

INTRODUCTION

Diagnosis, Proposals and Actions related to Religious Diversity in Africa and Asia

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I. Introduction

In 2010, the UN declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, affirming that “the variety of life on Earth is essential to sustaining the living networks and systems that provide us all with health, wealth, food, fuel and the vital services our lives depend on”¹. In other words, “the diversity of life”, including “religious diversity”, has been largely recognised as a fundamental condition for the survival of humanity and its habitat, the planet Earth.

However, diversity has been suffering from impoverishment, as indicated among other things by the continuous disappearance of rare biological species, human languages and civilisations, including indigenous religions. The world society has come to be aware of this situation especially since the end of the 20th century, thanks to the progress of science and technology accompanied by the rise of global civil society movements.

In this context, three regions deserve our attention: Africa-Asia and Europe. Why Africa-Asia? Why Europe?

Africa-Asia, because in the continuous process of globalisation following the expansion of capitalism, colonialism and imperialism started from Europe, Africa and Asia have something that they share mutually but not with other regions. They have been subjugated to the Western hegemony in the modern era, but survived its adverse effects; Africa and Asia are the regions not yet uprooted by Western Civilisation. While other corners of Earth — North and South

¹ UN News Center (2010), *UN opens Biodiversity Year with plea to save world's ecosystems*, <http://www.un.org/news/> (last check 07/05/2011).

America, Australia and New Zealand, Pacific Islands and Oceania, East, Central and West Europe — have largely, if not totally, become lands representing Western Civilisation marked by Christianity, Africa and Asia continue to be based on their own heritages. This backdrop was a key factor to the 1955 Bandung Asian-African Conference: “Actually, the Cold War was a war between two branches of the same tree with the same cultural roots, all of which were alien to Asia and Africa”². Sixty five years after the World War II, fifty five years after Bandung Asian-African Conference 1955 and twenty years after the Cold War, wars and violent conflicts still take place in Africa and Asia. And religions are a potential source if not a real cause of social conflicts and wars between and inside the Nation-States. The victims are the people themselves who lose their religious freedom or who have to live under the domination of other religious group. In other words, religious diversity is threatened in the two continents. So, the question is in what way religious diversity is threatened? In what way their agents of development (States, governments, religious authorities, civil society organisations) deal with the problem?

Europe, because it is the region where the high standard of human rights and democracy has been respected and where the conflicts inside and among the Nation-States have been settled in a peaceful way, at least for the last 65 years following the WW II. However, this region known for a long time as homogenous in term of ‘race’ (white skin people) and religion (Christianity) has been in the process of profound societal transformation due to the continuous inflow of migrants from Africa and Asia, especially since the 60s. So, the question is how does Europe deal with the increasing heterogeneity of religion in its territory? Is it in a peaceful way? Is it in favour of religious diversity?

Twenty papers have been proposed to feed our knowledge on the issue. Nineteen of them deal with Africa and Asia while the remaining one concerns Europe.

II. Religious Diversity in Africa and Asia

Every paper is unique. Nevertheless, based on the main concern of every one, we may classify them in the following categories: Diagnosis, Proposals, Actions.

2 Abdulgani, Roeslan (2005), “From Bandung with Sense of Solidarity,” *ASIA AFRICA Bandung Towards the First Century AFRICA ASIA*. Jakarta: Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, pp. 29-33.

II.1. Diagnosis

Religious diversity, religious freedom, and more fundamentally human rights, are threatened essentially by a domination of one agent over the others. In term of religious diversity, the dominating agent can be one religion over the others, but may also be a group of religions over the others, or religious way of thinking over non religious one. The nineteen papers reveal the following categories of domination.

