

The Role of Betawese Scholars in Multicultural Islamic Proselytism (*Dakwah*)

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Abstract-Betawese (a native of Jakarta) ethnic is a multicultural community which becomes valuable asset of this nation, yet at the other side, has a potential to make a social segregation moreover when political identity has increased among people. History recorded that the transmission of *Dakwah* Islam (Islamic proselytism) in Indonesia was brought in peace. One prominent factor that influenced the successful mission of *Dakwah* Islam is because of the cultural approach despite of power or military force. This paper is intended to describe the significant role of Betawese scholars in transmitting multicultural *dakwah* in Jakarta. This research applies qualitative methodology using descriptive analysis and phenomenological approach. The observation, historical documentation and interviews are taken as field study for this research. The interview was taken in Jakarta by having KH Ahmad Luthfi Fathullah and KH Saefuddin Amsir as the source. The role of multicultural *Dakwah* had been undertaken through three main factors, namely *dakwah* by tolerance, *dakwah* through dialogs, and *dakwah* through media and institution. Those matters were presented by Betawese scholars as an effort to build peace among pluralistic people.

Key words: Role, Betawese Scholars, Multicultural *Dakwah*

I. INTRODUCTION.

Islam for the Betawese, the native of Jakarta ethnic, is not merely a religion, but as an ideology, identity, life view and cultural expression [1, p. 238]. Islam plays a very important role in shaping the identity and character of an open, egalitarian, humorous and religious people. Islam is used as a unifying symbol that attaches all elements of Betawese society. Tradition and culture that is expressed always based on Islamic values.

Islam in Betawese land has a long historical range and setting of heroic events. According to Ridwan Saidi the history of Islam in Betawese land begins with the presence of Islam spreaders in Karawang, namely Sheikh Hasanudin or Sheikh Quro from Campa in 1412 Saka coincide in 1491 AD [2, p. 109] The next process of Islamic *dakwah* is when Fadhillah Khan (Fatahillah) stormed the Port of Sunda Kelapa to abolish populated Portuguese in Batavia, on June 22, 1527 AD [3, p. 29]. This event in Sunda Kelapa is marked as the birthday of Jakarta. [4]

Dakwah which was brought by Rasul based on multicultural concept since there were so many religions, race and cultures at that time. This also the reason why

Muhammad was sent to bring the grace for the whole nation, as it is mentioned in the Quran (QS. Al-Anbiya (21): 107). The Risalah that Muhammad broght should accomodates all life prolems that arouse not only within that certain time but also until the life ends. (Sya'rawi , 2011: 155).

For that reasons, history has recorded that the process of transmission of Islam, was brought in peace without any violence or power force, that makes Islam gradually becomes the main religion in Indonesia. The majority of Indonesian people have Islam as their religion. Islam gave appreciation to the use of art and local tradition as the tool to spread this belief. This cultural approach despite violence and military force, brought successful for *dakwah* in Indonesia.[5, p. 481] Indonesia is a nation that consists of many ethnics, tribes, race, culture, language and religion. This diversity can be a trigger to a conflict and separatism. The systematic, integrated and continuous effort should be taken in order to keep this multicultural nation stays in unity. There multicultural *dakwah* takes a major role.[6]

Multicultural *dakwah* can respond to many *dakwah* problems among pluralism society then the change of *mad'u* (the proselytism object) based on concept and attitude of respect each other's will bring to a harmonious relationship between people with different religion. Moslems should be the pioneer in bringing the message of peaceful Islam in order to spread this *rahmatan lil alamin* (pity for the entire world) religion by providing multicultural *dakwah*. [7, p. 44] This kind of multicultural *dakwah* can keep society live in a social stability along with diversity within the society. Not only with society, this multicultural is *dakwah* also keep Moslem hand in hand with government to create *kairu ummah* that is a stable society. [8, p. 34]

M. Arfah Shiddiq has elaborated that multicultural means that people should admit that there are so many different cultures, ethnics and beliefs within the society. Therefore every individual will gain respect and responsible to live harmoniously in the community. The refuse of respect towards others is the root of social problems to develop multicultural points of view.[9]

Charles and Bikhu explained that Multicultural is a paradigm that admit the pluralistic resemblance of cultural expressions, [10, p. 35] and [9, pp. 123– 126]. Multiculturalism can also be accepted as a worldview in

politics of recognition.

