



British Scholar's Perceptions on Capitalism and Religious Ethics In The Age of Techno-Feudalism

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Abstract

In a feudal system, land was the main source of wealth and power. Meanwhile, Techno-Feudalism concentrates power and data wealth in the digital realm, significantly impacting economic, social, and political structures. This research discusses the dialectics of religious ethics, capitalism, and Indonesian citizenship in the face of the rise of techno-feudalism from the perspective of British scholars' orientalism. The study employs a multi-faceted approach, combining interviews, content analysis, and scientific publication studies to reveal the complex layers of how British intellectuals interpreted and engaged with the historical discourse of inter-religious interaction in Indonesia amidst the shift from feudalism to techno-feudalism. The challenges of Indonesian citizenship in global civility and the flow of capitalism are central to this research. The findings demonstrate that the complexity inherent in cross-cultural academic interactions necessitates the development of diverse perspectives on citizenship and national identity amidst the rise of techno-feudalism that has supplanted capitalism. In this context, the power of religious ethics becomes increasingly relevant, serving as a moderating force towards balanced citizenship and economic systems. The study recommends that the concentration of power and wealth in the digital realm under techno-feudalism, which in many ways is considered potentially dangerous, must be addressed promptly to explore and envision a better future.

Keywords: Capitalism, Global Civility, Techno-Feudalism, Religious Ethics, British Scholar.

Introduction

The world is multiplying due to the impact of the rapid development of information and communication technology.¹ Great disruption is inevitable². Lifestyles in various elements of society are changing. The feudalism system, which used to make land control the main source of wealth and power, is now shifting to the trend of techno-feudalism where power and data wealth in the digital realm have had a significant impact on economic, social, political and educational structures³. The praxis of capitalism is also experiencing changes, the responsibilities of national citizenship are discussed, and the role of religion is tested for contextualization. This cannot be separated from the dialectic of the dark historical experience of the past due to traces of colonialism with various characteristics that have been sustainable since the past, present and perhaps in the future in line with the development of the times. In this position, postcolonial terminology becomes a new sign of the shifting practical patterns of capitalism due to the rise of symptoms of techno-feudalism.

Metaverse is a virtual world with its own ecosystem that is able to function completely and resembles the real world. People can build their own business networks in the virtual world so it is often considered a modern solution to various real-world limitations. ⁴Meanwhile, Techno-Feudalism cannot be separated from the technological giants which are called "leading companies" which are modern rulers. They master vast digital landscapes and digital footprints by collecting data. Leading companies collect and reorganize collected data primarily for the purpose of

¹ Yasraf Amir Piliang, *Dunia yang dilipat: tamasya melampaui batas-batas kebudayaan*, Ed. 3, cet. 1. (Bandung: Matahari, 2011).

² Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption Hakekat Manusia Dan Rekonstitusi Tatanan Sosial* (Yogyakarta: Qalam, 2002).

³ Tulika Tandon, "Techno Feudalism: What Is It and How It Increases Inequality in the Society?," accessed January 14, 2024, <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/explained-what-is-techno-feudalism-and-how-it-causes-inequality-in-the-society-1625207524-1>; "" From Feudalism to Techno-Feudalism " - shut down the tap!," accessed January 13, 2024.

⁴ Muhammad Samsul Ma'arip and Radea Yuli Ahmad Hambali, "Filsafat Stoicism Dan Relevansinya Dengan Kebahagiaan Manusia: Studi Kebahagiaan Konsumtif Dalam Dunia Digital Metaverse," *Jurnal Riset Agama* 3, no. 2 (August 25, 2023): 344-56.

improving their services, targeting advertising, and gaining insights into user behavior.⁵

Techno-Feudalism embraces the concentration of power and wealth in the digital realm. Some are considered potentially dangerous because there may be data monopolies and there may be digital discrepancies and biases that will impact the practice of new styles of capitalism and new models of colonialism in the postcolonial era.⁶ Several parties, especially the government, are starting to criticize and limit the power possessed by large technology companies (big tech). The concern is that the growing technological capabilities of big tech could disrupt the social, economic, political order and even the world of education.⁷ Currently, big technology is increasingly showing its potential as a monopoly actor in the modern economy.⁸

This progressive development of techno-feudalism has received various responses from intellectuals from various parts of the world as a global responsibility in controlling a new world ethic that is more humane and universal⁹. This research discusses the dialectics of religion, capitalism and Indonesian citizenship in the face of the rise of techno-feudalism from the perspective of British scholars' orientalism¹⁰. In the midst of the dominance of orientalism studies¹¹, in many cases the Eastern region, including Indonesia, is the object of study. In this research, the researcher as an eastern person tries to be a subject or researcher where British intellectuals are the source of data as a pioneer in the study of Occidentalism

⁵ Yanis Varoufakis, *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism* (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2023).