II.1.1. Monotheism Over Other Religions

Four papers on Africa and Asia reveal this phenomenon. In his paper *Africa's Spiritual Evil – Christianity and Islam: Reflection around the Spiritual Liberation of the Africans*, Tiburce Koffi from Ivory Coast denounces the adoption of Christianity and Islam by the Africans as the origin of their backwardness compared to other peoples of the world. He wrote, "*Africa is a continent whose spiritual life is fully borrowed from the conquering peoples who have subjugated it: Christianity and Islam, religions of conquest, of domination. Weapons have signed the military defeat of Africa, Christianity and Islam marked its spiritual surrender. The cannon forced the body, the religions captured the mind of the vanquished. The worst of defeats that could provoke the destruction of a people is its spiritual surrender. The deep and relevant reasons for Africa's backwardness is its cultural capture by the language and religion of the conqueror. A people which renounces even its own spirituality cannot survive from external aggressions. Thus it is a true spiritual adjustment process that the Africans have to carry out if they want to get out from their shocking state of dependency. Because a people without proper spirituality is a fragile people, open to all failures, and delivered to harmful fantasies and appetites of all predators*".

Hamah Sagrim from West Papua, Indonesia, speaks about the death of tribal religions – religions of his ancestors, destroyed by Christian missionaries backed by the Dutch colonial government. In his paper *Indigenous Belief and Trans-Faith in Indonesia: The Case of the Maybrat, Imian and Sawiat Tribes in West Papua*, he wrote, "*It seems that those evangelists were trying to put into silence and eliminate the indigenous belief systems of the Maybrat, Imian and Sawiat tribes. They threatened and insisted the believers of Wiyon/Wofle stop their religious activities. The tribal chiefs were mugged with a gun to their heads so that they were afraid and would not continue Wiyon/Wofle-based activities anymore. [...] Christianity had been combining its trinity with imperialism in the remote areas of Maybrat, Imian and Sawiat, in such a way that Maybrat, Imian and Sawiat tribes left their ancestral belief and lost their dignity, morality,*

values, identity, culture and personality". The similarity of the case with the African one is striking since West Papuan indigenous people are physically like the Africans (black skin, curl hair) and they did not have contact with modern civilisation until recently. According to the latest studies of paleoanthropology and genetics, the Papuans are the first population of Indonesia and Australia who came from Africa 50 thousand years ago.

The Indian scholar of African Studies Pushpraj Singh contributes to highlight those phenomena in a historical perspective of the so called ATR (African Traditional Religions). In his paper *Visualising African Traditional Religion from a Non-African Perspective*, he wrote, "no religion has been as confused in the minds of people as the African Traditional Religion as depicted in films and popular literature which present ATR as ugly superstition". He feels that "steps should be taken to present a rational and objective account of ATR". He further observed that "beyond its bloom as a field study, the threat of extinction rightly stares African Traditional Religion in the face as Africans continue to consciously drift towards Christianity and Islam, making the future of ATR more uncertain than ever. Although the theoretical frontiers of ATR have been advanced, it continues to diminish in practice and in the present epoch Christianity and Islam continue their relaxed displacement of the ancient faith of Africa".

From Nigeria, the educationist and historian specialised in African Church History Chijioko Ndubuisi presents the rise of religious violence in his country. In his paper *Religious Pluralism and the Problems of Secularism: The Nigerian Experience*, he reflects that "The advent of colonialism, Islam and Christianity polarised and factionalised the existed peace and tranquillity among autonomous ethnic groups. Islam and Christianity helped further to segregate the society in line with their teaching and dogmas. Since them, religious violence seems to be the greatest temptation between the two faiths and its acceptance as a means of settling scores and differences has become the central problem facing Islam and Christianity". The case of Boko Haram, a loosely modelled on Afghanistan's Taliban and Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, is a part of this process. He ends his paper with a rather pessimistic view: "The problems of Nigeria arise mainly from Muslims' attempts to introduce Islamic religious principles at every level of government with little or no consideration or tolerance of other religions.[...] Since the Muslims are bent on a gradual re-establishment of a caliphal system of government in Nigeria, and since the Christians and other non-Muslims are not ready to accept this, it would not be practically or ethically bad to suggest a peaceful break up of the country mainly along religious borders. This may heal the acrimonious relationship

and prevent further bloodshed, loss of lives and property and devastation of economic and valuable resources". This reminds us to the bitter partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 with its harmful consequences that continue until today.

