

The Practice of Cultural *Dakwah* Among the Bagelen Muslim Community

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ABSTRACT

Members of the Bagelen community practice Javanese traditions including rituals, arts and ceremonies, ones that are highly influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, even though they considered themselves as Muslims. This study analyzes the practice of cultural *dakwah* (Islamic proselytizing) among Muslim communities in the village of Bagelen. It uses a qualitative method, and focuses on selected key informants in order to gain the data. This study shows that the use of cultural *dakwah* among Muslims of the Bagelen community is pervasive. As such can be described as an attitude that tries to link Islamic teachings with wisdom of the local tradition. The practice of cultural *da'wah* in Bagelen appear as an interesting approach of doing *dakwah* as it keeps the dynamic of local tradition with ritual practices of the religion: here Islam does not discard the prevailing cultural traditions in society, but re-introduce them in a new cloak of Islamic values.

Keywords: Cultural *dakwah*, Javanese transmigrants, Javanese Muslim in Lampung

1. INTRODUCTION

Lampung is one of the provinces in Indonesia where the majority of the population are transmigrant people and come from the Javanese ethnic group. Multiculturalism [1] has become a part of the daily lives of people in Lampung, in a sense that both migrants or local communities live side by side. Lampung was one of the provinces designated by the Dutch colonial government in 1905 as a transmigration area because of its vast and fertile land. Bagelen village is one of the oldest transmigrant villages in Lampung, now consisting of 155 families and 815 inhabitants, most of which are Javanese family who came from Java [2].

In the daily life of the Bagelen village, people still use Javanese customs or traditions both in terms of communication and their daily activities. Even, Javanese traditional ceremonies and rituals are passed down by their ancestors to their descendants to this day, such as ritual beliefs, traditional arts and ceremonies. Culture is an identity formed through inheritance and innate, but culture can be diverse and integrated because it is driven by the number of newcomers more than the number of indigenous people. The Bagelen people, who still strongly identify themselves as Javanese, still adhere to the Javanese custom, that is traditional ceremonies and ritual practices which are highly influenced by the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism, even though by these practices, they convict themselves as Muslims. But what is always crucial and interesting to study is the following: local culture that still contain elements of the animism-dynamism mythology [3], [4]; ritual activities based on the mythology of animism-dynamism or syncretism; and cultural products of religious symbols, in this case, local

culture with a religious pattern, Islamic dialectics and culture, which in turn gives birth to a syncretic form of Islamic rituals and culture.

Dakwah activities are the accumulation of the process of transformation and actualization of the values of faith carried out by a Muslim or Islamic institution that embodies Islam as teachings, views and needs of life in personal and collective life, through certain channels and media in accordance with the chosen propaganda variety, in order to achieve Islamic life from various aspects [5]. In order to achieve the desired *dakwah* goals for the Bagelen community whose existence is locally patterned in religion, it is necessary to promote intensive application of cultural *dakwah* in the form of synergy and dynamism in the activities of preaching. For preaching with a cultural approach means propagation dynamically in line with dynamics people's lives. Thus many researchers want to further examine how the dynamics of efforts made in the implementation of cultural propaganda, and whether the implications will be good or not for the effectiveness of the *dakwah* [6]. Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the practice of cultural *dakwah* in Muslim communities in the village of Bagelen, Pesawaran, Lampung.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive and qualitative approach, because this study describes a certain object according to what it is, in order to provide an explanation and answers to the subject being studied. The subject of this research is the Bagelen community. Data for this research is gathered from traditional, religious and cultural figures in Bagelen. A qualitative research prioritizes a whole descriptive data

from the phenomenon under study. Researchers also act as a tool or instrument for data collection. This research also not only stops until the description of a phenomenon, but will continue to involve the process of interpretation about what is contained in it.