⁶ S. N. Johnson-Roehr, "From Imperialism to Postcolonialism: Key Concepts," JSTOR Daily, August 8, 2022, <https://daily.jstor.org/from-imperialism-to-postcolonialism-key-concepts/>; Neil Larsen, "Imperialism, Colonialism, Postcolonialism," in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2005), 23–52; Sharon A. Bong, "Post-Colonialism," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture*, ed. John F. A. Sawyer (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 497–514.

⁷ "Waspada! Metaverse Dan Techno-Feudalism - PinterPolitik.Com," accessed January 14, 2024.

⁸ Varoufakis, *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism*.

⁹ Hans Kung, *Global Responsibility in Search of a New World Ethics* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

¹⁰ "Said, Edward (1977) Orientalism," n.d.

¹¹ Martin Whittingham, *Capitalism, Colonialism and Orientalism and Christian Muslim Relation* (Oxford, 2023).

as suggested by some orientalists so that there is a balance between insiders and outsiders in the study of religious issues in the present and the future¹².

This article, titled "British Scholar's Perception on Capitalism and Religious Ethics in the Age of Techno-Feudalism," aims to explore the dialectics of religion, capitalism, and Indonesian citizenship in the face of the rise of techno-feudalism from the perspective of British scholars' orientalism. The primary goal of this research is to uncover how British scholars perceive and interpret inter-religious interactions in Indonesia and their implications for capitalism and religious ethics in the age of techno-feudalism. In this study, Indonesia is positioned as the subject of analysis to balance the dominance of orientalist studies with an insider's perspective. The researchers aim to provide a balanced viewpoint by using British intellectuals as data sources to examine Occidentalism studies.

This approach is expected to create equilibrium in the study of religious issues in the present and future. The research will highlight how British intellectuals perceive and interpret inter-religious interactions in Indonesia and how this affects capitalism and religious ethics in the era of techno-feudalism. Thus, this article not only seeks to understand the changes brought about by techno-feudalism but also offers new insights into how we can respond to these changes in a more humane and just manner. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the global discussion on ethics, citizenship, and national identity in the digital age, as well as offer new perspectives that can help us face future challenges.

Methods

This study employs a multi-faceted approach that combines direct interviews with resource persons from three campuses in England, namely the University of London, the University of Birmingham, and the University of Oxford. The selected resource persons are individuals who are competent and have a deep understanding of the topics discussed. After data collection through interviews, a mapping and data reduction process is carried out to simplify the complex information. The next step involves content analysis and scientific publication studies to uncover the complex layers of how British intellectuals interpret and engage in the historical discourse of

¹² Assar Lindbeck and Dennis Snower, "The Insider-Outsider Theory: A Survey," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, August 1, 2002. Hasan Hanafi, *Oksidentalisme, Sikap Kita Terhadap Tradisi Barat* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2000).

interreligious interaction in Indonesia amidst the transition from feudalism to techno-feudalism.

This research also highlights the challenges of Indonesian civilization within global civilization and the praxis of capitalism amidst interreligious relations. The main focus of this research is to understand how capitalism and religious ethics are interpreted in the context of social and economic changes brought about by techno-feudalism. With this approach, it is hoped that insights will be revealed on how British intellectuals perceive and respond to interreligious interactions in Indonesia, and how this affects their perspectives on capitalism and religious ethics in the age of techno-feudalism.

Explanation of the Dynamics of Human Practice in Relation to Religion, Capitalism, and Citizenship

Examining the dynamics of human practice in relation to religion, capitalism, and citizenship is a highly dynamic and complex task. This complexity arises because humans possess consciousness, reason, and belief, which interact and influence their actions and decisions. McCutcheon reminds us that to truly understand a person, we must consider things from their perspective: "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."¹³ In the context of this research, the collected data focuses on the perception of British scholars in interpreting and understanding the historical discourse of inter-religious interactions in Indonesia amidst the transition from feudalism to techno-feudalism. Additionally, this research discusses the challenges of Indonesian citizenship in global civilization and the praxis of capitalism amidst inter-religious relations.