II.1.2. Communitarism³ Over Individual

Three cases from Asia demonstrate the phenomenon. The Lebanon-born lawyer and scholar Nasreddine El Hage gives a perfect example of how the domination of communitarism over individual is translated and developed into a national juridical system. Gathering in its territory nineteen religious communities, each with a specific legal status governing family law, matrimonial regimes, inheritance and gifts, Lebanon's society is quite unique in the world. In his *Religious diversity and juridical pluralism in Lebanon*, he writes, "*The Lebanese State is built around sectarianism. It means that a citizen cannot exercise his citizenship outside of a religious community, which can only be the one he has belonged to since his birth or used to belong to. Never mind if he is a believer, an agnostic or an atheist, the citizen is subjected to this system. Institutions undergo sectarianism. Ministers, places in the Parliament, works in the Public Service and even military ranks are spread between religious communities according to their numbers and historical importance*". His long and detailed analysis led him to conclude that "*Regarding confessional juridical pluralism, it is in fact the reflection of a society marked, and even ankylosed, by its religious, social and cultural diversity. This situation often creates inequalities, essentially about Women and Children Rights. Secularism is the only way to eradicate all these injustices*".

The other two papers form complementary pictures of the rise of Islam-based communitarist movements in Indonesia. The American researcher Laura Steckman presents the problematic of *Pancasila vs. the Ormas: Challenges to Indonesian National Development*. Pancasila is the State's ideology of Indonesia (based on monotheism, humanism, national unity, democracy, and social justice), which allows cultural and religious diversity to flourish. During the Suharto regime (1966-1998), in order to avoid the development of communism and religious extremism, all the Ormas (mass organisations) had to be based on a unique ideology, that is Pancasila. After the fall of Suharto, the law on freedom of association changed and all kinds of mass organisations flourished, including

3 From the French notion of "Communautarisme", which is a socio-political term for attitudes or aspirations of minorities (cultural, religious, ethnic,...) in making their distinction or disassociation from the rest of society. It is not to be confused with the English notion of "Communitarianism", which is a school of thought in philosophy and in politics. See <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communautarisme> and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communitarianism> (last check 28/10/2012).

those based on religions, mainly Islam. One of them is the Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front or FPI), a hard-line Islamic group intending to re-shape Indonesian society along Islamic values and morals. Ideologically, the group endorsed the implementation of Sharia law in Indonesia. Since its inception, the FPI has resorted to violence when operationalising its ideologies. The organisation has earned a reputation for promoting violence and vigilantism to ‘moralise’ Indonesia. The group also has a paramilitary-styled wing to ‘protect’ Muslims whose lifestyles are threatened by non-Muslim values. Since the government has not taken a firm position on FPI vigilantism, it sends the message that it condones such activity. The natural reaction from the FPI is to continue carrying out its mission to enforce strict Muslim morality on the population at the expense of national diversity.

The France-based Indonesian scholar Darwis Khudori presents the case of a classical Muslim mass organisation, Muhammadiyah, the second biggest in Indonesia with around 20 millions adherents. In his paper *Islam and Religious Diversity in Indonesia: The Case of Muhammadiyah*, analysed the official documents of the organisation (statute, bylaws, long term, middle term and short term plans) in order to identify the position of the organisation on religious diversity. For that respect he proposed a typology of religion-based movements related to the question of religious diversity and then highlighted Muhammadiyah under the typology he proposed. He proposed four types of religion-based movements: Communitarist-radicalist; Communitarist-gradualist; Pluralist-tolerantist; Pluralist-altruist. He found that Muhammadiyah shares the same doctrine as the hard-line Islamic groups in Indonesia like the FPI. It declares clearly that Islam is the only true religion belonging to God Allah, that Muhammadiyah’s members have the sacred duty to spread Islam and to concretise a true Islamic society, and that every member is responsible for the glory of the community. Its difference from the FPI is in its strategy. While the FPI chooses a ‘radical’ way to reach its goals, Muhammadiyah takes a ‘gradual’ way mainly through education and social work. While the FPI is a ‘radicalist-communitarist’ movement, Muhammadiyah is ‘gradualist-communitarist’ one. As for its position on religious diversity, “*Muhammadiyah has an inclusive attitude in responding to religious plurality. Yet, it tends to fall into a hegemonistic-inclusivism, that is trying to see the truth in other religions while declaring the supremacy of its own religion*”. In this way, Muhammadiyah cannot be qualified as a ‘pluralist’ movement.