3. CONCEPTUALIZING CULTURAL DAKWAH

Cultural *dakwah* (Islamic proselytizing) is a practice of spreading Islamic values that is carried out through cultural activities characteristic of the community in which the *dakwah* is occurred, with an aim that the *dakwah* can be accepted by members of that community. Cultural *dakwah* is a *dakwah* activity by paying attention to the potentials and tendencies of humans as cultural creators in a broader manner, in order to produce new cultures with Islamic nuances, or proselytizing activities of indigenous approaches, traditions, arts, and local cultures as part of the processes of Islamizing the society. The essence of cultural *dakwah* is an proselytizing activity that utilizes local wisdom as a potential for a better result. Thus cultural proselytizing as a *dakwah* approach that emphasizes the dynamics of *dakwah*, and appreciates the potential and tendency of humans as cultural beings. It can also be understood that the cultural *da'wah* approach places more emphasis on the cultural-functional approach than on that of the structural-functional one. The cultural *dakwah* approach is not limited to the conceptual: yet the concept needs to be broken down into a grand strategic form as a concrete effort to implement the approach. The contextual aspects of *dakwah* community in cultural *dakwah* are local cultural context, global cultural context, art context and multimedia context [7].

KH. Ahmad Dahlan was included as a preacher who used the method of cultural propaganda around the 1912s, because he realized that the correct method of *dakwah* was only a method of cultural propaganda. But because of his caution with the issue of *aqidah* (theological beliefs in the unity of God), even though using the method of cultural *da'wah*, Islamic values [8] remain unharmed. On the contrary, through his method of *dakwah*, he can purify the values of Islamic teachings from the influence of local cultural culture [9]. The model of cultural propaganda applied by KH. Ahmad Dahlan is what we must take as an example. This includes preaching with works of arts, Javanese songs, puppets play, *ketoprak*, games, cadre coaching, marriage, family, infrastructure [10]. It was from artistic works such as pictures and song lyrics, Islam has been spread through Indonesia.

4. DISCUSSION

1.1. A Brief on the Bagelen Community

Bagelen is a transmigrant village located in Gedong Tataan, Pesawaran, Lampung. The origin of the name was taken from the name of a village located in Purworejo, Central Java [11], the village where the Bagelen residents came from. The existence of the Javanese diaspora community in Bagelen village can be seen from the origins of their arrival in Bagelen and their current life, by looking at the patterns of settlement, the social interaction between the Javanese diaspora community and the local community and the dominant identity and culture. Settlement in Bagelen is formed according to ethnicity of the Bagelen people as they live in groups with their fellow ethnic groups. This happened because the Javanese community in Bagelen felt safer when living with fellow Javanese ethnic groups, as well as local residents such as the local Lampung people who lived next door to fellow ethnic Lampung people. Even though in the settlement pattern of the Lampung local community and the Javanese community lived in groups, there were no ethnic conflicts in Bagelen, and this village was one of the settlements where the Javanese community could live in Lampung peacefully.

1.2. Javanese Islamic Tradition among the Bagelen Community

The Javanese community in Bagelen has a high sense of ethnic identity [12]. It can be seen from their daily lives, where they still make Javanese culture as a benchmark for daily behavior. The language and traditional ceremonies that they do are still Javanese, although there are still elements of local Lampung culture that they adapted. The dominant culture used in the community living in Bagelen is Javanese culture. It can be seen from the village government system, where the village heads who have always been of Javanese men. Because the village leader were Javanese, as such affected the government system in the village, since the government system is based on elements of Javanese culture, such as the practice Syuroan, or a ritual of purifying the village carried out on the month of Syuro: this ritual is part of Javanese culture. The art performances developed in the village are also of Javanese elements. The villagers also speak in Javanese for daily communication [13]. Most of the population in Bagelen is Javanese, so that Javanese arts such as *kuda lumping* (skin-made horse dance), *wayang kulit* (skin-made puppet play), and *angguk*, and Syuro rituals, are still popular, and are preserved from generations to generations in Bagelen. These artistic performance are still held in Bagelen, especially during celebrations such as weddings, circumcisions [14].

