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Dr. YOHANES RADJABAN, Tehnološko sveučilište u Yogyakarta

INDONESIA: LANGUAGES AND RELIGIONS

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akademik Vladimir Bermanec

Republic of Indonesia (RI) is a heavenly archipelago situated in the equator, between Asia and Australia continents, and becomes the border between Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is the largest island country in the world. RI consists of about 17,000 islands inhabited by about 255 million people. Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Papua are five most populated islands. The world most populous island of Java contains more than half of the country's population. The size of the country, the very different cultural background and traditions along with the geographical, ethnical variety of the people makes the role of language and religion extremely important and may have a role to support unity in this multifaceted heterogeneity. Indonesia has about 300 ethnic groups and 742 native languages (Radjaban, 2013), each with cultural identities developed over centuries, and influenced by Indian, Arabic, Chinese, and European sources. Traditional Javanese and Balinese dances, for example, contain aspects of Hindu culture and mythology. Five main religions namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam enrich the construction of the nation. Indonesian history also noted specific contributions of the religions to the diversity of Indonesia as a final state. Interrelationship among religions, language and culture that shape this huge archipelago is always an interesting issue to explore since it not only contributes to strengthen the unity of nation but also provides potentials for national disharmony. This short article shares the facts about Indonesia with two dominant identities, language and religions, and experiences of the nation to maintain the two critical yet problematic identities that uniquely shape Indonesia as a heavenly huge archipelago country in the hearth of the globe.