II.1.3. Majority over Minority

This phenomenon is represented by three papers from Asia. In her paper *Religion: for World Peace or Conflict*, the Indian scholar Sudha Chauhan speaks about the richness of India as the land of religions where religious diversity and religious tolerance are established in both law and custom. India is the birth place of four major religions namely Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism with Hinduism as religion of the large majority (more than 80 per cent of population). India is also a home to ‘non-Indian’ religions: Islam (13.4 per cent) and Christianity (2.3 per cent), beside Judaism and Zoroastrianism. The right to freedom of religion is a fundamental right according to the Indian Constitution. Yet, India applies two types of personal law: Hindu personal law for Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs; and personal laws exclusive to themselves for major religious communities not based in India (Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews). *“Sadly, today politics has been religionised and religion has been politicised. Thus a religion-politics collusion is taking place. [...] Political parties with clear agenda based on religion, caste and creed are emerging fast and elections are being held on these grounds. [...] some fundamentalist Hindu religious-political organisations have become more ‘vigilant’ and proactive and have adopted a tit for tat approach to deal with the problem. Hindus generally have a very tolerant attitude but they now claim that enough is enough. They argue that it is only they who are expected to be secular while Muslims and other minorities remain free to adopt exclusionary practices. They feel that minorities are being given special rights and favours and are rather being treated as more equal than equal. They feel that right from the historical period the Hindu majority have been oppressed, overlooked and side-lined in their own country and special privileges continue to be granted to the minority religious groups”*. This explains the violent conflicts between Hindus majority and minority religious groups (especially Muslim).

From the East Arab World, the Lebanese scholar and activist Boutros Labaki speaks about the continuous tensions between Muslim majority and Christian minority in the East Arab World (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria). In his paper *Confessional Diversity in the Arab World: Tensions in the Christian – Muslim relations*, he warns us that *“Societies in the Arab world in general and its Christian communities in particular are threatened by the rise of a backward and extremist conception of Islam. Several tragic terrorist attacks have proven this recently. But, the fate of these communities cannot be dissociated from the conflicts and sociopolitical fractures which are tearing up the region,*

often due to the West's blindness". He reminds us that the indigenous Christian communities had existed in the region before Islam and that their proportion has been decreasing from 50 per cent at the eve of the Crusades to 20-25 per cent at the end of the 19th century until 5 per cent nowadays. He presents afterwards the contemporary situation of these indigenous religious communities facing the rise of Islam-based political movements. *"The Salafist Jihadist movements forming the Al-Qaeda network increased in size and proclaimed the holy war against 'non-believer' regimes in Muslim countries and the 'unfaithful'. Two focal points were particularly targeted: Palestine and Iraq. In Palestine, the Hamas and Islamic Jihad developed and succeeded in gaining the elections, considering the corruption of the Palestinian Authority. The Christian Arabs of Palestine, caught between the hammer of Israeli occupation since 1967 and the anvil of Islamists movements, tended to take the road to exile, reducing to a strict minimum the Christian presence on the land where Jesus Christ was born and lived"*.

An exceptional situation happens in Burma (Myanmar): this time it is the Muslim minority who is persecuted by the religious majority, and this religious majority is Buddhist, religion associated so far in the West to peace and serenity. In his paper *Violence in the Name of Buddhism: How the marriage of Burma's Popular Islamophobia and the neo-Fascist State led to Rohingya genocide*, the Burmese scholar and activist in exile Maung Zarni explains *"how the institutionalised popular and historical Islamophobia in this predominantly Buddhist society of about 50 million led to the genocide and ethnocide of an estimated 800,000 Rohingya"*. He traces and sheds light on the unholy alliance among Burmese State, the society at large and the Buddhist Sangha which makes the genocide not only conceivable but also extremely lethal.