This research uses multicultural theory refers to pluralism theory based on Nurcholish Madjid, which is cited in his book, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*. According to the theory, Pluralism consists of The Unity of God, The Unity of Prophecy and the unity of humanity.[11, p. 177]

This research is intended to describe the role of Betawese scholars in multicultural *dakwah*.

II. METHODS

This research is a descriptive research with qualitative approach. Data collection was undertaken by intensive interview towards two respectable Betawese Scholars as the subject of the research, namely Dr. K.H. Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah, M.A. and K.H. Drs. Saifudin Amsir. K.H. is short from *Kiai Haji*, a title given to religious Muslim scholar. The researchers also took some observations and documentation. The interpretation was analyzed by using descriptive-qualitative technique.

III. DISCUSSION AND RESULT

A. The Profile of Betawese Scholars

1. Biography of KH. Dr. Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah

Dr. K.H. Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah was born in Kuningan, East Jakarta on March 25 1964. He is a Betawese ethnic and one of grandsons of Guru Mughni, a famous figure Betawese of Betawese scholars at the end of 1800s and in the early of 1900s. He got married to Jehan Azhari, a Syrian descendant. They have three children, namely Hanin Fathullah, Muhammad Hadi Fathullah, and Rahaf Fathullah. He went to SDN 01 for his elementary school in Kuningan Timur Jakarta, and then enrolled to Pondok Modern Gontor Ponorogo which is an Islamic boarding junior and senior high school. After graduated from his school he continued his study to Damascus University to get his bachelor degree, then to Jordan University for his master degree and finally to University Kebangsaan Malaysia to earned his Phd.[4]

2. Biography of KH. Drs. Saefuddin Amsir

K.H. Saifuddin was born in Jakarta on January 31, 1955. His father, Haji Amsir Naiman, was a religious teacher in his home village, Kebon Manggis Matraman. His mother name is Hajjah Nur'ain. Saifuddin's strong desire in the sciences of religion has been intensively soldered from childhood. He studied at the *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (Islamic elementary school), *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (Islamic junior school) Al-Washliyah, and *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic senior high school) Asyysafiah. K.H. Syaifudin Amsir received his baccalaureate degree at the Shari'a Faculty of Islamic University of Asy-Syafi'iyah (UIA) and Faculty of Ushuluddin IAIN (Islamic State Institute for Islamic Studies) of Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (now known as UIN –Islamic State University) as the best graduate.[12]

Among the scholars who were recorded as his teachers were K.H. Abdullah Syafi'i, K.H. Muhammad Syafi'i Hadzami Kebayoran Lama, Habib Abdullah bin Husein Syami Al-Attas, and Guru Hasan Murtoha. To those

teachers, he studied the various branches of Islamic sciences. At the time of studying to Habib Abdullah, among the books that he has finished in front of his teacher is the book *Minhaj al-Thalibin* (the work of Imam al-Nawawi) and the book *Bughyat al-Mustarsyidin* (the work of Habib Abdurrahman Al-Masyhur) [12].