In extracting data related to British scholars' perception in interpreting and understanding the historical discourse of inter-religious interactions in Indonesia amidst the transition from feudalism to techno-feudalism as well as the challenges of Indonesian citizenship in global civilization and the praxis of capitalism amidst inter-religious relations, researchers conducted interviews and visited directly to England in a few days to discover the structure of ideas and the habitus space of its ecological

¹³ Lindbeck and Snower, "The Insider-Outsider Theory"; Russel T. McCutcheon, *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Cassel, 1999), 1.

institutions. Including the process of discursive transformation amidst the dichotomy of orientalism and Occidentalism, majority and minority discourses, quality and quantity in the discourses of capitalism and colonialism.

Institutionally, it involves three universities, namely The London University, especially SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), The Oxford University, and The Birmingham University. These three large institutions were included in The Christian Muslim Relations Studies (CMRS) Oxford, which specifically serves as the center for the study of Christian and Muslim relations in Oxford. There are at least four resources people in responding to issues of capitalism, religious relations and national citizenship in the experience of colonialism and post colonialism, especially in facing the rise of techno-feudalism as a symptom of great disruption.

Some of resources people among others: (1) Dr Aliya Khalid, as a Lecturer of Comparative and International Education College Affiliation: Lady Margaret Hall, The Oxford University; (2) Dr. Martin Whittingham etc from the Center for Muslim-Christian Studies (CMCS) Oxford UK; (3) Dr. Paul Shalahuddin Armstrong from Chaplains and staff at the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy, The University of Birmingham UK, (4) Dr. Mulaika Hijjaz and Dr Kostas Retsikas from SOAS, The University of London.

From a number of resources people there is at least one generally agreed idea that colonialism and capitalism are interconnected global phenomena that continue to recur in the process of agrarian change and in the transformation of high technology into the internet of everything. One of the impacts is that there has been a shift which has recently become known as techno-feudalism, a transformation of power relations which was originally related to land and power as the epicenter, then shifted to data and power as the center, but in a different face. Despite this, the real practice of capitalism revolves around three main things, namely material wealth (Gold), political power (Glory), and religious interests (Gospel).

In several interviews it was found that several ideas interact with each other, as conveyed by Aliya Khalid from Oxford University who stated: "how global power structures and oppression have different faces. So one is capitalism, one is colonialism and the other is patriarchy"¹⁴. At a certain level, colonialism is even another package of patriarchy where women are

¹⁴ Aliya Khalid, *Capitalism, Colonialism and Orientalism Issues* (Oxford, 2023).

often victims and prioritized and even seem to be exploited, especially for the sake of accumulating capital.

According to Mulaika Hijjaz from SOAS University of London, both capitalism and colonialism, one of the means is knowledge as a tool to gain power, as in his statement: "The making of science is related to power. Not only in the old times, but also in the modern times." Aliya Khalid from The Oxford University further stated:

"...So basically, what has happened now in the world if you look at the global structure is that historically the way that countries gain control of other countries that was through colonialism. That was basically started by Europe, in Europe as they started to sort of in the name of exploring colonized, they started to take over they used to move to countries as you must You're already aware then when they moved to countries that was quite a violent act because they destroyed the education systems, they also destroyed the economic systems and then they did a lot of resource kind of they basically in simple words theft of resources from different parts of the world."¹⁵

This shows that colonialism is a mechanism for power relations in contestation in the global structure which ignores human values and even tends to destroy the social, cultural, political order and even the education system. Therefore, colonialism is incompatible with humanity and justice where capitalism is the economic system that is put forward. What is sad is that this desire to control often exploits human and natural resources without paying attention to environmental ethics. In fact, in many cases they actually utilize knowledge for the sake of expanding their power. In its statement Aliya Khalid stated:

"they are actually now so it's the same power principle that we will go and we will exploit other parts or control other parts so that we become the most powerful.... I think colonialism is a way of exerting power, but the economics and And capitalism, the privatization, you're always moving towards capital accumulation. And capitalism, the privatization, you're always moving towards capital accumulation. So the more capitalist you become, the more the social

