



## The use of Popular Cultural Media in Spreading The Dakwah Message in Indonesia

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### Abstract :

*The dakwah activities actually are focused on the delivering the dakwah message that contained the substance of Islamic teaching and its universal values. Dakwah nowadays, is not merely done through meeting in the majelis taklim congregations, sermons, and tabligh akbar (wide public meeting). But, it can be done also by some artists (arts workers) such as song writers, singers, authors, novelists, movie makers, etc. through their art work creations. Some art works such as music had inspired the public to accept the Islamic religious teaching through the songs they listened. And also the dakwah message can be well packaged by some novel writers so it touch the hearts of the readers. Not enough, the such book creations can also inspire the wider public through the movies and cinema creations, whether in televisions, movie cinema, even though advertisement movies. A da'i is encouraged to deliver the message of Islam creatively through various media, to meet the needs of the mad'u (targeted population of the message).*

**Kata Kunci:** *Song, Islamic Music, Islamic Novels, Religious Movies*

### INTRODUCTION

The dissemination of the Islamic teaching and universal religious values are often done through activities called *dakwah*. Literally *dakwah* means the call, encouragement or invitation. The actors who do the *dakwah* are often called as *Da'i*, while the invitee or the receivers are often called as *mad'u* (Saputra, 2012). The *dakwah* activities in the society can be done through several ways, not merely through preaching or direct speaking in front of the public in the congregation, but also can be done personally through vis a vis conversation, and also through other various medias.

The use of cultural media, actually had been done by some previous ulamas. In Java, for example, Islam was spreaded by the *Wali Songo* (the nine wali/saints) such as Sunan Bonang who use the gamelan (Javanese traditional musical instruments) which were played during the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday (Maulid) in the Sekaten events in Surakarta dan Yogyakarta. Sekaten itself came from the word *Syahadatain* (the two witnesses : first the affirmation on the oneness of Allah as God and the second the witness on Prophet Muhammad PBUH as the messenger of Allah). During the Sekaten itself, sometimes were played *Wayang Kulit* (shadow puppets) with the story of *Jimat Kalimasada* which is considered of the two of *Kalimat Syahadat* (the two of witness sentences as the same of the origin of Sekaten). In the Malay (Melayu) land, Raja Ali Haji was very famous with his *Gurindam Dua Belas*. *Gurindam* is a specific poems of the Melayu

culture. I think there so many other cultural media that are used to introduce Islam to the public. That's why I called the such media as cultural media.

The use of cultural media for dakwah are continued by some Dakwah actors nowadays. The started to use the popular cultural media such as music, songs, novel, movies, and etc. Just to mention some of them, for example Bimbo a group Singers from Bandung with their phenomenal religious song "Tuhan" that told the audience about the relations between human being and God. The such creations are also done by Emha Ainun Nadjib (Cak Nun) with his group Kyai Kanjeng. Although some people who referred to Al Zawajir had some opinions said music is a haram (prohibited) things (Republika, 14 Juli 2020). The use of writing activities were done by HAMKA with this famous novel *Tenggelamnya kapal Van Der Wijk*, and the critics of the conservative religious traditions were told by AA Navis with his novel *Robohnya Surau Kami*. The recent Indonesian creative writer such Andrea Hirata with his *Laskar Pelangi* and Darwis Tere Liye inspired the movie maker to create the movie with similar title. While the use movie in delivering Dakwah message had been started while a famous movie maker from Indonesia, come with his *Al Kautsar* and Titian Serambut Dibelah Tujuh. Chaerul Umam believed that movie can be used as the tools for dakwah (spreading the Islamic teaching) through the message delivered by the script of the movie. While on the contrary Ali Mustafa Yakub the previous Imam of Istiqlal Mosque said that it is impossible to use movie for dakwah. Because according to him, the cinema is a place for *maksiat* (doing evil things). *Majalah Madina* No. 4, Tahun 1, April 2008.

The existence on the use of the such popular media in delivering dakwah message actually are still relevants up to now. Some previous and recent studies on the discourse in the popular cultural media (song, music, novels, movies, etc.) are often done by some students and researchers. This situations inspired me to write this article, based on several research questions? 1) How the popular cultural media can be used to deliver the message of dakwah? 2) How are the public respond on the use of popular media for dakwah. 3) How do they accept the message of dakwah through these popular cultural media?