II.1.4. Men Over Women

This phenomenon is represented by the question of veil in Muslim societies. Two papers, respectively from Africa and Asia, reveal the spirit behind the veil in different ways but come implicitly to the same conclusion: the domination of men over women.

The Algerian writer, Mohamed Kacimi, who is male as his name reveals, presents the veil in a historical perspective. In his essay *The veil, a symbol of 3,000 years of religious male domination*, he explains that the veil was not firstly imposed to women by Islamic teaching but by a king of Assyria 3,000 years ago; and then by St. Paul at the beginning of Christianity as a theological duty for women. It was based on the conviction that man is the image and the

glory of God, while woman is the glory of man, because it is not man who was derived from woman, but woman from man, and man was not created for woman, but woman for man. This is why woman has to wear a veil on her head in order to show her dependence. Islam that came seven centuries later did not impose the veil to women. Nowhere in the Koran is a specific mention of veil (hijab) covering the face, hiding the hair, or the whole body of woman. It is the 1979 Iranian Revolution that provoked the generalisation of the veil. The hijab massively worn by Muslim women today is an innovation coming straight out of the heads of Islamist tailors. It is a sign of an Arab-Muslim society in crisis, without project, without prospects, subjected to totalitarian regimes and having no space for breathing, for utopia, except religion.

On the other side, the Thai scholar Duanghathai Buranajaroenkij presents her study on the phenomenon of veil among the Muslim women in Southern Thailand, a home to Muslim majority in a Buddhist country. Violent conflicts have been lasting for decades in the region, between the separatist Muslim movement and the central government. In her paper *Hijab: Ethno-Markers and Political Negotiation*, she reveals the role of Muslim women in this situation of conflict. By using the notion of 'ethno-markers' as a role to demarcate the identity of a community or nation, she found that Muslim women are assigned to play this role. Wearing the veil is one of these ethno-markers. This coincided with the Islamic resurgence at the global level. Muslim communities across the world were struggling for space to practice their religion and searching for the true Islam in non-Muslim majority states. These two factors were reflected in an increasing number of Muslim women wearing the veil or hijab in the southernmost area of Thailand. Educated Malay Muslim women joined young women in wearing the hijab in the public sphere. The politicisation of hijab is powerful and somewhat successful. Women's role of ethno-marker influenced political changes in a non-violent way. Many governmental offices, schools and university in the south have eventually allowed their Muslim staff and students to wear the hijab. The question is why the role of ethno-markers is assigned to women? Here comes the history of colonialism where the colonialist European women were assigned to play ethno-markers in order to maintain the race, identity, prestige, power of the colonists. There are a number of explanations of why women are usually assigned as ethno-markers. These are: a) Hegemonic masculinity discourse of the nation-building project, b) women's reproductive capacity and c) a means of control over women's sexuality.

II.2. Proposals

Three papers may be classified as proposals for political orientations, measures or actions.

II.2.1. From Liberation to Reconstruction

This proposal came from Africa and was written primarily for the sake of Africa. Its ideas and issues however concern the whole world because *“The rich diversity of African culture and identity may become the salvation of the human race in the third millennium”* as we can read in the paper of the Kenyan scholar of Philosophy and Comparative Religions Julius Gathogo, *Diversity and Homogeneity in African Religious Discourses*. The Africans need to define and redefine Africa due to its religio-cultural histories and life patterns. Among the numerous issues he raises in his paper are *“the stagnation in African thought, in social innovation, in technological inventiveness”*; *“the religious imitation of European and American missionaries by African converts, leading to a degradation of African cultural and religious values”*; *“the replacement of cross-continent slavery with keeping Africans in Africa to slave for the building of European economies”*; *“with globalisation, Africa’s economic marginalisation seems complete”* for the *“only way of survival offered to the people of the continent is to continue to use their natural resources to benefit Europe”*. The challenges are immense. Gathogo proposes to take care of one issue: the spiritual foundation of Africa, from the theology of liberation to the theology of reconstruction, by taking into account the diversity and the homogeneity of Africa. He suggests to consider *‘ubuntu’* as the philosophical foundation of African development.