¹⁵ Khalid.

fabric of capitalism..”¹⁶

What is most invisible is the effort to gain power through the engineering of knowledge through intellectual channels which is often known as intellectually soft power. This was done by British colonialists and other colonial countries. Aliya Khalid acknowledged this in its statement:

“...there's no way that England can actually not participate in that because the economic, the capitalist ideas, the problem with them is that they have a lot of power but very invisible power and what we call like soft power intellectually. That softly it takes control and you are so stuck in that system. So, colonialism then is a way of power but economics also. So, whoever sort of has all the economic resources or has the power, political power to be the decision makers in let's say IMF or World Bank or other institutions, they will have the power to do or have control over these different parts of the world.”¹⁷

In this way, all the characteristics of the colonialists were the same as the ideology of capitalism that was highlighted so that the accumulation of capital was the main goal, whether in the form of material capital (gold), social-political capital (glory) or spiritual capital (gospel). Therefore, documents and archives were also an important part of colonial politics in building a positive self-image which became known as ethical politics.¹⁸ British scholars do not agree that there are differences in the level of oppression or injustice between one colonialism and another. All are motivated by greedy materialism which has an impact on dehumanization in various aspects of life. As in the case of Indonesia which was colonized by the Dutch and British, for them the principle is the same, colonialism is injustice and oppression that must be removed.

In the Indonesian context, despite experiencing the experience of being colonized by several countries for hundreds of years, after Indonesia's

¹⁶ Khalid.

¹⁷ Khalid.

¹⁸ Kostas Retsikas, *Capitalism, Colonialism and orientalism Issues*, Desember 2023, London.

¹⁹ Mulaika Hijjas, “Politics of the Archive: Colonial Collections of Malay Manuscripts in Comparative Perspective,” accessed January 14, 2024.

independence, Indonesia's global economic role was recognized by the world and whether or not it was recognized as a player in the capitalist system. This is certainly a reflection for the Indonesian people that the Pancasila economy at the implementation level is still being questioned, especially in the frame of social justice for all Indonesian people. This is as assessed by British scholars, as stated by Paul Shalahuddin Armstrong from The University of Birmingham UK in his statement below:

"I think it's quite important to define colonialism, what is colonialism, and to see the fact that even though the Netherlands no longer administer or govern Indonesia power balances in the way Indonesia stands in the world. But at the same time, now Indonesia is part of the G20. So, it's a very big and important economy. Geopolitically, it plays a very important role. Jokowi has assumed some global leadership the past few years. So, with Sukarno, Indonesia had the same kind of profile, globally. Then with Suharto, things became strange, and now, which ago, it has some study in international affairs"²⁰

Another important role of socio-economic governance in Indonesia is the role of religious institutions or institutions that manage the lives of religious communities, such as the ministry of religious affair (MORA) which specifically exists in the Republic of Indonesia. Even the role of religious figures such as MORA by Paul Shalahuddin from Birmingham who has lived in Indonesia for decades is equated with the Mufti who gives fatwas to his followers. As in his statement:

"I mentioned to him, Gus Yakut (Mora minister), I don't know if it was about six months ago or a bit more, he actually made a... he signed a statement, you know, which becomes a rule, that you're not allowed to have the Azaan over 100 decibels. Because it's disturbing people. Here? In Indonesia. And, you know, so I mean, in a majority of Western countries, you've got the, he's in the role equivalent of a Grand Mufti. Indonesia doesn't have a Grand Mufti. But he has that same equivalent power as a Grand Mufti"²¹

²⁰ Paul Shalahuddin Armstrong, Capitalism, colonialism and orientalism Issues, December 11, 2023, Birmingham.

²¹ Armstrong.