1.3. Cultural Da'wa By The Bagelan Society

The Javanese transmigrants who have lived for years in Bagelen did not eliminate the culture of their ancestors in central Java. Artistic performance is one of the cultural heritages that are still preserved, in addition to several traditions carried by their ancestors. The Bagelen Muslims are known as religious people. That is because, in daily life, they perform religious worships and are active in organizing cultural activities that have religious nuances [15]. More over, culture is not all about religious issues, but also consists of economic, social, political, scientific and social elements. Also, because the cultural system consists of cultural values in the form of ideas that are very valuable for the life process [16], therefore, cultural values can determine the characteristics of a cultural environment. Where these values are adhered by the people, they will be colored by the actions of the community.

The concept of village community religion that is based on cultural systems and traditions does not stop with just one pattern. Yet there are several religious patterns that are owned by rural communities, namely tradition, or religious methods based on tradition. This method follows what has been done by the ancestors, and passed on from generation to generation [17]. In general, for someone who adheres to this way of religious belief, they will be strong, difficult to accept new religious matters or renewal, let alone convert to other religions. Thus the traditional way of religion is less able to improve the science of religious charity. Likewise, the religious purity does not break away from the predecessor's tradition, that is, the way of religion is based on the use of reason and heart (revelation). Thus, they always try to understand and live the teachings of their religion by understanding, practicing and spreading the *dakwah*.

The *dakwah* that can be developed by the Javanese transmigrant community in Bagelen is through artistic and cultural performances including *wayang kulit*, which is still preserved by the local community. *Wayang kulit* is used in every implementation of the Bagelen village by using Javanese language, which is inserted with Islamic values [1]. The *kuda lumping* is a local cultural heritage brought from the land of ancestral origin of the Bagelen people, Java. The performance of *kudalumping* is accompanied by Javanese chanting songs, which also contain Islamic moral meaning and messages such as *Ricik-Ricik Banyumasan*, *Eling-Eling*, *Gudril*, *Blendrong*, and *Lung Gadung*, displayed. at events such as weddings, circumcisions, and commemorations of national holidays and religious holidays, making the accompaniment of music and songs feel inherent in the minds of citizens, especially children who often watch this performance. Javanese rituals that is observed by the Bagelen community is the so-called *Syuroan*, or the celebration of a new year's eve according to the Javanese calendar which is, held in the first month of Syuro, considered to be sacred by the Javanese people. The celebration coincided with the commemoration of the 1st of *Muharram*, called *syahrullah*, the month of *Allah*, in Islamic calendar. Therefore, on the night of one *Suro*, it is usually interspersed with ritual prayers aimed at getting blessings

and preventing the coming of distress. Also, throughout the month of *Suro* the Javanese people believe in continuing to be mindful and alert to misleading temptations.

5. CONCLUSION

Cultural *dakwah* is a cultural activity that is carried out in accordance to spreading Islamic values: it is a proselytizing that is full of wisdom in addressing and understanding the culture that develops in and is held by the local society. When viewed in terms of interactions with the local social environment, it is included in the compromise *dakwah* category, a *dakwah* that accommodates and understands local wisdom. By understanding the concept of proselytizing Islam this way, various cultures that exist in society can be united in the shade of Islamic values, and in turn can give grace to human life. There is an element of local consideration in the context of the application of Islamic teachings, so that Indonesian Islam is not uprooted from its own local context, namely culture, tradition, and others. In practice, a model of cultural *dakwah* appears in a form that is more inclusive, i.e. an attitude that does not confine Islam into a mere form or symbol of a religious practice, but more importantly is the purpose and mission of the practice. The model of cultural *dakwah* also appears as a model of *dakwah* that is more adaptable to the social environment, where Islam is practiced not by discarding prevailing cultural traditions, but by making Islamic values become submerged into the local arts and rituals, passed from their ancestors, thus now are transformed into (part of) Islamic tradition.

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