B. The Map of *Dakwah* Activity of Betawese Ulemas

1. Map of *Dakwah* Activity of KH Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah

Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah is the ulema of the native Betawese.[13, pp. 37–38] His proselytism is *dakwah bil-lisan* (proselytism by oral), *dakwah bil-kitabah* (proselytism by writing), *dakwah bil-hal* (proselytism by action), and *dakwah bil-tadbir* (proselytism by organization).[14, p. 80] As a scholar and academician, the proselytism that he did was *dakwah bil-lisan*. The forms of *dakwah bil-lisan* that done by K.H. Dr. Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah cover the following activities:[15]

The *dakwah bil-lisan* that conducted by universities include: Postgraduate Lecturer at: University of Indonesia, State Islamic University of Jakarta, State Islamic University of Bandung, Muhammadiyah University of Jakarta, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, Institute of Qur'an Studies Jakarta, Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies Program Mc Gill Canada-UIN Jakarta, Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor, University of al-Aqidah, Jakarta, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi Slangor (Lecturer Examiner thesis/dissertation). He is also a lecturer at Ushuluddin Faculty of State Islamic University of Jakarta, Ushuluddin Faculty of State Islamic University of Bandung, Ushuluddin Faculty Institute of Qur'an Studies (IIQ) Jakarta, Education Muballigh al-Azhar Jakarta, Education Cadre of Pondok Modern Gontor. Teacher integrated Islamic elementary and junior high school of al-Mughni Jakarta, Director of Islamic College al-Mughni Jakarta. [16] He also becomes Hajj adviser of PT Dian Nusa Insani Jakarta and Director of Center for Study of Hadith Jakarta.

He is also a resource person in the program *Book of Sahih Bukhari* studies in TVRI—a state television channel. He is also gives actively lectures in *Majelis Taklim* (Islamic study group) in Jakarta and Bogor which include *Majelis Taklim* Al-Bahtsi wa al-Tahqiq al-Salam, Jakarta, Baitul Mughni Mosque, Jakarta, Masjid al-Tin, Jakarta, Masjid Agung Al- Azhar, Jakarta, Baitus Salam Mosque, Jakarta BIP Building, *Majelis Taklim* al-Sa'adah, Ciputat, Masjid al-Musyawah, Kelapa Gading Jakarta, Islamic Center of Bogor.[14, p. 15]

He is also active in *Tabligh Akbar* (public assembly for religious purposes) in Jogjakarta, in Hadith Studies Forum At-Tin Great Mosque, in *Majelis Taklim* Telkomsel, and in Weekly Islamic Studies SCB, Masjid Az-Zikra Sentul.[17] Among other of his religious activity are giving lecture at Ar- Rahman Mosque of Kota Baru Parahyangan, Daarut Tauhiid Mosque, Dhuha Mosque Al Hakim BSD, Dhuhur Study at Shalahuddin-Sudirman Mosque Sudirman Building Tax Office, Mt Druitt West SYDNEY and so on.[18]

a. *Dakwah Bi al-Kitabah*

Kiai Lutfi is a productive *Kiai* in *dakwah bil-Kitabah* (proselytism in writing). He published his books, wrote in journals, magazines, newspapers, and even in social media such as Whatsapp, Facebook, and Twitter. He has published about 30 books. [13, pp. 37–38] *Kiai* Lutfi even poured his creativity in multimedia in form of DVDs and CDs entitled *Interactive Learning Methods: Hadith and Hadith Science, Hadiths of Al-Qur'anic Prophets, Sahih Al-Bukhari, Interpreting and Interactive Takhrij (Issue 1), Thematic Al-Quran Index, and Portrait of the Personality and the Life of Prophet Muhammad*.

b. *Dakwah bi at-Tadbir*

The *dakwah bi at-tadbir* (proselytism by organization) that Dr. Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah done is founding and he became the leader of the center of Hadith Studies in Jakarta. He is grateful for the benefit of Muslims through the study of the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Weekly studies began to be held at Imam Jama Library and the science of Hadith became the subject of the study so that the activity of *takhrij* (explaining the source of Hadith) is being the next routine activity.