When major changes occur, including the rise of techno feudalism as the impact of great disruption, part of the globalization phenomenon. Every development has positive and negative sides. The following is an illustration of the relations of production and distribution of value under techno feudalism:²²

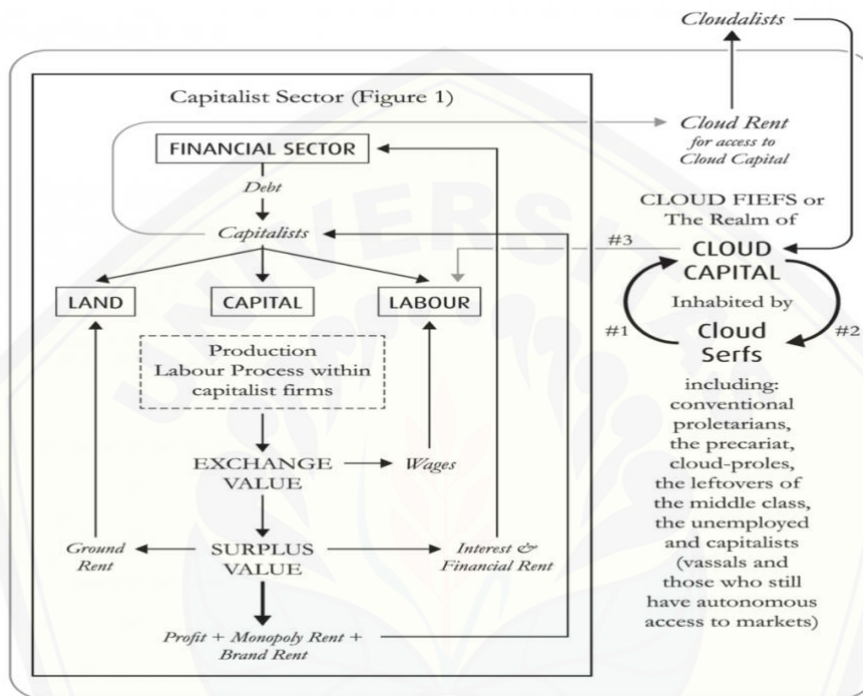


Figure 1 : The Production and Distribution of Value Under Techno Feudalism

From the chart above it can be understood that if feudalism was originally land and labor among the main capitals, then in the techno era feudalism gave rise to new capital, namely Cloud capital, as an important aspect in monopolizing data power as a consequence of globalization.²³ Nevertheless, Aliya Khalid from Oxford University had a positive side of globalization which has an impact on the rise of techno feudalism in her statement as follows:

²² Varoufakis, *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism*, 234.

²³ Kuntowijoyo, *Budaya Dan Masyarakat* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1999); Hyunjung Shin and Ryuko Kubota, "Post-Colonialism and Globalization in Language Education," in *The Handbook of Educational Linguistics*, ed. Bernard Spolsky and Francis M. Hult, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2008), 206–19, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470694138.ch15>.

“...the good side of globalization is that although there's a lot of intervention with other countries, but also now, increasingly, the global north or the west is seeing that there is such diversity of things happening in the world, because control also has a limit. After that, countries are going to become stronger. We see Indonesia, we see China emerging, so they're going to start getting stronger because there are very intellectual people across the world that are working on these things. Now the countries are having a pushback and so they're thinking, what do we do now? It's becoming complicated now. So, in a sense I think now they have incentive to understand what's happening. So, a bit of a pushback, although not all of them would like to, but I think now they're in a bit of a pickle because they're seeing that, okay, we've tried this, we've tried that, now this power is rising, this country is rising, there are interesting things happening. Countries will find a way of making themselves more sustainable. And as they do that, they'll rise in power. And so, we know that the Islamic Bank and everything, so banking and the systems, they're also mobilizing, they're coming together. And that nobody can stop, because people will have alliances, they'll have neighbors, they'll have other countries that have similar kind of interests, and they'll come together on principle. So, I think now there's a realization, so India rose economically, Indonesia does well, China grows economically.”²⁴

Globalization, including the emergence of techno-feudalism, will not be dangerous if in the Indonesian context the control power of intellectuals and religious figures plays their role and function as a critical group and as an ethical and aesthetic control force or in Hans Kung's language is having sustainable global responsibility.²⁵

To answer this challenge, an institution in Oxford initiated a space for dialogue through Christian-Muslim Relations Studies (CMRS) which tries to carry out dialogue between Christians and Muslims for Building Respect and Seeking Truth from various aspects so as to find common ground in esoteric dimensions to assemble global ethics in development a

²⁴ Khalid, *Capitalism, Colonialism and Orientalism Issues*.