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research is a kind of qualitative descriptive research that are done through several data collections and analysis techniques. Such as library research, phenomenology, observations through some popular cultural art media works, and other relevant methods. Most of the research process are done through a reflective analysis from the history and qualitative data found.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From some articles, researches and discussions, it was found that some popular media such as music and song lyrics, novels and movie are often used to deliver the message of dakwah. These situations happen in the very long time since several years ago, up to nowadays. From the research, here are some findings on those cultural and dakwah messages that are delivered through that media.

### 1) Dakwah through Music and Song Lyrics

Dakwah through music and song lyrics, had been done for a long time. There are no specific genre of music that were used to deliver these dakwah messages. Rhoma Irama and his group Soneta which are well-known with his Dangdut Music always send the message of dakwah to their listeners or

followers. Through some popular dangdut songs such as Judi, Mirasantika, etc. they tried to raise public awareness to avoid the *haram* (prohibited) things in Islam. (Mustholehuddin, 2012). While another music group such as Nasida Ria with their *qasidah* genre of musics delivered the message on the urgency of peace in their song *Perdamaian*, promoting the situation in a pesantren culture through their *Kota Santri* song, or encouraging women to cover their aurat (body and head) with the headscarf through their song *Jilbab Putih* and etc. (Zamzami, 2021). Gambus as another genre of music are also popularized by Nisa Sabyan, with her song *Ya Maulana* and *Deen as-Salaam* (M.Rosyid HW and Siti Lussiyandari, 2020). The three kinds of musical genre as mentioned above : dangdut, qasidah and gambus are often influenced by some middle eastern typical instruments such as drum and flute. But another typical of musical instruments such as rock and fushion also used to deliver the message of dakwah. For example as is performed by Armand Maulana and his band Gigi. They created some religious popular songs such as *Raihlah Kemenangan* and *Mohon Ampun* (Adi Setiadi, 2018). Another pop music group Ungu also launched his religious genre musical album, for example in their album *Para Pencari-Mu*. The trend to launch the religious musical album usually happen before the coming of the month of Ramadhan. So it is still need to be criticized that this kind of phenomena is part religious awareness or just a religious commodification in the popular musical album.

## 2) Dakwah through Novels

After Hamka came with *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah* and *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijk*, and Ayip Rosyidi with his novel *Robohnya Surau Kami*, the trend of delivering dakwah message are continued by some young women writers after them. It was started around 1990, when Abidah el-Khalieqy a feminist writer in Yogyakarta come with her novel *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban, Kartini, and Geni Jora*. In addition to that, some other women writer such as Asma Nadia came with her best sellers novel. For example *Assalamu'alaikum Beijing, Emak Ingin Naik Haji, Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika, and Surga yang Tak Dirindukan* (Diah Retno Wulandari, 2019). What the both women writers initiated had represented what is called by Helen Xicous as 'feminine writing'. Xicous through her works analysed the difference between women and men in their sexuality and the use of language. She aimed to show that women speak and write about a positive representation about femininity in a discourse she called 'écriture feminist' (Prachurjya Borah, 2020). After the both women novel writers, the new generations of women writers came. For example Khilma Anis with her novel *Hati Suhita* and also Muyassaroh Hafidhoh with her novel *Hilda*. The coming of those women writers also developed what is so called "sastra perempuan pesantren" (women's literature of the pesantren). The novels that were written by women had the strong flow of story-telling and full of empowering message; so that some of the novels for example *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (By Abidah el-Khalieqy) and some novels written by Asma Nadia as mentioned above are adapted as the title of the Islamic religious movie.

The coming of 'sastra pesantren' also brought Habiburrahman el-Shirazy or Kang Abik and Ahmad Fuadi Azis as the novelist. Kang Abik came with his *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*, *Cinta Suci Zahrana*, etc. While Ahmad Fuadi Azis also came with his novel *Negeri Lima Menara*. Another male novelist who came with the strong religious message are Darwis Tereliye (who are well-known with his novel *Hafalan Shalat Delisa*) and also Andrea Hirata with his famous *Laskar Pelangi* series. Although the last two writers did come from pesantren backgrounds, but their creative writing works also delivered the strong dakwah message.