Along with the establishment of Al-Mughni Islamic Center in Kuningan, Jakarta, the Center for Study of Hadith was placed on the ground floor of a building that planned to have eight floors. This center was inaugurated by dozens of scholars and officials of the Provincial Government of Jakarta and attended by about 2000 people on Saturday, May 17, 2008. The center is often gets visits and is offered cooperation by universities in Indonesia and Malaysia.

c. *Dakwah Bil Hal*

Dakwah bil hal (proselytism by social action) that conducted by *Kiai* Lutfi are through social services, mass circumcision, compensation of *dhuafa* (the poor), orphans, and religious foster in villages.

2. KH. Syaifuddin Amsir

KH Syaifuddin Amsir activities are in the form of *dakwah bil-lisan, dakwah bil-kitabah, dakwah bil-hal, and dakwah bil-tadbir*. [14, p. 80] As a scholar and academician, the *dakwah* that he did was more with *dakwah bil-lisan*.

a. *Dakwah bi al-Lisan*

Kiai Saifuddin Amsir still remains rectitude in organizing various *majelis taklim* that scattered throughout Jakarta. Practically his days are full of by giving preaches and teaches in almost 40 *majelis taklim*. such as Ibn Kathir's interpretation studies on Sunday morning at Ni'matul Ittihad Mosque, Pondok Pinang, and *the Book of Ihya Ulumiddin* studies at Taman Puring Mosque, Gandaria, South Jakarta, on Monday night. [12] *Kiai* Amsir routinely gives lecture at the mosque Ar-Riyadh in Kwitang. *Kiai* Saifuddin is listed as a permanent lecturer at Ushuluddin Faculty of Islamic State University of Jakarta.

Kiai Amsir has a unique characteristic in his *dakwah*, which is he likes to sing a song while he was preaching.

Rabiah Al Adawiyah explains the figure of *Kiai* Syaifuddin Amsir in her Thesis "The rhetoric of Ulama Betawese (rhetorical case of KH Saifuddin Amsir[19] by Aristoteles's ethos analysis, pathos, and logos)". She concludes that KH Syaifuddin Amsir Betawesein preaching has used rhetoric in *dakwah* which contains three the main elements possessed by the communicator ethos (ethics and credibility), pathos (emotional attachment), and logos (logical). Through qualitative design with descriptive explanation, this thesis finds that communicator has three elements so that facilitate the happening of the process of persuasion his *dakwah*. This *kiai* also focus more on scientific activity and intellectuality in various *majelis taklim* such as after Maghrib (sunset prayer) Islamic studies on Tuesday Night at Sunda Kelapa Grand Mosque Jakarta, monthly The Book of Jalalain's Interpretation studies at Musholla Al-Barkah Kampung Kemang Jaticepaka, *majelis taklim* at Masjid Raya Jakarta Islamic Center, *majelis taklim* LDNU at Cikunir Bekasi, and *majelis taklim* of Masjid Niaga Rahmat at Graha CIMB Niaga Sudirman.

In his *dakwah bil-lisan*, *Kiai* Syaifuddin Amsir has peculiarities on how his lectures can touch the heart of his audience. According to him when he was preaching, he let the words flowing as it is from his mouth.

b. *Dakwah bi al-Kitabah*[20]

In *dakwah bi al-kitabah*, KH Saifuddin Amsir is one of the unique of 21st century Betawese scholars. He has published his work such as *Tafsir Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* (four volumes), *Majmū 'al-Furū' wa al-Masāil* (three volumes), and *al-Qur'ān, I'jazan wa Khawāshan, wa Philosophy*. This latter work is considered as his magnum opus which has been studied by domestic and foreign scholars. [12]

c. *Da'wah bi al-Tadbir*

In *Dakwah bi al-Tadbir*, KH Saifuddin Amsir is actively functions as Rais Syuriah (consultative body) member of PBNU—a massive Islamic organization in Indonesia— and founder of Sibghatullah foundation. K.H. Saifuddin Amsir is also a columnist the *Kitab Kuning* (13 books of Islamic law compiled by Muslim theologians) column in *Alkisah* magazine.

d. *Dakwah bi al-Hal*

In *dakwah bi al-hal*, KH Saifuddin Amsir is considered as clever ulema. He found a community that give charity for those who in need. According to him, we will not become poor by giving charity, instead we will be more rich. [12]

C. The Role of Betawese Ulama in Multicultural Proselytism

1. *Dakwah* with Tolerance

Multicultural Pproselytism model is an alternative method of *dakwah* developed by Betawese scholars in responding to the cultural dynamics of Islamic society in Jakarta. The progress of mindset and civilization of a society also demands the development of multicultural proselytism model because Betawese Islamic society is pluralistic.