²⁵ Kung, *Global Responsibility In Search of a New World Ethics*.

safe and peaceful world of shared aspects of life in global citizenship.²⁶ The demand for global ethics in the midst of techno feudalism is not only related to economic ethics, but Kung and also the informants from England agreed that using different language, there are at least several values that must be emphasized in safeguarding global citizenship so that we can live together in a more humane manner,²⁷ namely:

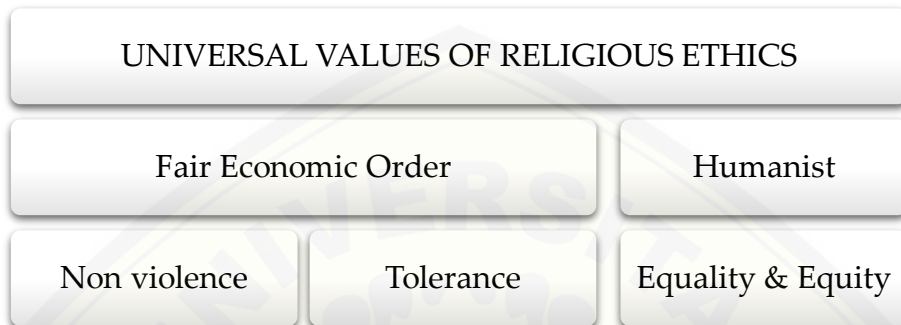


Figure Figure 2: Universal Values of Religious Ethics

Thus, in the context of global diversity and citizenship, the spirit of living together, the economic system of capitalism and feudalism as part of capitalism needs to pay attention to the human dimension which has been in decline for decades. There is an interesting phenomenon where several terms in oriental studies in England, such as at SOAS University of London, will be replaced with more neutral names as a historical realization that orientalism has in many cases been an extension of colonialism as happened in Indonesia. What is the meaning of a name if it is not accompanied by more meaningful ethical values.²⁸ As a recommendation, whatever the

²⁶ CMRS Oxford, "Christian-Muslim Relations: Historical and Theological Encounter," *Christian Muslim Relation Studies*, 2022; Mulaika Hijjas, *Capitalism, Colonialism and Orientalism Issues*, 2023. M. Amin Abdullah, *Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin & Transdisiplin Metode Studi Agama & Studi Islam Di Era Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: IB Pustaka, 2021); Frithjof Schuon, *Mencari Titik Temu Agama-Agama* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1987).

²⁷ "Science and Civilization in Islam: Nasr, Seyyed Hossein: 9780880298780: Amazon.Com: Books," accessed January 10, 2023; Marshal G.H. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in World Civilization*, 1st ed. (Chichago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974); Teresa A. Meade and Merry E. Wiesner, eds., *A Companion to Global Gender History*, Second edition, Blackwell Companions to World History (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2021).

²⁸ In many cases, this value dimension is actually well developed in the educational traditions of Islamic boarding schools. Abdurrahman Mas'ud, *Intelektual Pesantren; Perhelatan*

development of the economic system and colonial history, as long as global ethics are taken into account, human life will continue peacefully.

Conclusion

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the relationships between capitalism, colonialism, and orientalism in their socio-political traces are intertwined in achieving capital accumulation, control of colonial land, and at a certain level, intersect with religious interests. Capitalism supports colonialism, while colonialism often uses science as a strategy to conquer. There is a strong relationship between power and knowledge, so the politics of archives and history cannot be ignored in the perception of British scholars. However, changes always occur. The rapid development of information and communication technology, especially the emergence of the internet of everything, has shifted capitalism from the power of land (feudalism) to the power of data. Whoever controls and monopolizes data in various aspects of a nation's life is the one with supreme power, which has become known as techno-feudalism. Nonetheless, in practice, techno-feudalism remains within the capitalist system, only adding a different spatial dimension from the real world to the virtual world. This needs to be watched out for because it could be another form of colonialism in the postcolonial era.

Indonesia is known by British scholars as a large country with influence on the global stage in economic, political, cultural, and religious policies, with the Pancasila ideology as its foundation. The social structure that places religious organizations and a number of religious figures as civil society forces is expected to become an ethical force in the global order of humanity. Therefore, the enforcement of religious ethics as a basis for global ethics can be pioneered from Indonesia to the world, including what is now known as religious moderation. Thus, this study shows that Indonesia has the potential to be a leader in developing moderate and sustainable global ethics, which can address the challenges brought by techno-feudalism and modern capitalism.

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