### 3) Dakwah through Movie Films

The dakwah through movie films was not only practiced by some Da'i (Islamic preachers) in Indonesia. There were some international film which brought the strong dakwah message. Such as *The Message* (directed by Mustapha Akkad), *Children of Heaven* (directed by Majid Majidi), *Le Grand Voyage* (directed by Ismail el Feroukhi), *My Name is Khan* (directed by Karan Johar), etc. (AD Kusumaningtyas, 2020). In Indonesia itself, the coming of dakwah film can be noted since the launch of *Al-Kautsar* which brought a legendary poem artist WS. Rendra as one of the film star in that movie. Some articles said, that his religious experience while playing his role in that cinema brought him converted from his previous religion to Islam. Actually, the senior movie director Chairul Umam who introduced what is so called film dakwah (dakwah movie). Beside directed *Al-Kautsar*, Kang Mamang –the nick name of Chaerul Umam- also directed *Titian Serambut Dibelah Tujuh* a national movie which was awarded with the Piala Citra and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* when the novel was adapted to the wide screen.

Previously, the Dakwah film is only attached by the a glance of performance of religious figure in a huge drama, comedy, or horror movie; for example by showing a Kyai after a repentance of a criminal or sex worker. But, then it improved to other step, the dakwah movie or Islamic movie then are more seriously directed and arranged with a good script. And the recent situations, as the development of Film or Cinema Industry, the numbers of dakwah film are also increased. Some movies are taken from the best-sellers novels. Some of the films were created from the novels as mentioned above. For example, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*, *Assalamu'alaikum Beijing*, *Surga Yang Tak Dirindukan*, etc. Those novels have the strong dakwah message. In addition to that, some dakwah movies were also taken from history of the great figures. Such as *Sang Kyai*, *Sang Pencerah*, *Nyai Walidah*, and also sometimes based on some critical issues about the life of teacher of Islamic religion subject in *Guru Ngaji*, the process of seeking of faith such as in *Tanda Tanya* or *Mencari Hilal*, etc. Some other movies also describe the relations between a muslim believer in a multicultural society, the religious tolerance issue, and some so called pro and cons of the religious teaching such as about interfaith marriage, polygamy, etc.

From those research, actually we can conclude that the public respond in the use of art popular cultural media are good enough. They are very enthusiastic in receiving new information through the art work, such as for example some novel books that had been published become best seller song album. The religious musical creation such as *Para Pencari Tuhan, Pintu Sorga*, etc., *Deen as-Salaam* become the most requested songs in the radio and almost heard in the public places. While, the novels which had been launched in the public, for example *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban, Ayat-ayat Cinta, Ketika Cinta Bertasbih, Laskar Pelangi*, etc. also are always sold out and become best sellers in the off-line and online bookstores. Some of the songs are also taken as the song for the movies, and sometimes also inspired other movie makers to remake it into movie film or cinema electronic series. Such as *Para Pencari Tuhan* and *Amanah Wali*. While, the best seller novels are also brought back to the public in the form or movie and also become best seller movies also. Sometimes, they can be taken also as the source of public discussions, for example by providing Nobar (Nonton Bareng) Film Religi and then can be continued by the discussion on the message of the film and behind the scene of making it.

Actually, the religious message are various and rich. So, a Da'i must have a wise way to approach the target of the dakwah mission. As mentioned in the Quran: *Ud'u ilaa sabilli rabbika bi al-hikmah wa al-mauizhah al-hasanah. Wa jaadilhum billatii hiya ahsan. Wa huwa a'alamu biman zhalla 'an sabilihi wa huwa a'lamu bil-muhtadiin.*

## CONCLUSION

There are some forms of popular cultural media that can be used to deliver the message of dakwah. Such as music and song lyrics, novels and other creative writing art works, and also movie films. This is accordance with the situation of a *mad'u* (target of the dakwah actions).

Hopefully, in the future there will be some deeper analysis in each issues that can be continued by other future studies.

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