II.2.2. Establishment, Protection and Reinforcement of Secularism

Almost all the papers raise the need for the establishment of secularism, its protection and its reinforcement in order to guarantee the preservation and/or the development of religious diversity. One of them develops the issue as the focus of its contribution. The Malian intellectual and activist Moussa Mara speaks about *Religion as a shield against religious extremism!* It is a response to the violent conflicts in his country provoked by the combined armed rebels of Tuaregs and Islamist-Salafist-Jihadist Ansareddine backed by the Islamic Maghreb branch of Al-Qaeda. These rebels succeeded to control the North of Mali and established an Islamic State applying strictly Sharia in its most backward version. Moussa Mara wrote that all these are possible due to the ideological weakness and the lack of religious knowledge among the population

that expose them to manipulation and exploitation. In order to fight against illusions propagated by all types of ideological merchants, Moussa Mara reflects on the need, on one side, for the reinforcement of secularism of the Malian State already fixed in the constitution, and on the other side, for the better education of the people including on religious matters. In this respect, Moussa Mara proposes a concept of the relationship between State, religions and the Malians.

II.2.3. Inter-faith Dialogues

“Religion has become a source of severe conflict in non-western countries as in Africa (Nigeria) where the two religions: Christianity and Islam, have become dominant. The fundamental questions would be: what should be done to overcome this religious distrust?” To answer this question, the Nigerian scholar and pastor Matthew Kalu proposed inter-faith dialogues as a peaceful way of handling conflicts related to religious diversity, especially between the two monotheist and trans-national religions dominating the whole nation. In his paper *Religion and Civil Crisis: An Imperative for Inter-Faith Dialogue in Nigeria*, he proposes a movement from ‘dialogue’ to ‘diapraxis’. That is a relationship between people who try to reveal and transform the reality they share. *“In these areas our dialogue would no longer be merely about beliefs and the institutions that are raised to preserve the doctrines and beliefs. It must henceforth take the form of diapraxis, that is, be about fellowship and relationships in which human beings share common practice as in sports, in trading and in travelling”*.

II.3. Actions

Four papers represent actions led by religious leaders, activists of civil society movements and scholars concerning religious diversity in relation with peace, human rights, democracy and solidarity among people.

II.3.1. Campaign

The example came from Kenya, a country of Christian majority (more than 80 per cent) with minorities of Muslim (around 11 per cent) and others including Hindu (around 6 per cent), but is threatened by religious conflicts due to its involvement in the global war on terror in the neighbouring Somalia. This was seen as anti-Islamic by the Somalia’s jihadist group Al-Shabaab, which launched several retaliatory church attacks in Kenya aimed at causing religious tensions. However, this provocation did not grow into large and violent conflicts involving religious communities thanks to the common efforts of religious authorities to convince their respective religious communities that all of this

tension was nothing religious. The political scientist and senior lecturer at National University of Lesotho Oscar Gakuo Mwangi explains this process in his paper *Managing Religious Toleration and Sustainable Development in the Context of Kenya's War on Terror: The Role of Religious Authorities*. He examines the discourse used by religious authorities to counteract religious extremism and the intolerance emanating as a result of the attacks.

II.3.2. Dialogues

"After more than 4 decades of bloodshed on both sides, 15 years of peace negotiations, countless mothers burying their dead, fathers fighting with grief in their hearts, at long last the land of Mindanao sighs in relief", wrote the Filipino scholar and community leader Mussolini Sinsuat Lidasan from Mindanao in his paper *Religious Diversity: A Chance or a Threat for Peace and Development in the Bangsamoro New Political Entity?* Under his direction, Al Qalam Institute for Islamic Identities and Dialogue in Southeast Asia organised since 2011 intra-faith dialogue as well as inter-cultural and inter-religious (inter-faith) dialogue, public discussions and deliberations on social and theological issues, inter-civilisational dialogue and peace-building, and Islamic knowledge production, preservation and research. He discovered key important points about religious diversity in his region: religious diversity if not properly handled may become a source of threat to peace and a source of conflict; globalisation being perceived as a ground for secularisation; "arabisation" of Muslim Filipinos poses a threat to religious diversity; intra-faith dialogue among the Wahhabis, Salafi, Sunni, Shiites, and Sufis within the Bangsamoro Region is needed to ensure peace and development; and recognition of historical roots promotes acceptance of diversities of religions.