The development of multicultural method of Betawese ulemas is influenced by the situation and condition of *mad'u*, the response of civilization of modern society, and the demands of contemporary *dakwah* world to achieve the goal of *dakwah* present. The development of multicultural model is caused by *dakwah* continues to grow in facing various needs and diversity of *mad'u* condition in society.

The proselytism model developed by Betawese ulama is essentially an effort of *dakwah* world development which demands alternative method of da'wah *dakwah* in reality of *mad'u* condition, demands of *da'i* (Islamic preacher), and dynamics of civilization of pluralistic modern society. To that end, the development of *dakwah* model also rests on the methods of the prolyterism ulama Betawese ulamas that sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith. *Kiai* Fathullah and *Kiai* Amsir in multicultural proselytizing are by guiding peace, polite, tolerant, respecting diversity, and dialogue. It is because for both of them *Kiai* the *dakwah* has the purpose of "changing the rules and behavior" both individuals and society. In fact they refer to the Qur'an about its methodical outlines, namely *bi al-hikmah, wa al-mau'izat al-asana, wa jādilhum bi'l-latī hiya ahsan* (with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue in ways that best and most gracious) as stated in the Holy Quran Surah An-Nahl (16): 125.

Thus, it can be stated that the method of multicultural *dakwah* developed by these two Betawese ulama also refers to the Hadith of the Prophet. Even for the two *Kiai* this method can be done as long as not contrary to the principle of faith and worship. Since is stated in Al-Qur'an, surah Al-Kaafirun (109): 6: "For you your religion and for me my religion" This verse is the basis of tolerance in Islam. Tolerance is an attitude of appreciation, tolerance, tolerance of stance, opinion, views, beliefs, customs that are different or contrary to one's own stance.[21] Thus tolerance receives diversity and freedom of religion.

The principle of tolerance made by both scholars, are inclusivity and fairness. Inclusivity is explained that they accept the differences, the existence of religious differences, while in fairness both of the scholars provide firmness and courage in conveying the teachings of Islam as it is, and not the hidden motives, and accept the truth of other religions.

Kiai Fathullah and *Kiai* Amsir are instrumental in the tolerant *dakwah*. This tolerance is illustrated in real terms in the second field of Betawese clerics which shows that knitting the ropes of harmony and tolerance amid religious plurality in everyday life.

Therefore, multicultural *dakwah* is directed to Muslims to accept differences in real life, to have tolerant attitudes, to live harmoniously, to create peace, to bring glory in the form of social strokes, peace, justice, unity and brotherhood among Muslims, with other religious people, and with the government.

Harmony of religious people is a necessity built with *ukhuwah* (fraternity). The building of *ukhuwah* is described in the Qur'an, Hadith and *Qaul* (opinion) ulama. Understanding *ukhuwah* is realized through multicultural *dakwah* in Betawese. The concept of *ukhuwah* to build community harmony is based on the attitudes of the

Muslim such as *tawasuth, tasamuh, tawazun, tarahum*, and *ta'awun* (moderate, equality, justice, mutual affection, and mutual help).

