Karya Totem And Taboo (1912-1913). *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif*, 16(1), 27–52. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/jsr.v16i1.2162>
- Zakiah Darajat. (1985). *Perbandingan Agama*. Bumi Aksara.