II.3.3. Research

Two papers present research results on the perception of individuals and religious communities on religious diversity.

The first one presents the result of a joint research focused on Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia and Tanzania. The two countries share some common characteristics: they have had philosophies of national unity since their independence, *'Ujamaa'* in Tanzania and *'Pancasila'* in Indonesia. They were facilitated by the promotion of a lingua franca, Ki-Swahili and Bahasa Indonesia respectively. Since the 'liberalisation' process in Tanzania and the 'reformation' process in Indonesia, people in both countries experience disunity and diversity. Whereas shortly after independence they were taught to think about themselves

as ‘Tanzanians’ or ‘Indonesians’ first, thus stressing their citizenship of a nation, presently many people there tend to elevate their religious identity over their national identity, thus identifying themselves as believers of a religion. So, the question is whether religious diversity constitutes a threat for national unity. In their paper “*This is why we make noise*”: *National Unity and Religious Diversity*, the Dutch Frans Wijzen, Indonesian Suhadi Cholil and Tanzanian Thomas Ndaluka reveal that the dominant voice in Tanzania and Indonesia is that of national unity. In both countries the ideologies of *Ujamaa* and *Pancasila* respectively are very much alive at grass-roots level. Thus, religious diversity is in itself not a threat to national unity. If there is a threat to national unity it comes from religious favouritism. As one informant said, a father “*cannot have two children and favour one of them*”.

The other one speaks about the formation of a ‘peace community’ involving Muslim and other religious communities following the 2002 communal riots in the Indian State of Gujarat where more than 2000 people – most of them Muslims – were murdered and ten thousands permanently internally displaced. While sizeable stretches of Gujarati civil society reacted with reluctance or even ignorance to the riots, a number of organisations, networks and professionals joined hands and form an undoubtedly small yet impressively striving ‘peace community’. The German scholar Raphael Susewind presents his study on this ‘peace community’ in his paper *Unity in Diversity? Muslim Civil Society and Muslims in Civil Society in Gujarat, India*. The ‘peace community’ was united in their efforts at relief and rehabilitation following the riots. Once a first hue of normalcy returned, however, this unity in diversity faltered and gave way to considerable tensions. Two differences in particular emerged: between those organisations preferring to work in conflict as opposed to work on conflict – and between faith-based trusts and many of their secular counterparts. Both categories of organisations were, however, internally diverse: actors who draw strength from religion cannot only be found in faith-based organisations nor does everyone in secular NGOs subscribe to this particular creed. The paper dissects the internal diversity of Muslim civil society and Muslims in civil society to emphasise that it is not only important how civil society sees religious diversity, but also how it represents and respects such diversity internally.

III. A Comparative View from Europe

Every two years a number of Asian and European countries organise ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) SUMMIT, a meeting of heads of State/government of

Asian and European countries. At the same time and in the same city of the ASEM SUMMIT, civil society organisations from the two continents hold AEPF (Asia-Europe People's Forum).

In the 2010 AEPF taking place in Bruxelles, a workshop on *Religious Diversity, Secularism, Citizenship and Democracy* was organised by Centre Lebret-Irfed, Pax Romana, Bandung Spirit Network and AREDS-India. The workshop report is included in this book. The contribution from Europe can be summarised as follows:

Conflicts with a religious dimension are increasing in Europe

In Europe the problem appears not so much in the rise of religious extremism but in the rise or danger of populism with a religious touch or dimension. Everybody knows that the root causes of conflicts are not religious, but are due to economic reasons, social, ethnical aspects, nationalistic or political reasons. Religious identity is very often misused or manipulated.

Faith-based political parties as such are neither the problem nor the solution

Political parties based on religion are seen often as a danger for democracy and human rights. However, in Europe many religion-based political parties, like the Christian Democratic parties are present even in power, yet they are not seen in the same light.