Among the objectives of developing a model of multicultural *dakwah* is to inspire the Islamic *rahmatan lil'alamin* (pity for the entire world). For that, the message delivered by *da'i* to *mad'u* must in line with variation of *dakwah* method to achieve *dakwah* result according to its purpose. Among the goals of multicultural prolyterism is to build religious harmony in Jakarta. To that end, the message of *dakwah* is proclaimed in a persuasive, friendly, peaceful and tolerant way or in ways that are wise, and the wisdom of bringing the proselytizing of the *dakwah*. It means *dakwah* not in violent, radical ways, impose the most correct opinion so as to achieve radical and heretical Islam groups. With other alignment, the Islam of *rahmatan lil'alamin* is not Islam which aims at coercion of Islam into state ideology, known as "Islamism".

According to Noorhaidi Hasan, *et al.* "Islamism" is often referred to as political Islam, conceptualized not primarily as a religious phenomenon, but rather a socio-political phenomenon involving groups or individuals of Muslims who are actively engaged in certain ideological movements that they believe.[22, p. 8] [23, p. 8] "And the notion of Islamism is understood, Islamism is different from that of Islam *rahmatan lil'alamin*, not a religion with a political ideology.

2. *Dakwah* through Dialogue

The role played by two Betawese clerics in multicultural *dakwah* has an impact in harmony of social life in Jakarta. Therefore, every religion has a truth claim to the teachings of his religion. Adherents of religion regard their religion as the truest, while other religions are wrong. To find the intersection between religious people is needed dialogue between religious people.

Both *Kiai* Fathullah and *Kiai* Amsir quoted Al-Qur'an's Surah Al-Imran (3), verse 64, which means "Say: 'O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah.' If they turn back say ye: 'Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's will).'"

The above verse is explaining the importance of interfaith dialogue. According to the two scholars, this is the basis of which makes them conduct dialogue with inter-religious people which conducted at the residence of Sinta Nuriah, the wife of KH Abdurrahman Wahid.

According to K.H. Lutfi the approach of multicultural *dakwah* means that *dakwah* is no longer explicitly intended to Islamize non-Muslims. Moreover, the multicultural *dakwah* approach emphasizes that the target of *dakwah* is more directed to empowering the quality of the people in the internal sphere, and cooperation and dialogue between religions and cultures in the external sphere. In the multicultural *dakwah* assessing the phenomenon of conversion of non-Muslims to Muslims is a side effect of the purpose of *dakwah*, and not the main purpose of *dakwah* itself. Multicultural preaching no longer oriented on the aspect of quantity, but more to the

quality in the form of justice, equality, and prosperity for humanity worldwide. Cultural and religious diversity is a *sunatullah*—a God’s determination—that cannot be changed or replaced. In other words, it is impossible to aspire to make this man a single people, a religion, and a culture. Even those fantasies are in contradiction with God’s own (God’s) policy which does not want to make man as a people as stated in Surah Yunus (10): 99.

Through the recognition of the agreement or common interfaith point, in the perspective of multicultural *dakwah*, as Nurcholis Madjid repeatedly said, as quoted by Komarudin and Gaus, that to invite people to Islam is not always identical with inviting people to be Muslim.[24, p. 19]

IV. CONCLUSION

The activities of proselytism that conducted by the two Betawese ulamas, Dr. K.H. Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah and Drs. K.H. Syaifuddin Amsir, are by oral (*dakwah bil-lisan*), by writing (*dakwah bi al kitabah*), by social action (*dakwah bil-hal*), and by organiation (*dakwah bi at-tadbir*). The *dakwah* through oral is done through *majelis taklim*, mosques in Jakarta and surroundings cities, national and foreign environments. They also preaching through the media whether is electronic, which is done in TV stations such as TVRI and TV one, or through printed media (*dakwah bi al kitabah*), in the form of books or papers. The *dakwah bi al-hal and bi at-tadbir* both scholars is preaching through community organizations and their expertise respectively. The role of multicultural *dakwah* that conducted by K.H. Dr. Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah and K.H. Drs. Syaifudin Amsir are highly values differences (pluralism) as long as other parties also value Islam. The role of *dakwah* is done through the first two things, namely *dakwah* through tolerance, and *dakwah* through dialogue. This is done by Betawese scholars as an effort to build peace in a pluralist society.

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