A secular state is not the solution; possibly, it can only be part of the solution

If one considers the 27 countries of the European Union, many countries are not secular: starting from Britain where the Queen is at the same time head of state and protector of the Anglican Church. Looking at the more democratic countries like Denmark and Norway, again in Denmark, the Queen is the head of Church and there is an official state religion. Among the 27 countries of the European Union, secular states are not the majority! In many countries, one, two or three religions are 'privileged', there is an official status in the public space for those official cults, as they are called. In some countries, Islam is one of those recognized cults, for instance in Austria. So, a secular state is not a magical solution to prevent conflicts.

To live with religious diversity, we need democratic governance

It is not enough to have good laws or a good Constitution. Democratic governance is, first of all, a matter of democratic culture: people should be educated in having

a political way of behaviour in living with diversity. Living with diversity means a specific responsibility, if one is a member of the majority. Any member of a minority will agree with respecting religious, ethnical, linguistic, cultural diversity! The challenge comes for those who are part of the majority in the way they accept minorities. Governance means not only politicians, political parties, governments, who should be involved in finding a solution, but also all the stakeholders, including the religious leaders. The religious leaders have a specific responsibility in shaping the country, the society, the culture to be in favour of diversity. For example it would be beneficial for a religious leader to say *“I am a leader of a majority religion and I welcome members of religious minorities”*. Religious leaders should say explicitly that they are in favour of religious diversity, since in today’s world, homogeneity no longer exists because of migrations or whatever other reasons. Democratic governance is fundamental to deal with the issue of religious identity and diversity.

IV. Concluding Remark

If we look at religious diversity as a problem in Africa and Asia, the ensemble of papers presented above stresses more on diagnosis than proposals and actions for solution. We may group them in two following points.

In search of guarantee

If the diagnosis seems to be correct or acceptable according to the common sense, the proposals and actions seem to be insufficient or controversial. The question of secularism, for example, which is mentioned in many papers as a solution, still needs to be discussed. The European experience shows that secularism is not a guarantee for the preservation of religious diversity and that religion-based political parties are not a threat for democracy and human rights. So, what can guarantee the preservation of religious diversity? It seems that the typology of religion-based movements proposed by Darwis Khudori may help to answer this question. According to this typology, the one that can guarantee the preservation of religious diversity is neither secularism nor tolerantism, but a type of social movement or a movement of humanity based on ‘pluralist-altruist’ spirit. The ‘pluralist-altruists’ do not only “accept” the presence of others as the case of ‘pluralist-tolerantist’, but “encourage” the presence of others by taking the interest of others as a point of departure of their moral conduct. Religious activists, leaders or authorities who say explicitly that they are in favour of religious diversity move towards this direction.

Omnipresence of Islam

In the rise of religion-based movements in world scale since the end of the 20th century, Islam is a singular phenomenon. Political movements based on Islam have appeared largely within and beyond the Muslim World in various forms. No political movement based on trans-national religions (such as Buddhism and Christianity) has a higher intensity and larger spread than those based on Islam. Political movements based on Buddhism or Christianity are generally limited within the borders of certain countries and used for the sake of national reasons (Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand for Buddhism; India, Indonesia and Philippines for Christianity), whereas those based on Islam have no territorial limit. Political movements based on Islam tend to form networks of trans-national movements linking their bases not only in Muslim countries (Afghanistan, the Arab World, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan) but also in countries where Muslim minorities claim certain rights (France, Germany, India, Philippines, Thailand, UK, USA). The papers presented in this book confirm this phenomenon. In term of geography, Islam appears everywhere, in all the countries presented in the papers (Arab World, Burma, Europe, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand). In term of symptom, Islam is present in all the structures of domination: monotheism over other religions, communitarism over individual, majority over minority and men over women, in the position of dominating in some countries (Arab World, Indonesia, Mali, Nigeria), dominated in other countries (Burma, India, Philippines, Thailand). In any case, either in the position of dominating or dominated, Islam is present in relation with violence. Why? What to do? These questions are beyond the border of this book.***